
S O M E
T H O U G H T S
O N
C H R I S T I A N I T Y.

DEAR SIR,

THE civility and frankness, which I could not help thinking carried something of friendship in it, with which you used me, during our short acquaintanee, has kept me from forgetting you, since I saw you; nor have I forgot the repeated request you made me, before I left your place: Without hindering you then with apologies for my delay, I shall now begin to answer it.

A Christian, say we, in opposition to all the various ways wherein men seek to please God, is persuaded, upon divine authority, that **GOD IS WELL PLEASED IN HIS BELOVED SON**: This we are taught by the voice that came from heaven: This is the great point *proved* by the resurrection of Jesus, as
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being the point in dispute before he died ; upon which he was by the Jews condemned to death ; and upon which both sides appealed to heaven for decision. It was no part of the dispute, whether Jesus, in calling himself the SON OF GOD, signified himself to be truly and properly God. All parties concerned, friends and foes, were agreed upon this : For under this title Jesus claimed equal honour with the Father ; under this title the believing Jews worshiped him, and ascribed the divine perfections unto him, even at a time when nothing was more zealously maintained among the Jews, than the worshiping of one God only. Upon his assuming this title, the unbelieving Jews accused him of blasphemy ; because, said they, he being a man, maketh himself God : and in another place, because he said, that God was his Father, making himself equal with God ; while at the same time, however much they lay at the catch with his words, they never charged him with preaching up more gods than one. 'Tis too late now then to alter the meaning of that title. The only dispute then was, whether that title belonged to Jesus ; whether Jesus was the beloved Son of God, in whom he is well pleased. This is the plain meaning and import of that fact, the *resurrection of Jesus*.

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As Jesus came into the world not to suffer for any sin of his own, being without sin, but, as he declares himself, to give his life a ransom for many; so God, in raising him from the dead, gave the highest demonstration of his being well pleased with the ransom which he gave: And as Jesus put the truth of all that he said, upon the issue of his being raised again from the dead, which you see his enemies also were apprised of; his resurrection, by this means, must turn out to be the highest proof of the divine assent to every thing he spoke.

Accordingly the Apostles, in pursuance of their commission to preach that Gospel, upon which eternal life hinged, every where bare witness to this fact, and made it their first and chief business to persuade men of it: and when they had got men persuaded of it, their continual care about them was, that they might keep it in memory, (1 Cor. xv. 2. and 2 Tim. ii. 8.) and to serve this great purpose were the various observances, which the Apostles delivered unto the churches to keep. This is the first principle, the great axiom of Christianity, from which we find the apostles continually inferring almost every thing that we are called to believe or do in the Christian religion.

From *this* a Christian draws his first taste of that joy which is man's proper life in di-

distinction from the brutes. This keeps him, like his pole star from groping in the dark, after every idle guess, started by the wise and the learned, about virtue and happiness. Instead of seeking, like other men, to please God by any qualification he has or hopes to attain, he is persuaded that God is already well pleased in his beloved Son; that every thing needful to recommend him to the divine favour, was completed by Jesus on the cross, when he said, *It is finished*, and gave up the ghost.

This is the influencing principle, the leading line of his life: This leads him to love God and keep his commandments. His motives to his deeds of greatest self denial arise directly from *this*. His persuasion, that the character of Jesus was so amiable in the eye of God, as to procure his favour to the guilty, draws him to imitate that character; for 'tis plain, he that says he believes *this*, and does not make conscience of imitating Jesus, tells a lie. A Christian then is led in that path of virtue, which is in the highest repute with God; tho', as was exemplified in Jesus, the true standard of it, it will never be the path to honor in this world. And he is moved forward by that principle, which of all others draws the heart of man with greatest pleasure, gratitude: So he toils not in the fruitless task

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of making out a title to the divine favour ; but his obedience is a continued expression of thanks to God for the free gift of that righteousness, which he sent his Son to work, and which he finished on the cross, as a full title to the divine favour for the guiltiest of mankind.

This truth, believed on its proper evidence, gives such a dash to the natural pride of his own understanding, that he can no more trust his reasonings about God and happiness *a priori* ; so he learns his character of God, and his own situation with respect to him, wholly from this fact. This forms his judgment about mankind and about himself, alters his mind entirely as to every thing he formerly thought valuable about himself in the sight of God, or gave him any preference to others in that respect ; so keeps him from looking upon any of mankind with an air importing, stand by.

This directs him in the choice of his dearest friends, and is the measure and rule of his friendship with them : And, if he have friends in other respects, his tender wish in their behalf is, that they knew and believed this truth : He wishes, I say, for he knows he cannot persuade, nor contribute any thing to the obtaining of his wish ; even as he knows he did not contribute any thing himself to
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his obtaining any comfortable apprehension of this truth; yea, whatever pains might have been taken with himself, and however morally serious he might formerly have been, he sees plainly that the aim of his mind, in his most sincere endeavours that way, lay in direct opposition to the plain import of that fact, which he now believes and finds happiness in.

While I am sensible, that one man cannot persuade another to believe in Christ, I am sensible that I have no difficulty, which I can fully remove, as to hinder you from objecting: *Content* may be considered, that, however plain the external evidence be, the fact is of such a nature, as to require more than human testimony to give us a certain undoubting persuasion of it. We can firmly rely upon human testimony, as to events that fall out in the course of nature: but as, in the resurrection of the dead, the course of nature is reversed; and as the resurrection of Jesus is so circumstanced, as to decide a point of the highest importance and most interesting nature, in opposition to the reasoning of all mankind; there is need in this case for more than the testimony of any man, or set of men, to rest the firm persuasion of our minds upon: There is need here for divine testimony, divine evidence, to
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our belief. For as to what kind of credit these people may give to it, to whom it is a matter of no moment whether it be true or not, I have no occasion to take notice of that here. And if we rate the believers of this fact on its proper evidence, by their appearing well affected to the plain simple scripture meaning of it, their numbers will turn out to be but small, and rarely to be found in the Christian world.

If you enquire, what is the nature of this divine evidence? I answer, first, it is very simple and forcible, as all the ways whereby God corresponds with men are: For instance, when one retires a moment, and casts his eyes round upon the magnificent frame of the heavens and the earth, his mind is struck with an awful apprehension of a grand contriver, the great Creator and former of all things: so, with respect to the scripture account of the resurrection of Jesus, when one perceives the divine evidence of it, his mind is struck with a view of such a grand contrivance, that he is convinced none but God could be the author of it. But more particularly:

When man, who is distinguished from the brutes by his conscience, and whose proper life lies in a sense of God's favour, allows himself an interval from those functions that are common to him with other animals, and acts
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in his distinguished character, examining how matters stand betwixt his creator and him; his conscience must be convinced that God is an infinitely good being, so as opposite to all evil as he is good; of which the pain that arises in the mind of man, when he does evil, is a strong proof. This pain is man's proper death, which he suffers more than all other evils. The more he thinks on God, his pain encreases. When he looks abroad upon the inflexible opposition of the Almighty to all sin, he must conclude, seeing the Almighty is against me, who can be for me? All the creation cannot help here! He is surrounded with impossibilities on all hands as to any way of relief: He finds himself mortally wounded by the stroke of the Almighty, and so, incurable by any inferior hand. He is tormented with the impossibility he finds of answering that question, How shall God be pleased?

That beam of divine wisdom, which shines in man's conscience, discovering his sin, is the very kindler of his misery; and that power which gave man his being and proper life, appears armed for his ruin: For surely no power but that of God can hurt a life that lies in his favour: So divine *wisdom* and divine *power* stand the *objectors*. Therefore,

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ed, without diminishing in the least his awful conviction of God's inflexible opposition to sin, must, in the nature of the thing, carry its own evidence of coming from the infinitely good, wise and powerful Being; who created man, speaks in his conscience, made his life to lie in his favour; so could alone deprive him of that life, and alone restore it to him when lost. Such an answer must contain a new display of divine wisdom and power; for, seeing these form the wounding objection, surely no inferior wisdom or power can provide the healing answer: and the wisdom and power displayed in this healing answer, must appear as vehement for goodness and righteousness, and against sin, as formerly; that it may be manifest they are the wisdom and power of that infinitely good Being, who appears, in the wounded conscience, infinitely opposite to all evil, malignity, or sin. So,

While I represent divine wisdom and power as objecting against sinful man's happiness, and again providing a full satisfying answer to the objection, you must not think that I point out these divine perfections as in the least variable, or not perfectly uniform: No, for the answer must fully remove the foundation for the objection; it must shew that sin is taken away, by the full expression of God's inflexible opposition to it.

Now,

Now, this is the very case with the gospel: The gospel contains all that can be wished for in such an healing answer, to great advantage, and that by means which it could never have entered into the heart of man, or of any creature to devise; and which manifest a power not inferior to that which commanded the light to shine out of darkness, and called the world into being from nothing: So the gospel is the wisdom and the power of God, to save every one who believes it. It sets before us the inflexible opposition of the Almighty to all sin, fully expressed in the death of Christ: so, to use the scripture words, *the answer of a good conscience towards God, is by the resurrection of Jesus Christ; who is gone into Heaven and is on the right hand of God.* Here the character of the true God shines forth before the eyes of a sinner, thus described in his own words, *See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me; I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal, neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.* And in another place, *They have no knowledge, that set up—and pray unto a God that cannot save—there is no God beside me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none beside me; look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else.*

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But further, to shew the necessity there is for some such evidence as I have been speaking of it must be considered, that when a man's mind is heartily pinched upon a question, that lies wholly betwixt God and his own conscience, he then finds he needs something to be said on the part of God to ease his mind; something of greater authority and weight than the best connected chain of philosophic reasoning, or the most authentic tradition: And it cannot be denied, that God may so shew himself in what he says, as fully to convince the hearer, that it is he that speaks; and such a conviction the hearers of the apostles had, 1 Theſſ. ii. 14. So much then for the nature of the Christian truth, and its peculiar evidence.

But the great difficulty still remains: If this evidence lies quite plain and open in the bible before every one that reads or hears it, why does not every one perceive it? why cannot one man lay it so before another, as to make it strike him, as he may a proposition of Euclid?

In answer to this, I satisfy myself by saying, that as this truth as recorded in the bible, carrying its peculiar evidence along with it, presents a new idea of God, which our minds by their original constitution were not framed to take in; and which man, if he had re-

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tained his righteousness, could have no occasion for; it is therefore necessary that that same power, which at first framed the mind of man for taking in its *present* ideas, should put hand to it afresh, and make it capable of admitting this *new* one; which, in short, is this, God constituting and making a sinner a righteous person, as necessary to the enjoying his favour and eternal life, and yet appearing perfectly just in doing so.

I suppose you will think now, that by attempting to get out of one difficulty, I have fallen into a greater. You will say, at this rate, man is, by his very constitution led to reject the gospel: And this is indeed what I affirm. For man, by his original constitution, was made to live by his own righteousness; and while he retained this, his constitution was certainly well suited to his happiness, and he then could have no occasion for any such thing as the gospel: So his natural idea of God could be no other but this, that he is just in justifying the righteous, and in condemning the transgressor. And while he stood righteous, he could look upon the just God as his friend. But this idea of God can yield no comfort to a sinner: For, seeing none but the righteous can enjoy the friendship of the just God, no sinner can ever hope for that. And he know how God can be just

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just in justifying the ungodly, or making them righteous; so fit for that enjoyment. But this new idea of God cannot be had from nature, but from the gospel; where God makes a new discovery of himself, acting above and beyond the sphere of nature altogether; yea reversing the course thereof, raising the dead, and calling those things that be not, as though they were.

Suppose one should be educated from a child, and promoted by a great and wealthy trading company to be their principal manager and trustee with a pension of some thousands a year: and after he has lived many years splendidly in this office, he should at length forfeit all his wealth and his honor with the company, by gross unfaithfulness to his trust: would not his remaining taste for that honorable high life, which he had so long held by his integrity, make it almost impossible for him to beg, or even to expect subsistence by alms from any of the company? would he not rather chuse to make any kind of shift for himself in some remote place, where he should never be seen by any of them? This similitude may serve to signify, tho' indeed very imperfectly, the natural estrangement of sinful man's heart from God; and the strong bias which his original constitution must give him against the gospel.

When man became a sinner, his natural propensity to live by his own righteousness, which he had now lost, and could by no means repair, behoved to be criminal, as it leads him to think so dishonorably of God, as to imagine that he can be pleased with an imperfect righteousness, or a righteousness stained with sin; whereas his original apprehension of God behoved to be, that he could be pleased with nothing short of perfect sinless obedience; of which he soon had an awful proof, in God's condemning all mankind to death for one single transgression, and that not of what is commonly called a moral, but of a positive precept. To the same purpose we may yet find another abiding testimony among mankind, from the pain that arises in the mind of a man upon the commission of one single sin; and from the suspicious fear, which haunts those who have the best characters among men, when they seriously think of their situation with respect to God, that something more than they have yet done is needful to please him: A remarkable instance of which you have in that young gentleman, of a most amiable character among men; who, with regard to the laws that respect human society, could say, *All these things have I kept from my youth up*: yet, when he seriously thought of eternal life, this natural

question.

question pained his mind, *What good thing shall I do to obtain it? What lack I yet?* As this question shews the language of conscience, so it shews also the natural propensity above-mentioned; which, after ever so many fruitless attempts, still sets a man to work afresh, to seek life by something that he himself is to do. And tho' conscience still finds fault, and looks with a suspicious distrustful eye upon all that is doing: yet, as it knows not, so cannot point out a better way; it is generally made to give place unto *reasonings* on the side of the natural propensity, as the only means left to keep from despair.

These reasonings then must be very cogent, as they are on the side of our constitution, and supported by the first and strongest principle in our nature, self-preservation.

As the first business of these reasonings is to frame a new character of God suitable unto their main tendency, against which if conscience offer to object, it is put off with this, that it cannot present a more comfortable one; so, according to the scripture, the whole alienation of the heart of man from God, and its opposition to the gospel, is conducted by these reasonings. Jesus Christ, giving a sum of the evils which proceed out of the heart of man, gives these the first rank; *out of the heart proceedeth evil reasonings.* **What are the**

the many voluntary penances undergone by Bramins, Papist's, and others? What are ambition, avarice, &c? What even atheism itself, but the effects of various reasonings to answer or shift that importuning question; *What lack I yet to make me happy?* Does not the heart of man, as it were, rumage all nature, to see if he can find in himself, or among the creatures, any thing to supply that lack? What are the various excesses, in the enjoyment of the creatures, but so many attempts to force out of them that which they do not naturally yield? Whence proceed deceit, envy, murder, and all these vices which the world complain of; but from the interfering of the several ways which men take to compass the same end? And tho' one man may have a more decent idol than another in the world, yet if once the favour of the true God, man's proper good, be set aside, it matters not much in the issue, whether a man idolize himself, whether he place his chief good in such a character as may best draw the esteem of the world, and flatter his own vanity, or in cups and adores.

In scripture the heart of man is represented as a strong city, fortified with *these* against all access to the gospel; and the apostolic weapons are said to be *mighty through God*, for the demolishing of fortifications, immediately after called reasonings. By these weapons (their testimony) the apostles are said to pull down every height or mount exalted against the knowledge of God, and to lead captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ. And, say they, if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, whose thoughts the god of this world has blinded, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

You see by this time, that I am ready to make the above natural propensity, supported by its reasonings, the principle of all the evil, even as I make the Christian truth, believed on its proper evidence, the principle of all the good that is in the world. And this I am taught by the scripture, which always gives these two principles, very opposite designations, as light and darkness, the glory of the blessed God, and the power of Satan, &c.

marvelous manner, to relieve our whole misery, and to raise us unto the most exalted kind of happiness. The case in short is this, conscience finds fault, bodes the worst, and there leaves us, without pointing out one step toward relief. Relief of some kind, or diversion at least we must have: In this case, any chain of reasoning, any *ignis fatuus*, that promises this, is readily entertained; and if we cannot be sure that it is, we at least greedily wish that it were, true. And we esteem anything of this kind so much the better, the less it has to do with *conscience*; by which, I mean that *instinct* in man, where-
 which corresponds with his Creator; or in
 which dreads God. Accordingly
 our wise men have expunged *this* out of their
 schemes of virtue and happiness, and have
 substituted in place thereof, something that
 they call the moral sense, the measure of things,
 the ideas of beauty and order; something
 that does not depend immediately on God, but
 on human reasoning; and which regards the
 temporal interest of society, consequently a
 man's own interest, more than the pleasing of
 God; and which leads us into a more cool
 way of thinking about sin, than the first man
 was taught, than Israel at Sinai was taught,
 than the natural conscience yet teaches, and,
 most of all, the gospel. It must be owned
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at the same time, that in this case, our wise men have not walked in an untrodden path; for Paul gives us to understand, that the Greek philosophers paved this way long ago when he tells us, that *they did not like to retain God in their knowledge*; that is, they did not encline to build their schemes of virtue and happiness upon the fear of God; which the scripture makes to be the beginning of wisdom.

Now as God corresponds with man only by his conscience; so the apostles bringing a divine revelation to man, do not address his *passions* by the insinuating art of human rhetoric; nor his *reasoning faculty*, by an artful chain of philosophic arguments: But as man is not distinguished from the brutes by either of *these*, they consider him in his proper dignity and excellency; and by *manifestation of truth*, commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*. They do not enter into a
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* These words plainly refer to the ancient oracle of *Urim* and *Thummim* by which the enquirer was assured, by God given answer, when he saw the miraculous ray of light shining on the breast-plate of the priest, who pronounced the answer. To support this evidence, it is observable, that the common Greek translation of *Urim* and *Thummim* is by two words, signifying manifestation and truth. So the divine evidence of the apostolic testimony (which is the true oracle of *Urim* and *Thummim*) is fitted to strike the conscience with the firmness and force of a sun-beam; and not like the conclusion of a philosophic argument, by which we are often silenced, merely to shun an inconsistency, or the shame of self-contradiction.

parley of capitulation with his reasonings; but storming and demolishing these, they press forward to his conscience, place him before God, and converse with him there. They unshackle his conscience, and make it speak out, and with the highest demonstration enforce every thing it speaks; shewing, in the death of Christ, *the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, holding the truth (what their conscience knows about God) in unrighteousness.*

And when conscience has spoken and dreaded the worst it can, and the man, left destitute of every subterfuge, is ready to be swallowed up in utter darkness; the apostles at the same time, from the mouth of God, pour in the comfortable beam of divine truth, a ray of the divine glory (or love) which shines in the face of Jesus Christ. By the irresistible splendor of the truth, which they testify, they at once put all his reasonings out of countenance, and bring a most sovereign cure to his conscience, every way becoming the divine majesty in all its perfections, and in all respects suitable to his misery. Of this you may consider Paul's extraordinary conversion as a kind of emblematical representation. A sight of Jesus, alive from the dead, at once confuted all his schemes, and changed the man. The
belief

belief of what he saw, works the same effect to the end of the world: For it is the standing scripture maxim, that *the answer of a good conscience towards God, is by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*; and, *let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity*. Solomon says, the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear? And experience shews, that a conscience thoroughly wounded with a sense of the divine displeasure, is man's intolerable evil, his proper death; which pains him more than the fear of returning to dust. Now, if this be an evil beyond the power of man to provide a cure for, and God, in his sovereign mercy, was pleased to discover himself in some new work for this purpose; is it not very suitable to all this, that the whole conveyance and application of this discovery, this cure, should be under the special direction, and by the special concurrence, of that sovereign mercy which provided it? It can throw no reflection then against this truth, that every one does not perceive and admit the divine evidence of it. For what if some do not believe, shall their unbelief make the faith or veracity of God of none effect? Far be it! yea, their obstinate resisting of its evidence, to their own perdition, while many of them excell most of those who embrace it in every natural

natural endowment, serves, as a part of the divine scheme, to aggrandize the happiness of the sons of mercy, and to be an eternal proof to them, that sovereign mercy alone made the difference; even as the hatred and opposition of the enemies of the truth, is necessary to prepare the lovers thereof for their happiness, by giving occasion for the exercise of those virtues, which are peculiar to Christianity; wherein they must all be conformed to the Captain of their salvation, who was made perfect through sufferings. However many then persist in loving darkness, rather than the light, because their deeds are evil; still it holds true, that the gospel is the power of God and the wisdom of God, to save every one who believes it: It strikes the conscience in the most simple and forcible manner, even as the conviction of sin does, removing at once every objection that can arise from that conviction; and so fairly shews itself to be the voice of him, who speaks in the natural conscience.

The Christian truth, being once admitted in the conscience on its proper evidence, becomes as it were a new *instinct* in man, by which his friendly correspondence with his Creator is restored. *This* leads him as a *clue* into the meaning and scope of the scriptures; shews him the admirable harmony and connection of

of them, as they all contribute to establish him in the persuasion of, and form his mind into a suitableness unto that wherein his happiness lies. He reads the scriptures, as one well affected to the great scope and design of them; so is not easily induced to hearken to such as would put a sense on words or sentences in opposition to the leading design.

All the commands and institutions of the New Testament, are directed to consciences endowed with this instinct, and are in a peculiar manner adapted for the service thereof: So the apostle John, writing an epistle to recommend the new commandment of Christian brotherly love, 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.*

This new instinct gives a man a great value and esteem for all the sayings of Him, who came into the world to testify and accomplish the saving truth; leads him to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear his word, and, without disputing, to do just as he is bid. By *this* Christians know and love one another: For the cherishing of *this* the whole Christian church order is framed. The chief business of Christians in their assembling together, in their preaching, in their brotherly exhortations, to their discipline, in their mutual service one in
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another, is to promote and strengthen this, and to check the opposite propensity; which, as it is natural and deeply rooted in our constitution, is always by fresh reasonings seeking the ascendant, and so cuts out fresh work for Christians, and gives them continual occasion to exercise themselves, in handling the apostolic weapons for defeating them.

Seeing it is plain from the New Testament, that every thing in a society of Christians must be done by a free conscientious unanimity, and no point carried by majority of voices, or driven by the influence of party or faction, as is the case in all worldly societies: if then you would have me to account for the unanimity of a Christian church, in the many cases wherein their agreement is so necessary for the maintaining of fervent charity, I can ascribe it to nothing else but this instinct, and the prayer, of him who said, *I pray for all that shall believe on me through the word of the apostles, that they may be one*: And for my own part I can say, that I have been witness to such unanimity in many instances, as I could not account for any other way; and which yourself, I dare say, had you been witness, behoved at least to ascribe to some very uncommon spring. Such an unanimity must appear liable to many objections, and be even impracticable in any society not gathered
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and cemented together by this instinct. And indeed I look upon it as the great standing sign, appearance, or visible representation of the union spoken of in the 17th ch. of John, and accordingly one of the principle evidences, if not the most striking proof of the truth of Christianity: This is plainly intimated twice in that chapter; first in ver. 21. *That they all may be one, &c. that the world may believe that thou hast sent me:* And then in ver. 23. *That they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me.* The Christian unanimity corresponds to the New Testament, as a map does to the geographical grammar, and the appearance of it is one great thing that gives meaning and force to the preached gospel.

I cannot well conclude without taking notice of another grand obstacle, which the gospel has to overcome, in finding its way into the heart of man, and which is as firmly rooted in our constitution as the former, and stands in the closest connection with it; and that is, the appetite for an earthly paradise, something like what man originally enjoyed as the proper reward of his own righteousness, which his body was fitted for, and which he forfeited by his transgression. It is true, man's proper life was a sense of God's favour; yet it was in these delightful enjoyments, prepared for

him in paradise, that he experienced that favour: The divine smile upon his food and other earthly enjoyments, gave them that peculiar exquisite relish, which other animals, not having his peculiar taste, could not find in the like. And tho' man has long since lost both his righteousness and paradise together, yet in sinful miserable man, the disposition still remains to join some shadow of both these together. How bewitchingly are the stories of virtue rewarded drest up before our eyes? and the virtues chiefly recommended to us, and extolled by our wise men, are such as either aim at, or shine best in what is called high Life; so we are told, *virtutibus obstat res angusta domi.*

Now the gospel does not set before us the prospect of being re-instated into such an earthly happiness as man once held by his own righteousness, but a much more glorious life, the proper reward of the Son of God, for his humbling himself and becoming obedient unto the death; a spiritual and heavenly life, to take place by a resurrection from the dead: And in order to the full enjoyment of which, the constitution of man must be changed, and whereof he can only have the hope and foretaste to comfort himself with in his mortal state: So the virtues, by which the gospel calls true Christians to be chiefly distinguished,

guished, are such as will never be relished by the world, even those that shined in Jesus.

It must likewise be considered, that this happiness, this new life from the dead, is of such a nature as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to form a conception of it. We have no principles in our minds, nor any thing that affects our senses to draw a comparison from, by which we can frame any idea of it. For, however delicately a man may imagine about happiness, and however high he may raise his idea of it: still his most abstracted thoughts will never rise higher than some refinement upon earthly bliss. Hence also arises the necessity that the mind of man should be touched afresh by the finger of God, in order to his having some idea of, and relish for, this new life from the dead, these pleasures that are at the right hand of God for ever; even as the same divine energy was necessary to his knowing the *just God* and the *Saviour*, the name by which the true God distinguishes himself from all others. Tho' we may thus distinguish these things, yet they issue in one and the same, and are accordingly put together in scripture. *This is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*; and in another place, *This is the true God and eternal life; little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

Christianity then, as it calls a man off from the fruitless task of establishing his own righteousness, to be justified by the faith of Christ; so it calls a man off from the pursuit of an earthly happiness, which at best issues in death, to look for glory, honor and immortality, in fellowship with Jesus Christ, in the resurrection from the dead.

You will now ask me, how is a man acting a criminal part in rejecting the gospel, seeing it reveals things, whereof he has naturally no idea? In answer to this I shall only say, that he acts a criminal part in insisting on these objections, which are the real ground of his disaffection to the gospel; that is, he is a criminal in pretending to please God by his own righteousness, while he is conscious that he is a sinner; and in pursuing an earthly happiness as its reward, while his conscience must tell him, he has forfeited that, and is guilty of death: So he is a criminal in being angry at the gospel, because it asserts and enforces the verdict of his conscience in both these respects; and so far carries its own evidence of having come from that same God who speaks there.

I own at the same time, that I believe no man will ever be happy in this world, and a better prospect of his happiness in the life of them: but I believe, with the way of duty to

man to provide *these*, so, neither is he obliged to call off any man, from his own wish and choice, to partake of *these*, but whom he pleases: And it is enough to condemn the rest who hear and despise the gospel, that they perceive more about it than they do; for thus saith the Son of God, *This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.*

If you have any questions about the persons priviledged to receive the Christian truth in the love thereof, whether they are persons excelling others in any qualification whatsoever, or better disposed than others to admit the truth when laid before them? I have nothing to answer but this, that God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and that God's choice is of grace, and not according to works: so differs from that of man, which always proceeds upon some difference, some fitness in one thing to be chosen, more than in that which is rejected.

You see, dear Mr. —, I have at length sent you a long letter; and after all you find it is mostly taken up in shewing to how little purpose any thing I can write on this subject must be. If you would see what true Christianity is, in its simplest and best light, read the apostles; to whom Christ said,

L. L.

Lo! I am with you always to the end of the world.

And if, happening to turn your eyes first to the close of my letter, you should take the hint just now given, and then burn this without reading more; I think I should then gain a greater point than I can well expect from it. However, dear Sir, if you accept of this as a testimony of friendship, it will not a little gratify

Your obliged Friend

and Servant.

T H E

CONVERSION

O F

JONATHAN THE JEW,

As related by himself.

AD Jesus, when buried like other
H mortals, remained in the grave, I
had steadfastly adhered to the Pha-
risees, and gloried in being one of
them, as being convinced, that the grand
controversy about righteousness, which was
carried on with great zeal on both sides, was
now fairly decided in their favour, and that
they had gained an additional honor by the
opposition.

I received a liberal and virtuous education
among the Sadducees, who admit no sense
of our sacred writings but what they think
agreeable to sound philosophy. But happen-
ing, about the time that Jesus made his ap-
pearance, to fall acquainted with some ami-
able

able men of eminent piety among the Pharisees, I began to conceive a liking to their party. I observed, that they maintained a more strict temperance, and, in general, a greater purity of life, and that they had more exalted sentiments about the power and character of God, than the other party. I made it my business now to attend their lectures, and study their tenets, in hopes of being found worthy to rank with them. Mean time, the uncommon opposition shewn to them by Jesus drew no small share of my attention, and served, on the whole, rather to increase than diminish my attachment to them. I considered their sentiments as a great improvement of my former way of thinking, and highly conducive to my advancement in virtue as well as piety. I readily judged, then, that the opposition which was chiefly pointed against what came nearest to perfection, behoved to flow from the worst of causes.

I had a very low opinion of Jesus, as well as of the company he kept, on many accounts, which I shall not now take time to relate. In the general, I thought him a stranger to every great and noble sentiment which charms and elevates the mind of man. What disaffected me most to him was, I thought him uncharitable to the last degree. I could not
reconcile

reconcile with any degree of charity or piety the severe censures he putt upon men of the best established characters. It gave me great disgust, to hear him addressing the men whom I myself thought worthy of the highest esteem for every thing great and good, in such uncooth language as this, *How can ye escape the damnation of bell!* I thought it intolerable to hear him at the same time declaring, with singular assurance, that he himself was the only favourite of heaven; that every character of man, but his own, was the object of the divine displeasure; yea, without stopping here, with the greatest familiarity calling God his Father, in a sense peculiar to himself; and, without leaving us at any loss to gather his meaning, affirming, *The Father and I are one*; even while he shewed rather more zeal than any of us against the least appearance of ascribing any divine attribute or name to any but the one God, or even to himself in any other view;—to hear him, in the very houte sacred to the honor of the one God, against the prophaning of which he himself had shewn the greatest zeal, not only receiving divine praise from his attendants, but receiving it in the very words of the sacred hymns which we used to sing in our most solemn assemblies to the praise of the Most High; yea vindicating this praise as his due,
by

by quoting those very hymns in support of it; and rebuking my zealous friends, who complained of this as an abuse.

Let any one put himself in our place, and try how he could have borne all this, joined with many other provoking circumstances of the like nature; or, if any thing less could have satisfied him, than to have seen matters brought to the extremities to which all parties among us at last agreed to push them.

I must own indeed, that there was a peculiar energy in the rebukes of Jesus, which made it very difficult for one to resist the force of them. But what alarmed me most was, his performing many works that could not be done by human power; yea such power appeared in them, that could no help suspecting, upon occasions that the finger of God was there, notwithstanding all the pains that were taken to account for them otherwise. However, as his conduct, on the whole, seemed to me to be so very opposite to the universally received principles of reason and religion, I made the best shift I could to efface any impressions made on my heart from that quarter, concluding, that as the character of God himself must be measured by those principles, it would be absurd to suppose, that any revelation coming from him could ever serve to undermine them.

By

By the same principles, I fortified myself against the prediction delivered by Jesus concerning his rising again from the dead; to which event he had openly appealed for proof of his doctrine; or, which is the same thing, the excellency of his person and character: and what served to give me the greater assurance was, I found my favourite party was very forward to refer the decision of the whole controversy to that same event, as being very confident that it would never happen.

When once Jesus was dead and buried, I thought the dispute as good as ended. But how great was my astonishment! when, not long after, those poor illeterate men, who had been the companions of Jesus, appeared publicly, testifying with uncommon boldness, that he had risen again from the dead, according to his prediction; that they were well assured of this by many infallible tokens, and that at last they saw him ascend into heaven; when I saw that no threatnings, no infamy, no punishment, could intimidate them;—when, moreover, I observed so many undeniable proofs of supernatural power, co-operating with them, and exerted in the name of Jesus, as risen from the dead.—Then the late wonderful works of Jesus, before his death, recurred upon my thoughts.—The former im-

pressions I had been at so much pains to stifle, revived afresh upon me.—In short, the evidence crowded to fast upon me from every quarter, I found there was no gain saying it.

But still I was averse to the last degree to admit it. I was shocked at the train of consequences which behoved to follow. And thus I questioned with myself, Has reason itself deceived me? Do all our best books of divinity and morality proceed upon false principles? Must I give up with my choicest sentiments? Is there no such thing as wisdom or righteousness in the world! Are all the world fools, and enemies to God, but these rude Galileans? The reflection is confounding!—But what do these men propose? what do they aim at by their alarming the publick in this manner, with their testimony about the resurrection of J. sus?—They can have no design, no benevolent intention toward men. They seem rather to be influenced by a most malignant disposition. They certainly intend to bring this man's blood upon us,—to prove us all to be enemies to God and objects of his wrath. They intend to make us desperate and utterly miserable.

With such reflections, whatever inward disquiet I should undergo, I resolved to combat whatever evidence they could produce;—till one day that I heard them changed, by

some of my friends in authority, with the malevolent purpose I have just now mentioned — But such was their reply, that I think I shall never forget it! They indeed not only allowed, but demonstrated all the consequences I was so averse to admit, with such force and evidence, as quite defeated all my resolution. — But then they, at the same time, laid open such a treasure of divine good-will toward men; — they drew such a character of God, no less amiable than awful; — they laid such a solid foundation of everlasting consolation and good hope, for the most desperate and miserable wretch, as did infinitely more than counterbalance the loss of all my favourite principles, all my fond reasonings, and every worldly advantage I had connected with them. And all this they shewed with the greatest simplicity and clearness, to be the plain meaning and import of the fact which they testified, even the resurrection of Jesus. And they confirmed every thing they said, by the unanimous voice of the prophets, whom I had never understood till now. Their doctrine, in respect of authority, resembled the word of a king, against whom there is no rising up; and in respect of evidence, the light of the sun; or, to use a far more adequate simile, it resembled the fact which they testified, and whereof it was the meaning.

ing. And it well corresponded thereto in its effects: for it proved sufficient to raise the dead, and give hope to the desperate. — The fact and its import, the *hand-writing* and the *interpretation*, equally became the majesty of him who is the *Supreme*.

I saw plainly, that in the resurrection of Jesus, there behoved to be the agency of a *power* superior to the power of nature, even capable to controul and reverse the course thereof: therefore I concluded, that this operating *power* was greater than the God of the Sadducees and the philosophers. I found also, that this *power* had a *peculiar character*, manifest from the nature of the controversy, wherein it interposed its agency and gave decision. I found, by the decision, that its character was more grand and perfect, as well as its agency stronger, than that of the God of the Pharisees. As to its agency, it was able to raise from deeper misery to higher blessedness than the Pharisees thought of. As to its character, it appeared with unlimited sovereignty *just* and *merciful* in perfection. Whereas the God of the Pharisees was such only partially, and by halves; incapable to execute the threatened curse against every sin, and yet shew mercy and boundless favour to the transgressors, not so just as to maintain the honor, the spirit, and extent of the perfect law, at all events; nor so merciful, as to have
any

any favour for the utterly worthless and wretched: but, halving the matter, merciful to men of good repute, and just in accepting those who are deficient in their righteousness; or, in another view, just in exacting the debt of five hundred pence, and merciful in forgiving that of fifty; or shewing justice only against the utterly insolvent, and mercy only to those who can make partial payment;—in short, (like all created potentates), incapable of appearing, at once, without limitation of either attribute, just and merciful in perfection.

I found then that the power which operated in the resurrection of Jesus, excelled not only in strength, but also in majesty and perfection of character, all that was called God among men. So I perceived no small propriety in the saying of Jesus, *O righteous father, the world hath not known thee.*—I concluded then that this power is the only true God: for that which is *greatest* must be God. Thus am I called off from every idol, however highly dignified, whether the work of mens hands, or of their imaginations, to adore him who is *higher than the highest*.

I frankly acknowledge, then, that my religion, or my hope toward God, is *not founded on argument*, not on the wisdom of men, but on the *power of God*;—not on any deductions

tions from any principles I had hitherto known; but on *authority* interposed in a manner quite unexpected, baffling, confounding, and repelling all my reasonings; and, if I may be allowed the expression, *forcing* upon me a new set of principles, by the most convincing and satisfactory, as well as inevitable evidence;—not on any reasons *a priori*, but on a plain matter of fact established by impregnable evidence;—not on any effort exerted, or any motion felt in my breast, but on that motion of divine power, which burst the bands of death when Jesus rose;—not on any operation which men call *mistical*, to avoid saying *unintelligible*, but on the simplest and most striking operation of power that can affect the human mind, even the presenting alive again a man who was dead;—not on feeling any change on my heart to the better, or the remotest good inclination of my will, but on that fact, which, fore against my will, forced upon me the most shocking view of my guilt, and proved me to be an enemy to Heaven, in that respect wherein I thought to have approved and valued myself to my last hour;—not on any work of power assisting me to feel, will, or do any thing, in order to peace with God, but on a work of power, proving to demonstration, that every thing needful thereto is already completely finished;

finished ;—to say all in one word, not on any difference betwixt me and others, or any token for good about me whatsoever, but on the token or proof of divine good-will expressed, in the resurrection of Jesus, toward sinners of all nations, without regard to any difference by which one man can distinguish himself from another.

This fact, firm as a rock, emboldens me to pay an equal regard to philosophical guesses and enthusiastical fancies. If any one, then, should be the reason of the hope that is in me, I have only one word to say, *The resurrection is true*. Take away this from me, and I am miserable indeed. Let this stand true, and nothing shall ever make me despair.

This fact and its import, or the character of God thence arising, mutually confirm and ascertain each other. This character could never have been drawn to our view, but from some divine work. No work but this could ever evince such a character; and if this work was done, of necessity there must be such a character. This fact and its import, then, must stand or fall together. But more particularly,

As this divine character can no where be published but along with the fact, I am assured, by hearing the *grandest character* thence arising, that the fact must be true.

For to suppose, that the bare notion or idea of ought greater than God could ever be any where imagined, would be the wildest of all absurdities. And it is very evident, that that view of God, which, the lower it abases the pride of man, raises his comfort and joy the higher; which reduces man to the most unreserved or to *extreme* dependance, while it exalts him to the *summit* of all happiness; could never be the contrivance of man, whose strongest impulse is toward the gratifying of his pride, and whose joy naturally rises or sinks according to the success thereof. Therefore, when the fact and its import are conveyed to my knowledge by the same testimony, I have no room to doubt, that God, who alone can describe his own character, is the testifier and declarer of both. And surely it would be extremely absurd to suppose, that such a divine character could arise from a contrived lie.

Again, It is from this fact that the amiable character of the just and the Saviour rises to my view. I could not have known there was such a God, had I not known this fact. But I know, that this fact being true, there must be such a God; because it is impossible to account for it otherwise. Yea, every attempt to account for it otherwise, not only extinguishes all my former lights, but

without

without furnishing me with any new ones, lands me in atheism, in chaos, and utter darkness. Whereas the account of it given by the witnesses, while it proves all my former wisdom to be foolishness, opens to me a new and more delightful source of knowledge, throwing light upon a thousand facts that I could never account for before; shewing me a no less wonderful than satisfactory propriety, in all the extraordinary circumstances attending the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the ministry of his witnesses.—It throws light upon all the ancient sacred writings, and the extraordinary facts recorded in them from the creation downward. It sets my mind at rest, as to all the difficulties about the divine character, and the condition of man, which occasionally pinched me before.—I am now reconciled to the entrance of sin and death into the world, and the whole dark side of things, on account of the marvelous light that shines forth from the greatest darkness.—I am now reconciled to the shade, on account of the magnificent picture thence arising to my view, and which could not otherwise have appeared. In a word, I thence perceive a no less amiable than grand uniformity of design, in all the works of God from first to last. Whereas, should I shut my eyes against the light issuing thence

thence, I am immediately lost in an unfathomable abyss of absurdities.

I know then, assuredly, when I hear these illiterate men, attended by supernatural power, bearing witness to the fact, declaring the import of it, and speaking the grand things of God, I hear God himself speaking; I hear the voice and testimony of God. Divine wisdom and divine power, which are indeed inseparable, present themselves to my conscience at once; my pride is abashed; my reasonings are silenced, and hope arises to me from a new and unexpected source.

Were such a majestic personage as is described by John, in the 10th chapter of the Apocalypse, to appear publicly to our view, would not all our former ideas of human grandeur vanish at his presence? Have the wise men, of almost every succeeding age, exploded the principles maintained by their predecessors both in ethics and in physics? and should it seem a thing incredible to us that when God, no longer winking at the times of ignorance, was to commence a public speaker and writer to men, he should explode the wisdom of all the teachers who formerly taught mankind? and if we willingly hear wise men tracing to us the order and connection of facts and appearances in the course of nature, why should we not hear God explaining

explaining to us supernatural facts? This seems to be a province proper for the author and controuler of nature. It was surely far above the fishers of Galilee.

I am fully satisfied, then, in agreement with the witnesses, to hold the meaning they have given of the resurrection of Jesus, for the *gospel*, the *word*, and the *testimony* of God; and to call it, by way of eminence, **THE TRUTH**, in opposition to every false gloss on the scriptures, and every false reasoning about the light or law of nature, or about any of the works or ways of God. This truth opens for me a plain path, and affords me firm ground for every step: so that I have no occasion to grope among *probabilities* with the academics, or no less uncertain *feelings* with the devotees;—no reason to envy the former the pleasure they propose in their humble, candid and sincere enquiries after—a phantom, which has hitherto eluded their grasp; or the latter, the more refined delight they propose in their pious wrattlings and waitings for—a good conceit of themselves:—no reason to be teased by the scornful sneer of those, or the more solemn frown of these. Let this truth be my companion, and I will not be ashamed in the presence of the sons of Socrates, though joined with those of Gamaliel.

In company with this truth I dare act the part proper to man: I dare give free scope to my conscience, before God, and look into his perfect law, as knowing, that, however heavy the charge turn out against me, the resurrection of Jesus affords the answer of a good conscience toward God, as it shews a righteousness to be already finished, by which God can appear just in justifying me, even in the very worst view I can have of myself, or, which is more even in the worst view I can appear in before him, who knows all things. By being thus encouraged to look into the perfect law of liberty, and continue therein, I see the extent of it to be vastly wider than I was hitherto willing to notice. And, by seeing what a righteousness was requisite to honor it, and at what an expence every the least transgression of it behoved to be expiated, I am led to hold every precept of it more sacred than ever I did before. I know that I cannot disregard any precept of it, without, at the same time, disregarding the revealed righteousness. 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 though on this side the grave I cannot come before God at any time, and say, *I have no sin*, yet the TRUTH both binds and encourages me to aim at no less than perfection.

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While I keep the perfect law in my view, which, like a faithful mirror, discovers all my deformity, I can find no reason to glory over the most infamous of mankind. The nearer I come to the light, which makes *manifest all things that are reprov'd*, I have the more reason to say, *Behold I am vile*. I can have no room for glorying then but in the bare TRUTH: and I have good reason confidently to oppose the righteousnesses reveal'd there, to all that is admired, in its stead, among men.

I now see plainly, that all my former reasonings against Jesus and his character, were at the same time pointed against the divine law, and against the natural dictates of my own conscience. I chose to confine the exercise of my conscience to what might distinguish me from others. I took pleasure in reflecting *what I was not*, in comparison with others; but was averse to notice *what I was* before God. When any uneasy question, in this last respect, arose in my heart I was careful to turn it aside by more agreeable reasonings. If I might, for *once* call that which properly distinguishes man from other animals, *viz.* his conscience, by the name of REASON, I would vary the title of the received maxim, and say, *Reason partur'd is despair, and faith, or the knowledge of the truth, is the cure of*

despair. Before I knew the cure, I found nothing but pain and misery, in listening to the simple dictates of my conscience. And, sure I am, neither conscience nor argument directed me to the cure. But it came to me, unexpectedly, from heaven, by supernatural revelation; that is, when I heard God, by the mouths of the witnesses, laying open the meaning of a supernatural fact; a fact that had not only awakened fresh disturbance in my conscience, but also demolished all my arguments.

I was convinced then, that the revealed truth, which not only awakened my conscience, and made me sensible of my malady, but also brought such relief as was sufficient to satisfy it when most awakened, believed to come from the same God who formed it, and whose law is naturally impressed there. I found I had hitherto neglected and resisted the natural notices of the true God there, and framed to myself another God by reasonings; — that I had been all along as one half asleep or intoxicated; and who chuses to be so, as not finding his circumstances in so good order as to give him pleasure and satisfaction in his soberest and coolest moments. And indeed, who would incline to give place to such apprehensions of God and of himself, as could yield no pleasure nor satisfaction; but, on the contrary, the greatest of all pains;

yea behoved, without the knowledge of the cure, to fill his mind with the most repining hatred of God.

I have great reason then to value the gospel, as it enables me to reflect, without pain, that I am a human creature;—as it presents me with such an amiable view of the inflexibly just God, as that I may think of him, when fully awake, and need not court the momentary quiet, or rather insensibility, which is procured by resisting the natural notices of God in the conscience, or the more explicit declaration of his will in his written law. The gospel, while it enforces the law of God, and makes the conscience more sensible to the conviction of sin, conveys likewise the most refreshing remedy; so answers to the majesty of the living and true God, who says, Deut. xxxii. 29. *See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to Heaven, and say, I live for ever.*

Nor do I think I have any apology to make to men, for renouncing my former *ways* and *thoughts*, however righteous they appeared to myself and others, upon my being found guilty, beyond reply, by *the one lawgiver*, who is able to save and to destroy; and demon-

strated to be *wicked* and *unrighteous* in respect of both, by his irresistible work and testimony, I do not think it beneath the dignity of the wisest human creature, to be convinced of his mistake, by him, whom it well becomes to say,—*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.* (See Isaiah, lv. 7, 8, 9.)

I used to admire it as a fine imagination, that were truth and virtue to be presented before our eyes in all their native charms, the beautiful splendor would be too transporting, too dazzling to be beheld by us, but through some veil.—The experiment has been tried, and that in a manner far surpassing the reach of fancy. The unfulfilled perfection of both has appeared in the world, in all their native charms indeed, yet so as not to hurt the weakest eye.—But what was the result? we saw no form nor comeliness in him; no beauty, that we should desire him. We turned aside our faces from him, as from a disagreeable object. The most wise and virtuous among us were the foremost to let him at nought.—Yet however strange it may seem, true it is, that some of the most base and stupid among us were, upon this occasion

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on, struck with such an apprehension of divine beauty, as far exceeds all the raptures of imagination. *The WORD was made flesh, (said they) and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.*

I have said, the resurrection of Jesus serves me, as a new principle of knowledge or reasoning. I do not set out from conjectures to inquire after truth; but I set out with the light of undoubted truth, to observe what path it opens for me to walk in. I do not set out from human maxims or presumptions, to inquire how I shall form a god to myself; but I set out from heavenly truth, stamped with the divine character, to inquire how I shall form my heart and life suitably to it. I do not set out upon the inquiry, What I shall do to placate the Divine Majesty? or, as the phrase is, How I shall make up my peace with God? but I set out from the persuasion, that God is just in justifying the ungodly, to inquire, what service he has for me, — to prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

All my religious principles and practices are so many inferences from the afore-mentioned fact; yet I have no ground to value myself as a *reasoner*, even on this new footing. For I could find no satisfactory meaning at all in that fact, till I was first taught it by the illiterate

in state of life is. And, what is more, I can deduce no inference from thence, till I be first taught it by one or other of the intire witnesses. But when I hear them displaying the manifold wisdom of God from that source, I perceive a wonderful propriety and force in the whole of their reasoning. Thus God see meet to abase my pride of understanding, by the very means he uses for conveying to me the most useful and comfortable of all knowledge. And herein, I am persuaded, he consults my real benefit. For were I left to indulge my natural itch for reasoning, even on this new footing, I am sensible I should soon act the same part with this supernatural revelation, as I formerly did with the light of nature. When I reflect, where all my own wisdom, and that of the greatest sagacious landed me; and that in the light of my wisdom, I turned out the greatest fool; I am now fully satisfied that my safest and wisest course is, simply to believe just as I am told and submissively to do just as I am bidden without murmuring or disputing. However foolish then my rule of faith and practice may appear in the eyes of the WISE, and however weak in the eyes of the DEVOUT I find myself kept in countenance by the apostolic maxim, *The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

F I N I S.