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A N

Impartial Examination

O F

Mr. Robert Sandeman's

LETTERS on THERON and ASPASIO.

In THREE PARTS,

CONTAINING,

I. Some general Remarks on the Spirit and leading Notions of the Author of those Letters.

II. A particular Consideration of the Character of the Pharisee, and of JESUS, as drawn by Mr. Sandeman -- Remarks upon his Conversion of *Jonathan* the Jew -- The Conversion of *Cornelius* the Gentle as a Contrast to *Jonathan*.



III. The principal Sentiments in the Letters collected into Order, distinctly examined, and shown in several instances to be inconsistent with one another, and with the sacred Oracles, and the whole to be an unhappy Mixture of Truth with Absurdity and Falshood.

By Samuel Langdon, D. D.

Pastor of the first Church in Portsmouth in New Hampshire.

Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. — But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon — Every man's work shall be made manifest. —

The Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. iii. Chap.

B O S T O N :

Printed by MERRIN and FLEMING, at their Printing-office in Newbury-Street, for KNIGHT SIXTON, at Hartford.

MDCCLXIX.

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IMPARTIAL EXAMINATION
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Mr. Robert Sandeman's

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P A R T I.

C O N T A I N I N G,

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M D C C L X I X.

P A R T I.

Containing some general remarks on the spirit and leading notions of the Author of the Letters.

THE Author of the *Letters on Theron and Aspasio*, hath bent the force of his genius, which is sprightly and satyrical, to ruin the credit of the most eminent divines of the last and present age, and made a general attack upon christian professors of all denominations: He has tried all manner of weapons more especially against that religion which has been looked upon most venerable, as having the stamp of truth by the nearest conformity to the gospel; and endeavoured not only to render it ridiculous, but to represent it as much more dangerous than open opposition to Christ, or the practice of the grossest immoralities. If we believe him, the true faith of the Apostles was very near, if not entirely, lost out of the world soon after the first general spread of christianity; and hath never been recovered, except among a very few enlightened individuals, until he himself, with the assistance of a near friend, was so happy as to hit upon it again, and begin the glorious work of reformation. For as to the grand reformation from popery which protestants boast of, it is a mere trifle; “they have laid aside the crucifix, and reserved

“ no fragments of the cross; but have gained
 “ nothing but a perverted gospel.”

If he has given us a true state of things, it is time to be alarmed: but if the peculiarities of his scheme are at bottom mere sophistry, calculated to form a new party of christians to the honour of their ringleader; if this preacher of the apostolic gospel is himself deceived, or aims to unsettle the minds of people, and free them from the gloom of religion, that they may be easy in the indulgence of their lusts; it seems necessary that some attempt should be made to show him his error, or prevent the mischief of his subtilty.

There may be very little probability that his scheme will so generally take, as to give sufficient evidence of its falshood, according to his own way of reasoning: yet many christians may be surprized and shaken by the boldness of his assertions, the keenness of his wit, and the mixture of some capital articles of christianity with his own crude notions. Besides, in many, already too much disposed to think lightly of the gospel, the secret principles of infidelity may be very agreeably cherished by several hints he has dropt, who will be ready to acknowledge themselves greatly obliged to him, for helping them to so rich a vein of ridicule to support them against that religion which has always been galling to their consciences; tho' they handsomely excuse themselves from believing him more than other preachers, when he puts on the same gravity.

The manner in which he treats all who differ from him is indeed peculiarly haughty, and his own sentiments are delivered with such a singular

air of assurance, that their seems but little hope of convincing him of any mistake, or confronting him with equal boldness. That he may obviate the force of all objections on that account, and not be censured as a despicable writer, he endeavours to guard himself by giving notice in the preface, that he writes in the character of a very respectable person, who must be allowed to speak with the most undaunted confidence. He tells us that “ genuine christianity must always appear as
 “ an insult upon the taste of the public, yea, the
 “ most respectable part of the public, and that in
 “ the most important matters—that she has no
 “ reverence for the names of greatest repute in
 “ the world—that she dogmatizes with the great-
 “ est assurance—and boldly on the part of heaven
 “ denounces her anathema against all who oppose
 “ or corrupt that truth which she declares,” Now we must know, as this author speaks in the name of genuine christianity, exactly agreeable to her peremptory instructions, and as her true and only representative, he is as fully impowered to be dogmatical in declaring what is divine truth, and to denounce his anathema against all that oppose him, as if she herself were personally present: therefore we must not be surprized at his steady contempt of all opposition, since according to his own opinion of himself, every degree of opposition to his notions of the apostolic gospel, must proceed from the same temper and disposition which opposed that gospel when first preached.

But how little notice soever he may take of any thing that can be said, bowever tenaciously he may adhere to his own sentiments, it cannot be a-

mifs to show his unwary readers how truth may be separated from error, and while he is ready to glory in many things plausibly and smartly said, give some check to his fancied infallibility.

Several answers to the Letters have been published already in Great-Britain, but as few of them have been spread in America, and the greater part, if we may believe our Author's representation, maintain Aspasio's definition of faith, which is far from being current in New-England, I shall venture to add myself to the number of his antagonists; and attempt to examine his creed and consider the great question, *what is truth?* and I am the rather inclined to take upon me this labour, as the reputed Author has lately crossed the Atlantic to propagate his peculiar sentiments, and appeared as a preacher among us.

He will doubtless think me justifiable in making free use of his name, since it is now generally known; his works have been publicly advertised under the title of *Sandeman's Letters*.

My design is not to render railing for railing; nor shall I pretend to match him in wit and keen satyr; but only to try his spirit, shew the general strain and tendency of his writings, examine his distinguishing principles, and endeavour to detect his fallacies.

As his declared design is "*to contend for the divine righteousness finished on the Cross, as the sole requisite to justification*" I should be very unwilling to engage against him, were I persuaded he has placed this grand doctrine of christianity in the true apostolic light, without any false colourings. If I know myself, it would give me

greater pleasure to join with him, in publishing *the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe*, without any difference of nations or characters, than seem to appear against an article which is the peculiar glory of the Gospel, could I see it clearly and fully stated in the Letters in close connection with every other doctrine of Christ, like the pure rays of the sun, exhibiting thro' the medium of divine revelation, all the original colours of christianity: for I remember an antient saying of one deeply interested in the cause—*we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth*. But when I view his whole scheme, compare one part with another, and try it by the divine standard, I am struck with the remarkable dissimilitude, and the jarring of contradictory sentiments. In some things there seems to be a good harmony; in others a wide difference; some parts of religion take their proper place, and appear with distinguishing lustre; others are removed quite out of sight, or darkened with a veil: he diminishes some things, and enlarges the proportions of others; and as if all our salvation depended upon metaphysical accuracy in forming our conceptions of the nature of faith, he labours the utmost refinement on this point; while he speaks in a very loose and doubtful manner of the principal characters of the new man, the image of God on the soul of a believer, and the practice of moral righteousness in all its branches, in a way of subjection to Christ's authority, and by the energy of his Spirit.

When I view the weapons he uses * "keen

* Epist. Correspond. P 18.

satyr, disdainful irony, the contemptuous smile, the indignant frown"—and observe with what an angry countenance he looks round and strikes promiscuously at every man near him, especially at those who seem to be engaged in the same general cause for which he professes to contend; I cannot but suspect his zeal to be the rage of a madman, who casts firebrands, arrows, and death; ~~and~~ that his aim is to make sport by acting a feigned character. Certainly such weapons were never taken out of God's armory; they are not those spiritual weapons which once were so mighty against all opposition: they appear to be the same arms which commonly have been used against the kingdom of Christ; but rejected by the foremost champions in his cause. We find such an order as this given by a great officer of Christ's army—the servant of the Lord must not strive (or, fight like a fierce disputant, catching up any weapon he can lay his hand upon, whetting his tongue like a sword, and shooting the poisoned arrows of bitter words) *but be gentle unto all men, instructive, patient of evil, in meekness teaching as children those that oppose themselves; if peradventure God may give them repentance unto the acknowledgement of the truth, and they may be recovered from the snare of the devil, who were led captive by him. to a sober mind, to be in subjection to the will of God.*

Tho' our author's controversy is primarily managed against the late excellent Mr. Hervey under the character of Aspasio, yet his quarrel is very

N. B. I have taken the freedom to quote some things from the Letters which pass'd betwixt him and Mr. Pike, and also other Letters.

general, especially with those whom he calls *popular preachers*. Towards the conclusion of his sixth Letter he is so obliging as to inform us very particularly what he means by *popular doctrine*, and what sort of teachers he levels his chief artillery against. He says in a note, "I through-
 " out these letters, I consider those as teachers
 " of the popular doctrine, who seek to have
 " credit and influence among the people, by rest-
 " ing 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
 " towards 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
 " towards such change, in order to our accept-
 " ance with God; these I call the *popular preach-*
 " *ers*, however much they may differ from each
 " other about faith, and grace, special or com-
 " mon, or about any thing else. For I am dis-
 " posed rather to reconcile than widen the vari-
 " ous differences among them." *

This description is contrived so as to take a large sweep, and upon occasion comprehend divines of very different characters, and opposite sentiments

* Lett. Vol. 2. P. 245; Edit. 3d.

about the atonement, or the use to be made of it. He accordingly gives himself scope, and now and then gives a stroke at some whom he calls philosophic divines, and fashionable preachers. But he is most of all provoked with those who are tho't by the common people, to be most evangelical: the more credit and influence any preachers have among them on account of their apparent orthodoxy and zeal, so much the more he is put out of all patience, and fired with indignation.

In the first place, that he may effectually remove the strong prejudice of the most serious christians in their favour, he tries the utmost force of ridicule, following the maxim of some of his philosophic brethren, that *ridicule is the test of truth*. For this purpose he picks out the most exceptionable scraps in the writings of some divines of chief note, magnifies every mistake, takes advantage of every impropriety of expression, puts the worst construction upon their sentiments, and makes them speak contrary to the general spirit and tenor of their writings: there is something very peculiar in his management this way, for he has a certain knack of shewing truth in a kind of magic glass, which he uses very expertly, by which he distorts it into the visage of falsehood, so as to gain the laugh among his friends which otherwise would have been turned against himself. But the metaphorical style of some eminent preachers of his own country, and their manner of addressing their hearers, peculiarly suited to the national genius, afford him the best scope for burlesque. Their re-

presenting faith as furnished with *hands, feet, wings* &c. and ascribing to it various ideas of motion and action, such as *hasting, striving, running, fighting, and wrestling*; their use of various scholastic terms and distinctions; their speaking of faith as an *instrument for receiving, applying, closing with, and taking hold on Christ*; and now and then dropping some loose, unguarded, and uncouth expressions; all serve to make diversion as he goes along, and prevent a dull insipid arrangement of his own sentiments in strict order. It is well he could forbear some witty turn upon the motion which the scriptures in some places attribute to faith, as when they speak of *fleeing from the wrath to come, — coming to Christ — forsaking all to follow him*, &c. one text seems to cross him so much that he ventures to give it a gloss of his own, that he may blunt the force of it, viz. Heb. vi. 18, — *who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us*:* this text he blends with others which speak of the christian race, and in a very sly manner turns us off from attending to the full import of this beautiful allusion, by giving us a hint that it means nothing more than *denying ourselves for the sake of the heavenly inheritance, and running toward it as our home*; though any christian of common understanding may see that the Apostle alludes to the ancient cities of refuge as types both of Christ and the heavenly world, and includes the whole idea of taking refuge in Christ from our first faith till we enter into that glory which is the hope of all who have believed in him.

* Vol. 2. p. 115.

He seems likewise to have an inclination to divert himself with the phrases of *receiving, trusting, relying on Christ, &c.* but he finds it harder to manage these in his droll way: for if they do not so exactly express the simple idea of faith, yet they come so near it, and are so frequently substituted in the sacred writings as terms equivalent to faith, that he acknowledges it very difficult to shake off the ambiguity.* However, he gives us to understand that as the popular preachers use these phrases, they are making something more than faith necessary to justification: § for we must remember he is a very critical gentleman, and must have the description of faith reduced to a philosophical nicety, or we may expect the most unmerciful treatment.

But it must not be supposed he relies wholly on the force of ridicule to demolish these reputable preachers: no, he has more dreadful arms at hand, a number of heavy bulls which he at proper intervals thunders out against them.—With inimitable vehemence he declaims against them thro' a great number of pages—As the worst of hypocrites, the true offspring of the old pharisees, aiming at nothing but the praise of men and worldly interest; haughtily assuming the character of God's ambassadors strutting in their pulpits, and setting up for a sort of factors betwixt the Deity and men:—As crafty deceivers, using all manner of art to delude men, and confound their understandings in order to maintain their own dignity and authority: seasoning the gospel to the corrupt taste of their hearers; leaving no

* Vol. 2. p. 116.

§ Vol. 2. p. 112.

stone unturned to intercept the light of divine truth, and decoy attention to an endless variety of the most abominable jargon, which they confidently utter, however absurd and impious; leading men to read the new testament backwards; throwing the apostolic order into confusion, and covering it with a mist so as the cheat may not be easily discerned; doing their business most successfully in the dark, as true servants of the grand adversary and his angels, the rulers of the darkness of this world:—As sworn enemies to the belief of the truth as the sole ground of hope, and to the divine justice and sovereignty:—As bold idolators, or hardened atheists, who deny the God that is above, and have set up another god, another christ, and another spirit, quite different from the God of the Apostles:—In short, he pronounces them the most hardened of all sinners, the greatest destroyers of mankind, making every one that enters into the spirit of their writings two fold more the children of wrath than before, having themselves very little chance of escaping the damnation of hell, except perhaps by repentance at the hour of death.

What an abominable set of men must these be, who are blackened with such infernal characters!—But can he find any number of such wicked impostors, entered into a confederacy against the gospel and the souls of men? or hath he reference only to some notorious hypocrites within the circle of his acquaintance, who are secretly deists, tho' they preach for a living?—No, we are much mistaken if we think he means only to point out some particular bad men among the clergy of any one country or denomination:

they are all much alike; only such as have been supposed to be most serious honest and spiritual, whose conduct hath been most exemplary, and the tenor of whose discourses hath appeared most correspondent to the spirit of the gospel, are in his view the very worst of all. He discovers very particular spleen against Messrs. Guthrie, Marshal, Boston, and Erskines, writers of his own nation, who have been much esteemed by those whom he calls the devout: but he passes his compliments upon other writers as he goes along; and does not omit some strokes at Mr. Flavel; but especially at those two renowned gentlemen Dr. Watts, and Dr. Doddridge; “who he tells us, “having been considered among the dissenters as “a kind of trustees for the peculiar doctrines of “christianity, have shewn themselves most un- “worthy of the confidence reposed in them, by “their complaisantly yielding up the most ob- “noxious of those doctrines for the sake of their “reputation in the polite world; and that in “such a sly manner, as to lose as little as possi- “ble of their weight and influence among the “more strictly religious and devout. The for- “mer, not content with yielding up the aposto- “lic account of Christ as a *divine person*; “hath conspired with the latter to overthrow the “*gospel doctrine of faith, and the imputed righ- “teousness.**” The first of these charges is an instance of Mr. Sandeman’s sly way of wounding the reputation of men whose praise is in all the churches. He mentions it as a fact so indisputable that it scarce requires any proof, that this same

Dr. Watts denies Jesus Christ to be a *divine person*; and because it is a thing so notorious, he contents himself with quoting a few words from his treatise called, *The Christian Doctrine of the Trinity*; viz. “By the appointment of the Fa- “ther, the DIVINE NATURE DWELLS in *Jesus* “the *Son of man*, who of himself, and in him- “self, is but a *man*, and *could do nothing*.” This remarkable quotation he would pass upon us for a glaring proof of this charge of heresy: but his readers must be very eagle-eyed, or so extremely complaisant as to rely on our author’s judgment with implicit faith, if they can receive the above-mentioned quotation as any proof at all that the Doctor denies the *divine nature* of Christ. The argument from this proof, stands thus—Dr. Watts says in the passage just quoted, The DIVINE NATURE DWELLS in *Jesus the Son of Man*, (i. e. in the man *Jesus*) without which *Jesus* would be but a *man*, and so could do nothing of himself; therefore the Doctor denies that *Jesus* had a *divine nature* as well as an *human*. Let us now hear *Jesus* speaking of himself, and see what force there may be in the same argument applied to Christ’s own words. He says, John: v. 19, 30—*Verily verily I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doth, these also doth the Son likewise—I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. Again, John xiv. 10. Believest thou not, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father,*

that dwelleth in me he doth the works. Now, what if some ingenious critic, from a view of these passages, should take it into his head to affirm, by the very same curious reasoning as our author uses, that Jesus Christ here denies his own divinity, and makes himself a meer man; because he declares, that of himself he could do nothing, and attributes all his works to the Father dwelling in him?—Is Mr. Sandeman capable of blushing?—Or has he some “new principle of knowlege or reasoning,” by which he can squeeze out such strange heretical conclusions from very orthodox premises?—Or, is there no commandment against malicious slander to be found in his Gospel.

What if we should now take the hint, turn the tables, and charge the accuser with a plain reflection upon the apostolic doctrine of the human nature of Christ; for he seems to be angry, because Dr. Watts tells us that Jesus would have been *but a man* if the divine nature had not dwelt in him: and does not this imply an exception against that account of the Mediator which Paul gives us, 1. Tim: ii. 5. 6. *For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the MAN Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time?*

But our author checks my haste, and tells me he does not rest the proof of his charge entirely upon that one quotation; for, if it was worth while, he could produce more, from a work published since by the Doctor “in support of what is now quoted.”—The volume to which he refers, if I guess right, is intituled, *The glory of Christ*; but as our author acknowledges it was

written in support of that passage quoted from his other treatise, it is evident enough, by the remarks already made, that there is no heresy in the latter volume.

But we must hear him a word or two farther: for Mr. Sandeman can tell us something more of this work last published; viz. that in it Dr. Watts “sets forth at large his notion of the “pre-existence and peculiar origin of the human soul of Jesus Christ, wherein he makes the “great dignity of his person to consist.” But what if the Doctor hath some peculiar notions of the origin of the human soul of Christ, and endeavours to make it probable that it existed long before he assumed flesh and blood, so taking the Apostles words literally, Colos: i. 15. *Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature?* how will it follow, that he denies the divine nature of Christ in union with this pre-existent soul, any more than they who believe this soul to have been created when a body was prepared? Why, our author informs us, “the “great dignity of his person is made to consist “in the pre-existence and peculiar origin of “Christ’s soul.”—Now, by the great dignity, our author would doubtless have us understand the greatest dignity, tho’ he did not dare to say the Doctor affirms the latter.—But is Dr. Watts to be charged with denying the divine nature of Christ, because he attributes great dignity to the human soul of the Mediator, above all other creatures, even as distinguished from the divine nature which was in him? If our sagacious disputant pleases, he may undertake to prove the contrary to what the Doctor hath advanced, viz.

that the human soul of Jesus *could not* have been created before he assumed our flesh and blood, and that no more dignity belongs to it than is common to all other men, as to its origin: but christians need not give themselves much trouble about the issue of the controversy.

The second heavy charge against these two renowned gentlemen is, “ that they have conspired together to overthrow the gospel doctrine of faith, and the imputed righteousness.” For proof of which he refers us to a treatise called, *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul,* “ which being written by the one, and planned and revised by the other, may justly be considered as the joint production of both.” Now we are to know, that this treatise contains a most notorious opposition to the faith and righteousness of the gospel: no particular passage, indeed, is singled out; but this only gives us a stronger intimation that the whole treatise is condemned in the lump. But I shall take the liberty to transcribe a few sentences out of that valuable work, which speak expressly of the method of a sinner’s justification. Chap. 8, § 7, 8. The sinner is thus addressed, “ Look upon our dear Redeemer! Look up to this mournful, dreadful, yet in one view, delightful spectacle; and then ask thine own heart, Do I believe that Jesus suffered and died thus? And why did he suffer and die? Let me answer in God’s own words, *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities &c.* I do therefore testify to you, in the words of another inspired writer, that *Christ was made Sin,* that is, a sin offering, *for us, though he knew*

“ *no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;* that is, that thro’ the righteousness he has fulfilled, and the atonement he has made, we might be accepted by God as righteous, and be not only pardoned, but received into his favour. — Nor is it necessary, in order to thy being released from guilt, and intitled to this high and compleat felicity, that thou shouldst, before thou wilt venture to *apply to Jesus,* bring any good works of thine own to recommend thee to his acceptance. It is indeed true, that if thy faith be sincere, it will certainly produce them: but I have the authority of the word of God to tell thee, that if thou sincerely *believest* in the name of the *Son of God,* thou shalt *this day* be taken under his care, and be numbered among those of *his sheep,* to whom he hath graciously declared that he will give *Eternal Life,* and that *they shall never perish.* Thou hast no need therefore to say, *Who shall go up into heaven, or who shall descend into the deep for me? For the word is nigh thee in thy mouth, and in thine heart.* With this joyful message I leave thee; with this faithful saying, indeed worthy of all acceptance; with this gospel, Oh sinner, which is *my life;* and which if thou dost not reject it, will be *thine too.* — Let any christian now judge, whether they who say such things as these, have entered into a conspiracy to overthrow the gospel.

But without doubt in our author’s view there is a glaring corruption of the gospel even in these evangelical sentences. He has objections to make,

founded on his own peculiar notions of religion; the very same objections which he brings against a multitude of writers of the same class; it is therefore necessary to consider the general controversy, without which it would be to no purpose to attempt a vindication of particular paragraphs. Now let us enquire what are the grounds of his general outcry against all whom he brands with the name of *popular preachers*; whether he has reason to accuse them as wilful corrupters of the gospel? Or whether their sentiments may not, upon a fair trial, be found agreeable to the truth, and liable to as few exceptions as the scheme which Mr. Sandeman himself advances in opposition to them.

Tho' our author looks upon all the popular preachers as in a conspiracy against the *gospel doctrine of faith, and the imputed righteousness*, and for that reason spares no arrows; yet we are not to suppose they make it their business to preach and write in direct opposition to any capital doctrines of the gospel, as open professed adversaries.—He himself clears them from this charge, even by the very distinction kept up all along in his Letters, between *popular preachers*, and those whom he calls *philosophical and fashionable divines*. He grants that he might be “* referred to many passages in their treatises, asserting almost every branch of the christian doctrine in words not easily to be contradicted;” tho' he thinks “he might fairly show a complete system of self-dependence contained in the same treatises.” And he can assure us, that

* Vol. 1. p 42.

“ the pastors he speaks of, well know how to
 “ season and mix up the christian truth with pro-
 “ per ingredients, to suit the taste of the peo-
 “ ple; and the people accordingly flock in mul-
 “ titudes after them.”—The force of this *re-
 flection* by the way, might perhaps be tried with equal certainty, whenever we read of the *multi-
 tudes* that attended upon the preaching of our Lord himself, and his Apostles.

But he opens the cause of the quarrel more plainly in vol. i. p. 28, edit. 3d, and shows what sort of men he aims at, how far he acquits, and for what he condemns them. “ I speak not
 “ of those who have employed their weapons
 “ against the *person and work* of Christ, endea-
 “ vouring to make us lose sight of him as a di-
 “ vine person, and of his acting as his substitute
 “ and representative of sinners in the whole of
 “ his obedience unto death; such as have got
 “ any taste of the good word of God, are not in
 “ the greatest danger of being subverted by these:
 “ but I speak of those teachers, who having
 “ largely insisted on the corruption of human na-
 “ ture, concluded the whole world guilty before
 “ God, eloquently set forth the necessity of the at-
 “ tonement, zealously maintained the scripture doc-
 “ trine concerning the person and work of Christ;
 “ yet, after all, leave us as much in the dark *as
 “ to our comfort*, as if Jesus Christ had never ap-
 “ peared; and mark out as insuperable a task
 “ for us, as if he had not finished his work;
 “ while, with great assiduity and earnestness,
 “ they are busied in describing to us, animating
 “ us with various encouragements, and furnish-
 “ ing us with manifold instructions, how to per-

“ form that strange something which is to make
 “ out our connection with Christ, and bring his
 “ righteousness home to us; that something
 “ which has got many names, and includes di-
 “ vers considerations; all which have been sup-
 “ posed to be comprehended under the scriptu-
 “ ral expression FAITH: as to which, after all
 “ they have told us about it, we are at as great
 “ a loss to tell distinctly what it is, or what we
 “ are doing when we perform it, if not greater
 “ than when they began.” — Any one who at-
 tends to what our author here says, must per-
 ceive, that he allows, the *object* of faith *Jesus*
Christ and his whole work are clearly set before
 men, by the very preachers whom he condemns
 as enemies to the truth; and his main objection is,
 that they leave us *as much in the dark as to our*
comfort as if Christ had not finished his work; and
 that, because they do not distinctly and precisely
 describe what it is to believe, so that their hear-
 ers may have a clear conception of the nature of
 FAITH. I wonder he had not thought of a re-
 markable expression of one of the greatest preach-
 ers of Christianity relating to preachers of very dif-
 ferent characters and views in his day, *notwith-*
standing, every way, whether in pretence or in
truth, CHRIST IS PREACHED; and I therein do
rejoice, yea and I will rejoice. And I must de-
 sire him to account for it, upon his own scheme,
 how any hearers can be deluded, or hindered
 from faith or comfort, who have the *person and*
work of Christ clearly set before them; since he
 holds that ministers have nothing to do, but to
 declare the simple truth, which is to be believ-

ed; and that as soon as they know it they are comforted.

But a few pages farther, after some digressi-
 ons, to show that man in his fallen state has a
 natural propensity to live by his own righteous-
 ness and to enjoy an happy earthly life as its reward,
 and that this propensity is to be considered as
 nature corrupted, he goes on to explain himself
 as to that kind of corrupt doctrine which he prin-
 cipally opposeth in his letters. He says, “ every
 “ doctrine then which teacheth us to do or en-
 “ deavour any thing towards our acceptance
 “ with God stands opposed to the doctrine of the
 “ Apostles* — Whatever doctrine teacheth us
 “ to think that our friendly correspondence or
 “ acceptance with God is begun by our own
 “ good endeavours, seconded by the divine aid,
 “ or even first prompted by the divine influence,
 “ leads us to look for acceptance with God by
 “ our own righteousness; for whatever I do,
 “ however assisted or prompted, is still my own
 “ work; otherwise the most common actions of
 “ life could not be called our own, seeing in all
 “ these we must still acknowlege our dependence
 “ on God, in whom we live, move, and have
 “ our being.” This argument carried to its pro-
 per length may perhaps prove more than our
 author himself will care to allow: for since we
 are assured by his own pen, a few lines before,
 “ that by whatever means a sinner’s friendly cor-

* It is of very considerable importance in this controversy,
 that we should note here, that our author substitutes the phrase
 of doing or endeavouring any thing towards our *acceptance*
with God, instead of doing or endeavouring any thing in order
 to the *knowledge of Christ, or saving faith*, that he may bring the
 greater odium upon all means used for that end,

“ correspondence with God is begun, much more
 “ may it be carried on and perfected by the
 “ same or the like means ;” and since he like-
 wise here insists upon it, that if ourselves are
 active in the least measure in the beginning of
 this friendly correspondence, though by super-
 natural assistance, our salvation must be attribut-
 ed to our own endeavours : I think it must fol-
 low, that the believers friendly correspondence
 with God may be carried on, and his justification
 and salvation perfected, without any endeavours
first or last to continue and increase in faith, or
 perform any works of obedience : for, however
 he may be assisted or prompted to carefulness
 about his faith and obedience, all this is as strict-
 ly his own doing, according to our author’s rea-
 soning, as if he had no such assistance, and so it will
 turn out that he is labouring after some righte-
 ousness of his own to bear a part in his justifica-
 tion, and secure his salvation at the last day :
 whereas his salvation from first to last must be of
 Christ, and therefore without any works.

Agreeable to what has been quoted, Mr. Her-
 vey, is not charged with denying any one of the
 grand articles of christianity. He is allowed to
 be ‘ one of the foremost advocates for salvation
 ‘ only by the *Cross of Christ* ;’ on this account high
 encomiums are bestowed upon him ; he is smooth-
 ly addressed as one, ‘ who maintains the grand ar-
 ‘ ticle of the imputed righteousness, and sup-
 ‘ ports it clearly, and warmly, and with the most
 ‘ winning address, in the general strain of his
 ‘ writings,—whose sentiments receive the stamp
 ‘ of the true and only sublime ;’—yea, on this ac-
 count, there are many expressions of great en-

dearment used in the Letters, and he is just at the
 point of being acknowledged as a brother : but
 after all, he must not pass for a preacher of the
 apostolic doctrine, or one that knew the saving
 truth ; for unhappily a little leaven of the popu-
 lar doctrine was soon found mixed with his favo-
 ry writings, and after diligent search more and
 more was discovered, till finally our relentless au-
 thor gave up all hopes of him, and left him to
 share the same fate with the rest of his pharisaical
 friends.*

The whole quarrel then which Mr. Sandeman
 has with Messrs. Hervey, Marhal, Boston, Fla-
 vel, Watts, Doddridge, Whitefield, and the
 whole body of *popular* preachers, against whom a
 bill of indictment is brought as enemies to the a-
 postolic *doctrine of faith and the imputed righteous-
 ness*, is in sum this, that tho’ they preach well e-
 nough almost every grand and essential point of
 doctrine as to the *person and work of Christ*, yet
 they give a very unintelligible account of *faith* §
 leave us wholly in the dark as to our *comfort*, and

* In the beginning of the appendix to the Letters Vol. II.
 p. 257. Edit. 3. The Author delivers his final opinion as to Mr.
 Hervey, in these words—“ 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 suffici-
 ently 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. [called *The Time of Danger, The
 means of Safety, and the Way of Holiness*] that I had presumed
 too much in favour of my author, and that accordingly the
 affectionate esteem I had expressed for him had proceeded up-
 on a fond mistake. In short I found I had no reason to dis-
 tinguish him from other preachers of the same doctrine.”—
 Query—*What doctrine ! whether The doctrine of the imput’d righte-
 ousness ?*

§ If *faith* and the *object of faith* are to be considered as one
 and the same thing, as our Author labours to prove, Vol. II. p.

mark out an insuperable task for us in order to gain faith and make out our connexion with Christ. Or, in a more concise view, the Controversy turns upon these following questions.—*What is faith? How is it to be obtained? In what manner are we to gain comfort by the Gospel?*

Now we must observe in the first place that tho' he finds the greatest fault with Mr. Hervey's description of faith, viz. "*Faith is a real persuasion that Christ died for me;*" yet he condemns every other account of faith which he meets with in any other popular writings. He means to oppose the most laboured descriptions of faith even in the most celebrated authors, and that when they study the greatest niceness and accuracy.* He will admit no such terms as *receiving, applying to, trusting in, or resting on Christ,* into the definition of faith: but that he may keep at the greatest distance from all these modes of description, he chooses to call faith, *A bare persuasion of the bare truth, or a simple persuasion of the truth of the atonement.* However, that he may not leave us wholly in the dark about his meaning, he tells us, Vol. II. p. 29. "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

30, what consistency is there in his charging popular preachers with leaving us in the dark as to *faith or comfort,* when he grants they maintain the scripture doctrine concerning the *person and work of Christ?* If they give us a clear view of the *object of faith,* does it not follow upon his own principles, that they give us in reality, a clear account of *faith,* notwithstanding any blunders, when they endeavour to describe it as an act of the mind?

* Vid. Corr. with S.P. . P. 12.

" 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;* so must produce
 " greater certainty or firmness of persuasion.—
 " When once a man believes a testimony, he be-
 " comes 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 be-
 " lieved."—And again, p. 30, "Every one who
 " believes the same truth which the Apostles be-
 " lieved, has equally precious faith with them.*
 " He has unfeigned faith, and shall assuredly be
 " saved. If any man's faith be found insuffici-

* However simple a thing the belief of any common testimony may seem at first thought, it admits of many modes or gradual diversities, even tho' the general ideas communicated by the testimony remain very much the same; and the impressions, or effects of the persuasion, depend both upon the importance of the thing testified, and the strength of evidence in which they appear to the mind. Almost all our ideas are in some respects complex, made up of various parts, like external objects of sight; capable of being viewed and compared with different degrees of accuracy, and in different situations and combinations; and accordingly they strike the mind with greater or less force, not merely as they appear in general either to be true or false, or become superficially known, but as we see many particulars comprehended in them exciting attention, and consider their relation to our present or future welfare, or how they are accommodated to our peculiar condition, or call us to activity. A person condemned to starve to death in a prison, at a time of general scarcity, may believe the report of a plentiful importation of corn with as much certainty as others who expect to enjoy the benefit of it; but it will affect him very differently, because he expects no benefit to himself from it; and this instance may illustrate the difference betwixt the faith of devils, and that which is essential to the sal-

ent to save him, it is owing to this, that what he believed for truth, was not the very same that the Apostles believed, but some lie connected with or dressed up in the form of

vation of men. It is also plain to the observation of every thinking person, that there is a great difference betwixt believing things supposed to be at a great distance, and those which are viewed very near; things in which our own interest is concerned, and such as relate chiefly to other men; those things with which our highest hope and happiness plainly appear to be connected, and such as seem to touch but a part, and that some very small part of our interest. Likewise, the very same object in various views and connections may appear very beautiful and desirable to one man, which is tasteless and even offensive to another. To inquire critically into all these differences in the belief of what in general appears to be the very same thing, would require a considerable volume, and perhaps would not be a trifling employment for some masterly pen. But from these cursory hints it may appear, that the distinction which our author makes betwixt saving faith and that which is common to the generality of professors is extremely loose in a religious view, especially as it relates to our comfort, however strictly philosophical; for who can determine whether his own faith is the very same with that of the Apostles, merely because he seems to believe the very same things? There may be a vast difference in the minute and circumstantial views of the same general objects, and in the strength and brightness of those views, which may be discovered by the immediate or more remote effects, but can never be determined in any other way. — Therefore in the sacred writings, they are sometimes said to believe, who have only a general, ineffectual, transient knowledge, as the unfruitful hearers described by the sower ground in the parable of the sower; but that peculiar faith connected with salvation is distinguished in the New-Testament both by the internal and external effects, as it produces love, hope, joy, &c. in the heart, and all sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, in practice. Upon the whole we may conclude, that it is necessary, not only to believe the very same things, which the Apostles believed, but to believe them with the same strength and clearness, or with such convincing effectual evidence, as will produce the same kind of love and obedience to Christ. What we believe may be true, and yet our faith may be insufficient to save us, because the truth does not appear in its full light and importance. In strict propriety, truth can never be said to be mixed with any lie; for it is impossible that any thing should be both true and false at the same time, and in the same view.

truth." Again, Vol. II. p. 193, "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."

I shall not at present take notice of several exceptions which may be made against his account of the faith which saves men. In the progress of this enquiry there may be a more convenient place to show what encouragement he gives his readers to build their hope upon a very superficial and ineffectual knowledge of the atonement. Let us suppose he means neither more nor less, by the simple persuasion of the truth, than that knowledge of Jesus Christ which is connected with eternal life; agreeable to the words of our Lord himself, John xvii. 3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent;* and according to the current style of the Apostle John in his Epistles, in which knowing Christ is a phrase often used for believing in him. I am very ready to grant that faith is a peculiar kind of knowledge of Christ; or that the most simple notion of the faith of the New-Testament is this, viz. that it is a clear and effectual perception of the truth and importance of what the gospel declares concerning Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of sinners.

Let us now see whether the faith of the popular preachers is so widely different from the foregoing account of the faith of the New-Testament,

that they must be doomed to perdition as conspirators against it.

It we may have leave to explain Mr. Hervey's notion of faith in as favourable a manner as is consistent with the tenor of his writings, and the method in which he himself illustrates it; in as favourable a manner as our author would desire to have his own notions explained; it will be no difficult task to show that Mr. Sandeman's controversy with him in that respect, turns out to be—"much ado about nothing."

There are evidently two very distinct parts in that description of faith which Mr. Hervey has given us, viz. 1. There must be a persuasion that *Jesus Christ died, i. e. died as a sacrifice for sins*: which our author himself affirms to be the *faith* insisted on in the gospel, the *only faith* that saves men: so he has no manner of reason to find fault thus far, or charge Aspasio and his friends with opposing the gospel doctrine of faith. 2. There must be a particular application of this general truth that *Christ died for sinners*; the person who believes it, must have an appropriate persuasion of it, as a truth of peculiar importance with respect to himself, so that it may appear in a peculiar line of direction to him as a sinner who may enjoy the benefit of the Saviour's death. It may be supposed very justly, that Aspasio does not mean to insist upon a *full assurance of hope* as essential to the faith that saves men; but only some lower degree of *comfortable hope*, arising from the view which a sinner has of the death of Christ, as a sufficient sacrifice to take away his sins in particular; and so this latter part of Aspasio's de-

scription of faith amounts to no more than this, viz. that saving faith includes in it's nature some good hope in the man who believes, as to the forgiveness of his own sins. Now, notwithstanding a great part of the letters was wrote in opposition to this latter part of *Aspasio's* faith, it would puzzle the most subtle metaphysician to show the difference betwixt *this comfortable hope* arising from an appropriate view of Christ's death, and that *quiet of conscience, comfort or happiness*, which Mr. Sandeman himself affirms to be inseparably connected with the persuasion of what Christ has done. He tells us * "What Christ hath done, is that which pleases God; what he hath done, is that which quiets the guilty conscience of a man as soon as he knows it: so that whenever he hears of it, he has no occasion for any other question but this, is it true or not? if he finds it true, he is *happy*; if not he can reap no *comfort* by it. If then we slight the *comfort* arising from the bare persuasion of this, it must be owing at bottom, to our slighting the bare work of Christ, our considering it as too narrow a foundation, whereon to rest the whole weight of our acceptance with God." And in his third letter || he challenges any spirit that shall dare to whisper, "that no *comfort* or *benefit* can be derived from the bare persuasion of what God hath wrought." Again, in his fifth letter, § he says, "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

* Vol. I. p. 32. || Vol. I. p. 117. § Vol. II. p. 150.

“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 plen-
 “teous importation of corn, in the time of fa-
 “mine, 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 suf-
 “fering shipwreck, to hear that relief is hasten-
 “ing 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 oc-
 “casions in life, while yet no man knows cer-
 “tainly 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 obnox-
 “ious among them to be his friends and favour-
 “ites? Surely it will; and surely so it has done
 “in all ages.” Here we may remark, that all
 these instances, which he brings to illustrate the
 comfort arising from the good news of salvation
 by Christ, necessarily suppose, that the persons
 comforted receive the good news as having some
 relation to themselves as well as others; unless
 we may affirm, that a miserable person will be re-
 lieved under his misery, by hearing something
 which has no manner of respect to his own case.
 Every degree of hope or comfort to a sinner,
 hitherto considered as in a state of despair, must
 imply a change in his apprehensions of his own
 case; his hope must have some respect to himself,
 i. e. there must be some kind of *appropriation* in

his knowledge of the Saviour, before he can find
 any *refreshment* to his mind; and if this refresh-
 ment is “far superior to all the comforts he e-
 ver tasted in life before,” the *appropriation* must
 be very clear and full, for the person who just be-
 fore looked upon himself extremely miserable,
 now feels himself surprizingly happy. I think it
 must appear quite evident to every impartial read-
 er, from this representation of the dispute be-
 twixt Aspasio and our author about the descripti-
 on of faith which the former gives us, that it is
 merely a strife about words; Mr. Hervey will
 not allow that a man can have saving faith till he
 is persuaded that Christ’s death has some comfor-
 table aspect on his own case as a sinner, so that
 he can find *some relief and joy* in the believing view
 of it: Mr. Sandeman makes a bustle to oppose
 him, and yet tells us that as soon as a man is per-
 suaded of what Christ has done, his *guilty consci-
 ence is quieted*, he immediately derives *comfort and
 benefit* from this knowledge, and is *happy*. He
 must be able to split hairs who can see any mate-
 rial difference in these sentiments. Perhaps we
 may be told, that Mr. Hervey makes this appro-
 priation an essential part of faith, whereas saving
 faith respects only the work of Christ, and not any
 thing in or relating to ourselves; and that this
 hope or comfort is the effect of faith, not faith it-
 self. But this is very little to the purpose; for,
 besides that, what is inseparably connected with
 faith, may justly be made part of the description;
 if the object of faith, viz. *Jesus Christ and his
 work*, has any relation to my own circumstances
 as a sinner, it cannot be known or viewed to any
 real advantage but in this relation, and so an ap-

appropriating knowledge of Christ belongs to the very essence of faith.

However, let it be granted that Mr. Hervey, through inadvertency, carries the matter too far, and blends the *assurance of hope* with the *assurance of faith*, which ought to be kept distinct, and so leads his readers to those works of obedience which are properly the fruits and evidences of faith, that they may gain a full persuasion of their own personal claim to the benefits of Christ's death, before he will encourage them to think they have saving faith—Must he be censured as guilty of a pernicious error? a damning sin? does he deny the truth of the atonement? or lead men off from their regard to it as the foundation of hope? far from it. The first and great thing which he teaches men to believe, is that *Christ died* to make atonement for sins, and that his death is the only ground of acceptance with God; and all the crime he can be charged with is this, that he supposes no man has such a persuasion of the atonement as may be called *saving faith*, unless at the same time he has good assurance of his own justification by the imputed righteousness, so that he can speak with the same confidence as Thomas did, "*My Lord and my God.*" By this, indeed, he and his friends who hold the same notion of faith, are sometimes much embarrassed, while they endeavour to comfort their converts with hope in Christ. Not observing that they have unwarily blended two things together, in their own nature quite distinct, they find themselves in some cases intangled: some of their hearers seem to have faith, as far as it consists in the knowledge or persuasion that Christ died for sinners; but yet they cannot with sufficient assurance make the ap-

propriation and say, *Christ died for me.* In this case what can be done? they find a difficulty in declaring such to be believers, because this is contradictory to their own definition of faith; but yet they cannot consider them as unbelievers, because they appear to be persuaded of the truth and necessity of the sacrifice of Christ, and in many respects to have the spirit and temper of christians: so they conclude, nothing is wanting but farther encouragement to remove some remaining scruples in these converts concerning their own claim, that they may have joyful confidence in Christ, knowing their own personal interest in him.

Thus it is easy to account for their directing persons so far enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, to do many things in order to obtain full confidence of the forgiveness of their own sins through the atonement or assurance of salvation by Christ; and though their sentiments appear somewhat confused, and inconsistent when compared together, yet no such fatal consequences are deducible from them as may warrant us to censure such writers as enemies to the saving truth, or pharisaical teachers. The worst that can follow from this notion of faith is, that it may keep back some real christians from enjoying that comfort which springs from the first clear persuasion of the excellency of Christ's character and work; though they see the glory of divine grace as it respects sinners in general; yet they are not satisfied that they themselves may claim a right to the promises of the gospel as believers; and so cannot rejoice in their own deliverance from guilt and condemnation, because they su-

pose no man can be a believer till all doubts as to himself are so far removed, that he is persuaded Christ is his Saviour.

But this is one great objection against Aspasio; this is the complaint exhibited against him; that he “discourages such as God comforts, and leads forward those whom God holds at a distance.” Very strange! Will Mr. Sandeman then allow so much to depend on *ministerial* authority or instruction? Does the comfort or discouragement of a believer arise from what the *minister* says to him? is it in his power to keep that man from *comfort* who has *faith*? We are sometimes told, that “comfort immediately flows from the knowledge of the truth;” that “it gives at once superior refreshment:” yet, when it will serve his turn better, our author can change his note, and suspend the believer’s quiet of conscience upon the skill and address of the teacher. However, if there is any just cause for such a complaint against Aspasio; there is abundant reason to think the same or greater may be justly made against the complainant, who discourages and dooms to destruction multitudes whom God comforts, chiefly because they refuse to be tried by his standard.

After all it may be allowed, that it is very preposterous for Aspasio and his friends to put men upon doing every thing requisite to the full assurance of hope, before they give them encouragement to entertain any degree of hope. *Fallibility* is the motto of all writings but those which are divine, and whatever assistance we may receive from the labours of the wisest and best of men, we must be cautious of yielding implicit

faith or obedience. Yet since Mr. Hervey and the preachers of the same faith continually point their hearers to *Christ as the Lord our righteousness*, and only keep them back from drawing the settled conclusion that they have saving faith, till they have attained some assurance of hope in the very same way which is taught in the scriptures, *what spirit* is that which proclaims them enemies to the gospel, and wilful deceivers and destroyers of mankind? *Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth; yea he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand.*

A writer who is highly commended in the letters, furnishes us with a very good apology for all who hold Mr. Hervey’s description of faith, giving an easy and natural account of the way by which such preachers were led into the mistake about the nature of faith. In his *testimony of the King of Martyrs*, Edinburgh, p. 221, he says, “Some perhaps, finding all their endeavours after the *assurance of hope*, without the lively faith of this great truth of the gospel, altogether fruitless; and being at length brought to a clear and sure belief of this truth, and finding their consciences quieted, the disposition of their heart changed by the influence of this truth, and hope arising in their souls; they have imagined, that all this flowed at first from an assurance of *Christ’s being made fully theirs, and a certainty of their own salvation by him*, and so they have made that the nature of faith.” Thus we have good reason to suppose them to have saving faith themselves, and to aim to teach others that same

knowledge of Christ; which is the real ground of their own hope; and yet entangle themselves in some difficulties and contradictions for want of keeping up in their own minds a clearer distinction betwixt the *assurance of faith* and the *assurance of hope*.

Nay; our author himself discovers great tenderness towards some writers of the sixteenth century, who held the same notions of faith with many modern popular preachers, and so doubtless were guilty of the same inconsistencies. In his fifth letter, Vol. II. p. 145, glancing at the Martyrs of that century (as we learn from the table of contents) he says, "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 upon 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? shall we say, that these friends of Christ would have approved that as-

“ 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?” — But why all this tenderness towards these ancient leaders in the reformation, while he is so severe against many propagators of the same faith in these days? why may not the same apology serve alike for all? if we look over the writings of those famous sufferers in the cause of Christ, we shall find them all great friends to *heart work*, many of them largely insisting upon exercises preparatory to faith, giving various directions and encouragements, and speaking sometimes as darkly about the nature of faith as any moderns: but what is more remarkable, they were the master workmen in building up those very churches in protestant nations, which now are indiscriminately censured by this *new reformer* as genuine DAUGHTERS of the MOTHER OF HARLOTS.* But whatever mistakes they may be charged with, it seems the greatest may easily be overlooked in those venerable writers — why more in them than many modern writers? — because they suffered persecution and martyrdom — Can no man prove his faith to be saving unless he dies a martyr? — who knows, but the faith of many whom Mr. Sandeman persecutes with his pen, with such bitterness, might be sufficient to bear them up under the greatest real sufferings, as well as reproaches, and enable them to endure the loss of substance, all that they hold dear, and even life itself? if he will be at the trouble to look back, in our own history, about a century, he may be furnished with many

examples of suffering, among the very same writers against whom he makes it his business to exclaim as the worst of impostors.

Let us now hear what he says against those who describe faith in a *different* manner from Mr. Hervey, viz. by *receiving, applying to, trusting in, and resting upon Jesus Christ for salvation*. He tells us freely, Vol II. p. 63, “ That where
 “ the faith necessary to justification is described,
 “ every epithet, word, name, or phrase, pre-
 “ fixed or subjoined to FAITH, not meant as de-
 “ scriptive of the truth believed, but of some
 “ good motion, disposition, or exercise of the
 “ human soul about it, is INTENDED, and real-
 “ ly 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 publickly authorized standard
 “ doctrine, for direction here. These are fram-
 “ ed by the wisdom of the scribes, and dispu-
 “ ters of this world.” Very freely said indeed!
 more freely than becomes any man who pretends
 to the name of a christian. Dare he affirm, that
 every one, who describes faith by *receiving Christ,*
trusting in him, &c. or distinguisheth it by any
 such epithets as a true sincere, lively faith &c.
 including not only the truth believed, but some
 exercise of the mind in believing, really INTENDS
 to blindfold, decoy, and impose upon us! if they
 are wrong, may it not proceed from some mis-

take, consistent with a good and honest design?
 and may not the error be such as very little af-
 fects the capital truth; they must be bad men
 indeed, who try to impose upon us, in a matter
 of such infinite concern as our justification before
 God! and is this the character of the whole as-
 sembly of divines who composed the catechisms
 commonly received, and the confession of faith,
 do these abridgements of scripture doctrine, which,
 in the main, preserve an evident conformity to
 the sacred standard of faith, deserve no better
 compliment than—the *wisdom of the scribes,*
and disputers of this world?—but why?—no
 doubt, because they discover an *intention* to
 blindfold and deceive us, by describing faith as
 an exercise of the mind, or motion of the soul
 towards Jesus Christ, when we are told—“ *that*
 “ *faith in Jesus Christ, is a saving grace, where-*
 “ *by we receive and rest upon him alone for sal-*
 “ *vation as he is offered to us in the gospel.*”
 This definition he keeps in his eye, and, having
 proceeded a few pages farther, takes an opportu-
 nity to burlesque it. In a reflection upon the
 popular doctrine concerning the *truth of grace in*
the heart, Vol. II. p. 102, he says, “ 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 salvati-
 “ on, beside what appeared when Christ, by the
 “ grace of God, tasted death for the sins of men.
 This question may properly be answered by ask-
 ing one or two more of the same kind—when
 the Apostle says to the Corinthians, * *As ye a-*

bound in every thing, in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in THIS GRACE also, (i. e. the grace of liberality for which he had been commending the churches of Macedonia) are we not led to think of some other grace beside that which appeared in the death of Christ? and if liberality may be called a grace, why not faith also; especially since the Apostle does not scruple to call it a grace in this same verse, as appears by the connexion? and if men are saved by faith, why may not faith be called a saving grace? But he intends a farther satire in the turn he gives to that part of the definition, by which we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation,——thus——
 “by which we make use of Christ for salvation:”
 though if there is any true point in this wit, it must be this, that receiving and resting on Christ is making use of him; whereas no such use of him is implied in or connected with faith; or in other words, it is not necessary that we should receive Christ Jesus the Lord, or trust in him for salvation.

This brings us to the marrow of the controversy about the nature of faith, as it is managed against those divines who describe it by receiving, applying to, trusting in, resting on Christ, &c. and often distinguish it by the epithets true, sincere, lively, &c. for all these terms and phrases are used, not as descriptive of the truth believed, but of some affection or disposition of the soul towards the object, Jesus Christ. That we may understand our author's general objection against all these words and phrases, we must observe that he makes no distinction betwixt faith and the truth believed;

i. e. he considers faith as a mere passive perception of the object, quite distinct from all the actings of the mind with respect to what is presented to it, or any passions and affections produced by the view. He says, * “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 the testimony which he believes? His passions

* Vol. II. p. 29, 30, 31.

|| There is as much difference betwixt the truth to be believed and the belief of it, as there is betwixt the object itself presented before the eye, and the perception of it by the mind; the perception must correspond to the object in view; but to set aside entirely the consideration of the mind's attention to the thing presented to it, and tell us that seeing, means nothing else but the object on which the eye is fixed, or that believing means no more than the truth believed, must appear to every man of common sense, the most ridiculous trifling; and to introduce such odd philosophy into religion must be to impose upon men with vain deceit. Perception is so connected with the activity of the mind, in viewing, comparing, judging &c. that it is impossible by the nicest analysis, to separate these operations entirely from the image or impression of the object. When any truth is presented to the mind, the perception of it as Truth, may be called believing; but this necessarily implies some judgment passed upon it by the mind, some power of distinguishing betwixt truth and falshood, by which we determine that this is truth, and such an actual judgment and assent to the truth, is so connected with the perception, that however distinct it may be from perception in its own nature, it is inseparable from it. Thus the perception of an amiable object as amiable is connected with the affection of love, so closely, that we cannot but consider them together; though it would be a very awkward account of love, for any man to tell us it means nothing else but the object of love, because that which he loves may be called his love or delight; such a way of talking tends to destroy all distinctions of things, and confound all language.

“ 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.—He who is justified by
 “ faith, is justified by what he believes.—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 sal-
 “ vation.” Now, according to this account of
 faith, the whole dispute, betwixt him and all those
 divines whom he opposes, is over at once, and he
 has raised all this dust for nothing. For he and
 they do not differ about the question, *What*
must a man believe? They hold and teach that
 men must believe the person and work of Christ as
 the Saviour of sinners; but about the *activity of*
the mind in believing, or how a man must believe
 and be affected by the object. But he himself sets
 aside every thing relating to this latter question;
 and so, however warm his opposition seems to be,
 it is nothing at all to the purpose, because he and
 they speak of faith in quite different senses.

Here then we might finish this part of the con-
 troversy. But our author will make this plea for
 himself, That those divines, whose descriptions
 of faith he opposes, plainly undertake to describe
 that faith which is necessary to justification; and
 therefore since nothing but this truth, *that Christ*
died for sinners, can justify men, if they have
 not described this truth, he has a right to oppose
 them in his own sense of faith, in whatever other
 sense they describe it. Now tho' this seems plau-
 sible, yet it will appear to be very little to the
 purpose, if we only consider what must be the

use and design of every formal definition or de-
 scription of faith. No summary description or
 definition would be sufficient to give light to one
 ignorant of the scripture-doctrine concerning sal-
 vation by Jesus Christ, if the design is to show
what truth justifies a sinner: nothing would an-
 swer this end, but a particular and clear account
 of this doctrine, which, however it may be taken
 as one truth, certainly includes a great many ide-
 as. But if the same general truth may be believ-
 ed in a different manner by different persons, or
 perceived with very different degrees of strength,
 clearness and efficacy; or attentiveness to the im-
 portant parts of it, then it is necessary to distin-
 guish that appearance of truth to the mind which
 is essential to the full knowledge of its importance,
 from that which is deceitful and ineffectual; and
 this is the proper design of every definition of
 faith, to point out the distinguishing properties of
 that knowledge of Jesus Christ with which justifi-
 cation is connected.

If a man should ask this weighty question, What
 is that critical something which distinguishes sav-
 ing knowledge or faith, from that which seems
 to be the truth, and yet is consistent with a state
 of impenitency? *How may I be so far conscious of*
this peculiar faith of the gospel, as to be comforted
with the hope of my own justification by Jesus
Christ?—How impertinent would it be to answer
 him in this loose manner, ‘ Believing unto the
 saving of the soul is, to believe the same thing
 which the Apostles believed, to believe that Jesus
 is the Christ, in the very sense of the Apostles,
 without maintaining any thing, in connection
 with these words, subversive of their real means

ing! Doubtless the inquirer would proceed, and ask, What is implied in believing the same thing with the Apostles? May not a man be fatally mistaken in supposing he knows and believes the same thing in the same striking light? Must I not be conscious of some difference betwixt my own knowledge and that which many have who perish, before my state can be altered from despair to good hope? Our author leaves him here with no other reply than, that he must prove by his works of what sort his faith is. But the answer of the generality of divines would be, That faith which saves men, immediately produces full complacency in that Saviour revealed in the gospel, so that the soul is willing to acknowledge him as the only Redeemer of guilty men, and accordingly trusts in him with fixed dependence for righteousness and happiness, and finds the strongest desires towards him, and delight in him. He who thus receives Christ Jesus the Lord, has that faith by which he is justified, which will become farther evident by the fruits of righteousness in a course of obedience to Christ. They do not pretend to describe faith in it's simple nature, as it is the perception or vivid portrait of the object upon the mind; which would be like describing what light is, or what that peculiar view of a curious piece of sculpture, which forms the taste of one man, while another looks at the same thing quite unaffected. But they mean to describe faith by those effects which are inseparable from a just perception of the truth, in the strong colours in which the gospel presents it. And in doing this they not only proceed in the most proper and useful manner, but are abundantly kept in countenance by

the authority of the scriptures, in which faith is most frequently described by its effects. This our squeamish author himself is forced to acknowledge,* tho' he makes such wry faces at the same terms when he meets with them in the writings of popular preachers. Now to charge them, on this account, with a wilful design to impose upon men, and lead them to establish their own, in opposition to the divine righteousness, is a most inexcusable instance of censoriousness.

What colour is there for such a suspicion? or, what danger of such a consequence, when all such phrases as *receiving, resting on Christ, &c.* imply a clear view of Jesus Christ as the only author of our justification and salvation? § Is there not full as much danger of leading men to establish their own righteousness by teaching them to depend

* Vol. II. P. 112.

§ If a man tells me some joyful news; as soon as my mind is fully impressed with the knowledge of what he declares, I shall rejoice with him; my faith immediately produces joy; and though the joyful emotions of my heart are not in strict propriety my faith, yet if my friend, observing me unaffected, should call upon me to rejoice, it would be natural for me to conclude that I must have some different apprehensions of the news he brings, in order to my rejoicing with him; but I should not have the least reason to suspect his design was to impose upon me, by persuading me to rejoice before I believed him. If I have an opportunity of purchasing a diamond of great value, with the whole of my small estate, the purchase depends on my resolving, and striking the advantageous bargain; but that which must determine me to sell all, and purchase, is a full persuasion of the worth of the jewel: if I profess to know the value, and yet hesitate, it is a sufficient evidence that I have not just apprehensions of the wealth I may possess. Now if one, concerned for my interest, should urge me to consent to the bargain, it is plain he desires me to see it in the strongest point of light, in consequence of which I cannot but consent; and this determination of my mind is the first evidence to myself that I am fully sensible of the riches contained in it.

merely upon certain *works of charity*, done only in fellowship with a church of some peculiar form, to prove their knowledge of the truth, (notwithstanding the salvo intended in calling it *self-denied charity*;) as in teaching them to judge of their faith, in the first place, by the more immediate and inseparable effects of it upon the mind, or the motions and affections of the soul towards the glorious object presented before it; and then, by *being holy in all manner of conversation and godliness*? Or are none of the inward effects of faith to be regarded, but only the outward fruits? Is there no religion of the heart? Is no notice to be taken of those fruits of the spirit which especially relate to the temper and disposition of the soul, by which it appears to be renewed after the image of God? Our author has given us abundant reason to suspect, that he denies or makes light of all inward religion, and many important branches of godliness and virtue, and places it chiefly in subjection to that new form of church authority which he is so zealously setting up: we have, at least, as good grounds for this suspicion, as he has to charge so respectable a body of evangelical preachers, with a wicked design to lead men to establish their own, in opposition to the divine righteousness.

To bring the present question to a conclusion; If Jesus Christ is presented before us as the proper object of dependence, love, honour, &c. then this glorious object cannot be seen, and known in truth, without producing such dependence, love, &c. as are correspondent to what is seen and known of Christ; and therefore these, and whatever other motions or affections of the soul are necessary effects of the knowledge of this divine Redeemer,

are implied in the very nature of saving faith, and ought to be expressly included in every just description of it; yea, they cannot be separated from it, without destroying the most essential distinction betwixt that faith which justifies men, and that which is *dead, being alone*. So that, in attempting to laugh out of countenance, and set aside these distinguishing effects, our author comes not far short of burlesquing the Scriptures, and is busily pulling down with one hand what he pretends to build up with the other.

It is now time to dismiss the question, *What is faith?* And take some notice of the next question in the controversy, *How is faith to be obtained?*

Our author complains of the popular preachers, because they teach men to take so much pains in order to come to the knowledge of the truth, that they may be saved; because they insist upon so many pre-requisites, describe the progress of *convictions*, &c. and direct men to pray for the enlightening and quickening influences of the spirit of God, for their conversion and salvation. He tells us, "they mark out as insuperable a task for us, as if Christ had not finished his work," while they give us so many instructions and directions how to obtain that faith by which his righteousness becomes ours; and says of all the 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."

Now let us hear what answer he himself will

make to the present question. What easier way can he mark out, by which all this labour in order to conversion may be spared, yet with an equal or greater probability of our believing and obeying the gospel of salvation? Towards the conclusion of his fifth letter, he supposes it will be enquired, "Are no rules to be observed, no means to be used, no work to be exerted by the human mind or body, in order to justification? * And to this, he says with a smile, 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."—According to this latter state of the question it will stand as it ought, thus, *Are no [means or endeavours to be used in order to our understanding and believing the truth?* But he stands by his former answer, only adding by way of ridicule, "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? 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?"—If after all the question recurs, *How then is faith to be obtained?* His answer is, § "How have the most

* *i. e.* In order to faith, for, as we have already noted, our author frequently substitutes the phrase, *in order to justification*, instead of this, *in order to believing*; because tho' they convey different ideas, yet there is so near a connection, that he can easily shuffle in the former, when it will serve his turn better.

§ Vol. II. p. 133.

"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 enquiry.—Faith comes 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.—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 wise unto salvation.—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." This last sentence must be explained by what he says of those who are relieved by the gospel, Vol. II. p. 67 — "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."

By all these quotations it appears, that instead of that *long and dreary path* which the popular preachers prescribe; that *insuperable task* which they mark out for us by their instructions and directions; our author's easier way is, to use no means or endeavours at all. If men have not ob-

tained faith, he assures them there is not the least probability of obtaining it by any endeavours, any concern or exercise of the mind, or the use of any means whatever. But if God intends to save them he will bring them to the knowledge of the truth in a way of such absolute sovereignty as is wholly inconsistent with their own care, and intirely prevents every motion of their own wills; and that, in spite of every thing which can be said or done to the contrary. Faith must obtrude itself upon men, just like such remarkable discoveries as the polar direction of the magnet, or the salutary virtues of some capital medicines; so we must rest contented, till the word is sent in a supernatural manner to convey the saving truth to our minds.—Our author has the honour of making the first full discovery of this easy way of coming to the knowledge of the truth, viz. by waiting in a state of inactivity and despair, till it comes unsought and undesired. And the encouragement he gives men in this way is of a very peculiar kind; it amounts to this, viz. since God in this method of absolute sovereignty, which is inconsistent with our own thought and care, will certainly save a surprizing small number of mankind, we may very comfortably sit down quiet with this consideration,—*If one in a thousand, or even in a million shall certainly be made to know the saving truth, in spite of all opposition, perhaps I may be the happy man on whom the lot may fall.* *

* Our author in his sixth Letter, Vol. II. p. 156, takes occasion by a criticism upon those words of Peter;—*To them who have obtained (BY LOT) like precious faith with us,* to illustrate his own sentiments as to the sovereignty of God, by comparing it to a throw of the dice, in this manner;—“Of two
“ criminals justly condemned to die, if one escapes by a fa-

He may likewise have the credit of teaching us to reason in this new way about many things which serve for the accommodation of human life viz. Since the most remarkable discoveries of this kind have prevented human skill and industry, so that God might appear to be the author of them, men ought never to busy themselves in trying to make any new discoveries. God must be acknowledged as providing for us all the comforts of life, they must come as his gifts, and he is free and sovereign in the bestowment of them; therefore they must prevent every motion of man's will, and all our own industry, and we ought to sit down quite easy till he shall think fit to obtrude these things upon us.

But lest it should be suspected that I have taken our author at a disadvantage, or overstrained his meaning, I shall add a few passages more, which may throw farther light upon his sentiments. He says, Vol. I. p. 119. “Righteousness comes
“ unto men” (*i. e.* *Faith comes to them*, for our author here considers *righteousness* and *faith* as coming at the same time, and so is ready to affirm the same thing of both) “*always* unsent
“ for, not meeting men inquiring after it, but
“ overtaking them when running away; and ac-
“ cording to the significant phrase of the pro-
“ phet, as *a voice* behind them—It finds men
“ fast asleep, in the desert, in midnight darkness,
“ among the bones of many lately devoured, and
“ ready to be added to the number. It awakens

“ 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.” It is unnecessary to make any
other remark, than only to point my finger at this notion of
divine sovereignty, and torture of metaphors.

“ them as by the voice of thunder, and conducts
 “ them in safety, by its awful, but friendly
 “ lightening.” Now if we understand our author
 in the foregoing paragraph as expressing his sen-
 timents concerning the *manner in which men ob-*
tain faith. which is plainly his design, they may
 be summed up in these few words, the saving
 truth *always* comes suddenly and unfought, dart-
 ing like lightning from heaven into the mind ;
 until it thus comes, men neither know nor care any
 thing about it, but are all equally fast asleep, in
 midnight darkness and among the dead. Ano-
 ther sentence of much the same import, but
 more plainly expressing his mind, we have about
 three pages forward, “ Every one who is born
 “ of the spirit lives merely by what he hears,
 “ *without his performing any duty at all* ; unless
 “ we shall say, it was the duty of *Lazarus* to
 “ hear and live, upon the uttering of the call,
 “ *come forth.*” Here the matter is carried far-
 ther still, and every man until he believes, is sup-
 posed to be exactly in the same state as *Lazarus*
 when he was dead. Because the scriptures speak
 of the ignorance and insensibility of such as were
 wholly unacquainted with the gospel, in a figura-
 tive manner, as in a state of death ; and of all impe-
 nitent sinners, so far as they still remain ignorant
 and insensible under the greatest advantages as in
 a similar state ; therefore our author takes it for
 granted, that the figure may be stretched in all
 cases to its utmost length, till it proves men to
 have no more sense or motion, in any respect,
 than *dead Lazarus*. Thus men have often made
 wild work with the strong metaphors of scripture,
 and drawn strange arguments from illustrations

which indeed paint the truth in bright colours,
 but hold good only in some particular respects.
 If we must needs allow that all men, before they
 have saving faith, are *as dead as Lazarus was*,
 being as absolutely incapable of hearing, having
 no more power of thought, will, or motion, let
 us hear no more of *natural conscience* in man ;
 for the dead are not conscious of any thing.—
 Let us hear no more of any *law* obliging them
 to moral perfection, under whatever considerati-
 ons ; for there can be no law of *action* for the
 dead.—Let us never be guilty of the absurdity
 of endeavouring to disturb their deep repose by
 any terrors of damnation.—But—

Have patience, and hear Mr. Sandeman a little
 farther, Vol. II. p. 11. “ Let all the prophets
 “ and apostles be consulted upon the question,
 “ What is required of us in order to acceptance
 “ with God? We will 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.*” —Now since *acceptance with God*
 and *eternal salvation*, are phrases which have a
 very close connexion, and *believing* is in the gos-
 pel made necessary to salvation, let us only have
 leave to substitute the word *salvation* instead of
 our author’s phrase *acceptance with God*, and so
 ask the same question in this form, what is re-
 quired of us in order to *Salvation*? And to this
 let us hear his reply in the same words, without
 any trimming, *every thing*, or *nothing*. So we
 must neither do, will, nor think any thing relat-

ing to our own salvation; -no, not so much as entertain the least desire or motion of the soul in order to *believe*, or, which is the same thing, to *know the truth and import of the gospel*; because every endeavour of this kind is a damning sin.— Surely our author cannot find fault with the change of a word or two, when he himself so often sets us the example——To justify the foregoing representation, let us consider one passage more, Vol II. p. 72. where he reproves *Aspasio* for not making his reply to *Theron*, when he objected against the way of justification by faith as too simple and easy, 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.” Here we plainly see his meaning, that there is no *act of believing* required of us in order to our acceptance with God, and that a sinner must not make the least attempt to *believe*. Thus he fixes men firmly down, in a state of absolute inactivity of body and mind, to wait easy till *faith comes*.

So much does our author rely on this *metaphysical juggle* which he has invented, viz. that *faith is no act of our own minds, but a meer passive impression*, that he ventures to declare in the very face of the apostle John, that God does not command men to believe. * His gloss upon those words, *This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son*, is, “ that this is a commandment not requiring any thing of us,

• Vol. I. p. 168

“ but bestowing life by the knowledge which it conveys :” *i. e.* we must not understand it as a command to believe, but as a declaration that God conveys knowledge and life by his commanding word. He seems indeed to be cautious of delivering this sentiment so freely and plumply as he does many others; but it is evident enough, not only in what he says above, but by the pains he takes, especially in his fifth letter to exclude all activity of the mind from the notion of *believing*. And we may see his opposition to all who affirm that *faith, repentance*, or any thing else is required of us in order to our salvation, by the disgust he shows in the beginning of his third letter, at that question in the Assembly’s catechism, *What doth God require of us that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us for sin?* The answer doubtless offends him as much as the question, *God requireth of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with the diligent use of all the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth unto us the benefits of redemption.* But let any man of common sense judge, whether such passages as these in the Scriptures must not necessarily be understood as calls, exhortations or commands to sinners, implying some acts which are properly their own,—*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand—Repent ye and believe the gospel—Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish—Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out—The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.*—Whatever forced meaning our author may contrive to put upon these texts, that sense is certainly right

in which the hearers would most naturally receive them, and the curious distinction betwixt *faith* and the *act of the mind in believing* was not at that time invented; at least not made public.

It is impossible for our author, after all his subtlety, to show that believing does not imply an act of our minds, unless *thinking* implies no activity of the mind; for it is quite beyond the reach of common understanding to know how a man can believe a thing to be true, without *thinking it to be true*, or judging of its evidence. But what terrifies the letter writer is, if faith is allowed to be an act of the mind, then men are justified by means of their own act—What then?—He need not be so very much frightened—This matter can be made quite easy—This act does not originate from any power, work or contrivance for our own salvation, but from the testimony which God has given of his son in the gospel. It is not properly a work of the law, for it has the most direct relation to the gospel, and becomes a duty only by the publication of the grace of God in Christ Jesus: so we find *believing* opposed to *working* in the sense of the law, as being quite a distinct thing, Rom. iv. 5. *But to him that worketh not, but BELIEVETH on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

The word *believeth* in this text, must imply some activity of our own minds with respect to the object mentioned immediately after, or no sense at all can be made of it. Our *believing* justifies and saves, not as a meritorious act of legal obedience, but as it implies a clear view of our own guilt and misery, and an entire dependence

on the righteousness of God in Christ. This act therefore in its own nature excludes all boasting, agreeable to the argument in the third and fourth chapters to the Romans. It is no more the proper ground of our justification, than a criminal's bowing his knees in token of his thankful acceptance of a pardon from his king, if that were made necessary in order to his enjoying the benefit of a general proclamation, would unavoidably imply his endeavouring to merit a legal acquittance.

But however any critical reasonings may turn out, it is very certain that the apostolic doctrine of faith is quite clear of all such doubts and subtleties. The apostles speak of *believing* for justification in the same sense in which this word is used in common discourse; what they mean is, that what is proposed for our *belief* should be seen and acknowledged, in such a manner as corresponds to the full import, design, and divine evidence of the testimony; and no man, without some very critical instruction, would think of starting the doubt whether his own mind has any thing to do in *believing* a common testimony, when it deeply affects his interest, and requires such a conviction of its truth as may push him on through many difficulties.

Of how little use the law is, as introductory to the gospel, and how very inconsiderable a difference, in our author's opinion, it makes as to the probability of a man's obtaining the knowledge of divine mercy, whether the commands of God come with force upon his conscience and awaken him to a sense of his guilt and misery, or whether he remains insensible and hardened in sin; we may see by several passages in his fifth letter, Vol.

II. p. 16—20. where he considers the popular doctrine of *convictions*, &c. That we may not think he points only at some unskilful management of the doctrine about convictions of guilt, when he finds fault with the care, and pains, and exercises of the mind required; but may be sure that he looks upon every thing of this kind quite unnecessary, answering no other end but that of making a man proud of some distinction betwixt himself and the profane; he explains his mind in this manner.—“ 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.” Let us stop here, and take particular notice of this illustration of divine mercy.—*Mercy* is here supposed to have no regard to any thing else, but *mere misery*, and not to be under any kind of direction or limitation by wisdom, justice; or any other consideration whatever. Now, mercy which is in all respects unlimited must *always* be excited by the view of misery, and cannot but afford help and deliverance to *every* unhappy creature, as far as knowledge and power extend. For, to say, that mercy may pass by some very miserable objects, and leave them under great distress, when there is nothing at all to forbid their relief, is a contradiction to the very name of mercy. A king, whose character is *mercy* who has no regard to the justice of the

law, or the conduct of any of his subjects, must always pardon every criminal: If his compassions are touched with the sight of *mere misery*, he cannot leave any person to be punished, while it is in his power to deliver him; the moment he permits this, *mere mercy* ceases, and some considerations of wisdom and equity take place. The mercy of such a King could make no difference at all betwixt the malefactor led to execution in the jovial madness of strong drink, and him who is overwhelmed in sorrow, but must certainly set them both at liberty. But if our author hath no other view of divine mercy, than of the foolish pity of such a king, *his faith* has a great mixture of *falsehood* in it. The plain consequence of such a notion of divine mercy is, that the more wicked, insensible, and hardened any persons are, so much the fairer they stand for mercy: nay, all mankind, being miserable must certainly be objects of the unlimited mercy of God, and so be happy in the other world. There are several things in the letters which look very favourably towards the former of these consequences; and the zeal discovered for the repentance and salvation of the generality of sinners at death, intimates, that our author has no great aversion to the latter.—But let us hear him again.—“ 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, thro’ that righteousness unto eter-
 “ nal life.”—Here our author goes upon the sup-
 position, that no mercy can be shown, no prepa-
 ration made for the deliverance of a sinner from
 his misery, until there is a saving discovery of the
 righteousness of Christ: for he says, when mercy
 comes, it brings every requisite along with it,
 and operates all its effects by bringing the divine
 righteousness to view, *i. e.* by giving the know-
 ledge of the saving truth. Accordingly he ex-
 pressly says, a page or two forward,—“ Is it
 “ true that they have sinned or not; if it stands
 “ 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 mer-
 “ cy.”—Now, in other words, what he says here
 “ may be thus expressed; ‘ it is no matter what
 “ sense men have of their sin; whether they know
 “ any thing more about it than, in general that
 “ they have sinned; or whether they themselves
 “ have any striking apprehensions of damnation;
 “ if they are but really in danger of being dam-
 “ ed, this is enough to render them proper ob-
 “ jects of mercy, without any farther preparati-
 “ ons.” This same sentiment he illustrates by
 the *miraculous conversion of Paul*, whom “ the
 merciful truth surprized on the road of Damascus:
 and by an artful perversion of the Apostle’s ac-
 count of himself, 1. Tim. i. 16. he makes the
manner of this conversion a pattern to them which
should after believe; whereas the Apostle points
 out the *long suffering of God towards him as de-*
signed for a pattern; viz. that the chief of sin-
 ers might not look upon themselves utterly ex-

cluded from mercy, but be assured that God is
 long suffering and gracious, and that they also
 may be acquitted from their greatest guilt by be-
 lieving in Christ Jesus *who came into the world to*
save sinners.

Once more our author says, “ I must frankly
 “ own, that I see no more difference betwixt a
 “ careless and convicted sinner, than is betwixt
 “ a felon 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.” The bottom of this last
 frank declaration is this, viz. That a convicted
 sinner knows nothing of the mercy of God, and
 so has not so much as a general hope of deliver-
 ance from the punishment of his sins, no more than
 a felon convicted and sentenced by law, who,
 not having heard of a pardon for such offenders,
 despairs and dies. But let us only suppose a ge-
 neral proclamation of mercy issued, and that the
 criminal, however thoughtless and hardened be-
 fore, now becomes sensible of his danger, and
 begins to make some enquiry concerning the te-
 nor of that proclamation; then we shall easily see,
 he is in a more hopeful way of securing his own
 life, and becoming a good subject, than his fel-
 low who is still ranging his round at large.

Now since the letter-writer has struck such bold
 strokes to reduce man to a state of perfect inacti-
 vity, and make him a lifeless lump of matter;—
 since he has advanced a new notion of *divine mer-*
cy, which never regards what sense men have of
 their guilt, but will save all the miserable whether

they attend to their own misery or not;—since he has found out, that every man naturally has a sufficient conviction of sin, without being carried thro' any process of law;—he is certainly very consistent with himself in denying any agency of *the Holy Spirit* upon the mind of an unbeliever: for otherways, the main point would be yielded; if the spirit works at all upon the mind before the truth is communicated, something is done for the man in order to his believing. He therefore gives us his notion of the Holy Spirit's agency in these words,*—“The spirit of God acts as the soul, sense, or meaning of the words wherein the gospel is delivered.” It is difficult to know, whether he himself means any thing, when he speaks of the Holy Spirit as the **SOUL OF WORDS**: perhaps his notion might be as properly expressed by another well known phrase, **THE LIGHT WITHIN**. At least there seems to be some confusion in his ideas of the *personal* agency of the Spirit, while he thinks of it only as that power which the words of the gospel must have upon the mind whenever their true sense or meaning is understood; for throughout his letters he speaks very sparingly of the agency of the spirit of God in any other view than that of *truth working its genuine effects* by the perception of it. And so, as he contracts the whole gospel into one truth, he evidently limits the agency of the spirit to that one truth which saves men; and inclines to consider the spirit as undistinguishable from that *temper of mind* formed by the knowledge of that one truth. Thus he explains himself, Vol. I. p. 295, where, speaking of the power of the prime ene-

* Vol. II. p. 101.

my of the truth (whom, in another place, he very complaisantly calls a *certain great genius*, and treats with uncommon politeness thro' the whole of that ingenious history of him which he gives us in the latter part of his fourth letter) as manifest wherever the sentiment of self-dependence appears, and working only in and by that principle, he sets *the truth* in opposition to the agency of that evil spirit, and speak thus; “Wherever the sacred truth is believed, there acts the *spirit of the truth* whose agency is inseparable from it; and wherever the faith of it shews itself working by love, there the power of that Holy Spirit is manifest. And, in general, it may be said of every doctrine about the concerns of man with God, that a certain spirit or temper of mind goes along with it.”—Again he says, Vol. II. p. 102, 103. “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 said to resist the Holy Ghost.”—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.” By all the foregoing quotations, I think it appears, that our author denies any a-

gency of the Holy Spirit upon the mind before a man is acquainted with the saving truth.

Finally ; that he may compleat his scheme, our author denies an unbeliever the privilege of *prayer*.

To prove this, I shall content myself with quoting one or two plain sentences. Vol. I. p. 153; having observed that the first approach of the divine grace to men is made by presenting to their view the gift of righteousness, He says, “ I here-
 “ fore when we hear men who are pained about
 “ acceptance with God, taught to expect and
 “ pray for grace, to help them to convictions;
 “ faith, repentance, or any thing else, in order
 “ to their finding relief in Christ’s righteousness;
 “ we may be very sure, that this is not the true
 “ grace of God, but the false, or a corruption
 “ of the true. And we may be as sure; that
 “ God will regard no prayer but that of faith.”

And that we may not think he means any other *faith* but that which saves men; his meaning is precisely determined by what immediately follows;—“ The popular preachers themselves,
 “ finding some difficulty here, to reconcile their
 “ self-justifying labour to scripture language, in-
 “ cline to talk to us of some preliminary faith,
 “ as necessary to introduce the principal faith,
 “ that is a faith in God’s ability to work faith in
 “ us.” Our author may make himself merry, by punning upon the word *faith*: but he who has not some faith in God, especially in his justice, power and wrath, cannot believe in Jesus Christ his son.

Thus Mr. Sandeman represents all men, until they know the truth in a saving manner, as in a state of utter despair, like the devils. knowing no-

thing, believing nothing at all, but what natural conscience suggests, left entirely destitute of all divine help, discouraged even from the least desire to obtain mercy, and forbidden to ask so much as one petition of the God of heaven.

No scheme could be invented more directly tending to undermine the gospel under pretence of great friendship to it, and to harden men in unbelief and excess of wickedness, than this which we have in the letters. Instead of magnifying the righteousness of God, it tends to give men the most dishonourable thoughts of the wisdom and equity of the divine government. What can be more contrary to the whole tenor of the sacred writings, than to assure men, that *mercy* will break over every obstacle to save them, if God has determined the lot in their favour;—that however insensible they are, or abandoned to wickedness, they really will stand a better chance for mercy, than if they should set themselves to consider and learn the way of righteousness;—that tho’ they may indeed be told, in a sarcastic way, to be perfect and keep the law, this would not only be a vain and foolish attempt, but render them still more abominable in the sight of God, as they must thereby be labouring after righteousness; in direct opposition to the divine righteousness;—and that in plain terms they are not required and are wholly incapable of doing any thing of any kind, in order to gain the knowledge of the gospel, and must not indulge the least thought or desire, or make the least motion in order to escape misery and find the way to happiness.

Is it possible any man should be so far infatuated as to take such doctrines of licentiousness to be

founded on the word of God? Even the letter-writer himself must be ashamed of them, when he reviews his own scheme. Will he speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him? The divine righteousness never was designed to excuse, much less to encourage men in sin; tho' it must first be made known to men by a revelation from Heaven, yet when it is revealed, and all proper evidences are set before them, either their natural faculties may and ought to be exercised in order to the knowledge and belief of this revelation, or else there can be no such thing as the aggravated sin of rejecting Jesus Christ and his gospel.

But if it is not agreeable to my design in this part of the examination of the letters, to enter far into the arguments which may be brought against our author's scheme, I shall therefore dismiss the present question, How is faith to be obtained? And proceed briefly to consider the last, viz. *In what manner are we to gain comfort by the gospel?*

This coincides with the foregoing question, so far as comfort is inseparably connected with faith, and must be proportioned to the *consciousness of our own faith*. Our author affirms that comfort and relief are inseparable from *believing*; but since he seems to agree entirely with other divines in distinguishing the *assurance of faith* from the *assurance of hope*, the present question may be considered as more especially relating to the assurance of hope.

Now it will properly finish this first part of our remarks, if I show that no *comfort* can ever be gained from the gospel upon our author's plan. That this may appear, *we must observe in the*

first place, that Mr. Sandeman does not very openly differ from other preachers as to the methods in which the *assurance of hope* is gained. He affirms that faith must shew itself by love and good works; and that christians must examine themselves as to their actions and the motives of them; he says, * "It cannot farther 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." He speaks of the witness of the Spirit as "giving a clear evidence of the
" truth, and comforting all who follow the
" faith and practice of the Apostles;" and sometimes writes in very strong terms of confidence towards God. Indeed he discovers no great affection for "*heart work*," or the inward exercises of the soul about religion; and endeavours to beat off professors from "poring much
" upon their own hearts in order to form a judgment of themselves." He speaks also very sparingly of the mortification of inward lusts, and improvement in humility, meekness, patience, and other essential parts of the Christian temper; and seems very shy of taking into his scheme of religion those virtues which are generally *esteemed among men*, and recommended as *lovely and of good report, and praise worthy*. On the contrary he very much confines his notion of *love and good works*, to the love of those brethren towards one another who have associated upon his own plan of fellowship, and those distributions of their substance which are made under the direction of

* Vol. II. p. 172.

such churches. So that much fault may be found in his scheme on all these accounts, which may be particularly pointed out in the last part of these remarks.

We must *also observe*, that he does not hold any absolute assurance of our own salvation, or certainty of a christian's perseverance. Speaking against Mr. Hervey's notion of assurance as connected with faith, he says, Vol. I. p. 34, " *That Christ died for me, is a point not so easily settled—this is a point which the scripture nowhere ascertains; so far from it, that it often affirms the final perdition of many, not merely hearers of the gospel, but who have heard and received the word with joy; yea of those who have made such progress that their only deficiency is, that their fruit came not to perfection. It affirms that such as have been enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have been made PARTAKERS OF THE HOLY GHOST, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, may yet fall away irrecoverably.*" Now if we compare this concession, which the scriptures oblige him to make, with what we have before seen of his sentiments, viz, that the saving truth always finds men in midnight darkness, &c. and that the agency of the Holy Spirit is always inseparable from the knowledge of ~~that~~ truth, we shall see that he is forced to contradict himself. He must either allow, that men may be not only wonderfully enlightened, but made partakers of the Holy Ghost, *i. e.* have saving faith, and yet fall away irrecoverably; or grant that the holy spirit may act upon the minds of men before they

know that truth which is effectual to their justification. I do not see how he can avoid this dilemma, viz. either to affirm that men may fall away irrecoverably from the true faith of the gospel, or hold that unbelievers may have the spirit acting on their souls. For he says, Vol. II. p. 171, 172, " *believers are preserved from falling away, by the fear of falling away. Paul says to the Hebrews, Let us fear lest a promise being left &c. Yea, he says of himself, I keep under my body &c.—Thus they that believe come to be settled in the assurance of hope.*" Again, in the appendix to the third edition of the Letters, Vol. II. p. 305, we have the sentiments of one of his friends, which doubtless he publishes as fully expressing his own; who, speaking of rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, says, " *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 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; 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.” All this is very true, very agreeable to the sacred scriptures, but not at all consistent with the foundation on which Mr. Sandeman is building.

Let us now see how all these things will hang together. According to the first principles of the scheme we have been considering under the preceding question, all to whom the saving truth comes, must be persons who know nothing of the righteousness of God, ‘ who are not seeking after it, who are in midnight darkness, extremely insensible, and dead, wholly destitute of the Spirit’s agency, and in a state of utter despair.’ But now, in the next breath, he tells us, men may be enlightened, comforted by the gospel, made partakers of the Holy Ghost, have the rejoicing of hope, and in short every thing which a true believer has, as far as it is possible for a man to be conscious of any thing in himself, may go on and make great proficiency in good works, and yet at length turn out to be an unbeliever, and a castaway. What shall we make of this jargon? an unbeliever, enlightened; and yet in midnight darkness!—partaking of the Holy Ghost, and tasting the good word of God; and yet not knowing the sense or meaning of the words of the gospel, being entirely destitute of the Spirit of truth!—rejoicing in hope of the glory of God; and yet “ knowing nothing but “ what makes him miserable!”—having no faith of any kind; and yet having no other fault but this, that his fruit does not come to perfection!

Is there any thing in the first comfort and relief

which comes with faith? Can any man distinguish it from the joy of the hypocrite? If not, why is this opposed to the despair of an unbeliever, and made the criterion of the knowledge of the truth?

May a person have the full assurance of faith? May he be sure that what he knows is the very same truth which the apostles believed; that truth which saves men? If he may, no reason can be assigned why he may not have the full assurance of hope, for we must be certain of salvation, if we are certain that our faith is genuine, the very same which the gospel requires; unless we doubt of that divinely established connexion, that *he that believeth shall be saved*. Our author will not easily acknowledge such assurance; because then all fear of falling away will be removed, and so one part of his plan entirely demolished. Nor indeed do we desire him to yield this article, since it is the constant exhortation of the gospel to all christians to be diligent in making their calling and election sure.

But if a man cannot be sure that what he knows is the very truth which saves men, how can he have sufficient encouragement to pray, or engage in any of the duties of religion? He cannot be assured that one of his petitions is heard. He cannot firmly depend upon any assistance of the Spirit of God. He must feel a fatal damp to all his comfort and joy, arising from a constant suspicion that he may be still entirely ignorant of the truth; and no more likely to be acquainted with it than the most hardened sinner that breathes. Yea, this consideration is enough to keep his mind always in a state of the most dis-

travelling uneasiness, that if his faith is not at present the very same which the gospel declares to be saving, not only his hope is vain, but all his works, under whatever plausible pretence they are done, only serve to render him more damnably criminal. Instead of having any hope, that by going on still in the ways of well-doing he may be more likely to know the saving truth, if he has not yet obtained it, and to gain greater comfort by it; he will be liable to continual depression of spirit by this melancholy reflection, that the more careful, sincere, and diligent he endeavours to be in his obedience to Christ, so far he renders himself a ranker pharisee, and makes his own damnation sure. Who then would travel through such a long and difficult road, at the hazard of finding himself at last got at an irrecoverable distance from the kingdom of heaven, when he might have had a much better chance of being happy, if he had made no attempt in order to his own salvation, but left it entirely to divine sovereignty to grant him faith in his last moments.

If a man cannot consider any commands or exhortations as directed to him, until he is conscious of a new instinct implanted in him, or, in other words, of his own knowledge of the gospel; but must look upon himself still as under a law which requires absolute perfection, and yet assures him that he only makes himself worse and worse by endeavouring to obey; what shall he do? If he cannot be quite sure his faith is genuine, he can never be clearly persuaded that he ought to regard the precepts any more than the promises of the gospel; or indeed that he shall

not make himself more miserable by every step he takes. No comfort therefore can be gained by any works of obedience to the gospel, unless a man is first of all sure of his faith, because he cannot have any sufficient confidence that his works are the fruits of faith or that any of these things are required of him.

It is impossible for a sinner who is in such a state of darkness and despair, as our author represents every man to be in, who has not believed unto justification, to find any comfort, until he knows some reason of hope; or until he has some good reason to suppose he is delivered from that dreadful condition, in which he is threatened with amazing destruction, while he is deprived of the least power of motion in order to his escape. But he cannot have any reason at all to imagine himself delivered from this state of despair, unless he knows his justification and salvation to be possible. Now our author affirms that "Every one who is persuaded that he *may be justified*, is in reality justified, and accordingly finds joy and peace in believing."* But since he denies that a man can be quite sure he is in a justified state, he must also deny that any person can be sure of the *possibility* of his own justification: the plain consequence of which is, that no professor can ever obtain comfortable hope, because he never certainly knows that he *may be justified*.

It is difficult to reconcile the several parts of our authors scheme, so as to make any tolerable sense of them, upon any other principle than this, viz. that we are to take the first general know-

* Corresp. with S. P. p. 31.

ledge, or seeming persuasion *that Christ hath made attonement for sins*, to be saving faith; and to let out from this, as the “turning point from “despair to good hope,” to make our faith perfect by works. He labours with all his skill to keep men from troubling themselves to find out whether this faith is the pure unmixed truth, by any immediate effects on their hearts; because this would fall in very far with the popular doctrine, and occasion the same exercises. But he has a shorter way to comfort; it is only to comply with his terms of communion, or, in other words, to come into the bosom of the MOTHER CHURCH, as he has lately settled the order of it; and we need not be distressed with any farther doubts whether we know the truth, but may go to work as cheerfully as we please.

But what if we should be deceived in this first faith? We must not doubt it—much less give it up:—for then all our comfort is lost, and we can have no heart to do any thing more.

Our author assures us “it is highly criminal “for any man to *re-examine* the faith, or call “in question the truth,”* *i. e. what he believes*: we must therefore set out upon a mere presumption, and persist in a falsehood, if we have not obtained the very faith of the gospel; nor can we ever know but that all our hope and high enjoyments are *the light of our own fire, and the sparks which we have kindled*; unless giving all our goods to feed the poor, according to the orders of the church, may be taken as an infallible

* Vol. II. p. 141.

evidence of true charity. But if faith is of so critical and slippery a nature, that the warmest professors from the apostolic times to this day have, almost to a man, been fatally deceived, this is quite enough to damp all the comfort of every one who trembles at the thought of self-deceit.

Upon the whole, our Author's scheme has a plain tendency to “blindfold and decoy men;” to take off their attention from the genuine effects of faith, and fix it on the singularities of a party; to harden sinners in a course of wickedness, and lead men along in the direct road to destruction, with a delusive expectation of being saved by Christ's righteousness while they are not cleansed from their old sins.

The End of PART First.

AN
IMPARTIAL EXAMINATION

OF

Mr. Robert Sandeman's

LETTERS on THERON and ASPASIO.

PART II.

CONTAINING,

A particular Consideration of the Character of the Pharisees, and of Jesus, as drawn by Mr. Sandeman.—Remarks upon his Conversion of Jonathan the Jew.—The Conversion of Cornelius the Gentile, as a Contrast to Jonathan's.

By Samuel Langdon, D. D.

Pastor of the first Church in Portsmouth in New-Hampshire.

And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord,—Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man, by false accusation, I restore him four fold. And Jesus said unto him,—This day is salvation come to this house.
LUKE XIX. 8, 9.

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P A R T II.

SECTION I. *A particular Consideration of the Character of the Pharisees, as drawn by Mr. Sandeman.*

THE Author of the Letters on Theron and Aspasio, in his third letter, endeavours to modernize the antient controversy about the gospel, and so to place the *popular preachers* and their adherents in the same light in which Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul represent the Pharisees, and Judaizing teachers. Upon this, he values himself much, for in his letters of correspondence with S. P. (Lett. ii. p. 20.) he says, *If one would enter into my views, or yet oppose me pertinently, he ought particularly to consider my third letter, &c;*

It would therefore be unpardonable for me to pass over these characters, which he seems to have worked up with his utmost skill, that he might persuade us, by the most artful touches, that every *appearance of devotion and righteousness*, is the mark of a Pharisee; that Jesus Christ shewed the highest indignation against all virtue, and especially against those good works which are highly esteemed among men; and that the conversion of a sinner is always effected in such a supernatural way, as entirely excludes all previous means, endeavours, or preparation of the heart,

PART II. A

either by our own labour or any operations of the Holy Spirit upon the understanding or conscience.

The *character of the Pharisees* is a master-piece of the kind; he has laboured with all his art to work it up to the height of moral beauty, that by one stroke of disgrace, he might then fully all the glory of modern piety, and bring into contempt the most unexceptionable and admired characters of the principal leaders in religion. If we trust our author's description, which is professedly designed to serve his own hypothesis, we must entertain a very different notion of the Pharisees from what has been generally received; and they will appear far less contemptible in comparison with ourselves than we have hitherto supposed.—“No christian nation, says he, * can claim the precedency of the antient Jews, as to the knowledge of virtue or piety; and the Pharisees had the foremost reputation among them, both for integrity of life, and fervour in devotion.”—Strange mistake of moderns! To impute the worst hypocrisy to the very best men of so wise, pious, and virtuous a nation as the Jews; who knew as much by the *moonshine* of the law, as we do by the *sun-shine* of the gospel! Who knows but that we may soon be convinced of another mistake in supposing the Jews had any precedency of the antient *Heathen*, or enjoyed any advantage by having the oracles of God committed to them? And why may we not draw a parallel betwixt the piety and devotion of David, Solomon, and other famous Jewish saints, and Plato, Socrates, and other Pagan philosophers of

*Let. iii. p. 78. Edit. 3.

foremost reputation, for integrity of life, and fervour of devotion?

But are we indeed deceived in our notion of the Pharisees? Is it injurious to suppose their religion was nothing but hypocrisy; that they were really men of bad morals, though they artfully concealed their wickedness, and so kept up an high reputation for religion? Certainly they have been very unfairly represented, if our author has done them justice; and we christians have indeed been led by prejudice, rather than by any just reason, to entertain a contemptible opinion of them. Let us see how we are to correct our notions, by a new picture which he has drawn for this purpose, in which the features in the original copy, almost worn out with age, are with great art and pains restored, and shown to have a great deal of natural beauty, even where they have been generally censured as exhibiting something quite shocking.

If we may rely on this copy, which is given out as very nearly coming up to the perfection of the original.* “We are not to imagine the Pharisees were worse men than ourselves:—They outwardly appeared righteous, and were *highly esteemed* among men.—They were men who studied to keep a good conscience, and were zealous for God. The chief thing for which we find them censured in the New-Testament is, that they presumed God had a peculiar regard for them, and would accept them, on account of the excellency of their lives. This their presumption did not arise from a firm persuasion, that they had done enough to pro-

* Let. iii. p. 78. 81

“ cure the favour of God, and eternal life;—but
 “ it proceeded upon the difference they perceiv-
 “ ed betwixt thir own character, and that of o-
 “ ther men; this naturally drew their attention
 “ to increase that difference; and consequently
 “ they had the less attention to spare for no-
 “ ticing another difference of greater moment,
 “ *i. e.* the difference betwixt their own charac-
 “ ter, and the perfection of the divine law.—
 “ The law according to which they sought to be
 “ found righteous, or accepted with God, was
 “ indeed no other than the law delivered by Mo-
 “ ses; the law which requires **GODLINESS** and
 “ **HUMANITY** in perfection, as also the law of
 “ nature requires.—Tho’ their works were far
 “ from coming up to what the law required, in
 “ order to constitute them good, or well pleasing
 “ to God, yet they bore such a conformity to its
 “ precepts in the eyes of men, as to pass for the
 “ works of the law in their esteem. Had the divine
 “ law been given only like human laws, as a rule
 “ by which men were to judge of one another, the
 “ Pharisees undoubtedly stood fairest for being jus-
 “ tified by it.—Though the Pharisees character
 “ did in reality respect more the praise of men,
 “ than that of God, yet we must not consider
 “ them as regardless of the approbation of God
 “ and their own consciences.— Their whole
 “ conduct was not directed merely by ostentation:
 “ No; they were zealous for God while they
 “ were ambitious to distinguish themselves a-
 “ mong men. They were concerned to have
 “ the approbation of their own consciences, as
 “ to their difference from, or excellency above
 “ other men; so that they would not, even

“ in secret, have allowed themselves in doing
 “ what was unsuitable to, or omitted what
 “ was requisite, to support their difference from
 “ other men. They studied so to keep a good
 “ conscience in this respect, as that they might
 “ be able, in their addresses to God to ap-
 “ peal to him for the truth and reality of their
 “ difference; as would appear from the pro-
 “ ceedings of the Pharisee in the Parable. The
 “ mistake then of the Pharisees lay in this
 “ that they presumed that what distinguished
 “ them from other men, would recommend
 “ them to God. But the greatness of their mis-
 “ take is perceived only by such as believe the
 “ gospel. And indeed it had never been effectually
 “ demonstrated to the conviction of any, if
 “ a righteousness exceeding theirs had not ap-
 “ peared in the world.—And the gospel un-
 “ doubtedly gives their righteousness its high
 “ place of distinction, when it says, that the
 “ righteousness necessary for entering into the
 “ kingdom of heaven *must exceed theirs.*”

These are the main strokes of that character
 which has been so much wronged by the partiality
 of modern christians. Except their mistake
 as to that perfection of righteousness necessary in
 order to acceptance with God, nothing can be
 added to make their character excellent. Accord-
 ing to this description they were men of strict pi-
 ety and virtue, as far as men can go toward per-
 fection, and were justly held in high esteem by all
 as far as it was possible to form a judgment of
 them by the Law of God, as the rule by which
 men are to judge of one another. Their con-
 nual study and labour was to comply with the

law of Moses, not considered merely as ceremonial, but as moral, requiring **GODLINESS** and **HUMANITY** in perfection, and exactly corresponding with the law of nature. However deficient they might be in the sight of God, it was impossible for men to discover any great flaw in their righteousness; it was the very best in every respect which could be found among men; their lives were truly excellent; and as they really excelled in all moral righteousness, and that not only in outward appearance, but in heart, no wonder they could appeal to God for the truth and reality of their obedience to the great precepts of his law, beyond all other men. Upon the whole, the Pharisees, according to this view of them, appear to have been the very best patterns of righteousness ever seen in the world, who never were or could be excelled, until Jesus Christ eclipsed the glory of their righteousness by his own. And none, even now under the best advantages of the gospel, can perceive the defects of their righteousness, and the great evil thereof, but “* those
“ few who are christians in the antient or first
“ sense of the word.”

It must be supposed this picture is designed to represent only some of the better sort of men among the Pharisees, who could challenge the severest judges to censure their moral character; who could say, “ Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day :” no; we are presented with a general view of the whole sect, delineated so as to distinguish the main body from all other parties: the

deficiencies of a few individuals are not to be imputed to the whole; but the generality were very honest, pious, conscientious men, not only blameless, but of the most exemplary morals.

Having this fair representation of a character which has hitherto through the prejudices of Christians, been viewed in a very odious light, we may be well prepared to observe the great likeness which it bears to modern christians of the greatest fame for piety and virtue; for without doubt, if they are very *devout*, and very *strict*, and *conscientious* not only in their worship, but in their morals, they may easily bear a comparison with such excellent Pharisees; nor have any a fair chance of escaping being ranked with them, but such as take good care to avoid the charge of paying a scrupulous regard to the *great law of Godliness and Humanity*. Though our Author is so cautious as to point out the similitude with special reference to the ground of our acceptance with God, yet it is plain he means to throw all into a lump with the Pharisees, who have any *esteem* among men as devout and virtuous persons. He himself declares that the application is to be made to the * “ *great majority of those called christians, whether popish or protestant, churchmen, or dissenters, and excepts only a few who are christians in the ancient or first sense of the word,*” *i. e.* that very little number who have embraced his scheme.

To sum up this character according to our Author's account of it; the great unhappiness of the Pharisees was, that *they took so much pains in*

very respect to obey the Laws of God, and not only had regard to the approbation of God and their own consciences, but to the judgment of men, and gained high esteem by their unexceptionable piety and virtue. And so the main controversy carried on betwixt Jesus and the Pharisees, turned not to much upon this, viz. Whether their religion was all gross hypocrisy and their attention fixed upon the most trifling punctilios, while they omitted the weightier matters of the Law? but upon this surprizing question, viz. Whether they who took most pains to know and do the whole will of God, according to the great eternal law of Righteousness, did not lose all their labour and make themselves so much the more abominable in his sight?

But now as we have reason to suspect some imposition designed by our author in drawing this picture, let us endeavour to compare it with the original copy, and see whether there is not more art than truth in some of these new touches. How were the Pharisees drawn by the first great Master, who perfectly knew all men, and will not deceive us? The current interpretations of the Law among the Jews doubtless were taken from the most approved teachers; and these were the Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses's seat: we may therefore collect how well the Pharisees understood the great law of Godliness and Humanity, by the crude notions of it, which prevailed among the people.

In a Sermon preached to a great multitude, Jesus points out many gross mistakes they were guilty of as to the most important precepts of the Law. According to their doctrine, wilful mur-

der was indeed a capital crime; but it never entered into their heads that the law against this included a prohibition of *hatred, anger, revenge*, and all those evil passions and the expressions of them in which murder originates. They were ready to present *gifts and offerings* to God, even beyond what he required; but they never thought of *making reparation for the wrongs they had done to a brother or neighbour*, or taking any steps in order to be reconciled to those whom they had offended. They were severe enough against actual *adultery*; but never suspected that the most *secret lusts* of the heart were evil, or reflected on the danger of indulging sin in its *first motions* in the members of the body. As to the *original law of marriage*, they had a way of dissolving the bonds of it without any difficulty: for if a man took a dislike to his wife, he might get rid of her at his pleasure, only by giving her a written instrument of divorce, that it might appear she was fully dismissed. *Common swearing* they held to be no breach of the law, though they taught that *perjury* and non-performance of vows were great sins; and even the most solemn oaths might be got over, by some curious distinctions they had contrived. That law of retaliation, *an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*, which was given as a general direction for the administration of public justice, they perverted in such a manner as to make it a rule and warrant for private revenge. And from the great law of *love to our neighbour*, they drew this very ingenious inference, that we are allowed and commanded to hate our enemy.

Indeed these public teachers were not so entirely

corrupt but that they delivered many things which were good, and kept very close to the letter of the law. However deficient they were in *moral* instructions, they were thoroughly acquainted with all the rites and ceremonies which Moses had commanded, and strictly adhered to the *externals* of their ecclesiastical constitution. Instead of omitting any of these things, they were rather inclined to overstrain many nice points, and make the yoke of Moses still heavier; though at the same time that they laid heavy burdens upon the people, they themselves were careful to keep as clear of them as possible. Even when their doctrine was good, their practice was bad; and therefore, when Jesus commands the people to observe whatever they taught agreeable to the law of Moses, he warns them at the same time against following the example of men, who said but did not practise what they required of others.

We find them described by several very distinguishing characters; such as these,—That they did all their works to be seen of men: That they were fond of being saluted with honourable titles as public leaders in religion, and assumed the pre-eminence in all companies; and that this haughty ambitious spirit was the true cause of their unbelief and opposition to the Gospel. That they were covetous, and had the art of covering over the most unjust and wicked designs with the veil of sanctity; for they would pray in all public places till their very breath was spent, only that they might have the advantage of getting widows houses into their hands, and converting them to their own use. They were unbounded

in their zeal for making profelytes to their church and party; but such was their religion, that no man was made at all the better by joining with them, but notoriously worse than before. For as to *morality*, they had a knack of explaining away most of the fundamental precepts of it. They could shew men how they might be released from almost all other kinds of oaths, but such as bound them to do something for the church; and excuse *children* from all farther concern about the support of their *aged parents*, if they would declare all they had to be a gift devoted to the temple. They were extremely punctual and scrupulous as to every thing which belonged to the outward form and revenues of the church, and very tenacious of the traditions of the Fathers; but while they strained at a gnat they easily swallowed a camel; while they thought it no less than sacrilege to withhold tithes, even of such trifling articles as mint, annise, and cummin, they entirely passed over the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and the love of God. Indeed they took pains to make their outward behaviour fair and plausible so far as it was likely to fall under public notice; they prayed, fasted even twice a week, and gave alms, but all in the most public manner, that all might admire their extraordinary piety, while they freely indulged themselves in all kinds of secret wickedness; so that they were like a cup or platter cleansed on the outside, but very foul within; or like whited sepulchres adorned outwardly, and made very beautiful, but within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. To men who judged only as they were publicly taught, and

were easily imposed upon by extraordinary pretensions of piety, the Pharisees appeared very righteous; but when more closely and strictly examined by those who could judge better of the weighty matters of the law, they might easily be discovered to be full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

These characters, which still remain quite legible in the New Testament, are sufficiently descriptive, and plainly shew us what sort of persons the Pharisees were, as distinguished from all other men. But who would believe them to be the very same sort of men which our author has presented to view with such marks of a masterly and designing genius? If we consider them in the light in which he has been pleased to place them, who can justly find fault with these *eminent patterns* of piety and virtue. They went as far as human nature can go: whether we consider the ceremonial or moral law; whether we judge of righteousness by the outward conduct, or the more secret inward exercises of a good conscience, they came nearer to perfection, in a conformity to every known rule of godliness and humanity, than any set of men whatever, either before or since. And though they were to blame indeed in having too much regard to the praise of men, yet who can exceed them, until a power intirely supernatural opens men's eyes to see that better righteousness which the gospel reveals; and even in this case, there is not the least reason to suppose, that those *very few* who are christians in the ancient sense of the word, can ever go beyond the Pharisees in the practice of righteousness. This is their amiable character, if we can rely on Mr. Sandeman's drawing; but when we review

the original, how strangely different are the characters we see. It would puzzle the most acute genius to find out how they can be the *same*. According to the latter; *pride, superstition, hypocrisy, covetousness, and disregard to every grand and essential branch of morality*, are their reigning characters, which strike us at first view, and compel us to join in the heaviest censures which Jesus passes upon them. According to the *former*, we find every excellency according to all the known laws of righteousness, and nothing blameable, except this, that they went no farther in righteousness than was *possible* for man, and did not acknowledge that far superior righteousness, which they never *could* know by any means whatever, until it was discovered to them in a way above, and contrary to all the natural faculties of man.

What strange ideas of piety and virtue haunt our author's mind? Are these the men whom he sets up as *patterns of righteousness*? patterns of perfection, as far as it can be carried by the strictest regard to the divine law? whose defects could never have been discovered, if a righteousness exceeding theirs had not appeared in the character of Jesus Christ? Are these the fathers, by whose name, all, without exception, who have any *esteem* among men for piety and virtue, must be called? Why should we wholly lose many other antient names of distinction? Why may not the *Saducees* have some successors? And why are we obliged to consider all mankind, except a very few enlightened souls, as earnestly engaged in the fruitless toil of following after righteousness to the utmost of their power?

When we attend to the description of the Pha-

rites which Jesus Christ himself has given us, and take into consideration what his Apostles have said of Judaizing teachers, we are more naturally led to think of many zealous founders of Monasteries; the contrivers and venders of pardons, indulgencies, and other kinds of godly merchandize; the compilers of ecclesiastical canons, to make up the deficiencies of the scriptures; grave teachers of pious frauds, equivocations, and mental reservations; the devout admirers of ecclesiastical wealth and power; subtle managers of masquerade religion; and submissive multitudes yielding implicit obedience to the commands of sneering priests, and devoutly observing all the customs and traditions of the church; repeating their prayers by tale, undergoing various kinds of mortification, and earnestly hoping to purchase heaven by large donations to the church, or to make amends by superabundant devotion and charity, for the continued indulgence of beloved sins.

Let the same characters, wherever they are found combined, bear the same name. Let men of all parties who pretend to *high devotion*, and yet are carrying on schemes of *covert wickedness*, be branded as Pharisees; but let us not confound all distinctions, and call *every devout man* a Pharisee. Is it a crime to be devout, or to pray, fast, and give alms, because the Pharisees did so in an hypocritical manner? Must every man be an hypocrite who endeavours to comply with the duties which the divine law plainly requires, because the Pharisees pretended to pay a strict regard to the law, while they omitted the *weightiest matters* of it? According to such odd kind of reasoning, it will be necessary for every man to shun every thing

which looks like aiming to obey the law of nature or revelation, lest he should prove himself to be an hypocrite; and the safest way is, *never to trouble ourselves* about the practice of godliness or humanity.

Our author, having touched up the picture of the Pharisees according to his mind, makes no scruple of its answering the purpose designed.— He means, that we should see the popular preachers and their followers here represented all in a groupe, mixed with a variety of company, all earnestly labouring to distinguish themselves by their own righteousness, and plotting against the gospel. But how are we to draw the inference, and be sure of making a just comparison? In this manner, if he may be permitted to guide us, *viz.* ‘The Pharisees were the best moralists, the most devout and pious men of any in that day, or at any time before or since; and as such they were generally *admired and esteemed* among the people: therefore the popular preachers being the *best men* now to be found, and maintaining a *good character* among the bulk of the people, must be the Pharisees of the present day.’ According to a certain maxim of the kingdom of heaven, the emphasis of which our author distinguishes by capitals, *viz. That which is HIGHLY ESTEEMED amongst men is ABOMINATION in the sight of God*; he would have us pass censure upon the popular preachers in the lump, without hesitation; for as it is evident they are generally in *high esteem*, he looks upon the consequence as unavoidable, that *therefore they are an abomination in the sight of God*. But where will this sophistry lead us? Does God hate every thing, without limita-

tion or exception, which is in high esteem among men? Then we may be forced to make some such inferences as these, *viz.* That God hates, *truth, justice, mercy,* and whatever is most agreeable to the great law written upon the conscience of every man, because these things generally meet with high esteem and commendation among mankind. But some difficult questions may be asked, which ought to be answered before we can acknowledge this maxim as universally true, in all cases, *viz.* How *Jesus Christ* himself could be so highly esteemed by the multitudes, who thronged about him wherever he went, and applauded and honoured him with Hosannas, and yet continue pleasing in the sight of his father? How christians can shine as lights in the world by their good works, without some danger of *gaining credit* among men, on account of their good behaviour? What is meant by that apostolic exhortation, *to think of and do things which are lovely and of good report, and whatever may be to their praise?*— We might also start this Quere, Whether the high esteem in which the *Apostles* have always been held amongst the multitudes of those called christians in all ages, might not, by the same easy inference, as is drawn respecting popular preachers, be a full proof, that those admired teachers of christianity, were abominable in the sight of God?

Upon the whole, we have now sufficient evidence, that the author of the letters has endeavoured to impose upon us, in his description of the Pharisees, to serve his own turn, and bring into disgrace men, whose characters were every other way out of the reach of slander.

S E C T. II.

A particular Consideration of the Character of Jesus Christ as drawn by Mr. Sandeman.

LET us now turn to the character of Jesus Christ, which our author has drawn, and see how he has executed this part of his work. In this, to keep up unity of design, very essential in a work of genius, he exhibits *the character of Jesus* in such a point of view as may at once shew the contrast wherein it stood to that of the Pharisees and all other men.

This distinguished character therefore, is given us, in the first place by a *negative description*, contrived in such a manner, as to exclude from the character of Jesus every thing *highly esteemed* among men. He assures us, * “ it was not distinguished by those shining qualities, by which great men, and promoters of the temporal happiness of society, have gained the applause of their cotemporaries, and the veneration of posterity. It was a character in low life, wherein *godliness* and *humanity* *SHONE* forth in perfection. It respected the *good of men*, and the *praise of God*. It respected the eternal good of individuals of all ranks, without regard to what class or society of men they belonged; without any view to form them into any faction or party connected by secular ties. Jesus Christ promoted no *new art* or *science* for the

* Let. iii. p. 82.

“ benefit of society. Tho’ all means for forming
 “ the most perfect character were within his pow-
 “ er; instead of distinguishing himself by such
 “ acts of *generosity* as commonly draw the ap-
 “ plause and attachment of mankind. He chose
 “ to appear in such a condition, as to need the
 “ *alms* of others for supplying himself with the
 “ necessaries of life. He disputed not the secu-
 “ lar privileges of any rank or class of men.—
 “ He gave forth no new *laws* for the better go-
 “ vernment of states or kingdoms; nor did he
 “ urge a more *vigorous execution* of any penal
 “ statutes then in force, for the better suppressi-
 “ on of irreligion and immorality. He did not
 “ set on foot any work of public *reformation*.—
 “ He left the *world* in all respects *just as he found*
 “ *it*, having only made a farther discovery of
 “ the evil thereof to his own few disciples,
 “ whom he left exposed to its hatred, warning
 “ them to expect no better treatment from it
 “ than he himself met with. This character, tho’
 “ unadorned with those things which draw the
 “ *admiration* of the world, and tho’ held in the
 “ greatest *contempt* by all ranks of men in it,
 “ was yet found perfectly well-pleasing to God,
 “ and received the highest testimony of his ap-
 “ probation and delight.”

Now, if our author in this negative description
 of the character of Jesus Christ, only meant to
 oppose it to every thing *falsely called excellent* by
 the world, we should readily join with him; but
 if his design is to insinuate, that the gospel gives
no manner of encouragement to any thing which
 relates to the *benefit and happiness* of man in this
 present life; that it *discountenanceth* all those

great and good actions by which the temporal
 good of society is promoted, and *condemns* the
 applause by which mankind generally honour per-
 sons of distinguished merit, the way is open for
 disputation. We must be very diligently, not
 to observe, that our author, in this negative cha-
 racter, aims more at satirical reflections on se-
 veral notions which he supposes to be current
 in the present day, than at speaking plain truth,
 and making proper distinctions; and endeavours
 to render every thing ridiculous which does not
 fall in with his own scheme of christianity. That
 he may banter *generosity* as making any part of
 the religion of christians, he tells us, ‘ Jesus
 ‘ chose rather to live upon *alms* himself, than to
 ‘ be distinguished by that *generosity* which men
 ‘ generally applaud.’ To burlesque the connecti-
 on betwixt the prevalence of religion and the
 better government of the state, he says, ‘ Jesus
 ‘ Christ gave forth no new laws for this purpose.’
 And that he might effectually silence the clamour
 of all zealots for the suppression of irreligion and
 immorality by the due execution of penal laws,
 he assures us, ‘ Jesus Christ did not set on foot a-
 ‘ ny work of public reformation;’ and indeed
 that he never gave himself any concern about the
 moral state of the world, or laid any foundation
 for the least alteration in it for the better, but
 “ left it, in *all respects* just as he found it,” with-
 out so much as making a *further* ‘ discovery of
 ‘ the evil of it to any but his own few disciples.’
 Must we then take it for granted in the gross,
 that Jesus meant to teach his disciples, by his own
 example, the necessity of *shunning* all such acts of
 generosity as must naturally be admired and ap-

praised, whenever they are known? Did he mean to forbid and condemn every thing which great men have done for the temporal happiness of society, and by which they have gained the veneration of posterity? Did he chuse to live upon alms himself, that he might take off his disciples from the pharisaical notion of the necessity of giving alms to others as a part of their religion? Have magistrates no manner of encouragement from the gospel, if they believe it, to execute the laws against immorality with greater faithfulness? Or, can legislators collect nothing from any laws or rules which Christ hath delivered in the holy scriptures, which may teach them to govern their subjects in a better manner, than if they had never known any thing of his word? The loose manner in which Mr. Sandeman has drawn these characters, leaves his readers entirely at liberty to carry their notions as far as they please, in opposition to every thing which men are generally agreed to call *wise, or just, great, or good.*

But however poor and humble Jesus Christ chose to appear in the world, in opposition to the splendor of a temporal King, it cannot be denied, that he had in reality some *shining qualities*, for which the multitudes might be led to admire him?

Nothing is more likely to draw the admiration and applause of the bulk of mankind, than such *mighty works* as Jesus did; nor were any of the greatest benefactors of the world more celebrated than *he who went about doing good, and healing all manner of sickness and diseases among the people.* For these things he was so *highly esteemed* among the common ranks of people, that his enemies were afraid, even when matters came to

an extreme, to seize upon him in open day-light. But besides this, by our author's own account, there were some other things in his character of a peculiar kind, which could not be entirely hid from the eyes of the world, or escape some esteem; for we are told, that in his character, "*Godliness and humanity SHONE forth in perfection.*" The least that we can make of this, is, That these qualities were so *glaringly* conspicuous, and of such acknowledged excellence, that they must naturally be admired by all who had eyes to see; and therefore, if any thing which makes a part of real godliness, or any remarkable works of benevolence and humanity, were observed in him by the multitudes, which led them to an high esteem of him; these works were not the less pleasing to God, because they *SHONE* in the eyes of men, and procured universal applause; and we may infer, that he never meant to discourage his disciples from any remarkable good works which might *shine* in the view of all men.

Tho' Jesus did not dispute the secular privileges of any rank or class of men; he never meant to forbid his disciples to make use of their *natural rights* and claims, upon an equal footing with other men, in all cases in which the honour of their profession was secure.

If the writings of the Old Testament are to be ascribed to the *spirit of Christ*, we there find a compendium of *civil institutes* delivered indeed to a particular people, but in such a manner as plainly shows it to be designed for a perpetual standard of wisdom and righteousness, to direct the powers which he has ordained as his servants, in the administration of government.

The instructions of Jesus Christ more immediately related to the things of the kingdom of heaven; nor did he ever mean to teach any other new art or science; yet he has opened to the world such a fund of wisdom and knowledge, as serves to furnish us, with all necessary directions in order to our benefit and happiness in all situations, even in this life, and far exceeds the richest stores of the most famous ancient or modern philosophers.

Civil Magistrates are ordained of God to preserve the peace, order, and well-fare of public society: It is their proper business to suppress such vices as are inconsistent with the well-fare of the state, by a vigorous execution of the laws wisely made for that end; and therefore, tho' Jesus never called for the assistance of the civil powers, in opposing satan's kingdom, and setting up his own, yet he never forbade the exercise of their proper power in punishing open immorality; but hath declared it to be an ordinance of God, that they should be a terror to evil doers.

We are told that "Jesus Christ left the world, in all respects, just as he found it, having only made a farther discovery of the evil thereof to his own few disciples." If this is true, what advantage have they who enjoy the light of the glorious revelation of the gospel, above those who have lived in midnight darkness? And why does God now call all men, every where to repent, more than in times and places of the grossest ignorance? But our author's sophistry lies in this, that this phrase *the world* is used in the scriptures in two distinct senses, sometimes for *the bulk of mankind, in opposition to the limitation of divine mercy to [the Jewish nation: as the Apostle ex-*

presseth himself 1. John ii. 2. *And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world;* and as Jesus himself speaks John iii. 17. *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*—And sometimes for such *men of the world* as continue attached to earthly things, and so being wholly under the government of the carnal mind, set themselves in open opposition to the gospel; in this sense Christ warned his disciples to expect the hatred and contempt of the world, and prays for them as distinguished from the world. And so Mr. Sandeman has left us to guess whether he means this or that by the world, ~~that~~ when he is attacked on one side, he may have the advantage of shifting over to the other. *Worldly men* are undoubtedly governed by the same views now, as before the gospel was preached, and the prevailing customs and manners of those who remain enemies to the gospel continue the same: but to affirm that Jesus Christ never meant to concern himself about the general state of mankind, to afford light to the nations which had been in darkness, or make any alteration for the better in their circumstances, but left all, but his own few disciples, exactly in the same state in all respects in which he found them, must be shocking to every one who has not drank in the very dregs of FATALISM. Our author himself seems to be a little inconstant to his own principles; for a few pages forward he forgets himself so far as to assert, "that Jesus Christ laid the foundation of such a revolution among mankind, as to virtue and happiness, as quite eclipses all the great

“ *changes that ever happened in the World.*”
 We must therefore leave it to him to reconcile these two sentiments, which seem to be so flatly contradictory,——“ *Jesus Christ left the world in all respects just as he found it ;——and laid the foundation of the greatest CHANGE that ever happened in the WORLD.*”

But no character can be fully drawn merely by negatives : let us therefore attend to what our author says affirmatively of Jesus Christ.

The sum of what he says in several pages is this.——“ *Jesus Christ undertook to fulfil ALL righteousness, according to the most perfect views of the law. His own comprehensive knowlege of and delight in it, are set forth beforehand in the psalms ; especially in psalm 119th, which is employed from beginning to end in drawing the picture of his heart. In his teaching he gave the same views of the law as he had himself, particularly in his sermon on the mount, his aim is to show how perfect that obedience must be, by which men gain a friendly correspondence with God. But, to cut off his disciples from all hope of obeying the precepts delivered in that sermon, and to show that none but he himself could comply with them, or were required to endeavour to do so, Jesus declares that every thought opposite to the spirit of the law makes a man liable to hell fire, or the wrath to come. He accordingly fulfilled the law, in the strict sense he himself gave of it ; and at the same time studiously ordered all his conduct so, as to cast the utmost contempt upon all who discovered any concern or care to observe the divine law,*

“ *and on the contrary to testify his peculiar kindness and friendship for the most dissolute part of mankind. The story of the woman taken in adultery, places this part of his character in a surprizing light ; and nothing can abate our surprize, but the no less wonderful consideration of the joint appearance of human weakness and divine majesty in his person. It was indeed the main design of his appearing and conduct in the world, according to several prophecies, to effect the greatest revolution that ever happened in the world ; viz. intirely to destroy every distinction betwixt the characters of one man and another, and bring all mankind upon a perfect level as to their hope of God’s taking a favourable notice of their very best actions, though proceeding even from the very best principles, or his accepting their greatest care to please him, any more than if their characters were the worst of all, even such as the most infamous scoundrels, the vilest prostitutes, or the greatest ring-leaders in profaness and excess. For this reason the world hated him, because he testified against it, that the works thereof are evil. Not that he testified against murder, adultery, theft, or any other vices, but against the evil of the world in that very respect wherein they approved, and valued themselves most ; viz. against all the righteousness which was in the world, and every thing which was in high esteem among mankind. This was what especially provoked the resentment of the world, to hear one who claimed a divine mission, declaring, that all the pains they took in religion passed for nothing, or*

“ rather served to make them more *hateful* in
 “ the sight of God, and that God had no delight
 “ in *any other character under heaven* but his own.
 “ And this was the grand point of contro-
 “ versy betwixt Jesus and the Pharisees which at
 “ length issued in his death.”

Now what notion of Jesus Christ can we form by this loose description? However majestic and divine a person our author would represent him to be; however perfect in his own obedience to the law; we have not the least hint, in all Mr. Sandeman says, that Jesus ever shewed any disapprobation of the worst vices, or said a word to mankind of the *necessity of repentance*;—that he ever insisted upon any *change* to be made in the mind or conduct of a sinner;—that he gave his disciples any *instructions* to observe the unchangable laws of *godliness and humanity*, or to distinguish themselves in the least from other men by their *temper or behaviour*; or that his own obedience to his heavenly father was in any measure designed to be a *pattern for his disciples*, that they might walk in his steps, and learn how to please God. Nay that very *sermon on the mount*, which every one would naturally suppose to have been delivered as a summary of the laws and rules which Christ requires all the loving subjects of his kingdom to observe, is now shifted into a quite different view, by our author’s management so as to contain *no commands* at all to be observed, even by the best of his disciples, but only such as he himself stood bound to fulfil in order to the justification of the disobedient. And so far are we from having the least intimation, through the whole of this extraordinary charac-

ter, that Jesus meant to bear testimony against the *sins* of the world, as displeasing to his Father, that our author assures us of the contrary, and represents Jesus as one remarkably *fond* of the most *dissolute company*, and shewing peculiar marks of his favour; while on the other hand, he always frowned upon such as had any *appearance* of virtue or piety, that he might bring into contempt the best morality practised among men, and show, that God has no more regard to them that *fear him and work righteousness*, than to them that have *sold themselves to do evil*, and that without making any *distinction* betwixt the various characters of mankind, as to any favourable notice of their *good works*, more than of their *evil deeds*, God takes pleasure in no other character whatever but that of Jesus Christ.

If our author looks upon the story of the *Woman taken in adultery* in this view, viz. as designed to give us an example of that *perfect indifference* which Jesus discovered as to the moral characters of men, or rather of his *greater approbation* of the most *infamous persons*, and disregard to the *laws* which his Father had given, under the old Testament, against the gross acts of sin, we have reason enough to be *surprized* at such views. Every christian would blush at such a representation of the story, and be tempted to copy after the authors of the Syriac version of the New Testament, and leave it out of John’s gospel. Nor can any consideration whatever abate our surprize; no, not the most astonishing contrast of appearances in the character of Jesus in all other respects, until we can be satisfied that God gave men the moral law in writing, without

any design that they should regard it. But when we view the story in the same simple manner in which we find it recorded, all our surprize at once ceases, only by calling to mind that saying of Jesus, recorded by the same Evangelist,——*If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world: And another of the same tenor,——For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him, might be saved.*

It is a precious declaration of the gospel, that God accepts us in his beloved Son; and that by the obedience of one many are made righteous. Jesus Christ obeyed the law in the most perfect sense, and fulfilled all righteousness, according to the utmost extent of every precept, that there might be an honourable and just foundation for the remission of sins, and the acceptance of sinners before God as righteous persons unto eternal life, by virtue of the purchase he has made of the heavenly inheritance for them, and on account of his perfect righteousness reckoned as theirs, through faith in his name. No person on earth besides *Jesus Christ*, ever did or can obey the divine law in the same perfect sense, so as to be accounted *righteous* in the view of the law. Nor will God regard the most virtuous or righteous character that ever appeared, but that of Jesus, as the consideration on which he pardons and eternally saves, those whom the Law judges and condemns to death as sinners. Christ, as the only mediator betwixt God and man, accomplished his work both of obedience and suffering in a perfect manner. He finished on the cross all that he was

sent into the world to do; and being made perfect, he is become the author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY him. We have therefore no dispute with Mr. Sandeman about the perfection of Christ's character or work; or about that righteousness, on account of which God forgives sins, and grants eternal life to those who were under a legal sentence of death.

But, though Christ has indeed fulfilled all righteousness, so that nothing remains to be done either by unbelievers or believers, who are all exactly upon the same footing in this respect, by way of satisfaction to divine justice for the sins they have committed, or to lay a more complete foundation for their reconciliation to the offended majesty of heaven, and gain a title to eternal life; yet, we must be very careful not to strain this matter so high, as to leave no employment at all for man in any view, by way of obedience to the will of God. We must not reduce all the characters of men to such a perfect level in the sight of God, as to represent him absolutely indifferent to all alike, having no manner of regard to what men do, whether they endeavour to observe the rules of conduct given them, or commit the most enormous crimes, but only to the perfect character of Christ. He that will venture to affirm this absolutely, without any distinctions, destroys with one stroke the whole fabric of the christian religion; for he takes away every obligation and motive to evangelical obedience.

If God has absolutely no regard to the moral characters of men, but all appear perfectly equal in his view; and for this reason, viz. because no other character but that of Jesus is perfectly pleas-

ing to him; then, as we have observed above, both unbelievers and believers are exactly upon the same footing, and the works of the *latter* whether good or bad, make no manner of difference in the sight of God, more than the good or evil works of the *former*. He views them precisely in the same light, whether they are sober and engaged in the labours of godliness and humanity, or abandoned to all wickedness.

Our author has drawn the character of Jesus in such a manner as must unavoidably lead us to the above mentioned conclusion. He may perhaps deny the consequence, but it will stubbornly follow; nor can I see how he can get rid of it. Let us see whether he does not give us reason to suppose he secretly favours it, by some plain hints incidentally dropt.

If we turn to his 4th letter, p. 157, 158, we shall find a quotation from Isaiah lvii. 15, and lxvi. 1, 2. Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, &c.—To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.—Upon which our author says, “Does not the voice
“ which came from the excellent glory to Jesus
“ readily occur to our thoughts, when we read
“ such passages as these? And must it not yield
“ much more solid comfort to the self condemn-
“ ed, to read the scriptures in this view, (*i. e.*
“ *in the view of these things as spoken only of*
“ *Christ*) than to be urged, by the popular doc-
“ trine, to the hard labour of squeezing at their

own hearts, in order to extract thence some
“ one or other of the qualifications included in
“ the promises? Many passages in the prophets,
“ big with comfort to the desperate, have been
“ abused, to encourage men in this fruitless la-
“ bour; and we may add, almost the whole
“ book of Psalms; which were originally inter-
“ ed to set before us the sufferings of the Messiah,
“ and the following glory, as Jesus himself de-
“ clares. If we give head to many popular trea-
“ tises, we are left to understand the far greater
“ part of the Psalms as taken up with descripti-
“ ons of the ebbings and flowings of the pride of
“ the devotee.” Here we find, that, according
to Mr. Sandeman’s notion, it is in vain for any
person to look within himself for any of those cha-
racters which mark out the heirs of the promises.
None of those supposed marks are to be found.
Humility, reverence of the word of God, and all
other such *qualifications*, are mere *chimeras*, ex-
isting only in the imaginations of devotees. To
examine one’s self as to *these things* is hard and
fruitless labour, like squeezing a flint-stone to ex-
tract a drop of oil. And as to the Psalms, which
seem so abundantly to give countenance to the
holy exercises of a pious soul, nothing more was
intended in almost that whole book, than to shew
what the Messiah should suffer, and the glory
which should follow. We are to read them *only*
in this view, and not as expressing the devout sen-
timents or affections of David or the other pen-
men: For if we understand these holy men, as *me*
expressing at the same time their own real sen-
timents, we must conclude they were nothing else
but a parcel of self-conceited Pharisees, devoutly

describing the ebbings and flowings of their own pride.

Now, with the same design, no doubt, our author says in the character of Jesus, 'that the language of the Psalms is adapted to him;—that it sets forth his knowledge of the divine law, what righteousness was necessary to honour it, and his unfeigned love to it;—and that the cxix Psalm is employed from beginning to end, in drawing the picture of his heart.'—But if David was a type of Christ, and had in any measure the same mind and spirit which was in Christ Jesus, why may we not suppose he spoke his own real sentiments, in a more limited sense, tho' many of those strong terms he uses, under the influence of the spirit of prophecy, in the strictest sense, were applicable only to the great anti-type? Indeed, how shall we apply such sentences as these in any sense to Christ, unless we suppose he speaks the language of his people: *Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments?* * However, at all adventures, according to Mr. Sandeman, we must understand David as speaking only the language of Christ, when he expresses his *delight in the divine commands, and diligence in observing them*; for as to himself, it ought not to be supposed he had any more regard to them than the *vilest sinner*; and if he pretended to be more obedient, or to have any more affection to the law of God than

* And if our author's representation is just, that Jesus took the greatest pleasure in the company of the most dissolute persons, how shall we apply to him those words in the cxix. Psalm, *I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that kept thy precepts.*

other men; he must be plumply declared a proud devotee: he was no better, and neither did, nor could do, any more than other men, even the *worst of mankind, in the view of God.*

If we should object, that Christ's sermon on the mount, plainly contains many rules, by which his disciples were to govern both their temper and outward conduct; and that they are evidently required to do *much more* than other men;—our author is ready to help us out of this difficulty at once; and ease us of so much hard labor as we must find in obeying so many precepts, by giving the same turn to this sermon as he gives to the Psalms:—“The force of it, *he says*, turns upon man's correspondence with God: thereby: *for*, Christ declares that every thought entered in the heart, opposite to the spirit of the law, makes a man liable to hell-fire, or the wrath to come.” Now, the plain inference which he intends we should draw from what he says is this,—“That as Christ, in that sermon, gave such a perfect view of the law, as shows the impossibility that any should fulfil it but he himself, he never meant to bind his disciples to conform themselves to those precepts of righteousness, in hopes of any favourable notice which God would take of their obedience; but only to inform them what obedience he was to perform, and lead them to depend upon his fulfilling all righteousness for them, by which they would save a great deal of fruitless labour in squeezing and moulding their own hearts according to such impracticable rules.”

And now have we not good reason to believe, that when our author rises to such a flame of zeal

in representing Jesus Christ as setting aside all boasted *difference of characters* among men, and bringing all mankind upon a *perfect level* as to the hope of God's favourable regard to any thing they can do, his real intention is to destroy all distinction betwixt the temper and conduct of *saints and hardened sinners*, except in the view of men? The alarm does not arise merely from the danger of bringing into discredit every principle of *common virtue* among mankind, but from the immediate tendency of such sentiments, to encourage those who profess *friendship for Christ* to continue in sin; and retain their *confidence*, tho' they run into all manner of *licentiousness*. His sentences are very warm and vehement.—“There is no difference betwixt one man and another; —no difference betwixt the best accomplished gentlemen, and the most infamous scoundrel; —no difference betwixt the most virtuous lady and the vilest prostitute:—no difference betwixt the most reverend judge and the most odious criminal standing convicted before him, and receiving the just sentence of death from his mouth:—In a word, no difference betwixt the most fervent devotee, and the greatest ring-leader in prophaness and excess.” It is true he introduces them with this salvo. “*As to the matter of acceptance with God.*”——But it is far from being certain, that he means no more by this, than our *obtaining a right to the remission of sins*, and that *peculiar favour of God which is the ground of our claim to eternal life*. The meaning may be extended much farther, viz. to signify; that no character which can be found among mankind, meets with any acceptance or approbation at

all in the sight of God; the best character of the most *perfect saint*, any more than the most odious character of the *vilest sinner*. And this seems to be his real meaning, by comparing the whole, with the observations already made upon other hints in the letters; but to conceal it from vulgar eyes, he uses a phrase which may be taken in an inoffensive sense, as if he only meant as to the matter or ground of our justification before God.

Let us trace him a little farther, and see, whether it is not really one of the fundamental principles of his scheme, that there is no *difference at all in the sight of God betwixt the best and worst characters of men*, either as to the *plea for justification*, or in any other view; and that they are different only in the eyes of men. There is a remarkable passage in his first * letter, of which we have already taken some notice in the first part of this work, and which it may be worth while to review; it is this,——“Whatever doctrine teaches us to think, that our friendly correspondence or acceptance with God is begun by our own good endeavours, seconded by the divine aid, or even first prompted by the divine influence, leads us to look for acceptance with God by our own righteousness; for whatever I do, however assisted or prompted, is still my own work; otherwise the most common action of life could not be called our own, seeing in all these we must still acknowledge our dependence on God, in whom we live and move, and have our being. We must begin our religion then as we would end it. Our acceptance

“ with God, *first and last*, must rest entirely on
 “ the work *finished by Jesus Christ on the cross*.
 Now upon this we must make this remark, viz.
 That for the very same reason why all our own
 works, *done at first*, in order to gain some favour-
 able notice from God, not only go for nothing,
 but render us more hateful in his sight; *all our*
own works done afterwards, even under the most
extraordinary influence, must also be so far from
 being acceptable to God, as to provoke his high
 resentment. — If it is true, in an absolute sense,
 ‘ that God has no pleasure in any character under
 ‘ heaven, but that of Christ, and shews no fa-
 ‘ vourable regard, at all, to any virtue or piety
 ‘ but his; and that Jesus made it his business to
 ‘ declare this, and to affirm that all the pains
 ‘ taken by one man to excel another, and ob-
 ‘ tain the preference before God, go for nothing,
 ‘ or rather serve to make him more hateful in
 ‘ his sight;’ why must not this conclude equally
 against the works of *believers*, as those of *unbe-*
lievers? So long as it must be maintained, that
 whatever *believers* do, however prompted, is still
 their *own work*, does not Mr. Sandeman teach
 us to affirm that God is not at all pleased, but ra-
 ther provoked with what *they* do, as standing in
opposition to Christ’s character, and his work fi-
 nished on the cross? If we can do nothing *before*
 faith without looking for acceptance with God by
 our own righteousness, why is it not equally in-
 consistent with an intire dependence upon Christ’s
 work, for us to attempt to do any thing *after* we
 have believed the gospel? We are to *begin* and
end our religion in the same manner. It must
begin, according to our author’s plan, *without*

any good endeavours of our own; nay, “ to at-
 tempt to do any thing, is damnably criminal,”
 it must therefore be *carried on, and end* in the
 some way. God accepts us *at first* without the
 least regard to our temper and character, how
 vile and infamous soever; and we may continue
 accepted before him, without any alteration for
 the better. Our own works have not the least
 consideration first or last, as necessary, in order to
 our being accepted in the sight of God, what-
 ever value men may set upon them; nor can
 christians hope to be distinguished from others
 in his view, by the best moral character; nay, if
 they take any pains to excel even the worst of
 men, it is highly offensive. All characters are
 alike to God. (Christ’s) work is all the regards.
 Our own pains and labour in observing any of the
 divine commands, will highly provoke him at
 our first setting out in religion; and we offer him
 an equal affront, if we endeavour to please him
 by any thing we can do afterwards. All we can
 do, even under divine influence, is only to endea-
 vour to excel other men; and when we have done
 our utmost in keeping the divine commands, no
 christian can hope to go beyond the Pharisees; ne-
 ver did any righteousness exceed theirs, but that
 of Jesus Christ. The attempt therefore is vain,
 and not only fruitless, but damnably criminal.

Thus our author has shewed us the way fairly
 to get rid of all the labour of religion, and to gain
 the greatest comfort, by laying aside all concern
 about our own character, or conduct, and depend-
 ing entirely upon the work which Christ has done
 for us. ALL righteousness is already fulfilled,
 nothing remains for any person whatever to do.

We are to have no farther trouble about the commands of God. Our own care and pains to obey and please him, stand in *opposition* to the perfect righteousness of Christ, and only serve to render us more abominable in the sight of God. This, we are assured, was what Jesus constantly declared, which was the ground of that controversy carried on betwixt him and the Pharisees, and provoked them at length to put him to death.

But when we find ourselves unavoidably led on, by our author's description of the character of Jesus, to such surprising conclusions as above, we may be sure he has managed the matter with some sophistry, and grossly misrepresented the glorious author of the faith and hope of christians. Certainly Jesus Christ is not the *minister of sin*, nor ever meant to deter men from endeavouring to live *sobriety, righteously, and godly in this present world*. He has set us an example that we should walk in his steps, and all his true disciples look upon themselves called, and by every consideration obliged, to be holy in all manner of conversation, even as he is holy. They are changed into the *same image*, and have in a degree the same spirit, and the same delight in doing the will of God. There is as great a *difference* betwixt their character and behaviour, and that of other men, as betwixt the *dead and living*, or the *old man and the new*. How then can we believe that the main design of Jesus was to bring all characters of men upon a perfect level, and declare that God has no pleasure in the *best*, more than the *worst*?

Upon the whole, it evidently appears, by the point of light in which our author places the cha-

acter of Jesus, that he has no notion of the recovery of the soul of man to the moral image of God, and *that obedience to his will* which is accepted in his sight, as flowing from faith and love. He has nothing more in view than the pardon and salvation of sinners, without any consideration of their *repentance, or obligations to obedience*. He describes a *Saviour*, who came, not to *redeem his people from all iniquity, and purify them to himself as a peculiar people zealous of good works*; but to purchase pardon and grace with God for such as find in themselves *no change at all for the better*; no reason to count themselves *better men*, though they are *happier men*. If this is agreeable to the gospel, we must acquiesce in his description; but if upon inquiry we find it falls far short of that religion which the New Testament every where plainly teaches, we must conclude that the letter-writer has discovered more art than honesty in giving us the character of Jesus, and kept back a great part of that *redemption* which we have obtained by him from our view, while he aims at nothing more than to represent Jesus Christ as a *Saviour from guilt and punishment*, and the purchaser of eternal life for those who are first and last void of all the proper qualifications for it; not as a *Saviour from sin*, and the author of a new creation of our souls.

S E C T. III.

Remarks on the conversion of Jonathan the Jew.

HAVING examined the two contrasted characters of the Pharisees and of Jesus, as they are drawn by the author of the Letters, it is necessary we should now make some remarks on his account of the conversion of Jonathan; in which his declared aim is to modernize the ancient controversy about the Gospel, or accommodate it to our own times.

This story he has contrived and worked up in such a manner, as to introduce into it the greater part of his own distinguishing principles; so that if we were to remark upon every hint given us in Jonathan's conversion, we should unavoidably be led into the midst of the dispute respecting our author's peculiar sentiments. But as this is reserved for the last part of our work, it will be sufficient only to make some general observations upon this fictitious narration; especially upon those parts of it which are designed to shew us, that *the conversion of a sinner is always effected in a way perfectly unnatural*, without his using any means at all for this end, or having his mind prepared beforehand in the least measure for the admission of the gospel; yea, in direct opposition to all his former reasonings, desires, and endeavours.

“ Now this Jonathan, who was first a Sadducee,
“ or in modern stile, a free thinker, and valued

“ himself upon the most rational philosophical
“ principles of religion, about the time that Je-
“ sus made his appearance, changed his senti-
“ ments, and went over to the sect of the pha-
“ risees; because he observed they were men of
“ stricter morals, and had more excellent senti-
“ ments about the power and character of God
“ than the other party.— This was a conver-
“ sion not a little extraordinary. It is very rare
“ for a modern freethinker to change his mind so
“ easily, and be won over, even by his own phi-
“ losophical reasonings, to that party, which main-
“ tains the strictest forms of devotion: one would
“ think it a very singular instance, if a gentleman,
“ upon the *rational scheme* of religion at Rome,
“ being enamoured with virtue, and regarding on-
“ ly those notions of the Deity which are most phi-
“ losophical and exalted, should be induced to join
“ the most superstitious party there, by observing
“ the *excellency* of their religion in these respects,
“ and look upon his former way of thinking great-
“ ly improved, and his *virtue* as well as *piety*, high-
“ ly advanced by studying their tenets. However
“ we must now consider Jonathan as changed into
“ a *complete Pharisee*.

“ In the mean time Jesus shews the most ve-
“ hement opposition to this pious and virtuous
“ sect; which is the more provoking to this new
“ convert, as the opposition seemed to be point-
“ ed against those very things for which he had
“ joined them; against the very things which
“ came nearest to perfection. It could not but
“ be very disgustful to him, to hear one, who
“ himself seemed to be of a low character, and
“ shewed no great zeal against *adultery* or any

“ other *vices*, declaring it impossible for the Phari-
 “ sees to escape the damnation of hell:—and
 “ why? not because any real fault could be
 “ found with their *moral character*, which would
 “ bear the nicest examination by the best rules
 “ of human judgment; but chiefly because they
 “ paid so *strict regard* to the great law of god-
 “ liness and humanity. But what greatly add-
 “ ed to the provocation was, that this person,
 “ who himself appeared such an enemy to every
 “ thing virtuous and pious, and was fired with
 “ such high resentment against that religion
 “ which was most unexceptionable, should de-
 “ clare with singular assurance, that he himself
 “ was the only favourite of heaven, and that e-
 “ very character among men, but his own, was
 “ hateful to God; and should claim to himself
 “ all the honours of the Most High.”—Cer-
 tainly Jonathan is grown too warm with party
 zeal, which addles his brain, and sets every thing
 in a wrong light. He is determined to stand by
 his new friends at all adventures, and take every
 thing said against their character as pointed a-
 gainst the most perfect piety and morality. We
 will for the present suppose he himself and a few
 of his most intimate friends, were honest virtu-
 ous men; and, judging by fair appearances, he
 verily thought the generality of the Pharisees sin-
 cere in their devotion, and strict in their morals
 as he knew himself to be. But had he been tho-
 rowly acquainted with all the tricks and falsehoods
 of that party, covered with solemn grimace;
 had he but observed with an unprejudiced mind
 how the generality of them contrived to shuffle
 real piety and virtue out of their scheme of re-

ligious, even while they carried their pretensions
 to these very high; or had he understood that
 Jesus pointed his indignation chiefly against that
hypocrisy which was notoriously the leaven of the
 Sect, and not against any honest endeavours to
 know and do the great things which the law re-
 quired; it is probable if we are not mistaken in
 our good opinion of Jonathan, he might have
 left his faulty brethren to vindicate their own cha-
 racter as well as they could. It is likely he would
 not have been imposed upon by misrepresentati-
 ons of the character of Jesus; but being ready
 to attend to the tenor of his preaching, might
 have been at length convinced that he was no e-
 nemy to *devotion* or *morality*, but taught his dis-
 ciples to carry these things far beyond the Phari-
 sees, or the precepts of the most celebrated Phi-
 losophers. He might easily have observed, that
 Jesus never shewed resentment against any thing
 really excellent, even while he pointed out what
 was still deficient, and claimed to himself alone a
 perfect character, and all the honours of the *Most*
High;—that he was so far from a design to
 countenance *vice*, that he went about every where
 preaching *repentance*, warning all of the danger
 of everlasting destruction unless they repented;—
 and that his affability and kindness towards ma-
 ny whose characters among the Jews were infam-
 ous, as the vilest of men, could not justly
 be construed as any peculiar approbation of those
 whose morals were the worst; but was only de-
 signed to give full testimony that he came to *call*
sinners to repentance, and that the *greatest sinners*
 upon their repentance, should obtain mercy up-
 on an equal footing with others, and were equal

ly entitled to the benefit of his ministry. How unhappy was Jonathan in missing an acquaintance with *Nicodemus*, and some few other honest enquirers after truth, who might have given him a more favourable opinion of Jesus!

But let us see how his temper rises. “ He was provoked by so many circumstances, that nothing less could satisfy him, than seeing matters brought to the extremities to which all parties at length agreed to push them. Yet he was not so intirely blind and hardened, but that he had some struggles of conscience. The rebukes of Jesus carried with them such a conviction of the justice of his severest censures, that it was difficult to resist the force of them. But what alarmed him most was the undeniable evidence of divine power which appeared in his miracles. However, as the whole ministry and conduct of Jesus appeared to be aimed against all the known principles of natural and revealed religion, he thought it certain, even to demonstration, that such a person could not come from God. Therefore having his mind thus fortified, he went on with the less reluctance in promoting the design which his brethren had formed, of putting Jesus to death, not doubting but this would intirely finish the dispute. For as to the revival of it, by his resurrection, to which Jesus had appealed for full proof of his doctrine, he was under no kind of apprehensions that such an event would ever happen. Accordingly the plan was executed; Jesus was dead and buried; and all things seemed to be quiet.” Now the main question is whether Jonathan was right in his notions of the

preaching and conduct of Jesus? If it was really so as he imagined, that Jesus *did oppose* every principle of reason and religion in any way made known before to mankind;—if he constantly testified against the practice of every thing which could be called *right* and *good*, according to the best rules which men have to judge by, as rendering men so much the more *hateful* in the sight of God; and at the same time passed over all the *vices* of men with profound silence, plainly intimating by his conduct, that he was very well pleased with the company of the most dissolute persons;—*if all this was true*, there is no small difficulty in answering the argument by which this rational Pharisee encouraged himself to join in pushing matters to extremes. It would be hard to blame him for not yielding to the conviction of miracles, when they only tended to overthrow the very *foundations of religion and morality*, and contradicted every rule by which men could judge of any revelation. A man can never be induced to believe that to be true, which cannot be *proved* true by any principles already made known, or implanted in the human mind; no, not even if *one should rise from the dead*. But, in reality, he appears to have been unhappily mistaken as to the doctrines and character of Jesus. And there is reason to suspect, Jonathan was not quite so honest as we have been ready to suppose, from the account which hitherto he gives of himself; but, that he was too self-conceited like the rest of the sect, and being well satisfied with his own attainments in virtue and piety, conceived the first disaffection to Jesus, because he insisted upon purity of heart as well as outward behaviour, and taught

such a spiritual religion as was inconsistent with the worldly views of this philosophical Pharisee. However, we will attend to his remaining story, and see by what means he was at length convinced, and brought to believe what he had so fiercely opposed.

“ Not long after Jesus was dead and buried,
 “ those poor illiterate men, who had been his
 “ companions, appeared publicly, testifying with
 “ uncommon boldness, that he was risen from
 “ the dead, according to his own prediction;—
 “ that they had many proofs of it;—and that at
 “ last they saw him ascend into Heaven. No-
 “ thing that could be said or done could intimi-
 “ date them: They persisted in their testimony;
 “ and in confirmation of it, performed many
 “ wonderful works in the name of Jesus, as risen
 “ from the dead. These things gave a wonder-
 “ ful shock to his mind, revived the remem-
 “ brance of the late miracles of Jesus, and made
 “ way for *new evidences* to crowd in upon him
 “ from every quarter. Yet he struggled hard
 “ against all these convictions; for he was shock-
 “ ed at the train of consequences which he saw
 “ must follow. Especially, having still the same
 “ notions of Jesus which had led him to push on
 “ his execution; and finding it hard to give up
 “ every religious sentiment which he had enter-
 “ tained upon the most undoubted principles, and
 “ to believe that no such thing as wisdom or
 “ righteousness is to be found or expected among
 “ mankind; he was vexed at the very heart,
 “ that these witnesses should endeavour to make
 “ him and his party guilty of shedding the blood
 “ of this man, and represent them on this account

“ as enemies to God, and objects of his wrath.
 “ With such reflections there fore he was resolved
 “ to combat whatever evidences they could pro-
 “ duce.” *How can we wonder* at this resolution?
 His grand mistake was still the same: and this,
 which was sufficient to oppose the force of all former evidences, was equally forcible against every thing which could farther be produced. All that could be hoped, was, that he might be induced to enquire into the matter again, with the utmost care and sollicitude, and be ready to hear what better account of Jesus these witnesses could give him, and so discover that he had been grossly deceived in his former notions of the design and tendency of the ministry of Jesus. And indeed we may observe, that, notwithstanding his firm resolutions, he seemed to be *in some hopeful way*, when first he was shocked with so many *new evidences crowding fast into his mind*. Agreeable to the doctrine of many modern preachers, *his convictions encreased*, however he endeavoured to stifle them. He began to suspect whether he had not been mistaken in his opposition to Jesus, and to think he might be in no small danger if the real character of that man, whom they had crucified as an impostor, and an enemy to all true religion, should turn out to be quite different. We may, say therefore, there was some *preparation* made in his mind for farther evidence; at least he was prepared to hear what more these men had to say.

‘ Accordingly, he went to hear them again,
 ‘ and they indeed charged the blood of Jesus upon him and his brethren, as the highest crime in the sight of God. And he tells us, they not on-

He:

' ly allowed, but *demonstrated* the whole train of
 ' consequences which he had viewed in such a
 ' shocking light; and that, with such *force of e-*
 ' *vidence*, as quite defeated all his resolution.—
 ' For though he was forced to give up every
 ' thing which he had held before as to religion;
 ' all that he had known and believed *before* ei-
 ' ther from reason, human writings, or revelation,
 ' as well as every worldly advantage connected
 ' with his former favourite principles; yet they
 ' laid open such a treasure of divine good will to
 ' men—drew such a character of God—and laid
 ' such a foundation of everlasting consolation and
 ' good hope for the most desperate and miserable
 ' wretch, as did infinitely more than counterbal-
 ' ance the loss of all his former sentiments. All
 ' this they shewed with the greatest simplicity
 ' and clearness to be the import of the fact which
 ' they testified, even the *resurrection of Jesus*.
 ' And they confirmed every thing by the unanimous
 ' voice of the prophets, which he never under-
 ' stood till that day. Their doctrine came with
 ' peculiar authority, and resembled the fact which
 ' they testified; for it proved sufficient to raise the
 ' dead, and give hope to the desperate.' Thus
 Jonathan is at length fully brought off from his
 former prejudices, and persuaded to be a disciple
 of Jesus, contrary to all his past resolutions. But
 unless he is convinced that he was entirely mis-
 taken before as to the character and conduct of
 Jesus, while he imagined his design was to shew
 a peculiar *abhorrence of all piety and righteousness*
 among men, tho' practised in the best manner,
 and a singular *friendly disposition* towards those
 who were most *scandalously vitious*, one cannot help

entertaining a suspicion, that his former argu-
 ments will recur upon him, and at length prove
 too hard for his faith; or else, that he is now so
 far beat off from all regard to devotion and mo-
 rality, that if he is not very strictly watched and
 kept in awe by the terror of *ecclesiastical censures*,
 he may very soon turn out to be one of the *fore-*
most leaders in prophaness and excess. However,
 we will hope the best. If he really understood the
 doctrine of the witnesses, he could not but ob-
 serve that they vindicated the character of Jesus
 from all such aspersions; and shewed this to be the
 fundamental doctrine which he preached, viz.
that men should repent and turn to God, in order
to the remission of sins, and do works meet for re-
pentance. Tho' Jonathan seems to be a little too
 hasty in his ideas and expressions with respect to the
 change of his sentiments, yet we may excuse some
 extraordinary warmth in a new convert, just freed
 from the power of violent prejudices, and struck
 with new discoveries of truth. He has not pati-
 ence at present to make proper distinctions. But
 we shall presently find him in a calmer mood:
 for as he proceeds to give an account of this
 wonderful alteration made in his mind, he again
 puts on the gravity of a philosopher, and plainly
 discovers that he has not quite given up his old
 lurch for reasoning.

In a very grave way, he goes on to explain the
reasons which persuaded him to alter his sentiments,
 or the reasons which struck his mind, so that it
 was changed:— ' In the resurrection of Jesus I
 ' saw the agency of a *power*, superior to the pow-
 ' er of nature; therefore I concluded that this o-
 ' perating power was *greater than the God of the*
 PART II. G

‘ *Sadducees and Philosophers.* I found also, that
 ‘ this *power* had a peculiar character, which was
 ‘ manifested by interposing its agency, and giv-
 ‘ ing its decision in a certain *controversy*. I found
 ‘ by the decision, that its character was more
 ‘ grand and perfect, as well as its agency strong-
 ‘ er than that of the God of the *Pharisees*. I
 ‘ moreover found that this *power* excelled, not
 ‘ only in strength, but also in majesty and per-
 ‘ fection of character, all that was called God a-
 ‘ mong men; I therefore concluded, that this
 ‘ *power* is the only *true God*; for that which is
 ‘ greatest must be God.’ Now is it not quite as-
 tonishing, that, in the very next breath, after
 this grave philosophical argumentation which was
 the very ground of his believing in the true God,
 he should affirm, that his religion *was not founded*
 ‘ *on argument*; not on any deductions from any
 ‘ principles he had hitherto known, but on meer
 ‘ authority, interposed in a manner quite unexpect-
 ‘ ed; baffling, confounding, and repelling all his rea-
 ‘ sonings, and forcing upon him quite a new set
 ‘ of principles, by the most convincing and satisf-
 ‘ factory, as well as irresistible evidence?’ The
 fact which, according to his account, forced up-
 on him the knowledge of the true God, was the
 resurrection of Jesus. How came he to believe
 this fact? He did not see it; but it was declared
 to him by the testimony of the witnesses, confirm-
 ed by their opening to him the prophecies of the
 Old Testament, and at the same time performing
 many wonderful works. But had he no exercise
 of his reason when he was persuaded of the
 truth of this fact? Does he mean that we should
 believe him when he informs us what a *train of*

reasoning passed in his mind? And must we still
 believe him, when he says his religion was *not*
 founded on argument, or any reasonings of his
 own mind? He appears determined, whatever con-
 tradictions he may be forced into, to attribute his
 conversion entirely to a miraculous operation,
 without any activity of his own mind. Because the
 fact, viz. *the resurrection of Jesus*, was altogether
 supernatural and divine, he will insist upon it, that
 his conviction of the truth of this fact was forced
 upon him in a way equally marvelous, by irresisti-
 ble evidence, without any previous arguments or
 deductions from the common principles of reason.
 And if you ask him how he came to reason in the
 manner he has declared, and so draw the certain
 conclusion, that the *power* which operated in the
 resurrection of Jesus is the *true God*? He will an-
 swer, that this reasoning was the *effect*, not the
cause of his faith in the true God. He was not
 capable of reasoning in such a manner before he
 believed the fact; but when the belief of it was
 forced upon him, even solely against his will,
 confounding and repelling all his reasonings, then
 a new set of principles was likewise forced upon
 him, which enabled him to prove by many rational
 deductions that he ought to believe the power
 which operated in that fact to be divine, or the
true God. Thus by his account of his own con-
 version, we are led round about in a circle, and as-
 sured, that there is no way in which we can gain
 any evidence of the truth of the fact of the resur-
 rection, until we believe it; but when we believe
 it, then there is irresistible evidence offered:
 by this evidence, conviction is forced upon
 us; and being so convinced, we are compelled

to believe it; and then immediately having a new set of principles in the same manner forced upon us, we begin to reason very gravely, and prove the truth of what we believe. Here it may not be improper to ask a question, which may be of considerable importance in determining how far Jonathan's conviction depended upon the truth of one simple fact, without any other arguments or considerations whatever: The question is this,— Whether a thousand witnesses to this fact, *viz.* the resurrection of Jesus, however supernatural, would have been sufficient to prove him to be the promised Saviour and the Son of the living God; if there were not the concurrence of other evidences, especially by the agreement of all his characters with the antient prophecies? If one that is dead is raised again, it is indeed a manifestation of divine power; but this alone, without some farther evidences, will not prove the person who is recovered from the grave to be a divine person; for then the same proof might be applied to Lazarus, and other instances. Nor will even a visible ascension into Heaven entirely convince the mind, that one so favoured of God must be truly his Son; because, *Elijah* also was taken up in a chariot of fire. But the resurrection and ascension of Jesus become undeniable demonstrations of his divine character, when considered in connection with his own repeated declarations and predictions, the excellency of his doctrines, the holiness of his life, the power of his miracles, the direct testimonies given from Heaven that he was God's beloved Son, and all the prophecies of the Old Testament which give such descriptions of the glorious Messiah, as cannot be applied to any other

person than him who, though crucified, was raised again, and received up into heaven. Therefore, unless Jonathan had a sufficient view of these concurring proofs of the divine character of Jesus, no full conviction could be forced upon his mind, merely by the testimony of the fact, though attested by the most miraculous evidence: but how he could see such convincing proofs, without exercising his own reason at all, or comparing one thing with another, is very difficult to be conceived. I believe very few of those artful gentlemen, who take shelter in the darkness of mystery, when they are too hardly beset with arguments, ever advanced any thing more *mystical* or *unintelligible* than this account which Jonathan gives us of the change of his mind.

It may be worth while to hear a little more of his reasoning, that we may see farther how much he is improved by his new set of principles. He goes on in this manner,— ‘ This fact and the character of God thence arising, mutually confirm and illustrate each other. This character could never have been known, but by some divine work; and no work but this could ever evince such a character. If there was such a work, there was such a character; and there could be no such character unless there was such a work. And therefore since I see the grandest character thence arising, I am assured the work or 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; but that view of God which, the lower it abases the pride of man, raises his comfort and joy

‘ the higher could never be a lie contrived by
 ‘ man’.—Thus he goes on through another
 paragraph, to prove *there is a God*, because the
resurrection of Christ is true; and that *the resur-*
rection must be true, because *there is a God*. We
 may hope he does not mean to attribute this ex-
 traordinary faculty of reasoning to any superna-
 tural influence; for certainly it falls short of forc-
 ing conviction upon the mind. But was he him-
 self convinced by such reasons, and persuaded of
 the truth of the fact declared by the witnesses?
 No; he plumply denies that his religion is found-
 ed on argument, or any previous reasonings. What
 then does he mean by giving us so many reasons
 why he believes, and then denying that his faith
 was the effect of *any reasoning at all*? Did he
 believe *the fact* before he understood any thing a-
 bout it, or knew whether it was *credible* or not?
 Or could he understand and know the credibility
 of it, without any exercise of his reason?

However difficult we may think it to answer
 such questions, Jonathan has a way to get rid of
 this difficulty at once. For he would have us
 know, ‘ that in declaring this fact, viz. *the re-*
surrection of Christ, God himself commenced
 ‘ a public speaker and writer to men, and ex-
 ‘ ploded the wisdom of all the teachers, who
 ‘ formerly taught mankind; —that it is his
 ‘ peculiar province to explain supernatural facts;
 ‘ —and that by his divine wisdom and power,
 ‘ presented at once to the conscience, pride is
 ‘ abashed, reasonings are silenced, and hope a-
 ‘ rises from a new and unexpected source’. Or
 if we desire him to speak yet plainer, he is rea-
 dy to let us know his sentiments:—“ *Reason*

“ *pursued* 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” (i. e. *to Reason*; for he uses
Reason and conscience as synonymous terms.)
 “ And sure I am, neither conscience, nor argu-
 “ ment directed me to the cure. But it came
 “ to me, unexpectedly from heaven, by super-
 “ natural 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.” Thus he brings out the secret,
 and accounts for his conversion wholly in the mi-
 raculous way. The *Truth* and all the *reasons* for
 it, were conveyed to him at once from God, not
 only without any exercise of his own rational
 powers, but in direct opposition to them. And
 now what farther account can be demanded of
 the grounds of his faith?—But we must beg
 leave to doubt still, whether it is possible for a
 man to believe a divine revelation of any kind;
 until sufficient evidence is given to the mind, that
 the revelation is true; and whether the reasons
 for believing it must not necessarily be supposed
 to precede *faith*. Why may not the power of
 God be as manifest in this way of communicating
 the knowledge of truth, as by *flashing truth in the*
 most miraculous manner upon the mind? It is
 most readily granted that the news of salvation
 by Jesus Christ is published to the world by super-
 natural revelation, and confirmed by testimonies
 altogether divine; and that all the happy effects

of it are to be attributed to the power of God, in opposition to the wisdom of man. But can there be any solidity in such an argument as this? — *I could never have found out the truth made known in the Gospel, by any light in my own conscience, or any arguments suggested by reason, if it had not been revealed from heaven in a supernatural way: therefore, neither conscience, nor argument could be at all made use of in conveying to my mind this unexpected truth. — The resurrection of Christ was a fact supernaturally wrought, which could never have been effected but by a power wholly divine, or gained credit if there had not been many infallible and miraculous evidences of it: therefore neither Thomas nor any of the other disciples made the least use of their reasoning faculties, or their senses, in order to be fully persuaded of the truth of it.*

If Jonathan, after all that can be said, is verily persuaded that his conversion was perfectly miraculous, and that no person whatever can exercise his own intellectual faculties, to any manner of advantage, for gaining the knowledge of the truth, or believing the testimony of God, he is certainly quite unreasonable and cruel in bantering *Academics* “for their humble, candid, and serious enquiries after—a phantom;” or *Devotees* for “their pious wrestlings and waitings for—a good conceit of themselves:” for they can do no better till the supernatural light breaks in upon them; and he ought to remember, that his own deliverance from the same folly is owing to a very late miracle. They cannot be looked upon as *criminal* in their grossest mistakes, since it is absolutely impossible they should

know or do any thing which will turn to better account, even though they should listen to the witnesses of the resurrection with the utmost attention, and take every method of examining things, and opening their minds to truth.

No wonder Jonathan appears very sanguine, as to his own knowledge of the truth, if it forced itself in such a marvelous manner upon his mind, attended with the irresistible light of conviction, by so many infallible reasons and arguments, which left no manner of room to doubt of what he so clearly saw. Through the following pages of his account of himself, he speaks with the utmost assurance of the *truth*, as his companion and guide, and glories in the incomparable advantages he has gained by it. His evidence is no less than a miraculous heavenly testimony given immediately to his mind. He is abundantly and infallibly convinced of the resurrection of Jesus, and the meaning of it, *by demonstration upon demonstration*. He is as sure of the truth, as he is *sure there is a God*. He finds in himself a new principle of knowledge, from which he sets out in all his reasonings. He no longer depends upon conjectures, but sets out with the light of *undoubted* truth, to observe what path it opens for him to walk in. What assurance can rise higher than this? Certainly Jonathan has no reason for any anxiety about his perseverance unto eternal salvation, unless the promise made to every one that believes may fail. — But we are much mistaken if we think he will stand firm to what he says, and declare peremptorily that *he knows the grace of God in truth*. Ask him the question, — whether he is sure he holds the very same truth

which the Apostles believed, or has that unfeigned faith by which he shall assuredly be saved? and doubtless, he will consent that his friends should answer for him, and deny that he has such assurance. They will tell you, **“ It cannot farther 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:”* and that rejoicing in the hope of glory §*“ will 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. Therefore, notwithstanding all this supernatural infallible evidence which came with his faith, Jonathan stands a little in doubt of the evidence, and is ready to say, he is jealous lest he has deceived himself, mistaken the truth, and believed in vain, and must farther examine the matter. So we may now leave him to settle this difficult point, how he can be so infallibly sure of his faith, and yet remain under some little doubt whether he has that faith which will save him.*

S E C T. IV.

The conversion of *Cornelius the Gentile*, as a contrast to Jonathan's.

JONATHAN has given us such an account of his conversion, as tends to persuade us, that

no preparation at all was made in his mind for the reception of the saving truth; but, on the contrary, all his principles and reasonings, after the utmost that could be said or done for his conviction, only led him to make the more resolute opposition to it; until, in a way entirely supernatural, it forced itself irresistably into his mind, and so made him acquainted with the true God, whom he never knew before. An extraordinary conversion indeed! But then we may say, being before among the most hardened Pharisees, he might be got beyond all reasonable methods of conviction. He will be ready to answer,——No; it is always the case with every sinner, whether Sadducee, Pharisee, or any other name or character: for judging by himself, he knows no difference, as to the degrees of their ignorance and enmity against the Gospel, and the method of their conviction of the truth.

But in very antient and authentic records, we find some material circumstances of the conversion of *Cornelius the Gentile*, which give us a different view of the manner in which he came to the knowledge of the true God, and his Son Jesus Christ, and shew, how far the former may be without the latter, as also how the day dawns and shines brighter and brighter upon the mind. And I have lately met with a copy of his life, in which he gives a very particular account of his improvements in knowledge and virtue, and his conversion to the faith of the Gospel. This happened about the same time with that of Jonathan, and is of equal credit. Let us hear what he says of himself.

“ Had not God, who is rich in mercy to all that

call upon him, and a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, brought me into an acquaintance with himself, and his dear Son, by various steps of providence, and methods of instruction, I should have continued to this day in ignorance and idolatry.

“ I was born and educated at Rome. My Parents, who were highly esteemed among their neighbours for piety and every social virtue, early taught me to pay reverence to the supreme powers, and instilled into my mind the first principles of morality, according to the precepts of our gravest and most approved teachers. And as my natural temper was very mild and pliable, and my mind turned for thinking, their instructions and reproofs had great effect. I gained very early the character of a *sober amiable youth*; and finding a virtuous behaviour not only procured the love of my acquaintance, but conduced most to the peace and satisfaction of my own mind, I resolved to persist in ordering my whole conduct wisely, and guarding against all the errors and vices I saw in others.

“ Care was taken that I might enjoy all advantages of improvement, as far as the very moderate income of my parents would permit. They placed me under the care of some of our best public instructors; and I soon found myself much entertained and engaged, by what they taught me of the characters of the great father of all, in opposition to those gross vulgar superstitions, which encouraged vice more than virtue; and by their discourses concerning the chief good, the immortality of the soul, and other grand subjects,

“ Yet the encrease of knowledge was attended with some perplexity; for I plainly perceived, that however clearly some of our wise men demonstrated several grand characters of a supreme diety, and reasoned upon the practice of morality, &c. yet there were different sects, each holding some darling hypothesis in contempt of all others, and placing morality upon some different basis. But what appeared the greatest scandal of all, was, that there were some who set up FATE as a god, and in a very dogmatical manner advanced several absurd notions, which tended to confound all distinction betwixt virtue and vice; and as their aim was to make themselves quite easy in living according to their own humour, they sneered at all the devout, and laughed alike at *wisdom* and *folly*.

“ In the midst of so many jarring opinions, I was at length upon the point of declaring in favour of the sceptics; and looking upon every opinion entirely doubtful, was ready to quit all farther enquiries after truth. But this thought shocked me no less than the greatest contradictions among our wise men. I could by no means reject all knowledge, or resign myself up to perpetual doubting. Nor could I renounce all notions of religion, and become a stickler for the *Atheistical* party. For I found it impossible for me to free myself from the force of moral sentiments; and as often as I gazed on the starry heavens, and looked round on all nature, or reflected on my own bodily frame or rational nature, the impressions of a Diety were more strongly fixed on my mind, and I perceived in myself plain forebodings of *good* or *evil* from him, according to my con-

duct. And whatever else was uncertain, one thing appeared incontestably evident, viz. that the actions of men must be distinguished into *right* and *wrong*, and that virtue and vice can never be set upon an equal footing, in any sober search after happiness.—I therefore resolved to pursue that knowledge which seemed most natural and satisfactory to the mind, and to have a tendency to direct the conduct of my life, and to seek my happiness in the pleasure of acting wisely and uprightly.

“ While I kept this in view, I soon found myself disengaged from many idle controversies, fomented by the pride of science. I valued myself upon no particular party, any farther than their sentiments promoted this great end. Truth always commended itself to my attention, by a peculiar kind of simplicity, joined with unrivalled dignity; and the more I laboured to reduce my knowledge to practice, and to form my heart and life upon the plainest maxims of wisdom, and dictates of conscience, so much the more was my mind opened to distinguish truth from falsehood, and all vain conjectures.

“ But again, no small difficulty presented itself in my way. As I was following after the most perfect attainments in virtue, my heart often accused me of many miscarriages, and even very great crimes, at least of a secret nature. My faults seemed to multiply the more in my view, while I attended more strictly to my principles and conduct. However, I attempted to appease the Deity, whom I considered as offended in the best manner I could, by such rites of worship, and pro-

fessions of repentance, as seemed most reasonable and acceptable.

“ Finding it necessary to go into some employment for life, and having a friend in the army who made me advantageous offers, upon his encouragement I entered into the Emperor's service. My courteous behaviour and fidelity in the duties of my station, gained me reputation among all ranks, and by degrees I was advanced to a *Captain's* command. In the meantime, the notions of religion I had imbibed, remained strongly rivited in my mind, and greatly exercised my thoughts. I wished to gain some more certain knowledge of the natures and powers of the beings above, especially of the true character of *him* whom I was ready to acknowledge as *supreme*, and the existence of man after death. And I very well remember, that one evening, as I was walking alone, looking upwards towards Heaven, I was struck with admiration, and broke out into an earnest petition to that *Being* who presided over this amazing universe, by whatever name he was called, that he would manifest himself to me more clearly; as he had darted some feebler beams of light upon my heart, that he would teach me how to worship him acceptably, and point out to me the way to happiness.

“ My request was not in vain; for it was not long before I happened into company with some Jews, who were at Rome upon affairs of commerce. And tho' their religion was generally despised and hated as being extremely singular and unsociable, I could not forbear asking some questions to satisfy my curiosity. This I did with such an air of honesty and gravity, as led them to treat

me with less shyness and reserve. They gave me some general account of their law, and especially of the deity they worshipped, and said many things of him which greatly struck me. What they told me of the wonders he had done for their nation, was surprising; and many grand characters of him which they drew, very well corresponded with my former notions of a Deity, but every thing was carried to much higher perfection. Upon the whole, the account they gave me seemed to exhibit something which exceeded all the wisdom of our philosophers.

“ From that time I began to entertain a more favourable opinion of the *Jewish religion*, and took every opportunity of farther information concerning it. At length, hearing there was a Greek translation of their sacred books, I took pains and obtained a copy. This I very carefully perused; every thing I read was new and surprising, and opened to me richer and richer treasures of wisdom; so that the very best books of our wisest men, compared with what I now found, seemed to dwindle into childish prattle.

“ Indeed, at first I was not sensible of the full import of many things in these venerable writings. But one thing after another opened to my view, as I read and considered them again and again; and my mind was more and more affected, with those wonderful discoveries of the perfections of the *true God* which were there presented to me. The intenseness of my thoughts was evident in my countenance, and made a very observable alteration in my common conversation and behaviour. My acquaintance took notice of something peculiarly grave and solemn in my appearance, and

imputing it to a melancholy turn, endeavoured to divert me by *company* and *amusements*. Fear of ridicule made me conceal from them my friendship for that religion contained in the sacred books of the Jews; but every thing which tended to turn off my attention from the Creator and Lord of all, was disgustful, and rather served to fix my thoughts the more upon those grand descriptions of his Majesty, power and goodness, which had struck me so deeply. Great was my anxiety to obtain hope of his favour. His anger appeared terrible in all his threatenings, and every execution of his judgments; and yet I saw the most amiable declarations of his goodness and tender mercies. I took encouragement to address my prayers to him, and implore his mercy toward me an unworthy sinner of the Gentiles. Yet, when I observed that all the express promises of his love and kindness seemed to be limited to the seed of Abraham, so as to exclude all Gentiles from hope, unless they were incorporated and naturalized with the Jews, it greatly damped my spirits: and when I farther considered, that the whole form and order of the divine worship prescribed in these books was so accommodated to that nation, that it could be observed no where but among them, I was almost beat off from attempting to offer any homage to Jehovah. But upon reading with greater attention, in order to be better satisfied upon this head, I took particular notice of several instances of his regard to poor Gentiles, even though they were not circumcised; and of many plain hints in the prophetic books, that his mercy in future times should be extended to all nations. Laying all