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Collected Works

THE WORKS

Of The

REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER

VOLUME IV

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" Heb 12:14

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER.

LATE VICAR OF MADELEY.

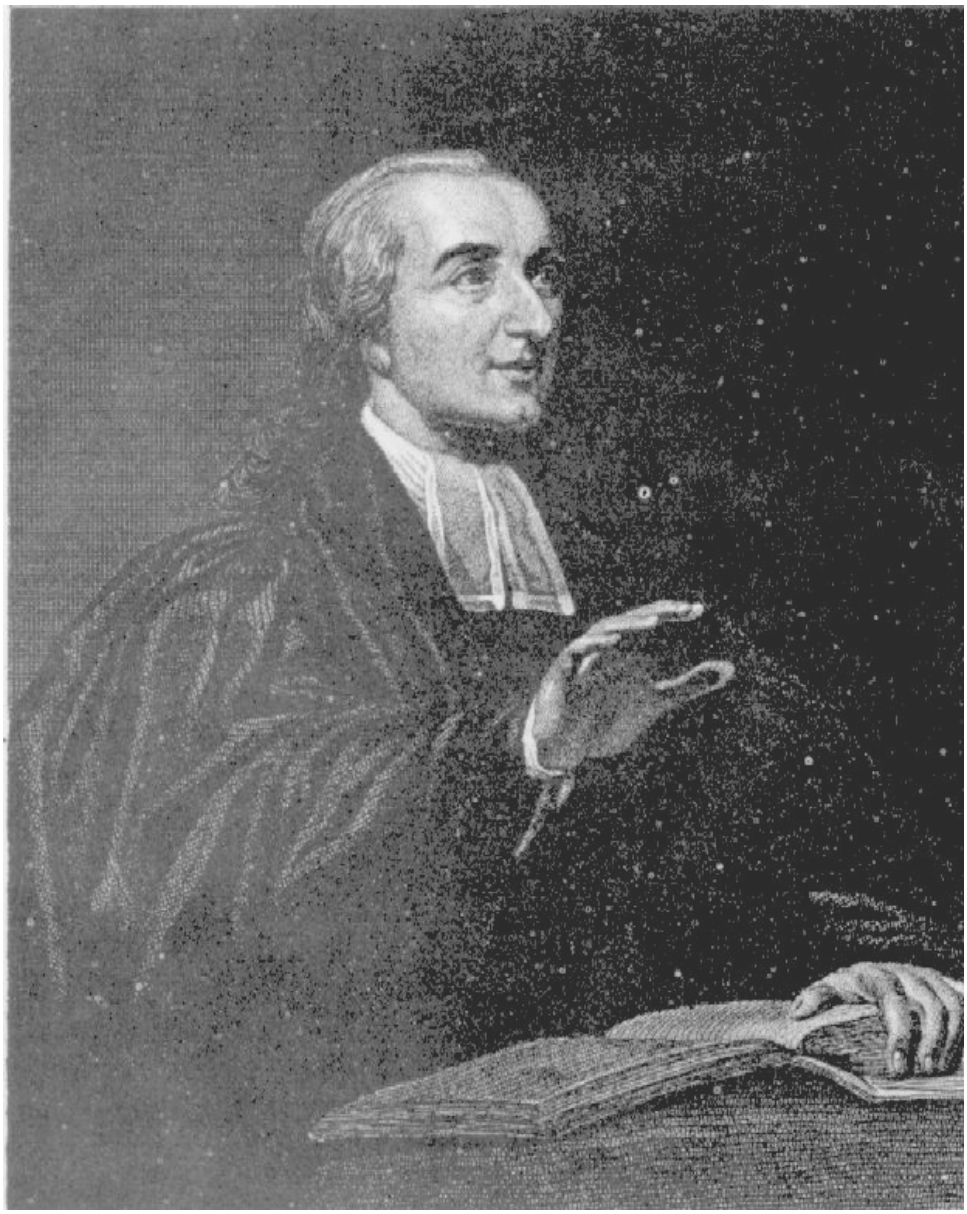
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ON EVANGELICAL MYSTICISM,

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF THE REV. J. FLETCHER.

BY THE LATE REV. MILES MARTINDALE.

SOME persons think all mysticism contrary to reason; and a work is deemed mystical if it contain truths a little more profound, or thoughts more sublime than what they are already acquainted with, A few remarks on this dangerous prejudice may not be unworthy of the serious reader's attention.

The rational mysticism, found in many excellent works, both ancient and modern, is a thin veil covering the naked truth, to improve her beauty, to quicken the attention of sincere seekers, to augment the pleasure of discovery, and to conceal her charms from the prying eyes of her enemies.

Poems, in general, and the sacred oracles in particular, abound with this mysticism, which consists in figures, allusions, comparisons, metaphors, types, allegories, apologues, and parables. David, for instance, simply tells us, God is attentive to the prayers of sincere seekers.

Comer presents the same truth veiled in a prosopopoeia, when he says, “Prayers are the daughters of Jupiter;” and consequently of celestial origin, and their influence Divine.

To this mysticism, which personifies virtues, vices, and the passions; dignifies animals with reason, and imparts life and speech to inanimate beings, our poets are indebted for the most sublime beauties of their works: had this imagery been wholly banished from my performance, I could not, with any propriety, have given it the name of a poem.

When a wise mysticism veils disagreeable truths, it may be compared to leaves of gold which bitter pills are sometimes covered with. Thus the Prophet Nathan, by concealing a terrible rebuke under a well-chosen apologue, brought King David to pass a just sentence upon the seducer of Uriah's wife. Thus Fenelon, under the character of Mentor; and Ravine, under the personages acting in his Esther, and Athalia, presumed to give lessons of wisdom and moderation to Lewis XIV., which would not have been received but through the prudent mysticism of the authors. In imitation of these I have sometimes introduced the apostles giving advice to Christians, at other times the feathered tribes offering instruction to the human race, but not like Fontaine, who says,—

De la simple nature encontez lee lecons, &c.

To simple nature's sacred lore attend,
Your ears to scaly tribes submissive bend,
Creation always speaks the numbers penn'd;
Foresight and diligence in them are joined,
By animals I lecture all mankind.

Judicious mysticism enables us to speak the greatest truths with impunity, and to deliver them in the most energetic and striking manner. Man being compounded of soul and body, the language most proper for him, is that which speaks to his sense and understanding. Through the fall of the first man we are sunk in sensuality, and the language that makes the deepest impression, is that which strikes our senses in the strongest manner.

Rousseau, in his Emilius, regrets the loss of energy in language, he wants action in every thing, and admires the wisdom of the man who, to recommend silence to his friend, imposed a seal on his lips. In this manner St. Paul, by rending his garments before the Pagans, who were going to offer him sacrifice, more strongly expressed his indignation at their folly than if he had given them an elaborate harangue on the subject.

Shall I be criminal in imitating what is approved in other authors? If Mark Antony's policy is admired, who, to excite the Romans to revenge the death of Julius Cesar, showed the bloody robe of his murdered friend; can I be blamed for exciting my readers to praise, by setting before them, at one time, the works of the Almighty, at another the jubilant choirs of angels, or music of the feathered tribes?

A moral precept divested of examples, metaphors, comparisons, actions, and images proper to seize on the senses and imagination, resembles the first sketch of a picture before the painter has animated it with colours; such a precept leaves the attention wavering and unsettled, making no lively impression; like an unsubstantial shade eluding the grasp and vanishing into empty air.

The necessity of mysticism, which gives body and strength to morality, was well understood by that prince who, to engage his sons in concord, ordered them into his chamber where he lay at the point of death. He commanded them to break a bundle of arrows, which they attempted in vain; he then enjoined them to cut the band by which they were united. and break them separately, which was easily done. This plan is pursued in the following work: instead of simply telling man he ought not to squander in dissensions the time allotted for the noble purpose of advancing in the path of salvation, he is invited to observe the birds of passage, which give lessons of foresight and unanimity.

The wisdom of that tender father has been admired, who, to snatch his son from the horrors of debauchery, led him to an hospital where living carcasses half consumed by the poison of vice, and terrible medicines, send forth a stench worse than sepulchres. “Go, my son,” said he, “and seek thy punishment in such an infamous place as this, where these unfortunate wretches have found the beginning of punishment inseparable from vice." Does the sermon of Bourdaloue, or the treatise of Placette against impurity, give such a pointed lesson?

Conformable to this, instead of declaiming against human weakness and the absurdity of pride-at one time I produce a peacock falling a victim to swelling pride, at another a Herod devoured by worms, or a Pharaoh humbled by insects more vile than worms.

A wise mysticism not only gives body and weight to moral precepts, but facilitates the doctrines of the Gospel, rendering them more pleasing and impressive. Thus Jesus Christ, instead of preaching a sermon to his disciples on feebleness, another on dependence, a third on the need of close and constant union with him, a fourth on the invisible manner in which he communicates his grace, a fifth on the fruits of the Spirit, unfolds all these important truths in two words: “I am the vine,” says he, “ye are the branches.” “Here is mysticism,” says prejudice. “Yes,” replies candour, “but it is a mysticism glowing with the Divine wisdom, and shedding luminous rays on the most profound truths, a mysticism having more light and energy than all the subtle arguments of the schoolmen; in fine, a mysticism which lays the most sublime truths, on a level with simple and unlearned people.

Nevertheless, I allow there is an extravagant mysticism, by which violence is done to sound criticism, in quitting, without reason, the literal sense of the Scriptures, and running into ridiculous and forced allegories. The authors who incline to this error, for which Origen was reproached, are blamable. But let us distinguish between frivolous mysticism and that which cautiously penetrates the bark or veil of religion to sound its depths, and discover in the sacred oracles a spiritual and heavenly sense, though veiled with figures which, in their general acceptance, signify nothing more than common things.

It would be impossible, without this wise mysticism, to understand the Scriptures, which, in many places, offer nothing but a coarse meaning, equally unworthy of the Holy Ghost, and of common sense. For instance, what literal meaning is there in these words of Moses? “Circumcise the foreskin of your hearts, and harden not your necks. The Lord will circumcise your hearts that ye may love him with all your soul.” And what literal sense can we fix to the words of David, when he says, “The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation?” All the sacred writers may be cited to prove the necessity of admitting mysticism in the manner it is done in the following work.

To confine every thing in the Bible to a literal meaning, is sinking to a level with the carnal Jews. Jesus attacked this error, saying to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The Jewish doctor replied with astonishment, “How can a man be born again when he is old? Can he enter again into his mother's womb, and be born again?” The answer of our Saviour applies not only to Nicodemus, but to all those who bury the mystical sense in the gross and literal meaning, and subjugate the spirit to the letter.

The apostles themselves, during the time of their novitiate, not unfrequently attached a ridiculous sense to the words of their Master, and by the letter slew the spirit. When Jesus Christ made an allusion to the sourness of the Pharisees’ doctrine, the gall of their characters, and the bitterness of their discourses; “Beware,” said he, "of the leaven of these false devotees." The apostles being severally attached to the letter, imagined our Lord meant the leaven used in fermenting bread: but calling then to the mystical sense of the words, he said, “O ye of little faith! [or of small discernment,] how is it that ye do not understand that I spake not concerning bread, when I said unto you, *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees!*” This proof opened their eyes, and they perceived that the leaven of which he spake was the traditions of the Jewish doctors.

A sage may smile at the disciples’ error; but the crimes which flow from the same source ought to cover the Christian world with sorrow. Certain doctors require those passages to be literally understood which should be taken mystically, and some divines insist on giving a mystical turn to passages which are literal. They dispute and mutually burn to establish opposite sentiments. From these contests spring those fatal schisms which unhappily divide Christians, and must continue to divide, until they become wise enough to admit a judicious mysticism.

An obstinate aversion to the spiritual sense of some mystical expressions does much injury to the Gospel, and the same obstinacy concerning certain mystical actions called sacraments, wounds both truth and Christian charity in a much more dangerous manner. For instance, do not many content themselves with the exterior of baptism, and neglect that sanctification of manners, and purity of heart, without which no man can see the Lord? The Scriptures clearly conduct us to the mystical design of this august ceremony, when they declare, “the baptism which saves, is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,” 1 Pet. iii. 21. But in vain does an apostle speak thus, our aversion to true mysticism being such, that, contenting ourselves with the letter that kills, we too frequently reject the Spirit that gives life.

To this error must be ascribed, not only the corruption of Christianity, but the murder of Jesus Christ. The malice of the Jews vented itself against his innocence in opposing the literal meaning of his words to the mystical and spiritual sense. They demanded, “What miracles dost thou perform to prove thyself the Messiah?” and he answered them concerning the temple of his body, “Destroy this temple, and I will

raise it again in three days." That is, resign myself to death, and in three days rise again. "And the elders," says St. Matthew, "sought false witnesses against Jesus to put him to death, but found none [that were proper.] At last two false witnesses came, saying, This man said, *I can destroy the temple of God, and in three days rebuild it.*" And when he hung on the cross, those who passed by said, "Thou that destroyest the temple, and in three days rebuildest it, save thyself!" This aversion of the Jews to mysticism, contributed to the death of Jesus Christ; and it now mutilates true Christianity, which enjoins a spiritual worship, and is a reasonable service.

A marked contempt for evangelical mysticism is so dangerous, that were it to become general, it would show the progress of that apostasy which is characteristic of the latter times. See what St. Paul has said on this subject, "This know, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

The severity of this apostolical command needs not surprise us, if we consider how much the enemies of true mysticism injure religion: they enervate the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as the Pharisees did the law of Moses; leaving only a dead carcass without a soul.

The strong aversion to evangelical mysticism manifested by some of the learned, flows from two sources equally dangerous. Extravagant mysticism appears ridiculous to the well informed and judicious, turning all into allegories, and constantly pursuing vain subtilties, and curious refinements, unworthy of the Holy Scriptures. On the other hand, the sages of this world, beholding, with indignation, these excesses of theology and metaphysics, imagine the only way to avoid them is by running to the other extreme; and being chiefly conversant with bodies, and natural philosophy, they regard the soul and metaphysics, as mere romances.

But do you, judicious reader, profit by the errors of the mystics, who resolve all into spirit; and by those of the philosophers, who turn every thing into body or matter throughout the universe. Make it your care to preserve the way of truth equally distant from the precipice down which mistaken religionists tumble, and the vortex where materialists perish. This path is attempted in the following work, where man, composed of body and soul, will find the literal and spiritual sense combined in a manner agreeable to sound reason and the word of God.

Those who prefer the feeble rays of their own understanding to the blazing light of the Gospel, are in general the greatest enemies to the profound meaning of the sacred writings. Yet there is nothing more reasonable than evangelical mysticism. Observe the proof.

Carnal and worldly men do not comprehend spiritual things but with the greatest difficulty. The language of paradise, and of celestial devotion, were lost with the innocence of the first man; and while man continues in his natural state, he is as much embarrassed to express a spiritual and heavenly idea, as an Indian, who having for the first time beheld a fleet of ships, would be to give his compatriots an idea of navigation. “I have seen,” he would say, “great houses with wings which fly, or swim on the water.” Some savages, as full of vanity as of ignorance, might perhaps blame the mysticism of these expressions; but a philosopher comes who is able to give such ideas of these things as the enlightened savage wished to give his ignorant companions.

All men are savages respecting the kingdom of God and his holy city. We need not therefore be surprised, if those who have some ideas of these subjects, can only express them in terms of circumlocution, which appear mysterious to carnal minds, whatever natural knowledge they possess in worldly concerns. Permission is given to poets and orators to employ metaphors, comparisons, and allegories. Why then censure a divine, who only submits through necessity to what orators do of choice, for the ornament of their works and pleasure of their auditors? Moreover, the liberty taken by the judicious divine, in this respect, is founded on the nature of things, and the essential relations they bear among themselves. These relations are so real that the unenlightened man may be conducted to the knowledge of supernatural things by the resemblance they bear to natural; as children and novices are taught sacred history by prints and figures.

The reality of these relations among things visible and invisible, engaged Jesus Christ to instruct the people by parables, founded in these relations, and having a double use; that of a glass by which objects are magnified and rendered more visible to the simple; and a veil to conceal them from false sages. St. Paul has given us a key to evangelical mysticism, when he assures us, “that the invisible things of God are clearly seen by the things which he has made,” that is, by the visible creation. And he gives the reason, saying, “That things which are seen were not made of things which do appear;” and when he declares, “that the things on earth are copies of those in heaven:” as though he had said, that all the visible and sensible objects are only dross and material copies, whose originals are spiritual and invisible. This is the foundation of that mysticism which runs through the Gospel. To reject it, is to continue in ignorance of Divine things, and in spiritual infancy. It is to imitate the folly of stupid persons who reject the sense of the Scriptures, and content themselves with admiring the pictures which render the meaning more agreeable and easy.

I will conclude this dissertation by a remark taken from Dr. Henry More, one of the greatest men that have ornamented the university of Cambridge. This poet and philosopher, in his discourse on John iv. 31-34, gives a proper idea of evangelical mysticism, and the character of such as turn it into ridicule.

Having considered the carnal disposition of the disciples, who imagined when Jesus Christ said, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of; my meat is to do the will of him that sent me;” that he spake of animal food; and said one to another, “Hath any man brought him aught to eat?” And having noticed the manner in which our Lord takes the opportunity of offering spiritual grace, under the name of “living water,” to the woman of Samaria, who had come to draw material water from Jacob's well, he thus expresses himself:-

“Whether we instruct others, or wish to enlarge our own knowledge, let us imitate the example given by Jesus Christ on this occasion. This is not only our privilege but indispensable duty; for the whole universe forms one great emblem, or symbolic sign of the most interesting truths.

“On the first appearance of the morning, when the sun darts his new-born rays over the face of creation, let us open the eyes of our understanding with those of our body, and say with David, ‘Lord, lift upon me the light of thy countenance.’ The air we respire should awaken a desire, like that which filled the breast of a certain emperor, not merely to breathe the common air, *but to be united with the great Intelligence which fills the universe*. Solitude and darkness, which naturally inspire dread and horror, represent the privation of that ‘perfect love which casteth out fear.’ Thus St. John speaks, ‘He that hateth his brother, walks in darkness.’

“As the circle of nature is unfolded to the natural man, the Spirit of God makes use of this, for the purpose of conducting him to spiritual things; so that by a thousand objects, which constantly strike the eyes, our souls are invited to elevate themselves above gross matter, and to obtain the spiritual treasure offered in the Gospel. Whatever we see, smell, taste, or hear, and the things that are tangible and sensible, represent some hidden mystery; and under all this bark and these ornamental shells, that veil the face of nature, we may find nourishment more precious than that which supports our senses and perishable bodies.

“A man surrounded by these objects, and neglecting to elevate himself to the more substantial and excellent things, is afflicted with a spiritual lethargy, or rather he is spiritually dead; and in conduct resembles the beasts of the forest. He is under a malediction, and in that brutality which fell on Nebuchadnezzar; and continues in this deplorable state, till the pride of his heart is humbled sufficiently to recollect, like that degraded monarch, that the Most High governs the world, and that a Divine Providence superintends all things. Then returning to himself, with all the regenerate, he is able to understand the meaning of spiritual life. He discovers that our spirits, as well as our bodies, may here find that beauty, fortitude, and pleasure, which are suitable to the dignity of their nature.”

Thus speaks this ingenious divine and philosopher. And I confess, I would much rather be blamed unjustly by superficial philosophers, than be compared to Nebuchadnezzar, by the celebrated author whose words are here cited.

GRACE AND NATURE.

WHEN St. Paul exhorts Christians to improve their grace, (or the spiritual aids which God bestows on reasonable creatures,) he says, “Rejoice evermore, and in every thing give thanks to the Lord.” Gratitude, which naturally utters its feelings in praise, is so essential a part of Christian worship, that the contrary disposition is, by this apostle, represented as characteristic of obdurate Pagans: “They are inexcusable,” said he, “because having known God,” by his works, “they did not glorify him as God,” nor render him due praise. They forgot their greatest benefactor, and behaved like Atheists in refusing him the tribute of adoration.

If grace leads us to celebrate the God of all grace, nature, in like manner, calls upon us to celebrate her invisible Author. “It is necessary,” says M. de Luc, in his History of the Earth, “daily to recall men to the original bias of human nature, which certainly was the admiration of the universe. That every step we advance in discoveries should be compared with our ideas of a wise and intelligent Cause,” &c. To follow the advice of this physician, is to proceed by the light of the universe, to the knowledge of her author. By this mean, religion walks hand in hand with philosophy, and grace and nature are united.

THE WORKS
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EULOGY

ON THE

CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHERS,

PASCAL, NEWTON, BONNET, DE LUC, BACON, BOYLE, NEWTON, &c.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF THE REV. J. FLETCHER,

BY THE LATE REV. MILES MARTINDALE.

GOOD sense should lead thee to the Gospel door,
That source of mercy to the guilty poor,
Led by this torch, implore celestial peace,
And prove the virtue of redeeming grace.
The yoke of Satan from thy heart remove,
And taste true wisdom flowing from above.
With humble Newton gain supernal light;
The Christian and philosopher unite.

Deep in thy heart let grace and wisdom join,
Thy life shall prove their energy Divine:
Copy Bonnet, that great observing sage,
And point to God in every glowing page.
The dreadful deluge with de Luc unfold;
With him by faith the righteous Judge behold,
Who with infuriate waters drowned the earth,
Changed ocean's bed, and to new worlds gave birth:
With vast concussions roused volcanoes dire,
To raise the deep, and bid the globe expire.
Who plunged the guilty world in death profound,
Bid ocean roll her foaming billows round.
This mighty wreck with pious dread behold,
Revere that God whom Moses sung of old;
With Galen trace his wondrous skill and might,
Till Heaven bestow the renovating light.

In the former edition I said, *such as humble Pascal*: the sense is equally just. PASCAL was one of the best writers, the finest geniuses, and the greatest

mathematicians that France has produced. In his conduct and writings he has fully demonstrated, that philosophy perfectly accords with Christianity. Superficial philosophers are frequently among the incredulous, but the truly learned consider it an honour to be believers. The system of DESCARTES tends to demonstrate the existence of a God: and though Voltaire has frequently ridiculed the devotion of Pascal, he has done justice to that of the great English philosopher, in his Elements of Newton's Philosophy.

"*Newton*," says he, "was intimately persuaded of the existence of a God; and he understood by this word, not merely a being that is infinite, omnipotent, eternal, and the Creator of all things, but a Master, who hath formed a relation between himself and his creatures; for without this relation the knowledge of the Deity is only a barren science. This great philosopher has likewise a very singular remark at the conclusion of his principles; which is, that we do not say, My *eternal, my infinite*, because these attributes have no relation to our nature; but we say, and we ought to say, *My God*! and by this we understand the *Master and Preserver of our life, and the object of our thoughts*. I remember that, in several conversations which I had with Dr. Clarke, in the year 1726, this philosopher never pronounced the name of God but with an air of recollection, and the most marked respect. I acknowledged to him the impression which his manner made upon my mind, and he informed me that it was from Newton he insensibly learned this manner, which indeed ought to be that of all men.

"A catechist announces God to his pupils, and Newton demonstrates his being to the wise. The whole of his philosophy necessarily leads to the knowledge of the Supreme Being, who created all things, and regulates them with ease. Of all the proofs concerning the existence of a God, those which proceed from final causes, appeared the strongest in the eyes of Newton. The infinite designs which beam forth in the most extensive, and in the smallest parts of the universe, are a demonstration; and yet, though so obvious, they are almost neglected; but Newton thought that these numberless evidences, which he perceived more clearly than others, were the productions of an infinitely powerful artist.

"I do not know," continues M. de Voltaire, "that there is one metaphysical proof that speaks more strongly to man than this admirable order which reigns in the universe; and if there had existed a more beautiful argument than this verse, *The heavens declare the glory of the lord*, Newton would not have placed this at the end of his principles. He found no kind of ratiocination more convincing in favour of the Deity than that of Plato, who says to one of his interrogators, You judge that I have a reasonable soul, because you perceive an order in my words and actions: judge then, in beholding the order of the universe, that it is regulated by a mind infinitely intelligent." Thus speaks M. de Voltaire. I am glad to see this philosopher united with Plato and Newton in supporting this grand truth! I likewise feel great satisfaction when I behold LOCKE demonstrate the superiority of his judgment, saying, "I receive the light of revelation with pleasure and gratitude, and I rejoice therein: for it lays my

mind at rest concerning many questions which my poor feeble reason could never fathom."

This satisfaction is augmented, when I behold so fine a genius as M. de MONTESQUIEU giving evidence in favour of the truth of Christianity, and of that power which at first established it, and which has preserved it to the present season. "The religion of Heaven," says he, "was not established by the same methods as the religion of this world. Read the history of the Church, and you will see the wonders of the Christian religion. Did she resolve to enter a country? She caused the gates to open: all instruments served her purpose. Sometimes God makes use of a few fishermen, and at other times he takes an emperor from his throne, and makes him bend his neck to the yoke of the Gospel. Did the Christian religion conceal herself in subterranean caverns? Attend a moment, and you shall see imperial majesty speaking for her. She passes, at pleasure, the ocean, the rivers, and the mountains: no obstacles on earth can impede her progress. Fill the minds of men with hatred to her, she will vanquish this aversion. Establish customs, form usages, publish edicts, make laws: she will triumph over the climate, the laws which are in force there, and the legislators who formed them. God, by his decrees, of which we have no knowledge, extends or contracts the boundaries of his holy religion." (*Defense de l'Esprit des Loix,* p. 112.)

How different is this language to that of Hume, the Scottish philosopher, who, filled with a vain hope concerning the progress of his vain philosophy, takes upon him to predict the approaching downfall of the Gospel; as if the religion of Jesus Christ must lick the dust before his philosophy, and that of Voltaire! But his expectation is vain: M. BONNET, the pious philosopher of Geneva, more closely unites Christian piety with sound philosophy; and his judicious researches into the truth of Christianity, demonstrate the Scottish prophet to be grossly mistaken.

It will not be unimportant to notice here the eulogy which M. Bonnet pays, in his *Philosophic Regeneration*, to the piety of LEIBNITZ, the great philosopher of Germany, whom he called the Germanic Plato.

This Genevese philosopher, speaking of the philosophical comparison of death and sleep, which Leibnitz had made according to the words of Jesus Christ, adds, "He cited with great pleasure even the least words of this Divine Master, and he always discovered some hidden sense still the more beautiful, as it was the more philosophical. The passage upon which I comment will furnish us with a remarkable example: I could easily cite many more; but I confine myself to the admirable preface to the *Theodicee*. He who was delighted to find in the Gospel a philosophy so exalted, was a living Encyclopedia, and one of the most profound geniuses that ever appeared on the earth. I beseech those who have neither the understanding nor the wisdom of this great man, to consider that it ill becomes them to despise the Gospel, and to strive at inspiring others with the same contempt."

“Four of the greatest English philosophers, (says Dr. Newton, the bishop of Bristol, in his Dissertation on the Philosophy of the Holy Scriptures,) were Lord BACON, BOYLE, LOCKE, and NEWTON, who have all proved, by their example, that philosophy and faith perfectly accord.

“BACON, elevated by his merit and his talents to the rank of chancellor, was a universal genius. In his works, which do great honour to England, we every where see his marked respect for religion, and his veneration for the Holy Scriptures, which he always quotes with reverence. His maxim is well known: ‘That a smattering of philosophy leads to Atheism, but a profound knowledge of this science to devotion.’ He considered theology as the most exalted of all knowledge, and the perfection of human nature.

“BOYLE, a profound natural philosopher, is better known by his piety than his nobility, and his discoveries in experimental physics. He wrote a treatise on *Seraphic Love*, for thus he called the love of God. This work is dedicated to his sister, the countess of Warwick, and it breathes the most sublime devotion of David's Psalms. He was the author of a treatise which proves divinity superior to philosophy. He was so filled with admiration of the Scriptures, that he composed a work on the excellency of their style: and at his own expense procured translations of the Bible in various languages, and often printed them to distribute among the poor; and after having passed his life in doing good, to combat error after his death, he left a considerable sum of money for the purpose of preaching annual sermons on the truths of the Christian religion.

“LOCKE is so well known, as a profound metaphysician by his *Essay on the Human Understanding*, that any praise of him as a philosopher is unnecessary. He has proved that Christianity accords with reason, and has even composed a paraphrase on some of St. Paul's epistles; having consecrated the latter part of his life to the study of the Bible.

“NEWTON was so great a mathematician, that a learned man said, ‘If we consider philosophy and the mathematics as composed of ten parts, we may regard him as the inventor of nine of those parts.’ He spake of the Supreme Being with that respect which becomes a sage. When he regulated the chronology of the ancient empires, it was always according to the light with which we are furnished by the Holy Scriptures: and by his observations on the prophecies of Daniel, and of St. John, he demonstrated that the word of God was the object to which all his labours tended; and having begun with philosophy, he acted like all the truly wise in finishing with religion.”

“M. BONNET was a celebrated philosopher of Geneva, a member and correspondent of many academies and royal societies. His philosophical researches into the truth of Christianity, organised bodies, regeneration, &c, have procured him the respect and admiration of Christian philosophers, as well as his Contemplations

of Nature, in which we every where behold the judicious observer of the universe, and the humble adorer of the Supreme Being.

"M. DE LUC was a companion of M. Bonnet, and with him trod the paths of the greatest philosophers of the Christian persuasion. He was a member of the Royal Society of London, of the Batavian Society, and a correspondent of the Royal Academies of Paris and Montpelier. His Letters, Physical and Moral, on the History of the Earth and of Man, which he published in five volumes, are an additional proof of the agreement of Christianity with sound philosophy. The reader will doubtless find a pleasure in reading what he says upon these articles.

After having compared an incredulous philosopher to a person found upon an immense ocean, without pilot, helm, or anchors, and having no hope of finding any port, he adds, "Being warned betimes by a wise pilot, my Father, I was fortunate enough to avoid the dangers, in the seasons of illusion, which every where surround the studious youth. I was in a measure captivated by the first attack, but restrained by a happy education, and by this recalled to reflection, I resisted, ere it was too late, the cruel hands that would have consigned me to the merciless waves.

"Who are you? I demanded of those who wished to allure me into their dangerous path. In whose name do you speak? *In the name of nature*. And in what manner has she spoken to you? *We have studied her oracles, and are become her interpreters*. Have you the credentials of your mission? *Credentials! fine demand! Do you then listen to these vulgar opinions? Do you believe in a revelation? Open your eyes, and behold how nature contradicts your fables!* &c. If you have made these discoveries in nature by your own faculties, I will examine also, for I have faculties similar to yours, and shall be very cautious in fixing my opinion upon the authority of any man, whoever he may be, concerning objects of this vast importance.

"Hence," continues M. de Luc, "arose my great inclination for this science, which the schools call *the knowledge of nature*. I was determined to know for myself what man could discover there. No, said I to myself, no, I will not relinquish, on the authority of any person, those laws which hitherto have appeared conformable to all the feelings of my heart, or that hope of future bliss which, amidst all the innocent pleasures resulting from society, are, in my esteem, more valuable than existence. I will not, upon the credit of any man, render myself offensive to this Being, on the belief of whom I rest as upon a centre, and who through the universe unfolds to my sight the most admirable harmony; by whose existence I am restrained from the commission of the evils too prevalent in society, nor am I alone in the lonely desert!

"They do not credit, they say, the facts which have been transmitted from Moses to the first Christians, and from the primitive Christians down to us! These form, however, the basis of all revelation, the most glorious display of light upon the universe, and the first foundation of human hopes. But if some of these facts be true, such, for instance, as the universality of the deluge, and the destruction of the earth

by water, would there not remain some traces of them on the face of the globe? I will then go in pursuit of them, I will study the phenomena, and I will see how they explain them who reject the sacred text.

"I undertook to observe the moral and physical world; I read what these philosophers said upon these subjects, and I soon suspected that those who abandoned Moses, saw but darkly, or reasoned without examination. The farther I carried my researches in this manner, the more was I convinced of their error; and cheerful serenity returned to my mind.

"Nor was I less struck with the deplorable effects produced by this system among certain individuals, and through them to society at large; the schemes of Atheism, of Fatalism, and of Materialism, children of impatience and false learning. There I beheld a morality without principle, politics separated from their true design; and a happiness without any durable source. I observed a number of unfortunate persons, victims to opinions which they did not comprehends and repeating ruinous creeds to which they had no other attachment but the force of fashion, and the confidential tone with which they were supported; and I saw that they were unable to extricate themselves from these shackles; because a single word produced a doubt, and it required deep study to dissipate the darkness.

"Hitherto I have only spoken of myself, and have done it with this view, to discover the internal history of man; and the progress of his ideas on a subject which contains so much happiness: and this man is none but myself, merely because I am the best acquainted with him. But I must associate my brother with me, who, next to myself, is the best known to me. Thirty years we studied the principal subject of this work, and we never took one step but in concert. When we were persuaded by the study of the phenomena, that the Mosaic history of our globe was the only system to be depended on, we formed the design of instructing those who either did not, or could not examine these subjects themselves; but we will not conceal the difficulties, &c.

"At present a certain class of infidels, with a labyrinth of arguments, constitute the fashion. The more feeble their reasons, the more decisive. They never hesitate, they deny and ridicule. In a word, one knows not which is the most wonderful, the boldness of their attacks, or the supercilious air which is manifested in the weakness of their means. One would think they imagine that religion is on the point of destruction, and that they have only to mingle with the crowd of assailants, to obtain some small branch of laurel. But they deceive themselves; religion has her foundation in nature, &c.

"Religion in general seizes the hearts of men. What conclusion should the observing philosopher draw from this? Must we not change the nature of man before we can destroy its influence? &c. In the whole system of morality, religion merits the regard of every honest man. And what religion has such strong reasons for its support

as ours, that is impressed with such striking characters of truth, and so firmly established, whose morality is so beautiful, whose motives to practice are so powerful, whose promises are so sweet and so conformable to our desires, and so well calculated to support us under the inevitable evils of the present life? A religion, in one word, which whoever announces in its proper form and beauty, and with pure intentions, obliges the idolater to renounce his false deities, because he feels the purity of primitive notions.

"I return to my general proposition. Since, in the study of the universe, man seeks to discover what is agreeable, that he may conform his conduct thereto, his first step should be to inquire if the FIRST CAUSE, to whom he owes his existence, has not manifested his will concerning man; and if he has not given him a rule of conduct. This is what has at all times determined a number of philosophers, whose example I think it an honour to follow, to examine the proofs concerning the certainty of a Divine revelation, and to publish such proofs when they had found them substantial, &c.

"To examine if revelation be certain, it is requisite, in the first place, to be well assured of the facts which I have collected, and to examine their consequents with respect to the ancient history of the earth; then to see if they be conformable to what Moses has said, and by what means he could gain a knowledge of these things. And if you are too feeble to run from country to country, or too much engaged with other concerns, even to examine the account which! I have given in my labours of thirty years, you cannot be in a condition to decide upon these facts; I beseech you, at least, for the sake of justice and humanity, to abstain from spreading such perplexing opinions, which at the best are only chimerical."

Such is the decision of a philosopher after having pursued his inquiries for a great number of years in different parts of the world, and who pushed his researches to the summits of the most lofty mountains, to the bottom of the deepest valleys, and down the most terrible precipices. But I refer the reader to the work itself, where he will find himself both amused and profited; and I will conclude this extract with a sketch of the character which M. de Luc gives of his celebrated compatriot, J. J. Rousseau.

"This haughty, but honest man," says he, "knowing the weakness of human reason in the pursuit of truth, sensibly felt the despotism which was exercised in the bosom of the Church, even by those who ought to have made revelation respectable. He was grieved to see the most essential part of religion falling a victim in the great world, through the unskilfulness of its defenders; and believing that he ought to hasten to its succour, and at least to give some support to the morals and hopes which are drawn from reason, he ranked himself on the side of those philosophers, who seek only in this way for a foundation of morality to combat, more certainly, the monstrous systems of Atheism and Materialism, which leave man without hope and without restraint.

“He too much doubted the influence of religion in herself, and being entangled in the heat of the contest, he went farther than he at first intended. He respected Christianity from the bottom of his heart: this I know, and this he has declared. But wishing to put an end to the persecution exercised on those who may, in sincerity, seek for the foundation of morality out of the Bible, he undertook to prove that the characters rising from this source were not sufficiently authentic, to affix the charge of impiety upon those who sought them elsewhere. But in attempting to prove this he wanted evidence, and sunk into doubts. He was deceived concerning the force of these objections to Christianity; for the most part they are only such difficulties as men meet with in their examinations of any subject, and those which appear more formidable are easily solved.”

THE WORKS
OF THE
REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER

A LETTER FROM THE REV. MR. FLETCHER,

TO

THE REV. MR. PROTHERO,

IN DEFENCE OF

EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.[1]

MADELEY, July 25, 1761.

REV. SIR,-The elegant sermon you preached at the visitation, got you, no doubt, the thanks of your known hearers. Permit an unknown one to add his to theirs, and to pay to merit a just tribute. It gave me exceeding great satisfaction to see you stand up so boldly in defence of revealed religion against Deists and infidels, and, by ingenious observations and cogent arguments, force them out of their strong hold, a blind confidence in reason. I could not help wishing that they did every where meet with opponents so able to fight them with their own weapons. Were this the case, there would not be so much room to lament the overflowings of Deism among men of reason and learning.

The second part of your discourse, wherein you endeavoured to guard the truth from the other extreme, superstition and enthusiasm, deserves no less to be commended, on account of the goodness of your design. It is the duty of a preacher to keep the sacred truths committed to him, as well from being perverted by enthusiasts, as crushed by infidels. The rocks on which both split are equally dangerous, and we see daily that nothing exposes so much the mysteries of Christianity to the scorn of freethinkers, as the words and behaviour of those who suppose themselves under the inspiration of God's Spirit, when, it appears, that they are led only by the weakness of their mind and nerves, by spiritual pride and the warmth of their imagination. Boasting of communion with God, and peculiar favours from heaven, is no less hurtful to the cause of Christ, when people's lives show them to be actuated by a spirit of delusion; and setting up impulses in the room of repentance, faith, hope, charity, obedience, has done no small mischief in the Church of God.

These are the counterfeits and bane of inward religion: these the tares that the enemy sows in the night of ignorance and superstition; and, I repeat it again, you cannot be too much commended, sir, for endeavouring to detect and stop him in this work of darkness. But did you act with all the caution necessary in so important an

undertaking, and, while you were pulling out the tares, did not you root up, unawares, some of the wheat also?

I had some fear of it, sir, while I was hearing you; and I beg leave to lay before you the ground of this fear in the following observations, which I humbly entreat you to weigh in the balance of the sanctuary:-

I. Is the representing, in general, virtue, benevolence, good nature, and morality, as the way to salvation, agreeable to either the word of God, or the doctrine of our Church? Both show us no other way but Christ alone, Christ “the way, the truth, and the life;” Christ the door, the only door to come to the Father, and receive grace and glory. “If justification comes by obeying the law,” says Paul, Gal. ii. 21, “then Christ died in vain;” and to the Ephesians, ii. 8, he says, " By grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.”

The only means and instrument, on our part, required for salvation, (according so our Church, second sermon on the passion,) is faith, that is to say, a sure trust and confidence in the mercy of God, whereby we persuade ourselves that God both has forgiven and will forgive our sins; that he has taken us again into his favour; that he has released us from the bonds of damnation, and received us again into the number of his elect people, not for our merits and deserts, but only and solely for the merits of Christ's death and passion.

This faith is so far from superseding morality and good works, that it works infallibly by love, and love infallibly by obedience, and consequently produces morality and good works, truly so called. “Do we make void the law through faith?” says Paul: “nay, we establish the law.”

Nevertheless, faith unfeigned alone justifieth, if the word of God and the articles of our Church stand for any thing; the eleventh of which runs thus: “We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works and deservings; wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as is more largely expressed in the homily on justification:” to which I refer you, sir, or to the enclosed extract of our homilies on this point, if you please to peruse it.

II. Does what you said, sir, of reason and free agency, in the second part of your discourse, perfectly agree with what you said in the first?

You told us first, (if I understood you rightly,) that since the fall, man's reason is so darkened, that the greatest philosophers staggered even at the fundamental truths of religion, the being of a God, the immortality of the soul, &c; that his passions are so disorderly and impetuous, as to hurry him down the paths of error and vice; that reason, so far from bringing him back, redoubles the cheat, and makes him ingenious

to excuse and satisfy his unruly appetites; that St. Paul's words painted his helplessness with true colours, “The good that I would I do not, and the evil I would not that I do," &c.

This, sir, was a superstructure worthy of the foundation; this agreed with your text with the utmost exactness: “We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing, [truly good before God,] as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.”

Who would have expected, after this, to hear you place again reason, and free will to good, upon the throne out of which you had but just forced them? I humbly presume, sir, that this candle of the Lord, shining in the breast of man, did not deserve to be set up quite so high again, since the light it gives can hardly hinder a philosopher, a man who makes it all his business to collect and follow that light, from stumbling at the being of a God.

As for free agency to good, you appealed to experience, sir, (if I am not mistaken,) whether a man has not the same power to enter the paths of virtue as to walk across a room: let then experience decide.

The heathen says, *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*. The prophet says, “Turn us, and so shall we be turned. Draw me, and I shall run after thee.” You say yourself, sir, “The good that I would I do not, and the evil I would not that I do." Our Church says, (Col. for Easter,) “We humbly beseech thee that, as by thy special grace preventing us, thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect.” The Bible says, Phil. ii. 13, “It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do” that which is truly good in his sight; and the tenth of those articles, which we solemnly took for the rule of our preaching, next to the word of God, says, “The condition of man, after the fall of Adam, is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God, by Christ, preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.”

“What! is man, then, a mere machine?” No, sir, he has a will, but it is contrary to the will of God; his carnal mind, his natural wisdom, “is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be,” says St. Paul: he is a free agent to do evil. Yet, when God prevents him with convictions of sin and good desires, as says our Church, which he always does sooner or later, he may, through the grace of God, yield to them, and enter into life, or through his stubbornness resist them, and remain in his fallen state.

III. You objected, in your discourse, that “the insisting upon these, and the line doctrines, tended to breed disturbances, strife, and confusion.” This is accidentally true, sir; but what do you infer from thence? That the doctrines are false, or the preachers in the wrong, because offences arise?

We cannot do this without giving up the Bible. What strife and confusion, yea, what jeering and cruel mockings, attended the ministry of the prophets among the Israel of God! Witness Micaiah, Elias, Jeremiah, &c. Yea, who was so great a disturber as that Jesus of Nazareth, of whom some of his friends said, "He is mad," whom all Jerusalem, in uproar, brought to Pilate, and accused, saying, Luke xxiii. 2, 5, "We found this fellow perverting the nation; for he stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place?" Or that Saul of Tarsus, who was well nigh torn in pieces by his offended hearers, yea, and by those that had never heard him, while the general cry was, "This is the pestilential fellow, who turneth the world upside down-brethren, help!"

The same causes will produce the same effects. The doctrines of the fall, the new birth, and free justification by faith alone; and their fruits in those that embrace them, godly sorrow, peace, righteousness, and joy in a believing heart, will stir up the hearers in proportion to the clearness, constancy, and power with which they are preached. And this will be the case in all ages, because in all ages men are born in sin, and children of wrath; yea, and in all places too: those that are born on the banks of the Thames, or Severn, are no better, by nature, than those that drink the water of Jordan or of the Ganges.

When a medicine operates by stirring up the peccant humours in order to evacuate them, is it a sign that it is not a good one? Not at all: it must work if it be good. I shall conclude this paragraph by a few words of him who had in his breast all the treasures of Divine wisdom and knowledge. John vii. 7, "The world hateth me, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil." And "shall the servant be above his master?" "I am come to send fire upon the earth-to set [occasionally] a man at variance with his father," &c. While the Gospel gives inward peace, even a peace that the world knoweth not, to those that really embrace it, it declares war, an eternal war, against sin, and must, of course, disturb the peace of the prince of this world and his subjects.

IV. It is agreeable enough to the doctrine of free agency to good, not to insist upon the necessity of being born again of the Spirit of God; but is the discountenancing of the preaching of it agreeable to the tenor of that revelation you did so well defend in the beginning of your discourse? If Ezekiel preached it, chap. xi. 19, and xviii. 31, and xxxvi. 26, if John speaks so often, as well as David and St. Paul, of being born of God, of being "quickened" by his word and Spirit, of the "new heart," the "new creature," the "renewing of the mind," the "life of God," the "eternal life," the "life of Christ" in a believer, &c; if Jesus himself enforced this doctrine in the strongest manner to Nicodemus; if our Church (office for baptism and collect for Ash Wednesday) pleads for it as well as the word of God, can we supersede it in the pulpit as an unintelligible tenet, without wounding, unawares, Christ and his apostles, our Church and the compilers of her liturgy? See Rev. xxii. 19.

V. To set up impulses as the standard of our faith, or rule of our conduct; to take the thrilling of weak nerves, sinking of the animal spirits, or flights of a heated imagination, for the workings of God's Spirit; to pretend to miraculous gifts, and those fruits of the Spirit which are not offered and promised to believers in all ages, or to boast of the graces which that Spirit produces in the heart of every child of God, when the fruits of the flesh appear in our life-this is downright enthusiasm: I detest it as well as you, sir, and I heartily wish you good luck whenever you shall attack such monstrous delusions.

But is it consistent with the doctrine of our Church to condemn and set aside all *feelings* in religion, and rank them with unaccountable *impulses*? Give me leave, sir, to tell you, that either you or the compilers of our liturgy, articles, and homilies, must be mistaken, if I did not mistake you.

They teach us to beseech God to "deliver us from hardness of heart," whereby I cannot conceive they mean any thing, if they mean not a heart past feeling. They bid us pray, (office for the sick,) that every sick person may know and feel that there is no saving name or power but that of Jesus Christ. In the seventeenth of our articles, they speak of godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the workings of God's Spirit. And in the third part of the homily for Rogation Week, they declare that when after contrition we feel our consciences at peace with God through the remission of our sin, it is God that worketh this miracle in us. Compare this with Rom. v. 1. They are so far, therefore, from attributing such feelings to the weakness of good people's nerves, or to a spirit of pride and delusion, that they affirm it is God that worketh them in their hearts.

Yea, they never suffer us to meet together for public worship without beseeching the God of all grace to give us such a "due sense of all his mercies, especially of his inestimable love in our redemption by Jesus Christ, as that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful;" and if they would have us have a due sense of an inestimable love causing our hearts to be unfeignedly thankful, she is not against our feeling some thankfulness, for the word *sense* certainly conveys that idea, as well as the Latin word *sentire*, or the French *sentir*, whence it is derived, which cannot be Englished more literally than by the word to *feel*. Therefore the expression, "to feel thankfulness," does not convey a stronger idea than the words of our Church, to be duly, sensibly, unfeignedly thankful in heart, which you daily use yourself, sir. In condemning feelings in general, lt would not then have been disagreeable at all to our liturgy to have allowed your hearers at least some feelings of thankfulness for the inestimable love of their dying Lord.

But to proceed: you seemed, sir, to discountenance *feelings* as not agreeable to sober, rational worship; but if I am not mistaken, reason by no means clashes with feelings of various sorts in religion. I am willing to let any man of reason judge whether feeling sorrow for sin, hunger and thirst after righteousness, peace of conscience, serenity of mind, consolation in prayer, thankfulness at the Lord's table,

hatred of sin, zeal for God, love to Jesus and all men, compassion for the distressed, &c; or feeling nothing at all of this, is matter of mere indifference: yea. sir, take for a judge a heathen poet, if you please, and you will hear him say, of a young man who, by his blushes, betrayed the shame he felt for having told an untruth, *Erubuit-salva res est.*

Does it seem contrary to reason that a spirit should be affected by spiritual objects? If heat and cold, sickness and health, so affect my body as to cause various feelings in it, why cannot fear and hope, love and hatred, joy and sorrow, sin and grace, remorse and peace, so affect my soul as to produce various feelings or sensations there? Can any thing be more absurd and contrary to nature than the apathy of Stoics? And what is banishing feelings out of religion, but pleading for religious apathy?

If a man may feel sorrow when he sees himself stripped of all, and left naked upon a desert coast, why should not a penitent sinner, whom God has delivered from blindness of heart, be allowed to feel sorrow upon seeing himself robbed of his title to heaven, and left in the wilderness of this world destitute of original righteousness? Again: if it is not absurd to say that a rebel, condemned to death, feels joy upon his being reprieved and received into his prince's favour, why should it be thought absurd to affirm that a Christian who, being justified by faith, has peace with God, and rejoices in hope of the glory to come, feels joy and happiness in his inmost soul on that account? On the contrary, sir, to affirm that such a one feels nothing, (if I am not mistaken,) is no less repugnant to reason than to religion.

But let us go to the law and the testimony, and let the point stand or fall by the oracles of God. Had Adam no feeling when, seeing his nakedness, he tried to hide himself from himself and from God? I believe, sir, he felt remorse, shame, and fear, to a very great degree; and should I be thought an enthusiast for it, I confess I have felt the same upon conviction of sin.

It is probable enough, also, that Jacob felt religious awe and a holy dread when he said, “How dreadful is this place; this is none other than the gate of heaven!” And young King Josiah, contrition of heart, when, upon his hearing the word of the Lord, he rent his clothes and wept, 2 Kings xxii. 11. Nor did the Searcher of hearts say that he was indebted to his constitution, and the weakness of his nerves, for those feelings of sorrow. Just the reverse: “Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself and wept before me, I also have heard thee, says the Lord.”

Was Job a low-spirited enthusiast, or did he feel something of the terrors of the Lord in reality, when he cried out, chap. vi. 4, “The arrows of the Almighty are within me; the poison thereof drinketh up my Spirits: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.”

But let us go to the Psalms, which, in all ages of the Church, have been looked upon as the standard of true devotion.

Can we, without uncharitableness, suppose that David had no feelings (or which comes to the same sense, no sensation) of joy and thankfulness in his heart, when he sung, Psalm xxviii. 7, “The Lord is my strength and shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth?”

Was not he a great dissembler, if, feeling no godly sorrow, he said, Psalm xxxi. 10, “My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength faileth me because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed?”

Did he feel no happiness in God, taste nothing of the Lord's goodness, when he said, Psalm xxxiv. 13, 18, “O taste and see that the Lord is good, he is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart?” No remorse, no fear of God's wrath, when he cried out, Psalm xxxviii. 1, 3, 4, “O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath; there is no rest in my bones because of my sin: for mine iniquities are gone over my head as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me to bear!”

Did he feel no fervour of devotion, no warmth of love, when he said, Psa. xxxix. 3, “My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire kindled, and I spake with my tongue?” No desire and thirst after God, when he sung, Psa. xlii. 1, “As the hart panteth after the waterbrook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God?” No dejection or trouble of mind, when he expostulated with himself, Psalm xlii. 11, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?” Did he expect no feelings of joy, no sense of the peace of God, when he prayed, Psalm li. 8, “Make me to hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice? Restore unto me the joy of salvation!” “Let thy loving kindness comfort me: when wilt thou comfort me?” &c, Psalm cxix. 76, 82.

Had he no sense, no inward consciousness, that his affections were set on things above, when he said, " My heart is fixed; Any heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise?" Did he feel no stirrings of desire, no touches of joy, when he cried, Psa. lxiii, 1, "My soul thirsteth after thee, my flesh longeth for thee as a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while l live; and my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness?"

Had he no sense or feeling of the mercy of God, and of his justification, when he said, Psa. lxvi. 16, “Come and hear, all ye that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul?” Psa. xxxii. 1, 5, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, &c. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin?” Psa. ciii. 1, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name; who forgiveth all thy sin, and healeth all thy infirmity?”

Did he feel no concern for God's glory, when he said, Psa. cxix. 136, 139, “Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law? My zeal hath even consumed me; because mine enemies have forgotten thy words?” In short, had he felt neither sorrow nor comfort, when he said. Psa. xciv. 19, “In the multitudes of the sorrows of my heart, thy comforts have refreshed my soul?” Or shall we suppose, that the man after God's own heart, in his devotion, was only a well-meaning enthusiast, of a soft complexion, sometimes cast down by melancholy, at other times carried out by the warmth of his imagination, and often led by impulses into the wild presumption of Ranters? If you refuse (as I am sure you do) to pass such judgments on David, you cannot help, sir, allowing the reality and the usefulness of feelings in sober religion, in rational devotion.

But let us leave the penitent king to his feelings, and consider what, we can make of the weeping prophet. Certainly, sir, we must say that Jeremiah was a melancholy enthusiast, almost falling into despair through the weakness of his nerves and lowness of his spirits, or allow that there is such a thing as feeling godly sorrow in religion, and thereby becoming entitled to the promise of our Lord, Matt. v, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;” unless we run to the other extreme, and account for his rivers of tears, by saying they were hypocritical tears, such as crocodiles are supposed to shed to bring men into their snare; and yet this must have been the case, if he felt no inward sorrow adequate to the outward demonstrations of his grief.

Were the saints of the New Testament more free from these inward *feelings?* Just the reverse! At least we ought to judge charitably enough of the Virgin Mary, to suppose that she felt some spiritual joy, when she said, “My soul rejoiceth in God my Saviour;” and of our Lord himself, to believe that he felt some trouble of mind, some deep concern, when he wept over Jerusalem, when he was troubled and wept at Lazarus’ grave, when he said, “My soul is troubled unto death;” and when, being in an agony, he offered up prayers with strong crying and tears, yea, with a bloody sweat: surely, sir, such scenes were transacted, not in his weak nerves, or frighted imagination, but in his inmost soul, and consequently we may conclude that he first felt them there.

If we read the Gospels and the Acts, we find frequent mention made of a peace, joy, and love, which people were strangers to, till they received the unction of the Holy One; and that not among apostles only, but among private Christians and illiterate women. The two disciples cried out, Luke xxiv., “How did our heart burn within us!” The twelve, whose hearts were filled with sorrow, John xvi. 6, return to Jerusalem with great joy, Luke xxiv.

At the day of Pentecost they were filled with power, boldness, and zeal, which are graces common to all believers, especially preachers: (for what have we to do with the miraculous gifts which it pleased God to confine to the apostolic age?) at least our Church declares, (homily for Whitsunday,) that the Spirit of God engendereth

still a burning zeal toward God's word, and giveth all men (not cloven tongues outwardly, but) a tongue, yea, a fiery tongue, so that they may boldly and cheerfully declare the truth in the face of all the world.

If we read on, we see three thousand people pricked to the heart by the word, (and consequently feeling the sword of the Spirit in their heart,) Eph. vi., compared with Hebrews, and upon their crying for help, we find them so comforted upon believing the forgiveness of sins through Jesus, that they were enabled to praise God, continue instant in prayer and breaking of bread, and to eat their food with gladness and singleness of heart. And I presume, sir, they felt and enjoyed that gladness of heart: yea, not only believers at Jerusalem felt it, but those of Antioch also, who, Acts xiii. 52, were filled with joy and the Holy Ghost; and the Churches of Judea and Galilee, who walked in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, Acts ix, 31.

Nor was that a privilege peculiar to the primitive Christians, as all those who have been at the pains of making their calling and election sure, experience daily: for the promise was not only to them, but to their children, and to us that are afar off: Had our Church been of another opinion, she would never have bidden us pray, as she does in the collect for Whitsunday, and the Sunday before: “Send us thine Holy Ghost to comfort us, and grant us, by thy Holy Spirit, to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort;” and in that for St. Stephen's day, “Grant that we, being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love our enemies as thy first martyr;” much less would she have bid us ask for the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, and conclude all our morning and evening prayers by asking the fellowship of the Holy Ghost for ourselves and for all.

But it; because your text was taken out of St. Paul's Epistle, you choose, sir, to let him decide whether feelings ought to have place in sound religion or not, I am willing to stand at the bar before so great a judge, and promise to find no fault with his sentence.

And first, not to mention the various scenes of terror, remorse, shame, desire, hope, joy, love, and admiration, he went through at his conversion, which he could not but feel in his soul; can we suppose, without rashness, that when he speaks of his fears within, the continual sorrow in his heart, the being in much trembling, the breaking of his heart, his preaching, praying, writing with many tears, his being “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing,” his longing to be dissolved, his being constrained by the love of Christ, his being refreshed in the Spirit, his bowels and the bowels of the saints being refreshed, his being comforted, yea, “exceeding full of comfort;” his “consolations abounding through Christ,” &c. Can we suppose, I say, he felt all along neither sorrow nor consolation, neither fear nor trembling, neither desire nor love? For my part, I believe he felt all this, and more than words can express: I dare no more place him among hypocrites than I dare rank him with enthusiasts.

But where does he exclaim against feeling the power of God, or the powerful operations of his Spirit on the heart? Is it where he says, that the kingdom of God is "not in word but in power;" that this kingdom within us, (if we are believers,) this true inward religion consists "in peace, righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost?" That Christians rejoice in tribulation, because the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them? Is it where he says, he is "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, because it is the power of God to the salvation of every one that believeth?" That he desired to "know nothing but Jesus and the power of his resurrection?" That his preaching was not with "enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," that the faith of his hearers might not "stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God?" 2 Cor. ii. 24. Or, is it when he calls the exerting of this power in him, his life, saying, "I live not, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me?"

Can we suppose that he discountenances feelings in religion when he prays that "the God of hope would fill the Romans, chap. xv. 13, with all joy and peace in believing, that they might abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost?" When he says that "they had not received again the spirit of bondage to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, crying, *Abba Father*, and witnessing to their spirits that they were the children of God," agreeable to that of St. John, "He that believeth, hath the witness in himself?"

Or does he suppose feelings useless when he gives up a notorious sinner to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit, being first troubled, might afterward be saved in the day of the Lord? And when, fearing the wound would be too deep, (for there is a danger in this also,) he desires the Corinthians "to comfort him, lest he should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow?" Does it not rather clearly appear, that deep sorrow is necessary to a great sinner, though he would not have him be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow?

Yea, he puts the question out of all doubt when he tells the Corinthians, second Epistle, chap. vii. 10, "that godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of;" and praises them for "sorrowing after a godly sort, insomuch that when Titus came, they received him with fear and trembling, and refreshed his spirit by the demonstrations that they gave him of their sorrow, indignation, fear, zeal, and vehement desire."

We may then safely conclude, that Paul, in this and other places, is as far from superseding feelings of godly sorrow as feelings of godly joy, when he says to the Philippians, "Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice;" or feelings of vehement desire, when he tells the Romans, that when the "Spirit helpeth our infirmities, he enables us to pray with groanings and desires that cannot be uttered."

But to avoid transcribing the greatest part of the apostle's epistles, let us see if he never spoke correctly to the point in question. Upon inquiry, I find him in our translation using thrice the word exclaimed against, and every time very much to the purpose, to show you were mistaken, sir, when you supposed that he discountenances *feelings* in your text.

The first is in Acts xvii. 27, where he is not ashamed to exhort the wise and learned Athenians "to seek after God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, as he is not far from every one of us." It is true the word in the original means *palpare*, but it has still a near relation to feel, when it signifies *sentire*, as it would be absurd to feel after that which cannot be felt, perceived, and found.

A man may properly enough be said "to feel after God," when he is enabled to obey the command of our Church, "Lift up your hearts unto the Lord," and to "find him," and get a sense of his glorious presence, when "the peace of God, passing all understanding, enters and keeps his heart in the knowledge and love of Christ," for "God is love." See 2 Cor. iv. 6.

The second place is Heb. iv. 15, where the apostle represents Jesus Christ himself at the right hand of God, as "touched with the feeling of our infirmity." What, sir, shall we impute our Saviour's being touched with such a feeling in heaven to the weakness of his nerves! Or shall we beg of God to give us hearts to love and dread him, such hearts as may be touched, first, with a feeling of our sins and miseries, and then with such a due sense of his inestimable love, as that they may be unfeignedly thankful?

The third place is Eph. iv. 19, where, after having begun the picture of heathens by saying, that their "understanding was darkened, and that they were alienated from the life of God by the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their hearts," the apostle gives it the last stroke but one by adding they were past feeling.

Past feeling! What? Bodily pain and pleasure? No: for he says that they gave themselves to lasciviousness, the basest pleasure of sense. They were then past feeling in their hearts, ("the blindness of their hearts" being mentioned just before,) past feeling any shame or remorse past feeling any horror of sin, or dread of the Lord.

David means the same thing when, speaking of stout-hearted sinners, he says that he delights in the Lord, but that their heart is "fat as brawn." According to St. Paul, the veil is still upon their heart, 2 Cor. iii. 17, "their heart was waxed gross," Acts xxviii. 27, yea, "after their hardness and impenitent heart, they heaped upon themselves wrath against the day of wrath," Rom. ii. 5.

It is not, then, without reason that God sums up all inward religion in this glorious promise, Ezek. xi. 19, "I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh," a feeling instead of a callous heart. And it is to be feared, that

banishing feeling out of religion, in a zeal against enthusiasm, will not a little countenance people in the hardness of their heart. They feel little enough already, God knows: why then should they be encouraged from the pulpit to feel less still, when the horrible consequence is to become past feeling in the end, and then "work all manner of uncleanness with greediness," as too many baptized heathen daily do, and glory to do?

To the above-mentioned passages, I may add a fourth one which is no less to the purpose. It is the last verse of the fifth chapter to the Hebrews, where strong believers are said to have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. From thence, it appears, that one that is born of God has spiritual senses, (αισθητηρια,) just as the natural man has bodily senses. He is endued with spiritual sight and taste. "See and taste how good the Lord is. His love is better than wine, his word sweeter than the honey comb," Yea, with a spiritual feeling, whereby, through the power of the Highest overshadowing him, he perceives the presence of him in whom he "lives, moves, and has his being;" and in particular feels "the love of God shed abroad in his heart through the Holy Ghost given unto him." Yea, with spiritual hearing, so that he hears the voice of the good Shepherd, and hearing it to day, he "hardens not his heart."

The opening of these spiritual senses in a heart that was past feeling, blind, hard, and deaf before; or the faith, the living faith, whereby a man is born of God, born again of the Spirit, is one and the same thing: and the living by the faith of the just, is nothing else but the exercising continually some of these spiritual senses on their proper objects. If we deny this, what can we make of St. Paul's definition of faith? It is, says he, "the substance of things hoped for, and the [demonstration (ελεγχος) the Divine] evidence of things not seen." I say, the Divine evidence, because I speak not of a speculative, human, historical faith, but of the faith unfeigned, the saving, justifying faith, that "works by love;" even that faith which is "of the operation of God," Col. ii. 12, whereby a man "passes from death unto life."

To these passages of the apostle of the Gentiles, I beg leave to add one or two of the apostle of the Jews, 1 Pet. i. 8, "Whom having not seen ye love, and in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Now, sir, could such unspeakable joy be unfelt?

In the next chapter, verse 3, he charges Christians to desire the sincere milk of the word, if so be they had tasted that the Lord is gracious. Agreeable to which is the noted place, Heb. vi. 4, 5, where the apostle represents believers as people "enlightened, is not to know him at all. Heathens knew him to be the infallible author of geometrical truths, and supreme disposer of nature. The Jews knew him by his providential care of his worshippers, and temporal blessings, but Christians know God as a God of consolation and love, a God who possesses the hearts and souls of his servants, gives them an inward feeling of their own misery, and his infinite

mercy, and unites himself to their spirits, replenishing them with humility and joy, with affiance and love."

To the testimony of that Christian philosopher, I beg leave to add that of the celebrated divine, St. Chrysostom, (Hom. xxiii, on the Romans,) "How must he be ravished, (says he,) who truly loves God! The state of such a one is the happiness of paradise itself. We may study what terms w that taste the heavenly gift, are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." If the inspired writers could without absurdity and enthusiasm say, that the faithful "taste that the Lord is gracious, taste the heavenly gift, taste the powers of the world to come," why should it be thought irrational to declare, as our Church does, that the children of God feel in themselves the workings of the Holy Spirit, feel peace of conscience after pardon, know and feel the saving virtue of Jesus' name?

To conclude, sir, if we are to insist upon rational goodness, benevolence, &c, exclusive of feelings in the heart, what shall we make of those scriptures which our Church places at the head of all our public worship: "Rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord;" a troubled spirit, yea, a "broken and contrite heart," is the first sacrifice he does not despise.

Upon the scheme that excludes feelings, a man may say, that "the remembrance of his sins is grievous unto him, the burden of them intolerable," and have been all his life as great a stranger to godly sorrow, as if he had not been conceived in iniquity. Upon the Gospel plan, such a one is whole, he has no need of a physician, he draws near to God with his lips, while his heart is far from him: he is an abomination to the Lord, though as sincere in his blind worship as Paul before his conversion.

Upon this scheme, a man may be a believer if he give a rational assent to the doctrines of Christ, and has "a form of godliness," though he never felt the power of it in his heart. But upon the Gospel scheme, he is to "believe with the heart unto righteousness," before he can make confession with the mouth unto salvation; and he is to turn away from such as "have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof."

Upon this scheme, again, it is possible for a man to be a true Christian, a penitent restored to God's favour, without ever going through the least trouble of mind for sin; whereas, upon the Scripture plan, Christ saves none but the lost, heals none, as says our Church, (homily on man's misery,) but those who have need of his salve for their sore; invites none to the living water, but the thirsty, offers refreshment and rest to none but those "that travail and are heavy laden;" which, I suppose, they are allowed to perceive, it being absurd to call those people heavy laden, who never felt the least load.

Upon this new scheme, the Pharisee, who had a rational conviction that he was not as other men, but benevolent, courteous, just, and chaste, must have gone to his house justified, as well as the publican who felt so much remorse, that he smote upon his breast; so much holy shame, that he durst neither draw near, nor look up to heaven. But upon the scheme of Jesus Christ, this man, who appeared to the composed Pharisee such a low-spirited, silly wretch, that he thanked God, too, he was not such an enthusiast; this man, I say, went to his house justified rather than the other; for, says the Lord, Isa. lxvi. 2, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor in spirit, and trembleth at my word.”

Agreeably to this easy scheme, a man may have the peace that the world knoweth not, the peace of God passing all understanding, and the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, without ever feeling any thing of either; whereas, this is impossible, according to the testimony of some of the best and wisest of men.

Pascal, the strength of whose reason was so much celebrated in the last age, thought that peace and love, unfelt, and consequently unenjoyed, were of as little service to him as a painted sun to a plant under snow, or the description of some beautiful fruits to a man starved with hunger. Take one of his thoughts:-

“To know God speculatively e please; we shall never be able to represent the happiness of that love. Experience only can give us a just sense of it. Let us, then, taste and see how good the Lord is, and we shall anticipate the life of heaven, and live on earth in the fruition of what the angels enjoy in heaven.

But why should we go into distant countries, when this island has produced such clouds of witnesses of God's power, sensibly exerted in the souls of his children? Out of a thousand, take the famous Bradford, one of the brightest lights of our Church, who confirmed the truth he had preached, by laying down his life in the flames: (Mirror of Martyrs, page 276,) “He preached twice a day. In the midst of his repast he used often to muse, having his hat over his eyes, from whence commonly trickled plenty of tears, dropping on his trencher. Such continual exercises of soul he had in private prayer, that he did not count himself to have prayed to his satisfaction, unless in it he felt inwardly some smiting of heart for sin, and some healing of that wound by faith; feeling the saving health of Christ, with some change of mind, detestation of sin, and love to God."

I shall close these testimonies by transcribing part of the xxth article of the famous *Confession of Augsburg*, drawn up and signed by Luther, and all the German reformers.

“Faith,” says St. Augustine, “is not a bare knowledge that may be common to us and wicked men, but it is a sure confidence that lifts up those that are cast down, and fills with consolation those that are troubled in mind. By this faith we obtain remission of our sins, the Holy Ghost is given unto us, our hearts are renewed,” &c.

All this doctrine belongs to the light of a conscience awakened and galled with sin, without which also it cannot be understood, which is the reason why it is rejected of the ignorant and profane people, who suppose that “Christian righteousness is only civil righteousness,” lifeless morality.

Now, sir, I leave you to judge whether a man may have this faith, this sure confidence, that fills a troubled mind with Divine consolation, and never be sensible of it.

Nor did the other reformers hold any other opinion, as you may see sir, by the following lines, Englished from articles xx and xxii of the *Confession of Faith* drawn up by Calvin, Beza, &c, and still subscribed to by all the Protestant clergy in France and Holland:-

“We believe that by faith alone we are born again, and made partakers of salvation, being enabled thereby to receive the promises of life made to us in Jesus Christ. We make them our own, and apply them by faith, insomuch that we feel the effect of them.” This is still more clearly expressed in the fourteenth section of their *Article of Faith*, printed with their liturgy, part of which runs thus:-

“As the blood of Christ is to purify us, so the Holy Ghost besprinkles our consciences therewith, that they may be effectually purified; for, dwelling in our hearts, he makes us feel the power of our Lord Jesus Christ; he enlightens us, he seals and impresses his graces in our hearts, regenerates, and makes us new creatures," &c.

I own, sir, that after these great divines, I am no more ashamed to enforce faith in the Holy Ghost, the Author and Giver of life, and to say to my flock that he is to make them feel the power of Jesus Christ and the virtue of his blood in their hearts, than I would be ashamed, were I a physician for the body, to tell them they must take a medicine inwardly, if the applying it outwardly would not do; and that would cause them some pain at the first operation, but only in order to cure them more radically.

Thus, sir, I have endeavoured to prove, from the doctrine of our Church, from reason and Scripture, from the testimony of the best men, and of all the Reformed Churches, not only that feeling and rational Christianity are not incompatible, especially the feeling godly sorrow or trouble of mind, antecedent to justifying faith, and the feeling the comforts of the Holy Ghost, even peace, love, and joy, in believing; but also that such feelings, so far from deserving to be called madness and enthusiasm, are nothing short of the actings of spiritual life, or, to speak Scripturally, “the power of God to every one that believeth,” Rom. i.

One more argument on this subject, and I shall conclude the whole.

If good nature, affability, and morality with a round of outward duties, will fit a man for heaven, without any feeling of the workings of the Spirit of God in the heart,

or without peace, righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost; if such a professor of godliness is really in that narrow way to the kingdom which few people find; why did our Lord puzzle honest Nicodemus with the strange doctrine of a new birth? Why was he so uncharitable as to declare, with the utmost solemnity, that he could not see the kingdom of God if he was not born again of the Spirit?

Why did he trouble the religious centurion with sending for Peter, that the Holy Ghost might fall upon him, and all that heard the word, while the apostle preached to them remission of sins, through faith in Jesus, a heart-purifying faith? See Acts xv, 8, 9.

But, above all, if inward feelings are nothing in sound religion; if they rather border upon enthusiasm; why did not our Lord caution the woman who came behind him in Simon's house, who wept at his feet, and kissed and wiped them with her hair? Why did he not take this opportunity to preach her and us a lecture on enthusiasm? Why did not he advise her to take something to help the weakness of her nerves, and prevent the ferment of her spirits? Why did not he tell her she went too far, she would run mad in the end? Why did not he bid her (as people do in our days) go into company a little, and divert her melancholy? Nay, more; why did he prefer her, with all her behaviour, to good natured virtuous, religious, undisturbed Simon? Why did he send her away with his peace, and the assurance of the forgiveness of her sins, while he did not vouchsafe to say to the composed Pharisee, " This day salvation is come to thy house?"

May I be allowed to tell the reason? Christ came not to “call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” If a man, therefore, is full of confidence in his own powers and righteousness; if he supposes he is, or can make himself, good enough outwardly, without those enthusiastic feelings of godly sorrow, pardon, peace, and love in his heart; Jesus must leave him to his self conceit and virtuous pride; for “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.”

However, do not mistake me, sir; I am far from supposing that the sincerity of people's devotion must be judged of by the emotion they feel in their bodies; for the grace of God generally brings a great calm, and such a heavenly serenity into the soul, that it may even keep the body composed in a sudden danger. But as I read that God will have the heart or nothing, so I know that when he has the heart, he has the affections of course. Fear and hope, sorrow and joy, desire and love, act upon their proper objects, God's attributes. They often launch out, and, as it were, lose themselves in his immensity, and, at times, several of these passions acting together in the soul, the noble disorder they cause there cannot but affect the animal spirits, and communicate itself more or less to the body. Hence came the floods of tears shed by David, Jeremiah, Mary, Peter, Paul, &c: hence came the sighs, tears, strong cries, and groans unutterable, of our Saviour himself.

But, after all, sir, if you exclaim only against bodily feelings and emotions, when the soul itself is past feeling, you cannot do it too much; it is either weakness, or hypocrisy intolerable; it must be thundered against. Therefore a just distinction is to be made between feelings excited in the body alone by self-exertion or mere natural pathos, and those bodily emotions that are necessary and involuntary consequences of the powerful workings of God's Spirit on the soul. The one are “sparks of our own kindling,” which give neither heat nor light, and vanish as soon as perceived; the other are the natural effect of grace, which the soul cannot contain; and they are to grace, and the fire of Divine love, what smoke is to culinary fire: it proceeds from it, but adds nothing to it; yea, if a man lay any stress thereon, it will darken, and perhaps put out the flame.

You see, sir, by this observation, that though I plead for spiritual feelings in devotion, and would not have even all bodily feelings resulting therefrom branded with the name of enthusiasm, yet I am as far as yourself from laying any stress upon bodily frames, merely as such; and I would as soon judge of the heat of a fire by the smoke that comes out of the chimney, as judge of grace by bodily emotions, conscious that there may be more of the one when there is less of the other; yea, that grace, peace, and love often overflow the soul within, when the animal spirits are most composed, and the nerves least at work without.

Upon the whole, sir, I humbly presume that I may conclude from what I have taken the liberty to lay before you, that true Christians, as free from enthusiasm as Paul or David, may experience, at times, emotions in their animal spirits, attended with tears and sighs, especially, when the cup of blessing or sorrow runs over with desire and love, or with fear and trouble; and, if they walk in the light of God's countenance, must enjoy, and consequently be sensible of, or feel, in their inmost souls, through believing, “a peace that passes all understanding,” such as the world knoweth not, “a joy,” at times, “unspeakable,” such as a stranger intermeddles not with.

This, and this alone, makes the service of God “perfect freedom;” this takes away the guilt and the power of sin, disarms death of its sting, and the grave of its horrors.

This is the first fruit of that “faith working by love,” which gives confessors victory over the world, and martyrs power to clap their hands for joy on the racks, and in the flames. It is the “Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father,” the earnest of the Spirit; the earnest of our inheritance above.

If we take this inward principle from the heart of a believer, we take away the ingrafted word, the incorruptible seed, the kingdom within, the bread and water of life, the little leaven, the pearl of great price, the hidden treasure, the wedding garment, the oil of the virgins, the hidden manna, the power of God to him that believes, the power of Christ's resurrection, the new creature, the new name which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it, the new birth, the wisdom from above, the

blood of sprinklings the life of God, &c; we take away, in short, “the faith of the operation of God;” and, in a blind zeal for formal religion, we cry out against Jesus coming in the Spirit, as the Jews, in their blind zeal for the law, cried out against Jesus coming in the flesh, “Crucify him, crucify him,” and effectually, though ignorantly, crucify “Christ in us the hope,” the living hope “of glory.”

Thus Christianity degenerates into mere heathenish morality and good nature, dressed up with Christian rites. All that is spiritual and experimental in our Bible and liturgy must be, of course, enthusiastic stuff, or, at best, words without meaning. So that, after all, the only essential difference that will be found between us and just, sober, chaste, benevolent Deists, will consist in repeating speculatively some creeds they do not assent to, in speaking for a book they run down, in using some religious ceremonies they think useless, and entertaining dry notions of one Jesus and his Spirit, whom they despise and reject; when, at the same time, we shall be equally strangers to that Gospel “which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,” to “the exceeding greatness of God's power toward those that believe, according to the working of his mighty power,” Eph. i. 19.

I have found it hard, sir, to submit my carnal reason to the force of these and the like observations. I know, by experiences that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” I can therefore truly sympathize with those that stagger yet at the hard saying of St. Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 18, “Let no man deceive himself: if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise, for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. Where is the wise, where the scholar, where the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For, when the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe”-that believe so as to be born of God, John v. 1; that believe so as to be “filled with peace, hope, joy, and love, through the power of the Holy Ghost,” Rom. xv. 13.

Let us then often meditate, sir, upon such scriptures; they will, by the blessing of God, bring our hearts low, and make them willing, in spite of our reasonings, to submit to that faith which is the gift of God to a soul distressed for sin, and to reap and enjoy its fruits, a solid peace, a living hope, a burning love, and an unwearied obedience. For till we are stripped of our fig leaves, till we have done boasting of our own powers, and the glorious remains of God's image, and trusting to self and reason, to Pharisaical righteousness and forms of godliness, we cannot truly seek the power of it; and we must stumble at a thousand scriptures, as well as that famous saying of Luther, “*Sicut sola fide in Christum veran justitiam ad salutem consequimur; ita nihil difficilius, quam hoc, hominibus persuadetur; nihil Satan (praesertim candidus ille Satan) aegue oppugnat*.”

Thus have I, sir, laid down with all plainness the observations I made upon your elegant discourse, as I understood it; I submit them to your candid judgment, and to your second thoughts, as well as to the word of God and the articles of our Church. Should I have mistaken your meaning, sir, in any part of these sheets, (which may easily have been the case,) I shall be exceeding glad to acknowledge it, and ask your pardon.

Should you have been mistaken, yourself, sir, in some parts of your discourse, I beg you would not take amiss the liberty I have taken to lay before you the grounds of my fears on that account. I have not done it (God knows) out of desire to set myself up as a judge of any one of my brethren and fathers in the Church; but I found myself in some measure forced to it by the following observations of some of my parishioners that were at Wenlock to hear you, sir, beside the officers:-

"If that gentleman is right," they concluded, "our minister must be quite wrong: he is always telling us of the darkness and blindness of our understandings in Divine things, the hardness of our hearts which we cannot force to repent and love, the unruliness of our will, which we cannot turn to true obedience: he concludes there is an absolute necessity for us to be born again, renewed in those faculties by the Spirit of God given unto us. But this gentleman talks of precious remains of God's image in our souls, and seems to be against this new birth. The one tells us, we are fallen, that God has concluded all under sin, that there is none good, no not one, that without Christ we can do nothing right, that there is no health in us; yea, he goes so far as to declare that 'of ourselves and by ourselves we have no goodness, help, or salvation; but contrariwise sin, damnation, and death everlasting.' (*Homily of the Misery of Man*, 2d part.) The other affirms that we are fallen, yet we can help and raise ourselves: we have a free will, and we may use it to do good works; and if, after all, we fall short in some things, the Spirit of Christ is to help our infirmity. Yea, we are not so blind and dark as some suppose, for we have the candle of the Lord shining in our breast, and that is, (not 'Christ, the light of the world,' or the word of God, that shines as a lamp in a dark place,) but reason.

"The one tells us, that all the world being wrapped up in sin, by breaking the law, no man, by his own acts, words, and deeds, seem they never so good, can be justified before God, and saved. (*Hom. of Salvation*.) He says that all our moral righteousness and our forms of godliness are but fig leaves, with which we cover the desperate pride and wickedness of our hearts, if, trusting to them for justification, in whole or in part, we do not flee as naked, poor, miserable, and blind sinners, to Jesus alone, put off, by repentance, the filthy rags of our own righteousness, and put on, by faith, the robe of our Saviour's merits.

"But the other recommends, in general, virtue, benevolence, relative duties, &c, and gives us to understand, that this is by far the plainest and most rational way of salvation.

“The one tells us, that if we never felt godly sorrow for sin, we never truly repented; that if we never enjoyed, and consequently were sensible of, or felt, the peace and love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, we have great reason to examine whether we be really in the faith-whether Christ be in us of a truth, Rom. v. 1-5; 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

“But the other discountenances such doctrines as leading to despair and enthusiasm; he represents feelings without distinction, as the consequences of people's constitutions, as owing to the weakness of their nerves, the lowness or height of their animal spirits; and he is so far from wishing to have us be uneasy, if we feel neither the burden of our sins nor the refreshment which Christ offers to those that are heavy laden, neither peace nor joy in the Holy Ghost; that he thinks our good nature, benevolence, diligence in business, &c, exclusive of those feelings, are the most rational way to happiness and heaven.”

I find myself, then, under a necessity, sir, as I value the souls of my parishioners, and regard the success of my ministry among them, to lay before those, who asked me what I had to say to your discourse, the reflections contained in these sheets; but would not do it before I had laid them at your feet, in hopes that if I have mistaken your meaning, you will be so kind as to acquaint me with it; or that, if I am in the wrong myself, by preaching such doctrines, you will condescend to convince me of my errors, and by that means stop the mischief I might do in propagating them. With an entire readiness to lie at your feet for instructions or reproofs, agreeable to the word of God, and the doctrine of our Church, I am, reverend sir, yours, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

THE WORKS
OF THE
REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER

NATURAL AVERSION

OF THE

HUMAN MIND TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD.

"SHOULD naked virtue give herself to view,
Th' admiring world would pay the homage due,"
Says a philosophers whose erring mind
Was to man's vice and monstrous evils blind.
Thus Joseph's piety, in tender age,
Awakes the fury of fraternal rage;
By envy stung, his brothers all conspire
The son to banish and deceive the sire.
Such was Pythagoras, a sage far famed;
And Aristides was THE JUST surnamed;
Great Socrates, unfortunately wise,
Bravely confessed one Ruler of the skies,
On Heaven reposed; while Greeks, a sinning race,
Levell'd his honours with the vile and base.

It is well known that ARISTIDES was banished from Athens for his excellent virtues; and in particular for his justice and beneficence, which gave umbrage to his fellow citizens. In the like manner that illustrious philosopher, who preached equity in Athens, lost his life through his support of truth which leads to piety. Many people, however, may not know that PYTHAGORAS was himself a martyr in the cause of virtue. For the sake of these, the following remarks, concerning the life and death of this great philosopher, are inserted from the account given by M. Dacier.

"Nothing could equal the respect shown to Pythagoras. He was regarded as the most perfect image of God among men; his dwelling was named the temple of Ceres, and when he went to the villages, it was said that he came not merely to instruct, but to bless mankind.

"Who could have thought but a man so respected, who never did any thing but good to society, would have enjoyed a tranquil old age, and a happy conclusion? But this is not always the lot of heroes and sages. The corruption and injustice of men promise, to such characters as these, more vexation than tranquillity. The last years of Pythagoras were clouded with persecution, and he met a tragical death. Observe the origin of his misfortunes.

“There was at Crotona a young man named Cylon, who was so elated with his birth, riches, and the great influence of his family, that he imagined it would be conferring honour on Pythagoras to become his disciple. The philosopher, not forming his judgment of men by external circumstances, perceiving this youth to be greatly depraved, dismissed him from his school.

“Cylon, being enraged at this injury, sought revenge. He every where defamed the philosopher, and endeavoured to render him suspected among the people, by representing his meetings as clubs of disaffected and seditious persons, whose aim was to overturn the state. These calumnies easily gained ground; (for the public were always unjust and suspicious, and ever ready to proceed to extremities against the sages, whom they considered as pedagogues who controlled and chastised them;) so that Pythagoras, their benefactor, was soon regarded as a public enemy at Crotona.

“One day when all his disciples were assembled with him in the house of Milo, Cylon went there with a crowd of ruffians, and a great number of his friends that were devoted to his resentment. They surrounded and set fire to the house. None escaped from the ruins save Pythagoras, Lysis, and Archippus; the latter fled to Tarentum, his own country, and Lysis to Thebes, where he became preceptor to Epaminondas.

“With respect to Pythagoras, he took the way to Locris; but the people being advertised of his intended visit to them, and dreading the wrath of Cylon, and the fate of Crotona, sent their principal magistrates to entreat him to depart from them. He went to Tarentum, from whence a new persecution shortly drove him. He went to Metapontum, but the sedition of Crotona served as a signal for a general insurrection against the Pythagoreans. The flame extended to all the cities of Greece. The schools of Pythagoras were demolished, and he himself, at the age of fourscore, murdered in a tumult at Metapontum; or, according to others, he died of hunger in the temple of the muses, where he had taken shelter. These are the most circumstantial and authentic materials I have been able to collect concerning the death of Pythagoras.

“Strange event,” concludes M. Dacier, “that the man who had appeased so many wars, calmed so many seditions, and extinguished the flame of discord in so many families, should perish in a tumult raised against himself. He was pursued from city to city, and the greatest part of his disciples were involved in the same ruin. It is very remark able that the cities which had persecuted Pythagoras the most, were the first who honoured his memory, and followed his laws with the greatest exactness.”

Those who neither embrace the Gospel, nor sound philosophy, will doubtless say, that the most active virtue has nothing to fear in these days. Does human nature differ at Paris and Toulouse from what it was at Crotona and Tarentum? Let us hear the decision of the two Rousseaus. “Socrates among us," says Rousseau the philosopher, who had such exalted ideas of man, “must not only drink the cup of poison, but he must also drink a bitter cup of insulting raillery and contempt, a thousand times

worse than death itself.” Rousseau the poet is of the same mind, in his Epistle to Count De Luc.

Si sur la terre aucun ne rous croit digne
D’etre hai, c'est un fort mauvais signe, &c.

Are you regarded in this envious age
Of hate unworthy? ’Tis a bad presage!
But you, ’tis said, pursue fair virtue's ways,
And clear of vice in these degenerate days;
Object of scorn, if yet from talents free,
Strange! what, not safe in *mediocrity?*
In all your conduct purest morals show,
Your merit let observing mortals know,
Procuring praise, and not provoke one foe.
This maxim treasure in your thoughtful mind,
Acquire just praise, and war with all mankind.

M. de Voltaire, who had no relish for the severe truths of the Gospel, could not forbear publishing similar thoughts in his Epistle on Calumny.

Que le mensonge un instant vous outrage, &c.

Should *slander* cast a hellish flood on you,
All burn with rage to prove that slander true:
Should *truth* beyond the clouds exalt her voice,
To vindicate thy fame, mankind are ice.

Horace had nearly the same views, if we consult the following lines. (Epis. i. lib. 2.)

Post ingentia fata Deorum in templa recepti,
Dum terras hominumque colunt genus, aspera bella
Componunt, agros adsignant, oppida condunt, &c.

Rome's founder, Leda's twins, the god of wine,
By human virtues raised to power Divine,
While they with pious cares improved mankind,
To various states their proper bounds assign'd,
Commanded war's destroying rage to cease,
And bless'd their cities with the arts of peace;
Complain'd their virtues and their toils could raise
But slight returns of gratitude and praise.
Who crush'd the hydra, when to life renew'd,
And monsters dire with fated toil subdued,
Found that the monster envy never dies,
Till low in equal death her conqueror lies.
Virtue, while living, suffers causeless hate,
But dead, we to the realms Divine translate.

The language of these poets illustrates the words of Jesus Christ; "Wo to you when all men speak well of you. Ye shall be hated of all nations for my sake." Those who think Jesus Christ was deceived when he thus expressed himself, will doubtless conclude this canto of no advantage; but those who rise above mediocrity in virtue, and luke-warmness in piety, will perhaps be of another mind.

We need only view the persecutions which Pythagoras suffered, to be convinced how much philosophers deceive themselves in saying Christianity is a false religion, owing to its being the innocent cause of persecutions. It is granted that pure Christianity, like sound philosophy, has always been persecuted by wicked Pagans, sophistical reasoners, and carnal Christians; but instead of concluding that this religion is bad, we ought to infer that it is the most perfect and holy in the world, seeing it leads men to the most sublime virtue. And though it be hated and persecuted by all worldly minded persons, not even excepting those who have been dedicated to Jesus Christ in baptism, and consequently ought to tolerate the Gospel; yet it meets the cordial approbation of all honest men.

True Christianity is so excellent, that no wicked person can love it, and the more depraved men are, the more they persecute it. And from this source spring those numerous and bloody persecutions with which nominal Christians are reproached. If it be demanded why wicked Christians are not only persecutors, but the fiercest persecutors, we answer, They persecute because they are wicked, and they are the most cruel persecutors because they are the greatest hypocrites, and consequently the

worst of men. “I will not cease to declare,” says Rousseau, “that persecutors who profess a religion of charity, and torment unbelievers, as though they wished to damn them in the present life, and so become the devil's harbingers, are not believers, but villains.” What numbers of persons have been entangled with, or confirmed in their incredulity by this difficulty, the solution of which we here present.

REMARKS ON THE TRINITY,

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF THE REV. J. FLETCHER.

BY THE LATE REV. MILES MARTINDALE.

SING nature's SIRE, sing his redeeming SON,
And the blest PARACLETE with glory crown;
From God, our light, life, love, Divinely spring,
His lofty praise let us incessant sing.
Let natures long as endless ages move,
Of this thrice holy God proclaim the love.

Those who think Arius and Socinus more rational than St. Paul and St. John, will perhaps say this doxology is contrary to the second dogma of natural religion, which establishes the *unity* of the Godhead. But if candour and honesty oblige us, either to renounce revelation, or admit that God has revealed his extraordinary essence, eternal and perfect, existing without separation under the distinctions of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; it is evident, we cannot believe the whole Gospel without adoring the holy trinity in unity, as appointed by Jesus Christ and his apostles in the baptismal form.

Moreover, if God has revealed his essence to us by the terms of *Father, Son,* and *Holy Spirit, the generation and the procession*, it is because they are the best that man's imperfect language can furnish to convey ideas of a mystery altogether Divine. Let us not forget that the ideas we attach to these words, in speaking of God, ought to be as much elevated above our common ideas, as the Supreme Being is above imperfect and finite beings. In the meantime this imperfect knowledge, like that which an infant in the cradle has of his father, mother, and nurse, may be sufficient for our present condition, as we are not called to speculate, but earnestly desire, as new-born babes, the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby. This made St. Paul say, “For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face.”

We can in some measure conceive that an infinite and eternal Father has necessarily an infinite and eternal Son: if the Father be eternal, and if the Son be his eternal and perfect image, we can also comprehend that, as it would be absurd to admit of two infinities, the Father and Son are united in the most perfect manner by

an eternal Spirit of peace, powers and love. And thus being equally removed from Deism and Tritheism, we adore the sacred trinity to whom we have been consecrated in baptism.

If Christians adored three gods, they would adore three separate beings; but they abhor Polytheism, and say with St. John, "There are three that bear record in heaven: χαι ουτοι οι τρεις εν εισι:[2] *et hi tres unum sunt*. And these three [hypostases, substances] are one:" the same one and perfect God. Those who consider the different nature of the words *three* and *one* used by St. John, will see the unreasonableness of those who say, "The Gospel calls us to believe *three* persons are only *one*." Never was charge more false: the care taken by the apostle to change the words by which he expresses the unity of the substance, and the trinity of the substances, if I may use the term, is an incontrovertible proof:

The whole difficulty then lies in believing that God, who knows his own nature, (to give us a view of the greatness of our salvation, and the price of redemption,) has condescended to inform us that, in his adorable nature, there are three principles so perfectly united that they form a trinity of substances, without breaking the unity of the substance, or Divine essence. Thousands of intelligent persons are so far from finding any contradiction in this proposition, that, to reject it in opposition to the irrefragable evidence of Scripture and the catholic Church, they conclude they must suffer themselves to be blinded by the grossest pride, or unreasonable philosophy.

Those who worship only the Father, reject in part the Christians' God, who does not exist without his Son and Spirit, any more than the sun exists without his light and heat. The Scriptures declare, that those who have not the Spirit of Christ believe not in the Son; and that such as receive not the Son, reject the Father, Rom. viii. 9; 1 John ii. 23. It follows then that Deists and their associates worship a being created by their proud reason, rather than the only true and living God, who particularly reveals himself in the Gospel, and who is called *Thrice Holy*, to show that the same perfect holiness shines in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

If we name the distinctions given to the Father, Son, and Comforter, or Holy Spirit, the principles, it is with reference to the creatures. For to these the Father is particularly a principle of *life*, the Son is a principle of *light*, and the Holy Spirit is a principle of *charity*. For in the Supreme Being these three distinctions are always in the most perfect unity, and never admit of the smallest shade of division.

The existence of a Supreme Being is the first truth in religion, and the unity of this Being is the second. This unity is not denied here, but we blame those who reject the distinction between the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, because they judge of this distinction by the diversity of three human persons. The enemies of the Christian religion would undoubtedly be right, if the personality in Divine nature was in all respects the same as personality in human nature. But good sense informs us, that the manner in which the Supreme Being exists is as much superior to our manner of

existing, as eternity is to time, or the omniscience of God to the feeble light of a mortal. It is hoped, however, that the word person, used by divines, has not produced any thing equivocal from which the Deists can take occasion to call us *Tritheists*, and thereby render the doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ridiculous in the eyes of men.

It is true, in some sense we admit a trinity in the Supreme Being, and we shall always be regarded by the Deists as superstitious, because we believe what we have no clear and precise idea of. But, if the Deist's mode of judging be reasonable, will not he himself he obliged to renounce Deism, and must not the Atheist renounce his Materialism and Fatalism? Where is the Deist who has a clear idea of a Spirit, and of an infinite unity, that pervades all and divides nothing? Where is the Atheist who has a just conception of that chance, which, according to his doctrine, fixed the order of the world? Or how does he comprehend that fate which regulates all events? And what idea has he of those atoms which, after wandering at random in chaos, have at length formed the system of the universe, and which suddenly became so wise and regular in their motions, that the revolutions of sun, moon, the great planets and their satellites, of summer and winter, the flux and reflux of the ocean, are never wanting? We therefore see, that the great objection these gentlemen have to revelation, equally militates against all the systems which they can substitute.

"God is an infinite Being," says true philosophy. A being which I can comprehend, does not merit the name of *infinite*. He is no longer my God, but my equal, or my inferior: for, according to metaphysics, that which comprehends is greater than that which is comprehended; the same as in physics, that which contains is greater than that which is contained. When the hollow of my hand can hold all the water of the ocean, I may flatter myself that I can comprehend the essence of the Supreme Being: and for this reason I conclude, that true philosophers will never reject the doctrine of the trinity in the Supreme Being, under a pretence that this doctrine is surrounded with difficulties which they cannot clearly unravel.

Some readers will perhaps demand why the trinity is so frequently mentioned in this work. Of what advantage is the doctrine? Dr. Priestley wished to know its use in morality and piety. "Does it render men more holy and happy?" An answer to this question shall be my apology.

In proportion as God has withheld the revelation of his trinity, the nations, not excepting the Jews, have abandoned themselves to their passions, and men in general have neither been good nor happy; and St. Paul draws their portrait in these words: "Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known," Rom. iii. 16, 17. In this fallen and corrupt condition in which human nature finds itself, the general knowledge of God, as a Creator, is insufficient to secure peace. Witness those who have no desire to behold the light; those who destroy themselves through an excess of despair; and those who would make their own exit, did not fear bind their impatient hands!

But things are soon changed, when the creating God reveals himself as Immanuel in believers; as soon as God, by the manifestation of his sanctifying Spirit, has re-established his image in their souls. Then the trinity being clearly revealed, God is adored in spirit and in truth, with a zeal like that which burned in the bosoms of the primitive Christians; then men begin to love and help each other with a charity which the world never saw before.

The multitude who believed in God manifested as Creator, Saviour, and Comforter, or (what is the same thing) those who truly believed in a trinity, "were all of one heart, and of one soul. Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost; and receiving their food with singleness of heart, they rejoiced in God the Saviour, with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The God of hope filled them with joy and peace in believing, so that they abounded in hope through the Holy Ghost. Full of faith, like Stephen, they saw the glory of the Saviour, as with uncovered faces; by the Spirit of the Lord they were transformed into the same image, from glory to glory. Conducted by the Son to the Father, and sustained by the Spirit of adoption, they call God their gather with unshaken confidence, and praise him on the scaffolds with a transport of joy which the Deists never knew.

If we insist upon the knowledge and adoration of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the three eternal principles that compose the Divine essence, it is not through superstition, as Dr. Priestley imagined, but because Scripture and experience concur in showing this to be the only mean of bringing sinners to that happy condition, in which they said, "We have access to the Father, by Jesus Christ, through the same Spirit: being justified by faith, we have peace with God, [the Father,] by our Lord Jesus Christ: we rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and we glory in tribulation, because the love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts, by the Holy Spirit given unto us." It is sufficient to read this two-fold evidence in the Epistles and Acts of the apostles, to see that the holiness and happiness of the first Christians depended on the experimental knowledge of the mystery of the holy trinity: or of God manifested in their souls as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; or as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

It is allowed things shortly changed; but this change is a proof that the doctrine of the trinity cannot be attacked without sapping the foundation of Christian piety. The Gnostics, who, like Dr. Priestley, prided themselves on being more enlightened than other Christians, by refinements contrary to the simplicity of the Gospel corrupted the doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and the corruption of manners among the ancient heretics was the consequence of their first revolt. The Arians soon followed the Gnostics, tearing the Church on one hand, and the Sabellians on the other; during that time the greatest part of the Catholics, occupied in disputes with their adversaries, instead of growing in holiness, by a more lively knowledge of the Redeemer, and Sanctifier, contented themselves with repeating forms of faith; and they shortly substituted the repetition of orthodox creeds for true Christian faith, which works by love, and is always fruitful in good works. The Church will remain in this state, until the ministers preach with zeal, and the people embrace with ardour,

the sacred doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which includes repentance toward God the Father, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit: love, the mother of good works, and the distinguishing badge of true Christians. From hence it follows, that Christian virtues flourish or decay, in proportion as the doctrine of the trinity is rendered clear, or obscured among men; for it is on this foundation that the (gospel becomes the power of God to salvation to all who believe. And it should be remembered, that faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of which we speak, is the gift of God, Eph. ii. 8, and not the word of a nurse, or the dictate of a catechist. It is a Divine energy, which is "the substance of things hoped for, a cordial demonstration of things not seen;" for we believe with the heart unto righteousness, before we can make confession with the mouth unto salvation.

THE SUPERNATURAL DARKNESS

AT

THE CRUCIFIXION OF OUR SAVIOUR.

"AND it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth, [or country,] until the ninth hour, and the sun was darkened," Luke xxiii. 45, and Matt. xxvii. 45. This event is recorded, not by the evangelists only, but by Phlegon, of Tralles or Seleucia, in Asia. This learned author flourished soon after the death of Christ, about the middle of the second century. He was one of the freed men whom Adrian the emperor caused to be taught the sciences; he wrote several works worthy of the learned and polite court where he resided. That in which we are the most interested, is a *Universal History* in twelve books. It is in these annals that Origen, and the learned defenders of Christianity, found the evidences of the circumstance here in question.

The words of Phlegon are these:-"In the fourth year of the 202d Olympiad, there was the greatest eclipse of the sun that had ever been beheld. About the sixth hour of the day, it produced a night so dark that the stars in the heaven were visible, and it was attended with a terrible earthquake." M. de Cheseux, Calmet, and others, have proved, by their judicious observations, that the fourth year of the 202d Olympiad, mentioned by Phlegon, was exactly the eighteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, and consequently the same year in which Jesus Christ was crucified.

Those who wish to see some judicious remarks on this passage, may consult Mr. Addison's excellent *Treatise on the Christian Religion;* translated by M. Seigneux de Corevon, (vol. i, p. 82.) This learned translator concludes, that Phlegon used the word *eclipse* to express the miraculous darkness, either because he was ignorant of the real sense of the word, or because the public, who are ignorant of astronomy, expressed themselves thus on the phenomenon which happened in Judea.

“Add to this,” says M. Seigneux, “that the darkness which reigned in the middle of the day, and during three of the most luminous hours, was altogether sufficiently wonderful to strike the whole world with astonishment, who might learn the truth of this prodigy from thousands of witnesses. And this Phlegon had in view, and it is easy to see that the apologists for Christianity have cited them in this manner.” Tertullian tells the Pagans, “that in the hour when Jesus Christ expired, at the time when the sun was in the midst of his career, the day was darkened: this fact is preserved in your archives. *Dies, medium orbem signante sole, subducta est. &c. Eum mundi casum in archivis vestris habetis*." (Apolog Cap. 21.)

“This prodigy,” adds the learned translator, “has received the testimonies of two other celebrated Pagan authors in addition to that of Phlegon; we have that of Thales, (according to Euseb. *Chron. Graec.* page 77,) a Greek author who wrote the Syriac History in the first century of the Church; in his third book he mentions this miraculous darkness.

“Julius the African, the most ancient historian that the Christians have had, strengthens the proof given by these Pagan authors. He was born in Palestine: he lived in the third century. His work is lost, save what is preserved as a quotation by Eusebius concerning the miracle of which we speak, and the proof which Julius brought to establish the divinity of Jesus Christ according to Phlegon's evidence and that of Thales. To this may be added what Rufinus says in his ecclesiastical history concerning Lucian, a priest and martyr, who said to his judges:[3] *Consulite annales vestros; invenietis Pilati temporibus, dum pateretur Christus, media die fugatum solem, et interruptum diem*.”

Finally, as God could shake the earth without forming a new volcano, so he could arrest the light of the sun, and cause a sudden darkness without the interposition of the moon, and without deranging the planets. Grotius, and some other apologists for the Christian religion, endeavour to render this miracle more extraordinary than is needful, and thus have unfortunately given to some philosophers a pretext for rejecting it. Judicious persons, like M. Seigneux, hold a just medium between incredulity which rejects the best attested facts, if they are extraordinary, and that passion for the marvellous which admits false miracles, or enlarges the true ones.

Here I will introduce the argument by which Mr. Ferguson has proved that Jesus Christ is the Messiah promised by the prophets. Daniel, in his prophecy, chap. ix. 25, thus expresses himself: “Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks,-and after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.” I will here give an extract from Mr. Ferguson's Analysis of Astronomy and Physics, concerning this prediction.

“The darkness which accompanied the crucifixion of our Saviour could not be occasioned by a natural and regular eclipse of the sun; for it happened during the

feast of the Passover, which was always celebrated at the full moon, at a time when the earth is between the sun and that planet, and when the moon cannot pass between the earth and the sun, and, by consequence, when it was impossible for her to produce an eclipse of the sun.

"He was crucified on the preparation for the Jewish Sabbath; and this Sabbath being on a Saturday, the crucifixion took place on the Friday; therefore the full moon of the Passover fell this year on the Friday.

"It appears from astronomical calculations, that from the twentieth to the fortieth year of our Saviour, the full moon never fell on a Friday but once; and this happened on the third of April, in the thirty third year of our Saviour's life, computing his birth according to the common era; the thirty-third year of our Saviour's life was the 4746th year of the Julian era, and the fourth year of the 202d Olympiad. Phlegon, a Pagan author, informs us that in the fourth year of the 202d Olympiad, there was the greatest eclipse of the sun that was ever beheld; for the day was so completely changed into night that the stars were visible.

"The canon of Ptolemy fixes the year 4256 of the Julian era, for the time in which Artaxerxes Longimanus published his edict for Esdras to rebuild Jerusalem, and re-establish the Jews in their own country. And according to the prophecy of Daniel, Christ was to suffer death seventy weeks of years, or 490 years after this command. Add 490 years to 4256, and you have 4746, the same year of the Julian era in which the death of Christ took place, according to astronomical calculations. An event supported by a Pagan author, who regarded preternatural darkness as an eclipse of the sun, because he was no astronomer."

THE CONVERSION OF MR. FLETCHER,

RELATED BY HIMSELF,

IN A LETTER TO HIS BROTHER.

"AT eighteen years of age I was a real enthusiast; for though I lived in the indulgence of many known sins, I considered myself a religious character, because I regularly attended public worship, made long prayers in private, and devoted as much time as I could spare from my studies to reading the prophetic writings and a few devotional books. My feelings were easily excited, but my heart was rarely affected; and, notwithstanding these deceitful externals, I was destitute of a sincere love to God, and consequently to my neighbour. All my hopes of salvation rested on my prayers, devotions, and a certain habit of saying, "Lord, I am a great sinner, pardon me for the sake of Jesus Christ." In the meantime I was ignorant of the fall and ruin in which every man is involved, the necessity of a Redeemer, and the way by which we may be rescued from the fall by receiving Christ with a living faith. I

should have been quite confounded if any one had then asked me the following questions taken from the Holy Scriptures:-Do you know that you are dead in Adam? Do you live to yourself? Do you live in Christ and for Christ? Does God rule in your heart? Do you experience that peace of God which passeth all understanding? Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit? I repeat it, my dear brother, these questions would have astonished and confounded me, as they must every one who relies on the form of religion, and neglects its power and influence. Blessed be God, who, through his abundant mercy in Jesus Christ, did not then call away my soul, when, with all my pretended piety, I must have had my portion with hypocrites, those clouds without water, those corrupt, unfruitful, rootless trees, those wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

My religion, alas! having a different foundation to that which is in Christ, was built merely on the sand; and no sooner did the winds and floods arise than it tottered and fell to ruins. I formed an acquaintance with some Deists, at first with the design of converting them, and afterward with pretence of thoroughly examining their sentiments. But my heart, like that of Balaam, was not right with God. He abandoned me, and I enrolled myself in their party. A considerable change took place in my external deportment. Before, I had a form of religion; and now I lost it. But as to the state of my heart, it was precisely the same. I did not remain many weeks in this state; my change was too sudden to be permanent. I sought for a reconciliation with my Saviour; or rather the good Shepherd sought after me, a wandering sheep. Again I became professedly a Christian, that is, I resumed a regular attendance at church and the communion, and offered up frequent prayers in the name of Jesus Christ. There were also in my heart some sparks of true love to God, and some germs of genuine faith: but a connection with worldly characters and an undue anxiety to promote my secular interests, prevented the growth of these Christian graces. Had I now been asked on what I founded my hopes of salvation, I should have replied, that I was not without some religion; that so far from doing harm to any one, I wished well to all the world; that I resisted my passions; that I abstained from pleasures in which I had once heedlessly indulged; and that if I was not so religious as some others, it was because such a degree of religion was unnecessary; that heaven might be obtained on easier terms; and that if I perished, the destruction of the generality of Christians was inevitable, which I could not believe was consistent with the mercy of God.

I was in this situation when a dream, in which I am constrained to acknowledge the hand of God, roused me from my security. On a sudden the heavens were darkened, the clouds rolled along in terrific majesty, and a thundering voice, like a trumpet, which penetrated to the bowels of the earth, exclaimed, “Arise, ye dead, and come out of your graves.” Instantly the earth and the sea gave up the dead which they contained; and the universe was crowded with living people, who appeared to come out of their graves by millions. But what a difference among them! Some convulsed with despair endeavoured in vain to hide themselves in their tombs; and cried to the hills to fall on them, and the mountains to cover them from the face of their holy Judge; while others rose with seraphic wings above the earth, which had been the

theatre of their conflicts and their victory. Serenity was painted on their countenances, joy sparkled in their eyes, and dignity was impressed on every feature!

My astonishment and terror were redoubled, when I perceived myself raised up with this innumerable multitude into the vast regions of the air, from whence my affrighted eyes beheld this globe consumed by flames, the heavens on fire, and the dissolving elements ready to pass away. But what did I feel when I beheld the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, in all the splendour of his glory, crowned with the charms of his mercy, and surrounded with the terrors of his justice. Ten thousand thousands went before him, and millions pressed upon his footsteps. All nature was silent: the wicked were convicted and condemned; and the sentence was pronounced: “Bind the tares and the chaff, and cast them into the lake of fire and brimstone!” In an instant the air gave way under the feet of those who surrounded me; a yawning gulf received them, and closed itself upon them. At the same time, he that sat upon the throne exclaimed, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, ye have suffered with me; come to participate in my glory; inherit the kingdom which I have prepared for you from the foundation of the world!” “Happy children of God,” I cried, “you are exalted in triumph with your Redeemer; and my dazzled eyes will soon lose sight of you in the blaze of light which surrounds you. Wretch that I am! What words, what language can express the horror of my situation.”

A fixed and severe look from the Judge as he departed pierced me to the heart; and my anguish and confusion were extreme, when a brilliant personage despatched from the celestial host thus addressed me: “Slothful servant,” he exclaimed in a stern voice, “what dost thou here? Dost thou presume to follow the Son of God, whom thou hast served merely with thy lips, while thy heart was far from him? Show me the seal of thy salvation, and the earnest of thy redemption; examine thy heart, and see if thou canst discover there a real love to God, and a living faith in his Son? Ask thy conscience what were the motives of thy pretended good works? Dost thou not see that pride and self love were the source of them? Dost thou not see that the fear of hell, rather than the fear of offending God, restrained thee from sin?” After these words he paused; and, regarding me with a compassionate air, seemed to await my reply. But conviction and terror closed my mouth, and he thus resumed his discourse: “Withhold no longer from God the glory that is due to him. Turn to him with all thy heart, and become a new creature. Watch and pray, was the command of the Son of God: but instead of having done this by working out thy salvation with fear and trembling, thou hast slept the sleep of security. At this very moment dost thou not sleep in that state of lethargy and spiritual death, from which the word of God, the exhortations of his servants, and the strivings of his grace, have not been sufficient to deliver thee? My words will also probably be ineffectual; for he who has not listened to Jesus Christ speaking in the Gospel, will not be likely to listen to an angel of the living God. Beside, time is swallowed up in eternity. There is no more place for repentance. Thou hast obstinately refused to glorify God's mercy in Christ Jesus: go then, slothful servant, and glorify his justice.”

Having uttered these words, he disappeared; and at the same instant the air gave way under my feet, the abyss began to open, dreadful wailings assailed my ears, and a whirlwind of smoke surrounded me. I considered myself on the brink of inevitable and eternal misery, when the agitation of my mind and body awoke me, of which nothing can equal the horror; and the mere recollection of which still makes me tremble. O how happy I felt on awaking, to find that I was still in the land of mercy, and the day of salvation! “O my God,” I cried, “grant that this dream may continually influence my sentiments and my conduct! May it prove a powerful stimulus to excite me to prepare continually for the coming of my great Master!”

For some days I was so dejected and harassed in mind as to be unable to apply myself to any thing. While in this state I attempted to copy some music, when a servant (an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile) entered my chamber. Having noticed my employment, “I am surprised, sir,” said he, with a Christian boldness, “that you who know so many things should forget what day this is, and that you should not be aware that the Lord's day should be sanctified in a very different manner.”

The sterling character of the man, his deep humility, his zeal for the glory of God, his love to his neighbours, and especially his patience, which enabled him to receive with joy the insults he met with from the whole family for Christ's sake, and above all the secret energy which accompanied his words, deeply affected me, and convinced me more than ever of my real state. I was convinced, as it had been told me in my dream, that I was not renewed in the spirit of my mind, that I was not conformed to the image of God, and that without this the death of Christ would be of no avail for my salvation.

In a subsequent letter to his brother he gives a farther account of this change of heart:-I speak from experience. I have been successively deluded by all those desires, which I here so sincerely reprobate; and sometimes I have been the sport of them all at once. This will appear incredible, except to those who have discovered that the heart of unregenerate man is nothing more than a chaos of obscurity, and a mass of contradictions. If you have any acquaintance with yourself, you will readily subscribe to this description of the human heart: and if you are without this acquaintance, then rest assured, my dear brother, that whatever your pursuit may be, you are as far from true happiness as the most wretched of men. The meteor you are following still flies before you; frequently it disappears, and never shows itself but to allure you to the brink of some unlooked-for precipice.

Every unconverted man must necessarily come under one or other of the following descriptions:-He is either a voluptuary, a worldly-minded person, or a Pharisaical philosopher: or, perhaps, like myself, he may be all of these at the same time: and what is still more extraordinary he may be so not only without believing, but even without once suspecting it. Indeed, nothing is more common among men than an entire blindness to their own real characters. How long have I placed my happiness

in mere chimeras! How often have I grounded my vain hopes upon imaginary foundations! I have been constantly employed in framing designs for my own felicity: but my disappointments have been as frequent and various as my objects. In the midst of my idle reveries, how often have I said to myself, “Drag thy weary feet but to the summit of yonder eminence, a situation beyond which the world has nothing to present more adequate to thy wishes, and there thou shalt sit down in a state of repose.” On my arrival, however, at the spot proposed, a sad discovery has taken place: the whole scene has appeared more barren than the valley I had quitted; and the point of happiness, which I lately imagined it possible to have touched with my finger, has presented itself at a greater distance than ever.

“If hitherto, my dear brother, you have beguiled yourself with prospects of the same visionary nature, never expect to be more successful in your future pursuits. One labour will only succeed another, making way for continual discontent and chagrin. Open your heart, and there you will discover the source of that painful inquietude, to which, by your own confession, you have been long a prey. Examine its secret recesses, and you will discover there sufficient proofs of the following truths:-“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. The thoughts of man’s heart are only evil, and that continually. The natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God.” On the discovery of these, and other important truths, you will be convinced that man is an apostate being, composed of a sensual, rebellious body, and a soul immersed in pride, self love, and ignorance: nay, more, you will perceive it a physical impossibility that man should ever become truly happy, till he is cast, as it were, into a new mould, and created a second time.

For my own part, when I first began to know myself, I saw, I felt that man is an undefinable animal, partly of a bestial, and partly of an infernal nature. This discovery shocked my self love, and filled me with the utmost horror. I endeavoured, for some time, to throw a palliating disguise over the wretchedness of my condition; but the impression it had already made upon my heart was too deep to be erased. It was to no purpose that I reminded myself of the morality of my conduct. It was in vain that I recollected the many encomiums that had been passed upon my early piety and virtue. And it was to little avail that I sought to cast a mist before my eyes, by reasonings like these: if conversion implies a total change, who has been converted in these days? Why dost thou imagine thyself worse than thou really art? Thou art a believer in God, and in Christ: thou art a Christian: thou hast injured no person: thou art neither a drunkard nor an adulterer: thou hast discharged thy duties not only in a general way, but with more than ordinary exactness: thou art a strict attendant at church: thou art accustomed to pray more regularly than others, and frequently with a good degree of fervour. Make thyself perfectly easy. Moreover, Jesus Christ has suffered for thy sins, and his merit will supply every thing that is lacking on thy part.

It was by reasonings of this nature that I endeavoured to conceal from myself the deplorable state of my heart; and I am ashamed, my dear brother, I repeat it, I am

ashamed that I suffered myself so long to be deluded by the artifices of Satan, and the devices of my own heart. God himself has invited me; a cloud of apostles, prophets, and martyrs have exhorted me; and my conscience, animated by these sparks of grace which are latent in every breast, has urged me to enter in at the strait gate; but, notwithstanding all this, a subtle tempter, a deluding world, and a deceived heart, have constantly turned the balance, for above these twenty years, in favour of the broad way. I have passed the most lovely part of my life in the service of these tyrannical masters, and am ready to declare, in the face of the universe, that all my reward has consisted in disquietude and remorse. Happy had I been, if I had listened to the earliest invitations of grace, and broken their iron yoke from off my neck!

A DREADFUL PHENOMENON,

DESCRIBED AND IMPROVED,

BEING

A PARTICULAR ACCOUNT

OF THE

SUDDEN STOPPAGE OF THE RIVER SEVERN, AND OF THE TERRIBLE DESOLATION THAT HAPPENED AT THE BIRCHES,

BETWEEN

COLEBROOK DALE AND BUILDWAS BRIDGE,

IN SHROPSHIRE,

ON THURSDAY MORNING, MAY 27, 1773;

AND THE

SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON

PREACHED THE NEXT DAYS ON THE RUINS, TO A VAST CONCOURSE OF SPECTATORS.

BY THE REV. JOHN FLETCHER.

O come, and behold the works of the Lord: what desolations he hath made up the earth. Psalm xlvi. 8

THE WORKS
OF THE
REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER

A PARTICULAR ACCOUNT

OF THE

DREADFUL PHENOMENON

WHICH GAVE OCCASION

TO THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE.

HEARING, on Thursday, May 27, 1773, that a place called the Birches, (probably from some remarkable birch trees, which formerly grew there,) many acres of land, which a gentleman of my parish holds on the borders of Buildwas parish, had that morning, about four o'clock, suffered strange revolutions, as well as the river Severn; I went to see if there was any foundation for so extraordinary a report.

When I came to the spot, the first thing that struck me was the destruction of the little bridge that separated the parish of Madeley from that of Buildwas, and the total disappearing of the turnpike road to Buildwas bridge; instead of which nothing presented itself to my view but a confused heap of bushes, and huge clods of earth, tumbled one over another. The river also wore a different aspect: it was shallow, turbid, noisy, boisterous, and came down from a different point. Whether I considered the water or the land, the scene appeared to me entirely new, and as I could not fancy myself in another part of the country, I concluded that the God of nature had shaken his providential iron rod over the subverted spot before me.

Following a tract made by a great number of spectators, who came already from the neighbouring parishes, I climbed over the ruins, and came to a field well grown with rye grass, where the ground was deeply cracked in several places; and where large turfs, some entirely, others half turned up, exhibited the appearance of straight or crooked furrows imperfectly formed by a plough drawn at a venture.

Getting from that field over the hedge, into a part of the road which was yet visible, I found it raised in one place, sunk in another, concave in a third, hanging on one side in a fourth, and contracted, as if some uncommon force had pressed the two hedges together. But the higher part of it surprised me most, and brought directly to my remembrance those places of Mount Vesuvius, where the solid, stony lava has been strongly worked by repeated earthquakes; for the hard beaten gravel, that formed the surface of the road, was broken every way into huge masses, partly detached from each other, with deep apertures between them, exactly like the shattered lava. This striking likeness of circumstances made me conclude, that the similar effect might proceed from the same cause, namely, a strong convulsion in the surface, if not in the bowels of the earth.

Going a little farther toward Buildwas, I found that the road was again totally lost for a considerable space; having been overturned, absorbed, or tumbled, with the hedges that bounded it, to a considerable distance toward the river. This part of the desolation appeared then to me inexpressibly dreadful.

Between the road and the river there was a large field of promising oats, running in length parallel to both. I got into it over a stile that had been shocked out of its proper position. Wonderful and unaccountable are the revolutions which that piece of ground had suffered. It was not flat, but diversified in its surface by some gradual falls and eminences; and now I found it had been tossed in so strange a manner, that the old mounts had sunk into hollows, and the hollows were raised into mounts, one of which is eight or nine yards higher than the road.

This is not all; this field is rent throughout, like the shattered part of the road; with this difference, that the misshapen masses into which it is torn, are in general larger, and the apertures between them deeper than those of the road. Some of these enormous lumps were so detached from the rest, as to totter under the weight of the spectators, when they jumped from one to the other, which made several persons afraid to venture upon the desultory walk; nor indeed without reason, for had they slided into some of the apertures, they might have gone in many feet, and remained wedged in between two ruinous lumps of earth.

Between that shattered field and the river there was that morning a bank, on which, beside a great deal of underwood, grew twenty fine large oaks. This wood shot with such violence into the Severn before it, that it forced the water in great columns a considerable height, like mighty fountains, and gave the overflowing river a retrograde motion.

This is not the only accident that happened to the Severn; for near the groves the channel, which was chiefly of a soft blue rock, burst in ten thousand pieces, and rose perpendicularly about ten yards, heaving up an immense quantity of water, and the shoals of fishes that were therein. Among the rubbish at the bottom of the river, which was very deep in that place, there were one or two huge stones, and a large piece of timber, or an oak tree, which from time immemorial had lain partly in the mud, I suppose in consequence of some flood. The stones and the tree were thrown up, as if they had only been a pebble and a stick, and are now at some distance from the river, many feet higher than the surface of it.

Ascending from the ruins of the road, I came to those of a barn, which, after travelling many yards toward the river, had been absorbed in a chasm, where the shattered roof was yet visible. Next to these remains of the barn, and partly parallel to the river was a long hedge, which had been torn from a part of it yet adjoining to the garden hedge, and had been removed above forty yards downward, together with some large trees that were in it and the land that it enclosed.

The tossing, tearing, and shifting of so many acres of land below, was attended with the formation of stupendous chasms above. One that struck me much, ran perpendicular to the river. Around it, as around a grave at a burial, stood, the day after, the numerous congregation to which the substance of the following sermon was preached; except about two hundred hearers, who descended into it to be out of the crowd, and made me fear, lest the abrupt sides, pressed by the surrounding multitude, should give way and bury some of them alive; but the ground happily stood firm as a rock.

At some distance above, near the wood which crowns the desolated spot, another chasm, or rather a complication of chasms, excited my admiration. It is an assemblage of chasms, one of which, that seems to terminate the desolation on the north-east, runs some hundred yards toward the river and Madeley Wood; it looked like the deep channel of some great serpentine river dried up, whose little islands, fords, and hollows, appear without a watery veil.

This long chasm at the top seems to be made up of two or three that run into each other. And their conjunction, when it is viewed from a particular point, exhibits the appearance of a ruined fortress, whose ramparts have been blown up by mines that have done dreadful execution, and yet have spared here and there a pyramid of earth, or a shattered tower, by which the spectators can judge of the nature and solidity of the demolished bulwark.

The strangeness of this, and some other parts of the prospect, vanishes daily; for many thousands of people, by walking again and again over the ruins, have trampled in and partly closed numbers of the small apertures that at first were several feet deep; and by climbing up the accessible places of the larger chasms, and ransacking them in search of fossils, they have caused the loosed earth and stones to come down. Add to this that the brittle stone, which in a great measure forms that stratum of earth, is of such a nature as to dissolve into a kind of infertile marl, when it is exposed to the open air. This, together with the natural crumbling of the pyramids, has already rendered the chasms in some places considerably less deep than they were at first.

Fortunately there was on that spot but one house, inhabited by two poor countrymen and their families. It stands yet, though it has removed about a yard from its former situation. The morning in which the desolation happened, Samuel Wilcocks, one of the countrymen, got up about four o'clock, and opening the window to see if the weather was fair, he took notice of a small crack in the earth, about four or five inches wide; and observed the above-mentioned field of oats, heaving up and rolling about like the waves of the sea. The trees, by the motion of the ground, waved all as if they had been blown with the wind, though the air was calm and serene. And the river Severn, which for some days had over flowed its banks, was very much agitated, and seemed to run back to its source. The man being astonished at such a sight, rubbed his eyes, supposing himself not quite awake; but being soon convinced that destruction stalked about, he alarmed his wife, and taking their children in their

arms, they went out of the house as fast as they could, accompanied by the other man and his wife. A kind Providence directed their flight; for instead of running eastward across the fields that were just going to be overthrown, they fled westward, into a wood that had little share in the desolation.

When they were about twenty yards from the house, they perceived a great crack run very quick up the ground from the river. Immediately the land behind them, with the trees and hedges, moved toward the Severn, with great swiftness and uncommon noise, which Samuel Wilcocks compared to a large flock of sheep running swiftly by him.

It was then chiefly that desolation expanded her wings over the devoted spot, and the Birches saw a momentary representation of a partial chaos;-then nature seemed to have forgotten her laws;-the opening earth swallowed a gliding barn;-trees commenced itinerant; those that were at a distance from the river, advanced toward it, while the submerged oak broke out of its watery confinement, and by rising many feet recovered a place on dry land;-the solid road was swept away, as its dust had been in a stormy day;-then probably the rocky bottom of the Severn emerged, pushing toward heaven astonishing shoals of fishes, and hogsheads of water innumerable;-the wood, like an embattled body of vegetable combatants, stormed the bed of the overflowing river; and triumphantly waved its green colours over the recoiling flood;-fields became movables; nay, they fled when none pursued: and as they fled, they rent the green carpets that covered them in a thousand pieces. In a word, dry land exhibited the dreadful appearance of a sea storm! Solid earth, as if it had acquired the fluidity of water, tossed itself into massy waves, which rose or sunk at the beck of Him who raised the tempest. And, what is most astonishing, the stupendous hollow of one of those waves, ran for near a quarter of a mile through rocks and a stony soil, with as much ease as if dry earth, stones, and rocks, had been a part of the liquid element.

Some hours after the desolation had happened, I met S. Wilcocks on the ruins, and asked him many questions, to which he returned very few satisfactory answers, ingenuously acknowledging he was so terrified, and so intent upon securing himself and his family, that he could not make any observations. He seemed then persuaded that the overthrow was caused by an earthquake, protesting before several witnesses, that a shock of one had been felt in the house two nights before: and if he denies it now, his testimony is inconsistent, and consequently not worthy to be depended upon.

Soon after the river was stopped, Samuel Cookson, a farmer, who lives about a quarter of a mile below the Birches, on the same side of the river, was much terrified by a gust of wind that beat against his window, as if shot had been thrown against it: but his fright greatly increased when, getting up to see if the flood, that was over his ground, had abated, he perceived that all the water was gone from his fields, and that scarce any remained in the Severn. He called up his family; ran to the river; and

finding that it was dammed up, he made the best of his way to alarm the inhabitants of Buildwas, the next village above, which he supposed would soon be under water.

He was happily mistaken. Providence just prepared a way for their escape. The Severn, notwithstanding a considerable flood, which at that time rendered it doubly rapid and powerful, having met with two dreadful shocks, the one from her rising bed, and the other from the intruding wood, could do nothing but foam and turn back with impetuosity. The ascending and descending streams conflicted some time about Buildwas bridge. The river sensibly rose for some miles back, and continued rising till, just as it was near entering into the houses at Buildwas, it got vent through the fields on the right; and after spreading far and near over them, collected all its might to assault its powerful aggressor, I mean the grove, that had so unexpectedly turned it out of the bed which it had enjoyed for countless ages. Sharp was the attack, but the resistance was yet more vigorous; and the Severn, repelled again and again, was obliged to seek its old empty bed, by going the shortest way to the right; and the moment it found it again, it precipitated therein with a dreadful roar, and for a time formed a considerable cataract: then with inconceivable fury (as if it wanted to be revenged on the first thing that came in its way) it began to tear and wash away a fine rich meadow opposite to the grove; and there, in a few hours, worked itself a new channel about three hundred yards long, through which a barge from Shrewsbury ventured three or four days after.

Although the old English oaks and the travelling wood got the day, it was not without considerable loss; for some of the trees, which stood in the first rank, were so undermined by the impetuous onsets of the Severn, that they fell across the stream. But the others stood their ground in the very middle of the old channel, and flourished as if they had been in their native place, till the proprietor ordered them to be cut down and barked.

While the underwood still grows there in peace, (such is the vicissitude of sublunary things!) an unfortunate tree, that grew secure at a considerable distance from the shore in the opposite meadow, is now exactly In the middle of the river, where it leans downward, with the earth washed from its roots, ready to be carried away by the first flood.

But let us see what passed down the river. When its course was obstructed, the fall below was as quick as the flood above. Although the flooded fields refunded their waters into the Severn, it fell near two yards. This draining of the overflowed meadows was so sudden, that many fishes which sported over them had not time to retire into the bed of the river, and were caught on dry land; as were also several eels, that worked themselves from the obstructed channel, through the cracks in the new planted grove; or more probably crept out of the roots and rubbish that were at the bottom of the river when it was forced up.

How fatal was that day to the finny tribes, that securely wantoned in their enlarged province! What a striking emblem did they afford us of the sudden destruction which will one day overtake the shoals of impenitent sinners, who swim with the tide of sinful customs, frisk about in the stream of worldly vanity, or are immersed in the dregs of sensual pleasure! Those fishes that had got out of the river were left panting on the grass: while those that remained in the rocky bed of the river were buried in its ruins; and if any escaped that danger it was only to meet a greater-to be caught in such a net as had never been drawn over them before, an earthen and wooden texture, made with the spreading roots of twenty large oaks.

While some of the spectators picked up eels and fishes on dry ground, others of a different taste looked for curious fossils among the ruins of the rock, which in the morning formed the channel of the Severn; and a great many were found bearing the impression of a flying insect, not unlike the butterfly into which silk worms are changed. Some of the most perfect might be worthy of a place in the British museum, where they would be a curious monument of the phenomenon that brought them to light:

Although the astonished watermen were as busy in securing their vessels as the frightful fishes in securing themselves, the endeavours of some were as ineffectual; a few of their barges having overset below: for when the river, which they had so often cursed, was dammed up, some of their loaded vessels, being suddenly deserted by the water, were left leaning upon one side of the muddy slope of the shore; and the stream, at its quick return, finding them in that unfavorable position, entered into and sunk them.

In less than a quarter of an hour the desolation was begun and completed. The quantity of ground that is damaged, cracked, removed, or turned into chasms and heaps of ruins, is eight fields, which were at first supposed to contain about thirty acres, but measure only eighteen and a quarter, the property of the same gentleman; who has also sustained a considerable loss on the other side of the river, by the ground that has been washed away, which being taken into the account, together with the river, makes in all twenty-two acres and a quarter.

But much more land has probably been stirred: for some of the spectators, seeking a shorter way home through a wood in Madeley parish, which bounds the desolated spot north east, found, four or five hundred yards above the highest chasm, a long abrupt cut, which runs partly parallel to the river, by which it is evident that the wood has sunk downward near a yard; and that a quantity of ground, double of what was at first apprehended, has been affected by the general convulsion.

As I suppose the curious reader will be glad to have a more particular account of the chasms, &c, than I can give him upon a bare inspection, I have prevailed upon a friend to take the following measures:-

“The great chasm next to Madeley parish begins just under a wood, at the top of the overthrow; and runs toward the river from north to south east. The length of it is three hundred and ninety-six yards. Its breadth and depth are unequal. The greatest breadth is forty-two yards, and the greatest depth ten. It contains several pyramids or towers. The only complete one is about five feet diameter at the top, where the grass continues fresh.

“From that long chasm another, which may be called a cross chasm, runs out at the top westward. In one part, it is fifty-four yards long, and fourteen wide. Near seventeen yards of the length are about thirteen yards deep.

“A second cross chasm connected with the preceding, and running also from east to west, is ninety four yards long, and in one place thirty eight broad and eight deep. Four remarkable pyramids, eminences, or towers, remain in this chasm; one, covered with grass, is about four feet diameter on the top; another is only one ploughed furrow, wide at the top, about four feet long: the others are not complete.

“A third cross chasm, next to the dwelling house, runs likewise from east to west. It is one hundred and twenty five yards long. The widest part, opposite to the place where the barn stood, is twenty-eight yards. That building advanced thirty-five yards in this chasm toward the river, before it was swallowed up.

“From the middle of this chasm, another runs out toward the river, from north to south, and forms the gigantic grave, around which the sermon was preached. It is forty yards long, twenty-two wide, and nine deep, taking the greatest depth, which gradually decreases southward, where the whole terminates in a point.

“All these cross chasms would make one uninterrupted vacancy, like that of a large quarry or marl pit, were it not for the above-mentioned pyramids and towers, and for two smaller and two larger spots of land, which not only stood their ground when all around them gave way, but are supposed to have risen perpendicularly some feet. If the vacuum were filled with water, they would exhibit the appearance of four islands rising out of a little lake.

“The bed of the river has been filled up two hundred and ninety yards in length. At the upper part of the new channel there is on the right shore a quantity of earth removed from the left, with some wood growing upon it. And about the midway on the left shore, there is a part of the meadow that was before on the right; and, what is more surprising, that part is now raised near two feet above the rest of the meadow.

“The turnpike road, which ran partly parallel to the river, is damaged three hundred and twenty-one yards in length. The part of it which is next to Buildwas, has been removed forty yards southward."

An incredible multitude of people of all ranks have come, and gentlemen continue to come from far and near to see this phenomenon. For two or three Sundays especially, the desolated spot swarmed with spectators, to the number of several thousands. Had they been armed and drawn up, the place would have looked not only like the stage, where destruction had just acted a dreadful part; but like a field of battle, where the demon of war was just going to murder men enow to fill up one of the yawning graves, I mean, one of the newly formed chasms.

That all this was owing to an earthquake, there can be no reasonable doubt. From the stony bed of the river to the highest chasm, the soil (some feet below the surface) is exactly of the same rocky nature. This is evident from the similar quality of the rock shattered under the river, and of those which have been rent at the formation of the chasms; and from the very same kind of fossils, which are found in the ruins of both. It is absurd to suppose that the stratum of slippery earth, which forms the surface of the field of oats, could by slipping have rent the rock that bore it, and occasioned so amazing an overthrow. If the weight of the rising ground could have caused such a desolation, Madeley Wood on the same side of the river, and equally washed by it, would have slipt much sooner than the Birches: as having a far greater pressure, and being much steeper, undermined by coal pits, embowelled by stone pits, and every where very subject to little slips, accidents from which the Birches have always been remarkably free.

Among the spots of ground which have been forced up, there are four under the wood which have been raised some feet. Now, as those spots are quite at the top of the overthrow, they could not be pressed upward by the weight of the lower ground. Beside, large chasms being before and behind them, it cannot be conceived how they could have been raised by pressure; as it is impossible that huge masses of dry earth and solid rock should be forced up by being pressed between a double *vacuum*.

Moreover, if it had been a slip, occasioned by the left bank of the river giving way to the pressure of the high ground, all the land would have moved one way, namely, from the wood to the river; but it has moved in every direction; many hundred, not to say thousand, tons of the earth have gone east toward Madeley Wood: witness the bridge that is buried east, and the brook that is pounded northeast. A great deal is gone west also; witness many of the cracks toward Buildwas bridge, and many masses of earth which hang west. Although it is evident, that the grand motion has been southward, yet the remaining part of the road, and the stile in the field of oats, to this day hang remarkably north. And although most of the cracks run parallel to the river, not a few run perpendicular to it; and among these, the remarkable chasm near which the following sermon was preached: a chasm this, which could not be formed but by the ground moving east or west, and not toward the river. This appears likewise by part of a ploughed field, which has been torn from the rest, and carried several yards to the south west, as the direction of the furrows evidently demonstrates.

From these observations we may conclude that it was an earthquake accompanied by a considerable eruption of air: and this appears from the sudden gust of wind that shook Samuel Cookson's windows, and affected a yew tree, which seems to have been blasted as well as two young trees, whose leaves have also turned yellow. They stand at the end of the long chasm, just in the way from it to the house where the sudden blast terrified the farmer at the time of the desolation.

This sentiment is confirmed, not only by the accident of the house at Buildwas, which unaccountably moved, cracking in several places, and partly sunk in, two days before; but by another singular earthquake that was, it seems, both felt and heard a little after at Bennington, in Shiffnal parish; though the earth did not open there as it did at the Birches.

It seems, the matter, which was the second cause of our phenomenon, operated near the surface of the earth, and consequently could not cause those violent shocks and convulsions, which are felt far and near, when she is affected in her inmost bowels.

Perhaps also the confined matter that struggled for a vent, finding one soon, and working itself out gradually when it had found it, at once caused the earthquake to last longer upon the desolated spot, and prevented its being felt at a greater distance.

But whatever the second or natural cause of our phenomenon was, it is certain that the first or moral cause of it is two fold; on our part aggravated sin; and on God's part warning justice.

The design of the following discourse was to point out that moral cause to inconsiderate spectators in general; and in particular to excite, in the hearts of my parishioners, an unfeigned gratitude for our preservation, and a salutary fear of the Almighty, who equally fulfils his providential will by storms or inundations, consumptions or fevers, famine or pestilence, slips or earthquakes.

Should the reader wish to know why I preached on that occasion upon the ruins, I will ingenuously tell him by what accidents and reasons I was induced to take that step. The day the earth opened at the Birches, as I considered one of the chasms, several of my parishioners, whom curiosity had brought to the awful spot, gathered around me. I observed to them, that the sight before us was a remarkable confirmation of the first argument of a book called, “An Appeal to Matter of Fact; or a rational Demonstration of Man's fallen and lost Estate,” which I had just published, as a last effort to awaken to a sense of the fear of God, the careless gentlemen of my parish, to whom it is dedicated. Having a few copies about me, which I was going to present to some of them, I begged leave to read that argument: and, as I read, I enlarged a little upon the following passages:-

“Does not the natural state of the earth cast a light upon the spiritual condition of its inhabitants? Amidst a thousand beauties that indicate what it was when God pronounced it ‘very good,’ and (as the original imports also) ‘extremely beautiful,’ can an impartial inquirer help taking notice of a thousand striking proofs, that a multiplied curse rests upon this globe; and that man, who inhabits it, is now disgraced by the God of nature and providence?

“Here deceitful morasses, or faithless quicksands, obstruct our way; there miry, impassable roads, or inhospitable sandy deserts, endanger our life. In one place we are stopped by stupendous chains of rocky mountains, broken into frightful precipices or hideous caverns; and in another we meet with ruinous valleys, cut deep by torrents, whose tremendous roar stuns the astonished traveller, &c.

“Nor does heaven alone dart destructive fires; earth-our mother earth, as if it were not enough frequently to corrupt the atmosphere by pestilential vapours, borrows the assistance of the devouring (or of the fluid) element, to terrify and scourge her guilty children. By sudden frightful chasms, and the mouths of her burning mountains, she vomits clouds of smoke, sulphureous flames, and calcined rocks; she emits streams of melted minerals; and as if she wanted to ease herself of the burden of her inhabitants, suddenly rises against them; and in battles of shaking, at once crushes, destroys, and buries them (or, as in the present case, their fields and buildings, their bridges and roads, their woods and rivers) in heaps of ruins.

“When these astonishing scenes are past, they may indeed entertain us like a bloody battle that is seen at a distance; they may amuse our imagination when in a peaceful apartment we behold them beautifully represented by the pen of a Virgil, or the pencil of a Raphael. But to be in the midst of them, as thousands are sooner or later, is inexpressibly dreadful. It is actually to see the forerunners of Divine vengeance, and to hear the shaking of God's destructive rod. It is to behold at once a lively emblem, and an awful pledge, of that fire and brimstone, storm and tempest, which the righteous Governor of the world will rain upon the ungodly; when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise; the elements shall melt away with fervent heat; and the earth, with the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.

“Now as reason loudly declares that the God of orders justice, and goodness, could never establish and continue this fearful course of things, but to punish the disorders of the moral world by those of the natural, we must conclude that man is guilty, from the alarming tokens of Divine displeasure, which (sooner or later) are so conspicuous in every part of the habitable globe,” and which are now so clearly seen, so sensibly felt in this ruinous spot.

I concluded my reading and remarks by thanksgiving and prayer; beseeching the Preserver of men to bless the dreadful phenomenon before us, not only to the awakening of those who were then present, but of all the impenitent in the land; that when they should hear, they might fear and turn to the Lord, instead of provoking

him by their crying sins to stop our rivers, overthrow our roads, cut off our harvest, carry away our lands, sink our buildings, and bury us in such immense and fearful graves, as had been instantaneously dug around us that morning.

Perceiving that seriousness sat upon all faces-remembering the apostolic precept, "Preach the word: be instant in season and out of season," which is abundantly confirmed by these words of our Church in the communion service: "It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty that we should, at all times, and in all places, give thanks to almighty God;" hoping also that curiosity might bring some of the most profane to hear a sermon and join in thanksgiving on so extraordinary an occasion; and flattering myself that the sight of the ruins would fix the attention of the most trifling auditors, and add solemnity to the devotion of the most serious; I told the people then present, that if they would come again the next evening to the same place, I would endeavour to echo back and improve the loud call to repentance, which God had given us that day.

They readily consented: and when I came at the time appointed, to my vast surprise I found a great concourse of people, and among them several of my parishioners, who had never been at church in all their lives; to whom, after prayer and thanksgiving, suitable to the uncommon circumstances, I then preached a sermon; of which (so far as I can recollect) the reader may find the substance, with some additions, in the following pages.

May it have a better effect upon him than it had upon some gentlemen that heard it! Whether they would also preach in their way a lecture to drunken colliers, wagoners, and bargemen; whether they would give me to understand, in the face of heaven and earth, that no ordinary nor extraordinary calls should ever make them regard the public worship of almighty God; or whether they would show, on the margin of the newly formed chasms, (those uncommon and dreadful graves,) their approbation of the heathenish maxim mentioned by St. Paul: "Let us drink, for to-morrow we die;" I do not pretend to say. But instead of prayer books, they pulled out their favourite companion, a bottle; and imparted the strong contents to each other as heartily as I did the awful contents of the text to the decent part of the congregation. Gentle reader, receive them as cordially as they did their stupifying antidote, and I ask no more.

JOHN FLETCHER.

MADELEY, *July* 6, 1773.

THE SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON

PREACHED ON THE OCCASION.

"If the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down alive into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord. And it came to pass, as he made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder which was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also," Num. xvi. 30-34.

OUR inconsideration requires the loudest calls; and our hardness of heart the heaviest blows. When we were warned by the loud, penitential cries of a giddy, dying young man,[4] upon whom God had laid his hand with uncommon severity; crowds of thoughtless hearers attended the church at his burial. l preached to them from these alarming words of Isaiah: "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up they will not see, but they shall see." Many of you saw, and some felt, on that awful occasion. But alas! the relentings of the most ceased with my warning, or vanished with the next morning's dew. Nay, instead of learning righteousness, too many, by stifling their convictions, hardened themselves, turned the savour of life into the savour of death, and learned to sin with less remorse than ever.

What can be done to awaken our stupid, drowsy, dead consciences? Must God lift up his hand in a more conspicuous manner? In order to turn our hearts, must he now subvert our fields, or turn the course of our river? But why do I ask the question? Has he not wrought the double wonder at once? O ye ungodly colliers, that poison the bowels of the earth with your impure and impious breath, see what destruction he has brought upon the solid element in which you get a maintenance.

Ye profane watermen, whose wickedness overflows all the dikes of human and Divine laws oftener than the Severn does its banks, see what a curse has overtaken the river on which you earn your bread! And ye sinners of all ranks and occupations, see the finger of a sin avenging God, laid upon this dismal spot; and by the desolation you behold here, judge of that which our iniquities would long since have brought upon all the earth, if Jehovah had not the patience and long suffering of a God.

However, the axe of his vengeance is not thrown by; it still is laid at the root of the tree; nay, it is lifted high, to strike a blow, general as our wickedness, repeated as our crimes, fearful as our imprecations. But punishment is God's strange work: and his Son, whom we put to open shame, and crucify afresh by our sins, is not yet weary of interceding for us. Yesterday, when the destroyer asked leave to bury us in heaps of ruins, as he did Job's feasting sons and daughters; or to bring in an unexpected flood upon us, as he did upon the world of the ungodly in the days of Noah; our compassionate Mediator interposed, and said, “Though they cumber the ground like barren fig trees, let them alone this day, this year also, till I shall dig about them. If they bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut them down.”

And now, sinners, see with grateful astonishment the prevalence of our Lord's prayer! We are spared! But tremble with godly fear at the literal fulfilment of his declaration: to make us bring forth fruit meet for repentance, he actually digs about us at a most alarming rate. What trenches!-to rouse our souls he tosses our grounds: to stop us in our sinful career, he absorbs our highway; and to water in our hearts the withered plant of God's fear, he dams up our navigable river.

Nay, he does more still. The Gospel mentions those who take the kingdom of heaven by violence; few of us, alas! seem to be of that happy number; in general we act as if we would storm the kingdom of darkness. We put on the whole armour of Satan; we take up the shield of unbelief, the helmet of presumption, the girdle of deceit, the breastplate of unrighteousness, and the sword of the evil spirit, the word of a lying world. Thus equipped, with undaunted confidence we tread upon the Divine mercies, and go on from sin to sin, from the follies of childhood to the vanity or profligacy of youth, and if we are not killed in the field of intemperance, we crown all by the worldly mindedness and obduracy of old age. Nothing turns us, nothing stops us. But now the angel of the Lord stands with a drawn sword in our way, as he did in that of Balaam. We seem determined to possess ourselves of Tophet; and to carry hell, as it were, sword in hand: but God fortifies it against our desperate assaults. See, sinners, see these newly-formed mounts, and stupendous chasms! Are they not ramparts of his raising, and ditches of his sinking, to make you desist from your mad enterprise? And if, with curses in your mouths, stolen goods in your hands, revenge in your hearts, or unpardoned sin upon your consciences, you force your way through these uncommon bulwarks, to the chambers of death: will you not doubly deserve to be devoured by the sword, which has been so dreadfully brandished over this desolated spot?

If impenitency is the fixed object of our choice; if still shutting our ears to all ordinary and extraordinary calls, and tossing Christ's easy yoke from off our necks, we equally harden our hearts against the yearning bowels of God's mercy, and the terrible warnings of his justice; shall we not make our dangerous case desperate? Is it not enough to have paid no attention to the whispers of his grace, must we also slight the thunders of his power? Shall the dreadful peal that was rung here yesterday only lull us asleep on the brink of destruction? By rendering our obstinacy more

inexcusable, shall the disregarded terrors of the Lord have no other effect, than that of accidentally fitting us for the aggravated punishment of those relentless cities, where Christ wrought his mighty works in vain? Shall we secure to ourselves the torments of that Jezebel, to whom God gave time to repent, and who nevertheless repented not? Is not the hell of Tyre and Sidon terrible enough for us? Must we also rush into that of Chorazin and Bethsaida? Or do we flatter ourselves that, because the scale of Divine patience yet preponderates, no hills of guilt, no mountains of iniquity can possibly turn the scale of righteous vengeance?

If any are in that fatal error, permit me to undeceive them, by producing the unhappy witnesses mentioned in my text, Dathan and Abiram, with their wives, children, and servants. And that we may improve at once God's alarming severity toward them, and the riches of his long suffering toward us, inquire we,

FIRST, into their crime, and our imitation of it. Consider we, in the

SECOND place, What new thing the Lord did to destroy them from off the earth. Let us,

THIRDLY, Improve the sight of this dreadful phenomenon, by which he warns us to repent, lest the earth swallow us up also. And then you will give me leave to conclude by a suitable address to several classes of hearers.

And thou, mighty God, who, in the midst of judgment, didst yesterday remember mercy, remember it now. Second by thy blessing the strokes of thy rod, and the truths of thy Gospel. Gracious Lord of the harvest! give the increase to the seed that shall be sown in a field which thou hast so strangely ploughed up. And while thy feeble messenger calls upon this multitude to turn, “turn thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned.” The work is worthy of Omnipotence, worthy of thee. Take then to thyself thy great power and reign. It is thy prerogative to break rocky hearts, as thou hast broken those rocks: and to turn the stream of human affections, as thou hast turned that of yonder river. Once more, great God, make bare thy powerful arm: and to-day work here as gloriously in the moral, as thou didst yesterday in the natural world.

1. Inquire we then, FIRST, what was Dathan and Abiram's crime? Had they committed your excesses, O ye who are “mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink;” and who (while your indignant neighbours, perhaps your own relations, or creditors, starve) continue adding surfeiting to feasting, or drunkenness to thirst? No: they left that crime, I shall not say to brutes, (because many of them are not brutish enough to commit it,) but to you who make it your chief delight to turn your heated mouths into smoking chimneys, your overloaded stomachs into stewing pots, and your enormous bellies into moving hogsheads.

Had they contrived to meet the bottomless pit, by driving perpendicular ways toward the centre of the earth, with mouths full of prayers for other people's damnation and their own? No: they left that diabolical iniquity to you, impious colliers, who send as many horrid imprecations toward heaven, as if you wanted to rend the roof of your pits over your heads, or to kindle the sulphur of Divine vengeance about your ears.

Had they endeavoured to accumulate gold by cheating, stealing, or oppression? No: although they were Jews, they probably detested those crimes, in the commission of which so many nominal Christians are grown brazen-faced and grey-headed. Had they violated matrimonial engagements by seducing their neighbours' wives, or by fixing upon their daughters an indelible mark of infamy? No: they regarded the seventh commandment; and my text speaks of their wives and children, not of their whores and bastards. Or had they learned Atheism of Pharaoh? Did they say like him, or like our modern infidels, "Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord!" Who is the Messiah? I will not bow to the Messiah! No: on the contrary, they were ambitious of ministering to the Lord, and offering, instead of Aaron, victims that typified the expiatory sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

What was then their crime? "They had provoked the Lord," says my text. But how? By slighting his servants, exalting themselves, and setting a bad example before their neighbours. "Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, who said, We will not come up." By this lordly refusal, in which they persisted to the last, they countenanced lawless liberty, encouraged the contempt of God's ministers, stamped the neglect of his ordinances, and filled up the measure of their iniquity. A complication of crimes this, which was so much the more heinous, as their rank was more eminent, and their influence over the inferior part of the congregation greater than that of other Israelites.

I grant that we cannot exactly commit their transgression: Moses and the tabernacle are no more: but have we not our places of worship? And has not one greater than Moses promised, that where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is in the midst of them? They despised Moses the servant, and we despise Christ, the Son of God. Does this extenuate our crime? Certainly not, if the apostle stated the case justly: hear him, Heb. x. 28, 29: "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and done despite to the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, and I will repay, saith the Lord."

But let us consider a moment our partial imitation of Dathan's crime. How many are there among us who, when the book, the providence, the ministers of the Lord, call upon us to forsake our sins, and come out of Babylon, that we may not partake of her plagues, show the invincible obstinacy of Abiram! How many, who, when they are entreated to haste to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the New

Jerusalem, return, by their haughty or careless behaviour, the answer of rebellious Dathan, “We will not come up:” or that of those more civil rebels, who made light of a solemn invitation to the Gospel feast, and said, “Pray have me excused!”

Numbers of us pay as little regard to the form as to the power of godliness. We are even void of religious decency: the return of the Lord's day invites, the bells call, our baptismal vow binds, our Christian name reminds, the canons of the Church bid, the law of the land compels, the fourth commandment enjoins, conscience urges, the day of judgment rushes on, and greedy death stalks about: all say, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, and go up to the house, to the table of the Lord.” To give the utmost solemnity to the general invitation, a multitude of ministers and congregations alternately lift up their voices, and say, “Serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song. O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise:” but what answer do most of us return? Alas! the very answer that cost Dathan and Abiram their lives. Our conduct speaks their insolent language: “We will not come up.” You may celebrate the Lord's praises, explain his law, preach his Gospel, administer his sacraments if you please; but those means of grace are nothing to us. We will neither seek the Lord in his appointed ways, nor edify our ignorant neighbours by setting them a good example: “We will not come up.” Poor enthusiasts may worship God in the face of the sun; but we people of fashion, we men of parts and learning, we busy tradesmen, we votaries of pleasure, we self-righteous moralists, and we immoral pretenders to morality, are all above paying our Creator a public homage: “We will not come up.” If God will bless us, let him wait upon us in our own houses, or in the fields of vanity: we give him leave; but in deed we are so slothful, or so busy; so proud, profane, or virtuous, that we neither will, can, nor need be at the trouble of going to his temple. “We will not come up.” I repeat it, neglecters of God's worship, this is the plain language of your conduct; and if you know what passes in your breasts, you will find it is the secret whisper of your hearts.

O ye Christian Dathans, ye lofty Abirams, ye who, like those proud Israelites, are in your respective parishes, “princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown,” the eyes of this populous neighbourhood are upon you, especially the eyes of your poor illiterate colliers, wagoners, and watermen. Do you not consider that they mind your examples rather than God's precepts? Are you not aware that they follow you as a bleating flock follows the first wandering sheep? Because they cannot read the sacred pages, or even tell the first letters of the alphabet; think you they cannot read, *Secret contempt of almighty God,* on the sleeves on which they sometimes see you laugh at godliness? And suppose ye they cannot make out, *Open pollution of the Sabbaths*, when they see the remarkable seats which you so frequently leave empty at church? Do you not know, that the lessons of practical Atheism, which you thus give them in the free school of bad example, they learn without delay, practise without remorse, and teach others with unwearied diligence? Alas! the pattern of indevotion, which you set in the house of God, carries, before you are aware, its baneful influence through a hundred private houses. O! how many

are now numbered among the dead, who have taken to the ways of destruction by following you! How many are yet unborn, upon whom a curse will be entailed, in consequence of the spreading plague of irreligion, which their parents have caught from you! And shall not their blood be more or less "required at your hands? Shall not I visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

Many of you, indeed, do not carry profaneness so far as to say with Dathan and Abiram, "We will not come up." You will come to the house of prayer; but alas! do you not turn it, so far as it lies in you, into a house of vanity, by behaving as if your employment there was to see and be seen? or do you not consider it as a house of intrigue, rather than a spiritual infirmary, when you come to gaze upon the person who captivates your affections, rather than to wait upon the heavenly Physician, who wounds by repentance, and heals by a pardon, "that the bones which he hath broken may rejoice?"

But, if you do not turn the church into a house of vanity or intrigue, do you not esteem it the house of dulness, a dormitory, a temple of sleep, rather than the house of God? In a word, when you say, Our bodies shall come up; do not your wandering minds too often reply, in imitation of the rebels mentioned in my text, "We will rove over the earth, we will not come up. Or, if we do, it shall be only to draw near to God with our lips, while our hearts are from him, his ways, his ordinances, and his people?"

So long as our practice speaks this dreadful language, is it surprising that so few should be the better for going up to the house of the Lord? And that the least hint given by the sons of vanity, that we are wanted at an idle dance, an indecent play, a gaming table, a midnight revel, a bloody sport, &c, should find many of us ready to say, We will do our selves the honour of waiting upon you; "we will go up!" On such occasions as these, when the inflexibility of Dathan would be a virtue, how few, alas! stand out as he did! How very few reply, with the unshaken resolution of Abiram, "We will not come up!"

II. We have seen the crime of those men, and our partial imitation of it: consider we next the dreadful punishment which was inflicted upon them, and which we have so narrowly escaped. They would not come up, therefore Moses rose up, and went unto them; and the elders of Israel followed him. And so will some messenger of Divine vengeance come down to us, if we persist in not going up to the house of prayer, to implore Divine mercy. For "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation," and to the last, slight the Saviour in his word, his service, his ambassadors, and the sacramental pledges of his dying love?

A crowd of spectators accompanied the man of God, and when he had bid them depart "from the tents of those wicked men," he wrapt himself, by a strong faith, in the mantle of Divine power, as St. Peter and St. Paul did afterward, when the one was

going to punish lying apostates with sudden death, and the other to strike the sorcerer Elymas with blindness. His pastoral rod became “a rod of iron,” stretched out to break in pieces “vessels of dishonour,” that had “fitted” themselves “for destruction;” and lest the spreading plague of their rebellion should bring spiritual death upon myriads, as an experienced surgeon cuts off a mortified limb, that the infection may not destroy the whole body, or rather, as a minister of that God, who resisteth the proud, and is a “consuming fire to the wicked;” he prepared to cut those dangerous men off from the congregation, and sternly spoke the words of my text.

“If these men die the common death of all men, then the Lord has not sent me; but if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down alive into the pit, then shall ye understand that these men have provoked the Lord. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all their goods: they, and all that appertained unto them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them, for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.”

What a strange punishment was this, and how wonderfully adapted to their crime! Their throat, like yours, O profane cursers and swearers, was an open sepulchre; they had opened their mouths against Heaven, and now the earth opens her mouth against them, and swallows them up as the grave. They had made a rent in the congregation, and now God rends the earth under their feet. They had endeavoured to draw sinners into the gulf of destruction, and now they plunge into it themselves, in the presence of those whom they had seduced. What a dreadful emblem was this of the perdition of ungodly men, when they shall hear those dreadful words: “Depart, ye cursed,” and shall sink into the bottomless pit-the pit dug for the ungodly, “for the devil and his angels;” the pit, out of which “the smoke of their torment shall ascend for ever and ever.”

A circumstance mentioned in my text deserves our peculiar attention. Dathan and Abiram cried as they disappeared; but, alas! like the foolish virgins, they cried too late. Those who had inclined to their rebellion, far from running to their help, fled at their cry. And so will your gay companions flee at your groans, O ye impenitent sinners. When you are just falling from a death bed into a noisome grave, they will flee from the room where you shall be executed, lest the executioner (whether it be small pox, or a fever) lay hold on them also; or lest the ghastly image of death, reflected from your pale face, force reflection upon their thoughtless minds, or spoil the diversion they are going to pursue. Again:

They cried in the jaws of destruction, but probably not to God. They that do not remember him in the days of their prosperity, too often forget him when sorrow comes upon them as pangs upon a woman. Hence it is that we hear so many crying,

“O dear! O dear!” And so few saying in earnest, as the blind beggar, “Jesus, have mercy upon me.” But suppose they had said, O Lud! or O Lord! through mere fright, as too many of us do upon every frivolous occasion through mere surprise, would this have saved them? No: for when the Lord by his prophet did spread forth his hands, they regarded not; and now that the day of vengeance is come, to speak after the manner of men, “he laughs at their calamity, and mocks when their fear cometh,” Prov. i. 26.

God is love, rather than vindictive justice: nor hath he “any pleasure that the wicked should die.” Hence it is that the “ministration of righteousness,” or righteous mercy, “exceeds in glory.” Nevertheless, says St. Paul, “the ministration of condemnation is glorious. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;” yet, when that wrath is wisely overruled, or justly punished, it turns to God's praise. Every rational being must then answer the end of his existence by glorifying the author of it one way or another. We must all reflect honour upon our Master, either as a gracious rewarder of those that diligently seek him, or a just punisher of those that obstinately offend him. Thus, while the blessed show forth in heaven the praises of his holiness and mercy; the wicked in hell display those of his holiness and justice. Therefore, the destruction of the latter, as well as the salvation of the former, is the proper theme of heavenly songs. Take an instance of it.

No sooner had St. John seen in a prophetic vision the dreadful fall of Babylon, than he heard the heavenly host shouting, “Hallelujah! salvation, and glory, and power to our God! True and righteous are his judgments, for he hath judged the great whore, which corrupted the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hands. And he heard the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and the voice of many thunderings, saying, Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” Yes, he reigneth justly to smite us with an iron sceptre through the loins of them that hate him, and rise against him, as well as to hold out to thee a golden sceptre of mercy, thou humble mourner, who tremblest at his word, and fleest for refuge to the shadow of Jesus’ wings.

There is then the song of Moses, who overthrew Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea, as well as “the song of the Lamb who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood;” and it is your prerogative, O ye servants of the Most High, to sing both those songs alternately: to shout God's justice, as well as his mercy, and celebrate the destruction of incorrigible criminals, as well as the salvation of penitent believers. We may then, without uncharitableness, join David in the 136th Psalm, and say, “O give thanks to the God of all gods, who only doth great wonders; who smote Egypt with the first born, for his mercy endureth for ever: yea, and slew mighty kings, for his mercy endureth for ever,” &c. The capital punishment of a murderer is a capital kindness shown to thousands. Were the king to reprieve all criminals, his mercy to them would be cruelty to millions. And although charity “rejoiceth not in iniquity,” yet she may, consistently with herself, rejoice in the suppression of triumphant wickedness; and, in order to this, she may acquiesce in the exemplary

punishment of obstinate and daring offenders; as Moses did in the destruction of Dathan and Abiram; and St. Peter in that of Ananias and Sapphira.

And now, although we cannot all sing the song of the Lamb, yet (glory be to God!) we may all consider the patience of our offended Creator, who upon these ruins invites us, guilty as we are, to repent and live; to celebrate his sparing mercy in fear, and rejoice in him with reverence.

The earth, in the days of Moses, “opened her mouth,” and dreadfully swallowed up two families. The earth yesterday opened her mouth, probably far wider, and yet the only two families that lived here were suffered to make their escape. Hallelujah! praise the Lord! Multitudes of fishes have perished on dry ground, and myriads of land insects in the water; and yet we, sinful insects before God, have neither been drowned in yesterday's flood, nor buried in these chasms. Hallelujah! God's tremendous axe has been lifted up: some of yonder green trees have been struck; and we, who are dry trees, we, cumberers of the ground, are graciously spared. Hallelujah! the houses of Dathan and Abiram, with all that appertained unto them, descended into the pit of destruction; and we, who are loaded with mountains of sins, stand yet on firm ground with all our friends. Hallelujah! God, who might have commanded the earth to swallow up a thronged play house, the royal exchange, a crowded cathedral, the parliament house, or the king's palace, has graciously commanded an empty barn to sink, and give us the alarm. Hallelujah! he might have ordered such a tract of land as this to heave, move, and open in the centre of our populous cities, but mercy has inclined him to fix upon this solitary place. Hallelujah!-he might have suffered the road and the river to be overthrown, when cursing drivers passed with their horses, and blaspheming watermen with their barges, but his compassion made him strike the warning blow with all possible tenderness. “O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he does for the children of men!”

To excite our thankfulness, let us observe, that if God had permitted the Severn, swelled as it is by the late flood, to be dammed up a little below; if Lincoln hill had run upon Bental Edge, part of which lately fell into the river; if those two high and steep hills, between which the Severn is so remarkably confined, had met by such an accident as befel yonder grove yesterday, how dreadful the consequence might have been! This country would have been submerged, and the devastation might have affected all the western part of the kingdom. But, happily for us, the river was stopt over against that flat meadow, where it could work itself a new channel, without spreading ruin through a hundred villages, and washing away the harvest of a thousand fields. Thus, though destruction hath thrust sore at us, yet God was our help, and we have the greatest reason to sing with David, “The right hand of the Lord hath the pre-eminence, the right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass; he hath chastened and corrected us, but he hath not dealt with us according to our sins, he hath not given us over unto death.”

And now “what shall we render unto God” for all these deliverances; and above all, for preservation from the horrors of the bottomless pit, and from the billows of the “lake that burneth with fire and brimstone?” Shall we not lay aside the cup of excess, to take that of thanksgiving? Shall we not loudly bless the name of the Lord, who thus redeemed our life from destruction? Dathan and Abiram, while they sunk into the deep, rent the heavens with a shriek of horror: may we be ready to rend it with a shout of wonder, while I endeavour more particularly to consider and improve, in the third part of this discourse, the new thing which the Lord hath done in the earth!

III. I should speak out of character if I expatiated upon the phenomenon before us as a philosopher, and not as a divine. My design is to benefit you by stirring up your hearts to gratitude and repentance: not to entertain vou by solving philosophical problems, or proposing a variety of conjectures. In a point of moral improvement, what signifies it whether this desolation was caused by a slip or an earthquake? Ruin is ruin, whatever be the instrument of it. And a rod is a rod, whether it be cut from the lofty birch, or only torn from the lower osier.

If God permitted this island suddenly to rush into the sea by a slip, or be overturned into it by an earthquake; where would be the difference with respect to us? Did it matter to the drowning world whether God had caused the deluge by breaking up the fountains of the great deep, and opening the windows of heaven; or only by suspending the attraction of the heavenly bodies, to raise a universal tide? When the waves of the Red Sea returned upon Pharaoh and all his host, what did it signify to that multitude of dying pursuers, whether the second cause of their destruction was the west wind, or only the abating of the strong east wind, by which the Lord made the sea to go back all night?

When God does a new thing in the earth, unwise philosophers make it their business to exclude his Divine agency. Our polite towns swarm with disciples of Epicurus, who fancy that God sitteth somewhere above the circle of the heavens, and has committed the government of the material world to I know not what inferior deity, that they call nature. Nor do they probably know themselves that goddess, about whom they make so much ado.

Should the most judicious of them say, that by nature they understand the assemblage of those stated laws, according to which our wise Creator preserves, and generally rules the material world; I reply: can any thing then be more irrational than the exclusion of God's immediate agency from the works of nature? Who could help smiling at the simplicity of a man, who should affirm that the king's signing a death warrant is not a royal act, merely because he does it according to the law of his kingdom? And who can help wondering at the prejudice of those who suppose, that what God does according to the law of his natural government, is not his own work?

If we believe those men, God made Aaron's dry rod to blossom once, but nature makes vegetables blossom every year. God appointed the peculiar death of Dathan and Abiram, but nature fixes the exit of the rest of mankind. How wild is the conceit! If God has so little to do in the universe, and nature so much, let us build temples to that powerful goddess. To her let us pray for rain or fair weather, for health and length of days: and when we have asked of God the pardon of our sins, let us say to nature, Give us this day our daily bread.

O ye injudicious philosophers, (I had almost said, ye baptized infidels,) let the prophets teach you true wisdom. They rationally maintain, that God is the first cause of all things, except moral evil. Hear their own words: “God clothes the grass of the field: God sendeth the springs into the rivers: he bringeth forth grass for the cattle, and green herb for the service of man; from the things creeping innumerable, which are in the great and wide sea, to that leviathan, whom God hath made to take his pastime therein, all wait upon him that he may give them meat in due season. He feedeth the young ravens when they cry: he sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: he maketh summer and winter: he giveth snow like wool: he scattereth his hoar frost like ashes: he casteth forth his ice like morsels: he sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth the wind to blow, and the waters to flow; as for his judgments, the heathens," (and God grant that none of us may verify the saying!) “the heathens have not known them.”

But let us hear God himself speaking in Isaiah. “I am the Lord, and there is none else: there is no God beside me. I [not nature] form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil. [I create natural, to punish moral evil.] I the Lord do all these things," Isaiah xlv. 5-7. Hence it is that one of the prophets indirectly reproves Atheistical naturalists, and says: “Shall there be [natural] evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it,” to bring about some spiritual good? Amos iii. 6. Have the Birches been overthrown, and the Lord hath not done it? The Lord, is he not the God here as well as in all the earth?

He is, he is: he ordered the other day the fall of the projecting part of the hill, which you call Bental Edge. Above a year ago he commanded an earthquake to alarm this part of the county. Some of you felt it in your beds, and others heard it in your pits. The shock reached Shrewsbury, and struck consternation into its gay inhabitants, one of whom lost her senses on the awful occasion. Foolish virgins heard then the midnight cry: “Behold! the bridegroom cometh!” Careless simmers felt the terrible alarm: “Behold! the Judge is at the door!” And stubborn offenders thought that Divine vengeance pursued them in a chariot moving upon rumbling, thundering wheels. But Omnipotence only threatened to give the blow which it began to strike here yesterday. Mighty God, if thou strike again, strike in mercy; remembering that we are but dust; and help us to consider this blow that we may all flee from the wrath to come, and take refuge in the name of Jesus, where only we can be secure.

Our phenomenon has several parts. Each of them will afford us some important instruction.

1. In the first place, behold there how these words of my text, “The earth opened her mouth,” have had another awful accomplishment. She horribly yawns in our sight, and forms sepulchres wide, long, and deep enough, not only to take in Dathan, Abiram, and their families, but to bury this immense congregation. Hundreds of you now stand in one of them, and cover but an inconsiderable part of its bottom. Glory be to God for not suffering it to shut its mouth over you, as the enormous fish did over the disobedient prophet!

O ye earthly minded, shall our mother earth, of which you are so fond, open her mouth; and shall you stand in her very jaws, without being able to understand her language? Here she fell in labour yesterday: in her throes she removed a road, a wood, a river; and was delivered of those mounts. Her convulsions are over, but she keeps a thousand mouths open; and each of them speaks to an attentive heart, and says, “O earth, earth, earth, hear your parent's word:” I stand ready to receive you; but are you ready to return to me, and sink into the cold bosom whence you were taken? But, ready or not ready, you must come; and your putrid remains must be mingled with my sordid dust.

Sinners, take the uncommon warning; prepare for dissolution and judgment. Dathan and Abiram are not the only men who, to alarm our fears and hasten our repentance, have descended alive into the grave. Did you never hear of Lima, the metropolis of Peru, which was totally buried by a dreadful earthquake? Have you never read dismal accounts of Port Royal, that rich trading town in Jamaica? and of Catana, that large flourishing city in Sicily, which have shared the horrible fate of Lima? And is not the dire overthrow of Lisbon still fresh in the memory of all Europe?

If earthquakes are not terrible enough to make us stand in awe before God; do you not know that to the tremours of the earth he can add deluges of fire? Has he not done it already? Do not Moses and St. Jude inform us that “Sodom and Gomorrah, Adma and Zeboim, suffered vengeance from heaven?” And has not the world shuddered in barely hearing of those broad and deep rivers of liquid fire, which from time to time break out of burning mountains, carrying villages before them, and after flowing several miles, cover large towns with fiery vengeance? In our days the ruins of two, Herculaneum and Pompeii, have been discovered near Mount Vesuvius. Nor is this an idle tale, invented to frighten weak minds. I have walked myself in the streets of one of those unhappy cities, which the king of Naples has partly brought to light by removing part of the stratum of earth and ashes under which it lay buried: and I have reached the theatre or play house of the other, by descending many fathoms through a well sunk in a rocky cinder, that was once the fiery fluid with which the whole city was filled and covered.

To past, we may add future events of this alarming nature: for, when they are clearly foretold in Scripture, they are as certain as if they had already happened. Thus our Lord speaks of earthquakes that shall happen in divers places; and St. John gives us the following description of two, in his prophetic visions:-"The same hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and in the earth quake were slain seven thousand men; and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven," Rev. xi. 13. Here we see the design of such direful phenomena; namely, to frighten men out of their impiety, and to make them give glory to the God of heaven, for his mercy, power, and justice. Again: "A mighty angel took up a stone like a great mill stone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus, with violence, shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be bound no more at all," Rev. xviii. 21. And thus, O thus, may our sins (the Babylon within) be cast this day, as the prophet expresses it, into the depth of the sea, into the ocean of God's mercy, and the streams of the Redeemer's blood! So shall they be found no more at all: and an uncommon or a common grave shall find us its willing and cheerful prey. For whether we shall be buried alive, as Dathan and many of the inhabitants of Lisbon, or dead, as the people we last committed to the earth, we must all return to the dust.

If we be ready for that awful change, it will not matter whether we are let into a grave six feet long, or into one as enormous as this chasm; nor yet will it signify, whether we are covered by a spadeful of mould, after a minister has said over us, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust;" or whether Divine Providence takes upon itself the minister's office, and commands an earthquake to do that of the sexton. In either case we must equally moulder away.

Should we, on the contrary, be unprepared, unconverted, our bodies must not only become the noisome prey of corruption and worms, but our souls must be that of insulting fiends; for prophet, the threat fiery grave, is prepared of old; and thither the poor cursing drunkard, though ever so meanly buried, follows the rich uncharitable glutton in all his funeral pomp. "Wo, therefore, unto them that draw iniquity with the cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope: for hell has enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth in wickedness, shall descend into it." Merciful Lord! keep us from fathoming the horrors of that bottomless chasm, by the line of our own experience.

Impenitent simmers, who stand fearless on its brink, I tremble for you. What shall I say to move you to repentance? And how shall I entreat you to give up your sins? By the miraculous grave of Dathan, by the dying shriek of Abiram, by these tremendous chasms, by the common grave into which you may suddenly drop,[5] and, above all, by the grave of Jesus Christ, I beseech you, loathe, cast away, bury your iniquities: so shall they not be your eternal ruin; and the end of these astonishing graves shall be answered. Grant me this reasonable request; or rather grant it to God, who makes it by this amazing visitation; and when the earth opens her mouth, as at this day, hear the voice of Providence, and harden not your hearts.

2. As our crimes are multiplied, so is our danger, and so are God's warnings. What is become of the barn that stood by that house yesterday? Has it made itself wings to fly away, as riches frequently do? No: it moved without; and hastening like you, sinners, toward destruction, it did not stop till it sunk into the pit, where you see the remains of its crushed root: So sunk Dathan's house! "So shall one day sink the wicked and their cruel habitations! They will not know the day of their visitation; and ere long their place shall know them no more.

Come hither, ye that do not build the tower of your hopes upon the rock; ye that, scorning the Redeemer's inestimable merits, or his holy precepts, make the sand of your Pharisaic righteousness, or of your Antinomian faith, your loose foundation: so shall your expectation of heaven perish, if you persist in your error. The sure word of prophecy has passed his lips: "Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blow, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Thus our Lord ended his sermon on the mount, where he invites us to behold how kindly our heavenly Father feeds the fowls of the air, which neither sow, nor gather into barns. And as the wise man bids the sluggard go to the ant, for a pattern of diligence, I am not above pointing you, for an example of vigilance and speedy escape, to some watchful fowls, which roosted yesterday in that building. At the first appearance of danger, they took the providential hint, flew out, and were all preserved. And shall you, careless simmers, be less diligent about your escape out of this transitory world, than those irrational creatures were about theirs out of the transitory barn? The crowing of a cock roused a fallen apostle: when he heard it "he went out and wept bitterly." And shall not the timely flight of more than one fowl make you pray with David, "O that I had the wings of a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest?" With the wings of prayer and faith I would fly to him, who says, "Come unto me all ye that travail under a sense of your danger, and I will give you rest," as well as safety: "for God gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life and everlasting rest."

But I should not do justice to this part of my subject, if I kept from you a just observation of the gentleman who rents this ground. "How uncertain," said he, yesterday, "is every thing below! and how easily can God blast our best-concerted schemes! We hope to secure our money by withdrawing it from the fluctuating stocks; we think to rescue it from the dangers that accompany navigation, by laying it out on a land estate: but now we see that when God commands, a solid building can sink on the land, as easily as a leaky ship can founder at sea."

O ye that make it your grand business to add house to house, and field to field; ye that say, like the rich farmer in the Gospels "My barns are full: soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" own the truth of that observation If ye will not believe that God can say to each of you, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee;"

confess at least, upon the fact of which you are now witnesses, that he can say, “Thou fool, to-morrow thy barns or houses shall be required of thee.” And upon such a consideration begin to pay a proper regard to our Lord's command: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust do corrupt; where the thieves break through and steal;” where fire consumes and water submerges, and where earthquakes subvert and overthrow: “but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,” where all blessings are as permanent as God himself.

3. Now the barn has disappeared, consider those fields; with hard labour and great expense they have been lately stocked and improved. That fallow was nearly ploughed; but God's plough has come across that of the husbandmen. See the difference of the furrows! Here is one that looks like a valley! How soon could the Lord of the harvest plough up all the earth with the same implement of destruction! When these fields felt it, they heaved, they moved, they tossed, they precipitated chiefly toward the stream of yonder river. And yet, sinners, when all the curses of God's broken law are levelled at your corrupt hearts, and all the vials of his righteous wrath are going to burst over your guilty heads, you do not flee to the stream of the Redeemer's blood: you are insensible and motionless; nay, some of you heartily challenge the descending storm; and to one cold prayer for salvation you breathe perhaps ten fervent wishes for eternal death and endless torments; in a word, for damnation.

Among the sentences which open the service of our Church, we find this Divine command: “Rend your heart, and not your garments; and turn unto the Lord your God,” &c; but how few people obey it after hearing it a thousand times! God yesterday, for the first time, commanded these fields to rend the rocks in their bowels; to tear the green carpets that cover the surface; and to turn some south, others east and west: and he was obeyed. Thus the word of the Lord which is perpetually slighted by the generality of mankind, was instantly submitted to by the inanimate creation. O my fellow sinners, let us regard the word of his patience; or that of his power, which yesterday cut perpendicularly some of these rocks without any instrument, and will cut us asunder in the day of his wrath, and appoint us our portion where, instead of music, “there will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.”

When these fields fled, and tumbling one upon another in their flight, carrying along with them the hedges that bind, and the stately oaks that crown them, did they not sensibly demonstrate the truth of such scriptures as these: “The time is short: it remains that they who rejoice be as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; for the fashion of this world passes away; but the word of God abideth for ever.” And yet, infatuated mortals, we despise that sure foundation, and build our happiness upon earth, a deceitful basis, that passes away as certainly, though not so swiftly, as the river that flows in our sight, or the clouds that fly over our heads.

But I mistake,-yesterday these solid fields flowed as if they had been water: and as they flowed, they washed those trees and bushes along as visibly as the current of the Severn carries down your barges and coracles: and more sensibly than the stream of time carries into eternity the king upon the throne, and the beggar on the dung hill.

All things under the sun are in a fluctuating condition; all move toward ruin or restoration in a future state: but in general we take no notice of our critical and awful circumstances. As mischievous insects, busy in fretting a bale of goods shipped for the other hemisphere, reach the Indies before they are sensible that the ship has set sail; so thousands of busy mortals are landed on the eternal shore before they have considered that the earth is but the great ship, where the inhabitants of a whole kingdom are wafted together into eternity.

“Love not the world, (says St. John,) neither the things that are in the world; for the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abideth for ever.” Now this passing away of the world is as great a mystery to unbelievers, as the host of guardian angels was to the frighted young man in Dothan, before the Lord had opened his eyes, that he might see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. But as the prophet's servant was formerly favoured with a sight of his master's cherubic guard, so were the people of that house permitted yesterday to behold “the world [literally] passing away with the things that are in the world.” And these solid ruins testify that they did not see “the idle fabric of a vision which leaves not a wreck behind them,”' but an awful reality which ought to leave the most lasting impression upon all our hearts. Believers, if you do not see these fields and buildings in motion, let your faith supply the want of that sight; and let this wreck add strength to your faith.

But need we walk by faith to see the transitoriness of the world and of all that it contains? Is not sight sufficient to give us the alarm? Look which way you please, and you see that all things evidence the winged despatch of the universe. Consider the heaven, and you behold planets continually moving; sun and moon rising and setting; days and nights growing longer or shorter; seasons pushing one another on: clouds formed, driven, and dispersed: winds rising, whistling, and falling; and the weather as unfixed as the gilded cock that shows its variations. Look at the earth, and you discover a perpetual rotation of droughts and land floods, frost and thaw, sowing and reaping, gathering and consuming. Slow ages measure the duration of forests, quicker years that of trees, rapid months that of leaves, weeks or days that of the insects which live upon them. And the impetuous stream of time sweeps days, weeks, months, years, and ages away; as they themselves do all that is limited to the circle of their duration.

Read the history of the world, and you will find it nothing but a narrative of the building, enlarging, and destruction of cities: the rise, aggrandizing, and fall of empires. Peruse the weekly publications, and you will find them full of the changes and chances which, like so many billows, toss the court and the exchange, the Church

and the state. Cast your eyes over that skeleton of parochial history which we call a register: a perpetual rotation of births, marriages, and burials, makes the whole of the dry performance.

Elderly sinner, your name is perhaps in two pages already, and your envious competitor would not be sorry to see it in the third. Your youth is gone, your beauty fades, your strength decays, grey hairs steal in upon your temples, and wrinkles mark you out in the forehead, as a prey almost ready for the grave. While all your friends tell one another "how fast you break," and how strangely you are altered;" will you never consider it yourself? Will you mind nothing but the fall of the market, and the changes in the ministry, or in the fashion? Shall a greedy heir see your name written in the register of burials, before it be written in the book of life? And when the world passes away; when all things around you are in motion, will you, to the last, be as he that "lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that sleepeth on the top of a mast?"

If you say that I carry matters too far, with respect to the transitoriness of the world; and if you oppose to my reflections the solidity of rocks, and the stability of the earth; before all these witnesses, I appeal to matter of fact, and aver, without fear of being contradicted, that yesterday the rocks rent and shifted here, as the sails of a ship do in a violent storm; while the earth streamed like yonder river, and rolled about like the waves of the sea. Up then! for "this is not your rest." If you will find a solid rock, seek the "Rock of Ages"-the Lord Jesus Christ: if you will inhabit a permanent city, set out for the New Jerusalem; and if you will dwell on a truly stable earth, "look for, and hasten unto the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

4. But has God laid his hands upon the fields only? Has he not done a new thing in the vegetable creation also? Have not these stately trees, has not that whole wood (although fastened to the earth by ligaments innumerable) moved as fast as if the roots had been the wheels of a flying chariot? Another instance this of the transitoriness of the most steadfast things in the world!

Some of those itinerant oaks that stand as upright and green as ever, though they have been violently shaken, and carried into the midst of the river, represent you, righteous men, whom the Scriptures call "trees of righteousness," and compare to trees planted by the water side, that bring forth their fruit in due season, and whose leaf shall not wither. In the midst of the most uncommon concussions and dreadful alarms, like those upright oaks, you may steadily lift up your heads to heaven; "confessing that you are strangers and pilgrims upon earth;" witnessing that the Christian is well, wherever Providence casts his lot; and experiencing that God "delivers obedient Israel out of all his troubles."

May not others of those oaks which bend forward, and hang down their lofty heads, represent you, unconverted men, who bend under the weight of threescore years spent in iniquity, and are just ready for a final overthrow? And may we not also

gather instruction from those that lie flat upon the ground, or across the stream, with their branches broken, and their roots turned up? May we not learn from them “how transgressors shall be rooted out of the earth?” Yes, sinners, whose hearts, harder than oak, yield to no tender entreaty, no solemn warning, no awful threatening; if you persist in your impenitency, a fit of sickness, perhaps a terrible accident, will turn up your roots. Nor will your strong constitutions, and green strength, avert the descending stroke. You may as easily be extirpated in the spring of your days, as some of those trees were in this fine month; and on the sweet morn that yesterday dawned upon them. It behooves you then to remember the saying of the wise man: “Where the tree falls there it lies.” If you fall among the wicked, you must lie with them; not across the gentle stream of the Severn, but across the fiery stream of Divine indignation, which will run against your stubborn spirits as that river beats upon those vanquished oaks.

In the meantime you may flourish as the crab tree did, that was yesterday in the opposite meadow, and is now battered in the middle of the river; you may even as much surpass your neighbours in honours, riches, and impiety, as those fallen trees did the bushes that grew under their shade; but take care that your impious stateliness be not the occasion of your aggravated ruin. By rising high, and spreading wide the branches of your wickedness, you may draw the lightning of Divine vengeance the sooner; as a lofty oak that towered some years ago on that very spot. Hundreds in this congregation may remember that it was even more suddenly blasted by fire from the clouds than some of yonder trees were overthrown by the heavings of the earth or the onsets of the river. We were then spared as we are now, and God, by shattering to pieces one of the tallest oaks at the Birches, showed what he could have done then, and what he will one day do to the great men of the world, who lift up their Atheistical foreheads against Heaven: yea, and you too, abject sinners, who are brambles in point of human grandeur-and yet cedars in point of diabolical wickedness.

5. But, withdrawing our attention from the trees, let us fix it upon the road What a strange alteration-what a dreadful overthrow is here! Toward Madeley, it is blocked up by bushes, hedges, and enormous clods, promiscuously tumbled on the ruins of a bridge. Nearer us it is forced up, shattered as the craggy sides of a volcano, sunk in, contracted, or inclining on one side; while toward Buildwas it has totally disappeared; having been carried away in ruinous heaps, to a consider able distance.

And shall we reap no benefit from this new thing that the Lord has done in the earth? Shall nobody take this occasion to deplore the profaneness of the great, who brim a curse upon roads by the pleasure journeys they take on the days of sacred rest, which they should keep holy with their families in the house of God?

Shall no well wisher to our Church and country take this opportunity of lamenting the uncommon wickedness of wagoners and drivers of horses? How often have our ears been struck with their dire imprecations: and our eyes with their savage,

unmerciful, reeling drunkenness, or stupid insolence! As I might ask, which of these subverted fields has not been yearly polluted by the impious, uncharitable, or unchaste actions or expressions of wanton reapers, or libidinous hay makers; so I may inquire, which of the overthrown bushes, which yesterday formed the hedges of yonder subverted grove, has not been witness to the flagrant wickedness of the men that travel it.

Incredible as the assertion may appear, I can testify before God, that over against us is the very place where I met one of them committing a shameful crime in the middle of the highway. I blushed to see him; but, as great a stranger to faith as the pack of horses which went before, he did not blush before God and angels. Unclean wretch, if thou art hid in the skirts of this congregation, and if shame will give thee leave to look back, see the spot which thou hast defiled. Behold! it has heaved under the burden of that crime which thou hast probably repeated. The holy God, who overthrew Sodom, has overthrown it. It hangs on one side, and testifies, that if thou hast not repented, thou art at this moment hanging over the pit of destruction. Before thou fallest in, hide thy blushing face in the dust at Jesus' feet: flee with Mary Magdalene to the "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness;" or, like filthy, leprous Naaman, "wash seven times, yea, seventy times seven," in the Jordan of his precious blood.

Go, sinner, polluted as thou art, thou mayest yet be made clean. Christ himself invites thee in the Gospel. "Come unto me," says he, "let us reason together, and though thy sins be red as crimson, or black as hell, they shall be made white as snow." Arise, unchaste prodigal, go to thy merciful Father by that compassionate Mediator. "He is the way,"-a highway to God, a sure though narrow way to heaven; a way so straight, that a traveller to Sion, though a fool, need not miscarry-a royal way, that no forces of hell can obstruct-a way everlasting, that no earthquakes can overthrow. Only remember, that it is a clean way, and if thou attempt to pollute it, by returning to thy sins as a dog to his vomit, it will rise like yonder road, and cast thee off with an abhorrence suitable to thy filthiness, and the purity of him that cast it up. "Serve then the Lord in fear, and kiss the Son, with holy reverence, lest you perish out of the way, if his wrath is kindled, yea, but a little."

6. But let us look beyond the road, and consider what new thing the Lord has done in yonder field of oats. Yesterday it promised, perhaps, as fine a crop as any in the county; and to-day how strangely is it worked by the destroyer's tool! How unexpectedly are the husbands man's hopes and labour cut off! What deep cuts! What wide gashes! How much wider and deeper are many of them than common graves!

Can we see them, and not thank God we are not hewn in pieces before the Lord by the destroyer, as wicked Agag was by Samuel?

God said yesterday, "Sword, go through that field:" and that overthrow instantly ensued. If he should say now, "Sword, go through that congregation," how swiftly

would the messenger of his vengeance go forth! How soon should we be like Sennacherib's army, dead corpses on these ruins! And, O! how many would be damned souls in hell! Alas! as many as are sly lovers of this world, like lying Ananias; as many as have scorned to make “their robes white in the blood of the Lamb,” like the proud Pharisee, and as many as are fast asleep in their sins, like the foolish virgins; and utterly unprepared for death, like the rich glutton.

7. But what appears still more extraordinary than the mangling of this field, is the sudden sinking of the eminences, and rise of the hollows that were in it; in a word, it is the formation of those mounts. Tell us, ye that prefer the name of philosopher to that of Christian, what mighty spur pricked that dull field, when it is thus reared up? If royal power had pent under it a herd of elephants, could they have heaved together as moles so as to form that shattered mount? O confess your ignorance; while you try to find out the mysteries of the natural world, be no longer ashamed publicly to confess the God of nature, and humbly to adore the God of grace.

David tells you who is the author of that phenomenon, where he says: “Behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he has made in the earth,” to punish or warn its sinful inhabitants. The God that formerly shook Mount Sinai, and continues to raise Mount Vesuvius,[6] has formed these eminences to confound your unsanctified wisdom, and alarm your ungodly fears.

O!- may a salutary dread of this almighty God be in you “the beginning of true wisdom!” May you be found restored to his favour and image, when he shall fulfil this awful prophecy: “Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven; which signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made: that those things which cannot be shaken may remain,” Heb. xii. 26.

In that awful day, foretold by St. Peter, and mentioned by Ovid, [7] when the “visible heavens, and this accursed earth, which are reserved unto fire, shall melt with fervent heat,” where will you hide your guilty distracted heads, if ye persist to slight your Saviour, and to represent the love of God and man as rank enthusiasm? Will you cry to such a valley as this chasm to receive you? Or will you call on such a hill as that mount to cover you? Are ye gods, instantly to sink the one, or raise the other? " O! how shall you escape, if you neglect such great salvation as is offered vou in the Gospel!” Rather, seeing you have no chance of escape, “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”

8. But leaving the newly formed mounts, through heaps of ruins, go to the ancient bank of the Severn. You come to it, but the river is gone. You are in the middle of her old bed, nay, you cross it before you suspect that you have reached her shore: you stand in the deepest part of her channel, and yet you are in a wood: large oaks spread their branches where bargemen unfurled their sails: you walk to day on solid ground, where fishes yesterday swam in twenty feet of water. A rock, that formed the bottom of the river, has mounted up as a cork, and gained a dry place on the bank, while a

travelling grove has planted itself in the waters, and a fugitive river has invaded dry land. Other instances these of the instability of all below: new prodigies wrought by the God of nature, to show us our need of standing upon a rock more solid than that which yesterday rose up many feet without pulleys, and burst in ten thousand pieces without gunpowder!

O! ye that call pleasant groves and delightful rivers after your names, cast your eyes upon the changes wrought yonder; and may the confusion of this estate make you remember the words of the apostle: “Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth, and seek those things which are above, where a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds out of the throne of God and the Lamb: and where, on either side of the river, the tree of life bears leaves for the healing, and twelve manner of fruits for the refreshing of the nations.” Those paradisiacal trees, and that celestial river, will not jostle together; nor will earthquakes overturn the “inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who have chosen the one thing needful, Mary's good part, that shall never be taken away from you.”

When we behold how some of these fields arose, while others fled; and how that overflowing river was dashed out of its rocky channel, and forced upward, may we not apply to those singular events the sublime words of the psalmist: “Thou art the God that doth wonders: thou hast declared thy power among the people. The waters saw thee, O Lord, the waters saw thee and were afraid; the depths were troubled; the earth was moved, and shook withal: the river saw thy rod, and fled. Severn was driven back.” These fields “skipped like rams, and those little hills like young sheep. What ailed thee,” O mighty river, “that thou fleddest? Thou Severn, that thou wast driven back?” Did the impiety of the inhabitants of Madeley Wood and Broseley shock thee back to thy source? Didst thou flee with horror from the guilty shores, where obdurate artists, drivers, and wagoners, so frequently echo back the imprecations of cursing colliers and swearing watermen? Had their brutish excesses, loud quarrels, and savage fights, which chill the blood of a few righteous Lots among us, frighted thee from the cruel habitations that line thy banks? Or restraining thy streams to sink our vessels, and ruin our trade, wilt thou break the staff of our bread and dry up the stream of our sins? “What ailed thee, that thou fleddest? Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing” new prodigies, and repeating old “wonders.”

God spake formerly, and Jordan turned back. He spake again yesterday, and Severn imitated Jordan. Did not the dreadful noise of her recoiling waves cry to us, “Impetuous as I am, when God commands I turn.” Turn ye then also, sinners, at this terrible reproof. When ye hear the roar of a turning river, will ye not be converted? When its senseless streams flow back without wind or tide, will ye not consider? When its rocky bottom mounts toward heaven, will ye not lift up your hearts? And

when a whole grove marches to obstruct the navigation that maintains you, will you remain rooted in your sins?

Forbid it, gracious Redeemer! Look upon us in mercy, and suffer us not to do “despite to the Spirit of grace,” in sight of so many prodigies. Let them rather bring to our remembrance the profusion of the unnatural sweat in Gethsemane, and the streams of thy precious blood on Calvary. Let them remind us of the tearing of thy sacred body, the breaking of the rocks around thy cross, the rending of the veil in the temple; and the double earthquake, that added terror to thy death, and triumph to thy resurrection.

9. If our Lord taught his disciples by comparisons and parables, taken from natural things and daily occurrences, I hope I shall not be deemed a flighty, enthusiastical preacher, for concluding this head of my discourse by grafting one or two moral or spiritual observations upon the branches of our phenomenon.

(1.) So long as we fight against God by our sins, the multiplied curses, which this world groans under, will point out and begin to punish our crimes.

Hissing currents of air and forked streams of fire, together with conflicting, thundering clouds, have frequently spread terror over every part of the earth: but yesterday God changed the scene in this place, and scourged us by the dissension of the grosser elements. Streaming lands and bursting rocks, militating with an impetuous overflowing river, were commanded to show us the dreadfu1 effects of sin. We contend with one another in ridiculous quarrels, or unjust law suits; and God, to frighten us into harmony, bids the jarring elements give one another battle in our sight, and make us feel the fatal consequence of discord. Let not this dreadful, though indirect reproof, be given you in vain, ye whose quarrelsome disposition is your neighbourhood's nuisance. In these fields, which yesterday crushed each other, or tore themselves, but now are peaceful and tranquil, for the mild Jesus’ sake drop all your animosities; be ready to fall upon the neck of your offending or offended neighbour; nor let it be said that contentions are sooner over in the natural than in the moral world.

(2.) My last observation is intended for you “who believe in the Son of God, and love one another.” When the river had obeyed the God of nature in quitting her bed and flowing back to her source, she soon received orders to pursue her journey. Though her bed was lost, and her way obstructed, she submitted, and with incredible violence tore all before her, till she found a free passage again.

So should you, believers, be ever ready to fulfil the Divine commands. If the Severn, at a moment's warning, left the deep, favourite part of her bed; should you not be ready to leave your houses, your estates, and this world itself for Christ's sake and the Gospel, whenever God calls you to that important act of self denial? And should you not, through all difficulties and obstacles, “run with patience the race that

is set before you; looking unto Jesus," and tending as incessantly toward the New Jerusalem and heaven, as the Severn does toward Bristol and the sea!

If your spiritual adversaries triumph, if this is a day of "rebuke and blasphemy;" nay, if it is "the hour and the power of darkness;" yet despair not; you are still in the field; the day is not lost. Strengthen yourselves in the Lord. Once more grasp the shield of faith, and in the name of Him who waded forty days and forty nights through floods of horrid temptations in the wilderness, who sweated blood in an agony of prayer in Gethsemane, who passed through a dreadful desertion upon the cross, and (notwithstanding all) cried at last with a loud voice, "It is finished," I have won the day: in his name, I say, attack your enemy with recruited courage, and the Lord will enable you to break through all, and enter in triumph into the heavenly Canaan. Thus shall you be like that river, which yesterday was worsted, and for awhile retreated before those embattled oaks; but to-day flows triumphant in a wider channel, and bears down all that opposes its course.

IV. We have seen what new thing the Lord did formerly to punish stubborn offenders; and what he did yesterday to alarm the flagitious part of the country. Permit me now to close this discourse by some addresses suited to your various states and to this present occasion.

(1.) Unconverted sinners, your danger is most imminent, and therefore I address you first. You stand in slippery places. The stream of your iniquities has long undermined the foundation of your hopes. Hills of guilt and mountains of vengeance wait only for the beck of the Lord to crush your impure bodies into the grave, and press your polluted souls down to the nethermost hell. Were the eyes of your understanding open, you would see yourselves as near the brink of eternal misery, as you are the margin of this chasm. But alas! instead of securing yourselves by a penitential flight from sin and a believing recourse to Christ, you are easy; you sleep; you dream of heaven. And if at any time your consciences are disturbed, instead of shaking yourselves like Samson, you go to sleep again; after calling the faithful watchmen of Israel enthusiastical disturbers of your peace.

O! may this phenomenon, seconded by the Redeemer's grace, do what neither sermons nor sicknesses, neither public nor private visitations have yet effectually done! May your conscience awake and sleep no more! May each of you take the alarm, and cry out as the trembling jailer, "What must I do to be saved?"

If this be your important question, I answer:-Be all as intent upon forsaking your sins, as Lot was upon running out of Sodom, when the dreadful artillery of heaven began to play upon it; and when a thousand flashes of lightning showed him his way to the mountain. Go all to Christ by prayer, with as much haste as Noah went into the ark, when the lowering sky was just going to dissolve in ceaseless showers over the condemned world. Leave your sinful companions with as much precipitation as the Israelites left the infatuated Egyptians groaning under the strokes of the destroyer's

sword. And be as ready to run from your places of sinful diversions, as the frighted rebels were to start from the place where screaming Dathan was swallowed up alive. Nay let your hurry, if it be possible, be a thousand times greater. Is not damnation more dreadful than an untimely grave? And the bottomless pit ten thousand times more terrible than these chasms?

O careless sinners, had you seen the diligence with which those frightened families yesterday made their escape, you might guess at the trembling haste with which you should now make yours, out of an infinitely greater danger. And had you beheld them when they gladly forsook all their property to save their lives, you might form some just idea of the meaning of our Lord's prophetic warning, Luke xxi, and Matt. xxiv: "There shall be great earthquakes, and distress of nations, with perplexity; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. Then let him that is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house; neither let him that is in the field return back to take his clothes." Follow the important advice, sinners. In these desolated fields begin to provide for the safety of your souls; and, instead of returning back to the vanities of this wicked world, "watch and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape what shall come to pass; and to stand before the Son of man."

The merciful Lord, that warned the old world by Noah, Lot by the angels, and those families by the man who first saw this desolation, warns you now by me. Nay, he who warned you yesterday by him; a Jonah was graciously spared to preach to us. When warm gratitude loosed his tongue, did not many of you hear him say, "O! if the world had seen what I saw this morning, they would have been frightened out of their sins. Surely it was enough to break the hardest heart, and make a heart of stone to bleed. What a mercy was it that we fled the right way! If we had run across those overthrown fields, we should have been lost."

O do as he did: escape for your lives. Stay not in all the plain of Sodom: flee to the mountain; to Calvary; to the Friend of sinners; to a dying Jesus. Flee from the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and your own evil hearts. Flee the right way. By penitential faith flee upward, heavenward. If you go to the world for comfort, you will be ten thousand times more dreadfully disappointed than the people of that house would have been had they fled for shelter into the mouths of the opening earth.

But this is not all, flee now. "Now is the day of" escape and "salvation." To-morrow may be that of vengeance and final ruin. And, as you flee, "look not behind you. Remember Lot's wife," and the Israelites who perished; the one for looking back toward Sodom, and the others for going back in their hearts toward Egypt. Above all, be not ashamed to run from the bottomless pit; nor blush to secure a crown of glory.

And now you have seen the mouth of the earth opened, and the rocks rent, imitate the repentance of our Lord's murderers, who, when they had seen the rocks of Calvary rent by an earthquake, smote upon their breasts and returned. But to that

penitential gesture, add the contrite publican's prayer: “God be merciful to me a sinner!” And may the merciful God, who “justifies the ungodly” that repent of their ungodliness, and believe in Jesus; and who permitted the publican “to go down to his house justified,” grant you to return home justified from all your crimes, earnestly praying that as the rest of your life hereafter may be pure and holy; so that at the last you may come to his eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

(2.) A word to you who will neither flee yourselves into the city of refuge, nor suffer others to make their escape out of the “city of destruction.” If yesterday you had met with the people of that house, running toward yonder wood with their children in their arms; if you had cursed them for fools that were frighted at nothing; and if by such means you had prevailed upon them to go back and run into the jaws of these opening and closing graves, you would have been just as kind to their bodies as you are to the souls of your friends who begin to run out of their sins, and consequently out of the jaws of hell and destruction.

Ye laugh at them: ye, perhaps, curse them for Methodistical fools; and “wonder why they make so much ado;” when they tell you in Scripture language that they “flee from the wrath to come,” and run for a crown of life: far from hearing reason, to cruel mockings ye add cutting detraction. Ye that stand infatuated on the brink of eternal ruin presume to call them fools because they are not so fool hardy as yourselves: ye that spend the awful, critical, important, irretrievable moment allotted you to make your escape, in passing idle jests, in catching the butterfly of honour, or in grasping the bubble of pleasure: ye not only pretend to be wise; but setting yourselves up as judges of others, from the scorners’ chair ye pass sentence of madness on all that show yet some respect for common sense, Scripture, and matter of fact. Was ever any thing more absurd? And if folly has a throne, is it not fixt in your own hearts? O that with the prodigal son you might come at last to yourselves! O that you were wise, and understood in time what dreadful injury such conduct does your friends, your Saviour, and your souls!

(3.) A word to you, also, who affect to pass for freethinkers, though probably you never allowed yourselves one day freely to think on your latter end, or one hour candidly to weigh the evidences of Christianity. You pretend that you “cannot believe the Bible, because it mentions so many uncommon and incredible events.” But let me encounter you upon this spot, and your argument will possibly be overthrown as these fields; and the idleness of your objection brought to light as the shattered bottom of that river.

If I had told you yesterday that you would walk across the bed of the Severn in the deepest place to day without so much as wetting your feet, with supercilious pity in your looks would you not have said, “We philosophers, in this enlightened age, cannot so easily be the dupes of priestcraft. I would as soon believe that Moses made the Israelites cross an arm of the Red Sea, dry shod?”

If one had intimated to you, that the tree which flourished yesterday in the meadow on the other side of the river would, like the sycamore mentioned by our Lord, be planted to-day in the middle of the river without the touch of a human hand; that a multitude of spectators would stand in the deepest part of the Severn's channel, and be shaded there by stately oaks, suddenly transplanted by an invisible power; that fields and hedges, a building and a road, would travel of their own accord; and that the hollows of yonder field would rise into mounts, and the mounts sink into hollows; would you not have said, “This is only repetition of the absurd tale about Joshua crossing Jordan when it overflowed its banks, without the help of either bridge or boat; this is the wild story of David about Mount Sinai skipping like a ram and little hills like young sheep?”

If one had assured you that Providence would make bare her arm, and that you would find fishes suddenly left dry in overflowed lands, and barges overset for want of water in the channel of a deep river, at a time when profane watermen had just horribly cursed its uncommon flood, would you not have replied, “I will as soon believe that the Nile was turned into blood by a touch of Moses’ rod, or that a stormy sea was suddenly calmed by a word of Jesus Christ?”

If I had informed you that the rocky bottom of the Severn, in a place where it was near twenty feet deep, would instantly spring up and rise many feet above the surface of the water; and that a great river, with out wind or tide, would flow back toward her source; would you not have answered, " We do not live in the time of miracles; the old women who believe that the sun forgat his going down in the days of Joshua, that iron swam in the days of Elisha, and that an ass spoke in the days of Balaam, may believe such absurdities?"

If one had declared to you, that the wicked watermen and profane drivers of horses could provoke God suddenly to dam up the river, overthrow their road, and put a temporary stop, both to their navigation and travelling; would you not have said with a shrewd smile, “I must believe the Bible, if God does such a thing?” Well then, believe it, for the Lord has done it. The fact is indubitable; and if you will not believe me, believe your own eyes, believe thousands of witnesses.

In some hundred years, (if this Sodom be suffered to subsist so long,) when all these apertures shall have been washed by rains or floods, or trodden in by the feet of man and beast; and when the plough shall have levelled these heaps of ruins into fields crowned with a waving harvest; posterity will find it almost as hard to credit what you now see, as you do to believe what the Israelites formerly saw; and some future disbelievers will probably wonder at your supposed credulity, just as you do at our believing the wonders recorded in the Bible.

O! that reason and experience might make you ashamed of your unbelief! O! that human and Divine testimony, arguments and facts, spiritual and sensible demonstration, which meet to day before you, might turn the stream of your

infidelity, as the Lord turned yesterday the course of that turbid river! O! that you would bow to the God of your fathers, the Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter of returning sinners! Trees have danced, fields have run, mounts have skipped, and "the floods have clapped their hands before the Lord;" God has answered you by water and earth: O that you would shout with the perplexed Israelites, when God answered them by fire! "The Lord he is the God! The Lord he is the God!" O that you might cry out in a transport of faith, as unbelieving Thomas, when he had seen the scars in the hands and side of his risen Saviour, "My Lord and my God!"

Those earthen pyramids, which the invisible hand of Providence has suddenly cut out of the bosom of the earth will soon disappear; those disparted rocks, which are now such striking instances of God's power, will one day decay; but if, on this awful occasion, you turn from your unbelief to your Saviour, and continue in the faith, you will be lasting monuments of his restoring grace, and eternal objects of the joy with which he welcomes returning prodigals to the open arms of his mercy, and penitent infidels to the unsearchable treasures of his love.

(4.) And ye that are awakened to a sight of your spiritual danger, and behold around you the blind leading the blind into the pit of destruction, suffer also the word of exhortation. Imitate the warning love of the illiterate man of that house, who gave his family the alarm, and excited them by his words and example, to flee from the impending ruin. Rouse your relations, your friends, your neighbours, your very enemies, as they can bear it. Tell them, in the language of St. Peter, "that the heavens and the earth, which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. Declare to them, that God is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance: and yet assure them, that the day of the Lord will certainly come, and that it will come as unexpectedly by most, as a thief in the night; and as suddenly to all, as this desolation came yesterday morning.

Then shall all that is under the curse pass away; and O! with what noise! If the removal of some acres of land and a river was yesterday so dreadful; how inconceivably terrible will be the passing away of all the plains and mountains, all the islands and continents, all the rivers and seas in the universe! Lord, give us the helmet of salvation, before the coming of "that great and terrible day."

In the meantime, whosoever thou art that fearest God, I address thee in the language of the angels to Lot: "Hast thou here any beside thy self, son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters?" Bring them out of this immense Sodom, this wicked world. Say to them, "Up! get ye out of this place," this vale of sin, tears, and misery: "for the Lord will destroy it: and have your conversation in heaven, whence Jesus Christ shall be revealed with ten thousand of his angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." And if thou "seem to them as one that mocks;" or if they say of thee, as the Pharisees did of our Lord, "He has

a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?" Yet do not give them up. Consider that "charity hopeth all things." Mourn for them in secret places: and remember, that many who had stood proof against the most rational exhortations, have at last been sweetly overcome by the power of humble, warm, persevering prayer.

(5.) But ye want perhaps some encouragement yourselves, ye that tremble at God's word, and at this desolation. Ye see by this sample, what terrible destruction will one day come upon all the earth; and ye desire to meet the general overthrow, not only with calm resignation, but with triumphant joy. In order to this, give me leave once more to point you "to the hills whence our salvation comes; to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel; and to Jesus, the" once crucified, but now for ever exalted "Mediator of the new covenant."

By the importunate actings of a penitential faith in his blood, and by a heart felt dependence upon his infinite merits, flee to his mediatorial protection, as the man slayer, pursued by the avenger of blood, fled to the city of refuge. And if the burden of your sins, increased by the sense of your natural impotence, render your hearts so heavy that you cannot lift them up to heaven; do as a lame child, who escaped yesterday out of this overthrow. Seeing all who were in the house ready to run out of it for their lives; and conscious that he could not save himself by a speedy flight, he cried out, "And what shall I do, father?" Imitate him, poor sinners, who are spiritually maimed, halt, blind, and full of putrefying sores: cry to the Saviour of the lost, "And what shall we do, Lord? Without thee we can do nothing: save us, O Lamb of God, or we perish."

And O! may the countryman's pity for the lame child be an emblem to you of the Redeemer's compassion for every distressed soul that looks to him for help! "I will carry thee, my child," answered the father with yearning bowels, as he took him up in his arms to run out of the house. And so will Christ: hear his own gracious words: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet I will not forget thee. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee. Why sayest thou, O worm Jacob, My way is hid from the Lord? Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God fainteth not? He giveth power to the weak, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even youths shall be weary. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

Only beware of making your profession of dependence upon the Lord an occasion of indulging spiritual sloth. Instead of saying, like Solomon's sluggard, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep," do as the lame child did, when he was carried across yonder field. Having then an opportunity of seeing over his father's shoulder what passed around him, far from composing himself to sleep, he earnestly cried out, "Run, father, run! for the barn, trees, and hedges go faster than we."

Run also, penitent sinner, run the race of obedience that is set before you: run the circle of all the good works prepared for you to walk in: run, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; and as you run, pray in the language of the spouse: "Draw us more and more, Lord, and we will run faster and faster after thee." Nor be satisfied with running to-day: while you are in this world go to the Father by Christ: believe, obey, and take up your cross daily: a life of holiness is the race, and heaven is the prize. Do not run back unto perdition: "So run that you may obtain:" endure unto the end of the race, and you shall be eternally saved.

(6.) And shall I forget to congratulate you on this occasion, ye happy believers, whose hearts are sprinkled with the blood of the true Paschal Lamb, and whose faith unfeigned works by obedient love? No. I must remind you of your inestimable privileges; it is your prerogative to glorify God in the fires, and shout his power on these ruins. Our Lord himself gives you leave to triumph, not only when the powers of the earth, but those of heaven shall be shaken. "When these things," says he, "begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

The destroyer may be suffered to tempt and afflict you, as severely and as long as he did the patient man: but ye may say with him, "Though God slay us, yet we will trust in him." You serve an almighty Protector. "Because you have set your love upon the Lord, therefore will he deliver you from the noisome pestilence; he shall defend you under his wings; his faithfulness and truth shall be your shield and buckler. Ye shall not be afraid for any terror by night, nor for the sickness, or earthquake that destroyeth in the noonday. A thousand shall fall beside you, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come nigh you, to overthrow your souls, or to destroy your peace. Yea, with your eyes shall ye behold and see the reward of the ungodly."

So long as ye hear your Shepherd's voice, and follow his steps, he numbers you among his sheep, and none shall pluck you out of his hand. Who or what shall harm you, if you are followers of that which is good? Were those fields this instant to reel again to and fro like a drunken man: did the earth open before your eyes a thousand new mouths as wide as this chasm, and burst all her rocks in ten thousand pieces under your feet: did impetuous rivers bend their course against you, and roaring seas roll mountainous waves around you; you would experience the serenity of mind which (even a poor heathen being judge) is the privilege of the just.[8] "The wreck of the world would crush your bodies without disturbing your souls." With trembling awe you could in that extremity rejoice in God your Saviour, and say with David, "The Lord is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble: therefore will we not fear though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea: though the waters thereof rage and swell, and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same. The kingdoms are moved, but God hath showed his voice. The earth itself shall melt away, but we will not fear what roaring storms, bellowing

earthquakes, wicked men, and raging devils, can do unto us: for “the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

Yes, O ye righteous, who walk as becomes the Gospel of his grace, he is your eternal refuge, and will be your exceeding great reward. The power that yesterday rent these rocks, opened these fields, and raised these mounts, will one day rend your tombs, open your graves, raise your dust, and place your immortal bodies upon Mount Sion that cannot be moved. There shall you shine as the sun in the innumerable company of angels, and in the assembly of just men made perfect. There brazen-faced scoffers and rioters, who glory in their shame, will interrupt your devotions no more: and there, with unutterable transports of joy and inexpressible ravishments of love, we shall meet again, to ascribe the glory of our present deliverance, and of an eternal salvation “to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever.”

ENDNOTES

[1 We find this letter referred to in a letter of Mr. Fletcher to the Rev. Charles Wesley, dated August 18, 1761, and recorded in page 73 of his life, octavo edition, in the following words: I do not know whether I mentioned to you a sermon preached at the archdeacon's visitation. It is almost all levelled at the points which are called 'The Doctrines of Methodism,' and as the preacher is minister of a parish near mine, it is probable he had me in his eye. After the sermon, another clergyman addressed me with an air of triumph, and demanded what answer I could make? As several of my parishioners were present, beside the churchwardens, I thought it my duty to take the matter up; and I have done so, by writing a long letter to the preacher, in which I have touched the principal mistakes of his discourse, with as much politeness and freedom as I was able: but I have as yet had no answer. [And, it seems, he never had any.] I could have wished for your advice before I sealed my letter; but as I could not have it, I have been very cautious, entrenching myself behind the ramparts of Scripture, as well as those of our homilies and articles.]

[2 1 John v. 7. This passage is so decisive that the enemies of the trinity have used all their efforts to render it suspected. But Mr. Travis has demonstrated its authenticity in a manner sufficiently clear to remove the doubts of the most scrupulous critic.]

[3 Consult your annals, and ye shall find, that in the days of Pilate, while Christ was suffering, the sun withdrew at noon, and obscured the day with darkness.]

[4 A blooming dancer, under twenty years of age, whom I loudly warned on Saturday evening to "prepare for death and judgment," and who distinguished himself among the nimblest of the company, while some cried, "Play away-dance away," &c. The next week, far from growing wiser, he procured money by wrong methods to go every evening to a show, against the will and entreaties of his parents. And this he continued to do till, putting one day his knee to the ground, the unseen point of a nail made an insignificant wound in it, not unlike the prick of a pin. The show man, to whom he mentioned this accident, by an unfortunate application inadvertently poisoned his trifling wound, and spoiled his dancing for ever. Terrible symptoms soon followed, with excruciating pains, which carried him off the Saturday following. The circumstances of his death, his solemn warnings to some of his companions on his death bed, and his affecting cries for mercy, which were heard for a considerable distance, struck a transitory awe upon many young people, and brought them to hear the funeral sermon, which I referred to in the beginning of this.]

[5 A woman, thirty five years of age, passing before a looking glass the day after she heard this sermon, was surprised to see an unusual paleness upon her face. She called her husband, told him she was a dying woman, and actually died in a quarter of an hour. She heard me on the Friday, and I buried her on the Monday following. Another middle aged person, that was also among my hearers, followed her to the grave the next day in the next parish. How soon may we be called to give an account of what we speak or hear, write or read.]

[6 It is not improbable that Vesuvius was once a plain, or an inconsiderable eminence, and that the rocks, ashes, lava, &c, that make the bulk of it, have been vomited out of the mouth of the volcano, which grows larger and wider by the additional matter that comes out of it at every new eruption.]

[7 "*Esse quoque in fatis reminiscitur affore tempus,*
Quo mare, quo tellus, correptaque regia coeli
Ardeat, et mundi moles operosa laboret."
Ovid. Metam. Lib. i, line 256.]

[8 "*Si fractus illabatur orbis,*
Impavidum feriunt ruinae."]

THE NEW BIRTH:

A DISCOURSE,

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

THE REV. JOHN FLETCHER.

BY HENRY MOORE.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.-ST. PAUL.

THE WORKS
OF THE
REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER

THE NEW BIRTH:

A DISCOURSE, &c.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3.

THE corruption of the Christian world, and the almost general lukewarmness of those who have some respect for religion, render it impossible to preach openly and constantly the deep truths of Christianity without giving general offence.

How naturally, having made some efforts toward salvation, do we repose ourselves as if we were at the end of our career! Perhaps we even think ourselves sure of the prize before we have begun the race! And if any one should venture to show us the folly and danger of such conduct, we regard him as a melancholy person who considers only the dark side of things, and who takes a sorrowful pleasure to make us view them in the same light with himself.

This is one of the reasons why those who are commissioned to show us the way of salvation, are afraid to dwell upon what Jesus Christ has said concerning the difficulties of the way, and the small number of those that walk therein. Indeed, if we ourselves be in the broad way that leadeth to destruction, it is not surprising that we should speak but seldom of the unfrequented path that leads to life; and that we should but feebly and sparingly press those truths by which at length worldlings must be either convinced or confounded. But it is certain, that if we be more sincere, a thousand difficulties will rise up to deter us, and shake the resolutions which we have formed to resist the torrent of prejudice and ungodliness.

We fear being accused of want of charity if we declare as strongly as the Scripture does, "That if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." We are afraid of being charged with preaching a new doctrine, if we declare boldly with St. James, "That he who is the friend of the world is the enemy of God;" or with St. Paul, "That she who liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." And we find by sorrowful experience that we must submit to be counted visionaries and enthusiasts, or cease to declare, with the same apostle, that the true Christian is a man who "glories only in the cross of Christ, who, being justified by faith, has really peace with God;" that he feels the peace of God in his soul, as a seal of the pardon of his sins; that he "rejoices in hope of the glory of God;" and that he "glories in tribulation, because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him." For it is certain that the world is always the same, and that the doctrine of Christ, as well as his cross, is still "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness:" that

it still excites the indignation of those who falsely call themselves children of God, and is ridiculed by those whom the foolish wisdom of this world fills with presumption. Nevertheless, as among those who reject the counsel of God in giving it the names of enthusiasm and dangerous reverie, there are some who are distinguished by their good desires, and by some sparks of zeal for the religion of our fathers: and as among those who fight against God, many do it in ignorance, believing that they do him service; let us strive to explain, in this discourse, one of those essential truths of Christianity upon which these half Christians meditate so rarely, and which they decry so often; viz. the doctrine of our regeneration, or new birth in Jesus Christ.

And to sustain the attention by the order of the matter as well as by the importance of the subject, let us examine,

FIRST, Upon what occasion our Lord Jesus Christ declared, that "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

SECONDLY, What we are to understand by these expressions,. "To be born again; to be regenerated."

THIRDLY, What are the reasons upon which the absolute necessity of our regeneration is founded; and how easy, and yet dangerous it is to take the reformation of our manners for the regeneration of our souls.

LASTLY, How we may come to a true renovation, without which no man can see the kingdom of God.

Reader, if you love the truth, and if you have respect to the eternal Son of God, whose words we are now to consider, lift up to him a mind disengaged from prejudice, and beseech him to apply to your heart and mine, the profound truths of our text! He taught them himself during the days of his flesh, and he still gives the knowledge of them by the unction of his Spirit. Yes, Divine Redeemer! let thy grace teach us, and thy word shall be in this hour also a light unto our feet! Deign to show us the path which conducts to thee, and give us the will and the power to run therein and follow thee in the regeneration, until we enter in by thee into thy kingdom: for thou art alone the path, the door, the truth, and the life!

PART FIRST.

To whom, and how our Saviour preached regeneration.

THE evangelist teaches us that Nicodemus, a Jew, as remarkable for his attachment to his religion as for his knowledge, his reputation, and his rank, having heard of the miracles of Jesus, concluded that he was a prophet sent of God, and came to see him by night; probably to put to him questions concerning the kingdom of God, which all

the pious Jews then attentively waited for. Our Lord, knowing that the ideas which Nicodemus had of his kingdom were not less gross than those of the rest of the nation, took this occasion to undeceive and instruct him. He declares to him that the kingdom of heaven is of a nature so spiritual, that a man, far from having power to enter, cannot be in a state even to see it without a real conversion. "I say to you," adds he, "that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

As if he had said, Do not deceive thyself, Nicodemus. My kingdom is not of this world. Thou hast formed false ideas of it. Few of mankind can see it, and thou canst not enter into it thyself. Thy temperance and moral virtues, thy zeal for the religion of your fathers, and the exactness with which thou fulfillest thy exterior duties, have not yet prepared thee for the presence of God. If thou be not delivered out of the estate in which thou art at present, know that thy soul will always remain encompassed with darkness as thick as that which envelopes an infant who has not yet seen the light. Thou rejoicest in a life animal and earthly; but thou hast lost in Adam a life spiritual and Divine. Thou hast lost the life of God out of thy soul, and thou canst not recover it but by being born again. Without a spiritual birth it will be as impossible for thee to see God, and rejoice in the brightness of his face, as for an infant not yet born to discover the sun, and rejoice in his light.

This doctrine, altogether strange as it must appear to the natural man, could not be wholly unknown to a Jewish doctor. God had promised to the Israelites, by the mouth of his prophets, that "he would put a new spirit within them; that he would take away the heart of stone out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh; that he would circumcise," or change entirely, "their hearts; that they might love him with all their soul, and with all their strength." David had demanded of God with torrents of tears, "that he would create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him." And Ezekiel had cried to all the people, "Put away from you all your iniquities, make you new hearts and new spirits; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" We may believe that, after these promises, these prayers, these declarations, these menaces, expressed so clearly in the Old Testament, a sincere Jew must have some idea of that spiritual change which distinguishes the faithful from the children of this world. But as in the present day, among the people of God, there are some who conscientiously fulfil many moral duties, and walk with sincerity in the exterior ordinances of religion, without, at the same time, knowing by experience what the new birth is, so it was in the times of our Saviour. Nicodemus, notwithstanding all his virtue, his religion, his zeal, his sincerity, and his love for instruction, was not yet regenerated: and consequently he augmented the number of those righteous persons, who think they have no need of deep repentance or spiritual renovation.

Being therefore struck with astonishment at hearing the words of Christ, and being yet so blind as to understand them in a gross and literal sense: "How can a man be born again?" cried he, "when he is old; can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, to be born?" "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," replied Jesus. In vain would you be born a second time of flesh and blood, which cannot enter into the

kingdom of heaven. You could not thereby be in a state to enter into that kingdom, for you could only carry out of your mother's womb a nature corrupt, sensual, and earthly. It is of a spiritual birth I speak; for only “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” And as the kingdom of God is purely spiritual, I repeat to thee again, “Verily, verily, if a man be not born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into it.” If the pure waters of grace, of which those of baptism are emblematic, do not render white as snow those sins which are red as scarlet; and if the powerful operation of the Spirit of God do not renew all the faculties of his soul, causing him to be born again of incorruptible seed, by which he may recover the image of his Creator, and become thus a partaker of the Divine nature, he shall have no part in the inheritance of the saints in light; the entrance of that kingdom shall be shut against him for ever.

And, as if it were not sufficient to have twice declared regeneration absolutely necessary to salvation, and to have supported his second solemn declaration by the word (not to say the oath) verily repeated also twice, the Son of God, seeing surprise painted upon the face of Nicodemus, and discovering by those eyes which sound the hearts and the reins, that he could not receive his doctrine, because he could not comprehend by what operation of the Spirit a soul could be regenerated; the Son of God, I say, prays him, as with tenderness, not to be astonished if he should say to all those who were present, as well as to him, “Ye must be born again.” And fearing lest that which is mysterious in the renewing of the soul, should cause him to reject what he had said as absurd and impossible, with a patience and wisdom truly admirable, he strives to make him see the possibility of feeling the effects of the grace which regenerates, and at the same time the impossibility of describing exactly its operations.

How great brevity and force are united in the reasoning of our Saviour! “The wind,” says he, “bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” As if he had said, You do not doubt but the wind is something real: meantime you can neither paint it nor describe it to a man who could neither feel nor hear it; much less could you say whence it ariseth, or whither it goeth. In like manner a sinner who is regenerated, into whose soul God has breathed the breath of spiritual life, knows that the clouds of his understanding are dissipated: that God has called him out of darkness into his marvellous light, and that the Sun of righteousness has risen upon him. He discovers with transports of holy joy the happy revolution it has made within him. He sees that he has passed from death unto life; and he feels that he is the child of God, because he has “the Spirit of adoption, which cries in his heart, Abba, Father!” Because the consolations of the Lord, as a spiritual zephyr (if I may so express myself) refresh his soul; and because he was made partaker of a power which was before unknown to him, and of a felicity which “eye hath not seen, which ear hath not heard,” and which has never elevated the heart of the man who is not regenerated. But although he feels these changes in himself it is impossible for him to paint them, or describe how the Spirit of God has wrought them. No, he cannot make a man, whose eyes the Lord has not opened, see this kingdom of God which is

established in his soul. He cannot make him taste these waters springing up into life eternal, this happiness unutterable, which inundates the heart of a believer. It is the pearl of great price, the concealed treasure, and the “new name which none knoweth but he who receiveth it.” It is the word of' life, the hidden manna, which each must see, which each must touch with his own hands, which each must taste with his own mouth. It is the “mystery of the faith preserved in a pure conscience.” It is the seed incorruptible, without which no man can be born of God, nor see the kingdom of heaven.

An answer so positive might have satisfied Nicodemus, but his incredulity forced him to cry out, “How can these things be?” How true it is, that the natural man, though he should be just, sincere, temperate, and in some sort religious, “cannot comprehend the things of the Spirit of God!” How true it is, that “they are foolishness to him,” and that he regards them always as things impossible, unless God reveals them to him as he does not to the world. Be not then surprised at their behaviour to whom we often announce the profound truths of Christianity. The virtuous Nicodemus himself cried out, “How can these things be?” The half Christians may also cry out, This is carrying things too far; this is yielding to enthusiasm; this is to lose ourselves in the clouds. The best way to stop the mouths of these unbelievers is to answer them as our Lord answered Nicodemus: “Art thou,” said he, “a teacher in Israel, and knowest not these things? That which we know we declare, and that which we have seen we testify:” but, blinded by your false wisdom, “you receive not our testimony.” If I have spoken to you of things material and terrestrial, of the properties of the wind which you feel, and which you hear blowing every day upon the earth, and ye believe not, being neither able to understand, or render a reason for it, how could you believe and comprehend my discourse if I should speak to you of spiritual and heavenly things; of the secret operations of regenerating grace, the particularities of that second birth, without which no man can see the Lord? It is thus that Jesus Christ confounds the ignorance and incredulity of this teacher in Israel, who knew not yet that which he should teach to others. Thus he gives him to understand, and us with him, that religion does not consist in speculative dissertations upon the doctrines which it proposes, but in an experimental knowledge of its mysteries, in an unshaken faith in the promises of God; in the joyful anticipation of that good which this faith procures for us, and in the living and powerful sentiments which lead instantly to the practice of all the duties of a new life. Reader, do you desire to profit by these instructions of the Son of God? If you believe that he who cannot lie or deceive, has declared that you must be born again in order to enter his kingdom, do not lose a moment in vain speculations. Fall upon your knees before him who can soften your heart, and cause the scales to fall from your eyes. Demand of him that he may enable you to see and feel the absolute necessity of regeneration, and that you may receive the grace to seek it with tears of sincere repentance. This is that which Nicodemus did. Notwithstanding the repugnance which he at first felt to receive the doctrine of regeneration, being convinced by the words of our Saviour, he at length devoted himself. He believed, and became a new creature; for the Gospel teaches us, that he who dared not come to Jesus but by night, and had spoken to him only to make

objections, confessed him openly, (and by consequence his doctrine,) even when all his disciples had abandoned him. O let us be strengthened, that we may be as ready to imitate his faith, as the worldlings are to object with him, “How can these things be?”

PART SECOND.

What are we to understand by these expressions, “To be born again; to be regenerated?”

ALTHOUGH our Saviour refused to answer an unprofitable question of the Jewish doctor, upon the manner of a soul being regenerated, it is nevertheless not impossible to explain what is the state of a soul that is born again, and in what regeneration doth consist. In general we may say, it is that great change by which a man passes from a state of nature to a state of grace. He was an animal man; in being born again he becomes a spiritual man. His natural birth had made him like to fallen Adam, to the old man, against whom God had pronounced the sentence of death, seeing it is the wages of sin. But his spiritual birth makes him like to Jesus Christ, to the new man, “which is created according to God in righteousness and true holiness.” He was born “a child of wrath,” proud, sensual, and unbelieving; full of the love of the world, and of self love; a lover of money, and of earthly glory and pleasure, rather than a lover of God. But by regeneration he is become a “child, and an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ.” The humility, the purity, the love of Jesus, is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit which is given to him, making him bear the image of the “second Adam.” He is “in Christ a new creature: old things are passed away, and all things are become new.” All the faculties and powers of his soul are renovated. His understanding, heretofore covered with darkness, is illuminated by the experimental knowledge which he has of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ. His conscience, asleep and insensible, awakes and speaks with a fidelity irreproachable. His hard heart is softened and broken. His will, stubborn and perverse, is softened, yields, and becomes conformable to the will of God. His passions, unruly, earthly, and sensual, yield to the conduct of grace, and turn of themselves to objects invisible and heavenly; and the members of his body, servants more or less to iniquity, are now employed in the service of righteousness unto holiness. Hence his soul, his body, his spirit, run with equal rapidity into the straight path of obedience, and all that is within him cries out, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ my Saviour, by which I am crucified unto the world, and the world unto me. I know no man after the flesh. I live not, but Christ liveth in me, and the life I live is by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Such is the prodigious change which a living faith produces in the soul of a repentant sinner. Such is the change which the apostle calls “a new creation, a resurrection from the dead, a passing from death unto life, the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth, and by which he is raised with Christ, and walks in newness of life.”

But to be more particular. We may reasonably suppose that when our Lord said to Nicodemus, “A man cannot see the kingdom of God without being born again,” he meant to compare the spiritual birth of a child of God with the natural birth of a child of Adam: thus, to have just ideas of the first, it is needful to consider the second, and to rise from that which is visible and material, to that which is invisible and celestial.

An infant which is not yet born, feels neither the air nor the fluids by which it exists. It understands not: the organs of sense are not in a condition to act. It discovers nothing; its eyes being closed to the light, and all sorts of objects. It is true, that when it approaches the birth, a principle of life is manifested, and some feeble movements begin to distinguish it from a mass of matter; but the objects which surround it are not the less unknown. Although it is in the world, it has no more idea of that which passes therein, than if the world did not exist; not only because the senses are not yet unfolded, but because of the thick veil which surrounds and hinders its discovering the objects that are so near it. So it is with the man who is not regenerated. In God “he lives, and moves, and has his being.” But he is not sensible of his presence, nor of that Divine breathing which nourishes the spiritual life of those who are born again. The things of God, which present themselves continually to the minds of the children of God, make no impression upon him. God calls, but he understands not his voice. Christ offers himself to him as “the bread that cometh down from heaven,” but he cannot “taste that the Lord is good.” God would manifest himself to him, “as he does not unto the world,” but the eyes of his understanding are covered with so thick a cloud that he cannot discover him. He is a “stranger and foreigner,” as St. Paul declares; “he is alienated from the life of God by the ignorance that is in him;” an ignorance that makes him insensible of its existence. He may have some beginnings of spiritual life and motion before he is regenerated. He may feel good desires, and make efforts to turn to God; but his spiritual senses are not yet unfolded, and the veil of obscurity still covering his soul, he cannot see the Sun of righteousness, nor the day of life eternal; he is not yet born of God.

Let us continue the parallel. The birth of an infant is commonly accompanied by sorrows inexpressible. This blessing costs sighs, tears, and even piercing cries. “In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children,” says God to Eve, after she had sinned; and this sentence is also more or less executed in a spiritual sense, upon all sinners who enter into life by regeneration. If Lydia felt the sorrows of repentance but for a moment before the Lord opened her heart; if three thousand persons were pricked to the heart during the preaching of St. Peter, and were immediately after regenerated, receiving remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost; the Scripture teaches us that David, Hezekiah, Manasseh, and St. Paul, did not pass so soon or so easily from death unto life. But however the circumstances may differ, it is certain that the change which accompanies the new birth, is such that none can be insensible of it who have experienced it. A child is no sooner born, than he exists in a manner altogether different. He breathes; he feels the air that surrounds him; and by an alternate motion receives it in, and sends it forth continually. All his coporeal senses

are affected by, and employed upon, their proper objects. His eyes are opened to the light, and hence he perceives an infinite variety of new things. His ears are struck with a thousand different sounds; and the faculty which he has of touching, tasting, and feeling discovers to him every moment something of those material things that are under the sun. Regeneration causes an equal revolution in the soul of a sinner. He is no sooner born of God, than he becomes sensible of the presence of the Supreme Being. He can say by experience with David, "Thou hast beset me, before and behind, and laid thy hand upon me." He renders back, without ceasing, to God, by prayer and praise, the breath of spiritual life, which he receives by faith; and acquiring every moment new strength, his spiritual senses are unfolded, exercised, and become capable of discerning spiritual objects.

"The eyes of his understanding are opened. He sees [in every place] him that is invisible. God, who commanded the light to shine into the darkness, shines into his heart, and enlightens him with the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ. God lifts upon him the light of his countenance." With Abraham he sees the day of the Lord, the day which to him is the beginning of eternal life; and seeing it, he rejoices with joy unspeakable. His ears are opened as well as his eyes. God does not now call in vain. He understands, he knows the voice of his Shepherd. He comes to him. "He tastes the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." In a word, his spiritual senses are all in action; the veil is taken away; the things of God are no longer mystery or foolishness. He knows-he comprehends them. He feels the "peace which passes all understanding, the joy of the Holy Ghost, and the love of God shed abroad in his heart." He knows that he is born of God. He knows that he "dwells in God, and God in him."

This is your state, reader, if you be a believer; if you have that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." But if you have never experienced that inward change, "judge yourself, that you be not judged of the Lord." Be deeply sensible, and confess that because you are not born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God. Consider the reasons which prove the absolute necessity of regeneration. They will infallibly convince you, if you suffer the grace of God to make you feel all their force and importance.

PART THIRD.

Why no man can see the kingdom of God without being born again.

IT is certain, from the testimony of sacred Scripture, that before the fall of Adam our nature participated of a holiness and a goodness, of which we have not any remains in coming into the world. In this state of spiritual life, man loved God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his mind. He served him with all his strength; he gave him thanks for all things; he rejoiced in him with joy unspeakable, and he had a constant communion with him by the Holy Spirit, of which he was the temple. But "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and death

passed upon all men, because all have sinned." Thus we are born "children of wrath," not only destined to bodily death, and exposed to death eternal, but already spiritually dead in original sin. "Conceived in sins and shapen in iniquity, we are alienated from the life of God," having only carnal and earthly affections, in which, St. Paul declares, consists the death of our souls. And as God is "not the God of the dead, but of the living," it is clear that before we can call "Jesus LORD, by the Holy Ghost, or God FATHER, by the Spirit of adoption;" before we can experience that which St. Paul calls the "life of God," we must feel inwardly the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and receive from him a new heart and a right spirit; spiritual and heavenly affections. This is the sacred oil with which God anoints true Christians. It is the want of this oil, of this vivifying grace, which causes the foolish virgins to be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, as well as the adulterers.

But again: as the decrees of God are unchangeable, the heavens shall be shaken, and the truth of God fail, before a child of Adam shall see the face of God without sanctification and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. You must be "transformed by the renewing of your mind," in order to prove "his holy, and acceptable, and perfect will." It ordains that you shall "put off the old man, and put on the new man, created after him in righteousness and true holiness;" and he declares solemnly, by the mouth of his Son, that none shall see his kingdom without being born again. Do not imagine that because God is good, he will cease to be true, and that he forgets to be holy and just because he is patient. No, his mercy does not make him the father of lies, and you should remember that though "heaven and earth pass away-his word shall not pass away."

But do you still demand why nothing that is impure and defileth, shall enter the kingdom of God? And why there are none before his throne but the spirits of the just made perfect, and saints, whose robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb? The reason is clear: sin, that leprosy of the devil, must not offend HIM, whose eyes are too pure to see evil. Defilement and iniquity cannot dwell with the King of saints. There is no refuge, no dwelling place in the heavenly Jerusalem for vipers, dogs, or swine. The proud, the passionate, lying and revengeful persons; the envious, the covetous, the sensual, cannot enter there: and if they could, they would find God only a consuming fire. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? (says David.) He who hath clean hands and a pure heart. Blessed are the pure in heart, (says Jesus,) for they shall see God." Miserable are those whose hearts are not purified, for they shall never see him. There is no communion between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial. To see the face of God in righteousness, we must be cleansed from our natural corruption, and become partakers of the nature of Christ, and of the image of God.

From hence it appears, that regeneration is the first degree of salvation. Grace is the only way to glory, and holiness the one foundation of true happiness. If we do not learn to know, in this world, Jesus Christ, who saves his people from their sins, we shall hear him say one day, "Depart from me, I know you not, ye workers of

iniquity." God will receive into his kingdom only those whom Christ shall sanctify in soul, body, and spirit. As on the one side, sin is the seed of death, and hell begins in those who are not regenerated; on the other, holiness is life eternal, and heaven is already opened in the believing soul. "He who believeth in me (saith Jesus) hath eternal life;" he has the earnest, the seal? and the foretaste of it. And as hell cannot be for those who are saved from their sins by Jesus, neither can paradise be for those who are not partakers of the Divine nature. We may add, that it is as preposterous to flatter ourselves with the hope of glory without having passed through regeneration, as to hope to see noon day without the intervention of the morning, or the summer of the year without the spring.

Moreover, to rejoice in the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore, it is needful to have senses and a taste to correspond thereto. The swine trample pearls under their feet. Dogs prize an ingot of gold no more than a flint. The elevated discourse of a philosopher is insupportable to a stupid mechanic: and an ignorant peasant introduced into a circle of men of learning and taste, is disgusted, sighs after his village, and declares no hour ever appeared to him so long. It would be the same to a man who is not regenerated, if we could suppose that God would so far forget his truth as to open to him the gate of heaven. If his heart were not created anew, if from a natural he were not changed to a spiritual man, however blameless he had been in his life, he would be as incapable of those transports of love which make the happiness of the glorified saints, as a horse is to admire the lustre of a diamond, or a swine to contemplate with delight the beautiful water of a pearl.

He is ignorant of the language of the heavenly Canaan. He cannot expatiate on the love of Jesus with the heavenly inhabitants. It would be insupportable for him now to meditate one hour on the perfections of God. What then shall he do among the cherubim and seraphim, and the spirits of just men made perfect, who draw from thence their transporting delights? He loves the pleasures and comforts of an animal life; but are these the same with the exercises of the spiritual life? Are they not rather insupportable to him? And although he will not acknowledge it, does he not hate God in his heart? Yes, he hates him, if his actions are to be credited rather than his words. He cannot employ himself one hour in prayer to Jesus without secretly wishing that the burdensome toil were concluded. His conversations, his readings, his amusements, as void of edification as of usefulness, rarely fatigue him; but one hour of meditation or prayer is insupportable. If he be not born again, not only he cannot be in a state to rejoice in the pleasures of paradise any more than a deaf man to receive with transport the most exquisite music, or a blind man to admire the works of the most eminent painters; but the most ravishing delights of angels would cause in him an insupportable distaste. Yes, he would banish himself from the presence of God rather than pass an eternity in prostrating himself before the throne, and crying day and night, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts! who is, and who was, and who is to come!"

It is very easy for such a one to say with the crowd of worldlings, “I hope that God will be merciful, and open to me the gate of heaven.” But it is not so easy to have just ideas of the heaven to which he flatters himself he shall go. It were to be wished that he would consider those words of our Lord, “The kingdom of God is within you.” They prove clearly that paradise consists more in the heavenly dispositions of the hearts of the faithful, than in the glorious pomp of a local heaven. We see in the book of Job, that Satan, intermingling himself with the saints, presented himself with them before the throne. But was he the more happy? No, the kingdom of darkness, and consequently his own hell, was within him. On the contrary, we may easily conceive a saint in a local hell; an Abed-nego in the burning fiery furnace, or a St. John in the caldron of burning oil, yet happy by virtue of the kingdom of God within them, “even righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” We conclude, that the gate of heaven must be opened upon earth by regeneration, and by the love of God, or that it will remain shut for ever; and that a local paradise would only be a sorrowful prison, to a man who was not regenerated; because, carrying nothing thither but depraved and earthly appetites and passions, and finding nothing there but spiritual and celestial objects, disgust and dissatisfaction must be the consequence; and, like Satan, his own mind would be his hell. Sinners cannot now comprehend this. But when their day of grace shall be past, and they shall be given over to a reprobate mind, they shall terribly feel the necessity of a spiritual birth, in order to be delivered from hell, and to see the kingdom of heaven; but, alas! it will be then too late.

To all these considerations, permit me to add another, which arises from the nature of the thing, and of itself claims our attention. Good sense cannot but dictate to us, that drunkards, gluttons, and impure persons; in a word, all the servants of Belial will, in that great day, follow the master whom they now serve. And is it not also clear, that the unjust, the extortioners, the covetous, and all those who defend the interests of the kingdom of darkness, under the standard of mammon, shall be excluded the kingdom of heavens as well as their infernal leader? And can we doubt that the worldlings, whose minds are more occupied with the pleasures and comforts of this life, than with the love and glory of God, will have their portion with Satan, who is the god of the world? Beside, does not reason convince us, that a depraved soul, loaded with the weight of its own sensuality, will precipitate itself into the abyss, as a stone, pressed by its own weight, falls toward the centre? And is it not as easy to conceive, that the heaviest and dullest of the feathered animals should soar like an eagle toward the sun, as to imagine that a soul that never had its conversation in heaven; that a soul who had never received by regeneration the wings of a firm faith, a lively hope, and a burning love, should be able to follow Jesus, and ascend to heaven with the triumphant army of the sons of God? We may then conclude, that our Saviour's words are founded on eternal reason and justice, and if a man be not born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

PART FOURTH.

DIVIDED INTO TWO SECTIONS.

SECTION I.

How dangerous it is to take the regularity of our manners for the regeneration of our souls.

PERHAPS some one will say, “I am convinced that perjured persons, debauchers, murderers, and those who act unjustly, shall never see the kingdom of heaven without being born again. But I thank God I am not of this number. From my youth I have lived in the practice of temperance and justice: and I flatter myself I am also no stranger to religion. I constantly attend the Church: I read the word of God: I pray and communicate regularly. Are not these indubitable marks of my regeneration? And was I not born again of water, and of the Holy Spirit, in my baptism?”

Before I answer this question, permit me to ask some which are not less important. Have you peace with God? Have you the remission of your sins? Has God revealed his Son in you? When you examine yourself, do you feel that Christ is in you the hope of glory? Have you received the “Spirit of adoption, witnessing with your spirit that you are a child of God?” Have you ever beheld the light of God's countenance, and felt the powers of the world to come? Do you taste the heaven which faithful souls enjoy even in this life, “the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them?” Is your soul athirst for the living God? Does it pant after him as the thirsty hart after the brooks of water? Do you count all things as dung and dross for “the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus?” Are you no longer conformed to this evil world, but do you live as a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth? Do you press with joy toward the heavenly Jerusalem in which are already your treasure and your heart? Does your soul ascend to God, even as the flame toward heaven? Do you celebrate in all your conversation the praises of him “who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light?” And do you find within you the humility, the patience, the disinterestedness, the renunciation of the world, the holy joy, the tender zeal, the constant sweetness, the desire to be with Christ, the modest gravity, the unfeigned love, which characterises true believers?

If these questions do not surprise you; if the Spirit of God has enabled you to sound the depths which they contain; if your most lively concern be, that you experience those heavenly dispositions only in a low degree; and if it be your most vehement desire that you may grow in grace every moment, until you feel all the power of the resurrection of Jesus,-you are a child of God, you are born again! Whether as Samuel you have walked in the way of the Lord from your infancy, or like St. Paul, beheld the light of the Sun of righteousness in the midst of your career, it imports not: “All is yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.”

But if, far from finding in your heart and in your conversation, these marks of a new and spiritual birth, your conscience rises against you, and you are forced to confess that you feel within you rather the natural than the spiritual man, being more occupied with earth than with heaven; with yourself and the world, than with the love of Jesus, and the glory to which he calls you; we should only lay a stumbling block in your way, if we did not cry to you in the words of our Divine Master, "Ye must be born again, or you cannot see the kingdom of God." We mean not by this, that you must reform your life even as scandalous sinners. No, you live, it may be, according to the strict rules of justice and temperance. You give alms, you fulfil the exterior duties of religion. We may believe even that, with Nicodemus, you do all this in the integrity of your heart, and as unto God. But the Lord declares that although you have the form of godliness, you have hitherto denied its power. He declares that your righteousness, which does not exceed that of the Pharisees, will never introduce you into the kingdom of God. Yes, were you a second Cornelius, a devout man, fearing God with all your house, giving much alms to the people, seeking God with fasting and continual prayer, if God hath not accepted you in the Beloved; if by faith in the name of Jesus you have not received remission of your sins; if the Holy Spirit have not descended upon you; if God, who knoweth the heart, beareth not witness to you as to him, purifying your heart by faith; your baptism has not saved you. And although you may not be far from the kingdom, you are not yet possessed of it, you are not yet regenerated. You have the fear of the Lord, but not his love. You are not yet a child of God. You still want the Spirit of adoption in order to be a Christian; for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creation; an entire change of our soul, as well as of our life. In a word, "a new heart, a right spirit: the kingdom of God within us."

If these things be so, (and they cannot be denied without trampling under foot the truth as it is in Jesus,) suffer the word of God to penetrate into your soul. This day hear the voice of God, and harden not your heart. The things which you read regard your eternal peace. Ah! beware lest your unbelief hide them from your eyes for ever. Are you one of those saints of the world who make a fair show in the flesh; and who, far from suffering persecution for the cross of Christ, are honoured of men because you still conform to the present world? Who, content with your moral duties and exterior piety, do not come to Jesus with the repentance and importunity of the publican? Suffer this foolishness of preaching to pull off your mask. Renounce your own wisdom: tear off the vain robe of your own righteousness: and smiting your breast, come to Christ with the publicans and harlots, and groan for regeneration, without which you cannot see the kingdom of heaven. Nicodemus has set you the example. He at length "received the kingdom as a little child, and was more than conqueror through the blood of the Lamb." Tread in his blessed footsteps. And if you also be a master in Israel, follow his simplicity, and triumph like him over all your prejudices, your doubts, and the fear of those who say, they are the Israel of God, and are not; and having followed him in the regeneration, you shall soon follow him to glory.

But if you are an open sinner, if you live in the practice of injustice, intemperance, impurity, or falsehood; thirsting after gold or pleasure; despising the name of God and his word; we need not attempt to prove that you are not regenerate. Your sins have a voice, they cry as Jesus did to such gross offenders, "You are of your father the devil, for his works you do." You know it is so; your own heart condemns you. Wonder not then that we denounce your utter perdition, in the name of God, if you are not born again. Strive to open your eyes, and behold the corruption of your heart, that depraved source of your ungodly manners. Behold the destroying angel behind you, the eternal abyss opened under your feet, and the Lord Jesus ready to take vengeance on you as his enemies. O that the idea of these awful events may awaken, before their reality overwhelms you! O may the fear of the Lord be in you the beginning of wisdom! This moment turn to your gracious God; tomorrow may be too late. "This is the day of salvation" for you. If you neglect it, the coming night may be the commencement of night eternal to your soul. And will you trifle with a danger like this? Will you do nothing to escape the sword of Divine justice? if your danger move you not, consider your interest. This would be sufficient to produce an entire change in you, if you would consider it seriously. In this world God offers you the pardon of your sins, and a happiness which can only be surpassed by that of glorified saints; and after this life a kingdom-a kingdom in the heavens. And will you carelessly renounce this because you cannot obtain it without pain? Rather than be born again, do you resolve to lose a crown of eternal glory? To lose your God, your Saviour, your all? Yea, to destroy yourself? Be not deceived. If the kingdom of heaven be shut against you, the kingdom of darkness, the second death, becomes your portion. If the kingdom of God be not established within you; if the foundation be not laid in your soul in this life, by the righteousness of Christ, the peace of God, and the joy of the Holy Ghost, Ad the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched shall terribly revenge your contempt for the blood of the covenant in which your sins might have been washed away, if you had implored the sacred sprinkling. Be not offended at our freedom. God knows that if we spread before you the treasures of his wrath, which he reserves for the day of wrath, it is that you may flee to those of his mercy. These are still open. His great and precious promises are still for you. By these you may be made partakers of the Divine nature in this life, and after death of the inheritance among the saints in light.

SECTION II.

The difference between the reformation of a Pharisee, and the regeneration of a Christian more particularly considered.

To the preceding exhortation permit me to add an advice which is of the last importance. Many sinners acknowledge the necessity of regeneration without being profited thereby, because they confound it with reformation of life. Reader, beware of this error. Remember, it is not sufficient to die to sin if we be not raised into newness of life. It is a little thing to say, "By the grace of God I am not what I was," if we cannot add, "by the same grace I am what I never have been." It is a little thing

to be able to say, “I am no swearer, drunkard, unclean person; I do not walk after the flesh;” unless we feel at the same time that we walk in the strait path of faith, hope, and Divine love.

You are no longer unjust: well; but like Zaccheus, do you give the half of your goods to feed the poor, and if you have wronged any man, do you restore four-fold? You are no longer sensual and voluptuous; but are your affections spiritual and Divine? You are no longer enslaved to passion and anger; but does the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your soul or, the sweetness and patience of the Lamb of God? You are no longer filled with that pride which made you hate your superiors despise your inferiors, and shun your equals; but in its place, do you feel in your heart the poverty of spirit, and the humility of Jesus? Do you never indulge what one calls “a polite pride?” Do you never pique yourselves upon your gentility, or upon any worldly distinction? You are perhaps an eminent person, and you feel it is unworthy an honest man to lie or calumniate; but do you always firmly take part with the truth? Do you comfort, reprove, or exhort your brethren with the sweetness and zeal of a Christian? You no longer mock at the word of God; but do you meditate upon it day and night? And is it as sweet to your soul as honey to your palate?

You are convinced it is a great sin to “take the name of God in vain;” but do you “rejoice with reverence” every time you pronounce or think of that sacred name? You detest impiety, you cry out against that deluge of iniquity which threatens to destroy us: but are you not either transported with bitter zeal, or lukewarm, and filled with vain confidence? You lament over many that you see at church, and at the holy table; but when you are there, do you rejoice as in the presence of the Lord? Does all that is within you cry out by happy experience, “How dreadful is this place! It is the dwelling of the mighty God!” Do you inwardly feed upon the bread of angels? Do you drink of the waters that spring up into everlasting life? Do you taste that the Lord is good?

You enter regularly into your closet, and you blame those who neglect to pray to their Father who seeth in secret, but do you there seek your God with tears until he manifests himself to you as he does not unto the world? Are you sick of love, (to use the expression of Solomon,) feeling that your Beloved is yours, and that you are his; “that his left hand is under your head,” and that his “right hand embraces you?” In a word, do you find there “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost?”

You feel that the life of a Christian ought to be a constant preparation for death, and as it is contrary to good sense to take those diversions in which we would not that death should find us; you therefore leave plays, useless visits, balls, finery, romances, cards, &c, to those whom the God of this world blinds, lest they should see eternity ready to swallow them up: but do you “redeem the time,” that you stay “walk in all those good works which the Lord has prepared” for you? Does the “love of Christ constrain you,” so that your duty becomes your delight? Do you love to visit

the Lord Jesus Christ in prison, and in the abode of the widow and orphan? Do you seek the poor that are despised? Are you merciful to the utmost of your power, both to the bodies and the souls of men? And do you find more pleasure in administering to the afflicted, and "weeping with those that weep," than the children of this world experience in all their vain delights?

Your life is not irregular, thanks be to God! You do not live any longer in presumptuous sins. But do you feel the sprinkling of the blood of Christ? Do vou know that you "have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of your sins?" In a word, are you "crucified with Christ," living no longer to yourself, but to God? Is "Christ your life?" Do you feel that "your life is hid with Christ in God?"

Reader, behold in these questions the difference between the reformation of a Pharisee, and the regeneration of a child of God. Some degrees of preventing grace, and of reason and reflection, suffice for the first; but nothing less can effect the second than a baptism of the Holy Ghost, and a real participation of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Beware, if indeed you would "flee from the wrath to come, and see the kingdom of God," beware that you rest not in the former state. If you do, "the publicans and harlots shall go into the kingdom of heaven before you," or rather you shall never enter therein. Christ himself has solemnly declared it, Matt. v. 20, xxi. 31. Accuse us not of severity in thus following eternal Wisdom, and in not daring to make void any words written in the book of life. To flatter you in this respect would be to lose our own souls, and that without remedy.

We are not ignorant that the voice of worldlings, like "the sound of many waters," lifts itself up on all sides, and drowns that of the Saviour. In vain we declare, that those who falsely "call him Lord, shall not enter into his kingdom." In vain we cry to sinners to "strive to enter in at the strait gate" of regeneration, because "many will seek to enter" by that of reformation, "and shall not be able." Sinners, always incredulous and obstinate, and ever carried away by the multitude, refuse to hear the voice of their Shepherd. Wolves in sheep's clothing betray them. Death seizes them before they are born again, and chains of darkness keep them bound to the judgment of the great day. Fools! to be blinded by that which should open their eyes, viz. the multitude that are content to live without regeneration. As if Christ had not expressly said, "Many are called, but few chosen; that his flock is a little flock;" and that few walk in the narrow path that leads to life.

Renounce, reader, renounce the presumptuous folly of worldlings, and if the charm be not yet broken, suffer the grace of God to break it this moment! Say not, you "are rich and need nothing." Depend not on your own works, your sincerity, your religious duties, your own righteousness. Acknowledge, on the contrary, that as you are not born again, you are yet in your sins; poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. Feel the necessity to "buy gold tried in the fire that you may be rich; and white clothing, that the shame of your nakedness may not appear; and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see." Cry out like the penitent publican, with a broken

and contrite heart, or as Saul, praying day and night for the Spirit of God, Lord, "be merciful to me a sinner!" Lord, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Lord, "what shall I do to be born again?" If these be the desires of your soul, attend to the conclusion of this discourse. There you shall see, that however dangerous your case may be, it is not desperate; and you shall be convinced that there is balm in Gilead. You shall confess that faith in the blood of Christ can, not only heal the wounds of a dying soul, but raise to life one that is spiritually dead.

THE CONCLUSION.

By what means a soul may be born again.

GOD takes the title of "slow to anger; abundant in goodness and truth." He swears by himself that he has "no pleasure in the death of a sinner," but that he should be converted and live; and the effects answer to those tender declarations. His mercy has found a way to raise fallen man, (if he will yield,) and to place him again among his children, without wounding his own justice. This way is astonishing, unthought of, incomprehensible. It surpasses infinitely the conjectures of angels, and the desires of men. And it is so infallible, that all who have a due sense of their miserable fall in Adam, all those who feel that they can no more regenerate themselves than they can create a new heaven and a new earth, may come to God, and receive regeneration freely by grace, and a right to the kingdom of heaven.

Reader, you have heard of this remedy a thousand times. But, on the one hand, knowing neither your indigence nor your malady, and on the other, having your understanding darkened by your unbelief you have neither, perhaps, considered nor apprehended as a Christian "the things which belong to your peace." May you receive them now as the Gospel of Christ, which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth!"

Know then that the regeneration which we preach is nothing else than the two great operations of the Spirit of God upon a penitential soul. The first, called justification, or the remission of sins, is that gratuitous act of the Divine mercy, by which God pardons the sinner, who believes in Jesus, all his past sins, and "imputes his faith to him for righteousness." Because, feeling that he has no righteousness, that he can do no work that is good in the sight of God, he "submits to the righteousness of God." He receives with his heart Jesus Christ as his Saviour, his gratuitous Saviour, his sole Saviour; and he knows that he has received him, because God "fills him with peace and joy in believing," and because he receives dominion over all his sins.

This dominion over sin, which the believer receives with the remission of his past sins, is the beginning or foundation of the second part of regeneration, called in the Holy Scripture sanctification. For in the same moment that the sinner receives this faith, the faith which justifies; at the same moment that "the Spirit of God witnesses

with his spirit that" his sins are pardoned, he receives the power to love much, as he feels that he has much forgiven. "The love of God" being thus "shed abroad in his heart," causes an extraordinary revolution in all the powers of his soul, and makes him feel, though perhaps in a low degree, the effects of the new birth, described in the second part of this discourse.

We are far from concluding that the body of sin is destroyed by this circumcision of the heart, this first revelation of Christ in the soul of a sinner. No: "the old man is only crucified with Christ;" and although he cannot act as before, he lives still, and seeks occasion to disengage himself, and to exercise his tyranny with more rage than ever. David and St. Peter had painful experience of this: and hence we see that sanctification is not generally the work of a day nor of a year. For, although God can cut short his work in righteousness, as the penitent thief found it aforetime, and as many sinners called at the eleventh hour have found it ever since, it is nevertheless in general a progressive work, and of long duration. We, therefore, define sanctification to be that powerful work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of a pardoned sinner, by which he receives power to go on "from faith to faith;" by which, illuminated more and more "to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," and "renewed day by day" in the image of his Saviour, which he had lost in Adam, he feels himself internally "changed from glory into glory," until he be "filled with all the fulness of God;" until he "loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength, and his neighbour as himself," even as Christ loved him. This is the highest point of the sanctification of a believer, and consequently his regeneration is complete.

Sanctification cannot therefore, begin before justification; for, seeing that the Spirit of God sanctifies the heart of a sinner, that Spirit must be received. But he is not received but in the sinner's being pardoned. For, according to Scripture, the first operation of the Spirit of adoration, is to cry "Abba, Father!" in the heart of which he takes possession; to testify to the spirit of the believer that he is a child of God, and to give him the foretaste of his heavenly inheritance. Beside, reason convinces us that God cannot communicate his nature, and the graces of his Spirit to a man whose sins he has not yet pardoned. A king is not bountiful to a rebellious subject before he restores him to his favour.

Thus our Church declares in her thirteenth article, "That works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ: yea, rather for that they are not done as God has willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin, however good they may appear to men."

This being admitted, it is evident that for a sinner to know how he is to be regenerated, he is to consider how he may be justified and sanctified. Upon this the Scripture is clear. "By grace ye are saved," says St. Paul, "through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast, being

created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works." As if the apostle had said, By the faith God has freely given you, you are saved from your sins; delivered from the punishment which they deserve by justification, and from their dominion over you by sanctification. Hence you are regenerated and new creatures. Thus St. Paul declares that a living faith is the gate of salvation, and all the Scripture declares it with him. "He who believeth shall be saved," says Jesus Christ; "he who believeth hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." And St. John shows us that "this passing from death unto life," and regeneration, are the same thing." He who believeth is born of God," says he, in his first epistle; and in his Gospel he declares, that "those who receive Christ, to them he gives power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name, who are born not of the will of man, but of God."

Our Church declares the same thing. In her homilies she teaches, that the only instrument necessary to salvation is faith, which is there defined, "A sure and firm confidence, that through the merits of Christ our sins are forgiven, and we reconciled to God."

Observe here, reader, with respect to faith, none can enjoy it but those who have felt their need of it. Jesus Christ never gives this sweet assurance, this testimony of his Spirit, but to those whose hearts are really contrite. "Come to me," says he, "all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He invites no others, he comforts no others. Before the Spirit of God " convinces the world of righteousness, he convinces of sin, because they believe not in Jesus." None can come to the Son for justifying faith, unless the "Father draw him" by a sense of his sins, and by the fear of that punishment which he merits.

If these truths have dissipated your doubts: if you no longer halt between God and Baal: if you are convinced that you can never see the "kingdom of God" without being "born again," and that the sole means of obtaining this blessing, is by a "faith of the operation of God," and which is "the power of God unto salvation;" a faith by which Christ is revealed in us, and we obtain peace with God: a faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" which points, like John the Baptist, to "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world," and who freely and graciously gives this faith to those who earnestly seek it: come then, dear reader, come then to the throne of grace, but come condemned by your conscience, burdened by the weight of your iniquities, and pierced with a sense of your unbelief and hardness of heart. Implore the mercy of your Judge until he shows himself your Father in giving you the Spirit of adoption; your Jesus in saving you from your sins; your Christ in giving you the unction of the Holy Spirit; your Emmanuel in revealing himself in you, and dwelling in your heart by faith.

He invites you himself. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters! Ye who have no money, who are poor in spirit, who tremble at my word, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do ye spend your money for that

which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Come to me! hearken! and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David, and your soul shall live. In the great day of the feast, Jesus cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believeth in men out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And this, says St. John, "spake he of the Spirit, which they who believed on him should receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

But Jesus is glorified! He is ascended to his Father and to our Father, to his God and to our God! And from the throne of his glory he sends every day into contrite hearts the Comforter, whom the world cannot receive, because it desires not to know him. But you, afflicted soul, shall receive him, if indeed you pant after him, and refuse to be comforted until he comes. The time cometh, yea, is now come, that you shall "worship the Father in spirit and in truth:" and filled with the Spirit of truth, you also shall cry out, "I know in whom I have believed! Lord, now let thy servant go in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation!" Yes, you shall be baptised by the Holy Ghost for the remission of sins, and justified freely by faith. You "shall have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in God your Saviour with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Doubt not the fidelity of God! Consider, "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all who are afar off, whom the Lord your God shall call." The God of truth has made this glorious promise-pray that it may be sealed upon your heart! But "pray with all prayer and supplication at all times; watching thereunto with all perseverance. And remember, that when your prayer is granted, you shall be "in Christ a new creature." "The Spirit of God shall bear witness to your spirit that you are a child of God," and that your Faith is really that which justifies and regenerates.

Take heed, in the meantime, that impatience and unbelief mingle not with the sense of the number and greatness of your sins, and so plunge you into discouraging and excessive sorrow. Are you tempted to doubt of the mercy of God? Reanimate your hope by meditating on the invitations of "the God of all grace," and the promises of the God of truth. Is your soul spiritually sick, yea, dying? Consider that Jesus has said, "The whole have no need of a physician, but those who are sick!" Is it spiritually dead? Hearken "to God manifest in the flesh:" "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he who liveth and believeth in me shall never die!" You feel that you are lost. Jesus says expressly, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Do you doubt if he will receive you? He says himself he will not "break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." "He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Do you feel that it is impossible such a corrupt soul as yours should be regenerated? Jesus says to you,

“Believe, and you shall see the glory of God: all things are possible to him that believeth.” Do you say you have no power? Remember, “power belongeth unto God.” “I will put my laws,” says he, “in your mind, and write them in your heart.” “I will be to you a God, and you shall be to me a people.” Do you doubt if God can with justice pardon sins as great as yours? “Come,” says he, “let us reason together; though your sins were as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though red as crimson, yet shall they be as wool.” Yes, says St. John, ‘if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Immortal spirit, who readest these promises, “why tarriest thou?” Why do you not cry out with transport, The Lord is faithful to pardon my sins! He has promised, and he will do it. I will then confess them to him day and night with tears; I will not give rest to my eyes, till they have seen the salvation of God. Consider! It is because the Almighty is just, that he will cleanse you from all sin. Yes, his Son, his only Son, has satisfied Divine justice for you. The stroke aimed at you has fallen upon his innocent head. The heavenly victim stretched upon the cross has been devoured by the fire of that eternal vengeance which flamed against you. The odour of this all-perfect sacrifice has reconciled that God who is a consuming fire to the sinner. The blood of the new covenant has flowed: it has made a propitiation for your sins. This blood, far from crying for vengeance, like that of Abel, merits, demands, obtains for you repentance, faith, regeneration, and eternal life. The paschal Lamb, the Lamb without spot or blemish is sacrificed for you. God withholds the arm of the destroying angel, until this precious blood shall be sprinkled upon your soul; until you are born again. The holy Jesus, who fears lest you should perish in your impenitence, hastens to offer you life eternal. “Behold,” says he, “I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.” He says to you by the mouth of the apostle, that “he who hath the Son, hath life, and he who hath not the Son of God, hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” He exhorts you by his servant David, “to kiss the Son lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, if his wrath be kindled but a little.” O! reader, gratefully accept those kind invitations; prostrate yourself at the feet of the Son of God, open the door of your heart to him, and cry incessantly, Come in, Lord Jesus, come in! Confess your poverty, your sins, your misery, until the “kingdom of God is within you.’ Mourn till you are comforted; hunger and thirst after righteousness till you are satisfied; and travail in birth till Christ be formed within you; till, being born of God, you bear the image of the heavenly Adam, as you have borne the image of the earthly.

I conjure you by the majesty of that God before whom angels rejoice with trembling! By the terror of the Lord, who may speak to you in thunder, and this instant require your soul of you! By the tender mercies, the bowels of compassion of your Father, which are moved in your favour, all ungrateful as you are! I conjure you by the incarnation of the eternal Word by whom you were created! By the humiliation, the pains, the temptations, the tears, the bloody sweat, the agony, the cries of “our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ!” I conjure you by the bonds, the insults, the scourgings, the robes of derision, the crown of thorns, the ponderous

cross, the nails, the instruments of death which pierced his torn body! By the arrows of the Almighty, the poison of which drank up his spirit! By that mysterious stroke of wrath Divine, and by those unknown terrors which forced him to cry out, “My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?” I conjure you by the interests of your immortal soul, and by the unseen accidents which may precipitate you into eternity! By the bed of death upon which you will soon be stretched, and by the useless sighs which you will then pour out, if your peace be not made with God! I conjure you by the sword of Divine justice, and by the sceptre of grace! By the sound of the last trumpet, and by the sudden appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, with ten thousands of his holy angels! By that august tribunal, at which you will appear with me, and which shall decide our lot for ever! By the vain despair of hardened sinners, and by the unknown transport of regenerated souls! I conjure you from this instant, “work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” “Enter by the door into the sheep fold:” sell all to purchase the pearl of great price: “count all things dung and dross in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ!” Let him not go till he blesses you with that faith which justifies, and that sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord. And soon, transported from this vale of tears, into the mansion of “the just made perfect,” you shall cast your crown of immortal glory “at the feet of Him that sitteth upon the throne,” and before the Lamb, “who has redeemed us by his blood: to whom be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the power, for ever and ever! Amen.”

THE WORKS
OF THE
REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER

NINE ADDITIONAL SERMONS.

SERMON III.-*State of the natural man.*

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14.

THE state of a true Christian is a state of peace, joy, love, and holiness; but before a man attains to it, he must go through a course of fear, anxiety, and repentance, whether long or short; for no one was ever cured in soul, by the great Physician, Jesus Christ, till he felt him self sin sick, and was loaded in his conscience with the burden of his iniquities; especially that of a hard impenitent heart, which he could not himself break and soften. Therefore St. Paul, writing to the children of God at Rome, told them that they were "no longer under the spirit of bondage to fear;" but that "they had received the Spirit of adoption," whereby they knew that God was "their Father," and heaven their inheritance. Whence it clearly appears, that those who now had the Spirit of grace, of love, and adoption, had had the spirit of bondage and fear; before which they were in their state of nature, wanting the grace both to love and fear God: of one in this last state St. Paul speaks under the appellation of a "natural man," in the words of the text.

There are then three states through which all the children of Adam must pass before they can be real Christians. That of an unawakened or "natural man," who neither loves nor fears God: that of a penitent man, or returning sinner, who, being awakened into a real concern for his salvation, fears God and the threatenings of his law, and dreads death with its consequences: and, thirdly, that of a man "under grace," or a true believer, who loves God above all persons and things, and rejoices in the expiation and pardon of his sins, which he has now received in Christ by a living faith.

We see these three states exemplified in the clearest manner in the life of St. Paul. Though he was one of the most learned, sober, and honest men in Jerusalem, and very strict in observing the hours of prayer, and of the service of the God of his fathers, as he had been taught; though he had endeavoured, as he says himself, "to keep a conscience void of offence toward God and men," and though his persecuting the saints was owing to his ignorance, he himself declaring that he did it in the sincerity of his mistaken zeal, thinking he was doing God service: nevertheless, he was but an unawakened, unregenerate man all the while, and remained such till Jesus awoke him from his sleep of carnal security as he was going to Damascus, and showed him that he was but a painted sepulchure. Then he entered into a second

state, the state of an awakened and returning sinner, who dreads the wrath to come, and endeavours, if possible, to flee from it. Three days and nights he remained in this state, crying for the pardon of his sins, without allowing himself time to eat or drink. But these pangs of his new birth were too severe to last long. The fourth day God introduced him into the third state I mentioned, gave peace to his guilty conscience, scattered all his fears, and gave him the Spirit of adoption by revealing Jesus in his heart, as he himself speaks. Then was he a Christian; then was he born again, and began to be kept in the love of God, and in the knowledge of Christ by the peace that passes all understanding, fighting the good fight of faith in union with those Christians whom he hated and despised before. Take away only the external light and splendour, and the miraculous circumstances of St. Paul's conversion, and you see in him what God must do in us, that we may become living branches of the true vine, Christ Jesus.

Now as we are all most certainly in one of these three states, and it highly concerns us to know in which of them this morning, I shall describe to you that of the unawakened or natural man, that you may be able to judge whether you are yet in it, or whether you have taken one true step toward your everlasting home. And in the evening, by God's grace, I shall endeavour to point out a little farther that narrow, but sure way that leads to life. You see the vast importance of the subject, and that it demands all your attention. O may you give it willingly! and may God speak himself to your hearts, while I, in his name, address your outward ears!

The natural unawakened man is one that is born a child of wrath, as being descended from fallen Adam, and having brought into the world with him the root and seed of all manner of evil, which is the case of every child of man; for where is the person that can say he never was in the condition of David, who owned, in the bitterness of his heart, that he was “born in sin,” and that his “mother conceived him in iniquity?” Is there one under heaven that never was proud, self willed, passionate, stubborn, and “a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God?” And are not these the only sources of all those streams of iniquity which overflow the whole earth? We are then all born “natural men,” spiritually asleep, that is to say, partakers of the fallen nature of Adam, (which in the original language signifies *man*,) partakers of that proud and stubborn nature which made him resemble devils, and of that sensual and earthly nature by which he became like the beasts that perish. This nature of Adam, this old man within us, as St. Paul terms it, we must put off by repentance and conversion, or die in the same state in which we were born, that is, “children of wrath,” and unawakened, mere natural men. And there will be no need of passing a new sentence of condemnation upon any such, for they shall have their curse written upon their hearts. “Depart, ye cursed,” shall Jesus Christ say to them, ye that do not want any new curse, ye that are cursed already with the nature of fallen man, and who never “put on in Christ the new man created in true holiness.” Such being then the wretched condition in which we are all by nature, we ought not to wonder if the state of a natural, unconverted man is represented to us in Scripture as a state of sleep and death; and that to him that is still in it St. Paul says, “Awake, thou that steepest, arise

from the dead, that Christ may give thee light." And indeed the natural man wherever he is, at church, at home, or abroad, is in a dead sleep; his spiritual senses are not awake, they discern neither spiritual good nor evil. He does not, he cannot know the things of the Spirit of God; the eyes of his understanding are shut, for he lies in the valley of the shadow of death and does not perceive it: how learned soever he may be in the eyes of the world, he is in gross stupid ignorance of whatever he is most concerned to know. He has no conception of that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord," nor of that happiness which they only can enjoy whose "life is hid with Christ in God." He is utterly ignorant of the truth and justice of that God who styles himself "a consuming fire," and swears by his own name that "though hand join in hand the wicked shall not escape."

Being thus fast asleep in his own ignorance, he is in some sense at rest; for as he is blind, so is he secure, and cries with the presumptuous man in the psalm, "Tush, there shall no harm happen to me." The darkness which covers him on every side keeps him in a kind of peace, (so far as peace can consist with the works of the devil, and with an earthly devilish mind,) he sees not that he stands on the edge of the pit, therefore he does not fear it; he cannot tremble at the danger he does not know, and has not understanding enough to fear. Why is it, O natural man, sleeping Jonas, that, even now in the temple of God, thou art in no dread of God? Because thou art totally ignorant of him, if not saying in thy heart, "There is no God;" or, "God Almighty does not trouble himself with considering what passes under the sun;" yet satisfying thyself as well to all Epicurean intents and purposes, by saying, "God is merciful;" swallowing up and destroying, in that confused idea of mercy, all the holiness of God, and his essential hatred of sin; all his wisdom and truth, and even that strict justice which covered once the whole earth with a flood, which rained fire from heaven upon thousands of sinners, which bade the earth open its mouth and swallow up Korah and his rebellious company; nay, that strict justice whose sword pierced the very soul of the holy Jesus, when he hung in our place upon the accursed tree.

But what wonder is it, brethren, if, as long as we remain in our natural, unawakened state, we are in no dread of the vengeance denounced against those who are unconverted, and obey not the blessed law of God? We do not understand it; we think that nothing is so easy as to be a true Christian. We suppose the main point is to be careful of performing external duties, and to be outwardly blameless. We imagine that all is done if we live honestly, give a few alms, are tree from the gross vices of the age, and do not omit attending the Church service. We do not see that the law of God extends to every temper, desire, thought, motion of the heart, or, what is still worse, we fancy perhaps that the obligation to obey it is abrogated, that Christ came to destroy the law, and purchase for us the privilege of enjoying the world, and the things that are in it, without fear of punishment; to save his people *in*, not *from* their sins, and to bring us to heaven in our state of nature; notwithstanding Christ's own words, that "not one jot or tittle of the law shall pass away, till all things are fulfilled; and that only those shall enter into the kingdom of heaven who do the will of our Father who is in heaven."

But, brethren, the unawakened man is secure, not only because he has no just notion of the inflexible justice of God, and of the strictness and holiness of his law, but because he is also utterly ignorant of him self; for he does not know, or (which comes to the same) he does not consider that he is a fallen spirit, whose business here is to recover the favour of God and a Divine nature. But though he is still in the bonds of iniquity, presumption and pride fill him with such a good opinion of himself, that, if he thinks he needs any repentance at all, he talks of repenting by and by. He does not, indeed, exactly know when, but some time or other before he dies. He takes it for granted that this is quite in his own power; for looking but seldom into the word of God, he probably never read this passage, “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do according to his pleasure:” thinking, therefore, that he has both free dolls and power to turn to God when he pleases, he does not trouble himself at all about obtaining “the Spirit of God,” and “being born again of the Spirit, as well as of water.” Nay, perhaps, forgetting that the last time he was at church he prayed (or at least feigned to pray) that God would give him true repentance and his Holy Spirit, he is not ashamed to call whose enthusiasts who say with Jesus Christ, that “unless a man be born again of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,” thus showing the truth of what St. Paul says in the text, “He receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.”

From this ignorance of the law, and the justice of God, and from this presumption, there may sometimes arise in him a kind of joy: he may congratulate himself upon his own wisdom and goodness: and what the world calls joy he may often possess. He may have pleasures of various kinds, either in gratifying the “desires of the flesh, the desires of the eye, or the pride of life;” particularly if he have “large possessions,” if he enjoy an affluent fortune. Then he may “clothe himself in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day;” and so long as he thus runs in a circle of pleasure, the bulk of mankind will envy his condition, and cry him up as a happy man; for this is the sum of the natural man's happiness, to get and spend, to dress and be admired, to visit and sport, to eat and drink, to sleep and rise up to play, as says St. Paul.

But suppose he acts in a lower sphere; suppose he is obliged to follow a plough, to attend a master, or to work hard to provide for his family, he is not less ignorant of the vast concerns of his soul, and takes as much care as the rich to arm himself against every thing that might invite him to repent, and seek deliverance out of his miserable state of nature. And what is that armour he uses to ward off from his heart all the calls of God's grace, all thoughts of shaking off his sins, going to Christ, and entering ss into the liberty of the sons of God?” “Why,” says he, “of him to whom little is given, little shall be required; God will not deal hardly with poor people that work for their bread, want time to read, and are no scholars.” Poor, ignorant, blind sinners, indeed! To persuade themselves that, because they work for the body that goes to corruption, they may safely neglect the immortal soul; that, because they serve an earthly master they have the privilege of not serving the God of heaven; nay, perhaps of serving the devil; and that their want of scholarship, as they call it, will

be a sufficient excuse before God for not loving Christ; for caring neither for death nor judgment, neither for heaven nor hell. Ah! be not deceived any longer, you who are in that case! God will not be mocked by his creatures; he requires your hearts; and while your hands are employed in the duties of your calling, you can lift up your souls to him, and work out your salvation as well or better than if you were in another state of life.

To return: let us observe a little more closely the natural man's ways. Examine particularly, and you will perceive that he commits sin, more or less, day by day; yet he is not troubled, he is in no fear, he feels no condemnation, he contents himself, (even though he should profess to believe that the Bible is the word of God,) with saying, “We are all sinners; man is frail; every body has his infirmity. There is none without his foible, and I freely own that this is mine.” And perhaps he will not be ashamed to name some crying sin, some habitual sin, such as being apt to get drunk, to utter an oath, to be passionate, proud, revengeful, or unclean, the very sins concerning which God has solemnly declared that “those who commit such things shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Fine foibles indeed! Trifles which are not worth mentioning, or writing down in God's book of remembrance! We learn, however, from Scripture, that when the day of patience shall give place to that of justices and when the books shall be opened, he shall be called to an account, not only for *his foibles*, as he calls them, but for every *idle word* that shall have passed his lips, and every sinful thought that shall have been formed in his heart. But in this, as in many other cases, the unawakened man flatly gives the Bible the lie, and will tell you with a sneer he does not believe any such thing. Nor has he understanding enough in Divine things to conclude, that, for saying so, he is guilty of high treason against the King of heaven; because he that rejects part of the Christian revelation must be as guilty before God as he that contemptuously tears part of a decree of the king in his presence: for, as such a one would in vain excuse himself by saying, that he tore but one part and spared the rest, the law would be put in execution against him, and so shall God's law against the unawakened and impenitent sinner. But tell him so again and again, you will get nothing except his contempt; for instead of owning his pride and unbelief, he will accuse you of superstition and weakness of mind; and as the text affirms that the things of God are *foolishness* to him, perhaps he will call you a *fool* for entertaining such notions. Most certain it is that he will think you a weak, though perhaps well-meaning man, and turn you into ridicule whenever he meets with one of the same temper as himself. But though he thus mangles the law of God, whenever it does not suit his notions of religion, yet he takes care, some way or other, to be provided with two or three savings of infidels out of the Bible, or two or three passages, generally misunderstood, which, by the construction he puts upon them, give him as much liberty to love the world and remain in his natural state, as he could wish. These he turns sometimes into a shield to defend himself against the reproofs of his conscience, or the calls of Christ's ministers, and sometimes into a sword to destroy what little work the grace of God may have begun in the hearts of those with whom he converses. “Fear not,” says he, “God's mercy is over all his works. Be not righteous overmuch. God willeth not the

death of a sinner. The righteous falleth seven times a day." These, and a few more scriptures he generally chooses for the subject of his meditations; in these he is skilled above all.

One or two strokes more, and I shall finish this picture of the unawakened sinner. He cannot bear to hear any one insist on the power of godliness: all is well, as long as you only say, "Live soberly and honestly: do good and go to church." Any thing that does not alarm him, and make him look to the vileness of his heart, will not offend him. But tell him that he must "be born again of the Spirit of God," that he must "be renewed in his mind,' that he must "become a partaker of the Divine nature," and have "the love of God shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Spirit given unto him," and that if he do not obtain the Spirit of Christ, he shall never be his; he stares, he wonders what you mean Lay those expressions. They are mere riddles to him; and if you show him that they occur continually both in the Bible and in our liturgy, he cannot conceive what St. Paul and Archbishop Cranmer meant by using such cant words, and he would fain put them in the class of enthusiasts too, were he not afraid of being thought a blasphemer.

But suppose you continue to declare unto him all the counsel of God in plain terms, and cry with the apostles, "Save thyself from this perverse generation; thou art still a child of wrath; repent and be converted; see him whom thou hast pierced, and mourn, lest he appoint thee thy portion with hypocrites and unbelievers;" he cannot tell what you mean by speaking with so much passion; for that is the name he generally gives to the concern that Christian ministers feel for his perishing soul. He wonders at your being so uncivil as to tell him plainly, that "he has an immortal soul to take care of;" a proud, devilish, stubborn, hard heart to overcome; and the eternal fire of hell to flee from.

Indeed, above all, you must not mention *hell* or *damnation* before him, unless you soften the expression so, that he may think, if it should be his lot to go thither, he will not find it so terrible as some suppose. If you speak of it, though it should be only in the words of Christ and his apostles, he will surely be offended, or, at least, will turn what you say into a jest. "What! You will frighten me into heaven, I suppose. How come you to make so free with hell and damnation?"

Alas, poor man! who makes so free with it as himself, who thinks to avoid it by a sneer from the seat of the scorner?

But to return: if at any time a serious thought fixes upon him, he stifles it as soon as possible. He sits uneasy under an awakening sermon; and if something that he hears is peculiarly applicable to him, he thinks that the minister, who, perhaps, never heard of him, draws his picture out of spite; for he has no idea that if a minister has studied his own heart, he can tell all men theirs too, because we are all alike by nature, all cast into the mould of Adam's corruption.

Nevertheless, if the word of God, that is sharper than a two-edged sword, to divide the words and thoughts of men, makes, at any time, a slight wound in his seared conscience, he binds it up immediately, either by resolving to read a few more prayers, and give some alms, or go to the Lord's table the next sacrament day, which he supposes will be quite sufficient to put him in a fair way to attain heaven; or, he puts all off by exclaiming, “Who can be a Christian at this rate? This doctrine is too severe; I know I am not very good; but, I thank God I am not very bad neither; many are worse than I am! What man is there that sins not? why should I then fear more than others? Was I not baptized? Is not God merciful? Did not Christ die for sinners? Beside, were I to grow so serious, and so good, all mine acquaintance would deride me, and ask whether I also will turn enthusiast, and enter on the melancholy way of religion.” By these and the like thoughts, the poor sinner, who began to awake, falls asleep again; shuts his eyes, which the Lord had begun to open, that he might see his danger; and will not probably open them again before death stares him in the face; and hell, as the prophet expresses himself, is moved from beneath to meet and swallow him up; unless, indeed, God strikes his impenitent heart with some fearful judgment, and makes him also cry out, “Lord, save, or I perish.”

Suppose again the Spirit of God gently strives with him, as is the case sometimes, especially when the sinner is disengaged from business and pleasure: if he feel himself unhappy; if the emptiness of his heart make him confess that he wants something; is it likely he will acknowledge that he wants God? or that he will apply to Jesus Christ, the great Physician of souls? No: it will be time enough, he thinks, on his death bed, to call earnestly for mercy, and ask “the peace of God that passes all understanding.” What does he do then? Why, he runs away from himself and God, (if I may so speak,) endeavours to divert himself from his melancholy, and raise *his low spirits*, for this is the name which he gives to those dawnings of conviction; and obtains an unhappy relief by plunging into business, diversions, or drunkenness; perhaps also by reading unprofitable books, having recourse to trifling company, or overcharging himself with the cares of this life.

Thus does the natural and unawakened man frustrate all the strivings of God's Spirit to show him his danger; thus he remains the willing servant of sin, content with the bondage of corruption, inwardly and outwardly unholy, and satisfied so to be, not only not conquering sin, but not endeavouring to conquer, especially that sin which so easily besets him.

Such is the state of every unawakened man, whether he be a gross, scandalous transgressor, or a more reputable and decent sinner, having the form though not the power of godliness.

O you who are in that condition, if I have showed you in some measure the state of your hearts, let me beseech you not to harden them the more on that account; rather give place to conviction. For Christ's sake let conscience be heard; if it cries, “Thou art the man,” be not ashamed to confess to God your mistake about your

spiritual state. Turn the text into a prayer, and say, “Lord, have mercy upon me, I am a mere natural man still: I never understood the things of thy Spirit; they have been foolishness to me, neither could I receive them, for they are spiritually discerned, and I want thy Spirit; but spare me a little, and let me recover thy favour in Christ, before I go hence and be no more seen. Wake my soul to righteousness, and that I ‘may never more plead for sin, or wilfully and knowingly transgress against thee, give me that knowledge of’ thee wherein standeth my eternal life. I own it to my shame, I am a stranger to it; but, Lord, spare me a little, teach me, and let me obtain in this world the knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting.” Nothing, brethren, but the desire I have that you should thus pray from a feeling sense of your wants, has made me use such plainness of speech. Be not displeased, then, at my endeavours to awaken you, and open your eyes. You are undone for ever, unless your wound be probed in such a manner as will make you see and feel the necessity or applying in time to him that can heal you, even the Lord Jesus Christ. In him you shall find all that you want in yourselves; he is the second Adam, from whom you must derive a new nature. To him your souls must be united in one Spirit; from him you must receive pardon and grace, life and power, holiness and happiness. He is ready to bestow all these things upon you, if you are but willing to ask him sincerely. And he requires but one proof of your sincerity, and that is, not to seek your happiness in the world, and in created things any longer; but in him alone. Begin then to deny yourselves those sinful gratifications which separate God from your souls, and choose rather to mourn now in hopes that you shall be comforted, than to enjoy the pleasures of the world for a season. If you have not resolution enough to make that happy choice,-to desire with St. Paul, “to know nothing but Jesus and him crucified;” O look to yourselves, see the horror of your state. You are heirs of the curse entailed upon every child of Adam. By nature you are children of wrath; you wander like lost sheep in the wilderness of this world; you are “dead in trespasses and sins.” You have sold yourselves to the prince of the air, who leads you to perdition as a sheep is led to the slaughter, and you know neither who leads you, nor whither you are led. In a word, you are as yet without God and without Christ in the world; and Adam's sin, with your own, of which you never truly repented, removes you every moment farther from God and nearer eternal misery. Now, in such a desperate condition, can you delay to leave all your sins and apply to Jesus? Can you spend one moment without beseeching him to grant you true repentance and his Holy Spirit? Can you think any terms too hard to be complied with in order to obtain an interest in the blood of the covenant, a happy passage into eternity, and an inheritance among the saints in light? O do not say that this doctrine is too severe. Do not go away from this place of worship, as some of our Lord's disciples did from him, complaining, “This is a hard saying, who can bear it?” Ah! will not that saying, “Depart from me, ye cursed,” be much harder to hear, and everlasting burnings much harder to bear? And do you think that life is so long, and so sure, as to be depended upon with safety? or that your strength or health will screen you from the wrath of God in your unawakened state? O, you are mistaken; death, by grasping your mortal body, before you are aware, may plunge you in an instant where there is no place for repentance, mercy, and salvation. Hang no longer in suspense, then; if the world and the devil,

the prince of the world, be gods, follow them; but if Jehovah, if Jesus Christ is the Lord, “deny yourselves, and sin not;” according to his command, “take up your cross daily and follow him,” till you overtake him, and he blesses you with the pardon of all your sins, and a new heart. Seek him till you find him in your souls; walk with him till you cleave to him, till you can say with the true spouse of Christ, “My beloved is mine, and I am his;” till you abide in him as a branch in the vine, and are enabled “to bear much fruit,” even all the fruits of “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

This is the kingdom of grace within us, through which we shall infallibly enter into that of glory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON IV.-*Awake, thou that sleepest.*

“Awake, thou that sleepest!” Eph. v. 14.

I DESCRIBED, in my last discourse, the state of an unconverted man, called, in Scripture, a “natural man;” or, in other words, the state of one who neither loves nor fears God; who, hanging over everlasting destruction only by the thread of life, lives unconcerned, being buried in worldly cares or pleasures, and bound down in his spiritual grave by stupidity, presumption, and sin; who fondly thinks that he shall go to heaven without becoming a new creature, and in that hope securely sleeps on upon the very brink of eternal ruin; fancying, perhaps, that the false peace which he enjoys is “the peace of God which passes all understanding.” And I proved, that if his false peace be not broken, if he be not awakened out of that deep spiritual sleep he is in; if he be not convinced that he is in a state of condemnation, and cannot escape the second deaths unless Christ causes him to pass from darkness to light, he has not the least ground to hope that the curse, which follows every natural man, shall not overtake and sink him into hell in the day of judgment. Now the next thing we must do is to consider how he may be awakened into a real desire to “work his salvation out with fear and trembling.” It is not in his power, brethren, or in that of any man living, to do that work of himself; here must the omnipotence of God begin to interpose, the Spirit of Jesus must make the wound as well as bind it up, for he is alone the “author and finisher of our salvation.” It is true, he has various ways of calling a sinner, and of crying to him, while he hides himself behind the trees of his performances, and the pitiful fig leaves of his own righteousness, “Adam [natural man] where art thou?” But he alone can speak to the heart, and make the outward call effectual. Nothing but the convincing Spirit of God can force a stupid sinner to exclaim, in the anguish of his soul, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” Nevertheless, it is highly necessary for us to know by what means the Spirit of God usually thus awakes drowsy sinners, that if we have been such, we may humble ourselves for having hardened our hearts against those means to this day, and pay them a due regard for

the future. I shall therefore, first, consider what they are, and then conclude by exhorting you not to resist or abuse them any more.

Though the ways in which God awakens sinners are very numerous, yet they can be distinguished in general into *extraordinary* and *ordinary* ones.

A man may be awakened in an extraordinary way by an unexpected and terrifying sight, as was St. Paul on his journey to Damascus; by a gracious thought darted into his heart on a sudden: thus was St. Peter stopped in the full career of his sin by a look from Christ, which confounded him, and caused him to retire and weep bitterly; by some *extraordinary Providence*, as the jailer at Philippi, who, feeling the prison tremble, came himself trembling, and, falling down before Paul and Silas, cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" Or, as some who, hearing of the dreadful earthquake which destroyed Lisbon, November 1, 1735, and buried alive, in a heap of ruins, so many thousands, who, ten minutes before, thought themselves as safe as we do now, were immediately brought to consider, and say, "Were God to lay his hand upon me in the same manner now, should I be ready for death and judgment?" And the Spirit of God, improving their fear, impressed on their hearts a lively sense of the necessity of their "preparing to meet their God," and "giving all diligence to make their calling and election sure." Some have been awakened in an uncommon manner, by receiving an unexpected token of God's goodness and patience, by restoring them from a desperate fit of illness, or by wonderfully preserving them in some imminent danger. For though such mercies are generally overlooked and forgotten, yet one, perhaps, in a thousand, remembers them for good, and spends to the glory of God the life which his long suffering remarkably preserved. A few more have been awakened by feeling, when retired from the noise of the world, I know not what uneasiness and trouble of mind, whereby, perceiving that nothing had yet filled the boundless capacity of their minds, or satisfied their desires, and that the world could never make them happy, they were brought to conclude that they wanted Christ; and that nothing but the enjoyment of the favour and love of God could give them that peace and comfort which the world neither knows nor enjoys. Some again have been struck with a deep sense of their danger, and a true desire "to flee from the wrath to come," by reading something striking concerning the state of their souls in a book of devotion, or by opening the Bible on some threatening of the law, as, "Cursed is he that doth not persevere in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them;" or some condition of the Gospel, as, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" which being applied to their hearts by the power of God, did not suffer them to rest till they rested in Christ.

These, and many more, are the extraordinary ways in which sinners may be, and sometimes are, awakened out of their spiritual sleep, and made to consider their latter end; but we may very well look on them as miracles of grace, which we have little room to expect God will work on our behalf; especially as his ordinary method is to work in a more common way; by *affliction*, by *Christian conversation*, and by *the preaching of his word*.

Blessed be the mercy of God, many are those who can say with David, “It was good for me to be afflicted.” The loss of a husband, wife, parent, child, has engaged some to make their peace with God, that they might live and die in his favour, and meet their departed friends at his right hand. Some unexpected and grievous calamity has opened the eyes of others to see their sinfulness and guilt, and give glory to God by confessing it. Thus Manasses, that monster of wickedness, who had filled Jerusalem with blood, when he was stripped of his royal robes, and carried away into captivity, cried out, under a load of chains and sin, “Spare me, spare me, O Lord,” till God answered in mercy, and made him as great a monument of repentance as he had been before of sin and iniquity. In the like manner proud Nebuchadnezzar, when he was reduced to the condition of a beast, and wandered in the fields forsaken of all, was brought at last to a true contrition and humiliation before the God of heaven and earth, and began to worship him in spirit and in truth, issuing a decree that every knee should bow before him in all his dominions. Such is the power of afflictions to bring a fallen man to the knowledge of himself, and make him perceive his want of the favor and love of God.

The New Testament also affords us several instances of the truth of this observation. There the prodigal son, when reduced to so wretched a state as to have no clothing but rags, and no food but the husks intended for the swine, bethinks himself of returning to his father, with a penitent confession of his sin and folly, and an humble request for pardon and acceptance, not indeed to be treated as a son, but as a hired servant. Poor Lazarus, when the dogs licked his sores, and when he sees that no relief is to be expected at the hands of man, secures a place in Abraham's bosom, and thinks of feeding on God by faith, since he cannot feed on the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table. Thus the man, also, sick of the palsy, gets himself carried to Jesus, and hears those words, “Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee,” which he would not have heard had he not been afflicted with sickness. And the woman, who had spent all her substance upon physicians, presses at last after our Saviour, touches him, and is healed both in soul and body, rejoicing that her faith had made her whole. Thus some of you, I hope, finding that you had nothing but troubles, sorrows, disappointments, sickness, hard labour, and poverty for your portion here, may at last have thought of securing the better part with Mary, that better part never to be taken from you. For why should an afflicted soul choose to have tribulation here, and the everlasting miseries of hell hereafter? Why should the poor refuse to be rich in grace? Why should he, who gets by the sweat of his brow the clothes he has upon his back, reject the robe of Christ's righteousness? Why should he, that eats the bread of labour and affliction, refuse to eat the food of angels, the bread that comes down from heaven? And yet, (O amazing reflection! O killing thought!) perhaps some of you that are poor, are even poorer in grace than in silver and gold. Perhaps, notwithstanding the mercy of God that has placed you in a state where every thing invites you to make God your friend and to take Christ for your portion, you are as attached to this world as if you had great possessions in it, and have not yet seriously endeavoured to fix your hearts where true joys and lasting riches are to be found. But if this be the case, blessed be the mercy of God, you are still poor and afflicted; there

is then still some hope that you will consider, and that your heavenly Father will not give over striking you with the rod of his judgment, till you awake and give him all you have to give, and all he asks of you, *your heart*.

But if afflictions are such unspeakable blessings, let us stop a little, brethren, to pity the rich, the healthy the young, with whom all things go according to their desires in the world, and who, because they want nothing for the body, do not feel the want of Christ for their souls. Sad, sad beyond expression, is your state. whatever vou may think of it. With Dives, you have your pleasure in this life-O may God grant that, with him, you may not have your torments in the next! O may he awaken you out of your sinful prosperity; may he lay some of his fatherly chastisements also upon you, ere it be too late, and save your immortal souls by afflicting your mortal bodies! May he smite—— But the concern I have for you carries me too far. Why should I form such a wish, since there are yet two other ways by which God can bring you to a sense of that misery you do not feel, and stir you up to seek that true happiness which you leave unregarded, to pursue a vain shadow!

The first is Christian conversation. A child of God may, if you will suffer him to speak, show you the bottom of your heart, and the folly of your hopes, so that you will be forced to cry out, as the woman of Samaria, “Behold, I have found one that has told me all things that ever I did;” for one that has found Christ can, if you will hear him, tell you what the Lord has done for his soul, and what he must do for yours. Thus, in the Gospel, Andrew told Peter, “I have found the Christ, the Son of God, come and see;” and Peter, upon his word, went and followed Jesus until he could say for himself, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” May thus the Lord send you one who has entered at the strait gate, to say to thou with the demonstration of his Spirit, “This is the way, walk in it;” and may you, like Peter, take the advice and follow on till you are admitted into the heavenly Jerusalem.

But, brethren, suppose the natural man is not awakened by conversing with Christians alive to God, which he will seldom do, because such Christians are very rarely to be met with in these faithless times, and because his contempt for them will hardly permit him to give ear or credit to their words; yet there is another great means of conviction, by which the Lord may still call him to repentance and life, namely, the preaching of the Gospel; and this, indeed, is the most common way of all, a way that God has chiefly blessed in all ages, and still blesses in our days. A man comes to church as he has done a thousand times, because it is his custom so to do on Sundays, and he thinks he can squander away the remainder of the Lord's Sabbath with a good conscience, if he can but say, s; I was at church morning and evening;” or, perhaps, he comes to indulge his curiosity, and hear what every minister has to say; not with any desire that God would manifest himself unto him, that he would teach him to know himself, a poor, benighted, perishing, yet never-dying soul; not with any concern about getting an interest in the favour of that God who is a consuming fire to the unregenerate; of that God before whom his naked soul shall soon be dragged by the cold hand of death. No, he never thought of this; it never

came into his head that he should wait upon God in his holy temple, as the vilest of sinners, a sinner under sentence of eternal death, is to wait upon the Majesty of heaven and earth, to ask, beg, implore a reprieve, if by any means he may be spared a week longer, to seek for repentance and pardon for glory and immortality. No, he did not think of any one of these things, but he comes with an intent to behave as usual, to see and to be seen, to show all the signs of the most listless, careless indifference. Though he seems to use a prayer to God for his blessing on what he is entering upon; he comes either to fall asleep during the awful service, or to recline in the most convenient posture for it; and sometimes, as though he supposed God to be asleep too, he comes to talk to another, or look round as utterly void of employment; or, at best, he comes to say his prayers, as he calls it, that is, to kneel or to stand, because others do so, and repeat with his lips, without any true concern of heart, the most moving pleas for mercy. But though he rushes into the presence of God with these shameful antichristian dispositions, yet he is upon the Lord's ground, though he is insensible of it; and the dread of that Lord, whom the heavenly hosts cannot behold without veiling their faces, and prostrating themselves with the deepest acts of adoration; the dread of that God, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, who with one look tries the hearts and searches the reins; the dread of that Lord whom he has so long insulted in his very temple, may rest upon him in a moment, and he may at last apprehend it to be “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” In spite of his presumption and carelessness, God may bless the word of his servant, and send it home to his hardened conscience, so that he shall tacitly own that he is a slothful and wicked servant, who has hitherto done despite to the Spirit of grace; and, perhaps, for the first time, seeing the necessity of “working out his salvation with fear and trembling,” he may say from the bottom of his heart, “Spare us, good Lord, and be not angry with us for ever.” In this manner has God blessed the preaching of the Gospel in all ages.

Thus while St. Peter preached at Jerusalem, three thousand of those who a few weeks before cried, “Crucify him, crucify him,” were cut to the heart, and cried, in the anguish of their souls, “Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?” Thus, while St. Paul preached at Athens, Dionysius believed his report; and while he delivered the word at Lystra, the Lord opened Lydia's heart to understand and believe. Happy then, brethren, happy will you be, if at any time the Lord alarms your drowsy consciences, and gives you the least measure of spiritual feeling, though it should be but some dread of his majesty, or shame of your ingratitude, or fear of his vengeance. Do not resist the touch of his mighty hand, lest he cut you off in his sore displeasure, “if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little.” Ah! do not harden your hearts, as Felix, who, when he heard St. Paul discourse on righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, was brought to tremble before God, and yet got nothing by his trembling, but a greater condemnation; for, soon stifling the remorse of his conscience, he said to the apostle, “Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.” O brethren, let none of you imitate his madness. Methinks he now lifts up his voice above the shrieks of those who are condemned with him to eternal weeping; methinks he cries to every one of us, “Now

is the convenient season for you, now is the hour of salvation; improve it as it flies, lest it should be gone, and gone for ever!" Alas, this was his deplorable case, he quenched the Spirit of God, and God gave him up to a reprobate mind, for his Spirit does not always strive with man. The "convenient season" he spoke of never came again; he soon forgot Paul and his words, and not long after put an end to his life, madly hurrying to that judgment, the very thoughts of which made him once tremble. And which of us dares say, that this shall not be the last hour in which God will strive with him? Which of us has made a covenant with death, and engaged him not to strike his heart before this day is over, or with hell that it shall not swallow him up? Is God a man, that he should lie? Is he like one of the sons of men, that he should break the most solemn declarations of his word? "Turn ye," he says by his prophets, "turn ye, every one from his wicked way, and I will abundantly pardon; turn ye unto me, for why should ye die, O house of Israel?" thus stooping to invite rebellious man to himself, and intreating him to return lest he should die. But if man answers, "Am I a heathen, that I should want to be turned to God; am I a drunkard or a murderer, that he should send me such a command?" I say, if man do not turn to God wholly, soul, body, and spirit, seeking all his happiness in his favour, and walking with him all the day long; surely that book comes from the father of lies, or he shall perish in his iniquity; for who can misunderstand these plain declarations of God's word? Psalm vii. 12, "God is angry with the wicked all the day long; if he turn not, he will whet his sword; nay, he has bent his bow and made it ready, he has prepared for him the instruments of death." And who are those wicked? You find it in the tenth Psalm, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God;" and a little before, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the people that forget God." Now, who will awake from his sleep, from the dream of his fancied goodness? Who will give glory to the loving God, and own that he is still among the wicked, because he never truly sought the Lord? Hear how David sought his God: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. My heart breaketh for the very fervent desire that I have for thy law. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, yea, for the living God. O when shall I come and appear before God!"

Now I ask you, before the Searcher of hearts, if this be seeking God, did you ever seek God in sincerity? Do you think you seek him when you come into his house with the shameful dispositions I mentioned? Alas! so far from seeking him, you bid him depart from you; you mock him in his very temple; for though you know that Christ does not dwell in you nor you in him; though you know that your heart is far from him at the very time that you make as if you worshipped him with all your soul; yet so far from being troubled at your hypocrisy, through the pride of your heart you cry, "Peace, peace," and persuade yourself that you do not need to seek God in another manner. O awake from that delusion, throw off the mask in the Lord's presence, and own yourself ripe for destruction. This is the first step toward that true repentance which shall never be repented of. O if you could be prevailed upon to take it in this hour, how soon would it lead you to inward vital religion; how surely would

it introduce you to the presence of a reconciled God, and give you, in the enjoyment of Christ, a foretaste of the joys of heaven! But alas! hitherto you have resisted all the calls of God. Yes, brethren, nothing, I fear, has made a lasting impression upon the minds of some of you; neither the Lord's mercies, nor his judgments; neither the deliverances from imminent dangers he has granted you, nor the death of many dear friends, which he permitted to fall into the grave in your presence, beckoning to you to prepare to follow them. But though neither the threatenings nor the Promises of his holy word have hitherto been able to awake you into a true concern for your immortal souls,-into a lively sense of God's fear, and a real desire of giving yourselves up to him: yet if you are willing to awake now, if now you own yourselves undone; if you have nothing to plead but “God be merciful to me a sinner:” if you resolve to plead this continually till he seals the forgiveness of your sins to your heart; if you are willing to be saved upon any terms; in a word, if you truly repent, God is willing to cast the mantle of his love over what is past, to sink all your sins into the sea of his mercy, and love you freely after all your wanderings; nay, and to rejoice over you as a good shepherd over a poor returning sheep, which he thought lost for ever, and to enable you to delight in him a thousand times more than you ever did in all the pleasures of sin. Choose then between life and death, eternity and time, God and the world; choose, but be sincere and wise in your choice; O choose life, God, and eternity. The angels of God, nay, God himself, fix their eyes upon you in this moment; they consider whether you will be barbarous enough to your own soul to prefer the world and the trifles it offers, as you have hitherto done, to heaven and the endless joys that wait for you there. Nay, Jesus Christ, who is always where two or three are gathered together in his name, stands before you, with his vesture dipt in blood, and waits to see if his agony and bloody sweat, his wounds and sufferings, his tears and strong cries, his cross and passion, shall have any effect upon you: to see whether you will not at last resolve to part even with the most pleasing sins, rather than not to come to him, choose him, and enjoy him for your portion for ever. Ah! let him not wait in vain: rather let us lift up our hearts together to him, and say, “Lord, turn us, and so shall we be turned!” Are you willing? Show it, by renouncing sin, and beginning to make conscience of keeping your baptismal vow. Will you become true Christians, the members of the Lord Jesus, the temples of the Holy Ghost? Let the world go; you cannot serve two masters. What have you to do with the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, with the pride of dress, balls and plays, cards and useless visits? Leave these things to those who choose to sleep on; they belong not to an awakened simmer, to one who sees him self with one foot in time and the other in eternity, just going to receive sentence of eternal death or endless life.

What have you to do with the devil and all his works, with lying, evil speaking, and slandering, with pride and passion, with envy and strife, with revenge and covetousness, with cursing and swearing, with Sabbath breaking and profaneness? All these are the works of the devil. O keep these his commandments no more; leave them to those who choose to have their portion in the eternal fire prepared for him

and his angels, and be you of the few who follow the Lord Jesus in the regeneration, that they may enter with him into the city of God.

Again: what have you to do with all the sinful hosts of the flesh; with surfeiting, drunkenness, and indulgence in lasciviousness and impurity? Leave them, I shall not say to devils, for the devils wallow not in these beastly pleasures; leave them to the brutes, to which alone they belong. And, since you are endued each with an everlasting spirit, worship God in spirit and in truth. But this you cannot do without the grace of Jesus. Ask it, then continually. When you get up and when you lie down; when you sit in your house or walk by the way, O let this be the ceaseless cry of your soul, "Lord Jesus, forgive me my sins, and give me thy good Spirit, that I may not sin against thee! O make me to love thee with all my heart, and let me now live the life of the righteous, that my latter end may be like his." And be not discouraged by the ridicule that the children of the world will pour upon you on every side, when you begin this life of prayer; remembering that the things of God are foolishness to the natural man, and that all the saints who are now in glory experienced, in their way to it, the truth of St. Paul's assertion, "Every one that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." But go on praying without fainting, and seeking the Lord till he sends his light and truth into your soul, and makes it a habitation for God through the Spirit; and then shall you begin to rejoice that ever you were awakened to work out your salvation with fear and trembling; and the angels of God shall rejoice for your conversion through the endless ages of eternity, which may God grant, for his mercy's sake. Amen.

SERMON V.-*Nature of regeneration*.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 1 Cor. v. 17.

ST. PAUL says, in his Epistle to the Romans, that "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but he who is such inwardly," by the circumcision of the heart. This being applied to Christianity, it follows that he is not a Christian who professes to be so, but he who has got "a new heart and a new spirit," by being truly born again, not of water only, but of the Spirit of Christ. That regeneration is absolutely necessary in order to be a true Christian, and that there is no surer mark whereby we may know whether we are living members of Jesus than to be really new men, appears in the clearest light in the words of the text, "If any man be in Christ," or be a true Christian, "he is a new creature." You see then, brethren, how necessary it is to have right notions of the doctrine of regeneration, since without it there can be no Christianity. I hope you will therefore follow me with an attention answerable to the vast importance of the subject, while I endeavour to show you,

First, What we must understand by regeneration, or becoming a new creature.

Secondly, What are the causes that concur to the work of regeneration: And,

Thirdly, Why regeneration is so necessary to salvation. May what shall be spoken in God's name, be so applied by his grace to every one of our hearts, that the important work of regeneration may be powerfully begun, or carried on in each of our souls!

Regeneration, brethren, is that mighty change whereby a natural man is made a spiritual, or new man; and he that was a child of the devil, becomes by grace a child of God. For, as by our natural birth we are made in the likeness of fallen Adam, called "*the old man*," the *first man*; so by this spiritual birth we become *new creatures-spiritual men*-and sons of God in Jesus Christ, the second Adam.

The work of grace, whereby we are thus born again, is so great that St. Paul calls it a new creation; and it deserves that name, for thereby the soul of man is renewed throughout, with all the powers and faculties thereof; his carnal, sensual, earthly disposition is turned into a spiritual and a heavenly one; his blind understanding is enlightened with the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ; his stubborn and perverse will becomes obedient and conformable to the will of God; his conscience, before seared and benumbed, is now quickened and awakened; his hard heart softened, his unruly affections crucified, and his body, whose members were before instruments of unrighteousness, is now ready to put in execution the good intentions of the mind. Thus is he restored to that happiness, to that image of God, wherein he was at first created, though before, on account of his corruption through the fall, he was altogether destitute of it. O! how great, how inconceivably great must man's depravation be by nature, since God cannot fit him for glory by mending or repairing the Divine image in which he first made him; but must thus, as it were, create him a second time, and cause him to be born again, and made anew.

But to be a little more particular concerning the nature of regeneration. It has two parts, as says our Church, "a death unto sin," and a "new birth unto righteousness."

By "a death unto sin" we must understand that casting off and crucifying the old man; that destroying the body of sin, on which St. Paul so often insists. "Mortify," says he, or put to death, "your members which are upon earth, uncleanness, covetousness, and the like:" whence it appears, that by those "members upon earth," he means, all sorts of sins and unholy desires, whereunto a natural man is given. Nor is it enough to curb and hold them in, but their life must be taken-they must die. And, indeed, it is impossible to put on the new man, till the old man is cast off; nor can a new birth unto righteousness follow, but where a death unto sin has taken place. But when a man, tired of the body of sin, has yielded it up to be crucified with Jesus, and feels the power of his death; then, and then only, does he experience a new birth to righteousness, and becomes a partaker of the power and benefit of Christ's resurrection.

This second part of regeneration is called in Scripture a passage from darkness to light; from death unto life; God's quickening us, and making us alive; a rising together with Christ, and walking in newness of life.

Whence it is plain that we must understand by regeneration, not only the destruction of sin in our souls, which is the devil's image stampt upon every child of Adam, since the fall; but the bringing in again into our souls that conformity to the Divine nature, that unspotted holiness, that image of God, wherein Adam was first created, and which Jesus Christ, the second parent of mankind, is ready to stamp again upon every sincere believer. Let us observe here the dangerous mistake of some who judge, that they are regenerate because they are reformed, and commit no longer those sins wherein they formerly lived. No, it is not enough to be able to say, "I am not what I was," unless we can add, "I am what I was not." It will signify but little for a man to plead that he is not a drunkard, that he swears no more, and no longer "walks after the flesh," unless he can also say, that by the grace of God he "walks after the Spirit," in faith, love, and holy obedience. You are not *unjust*, do you say? Very good. But do you *show mercy*? You are no longer *unclean*, nor *sensual*: but are you *spiritual* and *heavenly minded*? You no more break out into raging fits of anger! But does "the peace that passes all understanding," keep your soul in the meekness, gentleness, and long suffering of Jesus? You are no longer swelled with that overbearing pride which made all around you look on you as a tyrant: but, instead of getting the humble mind that was in Christ, do not you rest in what the world calls a *decent pride*, a *proper pride*? You think it now below you to curse, swear, and lie: but do you bless and intercede, reprove and exhort? You scorn to tell a lie: but do you boldly stand for the truth as it is in Jesus? You no longer laugh at the despised followers of a crucified God: but do vou take their part, and confess Christ in his members, who are rejected of men as he was himself? You no more make a mock at the word of God. Very well. But do you "meditate therein day and night?" and is it "sweeter to your soul than honey to your taste?" You are convinced that it is a dreadful sin to take God's name in vain: but do you rejoice with reverence, whenever you pronounce his sacred name? You detest profaneness, and daily lament the overflowings of ungodliness: but do not you rest short of piety, and lie down in a state of lukewarmness and presumption? You pity those who never go to church, and never worship in God's house: but when you are there, are you sensible of the presence of the God on whom you wait? And does the apprehension of his Majesty make you cry out, as Jacob, in the deepest act of adoration, "This place is dreadful; surely it is the temple of the Most High?" You cry out against those who never say their prayers, and with much reason: but when you pray, is the intercourse opened between God and your soul, and do you find in your heart what you profess to ask daily, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost?" If you do not, you are not yet regenerated in the Gospel sense. You know something, it may be, of the first part of regeneration, a death unto outward sin; but you are yet an utter stranger to the second part thereof: you never experienced a new birth unto righteousness, unto true inward holiness.

Having thus shown the nature and parts of regeneration, I come now to show, in a few words, what causes concur to effect that important change.

God alone, in Christ, is the first cause and author of it; wherefore the regenerate man is said in Scripture to be born of God: and if you ask why he does not leave us in the state of sin and misery into which we plunged ourselves by the fall, but offers to create us again in his image; whereas there is no regeneration for the fallen angels upon whom Divine justice passed at once sentence of eternal damnation; I must answer in the words of the Prophet Jeremiah: “It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed: it is because his compassion fails not:” that, as Adam was once placed in a state of trial, either to remain holy, like angels, or to fall into the sin and misery of devils; so we have, during this life, our trial too. Though God might, with justice, have suffered the sentence of eternal death to take place in all men, since all have sinned, he bids us choose whether we will remain fallen with devils, or rise again, by regeneration, to that blessed and holy life which Adam lost. The mercy of God is then the only original and moving cause of our new birth, by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. “Of his own will,” says St. James, “he begat us by the word of truth.” And St. Peter, that “God has begotten believers again according to his abundant mercy.”

But the immediate worker of regeneration is the Spirit of God, which our blessed Lord obtained for us by the merits of his death. In this respect true Christians are said by Christ to be *born of the Spirit*; and St. Paul calls regeneration “*the renewing of the Holy Ghost*,” Tit. iii. 5.

Yet the ordinary instrumental cause is the word of God, when applied to the soul by his Spirit. In this sense the apostle says that believers are begotten by the word of truth, James i. 18; or the Gospel, said by St. Paul, Rom. i. 16, to be “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” This is “the incorruptible seed,” as St. Peter terms it, which Christ's ministers sow in the Church of God; and when God raises it up with power in any soul under their ministry, we may look upon them also as *instrumental causes* of our regeneration, in the lowest sense of the word. Thus St. Paul tells the Corinthians, that he was their father, and had begotten them in Christ through the Gospel.

You see, brethren, how all these causes, in subordination to the first, concur to the Divine work of our regeneration. God's mercy contrives the scheme of man’s redemption: our Lord Jesus executes it. His ministers are sent to cast the seed of his word into men's souls, and to water it; but the Spirit of God alone gives the increase, and quickens the souls dead in sin and unbelief, when they are truly willing to be quickened. Thus the glory of our regeneration ought to be wholly ascribed to God's mercy in Christ, since it is the only source of that unspeakable blessing; and we are bound to exalt the free grace of God continually, and to call upon our souls to praise the Lord, since “as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.”

I come now to show the reasons why regeneration is necessary to salvation. And this appears,

1st. From the immutability of God's purpose, who has chosen believers to salvation “through the sanctification of the Spirit.” Whoever will enter into heaven must put off sin, and be clothed with a robe of unspotted righteousness. Do you ask why? Because God is resolved that it shall be so. “This is the will of God,” says St. Paul, “your sanctification” first, and then your salvation. And there is no variableness nor shadow of turning with him, all the world shall sooner be damned than his purpose shall be made void.

2dly. From the stability of the word of God. “Except a man be born again,” says Jesus himself; “he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;” and he is not as the sons of men, that he should lie. Does he not declare that “heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away?”

3dly. From the respect that regeneration has to salvation. Regeneration is nothing but a degree and part of salvation. Grace is glory begun; holiness is the spring of true happiness; and he who is not saved from his sins here shall never be saved into glory hereafter. He who is not so changed on earth as to find his happiness in God, will never be fit to delight in him in heaven. The angelic hosts, says St. John, “praise God day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, who was, and is, and is to come.” Now what probability is there that the unregenerate, who delight in nothing but money, apparel, pleasure, eating; drinking, uncleanness, and the like; and who are such enemies to God, that they had rather be set to do any work than to spend an hour in private prayer to him every day: what probability is there, I say, that they will be able to bear their part in those sacred concerts, unless their soul be so saved from sin here, and so changed in all its faculties, that God's service and worship, which are so tedious to them now, may become the joy of their hearts.

Let none then deceive himself. As sin is death and hell begun in the unregenerate, so are holiness, eternal life, and heaven, opened in the new creature. And as sure as there will be no hell for those that are saved from their sins here, so sure it is that there will be no heaven for those who are not made partakers of the Divine nature. We might as well look for the noon of a day which never dawned, as expect to see the meridian light of glory, without having ever known the morning of regenerating grace.

4thly. We may discover the necessity of regeneration in order to salvation, if we consider the entire corruption of our nature. Our first parents, having by their fall defaced that image of God in which they were created, and being there upon wholly polluted in soul, body, and spirit, all that come from them must be partakers of their corrupt nature. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” says Job. “I was born in sin,” says David, “and in iniquity did my mother conceive me.” “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” that is to say, carnal and unclean. “Now,” says St. John,

“no unclean person can enter into God's kingdom.” Believe it, sinners; God will not take you from the dung hill of sin, and covered with Satan's leprosy, to place you by him on his throne. The holy land shall not be filled with filth and rottenness; and in the heavenly Canaan there are no nests for serpents and vipers; no place for backbiting, lying, slandering, or cursing Christians; no den for angry lions to lurk in; and no mire for greedy and impure swine to wallow in; much less shall the vacant thrones of fallen angels, thrown down into hell for their pride, envy, and ambition, be given to proud, envious, ill-natured, or covetous men. Rebellious aliens must not inherit the kingdom of heaven. They must first be made children, and have the Spirit of adoption, and then are they heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

Again: that we must be new creatures to enter into heaven, appears from the enjoyments of saints and angels. They are wholly spiritual. Their felicity consists in the peace of God, the love of Christ, and the joy of angels: in an uninterrupted union and communion with the Lord; a continual admiration and fruition of all his perfections. But can carnal, worldly, unregenerate people taste pleasure in any of these things? Are not such delights for them, just what pearls and diamonds are to swine? Do not they even now trample them under their feet, and sometimes turn about and endeavour to rend those that hold out to them even that heavenly bread, that food of angels? Sinners, you must then lose your taste for earthly joys, and be made capable of relishing spiritual delights, or all the pleasures of heaven will prove to you just as much as the most melodious concert is to a deaf man, or the finest pictures to one that was born blind.

I shall conclude all these reasons with one drawn from the holiness of God's nature, which is such that no unclean person can stand in his presence. “His eyes are too pure,” says a prophet, “to behold iniquity.” “Evil shall not dwell with thee,” says David, “neither shall the foolish stand in thy sight.” There is such a contrariety between the holy nature of God, and the unholy nature of unregenerate men, that they can no more agree together than light with darkness; for “what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?” says St. Paul. A pure God with impure creatures? None at all; unless it be that which a devouring flame has with the stubble thrown therein. O sinners! learn then what the apostle means when he says, “Without holiness none shall see the Lord,” lest you find him a consuming fire, as the unregenerate will most certainly do. And that you may be the more willing to get out of the state you are in by sin, let me show you the many dangers that attend it.

You are not yet a new creature, and consequently you are yet without Christ in your heart, and nothing stands between God's justice and your unregenerate soul. And for what do you expose yourself to this dreadful peril? That you may serve Satan? “He that committeth sin is of the devil,” says St. John.

O that your eyes were open to see what master you have chosen, and what wages he will give you at last! Is it that you may take your chance with the rest of the world? Alas! do you not know the word of God declares, that he who loves the world

is the Lord's enemy? And that this world, and all that is therein, except the souls and bodies of the regenerate, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment? Is it that you may indulge a little longer the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eye, and the pride of life? O! if you saw them in a true light, you would renounce them as you would the service of a base and cruel tyrant, that says to you, “Do this,” though it will destroy thy body, and you do it: “Do not that,” though your soul should live thereby, and you do it not. Thus, like the child who was possessed by an evil spirit, you are possessed by carnal desires and unruly passions, which tear you and cast you sometimes into the fire, sometimes into the water, still waiting for the moment when they may plunge you into “the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.”

O! do the pleasures of sin, and the smiles of the world, compensate you for the happiness of the children of God, which you renounce for them; and when the curses of God's law overtake you, will they screen from the stroke of his wrath? For though you may little think of it, if your sins are not forgiven vou, a curse attends all your enjoyments. “I will curse their blessings,” says God by one of his prophets. Nay, it follows you in your religious exercises. The word which you hear is cursed to you; because you believe it not, or do it not, it proves to you “the savour of death unto death;” the prayers which you make, with so much indifference and contempt for God, draw no blessing upon you; and the Lord's table is made a snare to you by your presumption: for, instead of feeding on the body and blood of Christ, you trample it under foot, and refuse to let it have its due effect upon you.

And not only so, but you are liable to temporal and eternal judgments. In time God may let loose upon you the most dreadful sicknesses and afflictions, and you have no God to stand by you, no grace to comfort you under them. And in eternity what have you to expect but an eternal despair? and for whom is “the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone” appointed, if not for the unregenerate? And who shall have “the smoke of their torments ascending for ever and ever,” if not those who never strove to enter in at the strait gate of the new birth, but remained willing servants of the prince of this world, and their unruly passions, for ever and ever? O measure, if you can, the length and breadth, the depth and height of the meaning of that word, “for ever and ever;” and though all that Jesus says of that fire prepared for the devil and his angels, of that “fire which never shall be quenched,” that “worm which never dieth,” and that “outer darkness where there will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth:” though all these expressions should mean no more than an eternal fever, or an eternal confinement in a dark dungeon, will you draw this upon you for the momentary pleasure of walking according to the sight of your eye, and the desire of your heart? And will not you repent of this your unhappy choice even in this life? Ah! when death shall appear to you, and tell you that he has a message from the Lord, a warrant from the King of heaven to take from you all your worldly comforts, all the carnal pleasures and delights for which, Esau-like, you sell your birthright, and the blessing of your heavenly Father; all your nearest and dearest relations; all your wealth and honour, all your schemes of building and planting, buying and selling; and all the hopes of enjoying any longer those conveniences and superfluities, for

getting of which you forget that your main business here is to be born again of the Spirit of God;-when death shall thus hurry you away from your earthly paradise; when it shall rouse your drowsy conscience, and lay before you the black catalogue of all your sins, your lies, your scoffings at virtue and religion, your goods ill-gotten and ill-spent; your profanation of the Lord's day; your speculative wantonness or actual filthiness; your vanity, pride, covetousness, sensuality; with the many years spent with so much eagerness in the devil's service; what will then your views and feelings be! And how will you lament your sin and folly, in disregarding the day of your merciful visitation! O! consider this, ere it be for ever too late.

SERMON VI.-*Necessity of regeneration.*

"Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,"
John iii. 3.[1]

THE corruption that has overspread the Christian world as a flood, and the lukewarmness of those who distinguish themselves by some degree of seriousness, make it next to impossible to preach many of the most important doctrines of Christianity without giving offence to some. We love to lie down as if our spiritual race was run, even before we set out in earnest. And if any one attempts to show us plainly our danger in so doing, we look upon him in general as a troublesome person who endeavours to make us uneasy without necessity. This is one of the reasons why those who are appointed to show unto others the way of salvation dare hardly mention what Christ said of the narrowness of the way that leads to life, and the few that walk therein.

We fear to be thought uncharitable, or suspected of preaching new doctrines: and this fear makes us soften, if not conceal, those parts of the Gospel which Christ and his apostles insisted upon in the plainest manner.

Nevertheless, as we are commanded to declare the whole counsel of God, without respect of persons or fear of men, I shall now discourse on one of those points of doctrine which worldly Christians seldom make the subject of their meditations; I mean the doctrine of our regeneration or new birth in Christ Jesus. And to do it in order, I shall consider,

First, On what occasion and to whom our blessed Lord spoke the words of the text, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." In the

Second place I shall show the absolute necessity of a new birth to enter into life eternal; and

Thirdly, I shall conclude by pointing out the way to that regeneration, without which no man can see the kingdom of heaven. And may the Lord, who has promised

to be with his servants to the end of the world, manifest his presence among us, and apply by his Spirit to all our hearts the important doctrine of the text which he taught himself in the days of his flesh.

And first, I am to consider on what occasion and to whom our blessed Lord spoke of regeneration.

1. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, and no doubt one of the best of them, having heard of the miracles of Jesus, concluded that he was no mere man, but a teacher sent from God; therefore he came by night to ask him some questions concerning the kingdom of God, which every sincere Jew expected at that time. Our Lord, knowing that he (as well as the rest of the nation) entertained wrong notions of his kingdom, which is wholly spiritual, began by assuring him that no one unconverted could see that kingdom, much less enter into it: “Verily, verily I say unto thee, that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

2. As if he had said, “Be not mistaken, Nicodemus, my kingdom is not such as thou thinkest, nor can all men enter therein, since thou art yet unprepared for it thyself. Neither thy honesty, nor sobriety, nor all thy zeal for the religion of thy fathers, with thy great profession of all the external duties of it, can fit thee for the presence of God. If thou restest there, know that thy soul will remain in as thick darkness as that which surrounds a child yet unborn. For though thou enjoyest an animal life, as other creatures on earth, yet hast thou lost in Adam a spiritual life; the life of angels in thy soul; and thou must receive it again by a new and spiritual birth; or else thou shalt be as little capable of seeing and enjoying God as a child unborn is to see and enjoy the light of the sun.”

3. Though this doctrine of the new birth surprises every natural man, and seems foolishness to him, our blessed Lord did not first deliver it: Moses had said two thousand years before him, “The Lord your God shall circumcise,” or so change cc your heart, that you shall be enabled to love him with all your soul. The Lord will take away your heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh." David had prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit-within me.” Ezekiel had cried aloud to all the people of God, “Cast away from you all your transgressions, and make yourselves new hearts and new spirits, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” As if he had said, “In vain do you boast of being the house of Israel, and God's chosen people; unless you get new hearts and new spirits, you shall surely die.”

4. These and many more passages of the Old Testament should make us think that no sincere Jew could be a stranger to the doctrine of the new birth. But as there are now many serious people who have a great form of religion, and notwithstanding know nothing of regeneration experimentally, supposing themselves to be of those just men who need no repentance, and consequently no spiritual change; so it was in the days of our Lord; and Nicodemus, with all his profession of religion, zeal, morality, and desire of being instructed, was one of the number.

5. Accordingly, struck with amazement at the saying of our Lord, and mistaking quite the meaning of his words, “How can a man be born (cried he) when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” Our Lord told him, if a man could enter into his mother's womb and be born again, that would not help him, for he would still be sinful flesh, and of the same corrupted nature as that from which he was born. But to enter into his kingdom, which is spiritual, he must be born of water and of the Holy Ghost, he must have a spiritual birth, be begotten of incorruptible seed, and become an adopted son of God.

6. Then, to prevent all doubts of the absolute necessity of submitting to this doctrine, as if it were not enough to have affirmed it necessary twice, and to have enforced it by the solemn word “indeed, indeed;” lest any one, like Nicodemus, should question the truth of it, because he never experienced it, our Saviour added, for the third time, (turning himself, no doubt, to all that were present,) “Ye must be born again.” As if he had said, “What I say to Nicodemus I say unto all, ‘Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’”

7. Here the Jewish ruler, not daring to object any more to the truth of our Lord's doctrine, only expressed his wonder at hearing it. Our Lord, who (if we are sincere before him) always removes rather than punishes our stupidity in the things of God, would not discourage him; but with an admirable patience endeavoured to make him understand the impossibility of explaining by what operation of God's grace a man is born again.

8. How short, and yet how powerful was his argument! “When the wind bloweth,” saith he, “thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” As if he had said, “How can one describe the wind to him who has not felt or heard it? or how account whence it cometh” Yet we know and feel there is such a thing as wind. So one that is born again, into whose soul the Lord has breathed the breath of spiritual life, knows that the Holy Ghost has dispelled the darkness of his soul, and made him pass from death unto life: he feels in his heart the happy change; he experiences that he is a child of God, because God has given him of his Spirit, and refreshes him with the spiritual breezes of his consolation. Though he is conscious of all this, yet he cannot reveal or describe it to another; nor can he make one whose eyes the Lord has not yet opened see the kingdom, and taste the happiness to which he is restored, because it is what no man knows but he that receiveth it: here every one must experience for himself.”

9. This plain answer should have satisfied Nicodemus; but unbelief made him cry out again, “How can these things be?” Then did our Lord silence him. “What, (said he,) art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things? If I have told you of earthly things,” of the wind which is earthly, and you are not able to comprehend or account for its blowing, how can you pretend to understand spiritual and heavenly things, which are past finding out? Thus did our Lord reprove the ignorance and incredulity of that master in Israel, who had not learned himself what he should have

taught others long before: and at the same time gave him and us to understand that this mystery of the new birth is not to be defined or described, but felt, experienced, and enjoyed in the heart; and that every one who believes the word of God to be true, instead of inquiring, “How can this be?” must immediately beg of God to make him feel in his heart the want of a new birth; and then he will receive power to seek it with tears, prayer, and repentance till he find it for himself. This was the case of Nicodemus: for not withstanding the unwillingness he showed at first to believe the doctrine of regeneration true, he was convinced by the words of our Lord: and we hear that he proved at last a bold confessor of Christ and his doctrine. Would to God we were as ready to imitate him in his faith as worldly Christians are ready to imitate his crying out, “How can it be?”

10. Having thus explained how and to whom our Saviour preached regeneration, I proceed now to show the absolute necessity of a new birth. And in order to this it seems that, in addressing Christians, it should be sufficient to say, that Christ has solemnly declared it necessary for beside what he said to Nicodemus, he told his disciples that “unless they were converted, and became as little children, they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven,” which was enforced after his death by the apostles, when they said, “Put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness-and be ye renewed in the spirit of your minds; for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” And to add the last degree of evidence to these Scripture proofs, I could bring in the testimony of our Church, which declares in her catechism, “A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness necessary to salvation,” and is so far from supposing (as some would have it) that we are all born again in baptism, that she directs us in her collects to pray that God by “his Holy Spirit would create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we may obtain perfect remission of our sins.” Whence it appears clearly, that she exhorts every baptized person to seek this renewal of the heart, and that no one can be a faithful member of Christ and the Church of England, who does not receive the doctrine of regeneration.

11. But I know that all these proofs will not convince a man as long as he does not see why we must be born again: therefore I beg leave to lay before such a one the reason why God insists so much upon our regeneration in all parts of the Bible.

Whether we think of it or not, brethren, it is certain that man once enjoyed in Adam a life of happiness and holiness, loving God with all his soul, in every thing giving thanks, and rejoicing evermore. But, alas! his disobedience soon destroyed that life; for according to the sentence which God had pronounced, “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” he died spiritually; he died to happiness, to holiness, and God; and from that spiritual death he hastened to bodily death, and, if not prevented by regeneration, to death eternal, “the destruction of body and soul in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.” Now Adam, having thus destroyed himself, (being made the devil's slave, and covered all over with his leprosy,) swelled with pride, inflamed with lust, and filled with enmity to God, and unbelief of his

sacred word: Adam, I say, being in that wretched state, could not beget children in a better nature than he had himself. “Can a clean thing come out of an unclean? And can the streams be wholesome when the fountain is poisoned?”

12. What, then, is the plain consequence? The whole lump of mankind is leavened with the leaven of spiritual as well as bodily death. Hear the word of the Lord: “All flesh has corrupted its way upon earth.” “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” “I was born in sin,” says David, “and in iniquity did my mother conceive me.” St. Paul, with all the believers at Ephesus, owned that before they were born again, they “were children of wrath even as others.” Do we want more striking proofs? Let us only look into our lives, and we shall see too many reasons to believe, according to the word of God, that we are spiritually dead in sin and unbelief; for not to mention the injustice, drunkenness, uncleanness, avarice, malice, revenge, envy, lying, evil speaking, Sabbath breaking, swearing, cursing, profaneness; and all those overflowings of ungodliness which appear more or less in the conversation of too many of us; let us only examine our hearts, even now that we are in the presence of God. Are not they, in general, like so many stones, void of all spiritual feeling? Is there not in our necks an iron sinew that hinders us from stooping to God and worshipping him in spirit and in truth? And has not our stubbornness, and unbelief of the word of God, caused some of us to murmur already at the severity of our Lord's doctrine; while others, perhaps, flatter themselves still with hopes of salvation without experiencing the new birth. This alone is a plain proof that we have not recovered from Adam's fall, since, after his example, we believe Satan when he saith, “Ye shall not surely die,” rather than Christ, who declares in the text that if we are not born again, we cannot enter into his kingdom. O! if our hearts should rise in that manner against our Lord's doctrine, let us consider what one of the prophets told Saul in such a case: “Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft before God, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry; because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath also rejected thee.”

13. Now, brethren, if from the testimony of Scripture, the sins of our life, and the present stupid disposition of our hearts, it appears so clearly that we are estranged from God, and that our nature is just the reverse of his, does it not follow that before we can enter into his kingdom, we must put off this brutish and devilish nature of ours, and become “partakers of the Divine nature?"

This appears so plain, that our darkened reason, even without the light of revelation, is forced to agree to it. Who can deny, for example, that all gluttons, drunkards, unclean persons, in a word, all the sons and daughters of Belial, must naturally go with Belial their father-like with like? Who can doubt that the unjust, the covetous, and extortioners, who fight here for the kingdom of darkness, under the banner of mammon, shall be banished from the kingdom of heaven hereafter, unless they are born again, and get a new nature? Who can deny that every worldly-minded person, every one that loves pleasure more than God, that cares for earth more than heaven, shall have his portion with the god of this world, whose slave or child he still

is? And suppose any one thinks this expression too hard, let him hear Jesus Christ himself, who said plainly to the Pharisees of his age, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father you do:” though they thought themselves good enough without being born again, because outwardly they were less wicked than others. It follows, that every unregenerate man has in himself the nature of his father, and can never go to God unless he be renewed by the Spirit of God.

14. Again: does not good sense teach us that a soul who is overcharged with earthly pleasures, surfeiting, drunkenness, or the cares of this world, will sink into the bottomless pit, for the same reason that a stone falls down by its own weight? And is it not plain that a man, whose heart never felt the fear and love of God, who never had his conversation in heaven, and never troubled himself much about getting, by ardent prayer, the wings of a living faith, a confirmed hope, and an unfeigned burning love toward God: is it not plain, I say, that such a man shall be as unfit to take his flight to heaven with God's children, as the heaviest creature on earth is unable to soar toward the sun with the eagle? It is, then, most certain, that ye must be born again, or never see the kingdom of God.

15. But suppose it were possible for thee, O sinner, to enter into heaven without having experienced the new birth; suppose that Jesus Christ, to favour thee, would break his solemn word, (though he has declared the heaven and earth shall pass away rather than that one jot or tittle of it shall remain unfulfilled,) what wouldst thou do there? Drunkard! there is no strong drink in heaven. Sensualist! thou must leave flesh and blood behind, and how great would be the disappointment to be deprived of all the means of thy present happiness! Nay, being obliged to carry along with thee all the appetites, tempers, and passions, which now predominate in thy soul, and at the same time not being able to satisfy them, heaven itself would be no heaven for thee, and thy discontent would even prove a kind of hell.

And you, worldlings! how great would your disappointment be also! You could have neither card playing nor dancing assemblies; nor could you find among all the glorified saints one soul willing to spend a moment in talking about nothing, or about dress, or in hearing all the tales you pick up to slander or ridicule your neighbour. Confess, then, that you must be born again, or have your portion far from God and his holy angels.

16. But some one, perhaps, will be ready to say, “I acknowledge that swearers, extortioners, whoremongers, and the like, cannot be saved without a new birth; (for the oaths and curses of the profane shall not be mixed with the hallelujahs of angels, any more than the injustice of extortioners shall disturb the peace of saints: and it shocks good sense to think that the impure and sensual will be permitted to offend the pure eyes of God with their debaucheries;) but I bless God, I am not one of them. I have lived soberly and justly from my youth up; and I hope I have been as constant at church and sacrament as most people: now, must I be born again, as well as daring sinners? Was not I born of water and the Spirit at my baptism?”

17. Before I answer this serious question, suffer me to ask thee one that is not less important. Hast thou made thy peace with God? Is Christ revealed in thee? Does he dwell in thee and thou in him? Hast thou received the Spirit of adoption, bearing witness with thy spirit that thou art a child of God? See Rom. viii. Is the love of God shed abroad in thy heart? Dost thou know what it is to enjoy the light of God's countenance? Or to be troubled, like David, for the want of it? Is thy soul athirst for the living God? And dost thou pant after his likeness as the hart panteth after the water brook? Dost thou no longer conform thyself to this present evil world, living here as a stranger and pilgrim, and hastening with joy to the New Jerusalem, where thy heart is gone before thee? In short, does thy soul as naturally mount up to God in ardent prayers and delightful praises, as the flame mounts upward? And dost thou show forth the praises of him that has called thee from darkness to light in all thy conversation, by all meekness, gentleness, long suffering, patience, humility, holy mourning, holy joy, and heavenly mindedness?

18. If with Peter thou canst look by faith unto Jesus, and say with humble confidence, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee:” if thou canst take him to witness that thou findest in thy heart every day more and more the virtues and dispositions above mentioned; thou art a child of God, thou art born again-thou art passed from death unto life. Whether the mighty change was wrought at thy baptism or at any other time, it matters not; thou art a living member of Christ, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven. Only persevere, grow in grace, be faithful unto death, and thou shalt have the crown of life.

19. But if, so far from finding in thyself these marks of the new birth, in some considerable measure at least, thy conscience rises against thee, and thou art forced to own that thy heart cleaveth to the creature more than to God, to earth more than to heaven, be not offended if I tell thee, in the name of Christ, and pursuant to his doctrine, that thou must be born again, or be shut out of heaven. I do not mean that thou must reform thy life as presumptuous sinners, for I suppose thee to be free from all intemperance and dishonesty, and averse to all profaneness. But this Jesus affirms, that notwithstanding thy morality and form of religion, thou must experience also an inward change before thou canst enjoy happiness in heaven; for the joys of saints there are all spiritual and religious, but thou hast no taste or relish for religious pleasures: it is weariness to thee to spend some part of the Lord's day in hearing God's word, or conversing with him by prayer and praise. And dost thou think thou art likely to be happy in heaven, where loving, admiring, and praising God will make all the happiness of saints through the ages of eternity? Beside, thou are carnally minded; and to be carnally minded is death. Thy sins are not forgiven thee, for if they were, thou wouldst love much. Thou art, then, still unreconciled to God, and an enemy to Christ; if not by thy conversation, at least by the tempers of thy heart. Thou must, then, be born again, even as any other person, for the word of God bears this testimony to thee, that thy inward parts are very wickedness, thy heart is full of the love of the world, and of a thousand foolish and hurtful desires; in short, thou art alive unto the things of earth; and drowsy, stupid, and dead to the things of God.

20. Do not say, “I was born again in baptism;” for, beside that the most abandoned sinners can plead as much, does not St. Peter say, that the “baptism which saves us is not the outward washing of the body, but the answer of a good conscience, besprinkled with the blood of Jesus in the new birth?” And does not St. Paul affirm, that in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation, a thorough change of soul? Or, to use the words of the Church, a new and contrite heart, with which God always bestows entire pardon and forgiveness of all our sins.

Now, brethren, if these things be so, if none can deny them, but those who trample under foot the truth as it is in Jesus, how miserably deluded are those who trust in a form of godliness, in an outward reformation, or in the strictness of their morals! All these things, though very good in their proper place, without a change of heart, are but broken reeds which will pierce the hands of those that lean upon them, and let them fall into the bottomless pit. For, let no one deceive himself. If the unregenerate soul cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, it must be shut up in that of darkness; there is no middle place. And it will be sufficient not to have known Christ experimentally in the new birth, to be ranked with the reprobates at last.

“Depart from me,” shall the meek, the loving, the merciful Jesus be forced to say to all those that shall not be qualified for his kingdom by regeneration-“Depart from me, I never knew you.” Depart with those fallen angels whose dark, proud, and sensual nature you never put of by regeneration.

But let me put an end here to these sad, yet necessary reflections, and hasten to conclude, by laying before you, in few words, the glad tidings of salvation: for the ministers of Christ are messengers of peace; and God knows that if ever they are obliged to awake drowsy sinners, and to probe their spiritual wounds by speaking plain words. it is only to apply with more success the remedy which God's mercy has prepared for them.

Know, then, that the Lord is merciful, and that he delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but chooseth rather that he should be converted and live. Know that he has prepared an infallible remedy to recover every fallen soul; and if you will apply in earnest to him for if you shall attain to a life of happiness and holiness here, which shall be crowned with eternal glory hereafter.

Know, that that remedy cost him no less than the blood of his Son, his only Son, and that faith, a living faith, is the only means to apply it to your souls. Hear the word of God: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth is born of God. To them gave Jesus power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name. We are the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.” But beware that you mistake not faith. It is not the dry, speculative, barren faith, which every drunkard and every worldly-minded sinner profess to have. No, it is a close union with Christ, and a receiving him in the heart upon God's own terms,

whence arises an humble confidence that our sins are forgiven us, and that we, who were once afar off, are now reconciled to God through the blood of Christ. From this faith follows a loving heart to God and all mankind; a desire stronger than death to live henceforth only to the glory of Him that loved us unto death; and a happiness, which is the earnest and the foretaste of heavenly joys.

It is true, that the living faith by which we are thus born again, is the gift of God, and the work of his Holy Spirit; but what said our blessed Lord? "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for your heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

Why should we then delay, brethren? If God is ready, as he most certainly is, now, while the door of mercy is yet open, while the Lord stretches still to us the arms of his patience and love, let us not harden our hearts. Let us break off our sins by repentance. With shame and sorrow let us arise and go to the blessed Jesus; resolve to wait at his feet in all the means of grace, till he is pleased to make us whole, and to prepare us for heaven by causing us to be born again of his Spirit; which if we do, I take heaven and earth to witness, with all the promises of that book lay which we are to be judged at the bar of God, that the Lord will be faithful on his part, and will bestow his grace upon us, so that we shall rejoice in the midst of all the misfortunes of life, exult in sickness, triumph in death, and shout for joy with all the sons of God, when this earth is burnt up in the day of the Lord: which may God grant, for his infinite mercy's sake, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and praise from this time forth for evermore.

SERMON VII.-*Expostulation with sinners.*

"And thou shalt speak my words unto them whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, for they are most rebellious," Ezek. ii. 7.

LAST Sunday I delivered to you, my dear brethren, the most awful message that was ever sent from God, the mighty God, to his undone creature man. I offered you life in his name, and upon his terms: I offered you Jesus Christ, the Prince of life, "the way, the truth, and the life." I besought you to enter into covenant with him, yea, to accept your Maker for the husband of your souls, that being espoused and joined to him in one spirit, you might for ever dwell in him and he in you. How you received the message, whether you heartily accepted the gracious proposal, and have walked since as people who are new creatures in Christ; or whether the impressions which I would hope were made on some of your hearts have already vanished away like the early dew, is not my business to determine. Another messenger of the Lord, death, follows me. He will, ere long, summon you to the bar of Him who knows men's hearts and judges righteous judgment. There you will give an account of your accepting or rejecting the message I delivered to you in his name; there you will find

(may it not be to the endless confusion of any one!) that the matter was indeed for life and death, for eternal life or eternal death. However, as it is to be feared that the last sermon we have heard and the last communion we have received, have not had a better effect upon most of us than the foregoing ones; the want of outward reformation among us last week having visibly betrayed the want of inward conversion, I propose to-day to expostulate with these my unconverted hearers, and to show them that, notwithstanding their coming now and then into the house of the Lord, they are most rebellious against him. The task is not pleasant to me, nor do I suppose it will be so to you; but be this as it may, it must be performed; and though it be not agreeable, I trust it will be useful; the bitterest medicine often proving best for the soul as well as the body. And if any of you, my brethren, suppose we choose uncomfortable subjects, because we love to displease our hearers; not to mention that it is very unlikely ministers should thus endeavour to set their flocks against them; I answer, that we are the servants of God, and servants must not do what they please, but what their master commands, whether it be agreeable or disagreeable to them or to others. Our heavenly Master himself preached to convince and reprove, as well as to comfort his hearers, and he will have his servants do the same: witness the commission God gave again and again to Ezekiel in the chapter whence the text is taken. “Son of man, they are stiff-necked children, unto whom I send thee, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus says the Lord, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, for they are most rebellious.” Having, therefore, last Sunday invited you to accept of Jesus Christ, and come to the marriage feast of the Lamb upon Gospel terms, I know not how I could one day answer it to God and your own souls, were I not to testify to those who make light of the invitation, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, that they are most rebellious. Bear with me, my guilty brethren; and if you regard not my apology, regard, at least, the command given to Ezekiel in the text, and in him to all the ministers of God's word. There we are sent to our stiff-necked hearers, and whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, we are commanded to say unto them, “Thus says the Lord, you are a most rebellious house.” Permit me, therefore, my brethren, to consider myself at this time as an advocate of God, as one employed to plead against you who are such, and to charge you with nothing less than being rebels and traitors against the sovereign Majesty of heaven and earth: yes, did the noblest blood run in your veins, and were your seat among princes, it would be necessary you should be told, and told plainly, you are most rebellious: you leave broken the law of the King of kings, and by the breach of it you are become liable to his righteous condemnation, and are not in earnest to recover his favour.

Were not you born the natural subjects of God, born, as his creatures, under the indispensable obligations of his law? Does not your rational nature, whereby you are made capable of receiving law from God, bind you to obey it? And is it not equally evident and certain that you have not exactly obeyed this law; nay, that you have violated it in many aggravated instances?

Will you dare to deny this? Will you dare to assert your innocence? Remember, it must be a complete innocence; yes, and a perfect righteousness too, or it can stand you in no stead farther than to prove that, though condemned sinners, you are not quite so criminal as some others; and although dying unpardoned, you will not have quite so hot a place in hell as they. And, when this is considered, will you plead not guilty to the charge? Search the records of your own conscience, for God searcheth them, and ask it seriously whether you have not sinned against God. Solomon declared in his days there was not a just man upon earth, who did good and sinned not. And the Apostle Paul testified that all had sinned and come short of the glory of God; that both Jews and Gentiles (which you know comprehends the whole human race) were all under sin. And can you pretend any imaginable reason to believe the world is grown so much better since their days, that any should now plead his own case as an exception? Or will any of you presume to arise in the face of the heart searching Majesty of heaven, and say, “I plead not guilty, I never rebelled against God, I never broke his righteous law?”

Supposing you never allowed yourself to blaspheme God, to dishonour his name by customary swearing, or grossly to violate his Sabbaths, or commonly to neglect the solemnities of his public worship. Supposing again (and O that there were room to suppose this of every one!) that you have not injured your neighbours in their lives, their chastity, their character, or their property, either by violence or by fraud; and that you never scandalously debased your rational nature, or that of any man, by that vile intemperance which sinks a man below the worst kind of brutes; supposing all this, can you pretend that you have not in smaller instances violated the rules of piety, of temperance, and of chastity? Is there any one person who has intimately known you, that would not be able to testify you had said or done something amiss? Or, if others could not convict you, would not your own heart do it? Does it not prove you guilty of pride, of passion, of sensuality, of an excessive fondness for the world and its enjoyments; of murmuring, or at least of secretly repining against God under the strokes of an afflictive providence; of misspending a great deal of your time; of abusing the gifts of God's bounty to vain, if not, in some instances, to pernicious purposes; of mocking him when you have pretended to engage in his worship, drawing near to him with your lips, while your heart has been far from him? Does not your conscience condemn you of some one breach of the law at least? And by one breach of it does not the Holy Ghost bear witness, James ii. 10, that you are become guilty of all, and are as incapable of being justified before God by any obedience of your own, as if you had committed ten thousand offences? But, in reality, there are ten thousand and more to be charged to your account. When you come to reflect on all your sins of negligence, as well as on your voluntary transgressions; on all the instances in which you have failed to do good, when it was in your power to do it; on all the instances in which acts of devotion have been omitted, especially in secret; and on all those cases in which you have shown a stupid disregard to the honour of God, and to the temporal and eternal happiness of your fellow creatures: when all these, I say, are reviewed, the number will swell beyond all possibility of account, and force you to cry out, “I am rebellious, most rebellious, mine iniquities are more

than the hairs of my head." They will appear in such a light before you that your own heart will charge you with countless multitudes; and how much more then that God, "who is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things!"

And say, my fellow creatures, is it a little thing that you have presumed to set light by the authority of the God of heaven, and to violate his law, even if it had been by mere carelessness and inattention? How much more heinous then is the guilt, when in so many instances you have done it like an audacious rebel, knowingly and wilfully! Give me leave seriously to ask you, and let me entreat you to ask your own souls, "Against whom hast thou magnified thyself? Against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, or lifted up thy rebellious hand? On whose law, O sinner, hast thou presumed to trample? And whose friendship and enmity hast thou thereby dared to affront? Is it a man like thyself that thou hast insulted? Is it only a temporal monarch? Only one who can kill the body, and then hath no more that he can do? Nay, sinner, thou wouldst not have dared to treat a temporal prince as thou hast treated the King eternal, immortal, and invisible. No price could have hired thee to deal by the majesty of an earthly sovereign as thou hast dealt by that God before whom the cherubim and seraphim are continually bowing. Not one opposing or complaining, disputing or murmuring word is heard through the many millions of the heavenly host, when the intimations of their Maker's will are published to them. And who art thou, O wretched man? Who art thou, that thou shouldest oppose him? That thou shouldest oppose a God of infinite power and terror, who needs but exert one single act of his sovereign will, and thou art in a moment stript of every possession; cut off from every hope; destroyed and rooted up from existence, if that were his pleasure; or, what is inconceivably worse, consigned over to the severest and most lasting agonies? Yet this is the God whom thou host offended; whom thou hast affronted to his face, presuming to violate his express laws in his very presence. This is the God against whom thou hast not only rebelled, but whose gracious offers of mercy in the Son of his love thou hast carelessly rejected. This is the God before whom thou standest a convicted criminal; convicted not of one or two particular offences, but of thousands and ten thousands, yea, of a course of rebellions and provocations in which thou hast persisted more or less ever since thou wast a child, and the particulars of many of which have been attended with aggravating circumstances. Reflect on particulars, and deny the charge if thou canst.

1. If sinning against any means of grace, and against knowledge, be an aggravation of guilt, thy guilt, O sinner, is greatly aggravated. For thou wast born in a Christian country, hast been brought up in a reformed Church; God has delivered unto thee his sacred word, and has provided for thee teachers, coming early and late, to show thee the things that belong to thy peace. The means of grace have been brought, as it were, to thy very door; the manna of God's word runs round thy habitation. Thou canst not name one means of improving in Divine knowledge and grace, but what God has blessed thee with. Sacraments, plain sermons and lectures, reading of the word of God, and the soundest pieces of practical divinity, spiritual conferences, public and private prayers, instructions, singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; all these

means thou hast enjoyed, or mightest have enjoyed, if thy worldly and carnal mind had not made thee set light by then; still thou hast continued to dose on the pillow of security and presumption. And suppose thou art not one of those who entirely set at naught and turn from the instructions of their teachers, yet dost thou not often transgress in some such plain instances, that thins own reason, blinded as it is by the love of the world, manifests thy wilful disobedience; and knowing the righteous judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, hast thou not done the same; nay, and, as St. Paul speaks, taken pleasure in those that did them, and even chosen them for thy ultimate friends and companions, so as thereby to strengthen, by the force of example and converse, one another's hands in your contempt of vital religion and pursuit of vanity?

2. Add to this: if Divine love and mercy be an aggravation of the sins committed against it, your crimes, O sinner, have been heinously aggravated. "I have nourished and brought up children," says the Lord, Isa. i., "and they have rebelled against me." And is not this your very case, sinner? Did not God watch over you in your infant days, and guard you from a multitude of known and unknown dangers? Has he not given you rational faculties; has he not hitherto bestowed upon you the necessaries, and perhaps also the conveniences of life? Has he not frequently appeared for your deliverance, when in the distresses of nature you have called upon him for help? Has he not rescued you from ruin when unforeseen accidents have cut off in an instant some of your acquaintances about you? Hath he not, on some occasions, Sealed your diseases, when all that were around gave you up? Or, if it has not been so, has not the uninterrupted health which you have enjoyed been an equivalent obligation? Look round upon all your blessings, and name, if you can, one thing of which the God against whom you rebel has not been your bountiful giver and gracious preserver. Add to all these temporal mercies the many tender invitations at his Gospel, which you have heard and despised, and then say whether your rebellion hath not been aggravated by the vilest ingratitude, and whether that aggravation can be accounted small.

Again: if it be any aggravation of sin to be committed against conscience, Your crimes, O sinner, have been thus aggravated: consult the records of it, and then dispute the fact if you can: conscience is the agent of God's Spirit in the soul of man; it may be blinded and stupified, but it cannot be bribed. And it often condemns a sinner secretly, even while he endeavours to excuse himself outwardly. Have you not found it so? Has not conscience remonstrated against your past conduct, and have you not felt these remonstrances painful? Uncharitable as some think me in the pulpit, I cannot think you such a monster as to be void of conscience; or to have one so stupified, so seared, as it were, with a hot iron, that it never cried out against the violences you have done it, never warned you of the fatal consequences of one of your sins. These warnings, which you did not regard, were in effect the voice of God, the admonitions which he gave you by his agent in your breast. And if his sentence be executed upon you in everlasting death for your evil works, you will hear that voice speaking to you again, in a louder tone and a severer accent than before, and

you will be tormented with its upbraidings through eternity, because you would not in time hearken to its admonitions.

Let me add, farther, that if it be any aggravation of guilt to have sinned against the motions of God's Spirit on the mind, surely your sin has been attended with that aggravation also. St. Stephen charged it upon the Jews, that through all their generations they had always resisted the Holy Ghost. If the Spirit of God strove with the Jews, how much more with professing Christians! And have you never experienced any thing of this kind? Have you been so hardened from your infancy as never to have been wrought upon by an alarming or convincing discourse? Or when there was no pious teacher near you, have you never perceived a secret impulse upon your mind, leading you to think of religion, urging you to an immediate consideration of it, sweetly inviting you to make trial of it, and warning you that you would lament this stupid neglect? O sinner, why were not these happy motions attended to? Why did not you, as it were, spread out all the sails of your soul to catch that heavenly breath? But you have carelessly neglected it-you have suppressed these kind influences. How reasonably then might the sentence have gone forth in righteous displeasure: “My Spirit shall no more strive!” And, indeed, who can say that it has not already gone forth? Alas! if you feel no emotion of mind, no remorse, no awakening, while you listen to such a remonstrance as this, there will be room, great room, to fear it.

There is one aggravation more which probably attends your sins; I mean that of being committed against solemn engagements to the contrary. You promised in baptism to renounce all the pomps and vanities of this world, and all the sinful desires of the flesh; you vowed to keep God's holy commandments all the days of your life: you have, perhaps, strengthened the obligation, already laid upon you by being confirmed, or coming to the Lord's table with a public profession of having a stead fast purpose to lead a new life: but, alas! you are still the same, still a lover of pleasure, or of money, more than a lover of God! And, if you say you never come to the Lord's table to vow him obedience, and so vou never aggravate your guilt by sinning against solemn engagements; I answer, it is the more shameful that you should so publicly forsake the God of your fathers, as never to attempt to enter into any engagement with him. The pleading that you are a heathen, makes Christ and his Church little amends for your not being a good Christian. But suppose you never took your baptismal vow upon yourself, hath your heart been, even from your youth, hardened to so uncommon a degree, that you never cried to God in any season of danger and difficulty? And did you never mingle vows with those cries? Did you never promise, that if God would hear and help you in that hour of extremity, you would forsake your sins, and serve him as long as you lived? He heard and helped you, otherwise you would not have been in his courts at this time; and by such deliverance did, as it were, bind down your vows upon you, and therefore your guilt in the violation of them remains before him, though you are stupid enough to forget them. Nothing is forgotten, nothing is overlooked by him; and the day will come when the record shall be laid before you too.

And now, sinner, think seriously with yourself, what defence you will make to all this. Will you fly in the face of God and that of your conscience, so openly as to deny one of the charges of rebellion, yea, of aggravated rebellion, I have advanced against you? Have you not lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven? Have not you stiffened your neck and hardened your heart from his love and fear? Have you not sided with his sworn enemies, the world and the flesh? What part of your body, what faculty of your soul have you not employed as an instrument of unrighteousness? When did you live one day before God with the dependence of a creature, the gratitude of a redeemed creature, the heavenly frame of a sanctified creature? Nay, when did you live one hour without violating God's known law either in word, or thought, or action? Have not you done it almost continually by the vanity of your mind and the hardness of your heart, if not by the open immorality of your life? And, what infinitely aggravates your guilt, have you not despised and abused God's numberless mercies? Have not you affronted conscience, his deputy in your breast? Have not you resisted and grieved his Spirit? Yea, have not you trifled with him in all your pretended submissions or solemn engagements? In one word, and that in the language of Jeremiah, chap. iii., "Thou hast done evil things as thou couldest," or as thou durst. Thousands are, no doubt, already in hell, whose guilt never equalled yours; and yet God has spared you to see the end almost of another year, and to hear now this plain representation of your case. And will you not yet consider? Shall nothing move you to shake off that amazing carelessness and stupid disregard of your salvation? Will you never begin to "work it out with fear and trembling?" Will you slumber in impenitency till eternal woes crush you into destruction? Is death, is judgment, is the bottomless pit so far off that you dare put off, from week to week, the day of your conversion? You have read in God's word that there is mercy with him that he may be feared; but where did you read that there is mercy with him for those that fear him not; for those that are as unconcerned about his displeasure, as easy under his threatenings, as insensible of his mercies, as unmoved under his word as you are? Show me such a place, I shall not say any where in the Bible, but in any book written by a moral heathen! And yet you hope, you persist to hope, you are right, and can be saved in this way. When we expostulate with you, when we entreat you, after David, to "kiss the Son, lest he be angry," and so you perish in this way of carnal security, "if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little;" you blame us secretly, or openly, and are ready to quarrel with us for bringing you the unwelcome message: you will not blame yourselves for giving us cause to bring it, and obstinately refuse to fall out with the sins we exclaim against; but under the most cogent arguments, taken from reason and the nature of things, the most glaring proofs out of the word of God, the most earnest entreaties not to harden you heart, you remain as unshaken as an anvil under the workman's stroke: or, if you relent a little, and conscience receives the dart of conviction, instead of driving it deeper and deeper, you instantly shake it off, and quench the Spirit of God; you run into the company of careless worldlings, and are afraid or ashamed to converse with those whose consciences are alarmed, and with whom you might learn the first principles of repentance never to be repented of; and thus you grow more insensible every day, more averse to pure and undefiled religion, more alienated from the life of God in your heart. And what

do you think will be the end of these things? Has any one hardened himself against the Lord, says the prophet, and prospered? And do you suppose you shall first prosper in that way? “He that being often reproved,” says he again, “hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy;” and will the God of truth break his word, and commence a liar, by not spuing your lukewarm soul out of his mouth, by not cutting asunder such an unprofitable servant, such a rebellious subject as you are to him, if speedy conversion does not make him sheath the sword of his vengeance? If you say, that passion makes me represent your base worse than it really is, I put you to the proof: show wherein I speak not the words of soberness and truth. You cannot; and yet you condemn and slight them. If, therefore, I speak to any more particularly than to the rest of my careless hearers, it is to thee, whose heart is thus ready to say, “I am not a rebellious soul, but you are a false or enthusiastic teacher.” Alas! thou art the man-thou art the woman I chiefly address, and it appears clear that thou despisest reproof: and he that despises reproof, says the wise man, is brutish. “Yea, because I called,” (says God himself,) “and ye refused, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.” And wilt not thou yet take warning, wilt thou to the end reject the very first exhortation of our Church, wilt thou go on cloaking and dissembling thy sins before the face of almighty God? O, if, notwithstanding my repeated endeavours to awaken thee, thou persistest and diest at last in this impenitency, remember me, sinner, when I stand at the bar of God, when the Lord maketh inquisition for blood, and the burning fiery furnace of his eternal wrath is heated seven times more for false teachers, who, by healing slightly the wound of the daughter of God's people, betray souls into endless ruin, appear as a witness in my behalf and from the midst of everlasting burnings, let thy parched tongue send forth some such words as these: “Let not my teacher come into this place of torment, condemn him not on my account, I clear him, Lord, I clear him; he brought me thy messages, whether I would hear or whether I would forbear; he warned me of my rebellion against thee, and told me that these endless horrors would be my portion if I stiffened my neck and hardened my heart; but I set at naught all his counsels, and would none of his reproofs.” Yes, sinner, despise me here if thou wilt, and wonder why I urge thee so much to consider the things that belong to thy peace, before they be hid from thine eyes; call me here an enthusiast, and laugh at the concern I feel for thy perishing soul: but here after thou wilt do me justice, clear me before the Lord Jesus, and acknowledge that thy blood is upon thine own head, that thou art undone because thou wouldst be undone, because thou wouldst take neither warning nor reproof.

Yet if now thou art not quite given up to a reprobate mind; if thy stupid conscience is not entirely past feeling; if thy worldly soul is yet accessible to some touches of Divine grace, some motions of God's Spirit; if thou yet desirest to arise and return to thy long-despised Father, to that God from whom thou hast so deeply revolted; if this very day that thou hearest his warning voice, and hardenest not thy heart, though thou hast been hitherto most rebellious, he will yet show thee mercy. Rend, O rend your careless hearts, and not your garments, for why will ye die, O house of Israel? Hath the Lord any pleasure in the death of him that dieth? Does not such a one die because

he will die? because he will not turn to the Lord with weeping, fasting, and praying; be cause he will not be delivered from the world, the flesh, and the devil; because he will not be presented to God as a chaste virgin in Christ? “Ye will not come unto me,” said once that dear Saviour, “ye will not come unto me that ye may have life;” and shall we still give him room to complain in heaven as he did when on earth, or shall we know the time of our visitation, and hasten to him with all our aggravated guilt? If we choose this better part, as the Lord liveth we shall find him most willing and able to pardon our sins, and sanctify our nature, to create in us clean hearts, and renew right spirits within us; which may God grant unto us all for his mercy's sake.

SERMON VIII.-*Value of wisdom in spiritual things.*

“O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end,” Deut. xxxii. 29.

IF the dying words of a good man ought to make the deepest impression upon us, (and precepts given by one just launching into eternity, should be valued so much the more, as we cannot suspect him to be influenced by any motives but those of love and concern for our welfare,) what regard ought we to pay to the words of the text, since they were some of the last which were spoken by one of the best and greatest of men that ever lived, namely, Moses!

The day approached in which he was to be gathered to his fathers. For notwithstanding the repeated prayers he had made to enter into the good land of Canaan, God, whose inflexible justice often punishes the least faults in his saints, (how much more the greatest sins in his enemies,) God, I say, having resolved to make him an example of his invincible hatred to sin, (and of the necessity he stands under to require satisfaction where it is committed,) had told him that he must submit to die before his time, for having spoken unadvisedly with his lips at the waters of Meribah. Moses worshipped and humbly submitted to the Lord; well persuaded that his Redeemer lived; and that though worms should soon prey on his body, the God whom he served would deliver his soul from the pangs of the second death.

To spend the short time he had to live wholly in the work of faith and labour of love, he called together the people of Israel, read to them all the words of God's law, brought to their remembrance the many miracles which the Lord had done for them, to bring them out of Egypt with a stretched out arm, opening a way through the Red Sea; destroying all their enemies; causing the clouds to rain delicious food, and the rocks to yield water springs to preserve their lives in the wilderness. In short, he laid before them life and death in the most affecting manner, and besought them, sometimes by glorious promises, and sometimes by dreadful threatenings, not to provoke the Lord their God, but to cleave to him with full purpose of heart, telling them that the God of their fathers would bless them for ever, if they would but love him with all their souls; and adding, that if they departed from him, he would pursue

them with his severest judgments, and scatter them over the face of the whole earth, as we see them in our days.

What an awful sight must this have been! A whole nation,-men, women, and children, standing before the Lord! And Moses, the greatest of prophets, and the friend of God, expostulating with them for the last time! Methinks I see the effect of his pathetic discourse spreading through that numerous congregation. Thousands lift up weeping eyes to heaven in an ecstasy of praise and thanksgiving for God's mercies to them; while thousands more fix themselves on the ground with shame and confusion, ready to say, “We are not worthy of the least of the Lord's mercies, for we are a rebellious people; it is because his compassions fail not that we are not consumed.” On every side the trembling hands of aged people, with the feeble ones of children, are lifted up to heaven to witness, that henceforth they will love the Lord, and serve him only; and with one consent they cry as in the days of Elijah, “The Lord he is the God; the Lord he is the God:” he is the God to whom we will cleave for ever.

This moving scene had a due effect on Moses: he mixed, no doubt, his tears of joy with the tears of repentance, which he saw in the people's eyes. But, alas! the knowledge he had of the human heart made him at the same time foresee that this goodness would not last longer than the early dew, and that prosperity, with fulness of bread, would soon cause them to forget the Lord, and trample under foot the promises and threatenings he had laid before them. He foresaw that their hearts would be drawn aside by the cares and pleasures of the world, so as to remember no more the heavenly Canaan, of which the earthly one was but a figure. He saw that the little concerns of this life would swallow up the important ones of that which is to come. Therefore, overwhelmed with holy grief, he looked up to heaven, and expressed, in the words of the text, the thoughts of his bleeding heart, “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!” Having breathed that solemn wish, he blessed them once more, and the same day went up to Mount Nebo, from which, having taken a view of the earthly Canaan, he committed his spirit into the hands of the Lord, to carry it to the heavenly one, while the dust of his body returned to dust.

Having thus related on what occasion the words of the text were spoken, I come, in the second place, to dwell upon their general meaning; and, lastly, I shall endeavour to apply them to your hearts. In the meantime, may the grace of God so assist me in speaking, and you in hearing, that “Moses and the prophets” may never rise up in judgment to accuse us of having despised their solemn exhortations.

1. Since no scripture is of private interpretation, the words of the text certainly imply, that, of those who are called the people of God, whether they go by the denomination of Israelites, as formerly, or that of Christians, as in our days, far the greatest part want true wisdom and understanding in the things that nearly concern them: so that every minister of the Gospel has as much reason as Moses to break out

into this prayer, “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!”

It is to be wished it were harder to make good the melancholy assertion; but to the disgrace of our holy religion, nothing is easier. It has been granted, by the very heathens, that the sum of true wisdom is to know ourselves, and what is our business here. Now, suppose one was to ask most Christians what they do here? And what is their business upon earth? If they were to answer according to the maxims they follow in life, would they not show their folly rather than true wisdom? Would not the rich man say, “I am here to take care of and enjoy an estate; to spend my time in hunting, horse racing, cards, and company; to clothe myself with purple and fine linen, to fare sumptuously every day, and contrive various diversions to kill time and forget myself?” Would not the busy merchant, or anxious farmer answer, “I am in the world to toil early and late: my business is to get an estate, and God has blest me therein; for now my ware houses or barns are very nigh full, and I shall soon say to my soul, ‘Soul, take thine ease now, for thou hast much property laid up for many years?’” A third class of people would answer, “We do not desire so much, and the end of all our labours is to pay every man his own, and then to settle in some comfortable way of business, and provide for our children.” Now, all these answers would be reasonable in the mouths of heathens; for “after those things the Gentiles seek,” says our Lord: and I make no doubt but the beasts that perish, if they were endued with the faculty of speech, could give as good an account of themselves, and attain unto all the wisdom of worldlings. For though to provide for the body is part of our duty, yet it is but the least part of it. “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Thus speak Christ and true Christians. Believe him! Accordingly their answer to the question, mentioned above, would be as different from that of worldly people as light from darkness.

“We are everlasting spirits, (would they say,) we came out of God's hands pure, and holy, and happy. But now involved in flesh and blood, partakers of the guilt of fallen Adam, and born into the world children of wrath, we have, by nature, proud and hardened hearts, whereby we resemble the fallen angels; and earthly, sensual souls, by which we are not unlike the beasts that perish.

“As for our real business in this life, it is not to get an estate; for our Lord forbids us expressly laying up treasures upon earth. lt is not to get preferment or a title; for if all is vanity under the sun, as Solomon says, such honours are the froth of vanity itself. Nor is it to call lands after our own names, and leave them to our posterity; for this could not redeem our souls from hell. But our business is to get in time the ‘one thing needful:’ to recover a participation of the Divine nature, and a fitness to enjoy God in heaven. Our short life is all the time we have to do that great work in. We pass through the world as an arrow through the air. For a few months or years we are in a state of flesh and blood, only to try whether we shall be for ever happy with God, or for ever miserable with the devil.

“This world is but our way to our eternal abode; therefore, it is as great a piece of folly for us to set our hearts on any thing here, as for a traveller to fall in love with every object he meets in his way, which he has no sooner seen but he must leave behind. These bodies of ours, so far from having a right to engross all our cares, are but our prisons, wherein our immortal souls are chained down by fleshly thoughts, blinded with false notions of good and evil, and dead to all taste of their true happiness. In this low state we are called to rise far higher than an animal life; we are called to be ‘born again’ of the Holy Ghost) to become members of the kingdom, and to enjoy everlasting happiness with the Father of spirits in the realms of light. We are called to shake off those low desires, and that extravagant taste for worldly happiness which makes us wander unconcernedly in darkness and spiritual exile from God.

“We are called to give up all thoughts of rest here; to put off worldly tempers; to be delivered from the folly of our passions, and the slavery of our natural appetites. In a word, we are called to reform our whole nature by a death unto sin; to renew our souls in the image of God, by a new birth unto righteousness; and to be fitted again for conversation with the holy angels, and communion with God himself.

“This implies that we must not only renounce presumptuous sins; such as injustice, oppression, lying, deceit, drunkenness, and gluttony, with all kinds of impurity; cursing, swearing, and all branches of profaneness: for wise heathens fled from those abominations as from the face of a serpent; and Jesus says they are works of the devil, and that those who are guilty of them are of their father the devil, whose works they do.

“But we must, beside, be changed and renewed in all our tempers. Instead of that pride which turned angels into devils, we must be clothed with humility, and take up the cross of a despised Saviour. Instead of indulging covetousness and self seeking, we must learn to delight in doing good, and in spending and being spent for others. Instead of lying down in indolence, we must arise with fervency of spirit, and do with all our might the good our hand findeth to do; remembering that the night comes when no man can work. Instead of envy, and strife, and wrath, we must put on the humble, loving, patient, gentle mind of the Lord Jesus. Instead of sensuality, and that turn of mind which relishes nothing but earthly things; by heavenly mindedness our souls must be so transformed that we may be able to say with David, ‘Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee.’ And, lastly, for those stony hearts of ours, we must get hearts of flesh,-hearts affected with a sense of the love of God made man, to die a shameful death for us;-hearts purified from vain desires by a living faith; exalted by a hope full of immortality; and transformed by Divine love into the very image of God.”

Brethren, this is our high calling. He that knows these things, he that daily and hourly meditates therein, does not run like a fool without knowing his errand: and the Divine wisdom which has opened his eyes to see the great work he has to do, opens them farther to choose the only way of doing it. “I am the way, and the truth, and the

life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." He considers, then, that as all things were created by the Son of God, and "without him was not any thing made that was made;" so are all things redeemed and restored by the same Divine person. As nothing came into being without Jesus, so nothing can enter into a state of happiness but by him. He is, then, continually applying to his crucified Lord for an increase of spiritual wisdom and strength; he hangs upon him by the desires of his heart; he lives by faith; he spiritually eats his flesh and drinks his blood, whereby his soul is nourished as with marrow and fatness. In a word, by faith he becomes one spirit with the Lord, and can say with St. Paul, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." O that we were thus wise! O that we now understood and considered these things, and were prepared for our latter end. Then let the Bridegroom come never so unexpectedly, he would find us waiting for him, and we should enter into the joy of our Lord.

But to come to the application of the text: is this our case? Can we all say, we have the wisdom of the holy man that has been described? Nay, do we so much as seek after it in sincerity? Suppose we had attained unto it, should not we show it in our conversation?

If the drunkard, for example, knew his calling, instead of quenching, in a monstrous abuse of God's mercies, that spark of reason he has; instead of setting himself below the very brutes, to the disgrace of Christianity, and the shame of human kind; would not he prepare to drink of that river of pleasure which flows from the throne of God? Would not he beg to be enabled to say, by happy experience, with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd; he makes me rest in green pastures, and leads me along the waters of comfort:" he fills my cup with a foretaste of heavenly joys, so that it runs over even on earth. If the unclean persons were wise, and had used themselves to consider these things, would they sell themselves to work wickedness in the sight of the holy angels? Would they make their body, which was formed to be the temple of God, the body of a harlot? Would they not rather serve the God of purity with soul, and body, and spirit, which he created with so much power, redeemed with so much mercy, and which he still preserves with so much patience?

If the swearer had wisdom enough to understand his madness; if he considered the accuser of the brethren, writing down every curse he utters, to bring them all upon his guilty head in a dying hour; do you think he would provoke God to hasten his damnation? Do you think he would be so impatient to secure a place where he may be sure that cursing, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth will be his portion to all eternity? No, they could not; and if any act in that manner, it is because they have not one spark of true wisdom.

Let us, then, join to pray over them in the words of the text: "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

And you, poor worldlings, (if there be any such here,) who never yet made religion your chief business and concern; who, with the rich man in the Gospel, endeavour to take your pleasures in this world, not considering that this is the way to have your torments in the next; you who drown all the concerns of your immortal souls either in the transient joys, or the unnecessary cares of life; have you attained unto true wisdom? You may imagine so, and carry your delusion so far as to applaud yourselves on account of your fancied goodness: but, alas! ere long you must be undeceived; and death (if nothing else can) will teach you that true wisdom consisted in preparing to meet him with comfort. When he looks you in the face; when he shall summon you to the bar of God-where will you seek for peace and assurance of his love, if it is not in your soul? In the gold you endeavoured to hoard up? "Perish the hour (shall you say) in which I was mad enough to load myself with thick clay, instead of running to Jesus for my life!" In the money you have spent in vanity and self indulgence? You will have then what you now buy with it, fear and remorse. Will you seek relief in the remembrance of your past pleasures? Alas! it will only awaken your guilty conscience, and add new degrees to your horror. You expect, perhaps, some consolation from those with whom you endeavour to forget your latter end; with whom you squander away the best of your time in unprofitable talk or vain diversions. Alas! you are mistaken; they will be the first to turn their backs upon you: and while they go in quest of companions better able to run after vanity and excess than you, you shall be left to shift for yourself upon a dying bed.

Meantime God, that almighty God, whom you take so little care to make your friend now; nay, whom you daily offend by your impenitence and stubbornness: that almighty God, I say, will find you there. And what will you do when he says, "Away to judgment, unprofitable servant, who hast neglected the a one thing needful;" and cared for every thing more than for the salvation of thy immortal soul: fit or unfit, launch into eternity-hasten to thy latter abode!" Ah! surely, in that hour, if not sooner, you will own your want of true wisdom. And we have reason to pray also over you in the words of Moses, "O that they were wise, that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end!"

And who are those that do not need to consider it? Not you, young people, to whom health and youth seem to insure a long and happy life. Ah! know that sickness may overtake you to-day, and that youth is as little able as old age to resist the spear of death. Witness many of the tomb stones that are set up round these places of worship. Nothing, then, nothing can secure you but an interest in the blood of the dear Redeemer, of him who, having created you to make you happy, has again purchased you by all the sufferings of his most holy life and bitter death.

Now, then, consider that your highest wisdom and truest interest is to give him your hearts, to remember him in the days of your youth, and put yourselves under his almighty protection; which, if you do, O how happy shall you be in your life! how triumphant in your death! how transcendently blessed through all the ages of eternity!

“O that you were wise-that you understood this-that you would consider your latter end!”

As for you, brethren, who see one half of your days run out already, and yet are tempted by the corruption of the world, and your hearts, to mind nothing but the affairs of this life, you need, above all, to consider your latter end. Alas! you are too apt to forget that the better half of your days is gone, and gone for ever. Look back these thirty or forty years that you have lived. How short! it is a vapour which the wind has carried away. O, consider, that in thirty or forty years more, if you live so long, the whole of your days will look like the same dream; and learn, by what is past, to redeem what is to come.

But above all, forget not that eternity is at the end of your half-spent life. Eternity, that sea without either bottom or shore, in which a thousand years are swallowed up as a drop of rain in the ocean. Eternity, to which you hurry as fast as the wings of time can carry you. And what have you done for eternity? I do not ask, what have you done for time? The rivers of sweat that daily water your face in providing for flesh and blood, save you the trouble of an answer. (Nor are you to be blamed for caring for the body, if you do it always in subordination to the concerns of your soul.) But what have you done for eternity? Have you so much as shed one tear for the forgiveness of your manifold sins? Have you spent one hour in secret to entreat the Lord to prepare you for eternity? Or do you say by your lives, if not with your mouths, “There is time enough to think of that?” Ah! if this is your case, we pray in your behalf, “O that they were wise-that they understood this-that they would consider their latter end.”

Here I would also address myself to those whose grey hairs are ready to descend with you into the grave, at the first touch of sickness. I would ask you if you have been wise, and if your souls are as ripe for heaven as your bodies for the ground? But if your broken constitution, and the infirmities of old age, have not yet been able to awake you into a constant preparation for your latter end-what reason is there to expect that words will do it? But I would hope better things of you; I would hope that you have long ago devoted your lives to the Lord; and stand now waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom, and ready for the marriage feast. Nevertheless, if among you there is a grey-headed sinner, let us with double fervour say over him, “O that he were wise! O that he would understand this! O that he would consider his latter end!”

To conclude. Whosoever thou art, O sinner, whether young or old, rich or poor, in the name of the Lord I call upon thee to awake unto wisdom. Let not the god of this world blind thine eyes any longer. Consider ere it be too late. See death behind thee, and eternity at thy feet. Renounce trifles. Set aside the anxious cares of the world. Give up unlawful pleasures. Leave nothing untried to make thy calling and election sure. For, in the scenes of futurity which shall soon be displayed in thy sight, there is no room for alteration; all is steadfast, unmovable, beyond the grave.

Whether we are, then, seated on a throne, or stretched on a rack, a seal will be set to our condition by the hand of everlasting mercy or inflexible justice.

Now, then, that the present hour is still in thy power, use it to the best advantage. Throw thyself into the arms of a merciful Redeemer, and beseech him to prepare thee a place in his everlasting habitations, and to fit thee for the company of God and his angels. Fear not, (if thou art sincere,) far from casting thee away, he waits to be gracious, and to seal to thy heart by his Spirit the remission of thy sins. For with the Lord there is forgiveness that he may be feared. Come, then, wash thyself by faith in the blood of the Lamb-"the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world." And when thou art made clean, "go and sin no more."

I repeat it once more: tarry not; eternity is at stake. God, in the twinkling of an eye, may take away the breath that is in thy nostrils. The next hour sickness may impair thy reason, and deprive thee of all power to think or pray. The next day the Lord Jesus may come to judgment, and the trump of God may sound, to put an end to time and repentance. If not, the messenger of the Lord, which day and night advances toward thee, death, will most certainly do it, ere long; and what will become of thee, if thou art found in thy blood, in thy sins, unpardoned, unconverted? What horror! But I choose to draw a curtain over the deplorable spectacle, and hope none of us will harden his heart against the prayer of Moses, and might not I say against the tears of the Lord Jesus? O let us remember him, as he considered the sinners of Jerusalem a few days before his death; he wept over them, says the Gospel, and cried out, like Moses: "O that they would know, in this their day, the things that belong to their peace." Let not those precious tears of the Son of God; let not the sacred streams that flowed from his hands, his feet, his heart, flow unregarded and despised by us. From this day, let us all be wise unto salvation. And when the wicked shall be destroyed with an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power; when they shall call upon the hills to fall on them, and the mountains to cover them from the wrath of an offended God; in the inexpressible enjoyment of endless bliss we shall ascribe grace, mercy, and love to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb; which may God grant for Jesus Christ's sake, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one eternal God, be ascribed all majesty and dominion, from this time forth for ever.

SERMON IX.-*Causes of offence to our Lord's doctrine.*

"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life," John vi. 66-68.

IN opening these words, I shall endeavour, first, to show what offended so much many of our Lord's disciples, that they walked no more with him. Secondly, I shall

prove from St. Peter's words, by the grace of the Lord, that, as out of Christ there is nothing but eternal death for sinners, so in Christ there is eternal life for the chief of sinners that come to him. I shall then take occasion to make some practical reflections upon those two heads, by way of application. And may the Lord Jesus so shine upon our understandings by the striking light of his truth, and so prepare our hearts by the softening power of his grace, that we may all join Peter in his glorious confession of faith: “To whom shall we go, O Lord? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” who openest the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

I. I shall endeavour to show what offended so much many of our Lord's disciples, that they went back, and walked no more with him.

The sermons which our blessed Lord preached were plain, though deep; sharp as a razor, though smooth as oil; and the effect was the conversion or the confounding of his hearers. True doctrine will always cause a division between the chaff and the wheat of a congregation; it sifts the worldlings, puts the formalists at a stand, and makes the Pharisees and Sadducees, the secret and open infidels in all ages, to exclaim against the severity and depth of Gospel truths: so that some, unable to bear it, run away from the disagreeable sound, as many of our Lord’s disciples did; or, if they come again, it is to seek an occasion against the preacher, and if possible, to catch him in his words as the Pharisees Sadducees, and lawyers tried to do by our Lord himself.

Now, if the eternal wisdom, the lowly, meek Lamb of God, who knew how to suit his discourses to the capacity and wants of his followers, could not declare the counsel of God without exasperating many of his hearers, how can it be expected that we, who have hardly one ray of the wisdom of the Sun of righteousness, should preach the same Gospel without any of the same inconveniences? Do not then conclude, my brethren, that ministers are false teachers, because many rise up against them, and walk no more with them; and that a doctrine is contrary to truth, because it is hard to flesh and blood, and is exploded by the generality of the hearers. In so doing you would condemn Jesus Christ himself, to say nothing of his apostles, whose plain ministry met every where with the greatest opposition. And as for you, my brethren, whose heart speaks still the language of the prejudiced hearers of the Gospel in the days of our Lord; you who often say or think,-“This is a hard saying, who can bear it?”-consider that, as the heart of man is the same in all ages, so is also the Gospel: the same cause will produce the same effect in England as well as in Judea: search, therefore, your hearts; search the Scriptures; and you will find that the opposition which plain Gospel truths meet in you is not owing so much to the uncouthness or harshness of the preacher, as you think, as to a secret aversion which you have to the cross and the Gospel of Christ.

St. John, in the chapter out of which the text is taken, gives us a particular account of the sermon which caused the disciples of our Lord to murmur and depart from

him. It is a close and deep one indeed, and contains many things which are foolishness to the natural man, though they are the wisdom of God to every awakened sinner. First: in the twenty seventh verse, “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, (says our Saviour,) but for that which endureth to everlasting life.” This was more than the worldling and covetous could well bear. There are in every congregation people who bury themselves all the week in worldly cares; they think of nothing else but of adding field to field, or of enlarging their business; they have no time to say their prayers, or if they say them, it is always in a hurry; as for death and judgment, hell and heaven, eternity, and such solemn points of meditation, they do not trouble themselves about them more than about the most impertinent story in the newspaper, perhaps not so much. Now, how could people of this stamp bear the doctrine of our heavenly Master? “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth to eternal life.” No doubt they murmured secretly, or went away saying, “Did you hear this Galilean, this Son of Joseph? He tells us that we must not work. Can there be a more abominable doctrine?” And thus grossly mistaking our Lord, who only endeavoured, by those words, to damp their desires after earthly things that they might begin to provide heavenly food for their perishing souls, they ran away with part of a distorted sentence, made him an offender for a word, and represented him as a man whose doctrines interfered with the duties of people's calling, and tended to subvert the commonwealth.

In the next verse, the Jews asked, “What shall we do that we might work the works of God?” And they expected, no doubt, that our Lord would have said, “You must go regularly to the synagogue; you must take care to have your children circumcised the eighth day; you must religiously observe all the festivals and the Sabbaths; you must pay tithe, and give alms out of all you have;”-for, thought they, if we do all this, who shall do the works of God better than we? But our Saviour, who knew there were hundreds of hypocrites and formal Jews among his hearers who did all this, and were nevertheless as far from the kingdom of heaven as the vilest publican present, answered, to their great surprise, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he has sent.” “This is the work of God that we believe! Why, this is a new doctrine, (thought some of them;) how can faith be the work of God? That man with his doctrine of faith will set aside good works, and then what will become of ‘the law and the prophets?’” This doctrine of salvation by faith never was, and never will be, understood by the world, because all the children of the world are self confident, proud, boasters, as St. Paul says, Romans i., thinking that they can do good works before their heart is washed and changed by faith in Christ Jesus, and little suspecting that what they call their good works are only their least iniquities. “Without me," says our Saviour,” you can do nothing.” “If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love,” true faith, working by love, says St. Paul, “I am nothing.” And now what good works can the best moralist do, what good fruit can the most flourishing bramble produce, till grafted in Christ the true vine? Must not faith make us one with Jesus Christ, the tree of life, before we can bring forth fruit unto God; and is not this the work of God, that we believe on him whom he has sent,-that we come to Christ by faith, to have our hearts changed, and made fruitful in all good words and works?

But this our Lord's hearers did not like. Some, no doubt, blamed him for discouraging people from doing, as they thought, good works; and others could not bear to hear him declare that they had not the true faith, and that therefore their best works were only the fruit of their virtuous and hypocritical pride.

In the fifty-first verse, our Saviour goes deeper yet, and tells the Jews, “I am the bread of life; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.” They could not conceive what he meant by the bread of life, if he did not mean the manna which their fathers had eaten in the wilderness. So in our days, thousands cannot conceive what our Church means by bidding us feed upon Christ in our heart by faith; they believe that it means just kneeling at the communion table, holding out their hand to receive the bread, and eating it with the mouth of the body; and they are ready to quarrel with ministers if they insist upon an inward, spiritual, sensible feeding, in the heart, on the heavenly virtue of Christ's hidden flesh, and of Christ's blood, whereby the soul is refreshed and strengthened, as the body by bread and wine. Nor could the Jews make any thing of that repeated invitation to come to our blessed Lord, in verses 37 and 65: “He that cometh unto me shall never hunger; he shall live for ever. No man can come unto me, except the Father draw him,” &c. Strange doctrine! Some murmured at it, no doubt, and were ready to interrupt the heavenly Teacher by such words as these: “Why, what do you mean by coming to you? Are not we come to you, and some of us from far? Do not we now throng round you? We follow you by land and by water, and yet you say, no man can come unto you except the Father draw him. What unintelligible stuff!” Just so it is in our days. If ministers enforce the duty of coming to Jesus for salvation, of coming spiritually by an inward and constant motion of the heart toward Christ, they are accounted enthusiastic, or, or least, are supposed to affect new and strange methods of leading their flocks out of the beaten track. And if they go farther and declare that all going to church and going to the Lord's table, without this spiritual coming of the soul to Christ, is nothing but an empty form, a round of Pharisaical, hypocritical duties, which, like broken reeds, will pierce the souls of those that lean on them; the complaints run higher, and their hearers openly murmur against them, as the Jews did against our Saviour for the same reason.

But the indignation of our Lord's disciples rose higher still, when he added, in verse 53: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” Except you get a Divine life, a life begun and preserved by feeding in an unspeakable manner upon my body, which shall be broken for you, and by drinking spiritually my blood, which shall be shed for you, you will remain dead to God, as you are dead in trespasses and sins, and ready for the second death, for you have no life in you. At this saying, many could no longer contain themselves, and went away complaining of the harshness of the Lamb of God, and the severity of his heavenly doctrine. How many do the same in our days, when we tell them, as our Lord did his followers, that they are dead, if out of Christ; that they have no life in them till they get a heavenly power to feed upon Christ in their hearts by faith; that though we enjoy an animal life, as the beasts of the field,

and a rational life, as the prince of the air and his angels, yet till we are joined to Christ in one spirit, we are dead to God, and condemned already to the second death! But it is a comfort to us, under the opposition which we may meet with in enforcing this fundamental doctrine, to see that herein we only sip the cup which our blessed Lord and Master did before us; for the evangelist observes in the sixtieth verse, that many of our Lord's disciples, when they heard that we are spiritually dead, that there is no life in us till we live upon him by faith, said, “This is a hard saying, who can bear it?” Here some expect, perhaps, that our Saviour, seeing many of his hearers offended, and ready to leave him, began to palliate the matter, to preach to them in a smoother strain, and to indulge a little their carnal and worldly notions. Just the reverse: he stands to his doctrine, and enforces it more than ever, though all should forsake him and flee. Does this offend you? says he; what if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before, how much more incredible will it then appear to you that he should give you his flesh to quicken your dead soul? And what was the consequence? The text informs us: “From that time,” says the evangelist, “many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” And are we above our blessed Lord? No, dear Jesus, we are not above thee: and if, because thou didst speak the plain truth, many of thy disciples, even those who, the day before, would have made thee a king, went back and left thee, what can we expect of sinners who despise thee, thy ordinances, and thy word! But O leave us not to ourselves, lest we betray both thee and thy Gospel: help us to stand to thy truth, though many of our friends and acquaintance should forsake us for it; yea, help us to resist even unto blood, if thy providence call us to set to our seal that thy word is the word of truth!

II. Having thus showed what offended so much many of our Saviour's disciples, that they departed and walked no more with him; by the assistance of the Lord I am to prove next, that as, out of Christ, there is nothing but eternal death for sinners, so in Christ there is eternal life for the chief of sinners. But these points of doctrine are contained in St. Peter's answer to our Lord. When Jesus saw that many of his disciples were gone, he said unto the twelve, “Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of everlasting life.”

That expression-“To whom shall we go?” shows that man is helpless as well as wretched, and that he is both spiritually dead, and incapable to raise himself to spiritual life, since he must go to another for it. “To whom shall we go?” Here also appears an utter despair of finding relief, not only in one's self, but also in any creature, thing, or means under heaven, but in Jesus Christ. To instance in some particulars:-

1. To whom shall we go for salvation and eternal life? Shall we go to bishops, priests, or deacons? Shall we go to the apostles themselves? No, no: they can only point us to Christ, the way, the truth, and the life: they are neither the way, the truth, nor the life: they are but men, and what says the Scripture? “Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man,” Jer. xvii. 5. It is not so with Christ; for though he is the Son of man, he is also Jehovah God, blessed over all; in him, therefore, we may safely trust.

2. Shall we go to the pope, the pretended successor of St. Peter? Behold, St. Peter himself says: “To whom shall we go, but unto thee, O Lord? Lord, save, or I perish.” And how can St. Peter's pretended successor help us, if Peter cannot help himself?

3. Shall we go to any one denomination of Christians, to the Church of England, to the Church of Rome, to the Baptists, Presbyterians, Independents, or Quakers? Behold, the twelve disciples, the founders of all Christian Churches, the sacred college of the apostles, declare, with one consent, by the mouth of Peter, Salvation is not in us: to whom shall we go but to Christ? If, therefore, the purest Church that ever was or ever will be, a Church composed of apostles only, must go to Christ for salvation, how mistaken are those who trust to the denomination they belong to, as if a Protestant out of Christ was a hair's breadth beyond a Christless Papist, a Turk, or a Jew! In the Revelation our Saviour compares the seven purest Churches of Asia to seven golden candlesticks. Now, you know that a golden candlestick is as useless without a light as a brazen one. Christ alone is the light that is or ought to be placed in all Churches; he is alone the light which shines in darkness, though the darkness comprehends it not. There is then no more salvation in the purest Church, if Christ does not shine in our hearts, than there is light in a candlestick of purest gold, when the taper is put out.

What are, then, the greatest preachers in the world; what is Paul himself, who spake with the tongues of men and angels, when compared with Christ, the living way? Just as much as a fingerpost to a traveller, and no more; as the fingerpost is not the way, but shows the right way, so Paul and all the preachers in the world are nothing, but as they point us to Christ, the way.

4. Shall we go to the Virgin Mary, with the Roman Catholics? “Behold,” says she, “my soul rejoiceth in God my Saviour;” therefore she stood in need of Christ, as her God and Saviour, as much as any one of us: salvation is not then in her, though it is in the fruit of her womb.

5. Shall we go to angels or departed saints? Behold, angels are the servants of those who shall be heirs of salvation, so far from being their saviours, Heb. i. 14; and as to dead saints, they can absolutely do nothing for us,-“for a living dog,” says Solomon, “is better than a dead lion.” If saints could save us, it would be rather living saints than dead ones. It is well for the Virgin Mary and the saints, that they know nothing of the prayers which poor superstitious Christians address to them: if they knew of them, the very thought of such a piece of idolatry committed upon them, to the horrible contempt of Christ, the only Mediator, would damp all the joy in heaven.

6. To whom shall we go then? Shall we go to the writings of the dead, to books of piety and devotion, or to the Scriptures themselves? Alas! life is not in the letter: thousands of wicked men have written and read very good books: good books and the Scriptures are of infinite use in showing us the way of life, but still they are not the way; and when all the Bibles and libraries in the world shall be burnt up with the

world itself, Christ the way will stand, and, as he is the living way, he will live for ever a mighty Saviour to all that come to God through him. “Search the Scriptures,” said he to the Jews, a for in them you think to have life, and they are they which testify of me," John v. 39. The grand use, then, of all good books, and of the Scriptures themselves, is to bear witness of Christ.

7. Shall we make a saviour of our church walls, steeple, and bells? Shall we cry up the church! the church! as the Pharisees cried up the temple! the temple! Far be such a superstitious, such a worse than Popish notion from us: this building has no more in it that can contribute to our salvation, than the synagogue, out of which they cast our Saviour and his apostles. If there was any thing in any one building in the world more than in another, it was in the temple of Jerusalem, an eminent type of Christ, honoured several times by his bodily as well as spiritual presence; and yet one stone is not left upon another on the spot that bore the consecrated walls. But, blessed be God, the living temple of Christ's body, that was destroyed for three days, is now built up again, and stands for ever at the right hand of God; and in that temple it is that the holy catholic Church worships God night and day, in spirit and in truth. Vile drunkards, abominable swearers, filthy whoremongers, covetous extortioners, lying cheats, profane Sabbath breakers, all sorts of sons and daughters of darkness, resort at times within these walls, and remain unsaved from their wickedness. Salvation is not, then, within the walls of any one place of worship in the world, unless Christ manifest himself there as he does not to the world.

8. Where shall we go then? Shall we go out of this wicked world, and retire into a wilderness or a nunnery, as thousands do in the Church of Rome? No: salvation is in neither, out of Christ. Whom did Christ find in the wilderness but the tempter? Whom do monks and nuns find in convents but the tempter, and corrupt nature, worse than the tempter? Shall we go to our closet? Yes, to seek Christ there, but not to make our closet a saviour, as too many do. Shall we go to the Lord's table? Yes, to seek Christ there, but not to make the ordinance a saviour, as the Roman Catholics do, and too many who call themselves Protestants. The Pharisee, because he rested in his devotions, and sought not Christ in them, was made more the child of hell by his fasting and prayer: and when Judas received the sop, he received the seal of his destruction, the devil entering into him instead of God's good Spirit. Therefore ordinances help not, out of Christ.

9. To whom shall we go then? Will you give me leave to put off, for a moment, the character of a preacher of Christ's righteousness, such as I desire to be found among you, and to put on that of a fashionable preacher? Will you permit me to “prophesy smooth things to you, to prophesy deceit?” Well, then, I say, “O man, you ask, with St. Peter, to whom you shall go for salvation? To whom but to your self, to your own endeavours? Do your best, O man. Fulfil all relative and religious duties. Be honest, and go to church; wrong no man, murder nobody, be courteous and civil to all: and if those good works do not take you quite up to heaven, then Christ will lend you a hand at the last.” This is, my brethren, the diabolical scheme which

prevails almost every where, in opposition to the Bible and the doctrine of our Church; this is the masterpiece of Satan; this is nothing but Deism refined, nothing but heathenish morality gilt over with the name of Christianity. This overturns the cross of Christ, and makes man his own saviour in part, if not in whole; this tramples under foot the glorious robe of Christ's righteousness, to exalt the filthy rags of manes own righteousness; this sets at naught the blood of Christ, the Spirit of God, and the operations of Divine grace upon the hearts of men. This supersedes the fundamental doctrines of the fall in Adam, and the new birth in Jesus Christ. This, instead of ascribing salvation to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever, impiously ascribes it to free will and Pharisaical morality. And what is this but saying, "I will remain in myself for salvation; I have the words of everlasting life;" than which there can be no greater blasphemy; for it is the very quintessence of Luciferian pride. This is the wolf in sheep's clothing, which destroys the lambs of the Lord by thousands; this is the detestable doctrine which Paul overturns, and curses, with the preachers of it, in his Epistle to the Galatians: "Though an angel from heaven," says he, chap. i. 8, "preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed." And what is that Gospel, but that which is contained in the text: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of everlasting life." Yes, O thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, we are dead, lost, damned for ever, without thee! Our souls, like Noah's dove, cannot find whereon to fix themselves in all the creation: thou alone art the true, the living ark built by the living God, to save souls alive. There is neither health nor life in us; but thou hast the words of eternal health and life. Ah, Lord, speak them to thy servants, and we shall be whole! Restore thou them that are penitent. Lord, save, or we perish! O Lord, make speed to save us; O Lord, make haste to deliver us! This is the language of Peter, of our Church, and of every penitent sinner. May it be that of all our hearts, till the Lord shall have turned our prayer into praise!

Here, brethren, I would conclude this head, did not I think it will be agreeable to you to have the contents of it supported by some plain scriptures, showing that there is no safety, no salvation, but in Christ, and that he, and he alone, has the words of everlasting life. Moses and Peter, speaking of him, say, "Your God shall raise unto you a prophet from among your brethren, and whosoever will not hear that prophet, [receive his doctrine,] shall be cut off from among the people," that is to say, cut off from God's peoples and consigned to outer darkness, Acts iii. 22. Peter tells the Jews that Jesus Christ is "the stone which is set at naught by the builders, but is nevertheless the head of the corner," that which supports the whole building of each believer's salvation. "Neither is there salvation in any other," adds he, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," chap. iv. 12. In the next chapter, verse 31, the same apostle declares, that "God has exalted Jesus Christ with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, and to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel." And elsewhere, Acts x. 43, he says, "To him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." The third chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans may be looked upon as a short comment upon the text: part of it runs thus: "Every mouth

must be stopped," says the apostle, "and all the world become guilty before God; therefore, by the deeds of the law," by what a man can do in obedience to the law, "shall no flesh be justified. But now the righteousness of God," or God's way of saving sinners, "is manifested" in the Gospel, "by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all that believe, for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God: so that all must be justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood for the remission of the sins that are past." By these scriptures, not to quote any more, you see, my brethren, that if we remain in ourselves, in our sins or self-righteousness, or that if we go to any other person or means but to the eternal Son of God, through all such means we have not the least chance to escape endless ruin; and that if we go to him with all our sins and guilt, with all our misery and helplessness, he has the words of eternal life; he can and will speak peace, pardon, and heaven into our souls, and then from his kingdom of grace translate us into his kingdom of glory. Having thus showed what offended many of the disciples of our Lord, so that they walked no more with him; and having proved that Peter spoke the fundamental truth of the Gospel when he said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life;" I shall conclude by an application of what has been delivered.

Some of you are ready to find fault with us for telling and proving to you, that every natural man, every unconverted person, is in a damnable state, yea, is condemned already: you think this is a monstrous doctrine, not fit to be mentioned in a pulpit. What o is that which is so plainly laid down in the Bible monstrous, and not fit to be mentioned in the pulpit? Well, then, the Bible is not fit to be read in the desk. O, my brethren, how is it that you are yet without understanding in this point? How is it you cannot see that your hard thoughts or hard speeches fall not upon us, but upon that sacred book, and upon the holy, just, glorious, and eternal God, who sent it to you from heaven? And how will you stand at the bar of God when this very book shall be opened for your trial, and your secret murmurings or ungodly speeches against it stare you in the face, with all your other sins? To whom will you go then for the words of eternal life; to God Almighty? Hear what St. Peter says: As God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." "At the proud he looketh afar off," says David; yea, he frowned Satan into hell for his pride; and what greater pride can there be in people that are born in sin, and children of wrath by nature, as you and I are, than to oppose the plain word of God, and to absolve ourselves when the Lord condemns us, instead of pleading guilty, and going to Christ now for life and salvation? Will you go to him in the hour of death? Do you think he will give you heaven then for having trampled his doctrine under foot? Will he take you in, who fight against his word, when he shuts out the foolish virgins who assented to all that it contains? Or shall we go in that awful day to our good works for salvation? Our good works! I should be glad to know which they are? Our oaths and curses, our threats and passions, our whoredom and drunkenness, our filthy talking and jesting, our vain and covetous practices, our lying and slandering, our breaking the Sabbath, and making sport of those who want to fear the Lords our keeping away from the house of God's worship when others resort to it, and our openly refusing to walk with

a crucified Saviour, when the sacred mystery of his dying love is celebrated at the altar,-are these our good works? Will these save us? Having been guilty of such things, shall we ever dream of salvation by our works? When thieves are saved from the gallows by the robbery they have committed, we may fancy to be saved from hell by the works we have done. When the Pharisee shall go justified to his house, we may hope to he pardoned on account of our good deeds. And when the pope shall have turned Christ out of heaven, and the epistles of St. Paul out of the Bible, we may dissent from Peter in the text, and instead of saying with him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life;” we may say with all Deists, “Lord, we need not go to thee, for we have the words of eternal life at our command pour endeavours, works, and righteousness will save us; the pope has shown us this door, and though thou tellest us thou art the door, yet we are determined to go in at our own door.” This I do not speak, my brethren, to set you against good works, but to show you the need of coming to Christ first, that the tree may be made good before you can do works good in the sight of God. “Make the tree good,” says our Lord, “and then the fruit shall be good;” till then, “bring forth fruits meet for repentance;” and when you stand in the Lord by faith, when you are grafted in Christ, when God has given you the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, take St. Paul's advice, 1 Cor. xv. 58, “Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord: forasmuch as you know that,” though your labour would be in vain in yourselves, yet it “is not in vain in the Lord.”

But I would hope that many of you, instead of finding these sayings false and hard, find them true and just; and that were our Lord to say unto you as he did to the twelve, “Will ye also go away?” you would answer as well as Peter, “‘Lord, to whom should we go?’ God is a consuming fire out of thee; angels and saints, bishops and priests, books and ordinances, good works and endeavours cannot save, for thou alone, O Christ, hast the words of everlasting life.” But can you say this from your heart as well as with your lips? Are you entirely reconciled? Are you really well pleased with God's way of saving sinners through faith alone in the blood and Righteousness of Jesus Christ? Do you renounce the devil and all his works; yea, and all dependence upon your own works? Can you, with St. Paul, desire to be found in Christ, not having your own righteousness, but that which is through faith in his blood? Are you determined to glory only in the Lord; to rejoice in nothing so much as in the cross of Jesus your Lord, which is to crucify the world unto you, and you unto the world? Though all men should go back to the world, and walk no more with Christ in the way of the regeneration, are you resolved (the Lord being your helper) to follow Christ and his word, and to stand to your Bible even unto death? If this is the case, rejoice, you dearly beloved of the Lord; the good work is begun in your souls; you are already called out of the world. “Marvel not, then,” says St. John, “if the world hate you;” it hated, it forsook, it crucified your Lord and Master before you, and so it will do by the servant in a measure. O, bear your cross with patience; your Saviour who bore it first comes to meet you with a crown of righteousness, and a crown of glory. O faint not in the meantime; faint not in this day of reproach, scandal, temptation, and darkness. You see many who call themselves disciples, and

Churchmen, exclaiming against the plain doctrine of Christ and of our Church, and refusing to walk with our reformers in the narrow path pointed out in the word of God, and in our articles and homilies. But O, follow not a multitude in the broad way; choose rather with Moses to endure affliction and reproach with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures and smiles of the world for a season. Take the good part of Mary, take the good part of Peter, and though all the world should not only forsake Christ, but also rise up in arms against you for cleaving to his word, stand to the text. In you there is nothing but sin, death, and damnation, says our Church. "In me, that is, in my flesh, (says Paul himself,) dwelleth no good thing." Up then with the apostle; not only renounce with him all other saviours, but go, this moment go, to him whom God has exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour for you. Say not only, "To whom shall we go?" but go directly, with all your sins, with all your misery, to your dying Saviour. Tell him, "Lord, thou hast the words of everlasting life: speak them in my soul." Give him no rest till he say to you, as he did to David, "I am thy salvation;" till he give you the blessing which he gave to the thief upon the cross, to Zaccheus upon the tree, to Nathanael under the fig tree, to the harlot that wept behind him, to the woman who touched the hem of his garment, to the returning prodigal, to the penitent publican in the temple. Fear not; only believe; one grain of the faith of the centurion will remove all your sins upon Christ, who took them away upon the cross. Hear what David says: "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he put our sins from us." Look up then, believe, and live. Does not the Lord even now speak the word that, going justified to your houses through the blood of the everlasting covenant, you may praise and serve him without fear all the days of your lives?

SERMON X.-*On what terms Christ gives life.*

"Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life," John v. 40.

LAST Sunday I showed that Christ has an indubitable right to call us to receive spiritual and eternal life at his hands; because, having stood us our surety, he has fully satisfied Divine justice, and exactly answered the demands of the Divine law: so that now he is the author of eternal salvation to all those that seek it through his merits. I expostulated next with the convinced and awakened sinners; answering their most common objections for putting off their coming to Jesus Christ for life. But as time did not permit me to do such an important subject justice, I shall to-day, by the grace of God, show more particularly upon what terms Christ gives life to those that come unto him: describe four classes of sinners who will not come to Christ that they might have life: prove, by some unanswerable arguments, that unbelief (or not coming to Christ for life) is the most abominable and damning of all sins; and then I shall conclude by exhorting those who are guilty of it to arise, and go to their Saviour for pardon and life. And, in the meantime, may the power of Divine grace, and the virtue of Jesus' name, be so present to wound and to heal our souls, as to make us willing and able to come to him now, that henceforth we may live to the glory of him who died for us!

I. I am to show upon what terms Christ gives life unto those that come to him.

To come to Christ that we may have life is, in general, to believe in him only for salvation. It is to pass through faith, from a state of nature unto a state of grace: from a state of guilt and sin, into a state of peace and holiness: it is to forsake the old Adam and his deeds, and to go unto Christ so as to dwell in him, and to have him dwelling in us. It is, in short, to make an exchange of what we are, for what Christ is or hath: giving all we are worth to buy this pearl, as the wise merchant in the gospel.

This exchange, without which it is impossible to get life, implies four things chiefly.

1. The giving ourselves to him; head, heart, tongue, body, soul, because he bestows himself upon us freely. Then we are enabled to say with the believing soul, Cant. vi. 3, “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine.” When we do this sincerely, we sit already in heavenly places with our blessed Saviour. His Father is our Father: his throne is our throne; and we reap the benefits of his triumphs over death, hell, and the devil.

2. Coming to Jesus Christ for life implies giving all our sins to Christ; confessing them, loathing them, leaving them, casting them upon that Lamb of God, so as to receive rest for our souls from the guilt and power of them. When we do this we are made the righteousness of God in him, who, though he knew no sin, yet was made a sin offering for us.

3. Believing in Jesus Christ, or coming to him for life, implies a giving up our name, pleasure, profit, life, for him and his Gospel; because he gives his crown and honour, his life and all unto us. Thus, when nothing seems to be delightful and glorious unto us but Christ, he takes us into a share of all his delights and glory.

4. Our blessed Lord expects, when we come unto him for life, that we forsake all dependence upon our own righteousness, and place our entire reliance upon his merits; and then we shall obtain absolution from guilt, and be fully and freely “accepted in the beloved.” Now, glorious as these conditions are, it is remarkable that no one ever submitted to accept of them till he was driven to an extremity; no sinner ever coming to Jesus Christ for life till he sees that he is a dead man without him. We all shift for our ourselves, as long as we can, upon the stormy sea of the world, caring little whether Christ is far or near, whether he wakes or sleeps; but if, happily for us, a storm arise in our conscience, and we see ourselves just ready to sink into the gulf of God's judgment, then, and then only, are we made willing to come to Jesus Christ: then, and then only, we cry with the trembling disciples, “Lord, save us, we perish! Lord, quicken our souls by thy saving health, or we die the second death!”

And to convince you of the truth of this amazing assertion, I come,

II. To describe four classes of sinners who make up almost the whole of Christ's visible Church in our day, and yet will not come to Christ for life.

1. The first class consists of those who have well nigh filled up the measure of their iniquities, and sinned away their day of grace. These, like Cain and Judas, seeing their sins very great, and feeling their hearts almost past relenting, scorn to sigh and mourn, and ask for mercy: and unable to bear the consideration of their dangerous, desperate state, like mad dogs they break the chains of restraining grace, and run to the vomit of sin upon the dung hill of profaneness, till they leap into the lake that burneth with unquenchable fire. Of these (humbling and melancholy thought!) there are not a few among us. These you will find running into excesses and debauchery, as far as their shaken constitution and shallow purse will permit. These are noted for rambling from one house of public entertainment to another; for breaking the Sabbath, as far as the fear of the laws will allow them; despising all religious worship, and scoffing at all those that seem soberly and religiously incited. These are the first born of Satan, and the boldest of his visible agents among men: they worship openly their Father; and were their lip prayers (if they pray at all) to be weighed in a balance with their hearty curses and desperate wishes for damnation, you would find that the service they offer to God Almighty bears no proportion to that which they offer to the devil. These people are each of them a living hell; sunk into brutish lusts, and worse than brutish stupidity: swelled with diabolical passions, they have nothing human but the shape, and (blessed be God!) a capacity to come to Jesus Christ, that he may rescue them from the jaws of eternal death. But to these, among us, he says in vain, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” Formerly, indeed, such publicans and sinners flocked to hear the word, and entered into life before the righteous Pharisees and learned scribes; but in our degenerate days both publicans and Pharisees seem to vie who shall slight the Gospel most.

2. The second class of those who refuse to come to Jesus Christ for life, is that of careless, reputable sinners, who, trusting in themselves that they are righteous, (or at least that they are safe, because less unrighteous than others,) slight the invitations of Christ's messengers. Do they hear an offer of Christ? Instead of wondering at the love of the Lord, in making it to them, they regard it not. After the most searching sermon they go home as unaffected with grace and sin as if they had been hearing a ballad, or seeing a horse race. You may know them by such language as this, when the tedious discourse is over: “It is very fine weather to-day. Well, what do you say of the man? For my part I believe he means well; but do you not think he overdoes the matter? Did you see such a one at church? We had but a thin congregation to-day, the roads are so dirty.” Thus he will speak of the weather, the congregation, the minister, the sermon, and what not? but if ever you hear him mention the love of God in Christ, or the sinfulness of his heart, and the danger of his unconverted state, represented in the sermon, you may wonder, for the leopard has changed one of his spots. These careless sinners, who are every where the most numerous tribe, are for the world, their farm, their merchandise, their wife; they have married or intend to marry, and the care of the perishing body engrosses almost all their thoughts. As the

Gadarenes, disturbed about the loss of their herd of swine, came to Jesus, and besought him to depart out of their coasts: or like the devils, who, when our Lord was going to cast them out of the man, cried, “What have we to do with thee? Art thou come to torment us before the time?” So these worldly, careless sinners, when we invite them to rend their hearts, and turn unto the Lord with weeping, fasting, and praying, account our ministry troublesome and dangerous. They wish we would depart out of their coasts, or complain that we try to make them uneasy before the time. Scorning to yield to conviction, and stifling the checks of their own conscience, they soon grow so careless, or rather so hardened, that they make no more of the offer of Christ than of the offer of a straw. Were a good bargain put to them, they would forget all their business to accomplish it: but when it is only Jesus Christ and life that they are invited to, they suppose it time enough to think of that; they pray to be excused for the present; or madly suppose that they have already accepted him. I want words, brethren to express the greatness of the danger of these Laodicean sinners, who say, “I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.” I shall only observe, that if the blood of Abel cried to heaven for vengeance against Cain, the blood of Christ will one day cry much louder against these unbelievers, who, by slighting it, spill it afresh every moment. To these, then, as well as against desperate unbelievers, the man of sorrows and Lord of glory says, with great reason, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.”

3. The third sort of sinners that reject this kind offer of our Lord, is that of presumptuous unbelievers; who, seeing what sins they have committed, and it may be, having now and then some touches of sorrow for them, catch notionally at Christ, and hope to be saved by him, before ever they come to feel sin as a heavy curse. These catching notionally at Christ, and hoping that they have him already, shut him out of the future, and so in fact reject him. This is the case of most of those who are only half awakened. The Prophet Micah describes them in these remarkable words: “The sin of Israel is great, and unrepented of, yet will they lean upon the Lord and say, Is not the Lord among us? None evil can come upon us,” Mic. iii. 11. You will never hear people that are in this dangerous state complain of their utter want of faith, but only of the weakness of their faith; and they will not be beaten off from the notion, that they are true but weak believers. Let them hear never so much of their real misery, and see never so much of their desperate sinfulness, yet they will hold their imaginary trust in Christ: as if one could savingly trust in Christ, before he has truly experienced the bitterness of sin, and been clearly convinced of unbelief, John xvi. 9. Therefore, these also, (though they profess with their lips and conversation to come to Christ for life,) yet in fact keep at a distance from him with their heart, as well as desperate and careless unbelievers. This was the case of the foolish virgins. They made great profession of going to meet the bridegroom, as well as the wise ones, and really thought they had oil in their vessels, or faith in their hearts; but being mistaken, they justly perished for their wilful delusion.

4. The fourth, and last class of unbelievers, who make Christ complains that they will not come unto him that they might have life, is that of those who are convinced

they have not life,-they perceive in general that they are in a bad state,-they have some confined sight of their sins, and of their need of Jesus Christ,-but after all, they do not know whether they had best come to him or not. They see some good in a Saviour, for which they fain would have him; such as peace, grace, pardon, and heaven: but they see many things in his offer of life that overbalance those advantages. They must bid adieu to all their foolish pastimes, and vain diversions: the drunkard must renounce his cups, and the silly virgin her love of dress: the gamester must part with his cards and dice, and the jovial man with his foolish talking and jesting: the covetous man must cut his right hand, that is, give to the poor what he laid up for himself: the unclean person must pluck out his right eye, that is, part with the gratifying of some base lust, which is dearer to him than a right eye; and Nicodemus must confess Jesus openly, even before Pontius Pilate: all must take up the cross of their Saviour, and follow him through evil report, slander, and cruel mockings. Now all this is very hard to flesh and blood; and people who are disturbed by the dread of the cross, and the fear of man, being drawn by the love of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, of course remain irresolute and unsettled in their principles: they will lean this way, and that way; now they put their hand to the plough, and the next moment they look back: to-day they resolve to sell all, to buy the pearl of great price; but to-morrow they think it is venturing too far, and begin to hope that they can be saved at a lower rate. With the young man in the Gospel, they will ask you in a fit of devotion, “What they must do to inherit eternal life?” But if you tell them that all the good they have done from their youth up, or can do to their dying breath, will stand them in no stead without Christ; that they must sell all, renounce all their sins, without excepting the most delightful, fashionable ones, and follow their Saviour through the regeneration; though they have perhaps not much of this world’s goods, yet they will go away sorrowful, as well as he that had great possessions. If ministers could show them some by way to steal into heaven without bearing the reproach of the cross, and denying the flesh, then they would embrace the Gospel: if we could teach them how to follow the world and Christ at the same time, and how to die the death of the righteous after having lived the life of the worldly, they would rank us among the best preachers: if we gave them to understand that they might compound the matter between Christ and Belial, and keep upon fair terms with the world and God at the same time, they would be converted this very day. But from such half conversion, good Lord, deliver us and them! Of such half conversion our Saviour speaks, Matt. xiii. 20: “He that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: but as he hath not root in himself, he dureth only for a while; for when tribulation, temptation, or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended,” and falleth back to the world. These sinners are the most unhappy of all: they enjoy neither the pleasures of sin, nor those of godliness: they have neither earth nor heaven; for as they halt between Baal and God, and serve neither faithfully, they are rewarded by neither. They are a kind of mongrels in religion, a monstrous compound of Christianity and worldliness. One day they cry, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” and seem to confess him in his doctrine, and the next day, drawn away, or overawed by the scribes and Pharisees of the age, they join the general cry, “Away with him,

his doctrine is too strict; his conditions are too hard; his offers are too full of restriction; at this rate who can be saved?" Thus these also, in the end, are found despisers of Christ, as well as desperate sinners, careless sinners, and presumptuous sinners; all refusing to come unto him that they might have life upon his own terms. I hasten now,

III. To show the greatness of their sin, which consists in wilful unbelief; or, in other terms, in not coming to Christ that they might have life.

1. It is the most heinous of all sins. By committing all other imaginable sins, we indeed trample under foot the holy law of God: but by the sin of unbelief, by not coming to Christ to receive life from him, we trample under foot the blood of the Son of God, and look upon it as a common thing: and in this state there is absolutely no salvation for us, Heb. vi. 6.

2. If you are guilty of murder and adultery, of drunkenness and injustice, you sin against the justice and holiness of God: but by unbelief, by not coming to Christ for life, you sin not only against the justice and holiness of God, but against his mercy too; and thus shut against yourself the only door at which you can escape from endless ruin.

3. Unbelief, or not coming to Jesus Christ for life, is the only damning sin under the Gospel. In fact, suppose a reprobate, guilty of all the abominations of Manasses, the extortions of Zaccheus, the oaths of Peter, and the wickedness of the dying thief: if such a monster, loaded with these mountains of repeated and aggravated guilt, comes sincerely to Jesus for life and pardon, will the Son of God cast him out? Or will he save to the uttermost the chief of sinners? He will, he must save him. The promise hath passed his lips. He can in no wise cast him out. For he that believeth in him, though he were dead in all manner of sins, yet shall he live, and with Manasses and David shall praise a pardoning God. So true it is, that a grain of living faith will remove the highest mountain of sin into the sea of Jesus' blood. On the other hand, suppose a man as exact in all religious and social duties as the Pharisee mentioned in the Gospel: suppose again, if you please, that he has always lived as sober, as pious a life as the hopeful young man that had kept the letter of all the commandments from his youth; yet what will that avail him in that day? If, resting upon his goodness, as the Pharisee, or thinking the Gospel terms too hard, as the young man, he never comes to Jesus Christ for life, or goes away sorrowful before he receives it, he must perish in his blood, he must die the second death, as surely as if he had the guilt of all the sins of David and Manasses upon his conscience. And that for two reasons: first, dying out of Christ, he dies in the old Adam, dies a natural man, dies unrenewed; and such a one can never see the kingdom of God, John iii. 3. Secondly, there is but one way to get into that kingdom, namely, Christ, the way, John xiv. 6. And if a child of Adam should be never so circumspect in his conduct, without entering this way, he could never see life, but must inevitably perish: unless you suppose he can climb up some other way, contrary to John x. 1. Upon these

considerations, it is acknowledged by all sound divines, that had Judas come to the blood of sprinkling as Peter did, he would have been pardoned as well as he, notwithstanding his most horrible crime; and that, on the contrary, Nicodemus, with all his piety and morality, would have been damned as well as Judas, had he not come to Jesus that he might have life. Whence flows that Christian axiom which sounds like blasphemy in the ears of every unconvinced sinner, but which will stand as long as the Gospel stands: one single sin will damn for ever the best liver, if he does not come to Jesus Christ that he may have life, and be born again of the Spirit. And on the other hand, all manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven to him that comes to Jesus for life: so that the once abominable Manasses, dying in Christ, lifts up his eyes in endless glory; and the virtuous Pharisee, dying out of Christ, lifts them up in eternal torments. So true is that saying of our Lord, " The last shall be first, and the first last."

4. It is the sin that God will punish with the hottest place of hell. Capernaum was a town where our blessed Lord often invited people to come to him for life, both by his preaching and miracles: but it was then as it is now, they made light of the invitation. Some went to their farms, and others to their merchandise, and not a few reviled our Saviour and his doctrine, accounting him uncharitable, or out of his senses. This engaged the Son of God, mild and gentle as he was, to make, for our warning, this amazing declaration: “Thou Capernaum, that art exalted to heaven,” that supposest thou art in the way to heaven, and as it were, already there, “shalt be brought down to hell:” thy inhabitants shall be consigned to hell, and shall have the hottest place there: “For I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon, yea, for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you.” Who could ever have believed this, had not the Son of God revealed it again and again? What! shall those who call themselves God's people, and think they are sure of heaven; who lead a moral life, and attend God's ordinances, as the Capernaites; shall they be more severely punished than those impure children of Belial. the inhabitants of Sodom, who met a hell upon earth, and were visibly driven, by flakes of fire from heaven, into a lake burning with brimstone in hell? Yes! so heinous in the sight of God, so abominable is that sin of unbelief, of not coming to Christ for life, that He who judgeth righteous judgment has pronounced it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for Bethsaida, in the day of judgment. Archbishop Usher, in one of the sermons that I read to you last summer, accounts boldly for that amazing instance of Divine severity. “The inhabitants of Sodom,” says he, “sinned against nature, and their own blood; whereas unbelievers sin against grace, and the blood of the Son of God.”

5. It is the sin which brings the greatest dishonour to God. It is not only an open contempt of his authority, but of his mercy and love. It is also a direct reflection upon the Divine veracity: for “he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” The prodigal son made himself vile and abominable by his riotous living; but yet pity and mercy pleaded for him in his father's breast. But suppose he had refused the kiss of peace which his father gave

him, had slighted the best robe, and determined still to wear his filthy rags; would not such behaviour have stabbed his father to the heart, and have appeared more monstrous in his sight than all his former miscarriages? This is exactly the case with us: till we come to Jesus Christ for life, we are all prodigal children: we have all squandered away our portion-the Divine favour and image: we have all fed the devil's swine far from our native country, heaven: we have all indulged our sinful appetites, and kept at a distance from God with our hearts, even when we drew near to him with our lips. And now that our Father is come from heaven, in the person of the Son of his love, and sends to us day by day the ministers of his Gospel, to offer us the kiss of peace, and the best robe of righteousness; can we fill up the measure of our iniquities in a manner more cutting to his loving heart, than by spurning his mercy, and finding fault with the terms on which he offers us salvation?

6. It is the most desperate of all sins. If a man has cursed and sworn a hundred times in his life, I grant that he has a hundred times sold his soul to the devil for naught, and given himself a hundred deadly wounds; but yet his case is not hopeless. If he come to the Son of God for life, he will bring him back from the jaws of destruction, and cure all his wounds with the balm of Gilead, his most precious blood: but if he only neglect to come to Jesus Christ, he desperately rejects the only remedy: “There remaineth no other sacrifice for sin," says St. Paul; he cannot be renewed to repentance any other way than that into which he refuses to come. In short, he cuts his own throat, and then madly refuses the surgeon's help, and dies as stubborn, presumptuous, and hardened as Lucifer himself. This is the lamentable end of all those who let Christ complain in vain, that they will not come to him that they might have life. And I cannot but incline to the opinion of many eminent divines, among whom is Bishop Latimer, who affirms, this wilful unbelief, this careless neglect of Christ and his blood, if persisted in to the end, is the only unpardonable sin, because it overturns the very means of forgiveness by rejecting the application of the blood of Christ.

7. It is a sin of so deep a dye, that all the devils in hell cannot commit the like. Our Saviour never prayed, wept, bled, and died for devils. He never said to them, “Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.” They can never be so madly ungrateful as to slight a Saviour. Mercy never wooed their stubborn, proud hearts, as it does ours. They have abused grace, it is true, but they never trampled mercy under foot: this more than diabolical sin is reserved for thee, careless sinner, who goest on in vanity without calling on Christ for a broken and contrite heart, and supposest thyself safe, though the blood of Christ never washed thy filthy soul, and melted thy stubborn heart. O what despairing reflections dost thou prepare for thyself, when Christ, in his turn, shall bid thee depart! Now thou hearest him compassionately say, in the text, “Ye will not come unto me,” and thou remainest unmoved. Shut up in unfelt guilt and unbelief, thou wonderest perhaps what we mean, by speaking so much of coming to Christ for life: but the time cometh when thou shalt wonder at thy madness for making light of the gracious offer. The time cometh when Jesus, who meekly intreats, shall sternly curse: when he who in tender patience says, “Ye will

not come unto me for life," shall thunder in righteous vengeance, "Depart from me, ye cursed; depart unto the second death, the fire prepared for the devil and his angels." In vain wilt thou plead then as thou dost now, "Lord, I am no adulterer, I am no extortioner, I used to eat at thy table, I was baptized in thy name, I was a true Churchman, there are many who are worse than I am." In vain shalt thou thus say, "Lord, Lord:" this will not admit thee into the kingdom of Christ. His answer will be, "I know you not: you never came unto me for life." This is the condemnation, says he, John iii. 19, this is the true cause of your condemnation-"the light [Christ and his grace] is come into the world, and you love darkness rather than light:" you remain shut up in your natural darkness, and care not for the light of God's countenance, which shines again in Christ upon believing souls. Yea, some are so far from caring for it, that they explode it as the visionary dream of men whose brain is turned by religion, or whose tongue is actuated by hypocrisy. But wisdom shall be justified of her children. In the meantime our commission stands in full force: "Preach the Gospel to every creature." And what is that Gospel? "He that believeth, he that cometh to the Son that he might have life shall be saved; he that believeth not, he that cometh not to the Son for spiritual life, for a new birth of the Spirit, shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. For he only that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son, were he as good a man as Nicodemus, or Cornelius, hath not life, 1 John v. 12; yea, is condemned already, John iii. 18: he shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him, John iii. 36.

And will you remain any longer in this state, my dear brethren? Estranged from Jesus Christ, the source of all life, grace, and glory? Will you thus continue without God, and without Christ in the world? Strangers to the hope of Israel, the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus, and unacquainted with the love of God, which flows from the sense of that forgiveness? Can neither the broken law, which curses you? Nor the arm of Divine justice lifted up against you, till you are grafted into Christ? Nor hell, moved from beneath to meet you at your coming? Nor the consideration of your manifold aggravated sins, that cry for their wages, your eternal death? Can none of these things drive you to Jesus Christ, in prayers of distress and faith? Shall he still complain that you will not come to him that you might have life? Shall he still weep over ungrateful Jerusalem, and say, "O how often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not! Behold I am come from heaven to seek my lost sheep: I am the good Shepherd, that have laid down my life for the sheep: I call them by name: my every look, my every breath, says, Sinners, come unto me for life: but you know not my voice, you follow strangers. The world never sweat blood for you, and yet you leave me for the world: the flesh never opened to you the kingdom of heaven, and yet you forsake me to fulfil the desire of the flesh: the devil never expired upon a cross for you, and yet you renounce me to cleave to the devil and his works! O hard-hearted, ungrateful sinners, what can I do more for you? Can tears move you? Behold I have poured out my soul in tears and strong cries to God on your behalf, Heb. v. 7. Will you not be wrought upon put by tears of blood? Behold, all my pores, like so many weeping eyes, distil blood, great drops of blood falling to the ground, to wash away your sins; and yet you

will not come to me that you might have life. Must you see me pant, and bleed, and die for you in unknown agonies of body and soul? Behold me nailed to an accursed cross, a spectacle to angels and men! I stand your surety between earth and heaven. I discharge your debt in blood. I make reconciliation: I bring in everlasting righteousness: I expire for your sins. Now the covenant is sealed: my heart, my loving heart is pierced for your transgressions: the fountain of purifying blood and living water is opened: you may come, wash, and be clean. And if you suppose that, because I died for your sins, I cannot give you life: see me rising triumphantly for your justification. Now, the eternal conqueror of death and hell, I sit upon my throne, offering life to all mankind, and to you; and yet 'ye will not come unto me that you might have life.'" Thus complains the lover of souls in the text. Ah! my dear fellow sinners! let us yield to his gentle rebuke and moving expostulation. Let us go to him, for he only has the words of eternal life. This moment let us cast our helpless, guilty, damned souls upon his atoning blood. Through faith let us draw life out of his death, and more abundantly life out of his resurrection. Behold, sinners! the ark is ready. The storm of God's judgments gathers amain. A flood of Divine vengeance is going to sweep away the wicked from the earth. The patience of God is well nigh exhausted; and the true Noah, Jesus Christ, says once more, "Come unto me that ye may have life." O come now! Enter the ark to-day! In the ark there is salvation. In Christ, and in him alone, there is pardon and life. "But will he indeed receive me? Will he take in such a leprous, guilty soul as mine?" Yes, thou poor, afflicted, dejected sinner! he will, he does take thee in: for he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Only let thy heart close with his heart, thy soul with his soul, thy sins with his blood, and thou shalt find that thy life is bound up in his life; and that where he is, there shall his servant, his spouse, his member be. Thus shut up safe in the true ark, thou shalt outride all the storms of sin, temptation, death, and judgment, which will soon overwhelm a Christless world.

SERMON XI.-*Danger of the wicked.*

"O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul," Ezekiel xxxiii. 7-9.

THE king, by his pious proclamation, the Church, throughout the service we have performed, and God himself, in the solemn words of the text, call upon all preachers to shake off the dust of indolence, and put on the armour of God, on this mournful day.[2] At all times we are bound to be instant in preaching the word, both in season and out of season; but on such a day as this, we are especially commanded to cry aloud and spare not, to draw the sword of the Spirit, the keenest word of God, and sheath it in the very bowels of profaneness. We must attack, unmask, and overthrow

vice, with a holy violence, and strike at the heart of sin with the boldness of John the Baptist, and in the spirit of Elijah. You see, by the words of the text, that God has set us as watchmen unto the house of Israel; and bids us say to the wicked, “Thou shalt surely die.” He adds, that if we do not warn the wicked from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but his blood shall be required at our hands; and after so express a commission, who can be offended, if, superior to the frowns or smiles of sinners, we obey our heavenly, yea, and our earthly king's commands, and deliver our own souls by warning the wicked of impending ruin.

Without any apology for my plainness, I shall therefore endeavour, first, to convince the wicked man both of his wickedness and danger: and then conclude by giving such directions as will be a means (through Divine mercy) either to save his soul, or deliver my own.

I. I shall endeavour to convince the wicked man both of his wickedness and danger.

It is agreed by all divines that the wicked man never repents till he is convinced of his wickedness; and David tells us that “he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful,” Psalm xxxvi. 2. For, till then, he thinks it is delightful, fashionable, profitable, and not very perilous. The preacher has then but one way to take in order to convince him, and that is, to lay before him, out of the word of God, the picture of his wickedness in such true colours, that he may be constrained to say, “I am the man.” Then, and not till then, will he loath himself, discover his imminent danger, and begin to flee from the wrath to come. Therefore, that each may know whether he is the man, let him attentively consider whether his conscience does not plead guilty to one of the eight following marks of “wickedness;” for if but one of these be seen upon him, he is the man.

1. A numerous tribe, among which the wicked man is often found, is that of practical Atheists. Thousands there are, (it is to be feared,) who, by gross ignorance, shameful neglect of instruction, and abominable contempt of godliness, open the way for all those that go the downward road, and are, as it were, in the front of the battle, and next to the prince of darkness. Their heart is darkened by the mists of pride and the clouds of presumption, and they are such utter strangers to their want of spiritual light and Divine grace, that they seldom or never call upon God for help with any solemnity. The unhappy heathenish families who are of this stamp meet regularly every day to eat, drink, and make provision for the flesh; but how seldom do they meet to read and pray, to seek, and partake together of the bread of angels, and the water of life. You will find almost as much godliness among the wild Indians as among these practical Atheists. But why should I call them Atheists? They have many gods. The world is their god, pleasure is their god, vanity is their god, money is their god, their belly is their god: to some or other of these idols they sacrifice their hearts and their time. As for the God of heaven, the great and eternal Jehovah, they put him off with a careless attendance on his public worship on Sunday morning, if

the weather suits them; and it is well if to this they add sometimes the babbling over of the Lord's prayer and the creed, which, after all, in the manner in which they do it, is no better than a solemn mockery of the Saviour, whom they constantly crucify afresh. Do you belong to such a heathenish, prayerless family, and are you hurried down the stream of its profaneness? If you do, suffer me to deliver my soul by telling you that you are the very first person to whom I am bound to say, “Thou shalt surely die.” Read your sentence in Psalm lxxix. 6: the Lord will “pour out his wrath upon the heathen that have not known him, and upon the kingdoms that call not upon his name.” What! Shall the indignation of the Lord fall upon prayerless families among the heathens, and shall it pass by the nominally Christian, but prayerless family to which you belong? No, no: the Judge of all the earth will do right, he will repay you to your face. “Verily,” says the Son of God himself to those who call themselves Israelites or Christians, and are not: “Verily, verily, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you,” Matt. xi. 21. O repent and turn; turn and live; for why should you fall into the hands of the living God, and know him a consuming fire to the profane?

2. The wicked is often known to others and to himself, by his injustice, oppression, cruelty, deceit, and unfair dealing. Did you ever make a prey of the poor and helpless, as the stronger beasts used to do of the weaker? Are you like the horse leech, crying, “Give, give,” still wanting more profit, and never thinking you have enough? Do you take more care to lay up treasures upon earth than in heaven? Have you got the unhappy secret of distilling silver out of the poor man's brows, and gold out of the tears of helpless widows, and friendless orphans? Or, which is rather worse, do you directly or indirectly live by poisoning others, by encouraging the immoderate use of those refreshments, which, taken to excess, disorder the reason, ruin the soul, and prove no better than slow poison to the body? If your business calls you to buy or sell, do you use falsehood, do you equivocate, do you exaggerate or conceal the truth, in order to impose upon your neighbour, and make your profit of his necessity or credulity? If any one of these marks be found upon you, it is enough; God's word singles you out, and draws you to the bar of Divine justice to hear your doom in the text: “The wicked shall surely die;” or that more particular sentence in Isaiah xxx. 12: “Because you trust in oppression, perverseness, and deceit,” saith the Lord, “this iniquity shall be as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.” O see your danger, repent, and make restitution! Why should you meet the unjust steward in hell, when you may yet follow Zaccheus into heaven?

3. But if you have always been free from these two marks of a wicked man, are you equally free from another, that is not less sure than either of the former? There is a fearful sin, which has in it no profit, no pleasure, no, not sensual sweetness enough to bait the hook of temptation. The only enticement to it is the diabolical disposition of the wicked man, and the horrid pride he takes in cutting a figure among the children of Belial. I speak of oaths and curses,-those arrows shot from the string of a hellish heart, and the bow of a Luciferian tongue, against heaven itself. Those are

some of the sparks of hell fire, which now and then come out of the throat of the wicked man. Do they ever come out of thine? A year ago I laid before you the horror of that sin, and besought you by the tender mercies of the Lord Jesus Christ, to leave it to Satan and his angels, and to act no more the part, I shall not say of a wicked man, but of an incarnate devil. But have you strictly complied with the solemn request? Has not heaven been pierced with another fiery dart? Have not good men, or good angels, (if any attend you still,) shuddered at those imprecations which you have used, perhaps without remorse? Has not the prince of darkness smiled, and hell exulted, to hear that some of their hideous sounds proceed yet out of your ungodly mouth? If your conscience pleads guilty here, and you have not wept bitterly, and obtained pardon for the black transgression, you are the "wicked;" you "shall surely die," unless tears of repentance speedily flow, and the blood of a dying Saviour wash out the hellish stain. To you it is that David speaks in Psalm cix. 18: "As he clothed himself with cursing as with a garment, it shall come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones." O, will you still pull down this fearful curse upon your head, and entail the Almighty's judgments upon this guilty land? Will you die for the mere pleasure of cursing and dying? Merciful Saviour, forbid it! Pluck these brands out of the fire, and quench them in thy blood.

4. But perhaps your conscience bears you witness that you are not a swearing Christian, or rather a swearing infidel. Well, but does not the threatening of the text light upon you on some other account? To instance in a fourth particular: are you clear in the point of adultery, fornication, or uncleanness? Does not the guilt of some vile sin, which you have wickedly indulged in time past, and perhaps are still indulging from time to time, mark you for the member of a harlot, and not the member of Christ; for a child of Belial, and not for a child of the God of purity? Do not you kindle the wrath of Heaven against yourself and your country, as the men and women of Gomorrah did against themselves and the other cities of the plain? If you cherish the sparks of wantonness, as they did, how can you but be made with them to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire? And do not flatter yourself with the vain hope that your sin is not so heinous as theirs. If it be less in degree, is it not infinitely greater in its aggravating circumstances? Were these poor Canaanites Christians? Had they Bibles and ministers? Had they sermons and sacraments? Did they ever vow, as you have done, to renounce the devil, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh? Did they ever hear of the Son of God sweating great drops of blood, in an agony of prayer, to quench the fire of human corruption? Now, you have heard of this; you profess to believe it; and yet you sin on, both against the heavenly light and the heavenly blood. O what horrible guilt do you bring upon yourself, and upon the whole land! "Know you not that your body is," or ought to be, "the temple of God? Now if any defile the temple of God, him will God destroy," 1 Cor. vi. 18. O acknowledge your guilt and danger, and by deep repentance prevent infallible destruction.

5. Some will, perhaps, secretly triumph here, as the Pharisee once did, because they are "not as other" wicked "men, unjust, extortioners, adulterers," and unclean:

but, suppose the dart of sin has not wounded their breasts, are they in a better case if they rim the sword of intemperance through their own bowels? Gluttony and drunkenness are the two idols to which many sacrifice the marrow and fatness of the land, together with their time and strength. He is a glutton who eats barely for the pleasure of eating: he is a drunkard who drinks for the bare pleasure of drinking, though he should be so "mighty to mingle strong drink," as not to discompose either his reason or constitution. The men of the old world were "eating and drinking," says our Lord, (as if that had been the end of their creation,) when God swept them away by the flood: the Israelites had yet in their teeth the meat which they had wantonly desired, when God arose and slew the wealthier of them. "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play," says St. Paul, "and there fell of them that day about three thousand men," by a fearful judgment of God. Yea, the very sin of Sodom is said to have been indulgence and fulness of bread at first,-epicurism naturally leading into all debauchery and excess. Whether, therefore, you dig your grave with your teeth, and entomb in your own bowels that which should be the support of your family and of the poor; or whether, to indulge the lust of the flesh, or only to please and countenance your carnal acquaintance, you can spend the best part of a day in pouring drink offerings into the shrine of Belial which you carry about you; St. Paul describes your sins, and tells you your danger in Phil. iii. 18: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Observe the words, "whose end is destruction." Walk on then, O man, according to the desire of thy heart, the lust of thy eye, and the way of the world; pull down the judgments of a righteous God upon the land, upon thy family, and thyself, by the cords of surfeiting! drunkenness, or indulgence; "but remember, that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment." O might we all, on this grand day of humiliation, humble ourselves, call for the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, and be washed from this iniquity, before it be our eternal ruin of body and soul.

6. I cannot pass in silence the detestable, though fashionable sin, which, joined to the last I spoke against, has brought down the curse of Heaven, and poured desolation and ruin upon the most flourishing kingdoms: I mean, pride in apparel. After the fall, God gave our first parents coats to cover their shame, but their children use them to declare their pride: and even in this place, where poverty, hard labour, and drudgery would, one should think, prevent a sin which Christianity cannot tolerate even in kings' houses, there are not wanting foolish virgins who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and betray the levity of their hearts by that of their dress. Yea, some women that should be mothers in Israel, and that should adorn themselves with good works as holy and godly matrons, openly affect the opposite character. You may see them offer themselves first to the idol vanity, and then sacrifice their children upon the same altar. As some sons of Belial teach their little ones to curse, before they can well speak; so these daughters of Jezebel drag their unhappy offspring (before they can well walk) to the haunts of vanity and pride. They complain, perhaps, of evening lectures, but run to midnight dancings. If you believe them, it is almost abominable

to meet a minister, to seek the Lord, and sing his praises; but they can, with a good conscience, meet a harper, and, at the sound of his harp, make their children go through the fire of vanity, that Moloch of our days! O that such persons would let the prophet's words sink into their frothy minds, and fasten upon their careless hearts: “Because the daughters of Sion are haughty,” says the Lord, “and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, the Lord will smite with a sore the crown of their head, and discover their shame: instead of well-set hair there shall be baldness, and burning instead of beauty.” Nor will the punishment stop here; for this abominable sin of vanity and pride calls for the judgments of God upon the whole nation that indulge it; and therefore the prophet adds immediately: “Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy gates shall lament and mourn,” Isa. iii. 25. Thus this fashionable sin, which the god of this world represents as a piece of good breeding, according to God's words, will end in burning for those who commit and encourage it, and in destruction for the city or kingdom that suffers it, if speedy reformation, and the intercession of Christ, do not prevent the operations of the avenging sword.

7. Will you give me leave, my brethren, to lay before you another mark which shows that the man on whom it is found is certainly “wicked” before God, though in the account of men he may be religious and upright; I mean no less a sin than that of perjury, which implies, first taking an oath rashly, and then breaking it wickedly. I question whether any thing under heaven can be more solemn than taking an oath, and any thing on this side hell more abominable than falsifying it. And yet, what is more common! How many perjured persons do the flaming eyes of almighty God see throughout the kingdom! “Because of swearing the land mourneth,” said a prophet of old; but had he lived in our degenerate days, he would have added, “because of perjury the land groaneth.” To go no farther than that spot which we inhabit; how many of us, who have been from time to time entrusted with public offices, have wilfully broken the oaths administered unto us; I shall not say in one, but perhaps in a hundred instances! How many open and notorious drunkards, fighters, Sabbath breakers, blasphemers of God's word, cursers of men, and other notorious sinners have escaped deserved censure, I shall not say by the accidental neglect, but by the downright perjury of officers! And if those that should repress wickedness make no conscience of breaking their oath, that is, of committing themselves the greatest piece of wickedness under heaven, how will they make conscience of repressing lesser abominations in others! Nor does the generality of this Atheistical and damnable sin make it more excusable in the sight of God. It would have been no excuse for Satan, or for the inhabitants of Sodom, to say that they hoped their rebellion was trifling, because thousands of wicked angels, or wicked men, shared in it. And it will be no cloak for the forsworn person to say, “I am not alone, and, if perjury be a damning sin, God help us all!” The very heathen have punished perjury with death; and how the righteous God will punish it in professed Christians, I leave vou to infer from these words of the prophet, “I turned and lifted up my eyes,” says he, “and behold a flying roll. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll, the length whereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth; for every

one that sweareth shall be cut off according to it. I will bring it forth, saith the Lord: it shall enter into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name, and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof and the stones thereof." If you want to know what that roll of cursing is, according to which the perjured sinner shall be cut off, I answer, that it includes all the plagues written in the book of God. "So help me God," says he who takes an oath; and then he bows and kisses the Bible: that is to say, "Let God so truly help me, according to the promises of this book, as I will be true to my oath;" which implies, that if he falsify it, he prays that all the lamentations, curses, and woes, written in that book, may fall upon his perjured head: and the angry God will answer his horrible prayer, if the perjurer do not speedily repent of his sin, and seek shelter in the wounds of a crucified Saviour.

8. For the sake of brevity, I shall crowd into another article many classes of wicked men; as the day would be too short to give you a particular account of their guilt and danger.

At the head of these I would put the hypocrites; they that appear, or try to appear to be godly, out of vain glory and for private interest, or some selfish and sordid end. These are the very spawn of the crooked serpent, and, like him, attempt to transform themselves into angels of light, in order more effectually to promote the interests of the kingdom of darkness. From these pests may God deliver our Church and state! These bring a curse upon us, as Nathan did upon the Israelites of old. If any such be here, may the dagger of conviction make a wound in their seared consciences, and pierce their callous hearts!

Next to these I would put enthusiasts; that is to say, those people who dare to talk of the workings of the Spirit of God on their minds and hearts, when yet, by their words or works, they show that they are possessed by the spirit of pride and malice, or of covetousness and lust, in short, by the spirit of the devil. Wherever God begins to work, Satan will counterwork; and he does it often by dressing up some of his children as Christians, teaching them something of the language of Canaan, and then putting them upon doing the works of darkness, that the children of the world may conclude that all pretenders to the workings of God's Spirit are either fools or knaves, mere enthusiasts, and no better than these deceived ones. O let none of us countenance these first born of Satan: let us try to detect them, and turn out the wicked from among us, lest they make spiritual Christians stink for ever in the nostrils of them that are without, and bring a curse upon us and our Church.

Next to these I would place the followers of Judas and Demas-people who make profession of Christianity, come to church, are strict in some points, and regularly receive the bread and cup at the altar. They kiss our Saviour with their lips, as Judas; but they hug the bag in their hearts. They call themselves Churchmen, as Demas; but they love this present world. These "wicked" persons, though they do not pretend to spiritual Christianity, yet because they pretend to Christianity in general, shall have

their portion appointed them with hypocrites, unless their hearts be wounded by true repentance, and healed by the balmy blood of the Saviour.

In the fourth rank you may place all the busy agents of the devil. And who are these? I answer, (1.) All lying, envious, spiteful, wrathful, revengeful people: (2.) All those who speak evil of any one, unless in order to give necessary cautions and useful information to magistrates, ministers, and officers: (3.) All those that fight, quarrel, or willingly live at variance with any one. The Christian has many enemies; but is himself an enemy to none. If at any time he speaks of the evil that is in his neighbour, it is out of love and compassion, not out of malice or envy. Universal benevolence, a constant disposition to forgive and oblige, to make peace, and to suffer rather than to do wrong, are his peculiar characteristics. But how many are destitute of such characteristics, and yet think and call themselves Christians! Now all these are "wicked" men; and these I called the devil's agents; because, as they do his work, so they deserve his name. "Satan," in Hebrew, means an opposer, and Διαβολος, devil, in Greek, means a slanderer: because that unhappy spirit delights in opposing and slandering mankind in general, and good men in particular: so that those who oppose and slander their neighbours, and much more those who hurt and persecute them, show plainly what spirit they are of, what master they serve, and what wages they shall have; if, on their reformation and conversion, Divine mercy do not speedily reverse the sentence gone forth against them.

Thus, under the eight foregoing particulars, I have showed you who are the "wicked" that "shall surely die:" and I hope that in whichever class of them your particular case was touched, you have suffered conscience to make the application.

II. I now proceed to lay before you such directions as may, through Divine mercy, save your precious souls, notwithstanding all this great wickedness; or, at least, deliver my own.

1. Let us all humble ourselves before almighty God; not transiently, like bulrushes, which bend to the storm for an hour, and then return again to their former state; but for all the days of our life. No unhumbled, no stout hearted sinner can be in a state of salvation. "Except ye repent," says our Saviour, "ye shall all perish." The unhumbled sinner is, then, in double danger of perishing; first, on account of his sins, and secondly, on account of the stoutness of his heart, which makes his lip repentance entirely ineffectual.

2. To prove the sincerity of our humiliation and repentance, instead of cloaking and extenuating our manifold sins, let us confess them with deep sorrow, and return to the Lord with mourning and prayer, as well as with fasting; bearing, each of us, the load of our own private iniquities, the additional load of the iniquities of our families, and the immensely accumulated load of the iniquities of our country at large.

3. Let us meditate, with redoubled sorrow, on all the aggravating circumstances of our sins; for instance,

(1.) Let us meditate on their universality. From the gilded palace to the thatched cottage, our guilt cries to heaven for vengeance; as if the blood of Abel were found on the door posts of almost all the houses in the land!

(2.) Let us dwell on the commonness and frequency of our sins, which add a prodigious weight to our guilt. They are not sins committed but once in all our life; but they return every year, perhaps every month, or week; and, in too many cases, alas! every day, and every hour; as often as temptation urges; yea, sometimes before any temptation solicits.

(3.) Let us not conceal a third aggravation of our guilt, still more heinous than the former; I mean, our having sinned with an uncommon boldness, and boasted of our sins. Wickedness is become so fashionable, that he who refuses to run with others into vanity, intemperance, or profaneness, is in danger of losing his character, on one hand; while, on the others the son of Belial prides himself in excesses, glories in diabolical practices, and scoffs with impunity at religion and virtue. O how unconceivably provoking is this in the sight of a holy God!

(4.) But this is not all. Where have we committed these abominations? Is it in a land of the shadow of death, in some dark, unhappy corner of the earth, where God never manifested himself, either by any choice blessing, or by the light of his Gospel? No! Just the reverse! These scenes of wickedness, profaneness, and vanity, are transacted in the most favoured spot of the universe; in a country where Divine goodness seems to have endeavoured to soften every heart by showers of temporal and spiritual blessings. O, England! England! happy, yet ungrateful island! Dost thou repay fruitfulness by profaneness, plenty by vanity, liberty by impiety, and the light of Christianity by excesses of immorality?

After such aggravations of our guilt, how justly might God have scourged us by those that have risen up in arms against us; how justly might he have said to the sword, “Go through the very heart of this land,” or to the pestilence, “Arise, and devour.” Let us acknowledge this, and confess that “it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed,” as a nation, and that each of us is not cast as a Jonah into the sea of God's judgments, for the sport of Satan, that great leviathan.

4. But, above all, let our humiliation and confession, our acknowledgement of our aggravated guilt, and condemnation of ourselves, be attended with a visible reformation. We cannot mend the whole land, I grant; but let each of us, through the grace offered us this day, mend one at least; and let every head of a family vow before God, that, let others do as they will, yet “he and his house will serve the Lord.” Fasting without reformation is but abomination. Turning from our wicked way, and doing that which is lawful and right, through the grace of Jesus Christ, that we may

save our souls alive, is the very soul of repentance; and repentance is the very soul of fasting. So that take repentance from fasting, or take reformation from repentance, and there remains nothing but detestable formality and abominable hypocrisy.

5. Not only cease to do evil, but learn to do good. You never will, you never can, leave off serving mammon and the flesh, unless you give yourselves up wholly to the service of the living God. You may have good desires, yea, and good resolutions too; but till you come to make it the main business of your life to seek and serve the Lord, in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil, I take heaven and your conscience to witness, that I warn you this day of the consequence. Your resolutions will never come to any thing, and you shall surely die in the iniquity you have committed. Therefore, that this may not be your lamentable case, give all for all; the praise of men for the praise of God; earth for heaven. Sell all, to buy the pearl of Divine love. Sell all to get the knowledge of Him who says, “Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me, he is not worthy of me; he cannot be my disciple.”

6. Lastly: as you tender the prosperity of the king, the good of our Church, and the welfare of our country; as you would not bring a private curse upon yourself; your house, and your dearest friends; as you value the honour of almighty God, and dread his awakened wrath; as you would not force him to make our land a field of blood, or to break the staff of our bread, and send famine, pestilence, Popery, or some other fearful judgment among us; I pray, I beseech, I entreat each of you, my dear brethren! as upon my bended knees,-in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by those bowels of Divine mercy, against which we have madly kicked in times past, and which, nevertheless, still yearn over us,-I entreat you not to rest in outward humiliation and reformation. Christians must go one step beyond the Ninevites. O seek then, with all true Christians, a righteousness superior to that of the scribes and Pharisees. Seek it in Christ. Never rest, till you are sure of your interest in him, till you feel the virtue of his blood applied to your heart by the power of his Spirit. Without this all the rest will stand you in little stead. It is the blood of the true paschal Lamb, sprinkled upon our souls, that makes the destroyer sheath his flaming sword, and pass over the protected heads of true believers. O get an application of this blood; get this seal of the living God upon your heart; and then, marked unto the day of redemption, safe in your Saviour's wounds, and rejoicing even in the midst of tribulation, you will experience the truth of what David says, Psalm cxii: “Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. Surely he shall not be moved for ever. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established; he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies,”-sin, death, hell, and the grave. May this be our happy lot, for Christ's sake! Amen!

ENDNOTES

[1 Although the subject of this discourse is nearly the same with that of the preceding sermon, the reader will perceive they are two entirely different sermons. The latter is supposed to have been preached soon after Mr. Fletcher’s entrance into the ministry.]

[2 This sermon was preached on a fast day, in 1762.]

THE WORKS
OF THE
REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER

BRIEF OUTLINES OF SERMONS.

THE OUTLINES here presented to the public have been selected from a great number of others,-regard being had rather to the important subjects on which they treat, than to the skilful disposition of the matter which they contain. It must always be considered injurious to the deserved posthumous reputation of an able minister, to have such slender helps to thought, as these are, exposed to public view. Yet in the few specimens which follow, meagre though they be, the intelligent reader may trace the master mind of the author of the *Checks*, and the Christian zeal and charity of the vicar of Madeley. They will also be perused with considerable interest by all those who have rightly estimated the spirituality, fervour, and unction which accompanied the ministrations of this eminent Christian pastor; and on beholding the judicious (yet very imperfect) array of his Scriptural materials, every pious man will be tempted to apply to them, in an accommodated sense, the expression of the banished Grecian orator concerning his celebrated rival: “What would you have felt had you heard Fletcher himself deliver them in their perfect form with Divine pathos!”

OUTLINE I.

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," &c.
Genesis i. 26.

INTRODUCTION.-Man created last. The finishing stroke, (1.) For humility. (2.) That his palace might be furnished.

The word of command,-now, of deliberation. Trinity in our creation,-so in our regeneration.

I. God's natural image, lost in part.
1. Clear understanding,-now dark.
2. Pure reason,-now carnal.
3. Upright will,-now sinful.
4. Holy affections,-now disordered.
5. Strong memory,-now losing good.
6. Immortality, last as to the body, which would have suffered no violence, hunger, pain, or old age.

II. Totally lost.
1. Dominion over the creatures.

EXCEPTIONS.-Seas, fishes, rocks, earth. (Moses.) Sun, moon. (Joshua.) Fire. (Elijah.) Iron. (Elisha.) Seas, fishes, trees, winds. (Jesus Christ.) Faith as mustard seed.

2. Impassibility.-(Naked,) insects, vermin, thorns, &c.
3. Intuitive knowledge.-Creatures, angels.
4. Glory.-(Naked,) garment of light.
5. Knowledge of God.-Adam hiding, quibbling, &c.
6. Love of God.-He fled from him.
7. Righteousness and true holiness.-Innocency, propensity to good.
8. Peace and happiness.

III. How is the mighty fallen! Ox for stupidity. Wild ass for refractoriness. Lion for rage. Fox for craftiness. Dog for greediness. Swine for impurity. Devil for sin. Covetousness beside.

IV. INFERENCES.-

1. If we are born in sin, we are fallen. Satan's image.
2. If God created us, let us obey him. Leave the usurper,-return to our first Master.
3. No safety or bliss till God's image is recovered.
4. How rational the doctrine of the new birth.
5. It is God's work. *Let us make; created again*.
6. How precious Christ, the second Adam, whose image we are called to recover. “We all with open face, beholding," &c, 2 Cor iii. 18.
7. How empty formality and morality.
8. How invaluable the workings of the Spirit.
9. How deluded professors not new created.

V. APPLICATION.-

1. Careless sinners.-Know whence you are fallen. Awake. See your calling in Christ Jesus: a King, a Priest, a Prophet, a Son of God. Confess what you are: groan for what you are not. If you remain sinners, like to like.
2. Distressed souls.-See the second Adam, “made to you of God, wisdom,” &c. You can do all things through Christ. Innocency, happiness, garments of righteousness, and glory in him. Believe, till you are changed. Plead, God *was* your Father.
3. Children of God.-Grow, walk in his image. Show you are born. Know your privileges in Jesus Christ are greater than in Adam. Seriousness, majesty, dignity, heavenly mindedness, contempt of earth, become you.

☞“Whose image and superscription hath it?” See by thoughts, words, actions. See by the contrary, the glass of the law and the Gospel. O! pray, that God would deface with Jesus' blood, and stamp you with his Spirit. New heart: till then, all is against you, creation, redemption, &c.

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OUTLINE II.

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation,"
2 Cor. vi. 2.

INTRODUCTION.-Two grand devices of Satan, and mistakes of men.
1. Unbelief.-"God will not save us now."
2. Impenitency.-"He will do it at death."

I. What is "the accepted time?"
1. When God offers sinners to accept their persons, and pardon their sins.
2. When sinners can close with that offer.
Time of rejection.-Foolish virgins. Prov. i. Esau.

II. What is "the day of salvation?"
1. As to Christ: days of his flesh, birth, temptation, agony, death, resurrection, intercession.
2. As to the Spirit: when he saves sinners by an application of what Christ has done and suffered.
(1.) From stupidity, by awakenings.
(2.) From guilt, by a pardon.
(3.) From uneasiness, by peace and joy.
(4.) From a spiritual hell, by a taste of heaven.
(5.) From sin, by righteousness and a new birth.
☞A day.-Short space, wasting, soon gone, to work in: followed by the night. Day of life, day of grace, Lord's day, day of health, day of youth, day of the Gospel, day of power.
Remember Felix, Lot's sons, Jerusalem.

III. "Now is the accepted time," &c.
The Father calls, Jesus intercedes, ministers plead, the Spirit strives. While you have conscience to reprove, eyes to see, ears to hear, senses, health leisure.
Now Christ stands; now saints pray; now mercy courts; now sceptre of love; now door of heaven opened; now well of life unsealed; now the scale hovers; now a breath; now death is coming; now Gospel trump sounds; God about to summons; now that others enter in.
Behold, consider. Let not Satan, world, flesh, blind thee.
Behold, soon the time of rejection, no time. Soon the day of death, of judgment, of condemnation. The day when the wheels of opportunity shall be fast. O who shall bear that day of God, that last day?

APPLICATION.-To sinners.-Jesus weeps over you. Know, squander not your day; kill not time, soul, and Saviour together.
Mourners.-Publicans, now, Zaccheus, no to-morrow.
Believers.-Know, tell, show; day of glorification near.

OUTLINE III.

"This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance," Matt. xxi. 38.

INTRODUCTION.-Speech both of the Jews, and of every unbeliever, at least in their hearts and actions. Barbarous mothers. Herod and Pharaoh kill.

I. Jesus is the Son and heir.
1. Son, Isa. ix. 6; Matt. iii; Heb. i; Psalm ii. One in nature and essence, dignity. As old as his Father, as venerable; always begotten, and always in begetting; as brightness, and the sun.
2. Heir, Heb. i. 2; Rom. viii. 17, and iv. 13.

II. What is his inheritance?
1. Heaven.-That part of it people do not trouble themselves much about.
2. Earth.-"The uttermost parts" of it, Psalm ii. 8. For this many fight: they will seize on houses and lands, and those refined particles of the earth, called silver and gold, with all its fruits.
3. "The heathen for his inheritance."-All nations, our souls and bodies, our senses, powers, members, hearts, are Christ's, though we seize upon them as our own.

III. The unbelieving heart, the Jew within, says, "Let us kill him." Let us see him killed without taking his part. Let us reject him. Let us not entertain him. Let us account his blood a common thing. Let us crucify him by sin. Let us look on him as dead and lost. Let us "seize on his inheritance." He is come to take possession of thy thoughts and heart; seize them not; they are his right, as Son, as Redeemer, and heir.

APPLICATION.-
1. Unconverted.-Too long have ye murdered him afresh; perhaps doubly on his holy days.
2. Ye unbelievers, though you do not kill him, yet, Pharaoh like, you take him not up, you nurse him not, as Pharaoh's daughter did Moses. Mind now.

This is the heir, the Son; come let us kiss him, adore, serve him. Let us restore him his inheritance. Let us kiss him, with the shepherds; restore his own with the wise men: in so doing you will become heirs and joint heirs.

3. Ye believers, be as busy every one in saying, "This is the Son, believe on him," as the Jews were in crying, "Crucify him!" Remember, you are his peculiar possession.

OUTLINE IV.

"Ye desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life," Acts iii. 14, 15.

INTRODUCTION.-"Killing" not literal. Four soldiers. Uriah killed by David and the Ammonite's sword: so Christ by the Roman spear. Sin is the true cause.

I. We have desired a murderer to be granted to us.

1. Barabbas within, who hath made insurrection against God, superiors, conscience, law, Gospel.
2. Who hath committed murder on our souls and bodies, and on those of others. Yea, Christ himself has been stabbed.

☞Sin is the butcher of mankind, subtle poison, sharp dagger, envenomed dart. It brings lethargy and spiritual death, grieves and drives the Author of life, gilds the pill, sweetens the cup, comes in disguise, lets in a troop.

II. How our sins have particularly murdered Christ and us.

Priests, magistrates, people, pursue him to the garden; bound by the chain of our sins. We wander; he is led captive. We execute; he is silent. We shut our eyes; he is blindfolded. We pamper the flesh; he sheds blood, and agonises. We seek ease; he faints under the cross. We are proud; he is crowned with thorns, and naked. We abuse our hands and feet; he is pierced. We are intemperate; he thirsts, and hath vinegar and gall. We are unclean; he is bathed in blood. We are impatient; he was railed at. We are accursed by the law; he was upon the tree. We are hard hearted; his heart was pierced. We are careless; he had strong cries and agonies.

Particularly, envy of priests, covetousness of Judas, fear of Pilate, condescension of the multitude in submitting to priests and elders, Matt. xxvii. 20, backbiting and slander, lies and wrong construction of witnesses.

III. Christ is the Prince of life.

"The resurrection and the life," John xi. "The way, the truth, and the life," John xiv. 6. "In him is the water of life," Rev. xxii. "He that hath the Son hath life," 1 John v. "I am come that they might have life," &c, John x. "Ye will not come to me," &c, John v, 40. "I live not, but Christ lives in me," Gal. ii.

Christ our life.-He is the giver and preserver of spiritual and animal life. "He breathed the breath of lives," upholds it, will restore it.

INFERENCES.-

1. Aggravation of. Killed a Prince. That of life.

2. Condescension of Christ, and the worth of his death. He is the Prince of life and life itself.
3. Certainty of his resurrection, and power to raise the dead.

APPLICATION.-Desire no more the murderer. Pursue him in public and secret. Plot against him day and night. Find, bind, drag. Not only bind, spit, strike, crucify, but kill and pierce Delilah through the heart. Repent, as David, Psalm li. 6. Wash in the blood.

1. Sinners.-Dread.
2. Mourners.-Rejoice. Jesus lives and pardons. Thirst. Begin at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 47.

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OUTLINE V.

"John truly baptized with water: but ye shall be baptized with the HOLY GHOST, not many days hence," Acts i. 5.

INTRODUCTION.-Last words of our Lord. Dispensation of John: baptized *with* water, not *in*.

I. Use of John's water. Baptism.
1. A sign of universal pollution, from the womb. Repentance.
2. Acknowledgment of guilt, and need of pardon.
3. Acknowledgment of corruption, and need of holiness.
4. Profession of thirst after refreshing comfort.
5. Profession of helplessness. None baptized themselves.
6. Profession of cleansing the outside.

II. Insufficiency of John's baptism.
1. Material water cannot cleanse the soul.
2. It is not saving. Witness Simon Magus. "You shall be baptized," &c.
3. The water flows off, dries up: the effect superficial.
4. The testimony of John himself: "I indeed."
5. The declaration of Christ in the text.

III. General necessity of the baptism of the Holy Ghost.
1. All tainted with original sin. Must be born again.
2. All guilty. Must be pardoned, (Act. ii, and x.)
3. All unholy. Must be sanctified. Catechism, (Rom. viii.)
4. The corruption is spiritual and deep. Fire refines.
5. All are miserable, and need the Comforter and kingdom.
6. All helpless and Christless till then. "If any man," &c.
7. All are unfit for heaven and bliss, without love, melting, uniting.

8. Particular necessity for ministers: to preach the word with power. To bear up under troubles and persecutions. To be directed into all truth, and to testify of Jesus, though not to work miracles and speak with tongues.

IV. When?

"Not many days hence." When prepared with prayer and faith, united in one accord and tried. The day is not fixed, that we may expect daily and yet not faint.

APPLICATION.-

1. Unconverted.-Rest in no baptism, but that of the Holy Ghost and fire. Water baptism will condemn you alone.
2. John's disciples.-Promised, the thing promised, the time. O continue praying with one accord!
3. Believers.-You want fresh baptism, till the Holy Ghost, which is grace, fill your soul.

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OUTLINE VI.

"Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments. O Jerusalem," Isaiah lii. 1.

I. A description of Zion and Jerusalem.

1. Asleep, in the dust.
2. Without strength.
3. Naked.
4. Captives. Bands on neck, (v. 2.)
5. A thoroughfare for the uncircumcised and unclean.
6. Sold by themselves for naught.

II. The first command.

"Awake, awake!" Deep sleep is a great danger. Open the eyes of thy understanding. Dream no more. Be no more idle. Hear, rise, shake thyself from the dust, from the sleep of sin, ignorance, death. Awake by the trumpet of Sinai, the groans of Calvary, those of dying neighbours, the last trumpet; or now by the Gospel trumpet. Awake, to-night, and sin not. "Shake off thy sin," &c.

III. The second command.

"Put on thy strength." Put on Christ, who is the mighty God, Isaiah xlv. 24; John xv; Romans v. 6. "The Lord will be the strength of Israel," Joel iii. 16. "Strength made perfect when weak," Romans viii. 3; 2 Cor. xii. 9. "Wait, renew their strength," Isaiah xl. 31. Samson:-"Tell me wherein thy strength lieth." Believe in the Lord, thy strength. Lay hold on it. Thy Jesus gave

himself,-was weak for us. Use thy strength in shaking, rising, fighting, believing, praying, pulling down strong holds; break thy bonds.

IV. The third command.

"Put on thy beautiful garments." Innocency, righteousness, true holiness. Joshua and [his] filthy garments, Zech. iii. 4. Robe of the elder brother, Esau. Best robe for the prodigal. Beautiful in the eyes of the law, of God, of men, of angels. Put on Christ, the Lord thy righteousness. Tear not that garment. Walk in white. Stand with the redeemed with robes washed in the blood. Go to court. Go work for thy God. Be clothed with humility. Patch not the old garment. Obtain the wedding garment. Spread thy garment in the way. Dyed garment from Bozrah, Isaiah lxi. 10.

APPLICATION.-

1. The ungodly.-Awake, before hell awakes you. God will put on his strength. You cannot withstand him-naked you are before an all infinite power.
2. Mourners.-Christ your strength, righteousness, is very near. Put him on. See Jesus, naked, fainting, dying, rising, &c. The sword awoke the shepherd, &c.

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OUTLINE VII.

"Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life,"
Acts xi. 18.

INTRODUCTION.-There are dreadful mistakes about the fundamentals. Few are converted. Few penitents: why?

I. What that repentance is, which is not unto life?

1. Repentance in words. "I have sinned." Saul, 1 Samuel xv, 24.
2. General, not particular; not every sin.
3. Particular, not universal; merely one sin.
4. Afraid of sin's shame, pain, and punishment: not of sin itself
5. When any excuses are made; mouth stopped.
6. When in a fit of affliction only. Judas.
7. When no reform, or a partial one, follows.
8. When life, pardon, and the Spirit are not obtained.

II. What is repentance unto life?

1. Abstaining from all known sin.
2. Practising all known duties. Cornelius, Acts x.
3. Inquiring after the way and people of God.
4. Listening for life, till we are baptized with the Holy Ghost, and can magnify God.
5. Till we obtain life, a pardon, Christ, and the Spirit.

This repentance is hearty, universal, particular, lasting, uniform, transforming.

III. By whom, and to whom it is granted.

1. By Jesus Christ, who is exalted to give it. It is not our gift. No repentance in Adam and Eve before the promise, Genesis iii. 15. It is granted. It is a favour, not a judgment.
2. "To the Gentiles also." Ignorant and wicked, excommunicated from Christ and the Gospel. Not to the Jews only.

APPLICATION.-

1. YOU who are openly impenitent, consider your state, sin, law, curse, God, death, judgment, hell. These is no repentance in death.
2. You that deceive yourselves with false repentance; O let God by this text convince you!
3. Seekers of true repentance.-Behold Jesus.
4. Penitents.-Magnify God, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

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OUTLINE VIII.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Jeremiah xvii. 19.

INTRODUCTION.-Wound of the body and soul to be opened.

I. What is the heart?

Soul, spirit, will, mind, affections, conscience, and memory. "Lest they understand with their heart," &c, Isaiah vi. 10.

The heart and understanding opened in Lydia, Acts. Disciples to Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 31, 32.

It denotes conscience, John iii. 19, 21. "If our heart condemn us not," &c.

It implies memory.-"Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," Matt.

Il. Description of it.

It is in young and old; moral and immoral.

(1.) "Desperately wicked."

Adam, conception, infancy, childhood, youth, age, old age.

1. The heart is blind.

Adam hid himself. A veil hides it. "From blindness of heart, good Lord deliver us!" "Not given a heart to perceive," Deut. xxix. 4.

2. Hard, stout.

Pharaoh, disobedience, unrelenting, insensible, stony, not flesh, Josiah: 2 Kings xxii. 19. "Rend your heart," &c. "Contrite heart."

3. Stupid.

Daniel iv. 16. The heart of a beast, drowsy, sleepy. It has nothing to say to God and man. "Awake my heart," says David. "Fat as brawn."

4. Proud.

"Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" Exodus. Who are the magistrates, ministers? It rises against superiors, against their word, reproof, rod.

5. Passionate.

Saul, Jonah. Full of hatred. Notice Eccles. x. 13. Revengeful, envious, Hazael. Madness in their head.

6. Perjured.

Covenant breakers, false to God, man, self. Inconstant in spirituals, temporals, Peter.

7. Ungrateful, covetous, lustful.

8. Full of hatred to God.

Carnal mind. Lovers of the world. Haters of God, his ways, and people.

9. Full of unbelief to Christ.

Presumptuous, despairing, doubtful.

10. Full of resistance to the Holy Ghost. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."

(2.) "Deceitful above all things."

Above the sea, the weather, the look, the tongue, the devil, deceitful.

1. Deceit begins at home.

Deceives self, excuses sin, magnifies, shows of good, puts light for darkness, calls *evil* GOOD. "I have a good heart!" Pharisee.

2. Deceives neighbours.

It appears honest, chaste, godly, kind, disinterested, to cheat others.

3. Tries to deceive God himself.

Hypocrite, formalist.-Heart far off, lips near. Body without soul.

4. Cheats God of his service, men of love, and self of a kingdom of grace and glory. Yea, it cheats his soul into hell. Foolish virgins.

III. "Who can know it?"

Not the natural, learned, trading man; but God, the searcher of hearts. Christ, "who needed not that any one should testify of man." The Spirit, "who searcheth the deep things," &c, 1 Cor. ii. 10. And those who are taught by him.

INFERENCES.-

1. "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool."
2. "Watch, and keep your heart with all diligence."
3. How great the necessity of a new birth.
4. How glorious the promise of a new heart of flesh.
5. How do those who boast, show the deceitfulness of their hearts.
6. No change of life sufficient without a corresponding change of heart.
7. The fountain being bad, so are the streams.
8. The necessity of Christ's heart being pierced, and the Spirit to open and change ours.

APPLICATION.-Study your hearts. Pray for light. Examine what passes in sudden temptations, in dreams, in thoughts.

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OUTLINE IX.

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30.

INTRODUCTION.-Know thyself and thy advantages, believer!

I. "Ye are of him."
Accepted, born, sons, heirs.

II. "In Christ Jesus."
The second Adam, to whom you are united by faith and love. On his part, by water, blood, and the Spirit. He made himself man.

REFLECTION.-How noble the Christian! How should he despise earth and sin! Believe in Christ, walk in Christ, and you will be God's. Wicked men are of the devil, in Adam.

III. "Christ is made of God."
Christ is the masterpiece of Divine wisdom, power, love, mercy, justice.

IV. "To us.'
Enemies, foolish, guilty, polluted, wretched as long as we are out of Christ. Who sees it?

V. Christ is our Magazine.-All fulness. Wisdom, brightness, righteousness. He did and suffered all for us.

Priest.-Sanctification. Holy in himself. Making us so by faith as physician.

Redemption.-He redeemed himself and us, in rising from the dead. As King and Saviour he redeemed us from sin, misery, death.
☞Christ not only offered, designed, but *made*.

APPLICATION.-Close with the bargain. Reject, neglect not Christ. Benighted, wandering ones, foolish slaves of sin, receive Christ as wisdom. Guilty ones, receive him as righteousness. Unclean ones, receive him as sanctification. Miserable ones, receive him as redemption.

Observe the order.-Justification is before sanctification. A chain with four links, one draws the other. Believers, what a treasure! draw, buy out.

OUTLINE X.

"To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne," Rev. iii. 21.

INTRODUCTION.-Important words. "He that has an ear to hear, let him hear."

I. Jesus overcame.

1. The world.-Its crowns, smiles, pomps, pleasures, profit, applause. By standing, or flying.
2. The flesh.-Ease, gratifications, lusts. By fasting, abstinence, pain, want, agony of the cross.
3. The devil.-By resisting, and the word. The prince in his powers of darkness, and temptations, was conquered.
4. Sin.-By bleeding and dying for it.
5. Death.-By being swallowed up by it. Hell.

II. His reward as man.
He sits down with the Father on his throne. Union, rest, triumph, power, glory.

III. We must overcome as he did: and by his victory, the believer overcomes in Christ, 1 John v. 4.

IV. Promise.
"Sitting" denotes rest.
"With Christ," signifies union, delight.
"On his throne,"-power, glory.
"Even,"-like cross, like crown.
"Will I grant,"-favour to us by Christ's righteousness.

MOTIVES.-Love, gratitude, safety, rest, honour, power, and dominion for ever.
Encouragement.-Christ has overcome before, and for you.
Prize.-The person, and the throne of Christ. Honour superior to that of angels.
Fight the world as Shadrach, the flesh as Paul, the devil as Christ, sin as Joseph,-death as the conquerors, 1 Cor. xv. 57.

APPLICATION.-Worldlings.-Fight not in the wrong cause, or you will sit in hell.
Seekers.-Strive even to blood. Fight till you overcome. On your knees.
Believers.-Overcome, till you sit down.

OUTLINE XI.

"From henceforth thou shalt catch men," Luke v. 10.

INTRODUCTION.-Business of preachers to catch men.

I. From what place?
1. The muddy pool of ignorance.
2. The streams of vanity.
3. The foaming sea of corruption, original and actual.
4. The cistern, whirlpool, of self. These all lead to the lake burning, &c. There that leviathan takes his pastime.

II. For what end?
1. To save them from the lake, and the leviathan.
2. To bring them to the fountain opened for sin. To the river that gladdens Sion. To the ocean of Divine love, the living fountain of water, the well of life.

III. How?

Not by cunningly devised fables, not by flattery, but by the truth of the law to frighten, of the Gospel to allure.

Satan catches by lies. His bait is pleasure, profit, honour; not Jesus love. He is in the night, we in the day.

APPLICATION.-Compared to fishes. They devour each other. Care not for heaven.

Sinners.-Let me catch you, by conscience. God will catch you at last out of every pool.

Mourners.-Come to Jesus.

Backsliders.-Escape his net. No more be taken.

Saints.-Catch others.

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OUTLINE XII.

"Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the head stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it," Zech. iv. 6, 7.

I. Temple.

Difficulties in the way of erection, as a great mountain blocking up the way.

Alps, Hannibal.

II. Direction given.

1. Negatively.-“Not by might” of man's body, soul, parts, wealth. “Nor by power” of temporal and ecclesiastical rulers.
2. Positively.-“But by my Spirit.” He turns the hearts of men, and works effectually when man gives all up. “The Lord of hosts.” Superior might says so.

☞The power of the Spirit in Elijah, Christ, and his apostles. Man is weakened before God works. Jacob's thigh.

III. Gracious promise of God.

1. Authority and power of God.-“Who art thou,” Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Sanballat, Satan?
2. “Great mountain.”-Corruptions, prejudice, outward powers, sins.
3. “Before Zerubbabel."-Christ, the builder of the world and repairer of the breach, raising the temple of his body in three days.
4. “Thou shalt become a plain.”-A valley filled.
5. “The head stone, and foundation stone with shoutings.”-Of all good men, and angels, through joy. Of bad men, through fear.
6. “Grace, grace unto it!”

Grace in God, toward man immense.

APPLICATION.-Apply this,

1. To the difficulties of the undertaking.
2. To the difficulties of our salvation.

Grace is to begin and conclude. Every stone brought is put in with the heavenly shout.

Have you no power? “Not by YOUR power.” Zerubbabel hath power.

Have you no might? Christ hath the Spirit. “By my Spirit.” By the power of the spirit of prayer, spirit of faith, love, patience.

Look at the sin of the world, a great mountain: before Jesus it was a plain.

Look at the state of Christianity. Twelve poor fishermen. It was a plain, instead of a mountain, when Zerubbabel took the matter in hand.

Look at the reformation.

Look at the late revival.

☞Adam lost, Christ regains and gives paradise. As a proof, the thief, his greatest miracle. Breaking of the rocks, graves, the earthquake, rending of the veil of the temple, are less glorious.

Trophy! The shame of the company of the two thieves redounded to his greater glory.

OUTLINE XIII.

"And he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," Luke xxiii. 42, 43.

I. Power of the cross of Christ, and manner of conversion.
1. All men are robbers, murderers, despisers of Christ.
2. The greatest blessings or plagues humble them not.
3. The prayer of Christ, and grace in answer to it, do humble them.
4. Works are not the cause of pardon.
5. The meritorious cause is Christ. He is God. The Lord gives paradise.
6. Instrumental cause, faith and prayer. "Remember me."

II. The heart of Christ is toward sinners.
1. In these dreadful circumstances, Christ takes notice of an ejaculation.
2. "Verily," truth of the promise.
3. "Thou,' base, guilty as thou art.
4. "With ME," what company!
5. "Paradise," abode of the blessed.
6. "To-day," no delay, now is the accepted time.

III. The marks and effects of true faith.
1. It judges not by appearances. Christ was crucified, yet he was Lord and King.
2. It sees Christ glorious, though before it valued him not.
3. It prays, "Remember me," humbly. Not, "Let me sit down with thee on thy throne."
4. It takes Christ's part, and sees his righteousness, "He hath done nothing amiss."
5. Hatred of sin. Fear of God. Reproof: "dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?"
6. A vindication of justice: "we indeed justly."
7. An open confession: "we receive the due reward of our deeds."
8. He had but a heart and a tongue at liberty: both are used.

APPLICATION.-Sinners.-He is exalted still to give repentance and pardon. Abuse not God's goodness that leads you to it. You cannot outwit God. Thou fool. Wicked servants Matt. xxiv. 48. God will harden you as the other thief. Apoplexy, fever in the brain. As a thief he comes. How will you escape hell and damnation? O be concerned, rise against sin, go as far as the thief.

Mourners.-Ask, seek, knock. See Christ's readiness to receive sinners, to grant petitions, and to exceed them. He upbraids not.

OBJECTION.-"The thief had never heard Christ before." Peter had.

Self righteous.-Be not angry at this prodigal entering into paradise at the same door. One way and door.

Believers.-See your privilege. Assurance. Answer to prayer. Knowledge of pardon, and certainty of paradise. Make the best of a short life. Speak for Christ on a death bed. Esteem him the more, for the revilings of sinners. Make a stand against sin. Be patient on the cross. Be humble.

OUTLINE XIV.

"Beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me," Matt. xiv. 30.

INTRODUCTION.-Woman drowned.[1]

I. Power of faith.

It walks,

1. Upon a sea of iniquity.
2. A sea of temptations.
3. A sea of tribulation and danger.
4. It crosses the Jordan of death.
5. It stands the storms and billows of judgment.

II. The behaviour, in danger, of one who hath little faith. "O thou of little faith."

1. He walks on no more; but begins to sink.
2. He cries out to Jesus, "Lord, save me!"
3. He is happily saved: "Jesus stretched out his hand, and caught him."

III. The misery of unbelievers, those that sink and cry not.

1. The floods go over their head.
2. They are in the most deplorable condition.
3. They sink as easy as the corpse of the drowned.
4. O that you might lift up your head above the floods of worldliness and ignorance. See your danger and cry out.

IV. The misery of applying to any but Christ.

1. No help in the rotten boat of the flesh.
2. No help in many worldly goods, or works, or self.
3. No help in our fellow sinners.
4. No catching at man without disappointment.
5. No crying to man with success.

V. How happy the case of those who fly to Christ.

1. He hath come out of sin, flesh, world, grave.
2. Christ is every where, all love and power.

3. If we lay hold of him he will not be angry. Consider the woman with the bloody issue. "He that comes to ME, I will in no wise cast out."
4. If we cannot catch him, he will catch us.

Therefore cry to him now. Lay hold on, and stand in his strength, prepared for the worst.

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OUTLINE XV.

"There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the Lord! But I hate him, for he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil," 1 Kings xxii. 8.

INTRODUCTION.-False prophets multiplied. They were destroyed by Elijah. Now again they are four hundred to one. Micaiah.

I. The difference of the prophets of God and the world.
1. False prophets and wicked people talk of inquiring of the LORD; but they inquire of their own heart, of one another, and seek to please, and dread to offend, by the disagreeable truth. Therefore, they are many.
2. True prophets have God and the truth on their side; but are rejected by men and hated.

II. Concerning whom we must prophesy good and evil.
1. We cannot but prophesy EVIL,
(1.) To impious worldlings.-Jonah, Noah, Lot.
(2.) To formalists and self righteous Pharisees.-Christ.
(3.) To hypocrites.-Ananias and Peter. Paul and high priest.
(4.) To Babel builders.-They build oft the rock, are daubers, build house on sand.
2. We prophesy GOOD,
(1.) To those who are convicted of their sin, Matt. xi. 27.
(2.) To mourners in Zion, Isa. lxi.
(3.) To conscious unbelievers, and lost sheep.
(4.) To tempted souls.-"He breaks not the bruised reed," &c.
(5.) To the persecuted for righteousness' sake.
(6.) To those who wrestle with sin.
(7.) To those of little faith.
(8.) To despairing, self condemned sinners.

Saying, "All is ready, pardon, holiness, glory. We prophesy the good things of the promises, Gospel, Canaan."

APPLICATION.-To those who are of Ahab's mind. Those who prophesy smooth things to you are your enemies. God's prophets speak evil, that you may avoid it. You will know it in the end.

2. Believe, ye mourners. When we prophesy good, reject not the delightful testimony. Hate us not.

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OUTLINE XVI.

"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, Col. i. 26, 27, 28.

I. A great mystery, "Christ in us."
1. Christ in our flesh and nature; living, dying, or rising.
2. Christ in us.-Our life, motion, being, preservation.
3. Christ in us.-As our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, comforter.
4. "Hope of glory."-Present Saviour, purifying, 1 Tim. i. 5.

II. This mystery was hid from ages and generations. Especially those of stupid sinners, Pharisees, and unbelievers of all sorts. Hid from their eyes, hearts, by the curtain of ignorance, sin, and unbelief (See Rom. xvi. 25; Eph. i. 18, and iii. 9; 2 Tim. i. 10; Tit. i. 3.) "Now made manifest" to sinners, who became saints, by believing it, by the rending of the threefold veil.

III. "The riches of the glory of this mystery."
1. It is glorious to know God tenth us, and in us.-To be the temple of God, the members of Christ.
2. Glorious to Christ, to be acknowledged all in all.
3. It fits us for, and gives a sure hope and taste of glory.

☞"Riches."-Christ and his unsearchable riches of grace, mercy, righteousness, &c. "God is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

IV. Ministers' duty.
1. To preach this mystery.
2. To warn every man of his danger, in a state of sin, nature, unbelief.
3. To teach every man the way of faith, bliss, and glory; in all wisdom from above.

V. End of preaching.
1. "Presenting every man."-To God, to the Church, to the assembly of the first born.
2. "Perfect in Christ Jesus."-So acquainted with, and living in Christ, that he may be dead, and his life entirely hid with Christ in God.

☞Perfection in Christ, by dwelling in him.

APPLICATION.-Sinners!-Unacquainted with this mystery, how miserable, guilty, ruined! Sin, the world, Satan, in you, the fear of death, judgment, and hell: not hope of glory. You we warn to fly, from the wrath to come. Attend to Christ in your conscience, warning, wooing you. Change the mystery of sin for this "rich and glorious mystery."

Mourners.-This mystery is now manifested to you. Refuse not the hope of glory. Christ is near: in you, if you believe. You we teach the way of faith, in Scripture wisdom, in the very words of Christ. He is the true wisdom.

Believers.-Grow in the knowledge and enjoying of the mystery, till you are perfected, adult Christians.

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OUTLINE XVII.

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, and they came near, and he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt," Gen. xlv. 4.

INTRODUCTION.-Search the Scriptures, they testify of me in types.

I. The behaviour of sinners toward Christ, the beloved Son.
1. They hated Joseph, and could not speak peaceably.
2. When he went in love, they conspired to slay him.
3. They stripped him of his clothes, cast him into the pit.
4. They sat down to eat and drink.-Stupidity after sin.
5. They sold him for twenty pieces of silver.-Judas, Esau.
6. Skill in hiding their crime, and contentedness.
7. Jacob's grief.-I will go down to the grave mourning.

II. Christ's humiliation and exaltation.
1. Jacob said, "I will send thee to them;" and he said, "Here I am." See if it be well with thy brethren.
2. Hated.-"He came to his own, and they received him not." Cast into a pit. Sold. All prospers in his hand.
3. A guilty woman accused Joseph. He is condemned, imprisoned.
4. No help from the butler. Christ's apostles forsook him and fled.
5. No friend but Jesus. Thief. Butler forgetful.
6. Joseph exalted, arrayed as the king, rides in his chariot. Bow the knee. Without thee shall no man lift up his hand, in all Egypt! Gave bread to all, bought all.

III. Christ's heart is toward sinners, and how he manifests himself to them after many trials.

1. A famine once brought his brethren to beg of Joseph. Again, a famine brings sinners to beg of Christ.
2. Joseph saw, knew; yet, at first, made himself strange.
3. "Ye are spies; not true men. Ye shall be proved three days. Bring forth Benjamin," fruit meet for repentance. Delilah.
4. They said, "We are guilty." This distress comes, his blood is required, Joseph heard, turned, and wept.
5. Simeon bound, corn given freely, no money required.
6. "Except you bring Benjamin,"-Delilah,-"you will see my face no more." He is brought.
7. They must eat bread with Joseph, they bowed, Joseph made haste; retired, wept.
8. The last pang of distress:-"How shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of his servants."
9. Joseph refrains no longer.

All are dismissed. Joseph manifests himself, weeps: "I am Joseph, your brother," (I AM Jesus, whom thou persecutest,) come near: God sent me to preserve life. Kissed them; fatness of Egypt, Goshen.

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OUTLINE XVIII.

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness," 1 Cor. i. 23.

INTRODUCTION.-"And straightway he preached Christ," Acts ix. 20.

I. What the true preaching?
Not morality; but Christ.

INSTANCES.-God in paradise, Gen. iii. 15. God to Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. Jacob to sons, Gen. xlix. 10. Moses, Deut. xviii. 15,18; Job xix. 25; David ii. 1. Solomon, Prov. iii. 7; Cant. v. 9; Isaiah liii; Jer. xxiii. 6; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Dan. ix. 24; Hoses iii. 5; Joel ii. 28; Jonah ii. 9; Micah v. 2; Zech. ix. 9; xii. 10; xiii. 7; Mal. iv. 2.

In the New Testament.-Christ, Luke iv. 18; xxiv. 27. Commission, Mark xvi. 16. Apostles, Acts v. 42. Peter, Acts ii. 22; x, 43; Jews mad, Acts iv. 18. Philip, Acts viii. 35. St. Paul, in the text, and in Acts xiii. 38; xvi. 31; xvii. 18; 1 Cor. ii. 2; 2 Cor. iv. 5; Eph. iii. 8; Phil. i. 18; Col. i. 23, 28. Conclusion, Gal. i. 8.

II. What to preach Christ?
It is to preach, (l.) His natures. (2.) Offices. (3.) Relations.

1. His natures. His Divine nature; called “God” in John i. 1; xx. 2; Isa. ix. 6; Zech. xiii. 7; Phil. ii. 6. He does the works of God, has his knowledge, and is every where. Tremble, adore, trust.

His human nature, 1 Tim. iii. 16; John i. 14. Lived and died, was born, grew, thirsted as a man. Adore, wonder, praise, draw near, fear not.

2. His offices.

(1.) Mediator, 1 Tim. ii. 5; Heb. viii. 6; xii. 24.

(2.) Saviour, 1 Tim. iv. 10; Luke i. 47; ii. 11; Acts v. 31. Feel your ruin, believe, apply, be saved.

(3.) Prophet, John vi. 14; Luke xxiv. 19; Matt. xi. 29. Learn, consult, be taught, follow, fear. He knows all.

(4.) Priest, Heb. vii. 3; v. 10. Priest and victim. He atones and blesses: wash, be blessed and pardoned.

(5.) King, Rev. xix. 16. King of saints, Rev. xv. 3; John xii. 15; Matt. xxvii. 37. Wonder at his condescension, trust his power, fear him, believe, he can give a kingdom, Rev. i. 5.

(6.) Captain, Joshua v. 15; Hebrews ii. 10. Our David, enlist, be courageous, desert not, fight, conquer.

(7.) Shepherd, Zechariah xiii. 7; John x. 14; 1 Peter ii. 25. Follow him, wander not, eat his flesh, love him.

(8.) Physician, Matthew xix. 12; iv. 33; John v. 4. Apply, tell him your state, trust him, follow his prescriptions.

(9.) Advocate, 1 John ii. 1. Put your desperate cause into his hand, &c.

(10.) Judge, Acts x. 42; John v. 22. Make him your friend, tremble before him, rejoice.

3. Relations.

(1.) Father, Isaiah ix. 6; John i. 3.

(2.) Husband, Isaiah, liv. 5; 2 Cor. xi. 2; Ephesians v. 32. My husband, Hosea ii. 16. Take him, forsake others, be faithful, obedient, loving.

(3.) Brother, Matthew xii. 48; Hebrews ii. 11; Psalm xxii. 22; John xx. 17. Be co-heirs, obey, love the elder brother.

(4.) Friend, Canticles v. 16; Proverbs xviii. 24; John xv. 14, 15. Love him, tell him all, apply to him, betray not.

(5.) Servant, Philippians ii. 7; Luke xxii. 27. Wonder, obey.

(6.) Head, Col. i. 18; ii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 3. Hold him.

(7.) Life, John xi. 25; Col. iii. 4; Gal. ii. 20. Live now.

(8.) All, Col. iii. 11. Seek, find all in him.

APPLICATION.-

1. Why we preach Christ? No preaching is of service but this: it humbles, convinces, melts, renews.

2. Our duty, when he is preached, to believe, receive.

Unconverted! receive him.

Ye believers! preach him by your lives.

OUTLINE XIX.

"Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you," Acts xiii. 40, 41.

INTRODUCTION.-Coming of the Chaldeans against Jerusalem, Hab. i. 5.

I. God works a wonderful work in a Gospel day.
1. A work of conviction. Woman of Samaria. Pharisees, John viii. 3, 9.
2. A work of justification. Mary, the paralytic, the thief, the publican.
3. A work of sanctification. St. Paul, new birth, 1 Cor. vi, 11.

II. Many will not believe it to be the work of God.
Conviction they call despair; justification they call presumption, enthusiasm; sanctification they call being righteous overmuch, hypocrisy. "Though a man declare it unto them," as God's promise, and his own experience; though that man be Christ, or Paul, a dying man, a disinterested person.

III. They despise, and yet cannot help *wondering*.
1. "They despise," the place, the instruments, the great instrument, the Holy Ghost. Christ crucified, and faith.
2. "They wonder," why so much ado, why the loss of reputation, preferment, ease, pleasure, property.

APPLICATION.-Unbelievers! Does God work? "Behold," consider your need of this work. "Ye despisers" and unbelievers; wonder at the patience, and goodness, power, and mercy of God! Wonder and glory in his cross! Wonder aright, and you shall not perish! The world is for you, prophets against you. Despise not as the world did Noah, as Sodom did Lot. Christ and Moses were despised in their day. Wonder, or perish as they did, as Dives, the rich man.

You that believe. God does work; and does he work on you? How far? Be not offended by counterfeits. God is here the workman. The blood is shed. The word and Spirit present. A work on your part, believe, and pray. Careless ones, awake! Mourners, rejoice! Believers, abound in praise and good works! Christ's reward is with him, and his work before him. What wouldst thou have me to do? A word from Christ does the work: "Saul, Saul," &c, Acts. "Go in peace." "Martha, Martha." "A new heart." Anointing,-king, priest. Behold! wonder! believe, and be saved!

You that are in earnest, but fearful.

"He that has begun,"-he that is the Alpha and Omega, "will finish." Pray for a deeper work in your hearts, in your days. Christ, an angel, an apostle, ministers, witnesses, God from heaven, all "declare." The work of death and judgment will come: then despise, and wonder, and perish! Wonder at your infatuation, obstinacy, contradiction!

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OUTLINE XX.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," John vii. 37, 38.

I. Persons invited.

1. (Subject.) "If any man," whether rich or poor, righteous or unrighteous, little or great sinners.
2. (Qualification.) "Thirsts" after grace, pardon, righteousness, happiness, God.

II. Invitation.

1. "Let him come to ME." Believe in ME. I am a fountain, a brook, a river, a sea, and all that can quench this thirst. Blood, water, sweat.
2. "And let him drink." (Application, appropriation.) Let him be satisfied, refreshed, nourished, strengthened, healed, delighted, ravished.

III. Promise.

"Out of his belly,"-inmost soul, shall flow, not drops or dews, but "rivers," abundance of living water, of all the fruits, graces, comforts of the Spirit.

The Scripture says so; Joel ii, 28; Isaiah xii, 3, and xxxv, 6, and xliv. 28; and lviii. 11; Zech. xiii. 1; John iv. 14; Rev. xxii. 17.

☞Shall flow to his own comfort, and the benefit of others. His words and actions refreshing.

APPLICATION.-Jesus cries still. Do you hear?

1. Worldlings, your thirst is of a wrong kind; you hew out to yourselves cisterns that can hold no water, but poison. Ye who begin to thirst, beware of the broken cisterns of duties, self righteousness, &c. Come ye to Jesus Christ, to ME.

Comers. Drink; always coming, never drinking.

2. Believers: how is it with you? Is Jesus glorified? Do living waters spring up in you? Is Jesus Christ in you the source? Do they flow out to the benefit of all around you?

Jesus the true Siloam. He thirsted and had gall, that you may have living water. Double stream. Thirst as for pleasure; as Dives, or you will thirst with him.

OUTLINE XXI.

"And Esau said unto his Father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father! And Esau lifted up his voice and wept," Gen. xxvii. 38.

INTRODUCTION.-Our Lord wants us to learn of the unjust steward; Solomon, of the Ant. Profane Esau. Esau sold his birth right, and the blessing annexed. He wept, prayed, and carried another blessing. A pattern, not as he was sensual, wedded to the daughters of Heth, angry, a murderer; but as he prayed, wept, obtained.

I. God our heavenly Father hath not *one*, but *many* blessings. We are to seek them carefully with tears, and we shall obtain them.
1. The blessing of awakening. St. Paul. Careless.
2. That of calling. Worldling. Zaccheus.
3. Repentance. Harlot.
4. Pardon of sin. Hezekiah. Parable.
5. Healing of backsliders. David, Peter.
6. Righteousness. One that suits all, the best robe.
7. Spirit. One that can baptize all.
8. Kingdom. One set up in all.
9. New heart. And victory over all.
10. Kingdom of heaven in glory. "Come ye blessed."

II. How are we to seek those blessings?
1. Early. Esau. Foolish virgins.
2. Carefully, earnestly, with tears, lifting up the voice.
3. Pleading our relation,-by creation, redemption, "My Father," and
4. With importunity, and expostulation: "Hast thou but one blessing? bless me, even me."
5. Refusing to go without application. "Me, me!" desiring spiritual blessings above all.

III. Examples. Jacob, Jesus.

IV. Motives to make you seek the blessing.
1. If you get it not, the curse remains yours. The curse of the law, the curse of Christ. All the curses in the book of God. No dew of heaven.
(1.) Negatively.-No kiss of peace. No bread. No wine. No dominion over sin, &c, breaking its yoke. No living by the sword of the Spirit.
(2.) Positively.-You will feed on dust with the serpent. You will be the servant and slave of sin and Satan. You will inherit his fearful curse, "Depart!"
2. You are made for ever, if God bless you.

(1.) All things will work for your good
(2.) You will be sustained with corn and wine.
(3.) You will have dominion over all your enemies, in the end. Jacob and Esau.
(4.) You will have the blessing of Christ, the gracious and glorious kingdom. None shall reverse it. Cursers ashamed.

APPLICATION.-Careless souls.-Shall Esau weep, &c, for the loss of a temporal blessing? Shall some mourn for loss of friends, money, reputation, health? O! How should you for the loss of paradise, of God, of a kingdom! The curse hunts you. You lose the blessing by roving, hunting, pleasure! O! lift up your voice!

Seeking souls.-Thousands of blessings purchased, by thousands of Jesus' prayers, tears, blood; secured by thousands of promises, by oath, Heb. vi. 13. Christ has got them all first: but it is for you.

Blessed souls.-Bless in your turn. Sell not your blessing, as profane Esau, covetous Judas, worldly Demas. Use your blessing; be a blessing to all.

Claiming them, not by birthright; for we are born in sin. Not by purchase of works; for we have sold all for a lust, for nothing! But claim them, by promise, through the blood and righteousness of Christ.

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OUTLINE XXII.

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth," 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3.

INTRODUCTION.-

1. "The Spirit speaks expressly!" Where? Dan. vii. 25, and xi. 36; 2 Thess. ii. 4.
2. In the latter times. From Christ's first to second coming.
3. Some shall "depart from the faith" apostolic.
4. "Giving heed to seducing spirits;" popes and priests, jesuits and friars, seducing from the faith, Rom. xvi. 17.
5. "Doctrines of devils;" popish doctrines. "Forbidding to marry and to use meats."
6. "Conscience seared with a hot iron."

What is the apostolic faith? and how have Papists departed from it, and given place to doctrines of devils?

1. By maintaining that the Holy Scripture is not a sufficient rule of faith.

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isa. viii. 20. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed," Gal. i. 8. "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," 2 Tim. iii. 15-17. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book: If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book," Rev. xxii. 18.

Il. The apostolic faith is,-one God.

"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," Matt. iv. 10.

Whereas the Papists worship, (1.) The host. (2.) Mary. (3.) Angels, Col. ii. 18; Rev. xxii. 8, 9. (4.) Saints.

III. Christ is the only Saviour, Mediator, and Advocate.

Matt. i. 21; Isa. xlv. "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," 1 Tim. ii. 5. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John ii. 1.

No merit but in Christ.

"Unprofitable servants," Luke xvii. 10. Works, grace, Rom. xi. 6. Indulgences, penances, works of supererogation.

No purgatory but in his blood and Spirit.

"The blood of Christ cleanseth," 1 John i. 7. "Blessed are the dead,-robes washed in the Lamb's blood," Rev. i. 5.

No propitiatory sacrifice, but that of the cross.

That of the mass an abomination, Heb. i. 3.

"He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Heb. ix. 26). "By his own blood entered in once, having obtained eternal redemption." Without shedding of blood, no remission.

IV. Holy Ghost.

This proposition heretical:-Nothing good, "no certain knowledge of salvation," though the Spirit bear witness, can be done without the grace of Christ, or Holy Ghost. (*Bull Unigenitus*.)

V. The first commandment mangled; the second cut off, and openly broken; and the tenth violated. "Cursed who say that concupiscence is sin." (Council of Trent, fifth session.)

VI. Prayer to God.

Perverted, or ridiculously addressed to saints. Prayer made to angels, saints, and Mary.
Elijah asks Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for thee before I am taken!” 2 Kings ii. 9. “Abraham ignorant of us,” Isa. lxiii. 16.
God the Searcher of hearts.
Prayer in Latin, 1 Cor. xiv. 14.
Prayer by beads and strings.
Prayer for the dead.

VII. Two sacraments spoiled or vilified.
1. Transubstantiation. Door, rock, corner stone.
2. Adoration of the host.
3. Sacrifice of Christ's body.
4. Withholding the cup from the community.
5. Baptism of bells. Marriage a sacrament; forbidden.

Pope Liberius subscribed Arianism. John XXII. denied the immateriality of the soul. Council of Arimini was Arian. Helena, A. D. 320. Monks, Anthony.

Married POPES: Boniface I., Felix III., Gelasius.
BISHOPS: Hilary, Gregory, Nyssa, Nazianzen; the fathers down to Basil.
Gregory, mass, virgin, saints, A. D. 600.
First true pope, Boniface III., A. D. 605.
Universal bishop, Phocas, Mauritius; Boniface IV., Pantheon.
Wafer, priests, masses, A. D. 700.
Images worshipped, A. D. 790. “Of any one doubt whether they are to be worshipped, let him be accursed.” (Second Council of Nice.) “Let him not see Christ's face that will not adore his image.” (Council of Constantinople.) Council of Trent confirmed them. “We kiss, salute, prostrate before them.”
Saints canonised, Adrian, A. D. 880.
Bells baptized, John XIV., A. D. 965.
Beads, Peter the hermit, A. D. 1090.
Transubstantiation, article of faith, Innocent III., Council Lateran, A. D. 1215.
Honorius III. worships Gregory IX. bell.
Cup withheld, A. D. 1250.
Corpus Christi, Urban IV., A. D. 1260.
Berengarius, Valdo, John Huss, Jerome of Prague.

The occasion of the preceding discourse is thus explained by one of Mr. Fletcher's biographers:-“When he was on the eve of his departure the Roman Catholics opened a chapel at Madeley, and drew over to their communion some individuals of his flock. Under these circumstances he considered it his duty to oppose them, and for that purpose to delay his journey for a few weeks. He accordingly preached a sermon in which he ably contrasted the doctrines of the apostles with the errors of the Papists. The apostles, he observed, represent the Holy Scriptures as a sufficient rule of faith and practice; but the Papists maintain that tradition is to be received with the

same veneration, and that those are accursed who knowingly contemn it. The apostles declare that the one living and true God is the sole object of religious worship; whereas the Papists enjoin the worship of the host, and of angels, saints, images, and relics. The apostles affirm that Christ is the only Mediator between God and man; but the Papists assert that there are many mediators to whom they are wont to have recourse, as the Virgin Mary, St. Peter, and departed saints in general. The apostles teach us that there is no merit, strictly speaking, in us, or in our works or sufferings; that at the best we are unprofitable servants, and that all merit is in Christ, his life and death, his atonement and intercession; that there is no propitiatory sacrifice but that of his cross, and no purgatory but his blood and Spirit; whereas the Church of Rome, by her doctrine of indulgences, penances, and works of supererogation, as well as by that of the sacrifice of the mass and of purgatory, evidently departs from that faith, affirming that the works of justified persons do truly deserve eternal life, and pronouncing him accursed who denies that such works merit an increase of grace here, and eternal life hereafter. The apostles declare that the Holy Spirit is the only source of all inward or outward holiness; but the Papists maintain that the Virgin Mary is also a source of grace to the faithful,-being accustomed to address her in these words, 'Hail, Mary, full of grace; the Lord be with thee, thy grace with me.' As to the commandments, he said,-the Papists mangle the first; curtail or openly break the second; and evidently contradict and violate the tenth, the council of Trent having pronounced them accursed who say that concupiscence is sin. As to prayer, it is perverted by them, being ridiculously addressed to saints and angels, and that by means of beads and strings; as well as frequently offered for the dead; and, when in public, generally uttered in an unknown tongue. The two sacraments, he continued, are corrupted and abused by them; that of the Lord's Supper by their doctrine of transubstantiation, by their considering it as a sacrifice for the dead, and also by their denying the cup to the laity. The other sacrament is rendered ridiculous, partly by their baptism of bells, and partly by their joining it with sundry foolish and unscriptural ceremonies. Marriage, he continued, is constituted a sacrament without any authority from Scripture, and yet is forbidden to their clergy.

"The Romanists, who were previously sufficiently irritated, now openly professed their indignation. A man, who acted as their spokesman, cried out several times to the people, as they were leaving church, that there was not a word of truth in the whole sermon; and then, turning to Mr. Fletcher, assured him that he would shortly produce a gentleman who would refute it, as well as a pamphlet which Mr. Fletcher had distributed. These threats, however, they never thought proper to realize, while the bold and well timed remonstrance of the zealous vicar prevented them from making any considerable progress in that neighbourhood."

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OUTLINE XXIII.

"Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," Luke ii. 14.

INTRODUCTION.-How delightful to know the theme of angels songs. Ministers are called *angels*, and should be so in flesh. Allow me to take the song of angels for the subject of this day.

I. "Glory be to God on high."

Angels, looking into the mystery of the incarnation, see the perfections of God in a new light, and ascribe glory to him. Justice had appeared in the condemnation of fallen angels.

Mercy was hid still in the bosom of God. Truth must not be violated. The law must be vindicated. God incarnates himself. Glory to justice, truth, mercy, faithfulness. These words were spoken to excite man. Give glory to God on high, ye sons of earth. Raise your hearts and voices. Give God glory for all his attributes shining in Christ. God is on high. The high and lofty One-how low has he stooped!

II. "Peace on earth."

God hath the glory, man the benefit. *Peace*, in the Hebrew, means all good things. Peace be multiplied. The God of peace is come to reconcile the world unto himself.

1. Man, a rebel against God, an enemy. This enmity by nature in thoughts, words, actions, confederacy.
2. God is offended, and yet stoops to propose, to bring, to "make PEACE by the blood of the cross."
3. Man cannot, will not go to God in heaven. God comes to man on earth.
4. Peace is now proclaimed. Angels are all heralds. *Peace on earth*. Down with your arms, sons of the earth. Peace, ye troubled souls, who tremble before the Most High. Peace, ye guilty souls. Peace, ye tempted souls. Multiplied peace, ye believing souls. The God of peace is now Emmanuel, God with us. Know the heavenly "peace on earth." Enjoy the consequences of peace, "rest, quietness, assurance for ever," union, communion, gifts, plenty.

III. "Good will toward man."

God and angels well pleased with men in Christ. Full of good will as well as peace.

Εν ανθρωποις, "among men," complacence, forbearance, forgiving, harmony, love, mutual congratulations, and good offices. Mephibosheth and Ziba.

APPLICATION.-

Sinners.-Do you give glory to God in profaning, &c?

Unbelievers.-Believe or you cannot give glory.

Rebels.-"What have you to do with peace?" O accept it.
Mourners.-We proclaim it still: peace to you.
Backsliders.-Peace again.
Passionate ones.-Believers, &c.

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OUTLINE XXIV.

"Prepare to meet thy God," Amos vi. 12.

INTRODUCTION.-God had sent famine, (verse 6,) withheld rain, (7,) had sent insects, (9,) pestilence, (10,) Sodom's plague, (11,) yet have ye not returned unto me.

I. When we shall meet our God?
1. At death. The officer will come, break open the prison, take the prisoner to his just doom.
2. In the day of judgment. The great assize.

II. What preparation is needful to meet him with joy?
1. A sight of our sinful and lost condition, Luke xiii. 3. Repenting, or pleading guilty and undone.
2. Making interest with the Judge.

By applying to him in time, as a Saviour for mercy, pardon, and a new heart.
As Benhadad came to Ahab, 1 Kings xx. 31, 32.
As the poor harlot at Jesus' feet, Luke vii.
As the publican. In all the means till he meets you, Exod. xx. 24; James vi. 8.

III. When we are to prepare?
1. Not on a death bed. We may never come there. Or we may be delirious, or oppressed with pain and weakness.
2. Not in old age. Not when we have settled all things on earth. Not tomorrow. "Thou fool."
3. But to-day. When you have life and health. When God calls you by mercies and judgments. When messengers invite, and death suddenly snatches our neighbours. "Now is the accepted time," &c. Meet God as *your God*.

IV. Motives to engage you to prepare.
1. If you are found unprepared, it will be too late to do it when the last summons comes: foolish virgins. You will have eternity to repent in, and in vain. I have seen some dying unprepared. Shocking sight!
2. When prepared, you are in peace. Death hath no sting. Christ is your friend. "To live is Christ, to die is gain." You have one heaven, and are sure of another.
3. Consider, that Christ is come to meet you in mercy. THY GOD.

4. How soon he may meet you in judgment.

APPLICATION.-

1. Young sinners.-Prepare. It cannot be too soon. "Remember thy Creator," &c.
2. Busy worldlings.-Your field, house, rent, is prepared. Is your soul so? If you had a cause to be tried, you would prepare.
3. Old people.-Your hoary heads and wrinkled foreheads show that death comes. Your body is preparing for the tomb. Is your soul ready for God? End your follies with the year.
4. Relatives.-Prepare. The call is to all, doubly to you. O seek manger, look at Christ's tomb,-though this by faith. Mix your souls with Jesus, as you will mix your dust with——

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OUTLINE XXV.

"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha," 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

INTRODUCTION.-Devoted to destruction, execrable.

I. The Lord Jesus is infinitely worthy of our love.
If supreme beauty demands love, Christ does. All beauty his.
If goodness in creatures, Christ hath more.
If love demands love. Behold what love. Helen, Rachel. Name is Jacob.
If kindness, presents for body and soul, letters, messengers, parting with his glory, assuming our nature, confined for our crimes, leaping into the sea of to save us, drinking the cup of death to make us live, pleading our cause, he wept for Lazarus, he bleeds and dies for us.
This is heightened by the consideration of our unworthiness, our wretchedness, guilt, pollution, baseness.

II. Some do not love the Lord Jesus.
1. They will not have that Lord to reign over them.
2. They love him not as a Saviour from sin.
3. They love him not as a Christian prophet. They love not to think, talk of, or converse with him. They slight his letters, messengers, members, saints, doctrines, commands, and pledges of dying love.

III. Not to love Christ is a detestable and destructive sin. It makes is execrable, accursed, maranatha.
1. It is the highest ingratitude. The basest of sins;
2. It attacks the blessed trinity God so loved. Lovest thou me? The Spirit makes us understand the length, breadth, &c.
3. Sin worse than that of Adam, Capernaum, Sodom.

4. Worse than the sin of the scribes. We reject a glorious Redeemer.
5. Worse than murder, &c. He is our lawgiver, Redeemer.
6. It spoils all duties and works. Give me thy heart.
7. It breaks the whole law at once.
8. It unfits for heavenly love. Fits for hell, unbelief.

APPLICATION.-Lovers of the world-Ye are adulterers: the love of the Son is not in you. You are dead. Your object will fail you. As vou would not forfeit a double heaven, get Christ's love. Pray for Christ's love, for the Holy Spirit, and a new heart. Sin not against so much love, and against your interest, duty. Come, and taste how loving, how good Christ is.

Mourners.-"We love him, because he first loved us." Believe, view, remember his love. "Blessed are the mourners."

Backsliders.-Peter.

Believers.-Show, grow, walk in love, blessed.

"Any man.-*Maranatha*!"

OUTLINE XXVI.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life," John iii. 14, 15.

INTRODUCTION.-Law our school master to bring Us to Christ. Moses.

I. Deadly nature of sin.

Like a fiery serpent.-Act, like the sting, bite. In its guilt, like the venom infecting. In its consequence, pain, death, Prov. xxiii. 32. Approaches as a serpent. It stupifies, or makes raging. One serpent killed man with one bite.

II. Powerful remedy prepared.

"The Son of man lifted up,"-as brass, bright, durable. Serpent in the likeness of-Christ in the likeness of sinful flesh, without sin. Serpent accursed,-Christ was made a curse. Lifted up on the cross, to heaven. On the Gospel pole. Christ is the Physician and remedy. He is the Judge, and goes through the execution.

III. Way to apply the remedy.

Not by works. (These remedies are preparations of our own. Formalists, moralists.) But, by looking to Christ, Isa. xlv. 22; 2 Cor. iv. till the sting is extracted, the soul is pardoned and healed.

Behold Christ at the door, in the garden, on the cross. Your sin fastened on him. The serpent bruised his heel. His Godhead, unbruised, raises him. See

him pleading your cause. I bring the pole near. Look and be saved. Look steadily through all clouds. In faith, in hope, in love, with detestation of sin.

IV. Encouragement to believe.

Christ lifted up for this end,

1. "That they might not perish." In sin, death, hell, everlasting destruction.
2. "But might have everlasting life," health, life of grace, and glory for ever.
3. This is fulness of salvation. The freeness, "Whosoever believeth on him," &c.

APPLICATION.-

Careless sinners.-Is sin so terrible? Play not; trifle not with it; rest not with its sting; plead not for its life; put not off its cure; misery of sinners here, and in hell; gnawn by serpents, envy, rage, disappointment, worm.

Is he a sovereign remedy?-Convinced sinners, despair not; neglect it not; spoil it not; use it in haste, now. To avoid death, to secure life, to get strength to go through the wilderness to Canaan.

3. Backsliders, look again.-Let there be enmity, &c.
4. Believers, look on till you have got to Canaan. Serpents follow you; but so does the Rock. Help others; tell of the Physician. Show you are healed; work, and eat.

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OUTLINE XXVII.

"For whom [Jesus Christ my Lord] I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ," Phil. iii. 8.

INTRODUCTION.-"Win Christ." What a prize!

Kings have run in this race: beggars not excluded. It is for all that "run lawfully."

I. Let us take a view of the prize.

Riches, honours, pleasure, earth, heaven, life, eternal life, men, angels, God in three persons, Christ in three offices.

II. The way to gain it.

Faith. It is the ticket that always brings the glorious prize. If a distracted murderer, dying thief, &c.

III. What loss we are called to suffer.

"All things."-Loss of carnal rest, fair reputation, prospects of fortune, (Balaam,) friends, sensual pleasures, life itself; all this is lost in appearance; found in reality.

IV. This loss is small.

It is but the loss of dung, something base, disagreeable to the sight and smell, fit to be cast out, and buried out of the way.

APPLICATION.-Ungodly.-You too will soon suffer "the loss of all things;" but for a worse cause than Christ's. You will lose all good things on earth; get all evil things in hell. O view Christ's excellency and the dung of the earth.

Mourners.-Look to Christ and be saved. Win a gracious Christ now, and you will have a glorious one soon. Run, lay aside every weight, despondency, gloom, hard thoughts of Christ and his blood. Put in a blank, a blot, and you will have a prize.

Backsliders.-O, what have you left? The pursuit of Christ. What do you grasp? Dung.

Weak believers.-Be strong, Christ is all. O hold him fast. He hath apprehended you.

Believers.-Grow stronger.

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OUTLINE XXVIII.

"Unto us was the Gospel preached as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it," Heb. iv. 2.

I. The everlasting Gospel was preached to the Jews.

1. In the promises.-The woman's seed, the seed of Abraham, Shiloh, Messiah, the prophet like unto Moses.
2. Types.-Noah, Aaron, Joshua, brazen serpent, purification, sacrifices, as the daily lamb, the paschal lamb, the scape goat, offers of free mercy. This and the promise are chiefly meant here.

II. "The Gospel is preached to us."

In the promises, types, antitypes, sacraments, daily offers of mercy and pardon.

III. "The word preached did not profit them."

They remained, (1.) unconvinced, (2.) unholy, (3.) unhappy, (4.) unfit for glory.

IV. The reason.-"It was not mixed with faith in them that heard it."

Faith is the ingredient, without which the preaching of apostles, angels, and of Christ is lost.

Faith is that by which the preaching of babes avails.

The word is milk, food, physic, cordial. Faith sucks, eats, &c.

Faith is the gift of God, and act of man.

It is like treasure in a field; dig for it.

Pardon is offered, accept it.

Gallios, beware. The king is courting a beggar's love.

There are spices and gold in the East Indies, which we believe, though we have not seen. It is only fools, who believe *only when they see*.

Faith is both a Gospel blessing and a term of access. It takes the word and promises. Mix them now.

APPLICATION.-

1. Mischievous unbelief defeats the word, crucifies Christ.
2. Beware of it. Pray before, at, and after the word.
3. Do you profit? You have faith-*vice versa*.
4. Ye careless,-Believe a God, death, hell, heaven.
5. Ye mourners,-Believe Christ, his blood, promises, will, power.
6. Believers,-Believe and profit-show it-tell of the, &c.

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OUTLINE XXIX.

"Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil," Joel ii. 13.

INTRODUCTION.-This becomes us at all times, especially in Lent.

I. The first precept.-"Rend your hearts, not your garments."

1. Negative part.-A mean, coarse habit was a token of grief. *Rending of garments was*, and still is, sign of great sorrow and amazement. Job rent his mantle, Job i, 20: so did his friends, Job ii. 12. So did Tamar ravished, 2 Sam. xiii. 19. So did Hushai, when David fled before Absalom: "He met him with his clothes rent, and ashes or earth on his head," 2 Sam. xv. 32. (High priest.) This became at length a hypocritical form.
2. Positive part.-"Rend your hearts." *From, by, what*. (1.) *From*-hypocrisy and formality. *From*-earth and earthly things. *From*-self, creatures, and sin. Delilah.

(2.) *By* godly consideration, sorrow, shame, confession, abhorrence.

(3.) *What*-your hearts-not bodies, tongues.

(4.) What necessity for this?

The old heart must be rent. It is the sacrifice of God. A bone wrong set must be broken again. Clay must be tempered and bruised, or no good vessel can be made.

II. The second precept.-"Turn unto the Lord your God."

Turn unto the Lord Jesus Christ as your God, to have the heart rent and renewed. This implies beholding, praying, believing, following, cleaving to "your God,"-not your judge, executioner, enemy.

"Turn," as the prodigal to his father. Turn for the blood of Christ, and the Spirit of God. Turn for a pardon, holiness, glory.

☞Sin makes us turn from God, as Adam; and hide ourselves, as Tiberius.

III. Motives.

1. Evil is gone forth. "Lest I tear you in pieces," Psalm l. 22. "Rend the caul of their heart," Hosea xiii. 8. Unprofitable servant cut asunder, Matthew xxiv. 51. We blow the trumpet in Sion, and sound an alarm throughout God's holy mountain. Avoid this evil by condemning yourselves, rending your hearts. For God breaks not the bruised reed.
2. God is good. And willing not only to repent of the evil, [do it not,] but to do good.

(1.) He is *gracious*.-Full of grace, ready to give grace.
(2.) *Merciful* to returning penitents.
(3.) *Slow to anger*.-Witness our being cut of hell.
(4.) *Of great kindness*.-Witness the dying Jesus, intreating ministry, sweet promises, alluring mercies.
(5.) *Repents him of the evil*.-Nineveh. No pleasure in him that dies.

APPLICATION.-

1. Ye careless.-There is need of much ado, heart work, rending of the heart. This is not so terrible as to be rent from all good, and from God. Soon will be rent from earth, and the soul from the body.
2. Ye mourners.-Dwell on God's titles in the text.
3. Backsliders.-See Christ rent in the veil of his flesh. And see that of the temple.
4. Godly.-Mourn for others.

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OUTLINE XXX.

"Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ezekiel xviii, 31.

INTRODUCTION.-Strange expostulation of God to man.

I. What danger there is of our dying?
From the word of God, experience of sinners.

1. Death is the wages of sin and impenitency. O cast away from you all your transgressions.
2. It is the consequence of not turning to God, verse 32.
3. It is that of an unregenerate state, (new heart, verse 31.) This consequence is natural, necessary; the gradation is sin, death,-sin, sickness, death, grave.

☞One, the least sin is killing, Adam, Sabbath breaker, Num. xv. 39; undutiful son, Israel unbelieving, disobedient prophet at Bethel, Uzza, Ananias, Nadab, Abihu, Asa, Herod, Corinthians, lying, &c.

II. What death we are in danger of?
Why will you be twice dead? Die with horror, and die throughout all ages?

III. Enforce the expostulation of the text, *Why* will ye die?

1. "*Sin is sweet*" to a vitiated taste. Ask the unclean, passionate, drunken, pleasure taker, miser. Damnation is bitter.
2. "I fear a bad name." People will suppose me to be mad, (Beelzebub.) What of that? When dead, God will give you a new name.
3. "I have married a wife."
4. "I have *merchandise* to mind."
5. "I will do as the rest of my neighbours."
6. "I am loath to beg for life, and hope I am not in such danger as you say."
    1. Death follows sin as the shadow the body.
    2. *Why*?-Will you imbitter your own death, hasten to it, and secure endless agonies, by refusing life upon God's offers? Refusing the Prince of life, the ways of life?
    3. Why? Is there not a Saviour, balm, promises, helps, warning? Some must, you need not.

    Will you?-Let brutes, heathens, Turks, Jews, die: you need not. You that have the Gospel, means, baptism, precepts, convictions, reformation, calls. Will you, the house of Israel?

    4. Why?-Is spiritual and eternal life odious? Can any thing be given you in exchange for your lost souls? Is it not enough that so many die? Is death so sweet a state? Will you deprive Christ and angels of the satisfaction in your conversion? Will you please Satan and evil men?

APPLICATIONS-Some of you will answer in a different way: "We will not die,-we want to live. How shall we escape death?" See your danger, cry for help, fly to Jesus, hide in Jesus, abide in Jesus. Live in him, who is the resurrection and the life. Touch not the poisoned cup. Eat the bread of life. Hang the scarlet thread. Be sprinkled with the blood. Live the life of faith, hope, and love. You need not die. See Jesus dying for you. See the promises of life.

Quickened souls.-Why should any deadness come on you? Why should not you triumph more in Christ's life? Why should not you do more the acts of the living? Why do you not expostulate more with dying souls, and ask, "Why will you die?"

ENDNOTES

[1 This sermon appears to have been delivered soon after the interment of a woman who was drowned by crossing the Severn in a boat.]

THE WORKS
OF THE
REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

REDEMPTION OF MANKIND BY JESUS CHRIST.

IF the loadstone can communicate its virtue without suffering any decrease; and if this virtue can completely incorporate itself with iron, why might not the eternal Word, who dwells essentially in the Father, communicate himself to an individual of the human species, and reside particularly in the soul of the Saviour Jesus Christ, or God-man? By which other men may be made partakers of the holiness and felicity of God, without becoming real gods: as the needle, having its extremes powerfully touched with the loadstone, partakes of the attraction and polarity of the loadstone, without being of the nature of the loadstone. God is an infinite being, and all his perfections are infinite as himself: his holiness, his justice, his bounty, and his wisdom, are such a vast profound, that the human mind cannot fathom them. Can we then affirm, without temerity, that in the depths of justice, of holiness, and of love for order, there ought not to be such extreme severity, as to preclude the pardon of sin, even after a just indignation had been manifested against the same? If the majesty of God is infinite, is it reasonable to say that the sins committed against him by an innumerable multitude of beings; crimes committed with the greatest insolence, and the most daring pride; crimes perpetrated by creatures loaded with his benefits; crimes repeated with a thousand aggravating circumstances, during thousands of years, in all parts of the world: is it reasonable, I say, to maintain that these crimes ought to be pardoned by a legislature of infinite justice, without punishing this criminal race in a most exemplary manner? And if such a punishment would have bruised all the guilty; and if the bounty of God is as vast as his justice, is it reasonable to suppose that an infinite bounty cannot present to an infinite justice a victim of boundless merit, fully to expiate, under conditions worthy of God, sins whose numbers were become infinite and boundless, by their duration, by violating the holiness of the laws, by the grandeur of the offended Benefactor, by the majesty of the outraged Legislator, and by the insolence of the violators of these laws? Hath not boundless Wisdom power to reconcile the rights of infinite justice and bounty? What absurdity is there in the plan of redemption, according to which a being of innocence, of love for obedience, of an incomprehensible fortitude, generously unites himself with human nature, to pay the immense debt of this nature, to soften the hearts old the rebels, and to give to all reasonable beings the most perfect demonstration of a wisdom, of a bounty of a holiness, and of a justice, which are infinite; and accommodates himself to the maintenance of their rights, and completely to develope them in time and in eternity? Is it not strange that such a plan, formed by the love, the justice, the wisdom, and the bounty of the Supreme Being, executed by the incarnate

Word, confirming a great number of prophecies; a plan which has the admiration of angels, and of millions of pious persons for so many ages; which hath comforted such multitudes of penitents, in the most frightful circumstances; and hath made so many martyrs to triumph under the greatest torture, and even sing in the cold arms of death: is it not strange, I say, that such a plan should be the constant topic of ridicule to Socinians and Deists? Can the finite always judge of the infinite? Are the pretended advocates for reason constantly so unreasonable, as absolutely to fix what the justice of the Supreme Being ought to demand, what the moral order of the universe ought to require, and how infinite bounty ought to accommodate itself to its creatures? How absurd must that religion be, which lays for its foundation this dogma of the sages of our age! "A being bounded as I am, who neither knows his grandson nor grandfather; who is ignorant of the nature of his own soul, and of those vile atoms which constitute his body, can yet be so perfectly acquainted with the profound depths of Divine justice, mercy, and wisdom, as clearly to decide that the redemption of mankind by the propitiatory sacrifice of the Son of God, is contrary to his perfections." Is not the base incredulity of our modern philosophers owing to their contracted views of the bounty of God, of the excellency of an immortal soul, and of the odious nature of sin? "It is impossible," say they, "that the 'eternal Word, the Prince of life,' should become incarnate, and be sacrificed for human nature." But, if the soul of man was formed in the image of God; if it is infinite in its duration and desires; if its progress toward perfection is boundless; if God loves it with that tenderness with which a father nourishes his child; if the love which is in God as much surpasses the generosity of all fathers, and the tenderness of all mothers, as the infinite surpasses the finite,-is it reasonable to say that our heavenly Father, for the ransom of millions of souls, would not offer such a sacrifice as his incarnate Word? If King Codrus loved his subjects so far as to disguise and offer himself to death, in order to procure them certain temporal advantages; if the Deciuses and the Curtiuses felt so strong an interest in the welfare of their country, as to sacrifice their lives in order to deliver their fellow citizens from a transient calamity; if a Swiss so generously devoted himself to death, by running to Sampach covered with the lances of conflicting hosts, to clear the way for his victorious companions; if mothers have sacrificed their own lives to preserve those of their children; and if love, or the generous desire of saving one's neighbour, hath produced many sacrifices,-is it absurd to say that infinite bounty never could, and never would, perform an act of compassion equally glorious and efficacious, to deliver millions of souls from more dreadful miseries, and to procure to them the blessing of an infinite duration, and of an inestimable value?

O ye, who love wisdom, and who merit the name of philosophers, if you contemplate the majesty of the Supreme Being, the immensity of his perfections, the holiness of his laws, the beauty of moral order, the demerit of sin, and the price of souls which Jesus Christ hath redeemed, you will see that it is absurd even to doubt that God had power, or will, to offer a sacrifice of infinite value for their redemption. If you say that this redemption of human nature by the humiliation and sufferings of the incarnate Word, is unworthy of God; it is demanded of you, whether it be

unworthy of a Being infinitely good to give an astonishing proof of his bounty? Is it unworthy of a Being infinitely just, to display his justice in a most exemplary manner? Is it unworthy of infinite Wisdom, to form a Divine man sufficiently rich to become the pledge of his brethren, sufficiently strong to bear the burden which must Otherwise have depressed them, sufficiently wise and good to obtain for them the pardon of sin, and become for them the model of perfect holiness, and the channel of all grace, by which they may recover that holiness and glory from which they have fallen?

"But it is incredible (you say) that the Prince of life should die." Understand us: the Prince of life did not properly die; this being absolutely impossible: but the Prince of life, being united to a mortal body, could easily quit it two or three days, after having endured unutterable anguish. As the mortal body entered into a state of death, the sacrifice offered to Divine justice was complete, the tomb was consecrated for the consolation of mortals, the faithful have a certain earnest or pledge of their resurrection in that of their chief; and the Saviour fully showed himself the "resurrection and the life," in rising victorious from the grave, into which he had entered, "to destroy him who had the power of death, and to deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage?" Heb. ii. 14, 15. In short, if the Word was abased on earth for the space of thirty three years, and by his condescension left his body to repose in the tomb for three days, what is this short space for the Prince of eternity? A thousand years in his sight are but as one day; and three days are but as the twinkling of an eye; and, far from being dishonoured by this momentary act of pity, of love, and of mercy, he hath acquired, in the sight of all reasonable beings, a glory so grand, that, sooner or later, every knee both in heaven and on earth shall bow before him. We may then conclude, with St. Paul, that "the preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness; but unto them who are saved, it is the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. i. 18-24.

II. Particular observations on the Redeemer. If the preceding reflections prove that the opinion of redemption by Jesus Christ is conformable to reason, the following will serve to prove that the Deists are unreasonable; and that the foolish credulity with which they tax us may with justice be charged upon them.

O ye who refuse to believe in Jesus Christ, can you absolutely refuse to credit any thing concerning him? And if you believe something, will you not have greater difficulty in giving an account of your belief, than the Christian has in giving a reason of his faith? If you think the Christian Legislator never existed but in the imagination of his followers, you are pressed with a multitude of witnesses, both Jewish and Pagan, as well as by those of the Christians, and even by all the Mohammedans. The Jews never denied the existence of Jesus Christ, though they have thought themselves justified in rejecting him, notwithstanding the striking prediction of David, Psalm xxii. 16.

The heathens do not permit us to doubt the reality of his existence; witness Pliny the younger, Tacitus, Lucian, and Suetonius, four Pagan authors, who were contemporaries of St. John, or of his disciples. Pliny, who flourished about twenty years after the destruction of Jerusalem, and who was governor of Bythinia, wrote to the. Emperor Trajan, that he had put two Christian slaves to the torture: "But I find nothing (said he) but a bad and extravagant superstition."[1] He calls the zeal and constancy of the Christians "a wilful and inflexible stubbornness."[2] Speaking of those whom fear had driven to renounce their profession of religion, he adds, "They declared that all their fault or error consisted in assembling before light, on a fixed day, and singing a hymn unto Christ as to a god."[3] They certainly never would have exposed themselves to death for the support of an imaginary person, or the hero of a romance: Jesus Christ has existed, and given proofs of his divinity, since Christians of both sexes, and of every age, were ready to die for him, at a time when ocular evidence, and recent facts, left no means to cover an imposture. This persecution commenced before the reign of Trajan; for the Emperor Nero, having caused fire to be set to the city of Rome, in order to form an idea of the burning of Troy, punished the Christians as if they had been authors of the crime. Behold how Tacitus mentions this event in the fifteenth book of his Annals:-"Nero, to smother the noise of his crime, suborned false witnesses to accuse a people hated for their iniquities, commonly called Christians; making them undergo the most dreadful punishments. The author of this sect is Christus, whom Pontius Pilate, the governor, put to death. This pernicious sect, which had been suppressed for some time, recovered strength not only in Judea, where it originated, but likewise in Rome, which is the common sink of the crimes and follies of all the world. They seized on all who professed themselves Christians: in short, by the imperial mandate, an immense multitude were condemned, less for having set fire to Rome, than because they were objects of universal hatred. They added mockeries to their tortures. Some were covered with skins of ferocious animals, and torn by dogs; others crucified, and others burned in the evenings, to illuminate the streets during the night." These passages are cited, not only to show that the heathens acknowledged the existence of Jesus Christ, and the innocence of Christians, but also to demonstrate the exact accomplishment of the prophecies: "Ye shall be hated of all nations for my sake," said the Saviour. The Christians were the objects of universal hatred, saith Tacitus. I mention this to refute Voltaire, who tells his dupes that "Domitian was the first of the Cesars who disturbed the Christians."

St. Luke informs us that the Emperor Claudius commanded all Jews to depart from Rome, Acts xviii. 2. And Suetonius, a heathen historian, in his Life of Claudius, twenty-fifth chapter, agrees with the sacred penman, saying, "He drove the Jews from Rome, who caused continual tumults at the instigation of one Chrestus,"[4] the name which the Pagans generally gave to Jesus Christ. If Jesus had never existed but in the imagination of his disciples, Lucian, in his Peregrinus, could not have called him "the great man crucified in Palestine;"[5] nor could he have said "that the Christians forsook the Pagan divinities, to adore their crucified Master."[6] Had our Divine Master been no more than a grand sophist, (as Lucian insinuates,) Heaven would not

have confirmed his prediction concerning the temple of Jerusalem by a striking prodigy. Behold the fact:-"The disciples of Christ (saith St. Matthew xxiv. 1) came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple; and Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." As if he had said, This fine temple is going to be destroyed, and with it shall end the continual sacrifice, offered by the Jewish priests to God. When the Emperor Julian had replunged himself in Pagan darkness, he burned with a crafty zeal against the Christian religion; thinking to weaken it by proving that Jesus Christ was a false prophet; and imagining this would be sufficiently done by rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem, and enabling the Jews again to offer their sacrifices. But the attack was against the King of kings. Rufinus and Sozomen mention this business at large. (See what Ammianus Marcellinus says in his Annals, book 23.) "Julian, having a great desire to perpetuate the memory of his reign, by the grandeur of his enter prizes, formed the design of rebuilding the superb temple of Jerusalem, which having been taken by assault, after many bloody encounters, was destroyed, while Vespasian and Titus were carrying on the siege. To rebuild this temple would require immense sums. Julian charged Alipius of Antioch with the undertaking; him who had commanded in Britain under the governors. But when Alipius, seconded by the governor of the provinces, was eager to advance the work, globes of fire, bursting suddenly from the earth, near the foundations of the building, rendered the place inaccessible by the constant assaults which they made upon the workmen, many of whom perished by the flames. So that they were obliged to desist from pursuing the enterprise, to which fate and the element of fire were so strongly opposed." More than this could scarcely be expected from a heathen author, who had been a general in Julian's army; but he speaks sufficiently clear, so as not to leave any doubt of the truth of so remarkable an event.

If Pagan authors have only spoken of Jesus Christ indirectly, or slightly, it is not the same with the Mohammedans. Though in many respects they are Pagans, (saith the learned Dr. Moore,) their law contains many articles of the Old and the New Testament. The principal dogma of their faith, and which with ravishment they constantly confess in their mosques, is, "There is but one God." It is true, this is only what is believed by the Jews: but the Mohammedans go much farther, having a design to prove that they merit the name of semi-Christians, which is given them by a learned author: for in both their Koran and the Zuna it is declared, "That Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and that he was born of the Virgin Mary." "That the Gospel is the light, the way, and the salvation of men, and that such as reject it shall perish." "That Christ knew the thoughts of the heart, gave sight to the blind, and speech to the dumb, healed incurable diseases, and raised the dead." The Koran even attributes three advantages to Jesus Christ, which it refuses to Abraham, to Moses, and to Mohammed himself; the first is, "that he was translated soul and body into heaven," front whence (it is said in the Zuna) "he shall return to judge the world in righteousness." The second is, that he shall be called "The Word of God:" and the third, that he shall be named, "The Holy Spirit of God." (See *Confusio Sectae Mohammedanae*, by Johannes Andreas, and many others.)

I would remind my readers that the reason of the above quotations is first, to show, that though the Koran so much disfigures Christianity, for the chastising of disobedient and hypocritical Christians; yet it admits enough of our doctrines to overthrow idolatry, and the external empire of Satan upon earth; insomuch that in Africa and India, Mohammedanism prepares idolaters for the reception of Christianity: and secondly to nourish our hope, that the Mohammedans, who have already such exalted notions of Jesus Christ, will embrace the Gospel, when the great scandals of the Christian Churches shall be done away; the additions which Mohammed has made to the Gospel being founded only upon false miracles and absurd reveries. On the contrary, pure Christianity contained in the Gospel, is so reasonable, that all who examine with candour are obliged to acknowledge the force of those proofs which demonstrate its truth. From the above citations it is evident, that both Jews, Pagans, and Mohammedans have acknowledged the existence of our grand Prophet in such a manner that it remains an indubitable fact.

If you imagine that Jesus Christ was a false prophet, you believe that it was by mere chance that the temple and city of Jerusalem were destroyed, according to his prediction: and that it is mere accident which preserves the Jews in their dispersion and opprobrious condition, so clearly foretold by Moses. Or you suppose, against all probability, that the harmony of the Jewish and Christian prophecies, in this respect, is an imposture, plotted between Jews and Christians, to impose upon the world. Upon this supposition you likewise imagine, that when Jesus Christ said to his disciples, “I will make you fishers of men:” “Lo, I am with you to the end of the world:” “The gates of hell shall not prevail against my Church;”-you imagine, I say, that when Jesus Christ spake thus, he saw by accident that his Gospel would spread through all the Roman empire, and that the most powerful monarchs, Diocletian and Julian, should not be able to overturn Christianity; that his holy doctrine would be disseminated through all parts of the known world, and would even civilize nations in a part of the globe not then discovered. You moreover think that it was by mere chance that Jesus Christ foretold, in these words, the vile hypocrisy and scandalous divisions of wicked Christians: “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold.”

Notwithstanding this spiritual apostasy of Christians in our days, so clearly foretold by Jesus Christ and his apostles, (compare Matt. xxiv., 10, with 2 Tim. iii. 1-5, and 2 Thess. ii. 3, and 1 John ii. 18,) we see the other part of our Lord's prediction accomplishing, and Christianity daily extending through Russia and Siberia, even unto China and the east; while in the west it is franchising the Americans from that savage ferocity so natural to them.

It is vain superstition, credulity, false philosophy, and the rank apostasy of baptized infidels and professing worldlings, which rush forward, like the raging

waves of the boiling deep, to overwhelm the fair structure of Christianity and to sap its firm foundations. But all their waves are broken: the Rock on which she stands remains immovable; and the prophecies of the Redeemer are daily advancing toward their full and complete accomplishment. "His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into his garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire," Matt. iii. 10.

Twenty absurdities flow from the system of incredulity; for if you believe with some that the son of Mary was an impostor, you believe that a man whose character was the most modest and the most virtuous in the eyes of reason, through his whole life played a part the most abominable and diabolical. You suppose that an ambitious man (for such was Jesus if he was not the King of kings) was formed in a manner so different from other men, as openly to attack the prejudices of those among whom he was going to establish his reign; and that, contrary to appearances and to the springs of the human mind, he had formed the plan of bringing about his purpose by the cross, and rising to immortal honours by a death the most infamous.

If you say Jesus Christ was not an impostor, but a virtuous man, though a great enthusiast, you weave another web of absurdities. As a fanatic, could he conduct himself through his whole life with a wisdom and moderation which could never be impeached? As an illiterate man, with a brain deranged by folly, could he produce a system of morality more perfect than those of all legislators and of all philosophers? Beside, enthusiasts betray, at one time or other, such extravagances as shock right reason and manifest their folly; on the contrary, in the conduct of Jesus Christ, as well as in his morality, nothing is seen but a wisdom replete with sweetness, as far from fanaticism as moderation is from fury.

"One thing which charms me in the character of Jesus (says J. J. Rousseau) is not only the simplicity of his manners, but the facility, the grace, and even elegance. Although he was not the wisest of mortals, he was the most amiable." (*His third letter to Montaigne*.)

Moreover, as a man, who never showed himself but to attack all kinds of vice, could he have been an honest man if he had supported false pretensions by roguery, continual fraud, and imposture? There is no medium; either Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word; and as such he has confirmed his assertions by true miracles; or he was the most daring of impostors when he said, "I am the light of the world,"-"Verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." "All men ought to honour the Son even as they honour the Father." "He who hath seen me hath seen my Father also." "I have a greater witness than that of John; the works that I do bear witness that the Father hath sent me." "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works." "Go and tell John what things ye have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised."

If, yielding to the force of this multiplied evidence, you acknowledge that Jesus Christ and his apostles sustained their mission by miraculous works, you do no more than was done by Caiaphas, Celsus, Porphyry, those ancient enemies of Christianity who examined these evidences even up to their source, and who wanted neither penetration to discover their falsity, nor judgment to demonstrate the same, had such a fraud existed. And in this case reason will oblige you either to receive the Gospel, or to say, with obstinate unbelievers, that Jesus Christ and his apostles performed their miracles by the power of magic. But is it not much easier to believe in the Gospel than in this occult science? Beside, is it not most unreasonable to suppose that devils would league with Jesus Christ and his apostles to destroy the empire of vice, to overturn idols, to enlighten mankind, and to carry all the moral virtues to their highest degree of perfection, both in theory and practice?

Your system involves you in the same embarrassment with regard to the apostles. You are obliged to acknowledge, that either they were the true envoys of God, or else that persons of the greatest simplicity in conduct and writing, wherein they have displayed the most shining virtues, were only a band of the most obstinate knaves and liars. For, in constantly attesting the resurrection of their Master as eve witnesses of the fact, and in persisting in their evidence even unto death, without ever recanting, they were deeply stained with the most palpable knavery, and sustained it with more guile than was ever found among sharpers, and with more stubbornness than was ever manifested by robbers, where of one in twelve at least confess their imposture and guilt when conducted to the last place of punishment. On the contrary, here one of the twelve, who suffered himself to be seduced by the enemies of his Master, after having done justice to his character, took away his own life in despair, to which he resigned himself for having betrayed innocent blood.

And wherefore so much zeal and constancy? If truth, seconded by a series of clear and evident facts, and by supernatural succours from heaven, had not supported the disciples of Jesus Christ even to the last moment of their bold and unshaken confession, what motives, what rewards, could have so strongly attached them to a crucified Master, as every where to preach his cross, sharing his poverty, his troubles, and his death?

If Jesus Christ be not risen, as he foretold, and if he did not fulfil his promise in shedding upon the apostles miraculous gifts, our credulity must needs exceed all bounds, in believing that twelve ignorant, twelve poor Galilean fishermen, at the instigation of a knave who had deceived them, should take it into their heads to subvert all religions in the world, beginning with that of their fathers, and should have accomplished their project without any other support but that of lies and the cross of their Master; without any other arms than moral precepts which offend the passions; without any other bait than a doctrine which crucifies the flesh; and without any other allurement than dogmas which subvert the pride of philosophers. Such are the notions of our infidels, who so justly merit the name of fine geniuses, critics, and connoisseurs, because they can digest opinions destitute of probability.

Ought one not to have a soul all credulity, and proof against every ray of sound reason, to persuade one's self that twelve blind persons, set out from London to go and sap all the foundations of all the strong cities in Europe and Asia; and that they had accomplished their design without being seconded by a supernatural power, and without any other weapons than their walking sticks? Monstrous as this absurdity may appear, it is no greater than to suppose that twelve Jewish fishermen, without miraculous succours, overturned the foundations of Judaism and of Paganism, throughout the known world, in spite of all efforts that were made by all the priests and princes to oppose the religion of Jesus Christ.

O ye Deists, ye may applaud yourselves for your incredulity! But remember, that if prejudice and passion favour your system, we have reason, experience, and facts; and, after all, the absurdities which you are obliged to swallow in rejecting revelation, are more difficult to digest than the dogmas at which you stumble without reason. And never for get that faith leads to a hope the most sweet, and to a charity the most perfect; while your opinions conduct you to gloomy despair, and to a license that, after having broken the yoke of revelation, will not fail to destroy that of conscience. Melancholy observation this! the truth of which might be easily demonstrated by a multitude of anecdotes upon your apostles, if these kinds of proofs had not something in them too odious.

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THE THREE PRINCIPLES.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF THE REV. JOHN FLETCHER.

BY MR. MARTINDALE

THE regenerated man who is created anew after the image of God, that is. in the image of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, feels in himself three principles of activity. First, a principle of life, which he hath in common with all other animals. Secondly, a principle of intelligence, which he hath in common with devils. And thirdly, a principle of love, which he hath in common with holy angels. These three principles, replaced in their natural order, and purified by grace, constitute what the sacred writers call “the new creature.” The first, the most radical, the most central of the three principles, from whence the other two proceed, is particularly the image of the Father. The second, which flows from the first, is particularly the image of the Son. And the third, which proceeds from the other two, with which it harmonises, though always perfectly distinct, is particularly the image of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who is the Spirit of love, of peace, of joy, and of perfection, and who, by his holy presence, accomplishes the mystery of piety in the souls of those who are baptized with fire, in the name and power of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

These three principles residing at once in a soul, of which they compose the essence, one of them may operate with vigour, when the other two remain inactive:

as in those visionary distractions, which we call dreams; and when a pious person is struck with an apoplexy, his intellect and his will cease to act; or if seized with a burning fever, though his intellects may be deranged, his love appears always active. In his delirium he prays, he preaches, and endeavours the performance of good works. In a person completely renewed in the image of Jesus Christ, these three principles are always in perfect harmony, for "true wisdom," and "pure love," ceaselessly flow from what St. Paul calls the "life of God." Thus in God, the Word and the Holy Spirit are always in the Father, as the Father is always in each of the other two. If this union be considered, it will be in no way surprising, that, in the Holy Scriptures, the Father, the Word, and the Divine Spirit, are equally named God, as only making one and the same Jehovah.

The mystery of the incarnation did not annihilate the divinity of the Word; we owe Divine honours to the Son of Mary, because the Word united himself with his soul in a manner the most intimate, and because "it pleased the ever-blessed God, that in Jesus Christ should dwell all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," in order that in the kingdom of grace a plenitude of life, of wisdom, and of love should reside in Christ, Col. i. 19, and ii. 9, as in the kingdom of nature, a plenitude of vivifying energy, of light, and of heat, resides in the sun.

"But I do not see (says a philosophers how the Word, who was from all eternity with the Father, could be at one and the same time in heaven and on earth; in the bosom of the Father, and in the child Jesus."

There are many other things which you do not understand, which are nevertheless true. You do not comprehend how your Father communicated to you life, and the power of thought and reasoning: you do not understand how the lustre of the sun can be at one and the same time in the whole atmosphere, and in your eyes. For my part, I can not conceive in what manner any soul can make its will, (to speak so,) incarnate with my hand, so as to move it at pleasure; since the same union does not subsist between my will and my ears: if I cannot fathom this little mystery of my being, shall I be surprised if there are depths in the Supreme Being which I cannot fathom?

A savage, who hath no knowledge of pen, ink, and paper, carries the will of his master sealed in a letter. This to him is an impenetrable mystery, which astonishes his reason. We shall cease to be surprised, when we emerge from the deep gulfs of our ignorance. There will come a time, perhaps, when the savages of the moral world shall be so far enlightened by the Gospel, as to comprehend how the Almighty could unite his eternal Word to the spotless soul of Mary's Son, as we can now understand how men can commit their thoughts to paper, and transmit them to future generations.

"But why did not God explain to us the whole mystery?" Such a question is worthy of the savage, who might demand, Why did not my master unfold to me all the mystery of the sealed paper, which contained his will? Here is an answer to such

a question: God will not satisfy our curiosity; first, because he requires of us the "obedience of faith," and not the impertinence of pride; and secondly, because he wills man to make use of a method for his restoration, opposed to that which lost him his perfection and bliss. Is it not reasonable, that a being who involved himself in ruin, through "believing the father of lies," should restore himself by "believing the God of truth?" The first man hazarded his felicity upon the declarations of the tempter; and ought we not to hazard our misery upon a hundred declarations of the Redeemer? Do we not daily see sick persons put their lives into the hands of a physician, who is almost, yea, sometimes, altogether unknown to them?

"But I would not trust to the physician of which you speak: the person to whom I trusted should not be a quack." I answer, that if you do not sufficiently feel your sins and miseries, so as to impel you to run the risk, you cannot believe in Jesus Christ; because he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He comforteth not those who are at ease, but those who are weary and heavy laden. Nevertheless, the time will come, when, if you harden not your heart, you shall feel your danger and disease; when you shall be as much charmed with submission to Jesus Christ as Naaman, the leprous general, was in submitting to the venerable prophet; when you shall feel that in order to find health of soul and a foretaste of eternal life, you must know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, John xvii. 3. For regeneration, without which none can see the kingdom of heaven, is nothing more than the re-establishing of the soul in that happy state, when impressed with the image of God, she has not only the life of the Father, as her principle of life, but also the light of the Son to illuminate her understanding, and the love of the "Holy Spirit" to regulate her will.

It is very evident that life flows eminently from the Father, light from the Son, and Divine love from the "Holy Spirit," if we consult the three following quotations: John vi. 57; John i. 9; Romans v. 5. To reject the Son and the "Holy Spirit," when the Gospel is preached, is to rest contented with a life altogether defective, a life not perfected by the living light of grace and the sweetness of love: such is the life of devils, of infidels, and of proud Pharisees.

THOUGHTS ON FANATICISM.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF THE REV. JOHN FLETCHER.

BY MILES MARTINDALE.

FANATICISM is the child of false zeal and of superstition, the father of intolerance, and of persecution; it is therefore very different from piety, though some persons are pleased to confound them. The pious man, always governed by humility and reason, implores and receives the succours of grace; and evidences this Divine nature by conducting himself with sweet humility and love, the genuine character of the first Christians. But the fanatic, big with pride, and full of himself, rejects reason, and

takes the emotions of his own passions for those of grace; and far from conducting himself with Christian modesty and love, he follows the reveries of his imagination as if they were the inspirations of the Divine Spirit; he imitates the follies of enthusiastic fools, and, if occasion offers, the cruelties of bloody persecutors. Let us cautiously guard against this excess, but let us not despise true zeal; for it differs as much from fanaticism as vigour, accompanied with health, differs from a delirium produced by a burning fever.

While certain philosophers, and some proud of following them, fall into this error, and agree to treat as fanatics not only the falsely inspired, but also those who believe in the Divine assistance which holy souls receive from GOD; they rank with enthusiasts all who humbly request from the Father of lights that inspiration which the Scriptures call the "wisdom which cometh from above;" or the assistance of the Holy Spirit. This philosophy, so common and so dangerous, has its source in pride; and from pride there are but three steps to Atheism. The first is to think one's self sufficiently wise, independent, and strong, to govern the heart virtuously, without the Divine succours of the Father of lights. Those who take this step, filled with the lofty ideas they have of their own reason, despise, in some sense, this faculty of their soul, and take the twinkling light of their own imagination for the Sun of righteousness, from whom proceeds our supreme illumination. This step conducts to a second, which is not less dangerous. It is very natural for those who deny the influence of the Supreme Being on their spirits, to exclude him from all influence over their bodies, and all events. Hence it follows, that the gentlemen who are so ready to treat piety as enthusiasm, more or less follow Epicurus, who denied the influences of a Divine Providence over the preservation of our bodies, and the direction of all events. When these two steps are fully secured, the third is easily taken: for if God take no care, neither of our souls by his Spirit, nor of our bodies lay his providence, he is to us a useless Being, far from being God, that is to say, the "Being of beings," the Being in whom we have life and motion; and our faith is reduced to that of Epicurus, or Spinosa, who neither admitted a God of grace nor of providence.

If the reader be of the sect of these philosophers, or inclined to their system, he will doubtless judge the author an enthusiast, because that, under the articles of air and zephyr,[7] he alludes to this common inspiration of the Divine Spirit, which is called the "grace of God;" for inspiration is as necessary to piety, or the spiritual life, as respiration is necessary to the animal life. If I am mistaken in this matter there is at least this consolation, that not only all the sacred authors are on my side, with the compilers of Christian liturgies, but also the wisest of the heathens. Let us observe some of the well known and fine testimonies of the ancient philosophers, which ought to put our modern philosophers to the blush, and even some of our divines. "Without God, (says Seneca,) there is no good man; it is he who inspires with grand ideas and exalted designs. God dwells in every good man. When you see a man superior to his passions, happy in adversity, calm amid surrounding tempests; can you withhold respect from him? Do you not say, These qualities are too exalted to derive their origin from this little ornamented individual. A Divine vigour has

descended on him. A heavenly power animates an humble and excellent soul. There is no possessing these great advantages without the succours of the Supreme Being." (*Sen. Ep.* 41.)

Bias gave this precept to his disciples: "Remember that all the good you do comes principally from the gods." "Rome and Greece (says Cicero) have produced great men; and we ought to believe that none of them became such, but by the assistance of God. There never was a great man without some degree of Divine inspiration." (*Cic de Nat. Deorum*. chap. lxvi.) And in the thirty-first chapter: "If there be (says he) among men good faith, virtue, and concord; from whence, think you, do these arrive on earth, if not from heaven?"

One might even here quote M. de Voltaire, who, in one of his happy moments, where he recommends truth, cites with admiration this fine passage of Confucius:-"Heaven hath given me virtue, man cannot hurt me;" and the verse of ancient Orpheus, which the priests of Ceres recited to those who were initiated into their mysteries: "Walk in the path of righteousness, adore the Master of the universe: he is one: all beings owe their existence to him; he acts IN them and BY them." Now if God acts in beings in general, where is the absurdity of believing that he acts in a virtuous man, whose soul is the most noble instrument of the Father of spirits, as she is a temple the most worthy of the divinity? The ancient philosophers did not only acknowledge that moral virtues came principally from God, but also inventions that were useful to society. "They are the gift of the gods," saith Pliny, "and if any one imagines that man made these discoveries by chance, he makes ungrateful returns for the presents of the divinity." (*Plin. lib*. 27, chap. i. 2.)

Can we see these clear testimonies rendered to the truth of the doctrine which our philosophers would make to pass for fanaticism, without being astonished at the blindness of these people, who, aided by the Gospel, cannot discern that which the Pagans saw, but turn into ridicule truths clearly developed in the Holy Scriptures truths which the Pagan philosophers acknowledged many ages since? Plutarch, in his life of Coriolanus, goes still farther than the Roman philosophers; for, speaking of "actions extraordinary and dangerous, which demand a degree of inspiration and enthusiasm," he cites several passages from Homer, where the poet speaks of such an inspiration; and, far from thinking with our philosophers that it is impossible and unreasonable, he says that "only ignorant and stupid people ridiculed it." As a true philosopher he defends it, and proves that it harmonizes with our liberty. His words are remarkable. I will quote them from the translation of M. Dacier:-

"God," says he, "is so far from destroying our free agency, that he not only inspires us with a will, but he warms the imagination, and imparts ideas by which we are determined. It is thus he gives birth to the will, to which he adds confidence and hope. Indeed, we must either exclude God from having any part as to the moving cause and principle of our operations, or confess that there is no other way to succour men and co-operate with them. For he does not move our bodies, but by certain ideas

which he awakens in us he excites our souls to active virtue; thus giving us a will, and restraining or turning it from evil." (*Lives of Illustrious Men*. Ed. de Paris, 1762, tom. iii. p. 315.) It appears, in Plutarch's judgment, that to deny this kind of inspiration is to deny the providence of God, with regard to men; it is to plunge one's self, at the same time, in the impious error of Epicurus, and the blindness of ignorant and stupid persons.

When a Pagan philosopher thus pleads the cause of Divine grace, can we, without indignation, behold Christians making a mock of the succours of the Spirit of God, by which only we can have that faith which enables us to say with certainty that "Jesus Christ is the Lord?" 1 Cor. xii. 3. Full of aversion for true Christianity, these admirers of a false philosophy will not, perhaps, permit true Christians what they allow to Voltaire, in the prayer which concludes his poem on the "Law of Nature:" "O God, unknown! O God, whom all declare! My heart would wander, if not filled with thee." They think all to be enthusiasts who dare speak of inspiration as openly as M. Rousseau, their inconsistent oracle: "The divinity," says he, "is seen in his works; he makes himself felt within us; he has given us that degree of sensibility which is known and felt." He is not afraid to say in his confession of faith which he has made in his famous Emilius: "How can I be guilty for serving God according to the light which he imparts to my mind, and according to the sentiments with which he inspires my heart?" Some Christians, more inconsistent even than Rousseau, have not the candour to say, If God sometimes inspires with good sentiments even those who fight against the Gospel, he certainly can inspire those who receive it. There is perhaps no difficulty in drawing another comparison between the Pagan and our modern philosophers. After having seen how much they differ in regard to grace, let us see how widely they differ concerning prayer.

If man cannot conquer all his passions, and produce solid virtue in his heart, without the help of the Spirit of God, he ought with humility and ardour to implore that assistance. This is the foundation and reason of prayer. Some modern philosophers, at the head of whom is Rousseau, imagine that man has no need of Divine succours to render him virtuous. According to him, we are sufficient of ourselves. By setting our reason against our passions, she will make a complete conquest, and our will shall have the sole honour of the victory. See a little how he expresses himself on this head in his Emilius: "I bless God for his gifts; but I will not pray. What should I demand of him? Will he for me change the course of things? &c. No. Such a presumptuous petition is more deserving of punishment than an answer. I will not solicit from him the power to do well. Why should I ask of him what he hath already given me? &c. He requires me to change my will. It is he demands-demands from me. It is the will which makes my work." This reasoning of the philosopher of Geneva amounts, it I am not mistaken, to this: Christians believe that solid virtue results from the succours which Divine grace imparts to the will of men when they implore them with humility; but they are deceived; man alone can do all; and I would conduct Christians to the doctrine of the disciples of Epicurus, who says, "The gods may give me riches, if they please; but I will make myself virtuous."

What self sufficiency is in the language of proud philosophers! Is it then surprising that modern philosophers, who have as much vanity, should have so much pride to boast, as one of them has done, in speaking of the book from whence I have taken this grand error: “Ah! how shall I bring myself to justify this work:” says he in his first letter to Montaigne: “I who think by it to expiate the faults of my whole life; I who, full of confidence, one day hope to say to the supreme Judge, Deign to judge in thy clemency a feeble man; I have done evil upon earth, but I have published this treatise!”

When one sees this proud deception, it calls to mind an anecdote of Gaspard de Javanne, mareschal of France. The night of St. Bartholomew he paraded the streets of Paris to animate the assassins to carnage. “Slaughter! slaughter!” cried he: “It is as good to bleed in August as in May!” His son informs us (says Voltaire) that when his father lay a dying, he made a general confession of his life; and the confessor demanded with an air of astonishment, “How is it that you say nothing of St. Bartholomew?” I look on that (said the mareschal) as a meritorious action, which ought to atone for my other sins. The errors of Emilius are to expiate the sins of M. Rousseau in like manner as the exploits of St. Bartholomew were to expiate the transgressions of M. de Javanne!

But let us leave the vanity of this philosopher of Geneva, and consider the piety of a heathen philosopher and legislator, which I have chosen as a contrast. The legislator is Zaleucus, who gave laws to the Locrians. In the exordium to his laws he says, “Every man ought to conduct himself every moment as if that moment were the last of his life; but, if an evil genius entice him to sin, he ought to flee to the foot of the altars, and implore Heaven to banish far from him this evil genius. He must cast himself into the arms of good people, whose counsels will restore him to virtue by representing to him the bounty and the vengeance of God.” How far is this language from the self sufficiency of M. Rousseau! Another Pagan I will oppose to him is Hierocles, who commented on the golden verses of Pythagoras: “Never put thy hand to a work before thou hast implored the gods to finish what thou art about to begin.” Hierocles, it appears, had caught a ray of the morning star which Jesus Christ hath made to shine on the earth. I make use of M. Dacier's translation. (See *Bibliotheque des anciens Philosophes*, tom. ii, p. 186, &c.) “Pythagoras describes in these words two things which concur in aiding us to find the true good. These two things are, the voluntary movement of our soul and the succours of Heaven; for although the choice of good be free, and depends upon us, nevertheless, as we derive from God this liberty and ability, we stand in continual need of the Divine support to co-operate with us, and accomplish what we request, for prayer is a medium between our seeking and the gift of God. She addresses that Being who produced us, and who, after having given us a being, giveth us also a well being. And how shall any one receive this well being, if God do not bestow it? And how shall God, who only hath the power of bestowing, give it to those who, being masters of their own movements, will not even deign to request it by prayer? Thus, then, on the one hand, we should not rest solely in our prayers, but follow them by our exertions; and, on the other

hand, we should not wholly confide in our actions, but solicit the succours of Heaven; and that we must also join prayer to action, as the form to the matter. Pythagoras leads us to request that which we do, and to do that which we request; for he makes but one of these two: ‘Do not begin,’ says he, ‘to put thy hand to a work before thou hast prayed the gods to finish,’ &c. In short, it is wrong to attempt any thing as if it depended upon us to accomplish it without the succours of God; neither ought we to content ourselves with mere words in prayer, but to exert our utmost efforts to obtain what we request: for otherwise we either embrace only an impious virtue, and without God, if I may be permitted to speak so; or we prefer a mere prayer devoid of action. And that impiety which is in the first part, will entirely ruin the essence of virtue; and the inaction which is in the latter, will absolutely destroy the efficacy of prayer. How can that be good which is not done according to the rule or will of God? And if what we perform is to be done according to this rule, is there no need of the succours of the same God to accomplish and perfect the same? For virtue is the image of God in the reasonable soul; and all images have need of their original in order to exist: but in vain we possess this image, if we have not our eyes continually fixed on the original, whose resemblance only makes the beautiful and good: would we then acquire active virtue we must pray; but in praying we must act, and see that in our actions we always regard the Divinity, and the light with which he is surrounded: that which excites us to wisdom is continual action, in constantly addressing our supplications to the First Cause of all good. The soul which attaches to this cause, and purges herself, as the eye, to render it more clear and quick, is excited to prayer by her application to good works; and by the plenitude of blessings which results from prayer, she redoubles her application, in uniting petitions to good actions, and in assuring and fortifying these good actions by the Divine intercourse. Finding herself in part illuminated from above, she performs what she performs by prayer, and requests by her prayer what she performs. And thus results the union so necessary between prayer and action.”

Behold the true philosophy! See the truth and modesty! How much superior is the language of this Pagan philosopher, to that of these self-sufficient philosophers? O you who think, with M. Rousseau, to merit from heaven by a heap of contradictions, and by a monstrous and unmeaning compilation of the most grand truths, and the most monstrous errors, if you attack revelation,-at least respect true philosophy, and do not cast your veil of antichristian opinions over the truths of the ancient philosophers, which blazed forth amidst the thick shades of heathen darkness.

If the doctrine of Hierocles upon prayer do not appear preferable to that of Rousseau's philosophy, admit this at least, that Rousseau sometimes wrote as a Christian; for, like the poets who sung of Castor and Pollux, his thoughts were sometimes in the heaven of truth, and some times in the infernal glooms of error. Behold Rousseau, the true philosopher, full of admiration for the Gospel! “The greatest of all wants (says he) is that of feeling our wants. Let us be humble in order to be wise: let us see our feebleness, and we shall be strong. Thus, at one and the same time, let grace and liberty reign: slaves by our own weak ness, we shall be free

by prayer; for it depends upon us to implore: and to obtain strength, which we cannot derive from ourselves." This last doctrine of M. Rousseau is perfectly conformable to the Gospel. Those then who imbibe the poison which this philosopher has scattered in some parts of his works, ought also to taste the antidote which he offers in others.

In taking the liberty of producing certain contradictions of M. Rousseau, the reader is invited to do justice to the beauty of his style, and the sublimity of a great number of his thoughts, by which he hath justly merited a place in the republic of letters.

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LETTER ON THE PROPHECIES.[8]

REV. SIR,-I was very much surprised to hear you read part of a letter written on the impending revolutions; they have often been, for some years, the subject of my meditations, and of many conversations with a great divine abroad. That gentleman, as eminent for his uncommon learning, as he is remarkable for the use he has made of it, from his youth, showed the greatest inclination to dive into the apparent obscurities of the prophecies contained in the Bible. That inclination increased with his knowledge and piety; it followed him every where. When upon his travels, he generally got what light he could from the learned in that uncommon branch of knowledge, and had several conferences with Sir Isaac Newton and others.

For these fifty years he has spent his time in making himself perfectly master of the oriental languages, (which are become as familiar to him as Greek and Latin,) and in comparing and explaining the various prophecies scattered in the Old and New Testament. Therefore, if his labours have been attended with a blessing from above, and a measure of God's Holy Spirit, he is, in all appearance, a man most likely to discover what God has been pleased to hide, for a time, under the veil of prophetic figures. As I have often read his works, both those that have been printed, and those which he has not yet been able to publish, on account of the strong opposition of several people, I shall take the liberty to give you a short account of his system.

It is, as far as I can judge, pretty much the same as the gentleman's whose letter you read lately, and supported by the numerous train of his arguments; it seldom fails either to silence or convict those that oppose it; it agrees with the tenor of the whole Bible; it gives such grand ideas of God's justice in punishing the wicked, and his faithfulness in remembering the gracious promises he has made to the faithful; it squares so well with history and chronology, (I would almost say, with the present state of the world,) that if it be not true, one must confess it is at least very probable. This has been owned by numbers of clergymen, and even by some of those who, because the Lord delays his coming, think that the work shall always remain in the same state.

Let me beg of you, sir, for the sake of that gentleman, whom I have great reason to honour, not to judge absolutely of him by what I shall say; considering that clear water, running through a foul pipe, may easily contract a disagreeable and muddy taste. I confess I want a competent knowledge of Scripture, and the degree of profane learning, necessary to illustrate it; so that if you observe in these sheets any inconsistency, it is probably all my own.

According to that diviners opinion, we are come to the last times: the grand catastrophe of God's drama draws near apace; he shall soon be avenged, first of his unfaithful servants, and next of his barefaced enemies; in a few years he will “purge his floor,” and “burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Every Christian ought then to prepare himself for that day, which “will come as a thief in the night;” and to labour for a living faith, the ark which alone will carry us safe to the harbour, amidst the universal deluge of wo which is going to overflow the earth.

Here follow some of the reasons on which his opinion is founded:-(1st.) Consider Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which is a rough sketch of the world's four universal revolutions. Three are past long ago; the empires of the Assyrians, Persians, and Greeks, have disappeared. The iron legs, that represented the strength of the Roman empire under the consuls and emperors, have had the same fate: the feet only remain, which being “made of clay and iron, partly weak and partly strong,” express plainly the remains of the Roman monarchy, which is nothing but a weak compound of spiritual and temporal power, and does not cleave better together than iron to clay. And whereas the feet of the statue ended in ten toes, so was the Roman empire divided into ten kingdoms: these were still united together by the clay, i.e. the pope's erroneous religion and idolatrous worship.

“In the days of these ten kings,” says the Prophet Daniel, “shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: for it shall swallow up all these kingdoms, and stand for ever: forasmuch as a stone cut from the mountain without hands,” (a small number of true Christians sent from Mount Sion, without the hand of mortal man, and by the Spirit of God alone; or Jesus himself, the corner stone,) “shall smite the feet of the statue,” the last of the four monarchies; “and the pieces of it shall become as the chaff, carried away by the wind, and no place shall be found for them; but the stone that shall smite the image will become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth." (2dly.) Compare with this the vision of the seventh chapter, where the fourth beast that had iron teeth, to devour all, answers clearly to the iron legs of Nebuchadnezzar's image; for as this had ten toes, so that had ten horns: viz. the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was divided; those of Burgundy and Lombardy; that of the Vandals; the eastern and western empires; England, France, Spain, Portugal, and Poland. Between these ten horns did another come up, i.e. the pope; who aggrandized himself at the expense of the other kings, and before which three of the horns fell, the kingdoms of Lombardy, Burgundy, and that of the Vandals, who were once possessed of a great part of France, Spain, and Africa, but are now no longer known but in history.

This horn had eyes; i.e. an appearance of wisdom, and a great deal of fraud; “and a mouth that spake great things against the Most High: it warred against the saints;” and so has the pope; millions have fallen, as so many victims to his cruelty, pride, and persecuting spirit. But we are near the time when, having fully “prevailed against them, they shall be given unto him for a time, times, and a division of time:” but after this last raging of antichrist, his body shall be destroyed: then the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom and possess it for ever and ever: this will be an end of the matter; and if any one meditates thereon with singleness of heart, his thoughts, like Daniel's, In will be troubled in him, and his countenance changed, and he will keep the matter in his heart.” (3dly.) Compare again this vision with that which is contained in the following chapter, where the prophet, having foretold the ruin of the Persian empire, the conquest of Alexander, and the division of his dominion between four kings, comes at once to the little horn that should spring from one of them; namely, from that of Greece or Macedonia: for as the Spirit of God had shown the prophet before all that concerned the beginning of the fourth kingdom, he passes lightly over it, to come to the main point, the rising of the little horn, at whose destruction the empire of the saints shall begin.

Let it be remembered here, that Constantine, having transported into Greece the seat of the Roman empire, renewed (as it were) that of Macedonia, of which Byzantium was one of the chief cities; and that it was under him, and his successors, that the bishop of Rome increased in honours, and began to lift up himself above all the bishops and patriarchs in the world; so that in two or three hundred years he “waxed exceeding great in the pleasant land, and cast down, and stampt upon” kings and emperors, those stars in the heaven of government; he took away the daily sacrifice, abolished or quite disfigured the true worship of God and Jesus, and cut down the truth to the ground, with his army.

Here the prophet heard a saint asking another saint, How long the Church should be thus corrupted and desolate? And the answer was, till the end of 2300 days, and then the sanctuary should be cleansed.-Here is a number given; a number by which we may know that we are come to the very time the Spirit of God had in view: a number which fixes the beginning of the things that are coming upon the earth: let us take some notice of it.

1. When shall the sanctuary begin to be cleansed, in such a measure, as to deserve to be taken notice of by the Spirit of God? At the end of 2300 days; which are proved to be prophetic days, and to signify each a whole year, by the prophecy of the seventy weeks, and many other places of Scripture. 2. What is the epocha from which we must begin to reckon those 2300 years? It is evident it must be the time of the vision itself, which the prophet has taken particular care to observe; for in the first verse of the chapter, “In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar, (says he) a vision appeared to me, even unto me Daniel.”

3. But how can we know certainly the time of Belshazzar's reign? I must own, this question is not so easily answered as the others; but it can be resolved, with some knowledge of history and chronology: for if we compare the writings of sacred and profane historians; if we trust the canons of Ptolemy, which have been tried by astronomical observations, with Petrarius, Usserius, Prideaux, and others, we shall agree that Belshazzar (the same whom the historians call Niricasoolassar, or Neriglissor,) having killed Evilmerodac, the son of Nabocolasser, or Nebuchadnezzar, seized upon the Assyrian throne, A. M. 3476, i.e. 559 years before Christ, or as Torniel will have it, about twenty years after: because asserting that Evilmerodac, (instead of two years, which the above-mentioned chronologists give to his reign) enjoyed the diadem twenty-three years, which would make the reign of his successor, our Belshazzar, begin about 538 years before Christ. If we admit the first opinion, which is more probable, it follows that the third year of Belshazzar's reign falls in 556 years before Christ, which is the epocha wanted; add to it four or five years, on account of the difference of the Judaical year of 360 days, and ours that is 365, and above; add three years more for the time that Belshazzar had reigned when Daniel had the vision, and we have about 550, which being substracted from 2300, give the year 1750, for the cleansing of the sanctuary; or for such a tolerable progress in the cleansing of it, as may be taken notice of, and attract the eyes of all those who wait for this cleansing of God's Church.

4. If any one should ask, what happened so remarkably about that time, as to show that the sanctuary is in some degree cleansed, or that this important work is really carried on with any tolerable success; I would answer, that God was working at that time, and still works such a work as never was seen since the apostles' days; he has sent some chosen servants of his, both in these kingdoms and abroad, who, by the manifest assistance of God's Spirit, have removed the filthy doctrine of justification by works, and the outward Christless performances of moral duties, which pollute the sanctuary, and make it an abomination to the Lord. The Holy Ghost is given, and the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of believers as in the days of old; and the Lord has taken to himself servants, that will rejoice to stand boldly for the truth, to remain unshaken in the evil day, and to fight manfully his battles, when he shall call them to it. I own that the cleansing is but begun, but this first revolution may, in all probability, be the forerunner of a greater: God has called; a few have obeyed his call; the generality still shut their eyes and ears against the tender invitations of their Lord, and continue to pollute their sanctuary, and to look on the blood of the Lamb as an unholy thing. Shall not God carry on his work? Shall the creature still resist his Creator, and the arm of flesh be stronger than the living God? Not so: he will not always strive with obdurate hearts. What the gentle breathings of his Spirit cannot perform, he will do with war, sword and fire, plague and famine, tribulation and anguish. He is going to gird on his sword, and his right hand shall teach him terrible things. Nations refuse the sceptre of his mercy: what remains then, but to rule them with an iron sceptre, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel?

5. If this answer, satisfying as it is, do not content those who will not even believe even what they see, I would answer farther, that the calculation above mentioned is so far from being made to reach farther than chronology will allow, (as I have heard some object,) that it might admit of an addition or twenty-one years according to Torniel, as I said before; which would put off the cleansing of the sanctuary till 1770. Chronologists may mistake in a few years, but cannot err upon the whole; and as God is true and faithful, so it is manifest, that the prophecy of 2300 years must be fully accomplished in our days, or those of the next generation.

6. To set the argument, drawn from the number of 2300, in a clear light, it is necessary to prove, that it was not designed to show the time of the cleansing the sanctuary by Judas Maccabaeus and his brethren, from the pollution of Ahtiochus Epiphanes; nor the cleansing of Jesus and his apostles, who freed the Church of God from Pharisaical hypocrisy, and Sadducean profaneness; nor lastly, that of Luther, and other reformers, who cleansed the outside, and washed white the sanctuary but were not able to remove the filth of unbelief that remained within. Many arguments might be drawn from the number itself, which agrees with no cleansing but that in these days; but it will be easier to draw them from the general drift of the prophecy, and the context of the chapter. Observe first these words, “At the time of the end shall this vision be fulfilled,” where the word *end* signifies plainly, the catastrophe of God's drama, the last act of the wicked tragedy men have been acting for near 6000 years, and the παντων αποχαλυψις of our Lord Jesus Christ. Again: in the 19th verse, the angel said to Daniel, “Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation, for at the time appointed the end shall be.” What end is here spoken of, if it be not that of God's universal scheme?

Ponder also these words, (verse 26,) “Wherefore shut thou up the Vision, for it shall be for many days:” which agrees far better with our times than those of Antiochus, Paul, or Luther. Observe again these words of an angel to Daniel, (chap. x:) “I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days, for the vision is for many days;” where it is plain that “latter days’ here, and “end” in the eighth chapter, signify but one and the same thing. The angel, according to his promise, tells the prophet, in the eleventh chapter, many particulars of those things that shall soon come upon us, and of that time of trouble, which will be matchless and unheard of before: “Then, (adds the angel,) thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book:” and who is the man, so little conversant with history, as to say that here is meant the persecution of Antiochus, which, though fierce for awhile, by no means answers the angel's words; or the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus; for, though the troubles of the Jews were beyond expression, yet the Spirit of God had a far more distant prospect, as can be proved by the assurance the angel gives Daniel, that at “that time his people should be delivered;” which neither was then, nor has been hitherto: the Jews sighing still in a shameful banishment, and expecting yet that promised deliverance. An argument as strong as the foregoing, may be drawn from the first resurrection, which is to take place soon after that deliverance, “when many of them that sleep shall awake;”

whereas, at the second and last resurrection, not only many, but all the souls of dead men shall re-enter their bodies: but more concerning this afterward.

7. As what I have been writing on the number of 2300 forms a complete proof, I shall not trouble you, sir, with longer digressions upon the various prophetic numbers that occur in the Bible concerning the things we expect to see in a short time: let me only beg of you to observe the harmony of the following ones:-

Rev. x. 6: “And the angel swore by him who liveth for ever and ever, that when the seven thunders should have uttered their voices Χρονος ουκ εσται there will not be a time more;” which word *time*, in St. John and Daniel, signifies a year, and a prophetic year, viz. 360 years. If it be true that the seven voices here mentioned, signify the reformation of the seven Protestant countries, it will follow, that from the reformation there will not be a whole time, or 360 years, “till the mystery of God be accomplished, which he told for our comfort, to his servants the prophets.”

Chap. xi. 2: “Do not measure the porch, for it is given to the Gentiles, and they shall tread under foot the holy city forty two months. Ver. 3: My two witnesses shall preach 1260 days. Chap. xiii. 5: Power was given to the beast to fulfil forty two months.”

The woman, or true Church, fleeing from the serpent, retires to a place where she is fed for a time, times, and part of a time; which number plainly signifies three prophetic years and a half, and falls in, in a wonderful manner, with the forty two months that are allowed the beast, or pope; and the forty two months, during which two or a few witnesses will, in spite of opposition, maintain the truth as it is in Jesus, against antichrist and their false brethren.

N. B. 1260 days is equal to 45 months, or three years and a half, Dan. xii. 11. From the time that the daily sacrifice should be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be 1290 prophetic days. It is easy to observe that there is some years’ difference between the numbers of Daniel, and those of St. John; the reason is, that the apostle had the beginning of the war against antichrist in view; whereas the prophet looked farther, viz. to some remarkable battle that he shall lose, and in which he shall be utterly destroyed. As for his second number, it seems to refer to that happy year when the remotest nations of the earth shall have embraced the Christian faith.

You may probably have observed, sir, that the various numbers which come to the same, or very near, must be reckoned from the time the bishop of Rome showed himself plainly to be the head antichrist, “and set himself up as a god, in the temple of God;” which was not in a very remarkable manner till the end of the fifth century. Add then 500 years to 1260, and you will see that in a few years these plain prophecies concerning the preaching of the two witnesses, the flight of the woman into the desert, and the duration of antichrist's reign, will soon be accomplished.

It is worth observation, that as the tyranny of antichrist will last 1260 years, so his last raging, or that tribulation which will be so uncommon, shall last also 1260 common days, and not prophetic ones, because for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened, according to our Lord's merciful promise. This observation will cast a great light upon all those numbers, and prevent many objections.

Having thus laid the prophetic numbers as the foundation of the edifice, I shall now give a short sketch of the above mentioned gentleman's superstructure.

Seducers will come, saying, "Here is Christ, or there, and they shall seduce many; we shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars; kingdom shall rise against kingdom; there will be plagues and famines, troubles and earthquakes, but this is but the beginning of woes:" for the man of sin (recovered of the wound he received by the reformation) shall gather in incredible strength; and Satan, knowing that he has but a short time, will rage beyond all expression: God, whose wrath is justly stirred up by the iniquities and unbelief, nay, open profaneness of the Protestants, will give them into the hands of their enemies, as he formerly delivered his ungrateful people into the hands of the Assyrians: for his judgments always begin at his house. Then will come those dreadful troubles described in a hundred places of the sacred writings. "As the love of many will be cold," and there will be comparatively no faith upon the earth, the apostasy foretold by all the prophets will soon take place; begin, in all probability, by the Lutherans in Germany, and follow in all the Protestant countries. Here cruelties unheard of since the beginning of the world will be the refining fire of our decayed faith; part of the reformed Christians will be destroyed by the sword, or by famine; part will be carried away into captivity; part will remain to serve their cruel conquerors, who (notwithstanding their falling away from the pure outward worship) will treat them in a most terrible manner.

As for Christ's faithful witnesses, having withstood this grand apostasy with all their might, and confirmed their weak brethren, by whom they will often be betrayed into the hands of their enemies, they shall, for the greatest part, seal their faith with their blood, get the palm of martyrdom, and water the earth with rivers of blood, that the Lord may the sooner cover it with his promised harvest.

Those that shall escape, being hidden and saved in a wonderful manner, will be the seed of that harvest, and will remain concealed, (see Rev. xi., on the death and resurrection of the two witnesses,) when God, giving them an extraordinary measure of his Spirit, with an undaunted boldness, shall call on them to "lift up their voices like trumpets," to proclaim pardon in the name of Jesus, and to rouse deluded nations, and bid them come out of Babylon, that they may not partake of her plagues, and be consumed at the appearing of the Lord. Then shall the tenth part of the city fall; or a great kingdom, leaving the party of the man of sin, will turn to God, and give the signal of a universal reformation: others shall join it in time, and all together will get the better of God's adversaries, in spite of their desperate resistance.

Rome shall be destroyed, and antichristianism will share the same fate. The greatest wonders and signs shall attend these revolutions, insomuch that Turks and Jews, heathens and savages, will know the hand of the Lord, bow their stubborn hearts to his grace, and “give glory to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.”

Give me leave here, Rev. sir, to propose to you a thing that many will look on as a great paradox, but has yet sufficient ground in Scripture to raise the expectation of every Christian, who sincerely looks for the coming of our Lord: I mean the great probability that in the midst of this grand revolution, our Lord Jesus will suddenly come down from heaven, and go himself, conquering and to conquer. For, what but the greatest prejudice could induce Christians to think that the coming of our Lord, spoken of in so plain terms by three evangelists, is his last coming before the universal judgment, and the end of the world; since there is hardly any thing in those chapters that could have given occasion to such a thought?

1. Jesus himself says, that immediately (ευθεως) after the tribulation, which has been proved to be very near, the powers of heaven will be shaken, and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And to the end of the chapter our Lord does not say a word of the end of the world, and the universal judgment, of which he does not speak till the end of the following chapter, so far from confounding his third coming with his second.

2. I read the very same account in the thirteenth of St. Mark, when Jesus having spoken of the general apostasy, and “the abominable desolation spoken of by Daniel,” (which of course cannot be that of the Jews, at the taking of Jerusalem,) he adds, “Let him that readeth understand. In those days the sun shall be darkened, &c, and then shall they see the Son of man,’ &c. Who does not perceive that Christ will come to give the finishing stroke to the great work begun by the might of his Spirit, to establish his kingdom upon earth, and to bring those happy days, “when ten people shall lay hold on an Israelite, saying, Lead us to the temple of the Lord:” when the kid shall feed with the lion, and a child lead them; when he that dieth young “shall die a hundred years old;” and when “righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters fill the sea.” I cannot conceive how so many divines have such an idea of God's wisdom, as to think (contrary to the plain text of his word) that so happy a time will last but a few days; and that this Αποκαλυψις των παντων will no sooner take place, but the earth will be destroyed by fire; such must be, however, the inconsistent opinion of those who confound our Lord's second with his third coming.

3. After our Lord’s ascension, the angels promise the apostles, who then represented all true believers, that they should see Jesus Christ coming from heaven, but said not a word of the end of the world.

4. The second coming of our Lord was so frequently talked of in the apostles' days, that many expected it daily, so that St. Paul, who knew it was yet afar off, thought it necessary to refute the strong expression of the Thessalonians concerning the nearness of Christ's appearing: "That day will not come," says he, "before the apostasy, and the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition;" which is the same as if he had said, You shall know that the Lord will shortly come, when you shall see the universal apostasy that I foretel you. Nay, the apostle goes a great deal farther; for in the same chapter he assures us, that the Lord "will destroy the man of sin by the brightness of his presence." Can any thing be plainer?

5. Our Lord told his apostles, at the last supper, that he should not drink any more of the fruit of the vine till he should drink it new in the kingdom of heaven; which kingdom will be set up on earth thousands of years before the end of the world.

Having thus established the second coming of our Lord, give me leave, sir, to remove a specious objection:-

Those who dislike an opinion because it is not generally received, will object, that all that is said in Matthew xxiv, Mark xiii, &c, of our Lord's second coming, is certainly spoken of his last coming, immediately before the judgment, because Jesus says, that the angels shall gather his elect from the four winds, which seems to imply the resurrection and the judgment following it. But so far from granting it, this is the very thing that shows our Lord did not speak of the end of the world and the judgment; else why should not the reprobate be gathered from the four winds as well as the elect? Shall these only be judged, while the mouldered bodies of the wicked shall rest in peace? Is this Scriptural?

What then can be the meaning of that "gathering of the elect?" The question would be too deep for a short-sighted man to answer, had not the Spirit of God revealed it to St. John, and all the believers who with an humble mind search the writings of the prophets. I will begin at Revelation xvii., to show, by the by, how well every thing I have wrote concerning the man of sin, and his destruction, agrees with the account St. John gives us of his visions.

There he gives such strong characteristics as at once point out Rome and the pope; they agree extremely well with St. Paul's and Daniel's description: the beast and the ten kings that defend it "having made war with the Lambs shall at last be overcome by him;" whereupon the ten kings, Revelation xvii. 14, forsaking the whore or popish idolatry, shall rebel in turning against the pope, and with the Lord's unexpected assistance shall destroy him, his city, and all his adherents.

The eighteenth chapter is a sublime description of the vast alteration which this fall of Babylon will cause in the world; pride and luxury falling with the same blow.

The nineteenth chapter contains a magnificent account of the sudden manner in which God's kingdom shall take place: Christ comes down, (this is again his second appearing not distinguished enough from the third by our divines;) Christ comes down to be avenged of his enemies, who are all destroyed in a last and decisive battle, whereupon all the kingdoms of the earth become the kingdoms of our Lord.

The twentieth chapter displays to our expectation the most glorious scene that can be on earth. "Satan is bound for a thousand years," and if they are prophetic ones, for 360,000.[9] "Thrones are set up, and judgment is given to those that sit on them; [which probably refers to what our Saviour promised his apostles, that at his coming they should sit upon twelve thrones, and judge the twelve tribes of Israel,] and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, as well as the souls of those that had not worshipped the beast nor its image," &c. And having been gathered from the four winds, Matthew xxiv, "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years; but the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished: this is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

This takes away all the difficulty arising from that gathering of the elect so long before the day of judgment, and it confirms the ideas you give us in your hymns of God's wrath and mercy,-

"His wrath doth slowly move,-his mercy flows apace."

Nor can I conceive that Jesus would accept of a kingdom without his members, without the heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

The world, however, shall not last always in this happy state: Ezekiel and St. John are very express on this article. Satan shall be loosed at last out of his prison, and seduce two powerful nations, Gog and Magog; but this second almost universal rebellion will be quenched as prosperously as that of antichrist. How long the world shall last after this no one knows, not even the angels of God; but it is certain, that all those things must come to pass before the conflagration of this globe, spoken of by St. Peter, as well as before the resurrection and judgment: see the end of chapter twenty. We have in the twenty-first chapter an account of the palingeny [regeneration] of the earth after its purification by fire, of the New Jerusalem, and of the ravishing happiness of those who shall have persevered unto the end.

This is, sir, a short account of the gentleman's system, which, far from fearing a severe examination, does never appear in a better and clearer light than when it is compared with the writings of all the prophets and apostles, with the prophetic psalms, and, in a word, with the whole Bible.

Give me leave to conclude with some reflections that naturally flow from what has been said on that system.

1. Many people, I know, look on meditations on the prophecies, so expressly enjoined by St. Peter, as one of the greatest instances of presumption and enthusiasm; Cause they believe there is no sure ground to build upon, and that it is a land of darkness, in which the most enlightened Christians will never fail to stumble and fall shamefully. But is it probable that God, who foretold to a year, and very clearly, the deliverance of the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage, the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, and the building of the second temple, and the birth and death of the Messiah;-is it probable, I say, that he should have been silent, or not have spoken as clearly concerning his coming to destroy the destroyers, and to set up that kingdom which we pray for, when we daily say, according to our Lord's appointment, “Thy kingdom come?” If God has exactly foretold, for the comfort of believers, the various revolutions that have happened to his Church in past ages; is it possible that he should have left himself without a witness concerning the most important of all, I mean the last? If he showed the prophets the first acts of his dramas is it not highly probable he has not forgot the last, without which his wisdom, justice, and mercy, would always remain hid under a thick cloud?

2. Let none say that Jesus himself, as man, knew not the end of the world; and that Moses says, “Hidden things are for the Lord, but revealed ones for us and for our children.” I acknowledge that the end of the world and the time of the purification of this globe by dissolution and fire, is a secret too deeply hid in the glass of God's decrees for any man to fathom, before God himself is pleased to reveal it. But nobody talks here of the end of the world; nobody fixes either the hour or day, nor even the year of Christ's second appearing; since he did not think fit to reveal it to us, we ought to stand in continual readiness for it. For, supposing this system to be true in all points, supposing the tribulation is to begin next year, it will still be impossible to determine whether Jesus will come down in ten or fifty years: so that our Lord's words are true, in all their extent, even now, for that day and hour, and even that year, knoweth no man. Yet we expect to see the full cleansing of his sanctuary, by the fire of persecution; the destroying of antichrist and unbelief, his great enemies; the subduing of all nations to his easy yoke; the calling of the Jews; the fulfilling of God's gracious promises to that long scattered seed of Abraham; and the bringing of those times when the fear of the Lord shall cover the face of the earth, as the waters do that of the sea. Where is the child of God that dares to say, that all these things must not come to pass before the end of the world; and if so, when should they happen but in the time he has been pleased to fix in his Holy Bible? Where is that man that makes God a liar, because he is an unbeliever? Shall the Lord say, and shall he not do? Shall he promise, and shall he not perform? If he has borne with the wickedness of the world so long, not being willing that any man should perish; shall he delay, to all eternity, to fulfil his threatenings? God forbid! the day is fixed, it is foretold; and though the vision was to be after many days, as the angel said to Daniel, yet it may be fulfilled in a few days for us, who live in the last times.

3. It is lawful, yea, needful, that we and our children should often think of these things; for hidden things are for the Lord, but these are revealed for us and our children: they are revealed in all the prophets from Moses to John, and more especially in the Revelation of this beloved apostle. Let but these objectors ponder the word Αποχαλυψις, and they will be ashamed to say that we must not look into those things because they were never revealed unto us.

4. If Jesus told his disciples that it was not theirs to know the times when those things should be accomplished, it does not follow that it must be hid from us who are far more nearly concerned in them than they were; beside, how should they have understood and borne those things before they had received the Comforter, since they thought them bitter, after they had obtained the Divine gift, when they had some knowledge of them? Add to this, that Daniel's vision was to be closed till the end, and could not be perfectly known till very near the time of the fulfilling of it.

5. It is remarkable that more books have been written upon the prophecies these last hundred years, than were ever known before; and all (those at least which I have read) agree that these things will, in all probability, soon come upon the earth. I know many have been grossly mistaken as to the year, but because they were rash, shall we be stupid? Because they said, “To-day,” shall we say, “Never;” and cry, “Peace, peace,” when we should look about us with eyes full of expectation?

I know that a good part of a hundred thousand Protestants, scattered in France, expect some great revolution, that will turn at last for their good, and reunite them to the children of above two hundred thousand of their brethren, that were either expelled the kingdom, or forced to leave it, because they would not take the mark of the beast in their hands, or on their foreheads.

Let us not judge rashly, nor utter vain predictions in the name of the Lord; but yet let us look about us with watchful eyes, lest the enemy take an advantage of us, and we lose the opportunity of rousing people out of their sleep, of confirming the weak brethren, and building up in our most holy faith those who know in whom they have believed. If we are mistaken in forming conjectures; if the phenomena we hear of every where are but common providences; if these things happen not to us, but to our children, (as they most certainly will, before the third generation is swept away;) is it not our business to prepare ourselves for them, to meditate on them, and to warn as many people as we can prudently, lest their blood should be required at our hands, were they to fall because of a surprise? Let us pray to God more frequently, that for the elect's sake, he would still more shorten the days of the tribulation, and add daily to the true Church such as will be saved. But let us not forget to rejoice with Abraham, in seeing, by faith, the glorious day of our Lord, and to hasten, by our fervent prayers, that glorious kingdom, those happy days, when narrow shall be the way of destruction, when saints, raised from the dead, shall converse with living saints, and the world of spirits be manifested, in a great measure, to the material world: in a word, when Jesus will be all in all.

What a glorious prospect is this! Let us then often think of these words of our Lord, “Behold, I come quickly, blessed is he that mindeth the sayings of this prophecy.” Let us join the Spirit and the bride, who say, “Come:” O let him that heareth say, “Come,” and let him that is athirst come; “for he that testifieth these things says, Surely I come quickly, Amen: even so, come, Lord Jesus.” J. F.

LONDON, *November* 29, 1775.

ENDNOTES

[1 *Sed nihil aliud inveni quam superstitionem pravam et immodicam*.]

[2 *Pertinaciam et inflexibilem obstinationem*.]

[3 *Affirmabant hanc fuisse summam vel culpae vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo quasi Deo dicere, &c*.]

[4 *Judaeos, impulsore Chresto, assidue tumultuantes Roma expulit*.]

[5 Τον μεγαν εκεινον ανθρωπον τον εν Παλιστινη ανασκολοπισθεντα.]

[6 Τον ανασκολοπισμενον εκεινον σοφιστην αυτων ωροστκυνειν.]

[7 This refers to the poem entitled *La Grace et la Nature*.]

[8 The following letter by Mr. Fletcher on the prophecies, written in the year 1775, was communicated to Mr. George Story, several years ago, by a gentleman from Yorkshire, now resident in London. The superscription was lost, but it appears from the contents that it was addressed to the Rev. Mr. Wesley.]

[9 I should rather be of this opinion, for a day is before the Lord as 1000 years, and 1000 years as a day. How would at last vanish the pitiful objections of unbelievers concerning God's choosing to create a world, where the good were to bear no proportion to the wicked! What a fine instance should we have of God's mercy, and of the efficacy of our saviours blood! How gloriously would these words be explained, "I punish to the third or fourth generation, but show mercy unto thousands (of generations) of them that love me!"]

THE WORKS
OF THE
REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER

FRAGMENTS.

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ON SERIOUSNESS.

NOTHING is so contrary to godliness as levity. Seriousness consists in the matter of what is spoken, in the manner of speaking, in dignity of behaviour, and in weighty, not trifling actions. Some people are serious by nature, some by policy and for selfish ends, and some by grace and from a sense of duty.

Jesting and raillery, lightness of behaviour, useless occupations, joy, without trembling and awe of God, an affectation of vivacity and sprightliness, are all contrary to the Spirit of God. “A fool laughs loud,” saith Solomon; but a wise man scarce smiles a little.

Levity is contrary to contrition and self knowledge-to watching and prayer-frequently to charity-and to common sense, when death is at our heels.

Levity is also destructive of all devotion-in our own hearts-and in those of others, by unfitting the company for receiving good, and bringing a suspicion of hypocrisy upon all.

Seriousness is useful to prevent the foregoing miscarriages, to keep grace, to recommend piety, and a sense of God's presence, to leave room for the Spirit to work, and to check levity and sin in others.

And have we not motives sufficient to seriousness? Are we not priests and kings to God-temples of the Holy Ghost? Are we not walking in the presence of God-on the verge of the grave-and in sight of eternity?

All who walk with God are serious, taking their Lord for their example, and walking by Scripture precepts and warnings.

“But are we to renounce innocent mirth?” Our souls are diseased. “Are we to be dull and melancholy?” Seriousness and solid happiness are inseparable. “Is there not a time for all things?” There is no time for sin and folly.

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ON PLEASURE.

DYING to pleasure, even the most innocent, we shall live to God. Of pleasures there are four sorts. Sensual pleasures-of the eye, ear, taste, smell, ease, indulgence, &c. Pleasures of the heart-attachments, entanglements, creature love, unmortified friendships. Pleasures of the mind-curious books, deep researches, speculations, hankerings after news, wit, fine language. The pleasures of the imagination-schemes fancies, suppositions.

God requires that we should deny ourselves in all these respects, because, 1. God will have the heart, which he cannot have if pleasure hath it: and God is a jealous God. 2. There is no solid union with God until, in a Christian sense, we are dead to creature comports. Pleasure is the Gordian knot. 3. God is purity-hankering after pleasure is the cause of almost all our sins-the bait of temptation. 4. God calls us to show our faith and love by a spirit of sacrifice. Pleasure is Isaac. 5. Denying ourselves, hating our life, dying daily, crucifying the flesh, putting off the old man, are Gospel precepts: so is cutting off the right hand, plucking out the right eye, and forsaking all to follow Christ. 6. God makes no exceptions. All the offending members must be cut off; every leak must be stopt; otherwise the corrupting pleasure spared gets more ascendency. 7. Pleasures render the soul incapable of the operations of the Spirit, and obstruct Divine consolations.

Now nature is all for pleasure, and lives upon sensuality. The senses, heart, mind, and imagination, pursue always objects that may gratify them. We love pleasure so as to deprive ourselves of every thing to enjoy it in some kind or other; and we undergo hardships to procure it. Nature frets horribly if disappointed in this favourite pursuit; and yet, if nature be pampered, grace must be starved.

Earthly pleasures are of a corrupting nature; for example, that of taste, if indulged, spreads through, corrupts, and dissipates all the powers of the soul and body. It is so much the more dangerous, as it hides itself under a mask of necessity, or colour of lawfulness; and does all the mischief of a concealed traitor. It betrays with a kiss, poisons with honey, wounds in its smiles, and kills while it promises happiness.

Indulgence enervates and renders us incapable of suffering any thing from God, men, devils, or self; and stands continually in the way of our doing, as well as suffering the will of God. It is much easier, therefore, to flee from pleasure than to remain within due bounds in its enjoyments. The greatest saints find nothing is so difficult, nothing makes them tremble so, as the use of pleasure; for it requires the strictest watchfulness and the most vigorous attention. He must walk steadily who can walk safely, on the brink of a precipice.

The absolute necessity of dying to pleasure will appear from the following considerations. The earthly senses must be spiritualised; the sensual heart purified; the wandering mind fixed; the foolish imagination made sober.

Worldly pleasures are all little, low, and transitory, and a hinderance to our chief good. Much moderation, however, is to be used in the choice and degree of our mortifications. Through pride, nature often prompts us to great extremes, which hurt the body, and sometimes lead the mind into sourness and obstinacy. But to know, and walk in the right path of self denial, we have need of much recollection.

ON HYPOCRISY.

MANY pretend to a share of the holy child, but we want all the wisdom of the true Solomon to know the mother from the harlot. A hypocrite hides wickedness under a cloak of goodness,-clouds without rain, wells without water, trees without fruit, the ape of piety, the mask of sin, glorious without, carrion within. They do not put off, but throw a cloak over it.

Satan an arch hypocrite.-Having apostatized from God himself, he endeavours to vent his malice and envy on God's favourite, loan. He disguised himself as a serpent, showed much love and friendship, and by that appearance deceived Eve. Though God has prepared an antidote, yet he goes about murdering the children of men with increasing craft, (for he is now the old serpent,) he is still opposing Christ, picking up the seed of the word, hindering the sowers, sowing tares. He is the strong man, armed with the force of an angel, the subtilty of a fallen angel, able to insinuate himself into souls, as into serpents. His baits are pleasure for the sensual, wealth for the muckworm, honour for the ambitious, and science for the curious: in each he transforms himself as an angel of light, gilding all with heavenly appearances; but his light is darkness, and how great is that darkness!

He works admirably on predispositions. 1. On ignorance of evil, or forgetfulness of the sword of the Spirit. He finds us blind, or blinds our eyes to make us turn the better in his mill. 2. On security. He puts far from us the thoughts of death: “Ye shall not surely die.” 3. On idleness. When David was idle at home, and Joab in the field, Satan took that opportunity to draw him into the snare of lust. 4. On unreasonable scruples of conscience,-discouragement,-extremes. If he cannot put out the fire of zeal, he will make it break out at the chimney, and drive fasting into starving. 5. He suits his temptations to the subjects, drives the nail that will go, and causes the stream of natural propensities to flow. He tempts not, in general, the old to pleasure, nor the young to covetousness; nor the sick to drunkenness, but to impatience.

The moral hypocrite.-Many mistake nature for grace, and so rest short of a true change. Strong sense, keen wit, lively parts, and a good natural temper, puff up many. The tempering makes a vast difference in many blades, all made of the same metal, some of which will bend before they break, others break before they bend. Good nature without grace, maketh a fairer show than grace with an evil nature. A cur outruns a greyhound with a clog.

The hypocrite derives his honour from his birth; the child of God from his new birth. The hypocrite hath his perfections from the body, from his complexion and constitution, which are not praiseworthy; but the Christian hath them from his better part, the soul. A warm temper hath often the appearance of zeal; a cooler, of patience; melancholy, of contemplation; lively blood and strong spirits, of spiritual joy.

The hypocrite serves God with what costs him nothing, only going down the stream; but the Christian works with strife and industry, wrestleth, and keeps his body under.

The hypocrite is disposed to some virtues, and refrains from those vices that are contrary to his taste and humour, as an elephant abhors a mouse; but the Christian shuts every door against sin, and is thoroughly furnished to every good work.

The hypocrite puts reason in the place of religion; on the contrary, the Christian brings reason under the command of religion; his understanding bows to faith, and his free will to God's free grace.

The hypocrite derives his virtues from himself, spider like. “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man,” Jer. xvii. 5. The Christian hath his virtue from above: the one is like marshy ground, the other is watered from heaven. Again: the hypocrite curses himself, by giving to reason the command of appetite, not knowing that his reason is crooked; but the Christian puts all under the strict rule of grace:-grace is Sarah, reason Agar. The one talks of right reason, the other rectifieth it.

The hypocrite puts honesty in the place of piety, but the Christian is honest and kind from a principle of genuine piety. There was a difference between Alexander and David pouring out water, the one before his soldiers, the other before the Lord.

He hath for virtues only shining vices-virtues proceeding from unsanctified reason, and spoiled by the intention: thus a covetous, indolent man avoids and hates law suits; he is sober and temperate through love of money, or of health and reputation; he is diligent and industrious to compass profit. But the Christian hath the truth, if he wants the perfection of virtue; the one shines as rotten wood, the other as gold in the ore.

The hypocrite cries up virtue and exclaims against vice, rather by speech than practice; but the king's daughter is glorious within: the one speaks, the other lives, great things.

The hypocrite keeps himself from gross sins, but harbours spiritual corruptions. Does he subdue his passions? They are in the way of his glory and quiet. Does he do good? It is to be more in love with himself. The Christian cleanseth himself from all spiritual vices: the one is settled on the lees of self love, the other is emptied of self, and filled with Christ.

The hypocrite compares himself with a child of God, when under disadvantages; as for example, when he is fallen, or overtaken in an infirmity; but the whitest devil shall not stand in the judgment with the most tawny child of God. The meteor may blaze, but the star standeth.

The hearing hypocrite.-The hearing hypocrite hears Christ's word without benefit; he assembles with the pious, whom he deceives, as he hopes to deceive Christ, Luke xiii. He goes to meet Christ, not as the bride, but only as the bride's friend. He is the stony ground; he is sermon proof, repels conviction, takes nothing to himself, or shakes it off, as sheep do the rain. He hath the forehead of the whore, Jer. iii. 3, and refuses to be ashamed. Christ condemns him both as a worker of iniquity, and a builder on the sand. The Christian hears so that his “profiting appears unto all men;” he hears Christ himself through the minister; and the word is “able to save his soul,-is a savour of life unto life:” nor is he “a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word.”

The hypocrite will hear only such ministers as suit his humour,-Balaam suits Balak, a lying prophet Ahab. He will neglect or slight others. The Christian hears God's voice through every messenger of his; the plainer the message, the better he receives the messenger,-as “an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus,” Gal. iv. 14. He Judges not of the word by the preacher, but of the preacher by the word. He, like Jehosaphat, will hear Micaiah preach, rather than the four hundred prophets of Baal.

The hypocrite hears, in hopes of hearing something new; therefore when he has heard a few times, he grows weary, and longs for a new preacher. An unsanctified heart, like a sick stomach, loathes its daily bread; but the Christian is never tired of “the sincere milk of the word;” he desires no new wine; he likes manna after forty years,-”Evermore give us this bread.”

The hypocrite hearkens more after eloquence than substance. He likes Apollos, not Christ's messenger; he hears not for life; he sports with the infirmities of Samson,-but death is at the door. The Christian looks most to the power of the word; he comes not as to a show, but to the bar; weighs the matter rather than the manner, and regards the message more than the messenger. The one falls down before man, the other before God.

He will not hear all; comforts, promises, and general truths he loves; the doctrine of the cross he hates. A foil, a wooden sword that draws no blood, suits him. The Christian hears all God's word, loves to be smitten, does not say, “ Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?” But, “Search me, and try my heart.”

The hypocrite looks on the word as a story, or a landscape; he loves to hear of Christ's miracles, of the prodigal son, &c, but draws a curtain before his own picture. The Christian looks on the word as a glass to see himself. The one uses the word as children their books, looking more at the pictures than the lesson; the other sees himself, and improves.

He hears, without preparing his heart to hear; he minds his outward more than his inward man; he uses no exercise to get an appetite; it is enough if he hears, though he digests nothing. He sows among thorns, having never ploughed them up, and they choke all. The Christian looks to his feet, comes hungry to the house of God, longing to be fed, and is not willing to go without his portion.

He hears only for the present time, as he would hear a concert of music; the Christian hears both for the time present and to come; he studies what he hears, and to what end, that he may turn it into practice. He remembers that word; “Take heed how ye hear.”

He proposes to himself some carnal end, if any at all; as to be noted for his diligence, to be reputed a good Churchman, to fulfil his task of hearing; perhaps to cavil and find fault, to make amends for not doing, to please a friend. Festus thus pleased Agrippa, and Ahab heard Micaiah for Jehosaphat’s sake: but the Christian hears for his own and others’ edification.

If the hypocrite is of the second class of hearers, he sometimes pretends to practise, as an excuse for not hearing. “I have,” says he, “enough in one sermon to practise all the week.” The Christian makes hearing and practice to go hand in hand; he will redeem time for hearing from recreation and sleep; his hearing is a spur to his practice. He does not pretend practice as a hinderance to his hearing, like Judas, who, out of pretended regard to the poor, sought to rob Christ of his due.

Sometimes he trembleth under the word, but yet he shifts it off; before it has taken hold on his heart: as a tree shaken by the wind takes deeper root, so is he more rooted in his sins. Felix's fearfulness surpriseth the hypocrite before he is aware; he is ashamed of himself, angry at the preacher, and, Cain like, he runs from God, instead of going to him. But the Christian trembles at the word as afraid to sin against it. One is Pharaoh, the other Josiah.

He is a seeming friend, but a secret foe, to the Gospel. When the word is a hammer, he is an anvil; when it is a fire, he is clay. But the Christian is both reconciled to, and transformed into the word; receiving it as the word of God in the love thereof. If the word be a nail, it nails him to Christ; if a sword, he loves to be cut and dissected; if a fire, he is like water, or as gold. The one kisses the word, like Judas; the other embraces it, as Joseph did Benjamin.

The praying hypocrite.-The praying hypocrite prays with his tongue, but not with his heart. The heart of the Christian goes first in prayer.

The hypocrite asks according to his wishes, looking no farther, like Israel for quails, Balaam for leave to curse God's people, Rachel for children. But the Christian, like Hannah, who prayed hard, and submitted all to God.

He is wavering and double minded. “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” “Will he hear and answer?” The Christian asketh in faith, nothing wavering; as Moses at the Red Sea, while Israel cried and expected death.

The hypocrite is sometimes presumptuous also: “Wherefore have I fasted, and thou seest not?” The Christian always comes as a poor beggar, crying with the centurion, “I am not worthy.” He quarrelleth with God, if not answered: “This evil is of the Lord.” But the Christian waiteth patiently, saying, “It is the Lord, let him do as he pleaseth.”

He prays without repentance, regarding iniquity in his heart; but the Christian confesses and forsakes his sin.

The hypocrite prays without faith, without expecting an answer; therefore he often cuts short his prayer, especially in secret. The Christian pours out his soul in prayer: gives good measure, pressed down, running over, being assured that word standeth fast, “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall my heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it?”

At other times the hypocrite will exceed measure,-but only in company, like the Ave Marias of the Papists. The true Christian measures his prayers by his affections, and by works of charity and duty.

The hypocrite prays in adversity, not in prosperity: he comes like the leper, or beaten child. The Christian, as the loving son, prays in prosperity, without the compulsion of the rod. Or, perhaps, he will pray in prosperity; but in adversity his heart sinks, like Nabal’s: he murmurs, complains, and cries out, “Why doth the Lord do thus unto me?” The Christian remembers those words of St. James, “Is any afflicted? Let him pray.” The one, as a bastard, runs away; the other kisses the rod, and sees every thing as the answer of prayer, submitting himself wholly to the will of God.

The preaching hypocrite worse than all.-Admitted of men, not called of God, he preaches Christ, but not for Christ. “Put me (saith he) into the priest's office, that I may eat a morsel of bread.” He is, perhaps, a “preacher of righteousness,” but a “worker of iniquity.” But the true Christian preacher only spends and is spent upon Christ and his interest; he is careful not only of his gifts, but of his grace; not only to be sent of men, but of God. The one preaches himself, and for himself; the other preaches Christ, and for Christ.

The hypocrite is ambitious to show his learning,-to be admired rather than to be useful: not so St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. A “scribe well instructed bringeth out of his own treasures things new and old.”

He brings in learning, but not Divine learning! His artificial fire hath no warmth in it. But the Christian minister, though perhaps learned in Egyptian wisdom as Moses, and in Greek literature as St. Paul, who quoted Aratus to the Athenians, Acts xvii. 28, Menander to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. xv. 38, Epimenides to Titus, chap. i. 12, never uses it but as the Agar of Sarah; Christ crucified being his chief knowledge.

The hypocrite uses Divine learning to human, carnal ends,-to get preferment or fame, to support opinions or parties. The minister of Christ handles not the "word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth," 2 Cor. iv, 2. He glorieth not in his preaching, a necessity being laid upon him by Christ.

The hypocrite chooses subjects on which he may shine and please: the other, those which may awaken and edify, disclaiming men pleasing. The one shoots over the heads, the other aims at the hearts of his hearers, suiting himself to the meanest capacity.

He puts on a face of zeal, without zeal; and, trying to move others, is himself unmoved. He cannot say, with Christ, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." His zeal is an ignis fatuus, or perhaps a heathenish fire lighted at Seneca's torch; not a burning, as well as a shining light. He may have some feelings, but they are over with his sermon or prayer; some warmth for the Church, as Jehu, because it is his party. But the Christian minister hath more zeal in his bosom than on his tongue. Elijah like, the "word of the Lord is as a fire in his bones." His soul "mourns in secret places" for the sins he reproves openly, Jer. xiii. 17. He can put *probatum est* to what he preaches; and his zeal hath a very large measure of Gospel love; it saves others while it consumes himself.

The hypocrite is, perhaps, strict in his rules, loose in his practice, binding heavy burdens, that he toucheth not himself. He is like a finger post, which shows the way, but never walks in it. He promises liberty, while he is himself the slave of sin. The true preacher is afraid to preach what he practises not; he lives his sermons over. As a brave captain, he saith, "Follow me." He aims at thummim as well as urim, perfection as well as light.

The one makes the way to heaven as broad as he can, at least to himself; and oft times allows things to others to screen himself. The other makes the way to heaven narrower to himself than to his hearers, and never gives up the last of the word, lest his own foot should be pinched.

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ON LUKEWARMNESS.

THE lukewarm are of two sorts. The first will speak against enormities, but plead for little sins; will go to church and sacrament, but also to plays, races, and shows;

will read the Bible, and also romances and trifling books. They will have family prayer, at least on Sundays, but after it unprofitable talk, evil speaking, and worldly conversation. They plead for the Church, yet leave it for a card party, a pot companion, or the fire side. They think they are almost good enough, and they who aim at being better, are (to be sure) hypocrites. They are under the power of anger, evil desire, and anxious care, but suppose all men are the same, and talk much of being saved by true repentance, and doing all they can. They undervalue Christ, extol morality and good works, and do next to none. They plead for old customs: they will do as their fathers did, though ever so contrary to the word of God; and whatever hath not custom to plead for it, though ever so much recommended in Scripture, is accounted by them a heresy. They are greatly afraid of being too good, and of making too much ado about their souls and eternity. They will be sober, but not enthusiasts. The scriptures they quote most, and understand least, are, "Be not righteous over much: God's mercies are over all his works: there is a time for all things," &c. They call themselves by the name of Christ, but worship Baal.

The second sort of lukewarm persons assent to the whole Bible, talk of repentance, faith, and the new birth, commend holiness, plead for religion, use the outward means, and profess to be and do more than others. But they yield to carelessness, self indulgence, fear of man, dread of reproach, and of loss, hatred of the cross, love of ease, and the false pleasures of a vain imagination. These say, do, and really suffer many things; but rest short of the true change of heart, the one thing needful being still lacking. They are as the foolish virgins, without oil, as the man not having a wedding garment.

Of these the Lord hath said, "He will spue them up out of his mouth." But why so severe a sentence? Because, (1.) Christ will have a man hearty and true to his principles; he looks for truth in the inward parts. As a consistent character, he commended even the unjust steward. (2.) Religion admits of no lukewarmness, and it is by men of this character, that his name is blasphemed. (3.) A bad servant is worse than a careless neighbour; and a traitor in the guise of a friend, is more hateful, and more dangerous, than an open enemy: Judas was more infamous than Pilate. (4.) The cold have nothing to trust to; and harlots and publicans enter into the kingdom of heaven before moral or evangelical Pharisees, who, in different degrees, know their Master's will and do it not: "they shall be beaten with many stripes."

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Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee, **Isaiah xxvi. 3.**

THE very centre of the Christian religion is union with Christ, and the receiving him as our all; in other words, called faith, or a "staying our minds upon him." To the doing this, there are many hinderances, but the two greatest and most general ones are:-

First, the want of self knowledge; this keeps ninety-nine out of one hundred from Christ. They know not, or rather feel not that they are blind, naked, leprous, helpless, and condemned; that all their works can make no atonement, and that nothing they can do will fit them for heaven. When this is truly known, the first grand hinderance to our union with Christ is removed.

The second is the want of understanding “the Gospel of Christ:” the want of seeing therein the firm foundation given us for this pure and simple faith, the only solid ground of staying our souls on God. We must remember that the Gospel is “good news,” and not be slow of heart to believe it. Christ receiveth sinners; he undertaketh their whole concern; he giveth not only repentance, but remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. He creates them anew: his love first makes the bride, and then he delights in her. The want of viewing Christ in this light, as the author and finisher of our salvation, hinders the poor, humble penitent from casting himself wholly on the Lord, although he hath said, “Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.”

I do not mention sin, for sin is the very thing which renders man the object of Christ's pity: our sins will never turn away the heart of Christ from us, for they brought him down from heaven to die in our place; and the reason why iniquity separates between God and our souls, is because it turns our eyes from him, and shuts up in us the capacity of receiving those beams of love, which are ever descending upon and offering themselves to us. But sin, sincerely lamented, and brought by “a constant act of faith” and prayer before the Lord, shall soon be consumed, as the thorns laid close to a fire; only let us abide thus waiting, and the Lord will pass through them and burn them up together.

When the soul feels its own helplessness, and receives the glad tidings of the Gospel, it ventures upon Christ; and though the world, the flesh, and the devil pursue, so that the soul seems often to be on the brink of ruin, it has still only to listen to the Gospel, and venture on Christ, as a drowning man on a single plank, with “I can but perish;” remembering these words, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.”

The consequence of thus trusting is, that God keeps the soul from its threefold enemy: defends it in temptation, in persecution, in heaviness. Through all it finds power to repose itself on Christ, to say, “God shall choose my inheritance for me.” Here the Christian finds peace with God, peace with himself, and peace with all around him; the peace of pardon, the peace of holiness; for both are obtained through staying he mind on Christ. He walks in the perpetual recollection of a present God, and is not disturbed by any thing. If he feels sin, he carries it to the Saviour; and if in heaviness, through manifold temptations, he still holds fast his confidence: he is above the region of clouds.

The careless sinner is not to be exhorted to trust in Christ; it would be to cast pearls before swine. Before an act of faith, there must be an act of self despair; before

filling, there must be emptiness. Is this thy character? Then suffer me to take away thy false props. Upon what dost thou stay thy soul? Thy honesty, morality, humility, doing good, using the means, business, friends, confused thoughts of God's mercy? This will never do. Thou must be brought to say, “What shall I do to be saved?” Without trembling at God's word, thou canst not receive Christ. Nothing short of love will do.

The penitent needs, and, blessed be God, has every encouragement. You have nothing but sin;-it is time you should understand the Gospel. You see yourself sinking,-Christ is with you.

You despair of yourself,-hope in Christ. You are overcome,-Christ conquers. Self condemned,-he absolves. Why do not you believe? Is not the messenger, the word, the Spirit of God sufficient? You want a joy unspeakable,-the way to It is by thus waiting patiently upon God. Look to Jesus. He speaks peace; abide looking, and your peace shall flow as a river.

Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? **Dan. iii. 14.**[1]

IN this chapter we have an account of those worthies, who quenched the violence of fire. (I.) The dedication of the image. (II.) The three children accused and arraigned. (III.) Soothed and threatened, but preferring death to sin, God's law to the king's, faith to honour and profit. (IV.) Nebuchadnezzar's anger, their punishment, and deliverance. (V.) The effect it had on the king.

This account may be applied to the trials of God's children, in all ages. The god of this world sets up, in opposition to the Gospel, three images: the first, a golden image, profit; the second, an airy image, honour; the third, a beautiful alluring image, pleasure.

The first, profit, is worshipped by setting our affections upon it, by making it the prime, if not sole object of our thoughts, and lord even of our Sabbaths. We bow down to this golden image, by unjust dealing, running in debt without taking care to discharge it, choosing rather to wound our conscience than our pocket, by countenancing or suffering evil for filthy lucre's sake, forgetting that “the love of money is the root of all evil.”

The second, honour, is worshipped, when we desire the applause of men, or shrink from duty for fear of their rage or contempt.

The third, pleasure, when we indulge the flesh, by excessive eating and drinking, by uncleanness, vain shows and heathenish sports; when we delight ourselves in

dress, furniture, our persons, &c. In a word, when we do not sanctify the enjoyment of the creature by the word of God and prayer.

As the people of God will not bow down to this threefold image, they are accused, threatened, and ridiculed. Their duty, under such circumstances, is to bear their testimony against this idolatrous worship of the god of this world, to possess their souls in patience, to believe in the Lord's will and power to save them; not to comply by halves, or compromise the matter with the world; but to be ready to offer up their lives, and leave the event to God, in a steady purpose not to offend him.

All came to the dedication, even from afar;-but how many stay from the house of God, though at the door! All bowed down but three. How many are now going to turn their backs on the Lord's table!

From the dedication of our Church, from days set apart to be kept holy, Satan takes occasion to enforce the worship of his threefold image. Now, remember the duty of God's people, and quit yourselves like men. Some petty Nebuchadnezzars have sent to gather together, not princes, but drunken men: and have set up, not a golden image, no, nor a golden calf, but a living bull. O ye, that fear God, be not afraid of their terror, be not allured by their music; confess the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; and pray that these offenders may, with Nebuchadnezzar of old, resolve, not only to do nothing against, but not even “to speak amiss of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.”

To you, my brethren, who worship the image, what shall I say? Shall Nebuchadnezzar rise up in judgment against you? He blessed the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; will you curse him? For inasmuch as you do it to one of his followers, you do it unto him. Nebuchadnezzar made a decree, that whoever should speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, should be cut in pieces, and their houses made a dung hill; and will you cut in pieces, with your tongues; or turn into a dung hill, by riot and mobbing, the houses of those who fear and love the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego? No other God can deliver after this sort, saith the heathen: and give me leave to add, no other God can punish after this sort.

The King of kings hath anointed Jesus! He is lifted up on the cross;-upon a throne of glory. The decree is gone forth. At the name of Jesus every knee must bow. All tongues, nations, languages, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, angels, archangels, and saints, above and below, “all must fall down.” In heaven, trumpets, thunders, lightnings, voices:-on earth, the terrors of Sinai, all say, “Kiss the Son.” He is not a dead image, but the living God. He comes: the trump of God may sound to-day. The burning furnace of his indignation is heated, and eternity is the duration of their torments, whose smoke ascendeth for ever and ever. O let him bless you now, in turning every one of you from his iniquities, and you shall keep the feast in heaven.

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Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground, **Luke xxii. 44.**

MANY desire to know what passes in the heart of great men, when under afflicting circumstances, or engaged in some great undertaking. Behold the most sublime scene of suffering held out to us in the word of God. Here are laid open the last, the dying thoughts and cruel sufferings of the Saviour of mankind. Here is a scene, in which we are all most deeply interested. Let us look into,

I. The agony of our Saviour. II. What he did in his agony. III. The amazing consequences of that agony.

The agony of our Lord was a conflict:-a violent struggle:-a grappling and wrestling with the deepest horror:-the agitation of a breast penetrated with the greatest sense of fear and amazement. “He was heard in that he feared.”

The cause of his agony was, (1.) The powers of darkness, legions of devils, who poured on his devoted head their utmost rage and malice. Every wound, which sin had given, and the devil had power to inflict, the pure and naked bosom of Jesus opened itself to receive. The prince of darkness, whose chain was let loose for the purpose, now ruled his hour, and, to appearance, triumphed over the Prince of life. (2.) The feeling of the weight of the wrath of God (and who knoweth the power of his wrath?) as kindled against sin:-the terrors of the Lord:-the cup of trembling, the withdrawing of God's comfortable presence. (3.) The fear of his farther sufferings:-a violent, dreadful, and approaching death. (4.) The atoning for our coldness, and the painful foresight, with how much truth, those words of the prophet might be applied to many, “Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?”

During his agony he prayed more earnestly. He prayed earnestly before, but now more earnestly; before he kneeled, but now he threw himself prostrate on the earth. He prayed aloud, with strong cries and tears, Heb. v. 7. He was in an agony, every power of soul and body being stretched to the utmost. Those who never, or seldom pray, are strangers to spiritual conflicts.

The greatness of his agony, and intenseness of his prayer, caused that amazing circumstance “of his sweat being as it were great drops of blood.” Amazing! because it was a cold damp night:-he lay on the dewy ground:-it was so profuse as to run down in great drops to the ground; the sweat was mixt with blood, bursting out of the capillary vessels through the open pores.

Observe, Adam sinned in a garden; in a garden Christ expiates his sin. Before death, “In the sweat of thy brow,” &c, Gen. iii. before death, Christ sweat, and with all his body laboured. “In sorrow shalt thou bring forth;” Christ sweat blood, strong

sign of pain. "Cursed is the ground," &c. Christ, when made sin and a curse, lies prostrate on the ground, and bedews it with blood.

Brethren, we must all be brought to an agony; yea, we must be crucified with Christ, if we would reign with him. Beware then of villifying the spiritual agonies of the children of God, by calling them mad fits.

You who, in agony, have brought forth children, or struggled under the load of excessive drinking, or laboured for life when in danger, struggle and agonize now for your souls.

Learn to pray most, when most troubled-when weakest-when most tempted. Still look to the Lord Jesus-adore him-love him. Be not dry, like Gideon's fleece, in the midst of this sacred dew. O come for the answer of his prayer. It is thy balm, O Gilead, the precious ointment, which runs down to the skirts of his clothing! Wash away thy sin: bathe in his bloody sweat; it is the former and the latter rain, bedewing prophets and apostles.

Let every believer remember, (and rejoice in the remembrance,) that sweat, pain, the earth, the grave, are sanctified: and let every stubborn unbeliever beware of the cry of his blood. It now cries better things: by and by it will cry bitterer things than the blood of Abel.

The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence,
and the violent take it by force, **Matthew xi. 12.**

THE grand device of Satan is to prevent us from seeing the necessity of this holy violence, or from putting it in execution. To prevent the effect of this stratagem, our blessed Lord gives us the plainest directions in these words: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." "Labour for the meat that endureth to eternal life," &c, &c. But in no scripture is the direction more plain than in that of the text: "The kingdom," &c. Let us consider, I. The nature of this kingdom. II. How the violent take it by force. III. Answer an objection to the doctrine of the text.

This kingdom is that of grace, which brings down a heavenly nature and felicity into the believing soul. The kingdom within us is righteousness, and peace, and joy. It is Jesus apprehended by faith, as given for us; and felt by love, as living in us. In a word, it is the image of God lost in Adam and restored by Christ;-pardon, holiness, and happiness issuing in eternal glory.

This kingdom suffereth violence, which is offered, (1.) To those lords who reign over us,-the world, the devil, the flesh. These rebels must be turned out: our own wills must be overcome, and ourselves surrendered up to God, as to our lawful and chosen sovereign. (2.) An humble, holy, sacred violence must be used in prayer,-with

Jesus, that he would open in our hearts the power of faith, apply the efficacy of his blood, and bestow upon us the spirit of prayer; or in other words the prayer of faith:-with the Father, that he would look through the pillar of fire, and discomfit all our enemies:-with the Holy Ghost, that he would take up his abode with us.

Of this violence we have an example in Jacob wrestling with the Angel, who said, “Let me go, for the day breaketh;” and he said, “I will not let thee go till thou bless me,” Genesis xxxii. 26. Here Jacob, being left alone, improves his solitude; danger and trouble work in him the right way. He prays, prays earnestly, and that against much discouragement. God and man seem to oppose him; for the Angel of the covenant wrestled as if to get loose from his hold. It was a spiritual wrestling; he wept and made supplication; but before he prevailed the Angel touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, and hindered him from wrestling in his own strength. Then the Spirit alone made intercession; nature failed, and grace was conqueror. “When I am weak, then am I strong.” He says, “Let me go;” as God once said to Moses, “Let me alone:” thus does the Lord sometimes try our faith. This was the case of the woman of Canaan, when Jesus, at first, answered her not, and afterward said, “It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs.” But when she still worshipped, prayed, and waited, she obtained these words of approbation: “O woman, great is thy faith!” as well as the answer of her prayer. So the Angel said, “Let me go, the day breaketh;”-thy affairs want thee;-thou must have rest; but Jacob foregoes all for the blessing,-rest, family, weariness, pain; and answers, “I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me.” So must it be with us; none prevail but those who take the kingdom by violence. He conquers at last. “What is thy name?” saith God. He will have the sinner know himself, and confess what he is; then he gives the new name, “A prince with God. If God be for us, who can be against us?” The Angel does not tell him his name; for the tree of life is better than the tree of knowledge. “He saw God face to face and lived.” So it is with faithful wrestlers: God resists only to increase our desires; and we must be resolved to hearken to nothing that would hinder. Weariness, care, friends, fear, and unbelief, must all be thrown aside when we seek to see God face to face, and to be brought into the light of life.

They who are weary of the Egyptian yoke of outward and inward sin, who cannot resist without the love of Jesus, the life of God, at last become violent. They forcibly turn from the world; by force they attack the devil; bringing themselves by force before God; and drag out, by strong confession, the evils that lurk within. Against these they fight, by detesting and denying them. Their strength is in crying mightily to the Lord, and expecting continually that fire which God will rain from heaven upon them. All this must be done by force and with great conflicts; for it is against nature, which hath the utmost reluctance to it.

The words of the text allude to the taking a fortified town by storming it; and this is of all military expeditions the most dangerous. The enemy is covered and hid, and those who scale the walls have nothing but their arms and courage. But can the wrestling soul overcome, can he take this kingdom? Ah! no, not by his own strength;

but his Joshua will take it for him. God only requires that we should entreat him to do this; the prayer of repentance, the prayer of faith, storm Mount Sion, the city of God. He that is violent shall receive the kingdom of God,-justification and sanctification: but remember the violent take it by force. He shall have many a hard struggle with God's enemies, and it may be, many with the Lord himself, before he declares him conqueror.

Some object, “We have no might;” and to endeavour to take the kingdom by violence, is taking the matter out of God's hand: is it not better to wait for the promise, “Stand still, and see the salvation of God?” If you mean by standing still, not agonising to enter in at the strait gate, not wrestling in prayer and fighting the good fight of faith; may God save you from this stillness! “You err, not knowing the Scriptures.” The standing still there recommended is to possess your soul in patience, without dejection, fears and murmuring. Stand still, as the apostles, who watched together in prayer, ran with patience the race set before them, and fought manfully, as faithful soldiers, under the banner of the cross. Any other stillness is of the devil, and leads to his kingdom. Search the New Testament and show me one standing still after he had been convinced of his wants. Did the centurion, did the woman of Canaan, did blind Bartimeus stand still? Did St. Paul, did the woman with the bloody issue stand still? Did not all of them use the power they had? I do not desire you to use what you have not; only be faithful stewards of the manifold grace entrusted to you. A kingdom, a kingdom of heaven is before you-power to reign with Jesus as his priests and kings. Stir up then thy faith; reach forward to the things which are before. Become a wrestling Jacob and you shall shortly be a prevailing Israel. Be not discouraged, for, as a good man observes, “God frequently gives in one moment what he hath apparently withheld for many years."

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Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, Luke xii. 20.

LET us consider, I. Why our Lord calls the person mentioned in the text, fool,-Thou fool. II. The sudden and unexpected separation between this rich man and his all. III. The circumstance of the particular time of his death,-This night. IV. Make some observations on the nature and value of a soul. V. Observe who shall require the rich man's soul,-I shall be required. VI. Make some remarks on the last words of the text,-“Thy soul shall be required of thee.”

I. It is not without good reason that our Lord addresses the rich man in the text with, Thou fool. The picture our Lord has drawn of him hath eight strokes, each of which proves this worldling to have been an egregious fool.

(1.) He was rich in this world, but neglected being rich toward God, rich in grace. (2.) He was perplexed without reason, and exclaimed, “What shall I do! I have not where to bestow my fruits.” Had he been wise, he would rather have cried out, with the jailer, “What shall I do to be saved?” or he would have inquired whether all the

houses of his poor neighbours were full, and whether he could not bestow upon them some of those fruits, the abundance of which made him so uneasy. (3.) He determined to pull down his barns: not to break off his sins. The pile of them, though towering to heaven, like Babel, did not make him uneasy. (4.) He resolved to build greater barns; but forgot to build the hopes of his salvation on the Rock of ages, Matt. vii. 24. (5.) He would say to his soul, Soul, thou hast goods laid up: but had he been wise, he would have considered, that although he was rich as to his outward circumstances and the things which support the body, yet his soul was "poor, miserable, blind, and naked," Rev. iii. 17. (6.) He had the folly to promise himself a long life, as if he had a lease of it, signed by his heavenly Lord. "Soul,' said he, "thou hast much goods laid up for many years:" but God said, "Thou fool, this night," &c. (7.) He would say to his soul, "Soul, take thine ease;" but had he been directed by wisdom, he would have exhorted his soul not to rest till he had obeyed the apostle's precept, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," Phil. ii. 1-2. Alas! how common and how dangerous is the mistake of the children of this world, who openly follow this fool, and say either to themselves or one to another, "Soul, take thine ease; take care of being under any concern about salvation, there is no need of so much ado about religion and heaven." (8.) The last mark of the rich man's folly, was to say to his deluded soul, "Eat, drink, and be merry;" as if a soul could eat and drink, what money can procure or barns contain. No, my brethren: the grace of God, and the benefits of Christ's death, which are called his "flesh and blood, the bread of life, and the living water," are the only food and drink proper for our souls; and the true mirth and solid joy of a spirit, is that to which St. Paul exhorts us, "Rejoice in the Lord; and again, I say, rejoice," Phil. iv. 4.

II. The separation between this rich farmer and his all was sudden and unexpected: "This night," said God, "shall thy soul be required of thee." This night, not so much as to-morrow is allowed him to dispose of those goods which were laid up for many years; he must suddenly, immediately, part with all. (1.) All his movable goods, except a winding sheet. (2.) All his landed estate, except a grave. (3.) All his barns, houses, and halls, except a coffin. (4.) All his friends and relations without exception. He must go this dismal journey alone and unattended. (5.) All his time, his precious time, which the living kill so many ways, and which the dying and the dead would gladly recover, by parting with a world, if they had it to part with. (6.) His soul, it is to be feared.

Let us here reflect, how careful we are to secure our door, lest thieves should break in and take away some of our goods; and yet how careless to provide for death, which carries away all, or rather hurries us away from all at once! What an alarming thought is this for impenitent sinners! May their souls be required this very night? O let them not plot wickedness and contrive vanity against to morrow.

III. The circumstance of the particular time of this rich man's death is very awful, "This night," not this day, "shall thy soul," &c. This seems to imply four things.

(1.) Darkness and horror, which chiefly belong to the night. Of this we have striking illustrations, in the destruction of the first born of the Egyptians, and of Sennacherib's army in Judea. (2.) Drowsiness and carnal security, illustrated in the opposite case of the foolish virgins, Matt. xxv. (3.) Sadness, in opposition to those nights which he had perhaps spent in debauchery and vain diversions. (4.) Sin and ignorance of the ways of God; which are called darkness and night, works of darkness, &c, in various parts of the Scripture.

O think upon this night of death, ye that forget God. How soon may it be here, to cast a veil upon your pride, and make it share the fate of Absalom's beauty, Jezebel's paint, and Saul's stature.

If this night of death is coming upon all! This night “when no man can work!” Let us follow our Lord's advice, “and work the works of God, while it is day, John ix. 4.

IV. How wonderful is the nature, how inestimable is the value of that soul, which was required of this fool; and which shall be required of us!

How excellent is that noble, that neglected being, in itself! Spiritual, immortal, endued with the most glorious faculties, made after the very image of God!

How precious is it, as well as how excellent. It is a jewel of inestimable value, and its worth may be estimated, (1.) From the admirable texture of the body, which is only the casket where that jewel is placed. (2.) From the extraordinary pains which the sons of men take to repair and adorn the body, whose value depends only on the jewel it contains. (3.) From the testimony of Christ, who prefers one soul to the whole material creation: “What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Matt. xvi. 26.

Suffer me then to entreat you, brethren, to bestow on your souls pains and care, in some measure, proportionable to their worth; at least, be not offended with us ministers, for showing some concern for the salvation of your precious immortal souls.

V. Who shall require his soul? “Thy soul shall be required.” The original word, απαιτουσιν means, “They shall require.” The question then offers itself, Who they are that shall require the unprepared worldling's soul?

I answer, (1.) Not Christ as a Saviour; for in that capacity he hath nothing to do with dying unbelievers. They would not receive his grace into their hearts, and he will not receive them into his glory, Prov. i. 24, &c. (2.) Nor good angels: we read, indeed, that they “carried Lazarus to Abraham's bosom,” Luke xvi. 22: but the rich man found his way to the flames without them. (3.) Nor departed saints, who neither can nor will meddle with unregenerated souls. For this we may read the conversation between Abraham and the wretch who prayed to him for help, Luke xvi. Who then?

(1.) Some unforeseen accident or distemper. (2.) Death, who, as an officer, delivers the wicked into the hands of the tormentors. (3.) Evil spirits, the ministers of Divine justice; which may be inferred from the strong sense of the powers of darkness, which some wicked men have in their last moments. See the case of the memorable Francis Spira.

Believers cheerfully resign their souls into their Saviour's hands; yea, they long to "depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." Unbelievers, who have their portion in this world, are loath to leave it: but a peremptory, forcible command shall set aside all their pleas: their souls shall be required.

VI. the last words of the text afford matter for the last head of the discourse. Death comes to require a soul: "Not of me," says, perhaps, the rich farmer; "not of me, for I have much goods laid up for many years;" but God says, "Of thee shall thy soul be required."

What! May not the soul of some poor Lazarus, who pines away in want, sickness, and obscurity, be required first? No, says God, it must be required of thee. May not an old Simeon, who longs to depart in peace, be allowed to die for the rich man? No: his hour is come; of him is his soul required. But, perhaps, some of the rich man's servants, at the feet of the bed, may go upon his fatal errand for him? No, says death, he must go himself: of thee is thy soul required. See all those weeping friends who surround his bed! May not one of them do for death? No, cries the stern messenger, my errand is to thee.

Consider the peremptoriness of the inexorable messenger. Gold will not bribe him. Entreaties prevail not. He takes no notice of promises of amendment. Tears melt him not. In spite of physicians and medicines, he does his office, and requires of the worldling his unprepared soul.

The epithet, which God fixes on the rich man, belongs, (1.) To all who depend upon many years of life, and do not habitually prepare for death. (2.) To all, whether rich or poor, who are not rich toward God. (3.) Especially to those who, though they have not the conveniences, and hardly the necessaries of life, will yet trample on the riches of Divine grace and heavenly glory. If the rich worldling was a fool in God's esteem, how doubly foolish are the poor, to whom the Gospel is preached in vain!

Ye foolish virgins, ye slumbering souls, awake,-arise,-trim your lamps. Be wise to salvation; be as anxious about your eternal, as he was for his temporal prosperity. Pull down, not your barns, but your sins. Build not larger houses, but the house that will stand when death beats upon you with all its storms. And never say to your soul, "Soul, take thine ease," until you have a habitation, "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Ye, who are wise virgins, and who are preparing to meet the Bridegroom, apply to your souls, but in a better sense, the words that the rich fool spake to his soul, “Eat, drink, and be merry.” Feed upon the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood; that is, believe the Gospel of Jesus, firmly believe that, by his cross, he redeemed you from sin, death, hell, and the grave: and through faith in him, you will be able to rejoice in the Lord with unspeakable joy, and to antedate your heaven.

I beseech thee, awakened sinner, who tremblest at death and judgment, to come, by the prayer of faith, to the Prince of life, that, through the value of his death, he may take away the sting of death, sin, from thy heart. Steadfastly believe these comfortable words of St. Paul: “He tasted death for every man; that he, through death, might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage,” Heb. ii. 9, 14, 15. If you heartily credit this blessed report, you will find your fears of death changed into longings after it; and with your dying breath you will be able, through mercy, to challenge the king of terrors, and to say, with the apostle, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

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THE TEST OF A NEW CREATURE:

OR, HEADS OF EXAMINATION FOR ADULT CHRISTIANS.

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith,” 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

WHATEVER is the state of one wholly renewed, must be, in a less degree, the state of all “who are born from above:” and whatever is the fruit of perfect holiness, to walk by the same rule must be the way to obtain the same salvation. The image of God is one, grace is the same; and to be in Christ is to believe, and have the fellowship of his Spirit.

Regeneration differs only in degrees of strength and soundness. In our early justification the Divine life is comparatively small, and mixed with sin; but when perfectly renewed, we are strong, and every part pure, holding by faith that salvation which makes us one with the Son of God.

The law given in our first state, and the law required by the Gospel, the covenant of works, and the covenant of faith, are different. Whatever we see in the example of Jesus, and whatever he promises to bestow on his followers, are unquestionable privileges of Gospel salvation. Neither is the whole of this salvation, of our justification, or of our renewal after the image of God, finished, till the resurrection, when we shall “see him as he is,” and beholding him face to face, “his name shall be written on our foreheads.” Nor can we ever have so much of the likeness of God as

to be incapable of more; but rather the more we obtain of his image and favour, the more we are fitted to receive for ever and ever.

HEADS OF EXAMINATION.

I. Do I feel any pride; or am I partaker of the meek and lowly mind that was in Jesus? Am I dead to all desire of praise? If any despise me, do I like them the worse for it? Or if they love and approve me, do I love them more on that account? Am I willing to be accounted useless, and of no consequence,-glad to be made of no reputation? Do humiliations give me real pleasure, and is it the language of my heart,

Make me little and unknown,
Loved and prized by God alone?

II. Does God bear witness in my heart that it is purified? that in all things I please him?

III. Is the life I live, “by the faith of the Son of God;” so that Christ dwelleth in me? Is Christ the life of all my affections and designs, as my soul is the life of my body? Is my eye single, and my soul full of light,-all eye within and without; always watchful?

IV. Have I always the presence of God? Does no cloud come between God and the eye of my faith? Can I “rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks?”

V. Am I saved from the fear of man? Do I speak plainly to all, neither fearing their frowns, nor seeking their favours? Have I no shame of religion; and am I always ready to confess Christ, to suffer with his people, and to die for his sake?

VI. Do I deny myself at all times, and take up my cross as the Spirit of God leads me? Do I embrace the cross of every sort, being willing to give up my ease and convenience to oblige others; or do I expect them to conform to my hours, ways, and customs? Does the cross sit light upon me, and am I willing to suffer all the will of God? Can I trample on pleasure and pain? Have I

A soul inured to pain,
To hardship, grief, and loss;
Bold to take up, firm to sustain,
The consecrated cross?

VII. Are my bodily senses, and outward things, all sanctified to me? Do I not seek my own things, to please myself? Do I seek grace more for God's honour than my own profit, preferring the glory of God to all in earth or heaven, the giver to the gift?

VIII. Am I “poor in spirit?” Do I “take pleasure in infirmities, necessities, distresses, reproaches;” so that out of weakness, want, and danger, I may cast myself on the Lord? Have I no false shame in approaching God? Do I seek to be saved, as a poor sinner, by grace alone?

IX. Do I not “lean to my own understanding?” Am I ready to give up the point, when contradicted, unless conscience forbid? Am I easy to be persuaded? Do I esteem every one better than myself? Am I as willing to be a cypher as to be useful, and does my zeal burn bright, notwithstanding this willingness to be nothing?

X. Have I no false wisdom, goodness, strength; as if the grace I feel were my own? Do I never take that glory to myself which belongs to Christ? Do I feel my want of Christ, as much as ever, to be my all? and do I draw near to God, as poor and needy, only presenting before him his well beloved Son? Can I say,

“Every moment Lord, I need
The merit of thy death?
I shall hang upon my God,
Till I thy perfect glory see,
Till the sprinkling of thy blood
Shall speak me up to thee?”

Do I find joy in being thus nothing, empty, undeserving, giving all the glory to Christ.? Or do I wish that grace made me something, instead of God being all?

XI. Have I meekness? Does it bear rule over all my tempers, affections, and desires; so that my hopes, fears, joy, zeal, love, and hatred, are duly balanced? Do I feel no disturbance from others, and do I desire to give none? If any offend me, do I still love them, and make it an occasion to pray for them? If condemned by the world, do I entreat;-if condemned by the godly, am I one in whose mouth there is no reproof; replying only as conscience, and not as impatient nature dictates? It in the wrong, do I confess it? If in the right, do I submit, being content to do well, and suffer for it? It is the sin of superiors to be overbearing, of inferiors to be stubborn; if, then, I am a servant, do I yield not only to the gentle, but to the froward, committing my cause in silence to God; or if a master, do I “show all long suffering?” The Lord of all was “as he that serveth.” If I am the greatest, do I make myself least, “and the servant of all;” if a teacher, am I lowly! meek, and patient, not conceited, self willed, nor dogmatic? Am I ready to give up the claims of respect due to age, station, parent, master, &c; or do I rigidly exact those demands?

XII. Do I possess resignation; am I content with whatever is, or may be; seeing that God, the Author of all events, does, and will do, all for my good? Do I desire nothing but God, willing to part with all, if the Lord manifest his will for my so doing? Do I “know how to abound,” and yet not gratify unnecessary wants; but being content with things needful, do I faithfully and freely dispose of all the rest for the

help of others? Do I know how to suffer need? Is my confidence unshaken while I feel the distress of poverty, and have the prospect of future want, while, humanly speaking, strangling were better than life? And, in these circumstances, do I pity those who, having plenty, waste it in excess, instead of helping me?

XIII. Am I just; doing in all things as I would others should do unto me? Do I render due homage to those above me, not presuming on their lenity and condescension? As a superior, do I exercise no undue authority, taking no advantage of the timidity, respect, or necessity of any man? Do I consider the great obligation superiority lays me under, of being lowly and kind, and of setting a good example?

XIV. Am I temperate, using the world, and not abusing it? Do I receive outward things in the order of God, making earth a scale to heaven? Is the satisfaction I take in the creation consistent with my being dead to all below, and a mean of leading me more to God? Is the turn of my mind and temper in due subjection, not leading me to any extreme, either of too much silence, or of too much talkativeness, of reserve, or freedom?

XV. Am I courteous, not severe? Suiting myself to all with sweetness? Striving to give no one pain, but to gain and win all for their good?

XVI. Am I vigilant; redeeming time, taking every opportunity of doing good; or do I spare myself, being careless about the souls and bodies to which I might do good? Can I do no more than I do? Do I perform the most servile offices, such as require labour and humiliation, with cheerfulness? Is my conversation always seasoned with salt, at every time administering some kind of favour to those I am with?

XVII. Do I “love God with all my heart?” Do I constantly present myself, my time, substance, talents, and all that I have, a living sacrifice? Is every thought brought into subjection to Christ? Do I like, or dislike only such things as are pleasing or displeasing to God?

XVIII. Do I love God with all my strength, and are my spiritual faculties always vigorous? Do I give way to no sinful languor? Am I always on my watch? Do not business, worldly care, and conversation, damp my fervour and zeal for God?

XIX. Do I love my neighbour as myself; every man for Christ's sake, and honour all men, as the image of God? Do I think no evil, listen to no groundless surmises, nor judge from appearances? Can I bridle my tongue, never speaking of the faults of another, but with a view to do good; and when I am obliged to do it, have I the testimony that I sin not? Have I that love which hopeth, believeth, and endureth all things?

XX. How am I in my sleep? If Satan presents an evil imagination, does my will immediately resist, or give way to it?

XXI. Do I bear the infirmities of age or sickness; without seeking to repair the decays of nature by strong liquors; or do I make Christ my sole support, casting the burden of a feeble body into the arms of his mercy?

Many consider that “perfect love which casteth out fear” as instantaneous: all grace is so; but what is given in a moment, is enlarged and established by diligence and fidelity. That which is instantaneous in its descent, is perfective in its increase.

This is certain,-too much grace cannot be desired or looked for; and to believe and obey with all the power we have, is the highway to receive all we have not. There is a day of Pentecost for believers; a time when the Holy Ghost descends abundantly. Happy they who receive most of this perfect love, and of that establishing grace, which may preserve them from such falls and decays as they were before liable to.

Jesus, Lord of all, grant thy purest gifts to every waiting disciple. Enlighten us with the knowledge of thy will, and show us “the mark of the prize of our high calling.” Let us die to all thou art not; and seek thee with our whole heart, till we enjoy the fulness of the purchased possession. Amen!

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ENDNOTES

[1 Preached at Madeley, on the Wake Sunday, A. D. 1763]

POSTHUMOUS PIECES

OF THE

LATE REV. JOHN FLETCHER;

CONTAINING

SIX LETTERS

ON THE

SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD;

TOGETHER WITH

DIVERS PASTORAL AND FAMILIAR LETTERS:

COLLECTED AND FIRST PUBLISHED

BY THE REV MELVILLE HORNE

THE WORKS
OF THE
REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER

MR. HORNE'S PREFACE.

THE name of the venerable Mr. FLETCHER, inscribed on this volume, will introduce it to the perusal of many; and its own intrinsic worth will, I flatter myself, entitle it to the approbation of *proper judges*. Thus I am relieved from the pain of soliciting for it the notice of the public, and giving it that commendation which will better become any other person than the editor. It may, however, be expected that I should give some account of my book; and I conform the more cheerfully to general custom, as it affords me an opportunity of conciliating the candour of the reader.

This book is *truly* Mr. FLETCHER'S. A large part of the *Letters* is transcribed from the originals, others from authentic copies, and some from a small Collection of Letters, published a few years ago in Dublin. For the *Letters on the Manifestation of Christ, and the Fragments*, I am obliged to Mrs. Fletcher: the first are in the author's own manuscript, the last copied by Mrs. Fletcher from some of his old pocket books. The Pastoral and Familiar Letters are written from the period of Mr. FLETCHER'S conversion, to within a few days of his decease. *When* the Letters on the Manifestation were written, or *to whom* they are addressed, I cannot learn; but from the beginning of the first letter, the decayed state of the manuscript, and the extreme smallness of the character, (which could scarcely have been legible to the author in his latter years,) I judge them to have been the first essay of a genius afterward so much admired. The Fragments, of which some appear as the thoughts of the day, others as notes of sermons, bear date the first few years of his ministry.

If, therefore, any part of this volume, however excellent, be deemed inferior to the more mature productions of the same admirable pen, it is hoped that candour will have at least as much weight as criticism.

The reader is farther requested to remember that the pious author wrote only for himself and his friends; that these sheets want his perfecting hand; and that the editor thought himself entitled to take *no liberties*.

It is not expected that Mr. FLETCHER'S reputation, as a *writer*, will receive new lustre from these *Posthumous Pieces*: but, if the many friends who revere his memory, find edification and delight in perusing his apostolic letters; if any, whose opposition of sentiment would not allow them to converse with him as a polemic divine, shall now receive him to their breasts as a Christian brother; if any who have not reaped the rich harvest of his former writings, are benefited by the gleanings of the field; and if the world in general is made better acquainted with the virtues of this

excellent man, all the ends proposed by their publication will be obtained, and the editor will think himself justified in giving them to the press.

That the benediction of the Almighty may attend these last labours of his servant, that the reader may imbibe the spirit of the author, and that myself and all my fellow labourers in the Gospel may emulate his faith and work in the Lord, is the earnest desire of

THE EDITOR.

THE WORKS
OF THE
REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER

SIX LETTERS

ON THE

SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

LETTER I.

SIR,-When I had the pleasure of seeing you last, you seemed surprised to hear me say that the Son of God, for purposes worthy of his wisdom, manifests himself, sooner or later, to all his sincere followers, in a spiritual manner, which the world knows not of. The assertion appeared to you unscriptural, enthusiastical, and dangerous. What I then advanced to prove that it was Scriptural, rational, and of the greatest importance, made you desire I would write to you on the mysterious subject. I declined it, as being unequal to the task; but having since considered that a mistake here may endanger your soul and mine, I sit down to comply with your request: and the end I propose by it, is either to give you a fair opportunity of pointing out my error, if I am wrong, or to engage you, if I am right, to seek what I esteem the most valuable of all blessings-revelations of Christ to your own soul, productive of the experimental knowledge of him, and the present enjoyment of his salvation.

As an architect cannot build a palace unless he be allowed a proper spot to erect it upon, so I shall not be able to establish the doctrine I maintain unless you allow me the existence of the proper senses to which our Lord manifests himself. The manifestation I contend for being of a spiritual nature, must be made to spiritual senses; and that such senses exist, and are opened in, and exercised by regenerate souls, is what I design to prove in this letter, by the joint testimony of Scripture, our Church, and reason.

I. The Scriptures inform us that Adam lost the experimental knowledge of God by the fall. His foolish attempt to hide himself from his Creator, whose eyes are in every place, evidences the total blindness of his understanding. The same veil of unbelief which hid God from his mind, was drawn over his heart and all his spiritual senses. He died the death, the moral, spiritual death, in consequence of which the corruptible body sinks into the grave, and the unregenerate soul into hell.

In this deplorable state Adam begat his children. We, like him, are not only void of the life of God, but alienated from is through the ignorance that is in us. Hence it is, that though we are possessed of such an animal and rational life, as he retained after the commission of his sin, yet we are, by nature, utter strangers to the holiness and bliss he enjoyed in a state of innocence. Though we have, in common with

beasts, bodily organs of sight, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling, adapted to outward objects; though we enjoy, in common with devils, the faculty of reasoning upon natural truths and mathematical propositions, yet we do not understand supernatural and Divine things. Notwithstanding all our speculations about them, we can neither see nor taste them truly, unless we are "risen with Christ and taught of God." We may, indeed, speak and write about them, as the blind may speak of colours, and the deaf dispute of sounds, but it is all guesswork, hearsay, and mere conjecture. The things of the Spirit of God cannot be discovered but by spiritual, internal senses, which are, with regard to the spiritual world, what our bodily external senses are with regard to the material world. They are the only medium by which an intercourse between Christ and our souls can be opened and maintained.

The exercise of these senses is peculiar to those who are born of God. They belong to what the apostles call "the new man, the inward man, the new creature, the hidden man of the heart." In believers, this hidden man is awakened and raised from the dead, by the power of Christ's resurrection. Christ is his life, the Spirit of God is his spirit, prayer or praise his breath, holiness his health, and love his element. We read of his hunger and thirst, food and drink, garment and habitation, armour and conflicts, pain and pleasure, fainting and reviving, growing, walking, and working. All this supposes senses, and the more these senses are quickened by God, and exercised by the new-born soul, the clearer and stronger is his perception of Divine things.

On the other hand, in unbelievers, the inward man is deaf, blind, naked, asleep, past feeling; yea, dead in trespasses and sins; and of course, as incapable of perceiving spiritual things, as a person in a deep sleep, or a dead man, of discovering outward objects. St. Paul's language to him is, "Awake, thou that steepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." He calls him a natural man, one who hath no higher life than his parents conveyed to him by natural generation-one who follows the dictates of his own sensual soul, and is neither born of God, nor led by the Spirit of God. "The natural man," says the apostle, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." He has no sense properly exercised for this kind of discernment, "his eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into his heart the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

The reverse of the natural man is the spiritual, so called, because God hath revealed spiritual things to him by his Spirit, who is now in him a principle of spiritual and eternal life. "The spiritual man," says the apostle, "judgeth, [i.e. discerneth] all things, yet he himself is discerned of no one." The high state he is in can no more be discerned by the natural man, than the condition of the natural man can be discerned by a brute, 1 Cor. x. 15.

St. Paul not only describes the spiritual man, but speaks particularly of his internal, moral senses. Christians, says he, of full age, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern good and evil, Heb. v. 14. He prays, that the love of the

Philippians " may abound more and more in knowledge, and εν παση αισθησει in all sense or feeling," Phil. i. 9. The Scriptures constantly mention, or allude to one or other of these spiritual senses. Give me leave to produce some instances.

(l.) To begin with sight. St. Paul prays that the eyes of his converts being enlightened, they might "know what was the hope of their calling." He reminds them that Christ had been "evidently set forth crucified before their eyes." He assures them, that "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe riot the Gospel;" and declares that his commission was "to open the eyes of the Gentiles, and turn them from darkness to light." "Abraham saw Christ's day, and was glad." Moses persevered, as "seeing Him who is invisible." David prayed, "Open my eyes that I may see wonders out of thy law." Our Lord complains that the heart of unbelievers is "waxed gross, that their ears are dull of hearing, and that they have closed their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes, understand with their hearts, and be converted." He counsels the Laodiceans to anoint their eyes with eye salve, "that they might see." He declares that the world cannot receive the Spirit of truth, "because it sees him not;" that "the things which belong to the peace" of obstinate unbelievers are, at last, judicially "hid from their eyes;" and that the "pure in heart shall see God." St. John testifies that he who does evil "hath not seen God:" and that darkness "hath blinded the eyes of him" that loves not his brother. The Holy Ghost informs us, that believers "look at the things which are not seen, and behold the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ." These are the eyes with which believers see the salvation of God. They are so distinct from those of the body, that when our Lord opened them in St. Paul's soul, he suffered scales to grow over his bodily eyes. And no doubt, when Christ gave outward sight to the blind, it was chiefly to convince the world that it is He who can say to blind sinners, "Receive your sight; see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living; look unto me, and be ye saved."

(2.) If you do not admit of a spiritual hearing, what can you make of our Lord's repeated caution, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear?" And what can be the meaning of the following scriptures:-"Hear, O foolish people, who have ears and hear not. Ye uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye cannot hear my words; ye are of your father the devil. He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye, therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God?" Can it be supposed that our Lord spake of outward hearing, when he said, "The hour cometh, and now is, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live. My sheep hear my voice. He that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me?" Do not all sinners stand spiritually in need of Christ's powerful Ephphatha, "Be thou opened?" Is that man truly converted, who cannot witness with Isaiah, "The Lord hath wakened my ear to hear as the learned;" and with the psalmist, "Mine ears hast thou opened?" Had not the believers at Ephesus "heard Christ, and been taught of him?" When St. Paul was caught up into the third heaven, did he not "hear words unspeakable?" And, far from thinking spiritual hearing absurd, or impossible, did he not question, whether he was not then out of the body? And does not St. John positively declare that he was in the Spirit, when he heard Jesus say, "I am the first and the last?"

(3.) How void of meaning are the following passages, if they do not allude to that sense, which is calculated for the reception of what the barrenness of human language compels me to call spiritual perfumes? “The smell of thy ointments is better than all spices. The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon, All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia; and because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth.”

(4.) If believers have not a spiritual faculty of tasting Divine things, what delusion must they be under, when they say, Christ's “fruit is sweet to their taste;” and cry out, “How sweet are thy words to my taste; they are sweeter than honey to my mouth!” But how justly can they speak thus, if they have “tasted the heavenly gift, and the good word of God, and as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of it!” Surely, if they eat the flesh of the Son of God, drink his blood, and taste that “the Lord is gracious,” they have a right to testify, that “his love is better than wine;” and to invite those that “hunger and thirst after righteousness, to taste that the Lord is good,” that they also may be satisfied with his goodness and mercy, “as with marrow and fatness.”

(5.) If we be not perfect Stoics in religion, if we have one degree more of devotion, than the marble statues, which adorn our churches, we should have, I think, some feeling of our unworthiness, some sense of God's majesty. Christ's tender heart was pierced to atone for, and to remove the hardness of ours. God promises to take from us the “heart of stone,” and to give us a heart of flesh, “a broken and contrite heart,” the sacrifice of which he will not despise. Good King Josiah was praised, because his heart was “tender.” The conversion of the three thousand, on the day of Pentecost, began by their being pricked in their heart. We are directed to feel after God, if haply we may find him. Our Lord himself is not ashamed to be touched, in heaven, with a feeling of our infirmities. And St. Paul intimates, that the highest degree of obduracy and apostasy, is to be past feeling, and to have our consciences seared as with a hot iron.

I hope, sir, you will not attempt to set aside so many plain passages by saying they are unfit to support a doctrine, as containing empty metaphors, which amount just to nothing. This would be pouring the greatest contempt on the perspicuity of the oracles of God, the integrity of the sacred writers, and the wisdom of the Holy Ghost who inspired them. As certainly as there is a spiritual life, there are senses calculated for the display and enjoyment of it; and these senses exist no more in metaphor than the life that exerts itself by them. Our Lord settled the point when he declared to Nicodemus, that “no man can see the kingdom of God,” the kingdom of grace here and of glory hereafter, “except he be first born of God, born of the Spirit;” just as no child can see this world except he be first born of a woman, born of the flesh. Hence it appears that a regenerate soul hath its spiritual senses opened, and made capable of discerning what belongs to the spiritual would, as a new-born infant hath its natural senses unlocked, and begins to see, hear, and taste what belongs to the material world into which he enters.

II. These declarations of the Lord, his prophets, and apostles, need no confirmation. Nevertheless, to show you, sir, that I do not mistake their meaning I shall add the testimony of our own excellent Church. As she strictly agrees with the Scripture, she makes also frequent mention of spiritual sensations; and you know, sir, that sensations necessarily suppose senses. She prays that God would "give us a due sense of his inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ." (*Thanksgiving*.) She begs that he would "make us know and feel that there is no other name than that of Jesus, whereby we must be saved." (*Office for the sick*.) She affirms that true penitents feel "the burden of their sins intolerable;" (*communion*;) that godly persons "feel in themselves the workings of Christ's Spirit;" (*seventeenth article*;) that "the Lord speaks presently to us in the Scriptures, to the great and endless comfort of all that have any feeling of God in them at all;" that "godly men felt inwardly the Holy Ghost inflaming their hearts with the fear and love of God, and that they are miserable wretches who have no feeling of God within them at all!" (*Hom. on certain places of Scripture* ;) and that " if we feel the heavy burden of our sins pressing our souls and tormenting us with the fear of death, hell, and damnation, we must steadfastly behold Christ crucified with the eyes of our heart." (*Second Hom. on the passion*.)

Our Church farther declares that "true faith is not in the mouth and outward profession only, but liveth and stirreth in the heart, and if we feel and perceive such a faith in us, we must rejoice," (*Hom. On faith, first and third part*:) that "correction, though painful, bringeth with it a taste of God's goodness:" (*Hom. on the fear of death, third part*:) that "if after contrition we feel our consciences at peace with God, through the remission of our sin, it is God who worketh that great miracle in us;" and she prays, that "as this knowledge and feeling is not in ourselves, and as by ourselves it is not possible to come by it, the Lord would give us grace to know these things, and feel them in our hearts." (*Hom. for Rogation week, third part*.) She begs that "God would assist us with his Holy Spirit, that we may hearken to the voice of the good Shepherd:" (*Hom. on repentance, second part*:) she sets upon asking continually that the Lord would is lighten our darkness," and deliver us from the two heaviest plagues of Pharaoh, "blindness and hardness of heart." (*Evening prayer and litany*.) And she affirms that "if we will be profitable hearers of the Scriptures, we must keep under our carnal senses, taken by the outward words, search the inward meaning, and give place to the Holy Ghost," whose peculiar office it is to open our spiritual senses, as he opened Lydia's heart. (*Hom. on certain places of Scripture*.)

If I did not think the testimony of our blessed reformers, founded upon that of the sacred writers, of sufficient weight to turn the scale of your sentiments, I could throw in the declarations of many ancient divines. To instance in two or three only. St. Cyril, in the thirteenth Book of his Treasure, affirms, that "men know Jesus is the Lord, by the Holy Ghost, no otherwise than they who taste honey know it is sweet, even by its proper quality." Dr. Smith, of Queen's college, Cambridge, in his Select Discourses, observes, after Plotinus, that "God is best discerned νοερα τη αφη, by an intellectual touch of him." We must, says he, "see with our eyes, to use St. John's words; 'we must hear with our ears, and our hands must handle the word of life,' εστι

γαρ ψυχης αισθεσις τις, has, for the soul hath its sense as well as the body." And Bishop Hopkins, in his Treatise on the New Birth, accounts for the Papists denying the knowledge of salvation by saying, "It is no wonder that they who will not trust their natural senses in the doctrine of transubstantiation should not trust their spiritual ones in the doctrine of assurance."

III. But instead of proving the point by multiplying quotations, let me entreat you, sir, to weigh the following observations in the balance of reason;-

(1.) Do not all grant there is such a thing as moral sense in the world, and that to be utterly void of it is to be altogether unfit for social life? If you had given a friend the greatest proofs of your love, would not he be inexcusable if he felt no gratitude, and had absolutely no sense of your kindness? Now, if moral sense and feeling are universally allowed between man and man in civil life, why should it appear incredible, or irrational, that there should be such a thing between God and man in the Divine life?

(2.) To conclude. if material objects cannot be perceived by man in his present state, but through the medium of one or other of his bodily senses, by a parity of reason, spiritual objects cannot be discovered but through one or other of the senses, which belong to the inward man. God being a Spirit, cannot be worshipped in truth, unless he be known in Spirit. You may as soon imagine how a blind man, by reasoning on what he feels or tastes, can get true ideas on light and colours, as how one, who has no spiritual senses opened, can, by all his reasoning and guessing, attain an experimental knowledge of the invisible God.

Thus from the joint testimony of Scripture, of our Church, and of reason, it appears that spiritual senses are a blessed reality. I have dwelt so long on the proof of their existence for two reasons. First, they are of infinite use in religion. Saving faith cannot subsist and act without them. If St. Paul's definition of grace be just, if it be "the substance, or subsistence rather, of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," it must be a principle of spiritual life, more or less, attended with the exercise of these senses; according to the poetic and evangelical lines of Dr. Young:-

My heart, awake,
Feel the great truths: to feel is to be fired,
And to believe, Lorenzo, is to feel.

Till professors see the necessity of believing, in this manner, they rest in a refined "form of godliness." To the confidence of the Antinomians, they may, indeed, join the high profession of the foolish virgins. They may even crown their partial assent to the truths of the Gospel with the zeal of Pharisees and the regularity of moralists; but still they stop short of the "new creation," the "new birth, the life of God" in the soul of man. Nay more, they stumble at some of the most important truths of Christianity, and think the discoveries that sound believers have of Christ and the spiritual world are enthusiastical delusions, or at least extraordinary favours, which

they can very well do without. Thus, even while they allow the power of godliness in others, they rest satisfied without experiencing it in themselves.

Secondly. What I shall write will depend very much on the existence of “spiritual senses:” if this letter convince you that they are opened in every new-born soul, you will more easily believe Christ can and does manifest himself by that proper medium; and my letters on Divine Manifestations will meet with a less prejudiced reader.

That Emmanuel, “the light of the world,” may direct me to write with soberness and truth, and you to read with attention and candour, is the sincere prayer of, sir, yours, &c,

JOHN FLETCHER.

LETTER II.

SIR,-Having proved in my first letter the existence of the “spiritual senses,” to which the Lord manifests himself, I shall now enter upon that subject, by letting you know, as far as my pen can do it:-I. What is the nature of that manifestation, which makes the believer more than conqueror over sin and death.

(1.) Mistake me not, sir, for the pleasure of calling me enthusiast. I do not insist, as you may imagine, upon a manifestation of the voice, body, or blood of our Lord to our external senses. Pilate heard Christ's voice, the Jews saw his body, the soldiers handled it, and some of them were literally sprinkled with his blood; but this answered no spiritual end: they knew not God manifest in the flesh.

(2.) Nor do I understand such a knowledge of our Redeemer's doctrine, offices, promises, and performances, as the natural man can attain, by the force of his understanding and memory. All carnal professors, all foolish virgins, by conversing with true Christians, hearing Gospel sermons, and reading evangelical books, attain to the historical and doctrinal knowledge of Jesus Christ. Their understandings are informed; but, alas! their hearts remain unchanged. Acquainted with the letter, they continue ignorant of the Spirit. Boasting, perhaps, of the greatness of Christ's salvation, they remain altogether unsaved; and full of talk about what he hath done for them, they know nothing of “Christ in them, the hope of glory.”

(3.) Much less do I mean such a representation of our Lord's person and sufferings as the natural man can form to himself, by the force of a warm imagination. Many, by seeing a striking picture of Jesus bleeding on the cross, or hearing a pathetic discourse on his agony in the garden, are deeply affected and melted into tears. They raise, in themselves, a lively idea of a great and good man unjustly tortured to death: their soft passions are wrought upon, and pity fills their heaving breasts. But, alas! they remain strangers to the revelation of the Son of God by the Holy Ghost. The murder of Julius Cesar, pathetically described, would have the same effect upon them

as the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. A deep play would touch them as easily as a deep sermon, and much to the same purpose; for in either case their impressions and their tears are generally wiped away together.

(4.) Nor yet do I understand good desires, meltings of heart, victories over particular corruptions, a confidence that the Lord can and will save us, power to stay ourselves on some promises, gleams of joy, rays of comfort, enlivening hopes, touches of love; no, not even foretastes of Christian liberty, and of the good word of God. These are rather the delightful "drawings of the Father," than the powerful "revelation of the Son." These, like the star that led the wise men for a time, then disappeared, and appeared again, are helps and encouragements, to come to Christ, and not a Divine union with him, by the revelation of himself.

I can more easily tell you, sir, what this revelation is not, than what it is. The tongues of men and angels want proper words to express the sweetness and glory with which the Son of God visits the soul that can not rest without him. This blessing is not to be described, but enjoyed. It is to be "written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on paper, or tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart." May the Lord himself explain the mystery, by giving you to eat of the "hidden manna," and bestowing upon you the "new name, which no man knows save he that receives it!" In the meantime take a view of the following rough draft of his mercy; and, if it be agreeable to the letter of the word, pray that it may be engraved on your heart by the power of the Spirit.

The revelation of Christ, by which a carnal professor becomes a holy and happy possessor of the faith, is a supernatural, spiritual, experimental manifestation of the Spirit, power, and love, and sometimes of the person of "God manifest in the flesh," whereby he is known and enjoyed in a manner altogether new: as new as the knowledge that a man, who never tasted any thing but bread and water, would have of honey and wine, suppose, being dissatisfied with the best descriptions of those rich productions of nature, he actually tasted them for himself.

This manifestation is, sooner or later, in a higher or lower degree, vouchsafed to every sincere seeker, through the medium of one or more of the spiritual senses opened in his soul, in a gradual or instantaneous manner, as it pleases God. No sooner is the veil of unbelief, which covers the heart, rent, through the agency of the Spirit, and the efforts of the soul struggling into a living belief of the word; no sooner, I say, is the door of faith opened, than Christ, who stood at the door and knocked, comes in, and discovers himself full of grace and truth. "Then the tabernacle of God is with man. His kingdom comes with power. Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," spread through the new-born soul; eternal life begins; heaven is open on earth; the conscious heir of glory cries, "Abba, Father;" and from blessed experience can witness that he is come to "Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and Church of the first born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and

to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel."

If this manifestation be duly improved, the effects of it are admirable. The believer's heart, now set at liberty from the guilt and dominion of sin, and drawn by the love of Jesus, pants after greater conformity to his holy will, and mounts up to him in prayer and praise. His life is a course of cheerful, evangelical obedience, and his most common actions become good works done to the glory of God. If he walk up to his privileges, outward objects entangle him no more. Having found the great I AM, the eternal substance, he looks upon all created things as shadows. Man, the most excellent of all, appears to him altogether lighter than vanity. "Yea, doubtless, he counts all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, esteeming them but dung, that he may win Christ, and, to the last, be found in him, not having his own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ:" that by new discoveries of himself he may "know him and the power of his resurrection" every day more clearly. In the meantime he casts his sins and miseries upon Jesus, and Jesus bestows his righteousness and happiness upon him. "He puts on Christ," and becomes a partaker of the Divine nature. Thus, they are mutually interested in each other; and to use St. Paul's endearing expressions, they are espoused and married. Joined by the double band of redeeming love and saving faith, they "are one Spirit," as Adam and Eve by matrimony were "one flesh." "This is a great mystery," says the apostle, but thanks be to God, it is made manifest to his saints, Eph. v. 32.

II. If vou ask, sir, "How can these things be?" Describe to me the particular manner of these manifestations! I reply, in our Lord's words to Nicodemus, "Art thou a master in Israel, [nay more, a Christian,] and knowest not these things? Verily I say unto you, [though we cannot fix the exact mode, and precise manner of the breathing of the Spirit, yet, we speak what we do know, and testify what we have seen, but you receive not our witness." Marvel not, however, if we find it impossible to tell you all the particulars of a Divine manifestation. You yourself, though you feel the wind, see its amazing effects, and hear the sound of it, "cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth," much less could you describe it to the satisfaction of one who never heard or felt it himself. Many earthly things cannot be conceived by earthly men. The blind, for example, can never conceive the difference of colours; what wonder then if natural men do not understand us when we tell them of Heavenly things?

Nevertheless, I would, in general, observe, that the manner in which the manifestation of the Son of God is vouchsafed, is not the same in all persons, nor in the same person at all times. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," much more the Spirit of the living God. "His thoughts are not as our thoughts." He dispenseth his blessings, not as we expect them, but as it pleases him. Most commonly, however, the sinner, driven out of all his refuges of lies, feels an aching void in his soul. Unable to satisfy himself any longer with the husks of empty vanity, dry morality, and speculative Christianity; and tired with the best form of godliness which is not attended with the power of it, he is brought to a spiritual famine, and hungers after

heavenly food. Convinced of unbelief, he feels the want of the “faith of God's operation.” He sees that nothing short of an immediate display of the Lord's arm can bring his soul into “the kingdom of God,” and fill it “with righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Sometimes, encouraged by lively hopes, he struggles into liberty of heart, and prays “with groanings which cannot be uttered.” At other times, almost sinking under a burthen of guilty fear, or stupid unbelief, he is violently tempted to throw away his hope, and go back to Egypt; but an invisible hand supports him, and, far from yielding to the base suggestion, he resumes courage, and determines to “follow on to know the Lord,” or to die seeking him. Thus he continues wandering up and down in a spiritual wilderness, until the Lord gives him the rest of faith, the “subsistence of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

This evidence comes various ways. Sometimes the “spiritual eye” is first opened, and chiefly, though not only, wrought upon. Then the believer, in a Divine, transforming light, discovers God in the man Christ, perceives unspeakable glories in his despised person, and admires infinite wisdom, power, justice, and mercy, in the blood of the cross. He reads the Scripture with new eyes. The mysterious book is unsealed and every where testifies of Him whom his soul loves. He views experimentally, as well as doctrinally, the suitableness of the Redeemer's offices, the firmness of his promises, the sufficiency of his righteousness, the preciousness of his atonement, and the completeness of his salvation. He sees and feels his interest in all. Thus he beholds, believes, wonders, and adores. Sight being the noblest sense, this sort of manifestation is generally the brightest.

Perhaps his “spiritual ear” is first opened, and that voice, which raiseth the dead, “Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee,” passes with power through his waiting soul. He knows, by the “gracious effect,” it is the voice of Him who said once, “Let there be light, and there was light.” He is sensible of a new creation, and can say, by the testimony of “God's Spirit, bearing witness with his spirit,” This is my Beloved’s voice; " he is mine, and I am his." I have “redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of my sins:” and having much forgiven, he loves much, and obeys in proportion.

Frequently also Christ manifests himself first and chiefly to the “spiritual feeling.” He takes the burden of guilt, dejection, and sin, from the heavy laden soul; and in the room of it, imparts a strong sense of liberty, peace, love, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The ransomed sinner, enabled to overcome racking doubts or dull insensibility, “believes now with the heart unto righteousness,” and makes “confession with the mouth unto salvation.” “Surely,” says he, “in the Lord I have righteousness and strength.” This is the finger of God. “This day is salvation come to my soul.” None but Jesus could do this for me. “The Lord he is God; he is my Lord and my God.” This manifestation is generally the lowest, as being made to a lower sense; therefore great care ought to be taken not to confound it with the strong drawings of the Father, on which it borders. Some babes in Christ, who, like young Samuel, have not yet their senses properly exercised to know the things freely given to them of God, are often made uneasy on this very account. Nor can they be fully satisfied, until they

find the effects of this manifestation are lasting, or they obtain clearer ones by means of the nobler senses,-the sight or hearing of the heart.

III. Though I contend only for those discoveries of Christ which are made by the internal senses, because such only are promised to all; yet I cannot, without contradicting Scripture, deny that the external senses have been wrought upon in some manifestations. When Abraham saw his Saviour's day he was, it seems, allowed to wash his feet with water, Gen. xviii. 3, as afterward the penitent harlot did with her tears. And Saul, in his way to Damascus, saw Jesus' glory and heard his voice both externally and internally, "for they that journeyed with him saw the light and heard his voice," though they could not distinguish the words that were spoken.

Sometimes also manifestations, though merely internal, have appeared external to those who were favoured with them. When the Lord called Samuel, in Shiloh, the pious youth supposed the call was outward, and ran to Eli, saying, "Thou calledst me;" but it seems the voice had struck his spiritual ear only, otherwise the high priest, who was within hearing, would have heard it as well as the young prophet. And though Stephen steadfastly looked up to heaven, as if he really saw Christ there with his bodily eyes, it is plain he discovered him only with those of his faith, for the roof of the house, where the court was held, bounded his outward sight; and if Christ had appeared in the room, so as to be visible to common eyes, the council of the Jews would have seen him, as well as the pious prisoner at the bar.

Hence we learn, 1*st*, That the knowledge of spiritual things, received by spiritual sense, is as clear as the knowledge of natural things, obtained by bodily sense. 2*dly*, That it is sometimes possible to be doubtful, whether the outward eye or ear is not concerned in particular revelations: since this was not only the case of Samuel, but of St. Paul himself, Who could not tell whether the unspeakable words he heard in paradise struck his bodily ears, or only those of his soul. 3*dly*, That no stress is to be laid upon the external circumstances which have some times accompanied the revelation of Christ. If aged Simeon had been as blind as old Isaac, and as much disabled from taking the child Jesus in his arms as the paralytic, the internal revelation he had of Christ could have made him say with the same assurance, "Now, Lord, let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." If the apostle had not been struck to the ground, and his eyes dazzled by outward light, his conversion would not have been less real, provided he had been inwardly humbled and enlightened. And if Thomas, waiving the carnal demonstration he insisted upon, had experienced only in his inner man, that "Christ is the resurrection and the life," he could have confessed him with as great a consciousness he was not mistaken, as when he cried out, "My Lord, and my God!" I am, sir, yours, &c,

JOHN FLETCHER.

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LETTER III.

IV. WHY the Lord manifests himself to the children of men, is an important question, which I now come to consider. It is not, we may easily think, for the gratification of their curiosity, but for purposes worthy of his wisdom: and what these are, we shall soon learn, if we reduce Divine manifestations to three general classes, extraordinary, ordinary, and mixt ones; and then consider the design and use of each, as it may be collected from Scripture.

I. To begin with manifestations of the extraordinary kind: they are such as are either merely external, or vouchsafed to a few only on particular occasions, and are by no means essential to salvation.

1. Some of these are calculated to rouse the thoughtless into consideration. Of this kind was the manifestation some were favoured with, a little before our Lord's passion: “As he prayed, there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have glorified my name, and will glorify it again. The people that stood by and heard it, said it thundered!” They looked upon the extraordinary call as something common and natural. “Others said, An angel spake to him.” But Jesus said “This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.”

2. Others are intended as a last warning to notorious sinners. Of this nature was the terrifying sight Nebuchadnezzar had, in his second dream of “a Watcher and Holy One coming down from heaven, and crying aloud, Cut down the tree.” And that of the mysterious hand, which wrote Belshazzar's doom on the wall, while he profaned the sacred vessels in his night revels.

3. Some are designed for the protection of God's people, and the destruction and humiliation of their proud enemies. As when the “Lord looked to the Egyptians, through the pillar of fire, and troubled their host:” when “he cast down great stones from heaven” upon the armies of the five kings, who fought against Israel: or when he manifested his presence in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, to quench the violence of the flame, preserve the three confessors, and convince the raging tyrant that God's kingdom ruleth over all.

4. The design of others is to encourage the children of God in dangerous enterprises, or direct them in important steps. Of this kind was that to Joshua, before he began the conquest of Canaan; and that to St. Paul, when the “Lord stood by him” in the prison, and informed him he must bear witness to him also at Rome.

5. Some are calculated to appoint some persons to uncommon services and trials, or to the prophetic and ministerial office: as to that in which Noah was commissioned to build the ark, Abraham to offer up Isaac, Moses to deliver Israel, Nathan to reprove David, Balaam to bless Israel, and Jeremiah to preach to the Jews.

6. Others again are designed to answer providential ends for the deliverance of the people of God, as those of Gideon; or spiritual ends of reproof, instruction, and consolation to the Church throughout all ages, as most of the revelations vouchsafed to the prophets, and to St. John.

II. The manifestations essential either to the conversion of sinners or edification of saints, and which the word of God and the experiences of Christians show to be common to all believers of the Church, are of the ordinary kind, and their use or design is,

1. To make the word "spirit and life, quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder soul and spirit," that the Gospel may not come to sinners "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

2. To ease an anguished conscience, and impart the peace of God to a troubled mind: as in the case of broken-hearted David, mourning Hezekiah, weeping Peter, and Paul agonizing in prayer.

3. To reveal Christ to us, and in us, so as to make us savingly believe, and "know in whom we have believed," according to the experiences of Peter, Lydia, Cornelius, and every living member of Christ.

4. To open a blessed intercourse, and keep up a delightful communion with Christ; as appears from the experience of believers illustrated in the Canticles.

5. To silence the remains of self righteousness, and deepen the humiliation of our souls, as in the case of Job. To make us "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To bruise Satan under our feet," yea, to bruise the serpent's head in our hearts, and seal "the exceeding great and precious promises given to us, that we might be partakers of the Divine nature," and continue "immovable, always abounding in the work of faith, the patience of hope, and the labour of love." In a word, to "strengthen us with might, by God's Spirit, in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and we may be filled with all the fulness of God."

6. To prepare us for great trials, support us under them, and comfort us after them. This was our Lord's experience before his temptation, after he had overcome the tempter, and when he was in the height of his agony. This was also the case of David, St. Paul, and of all the apostles, when they had been scourged for the name of Jesus; and it is still the case of all true and deep mourners in Sion.

7. And lastly, to make us "depart in peace," as Simeon; or die in perfect love with our enemies, and in the full triumph of faith, as St. Stephen. All who live and die in the Lord, partake, more or less, of these ordinary displays of his powerful presence; and I desire you, sir, to remember, that it is *chiefly*, if not only, in support of these important manifestations, I take up the pen.

III. The third class of manifestations, is that of *mixt ones*: so called, because they are partly extraordinary, and partly ordinary. Some are ordinary in their design, and extraordinary in their circumstances. Of this sort was the manifestation to the apostles, Acts iv. 31. The design of it was merely common, that is, to comfort them under contempt, and encourage them to do good and suffer evil; but the "shaking of the place where they were assembled," was an uncommon circumstance. The same thing may be said of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the one hundred and twenty, who were assembled in the upper room on the day of Pentecost; and, some time after, on Cornelius and his soldiers. That they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost and spiritual fire, was not extraordinary, since it is the common blessing which can alone make a man a Christian, or confirm him in the faith: but that the sound of a rushing wind should be heard, and luminous appearances seen resting upon them, that they should have been enabled to speak the wonderful works of God in other tongues, were uncommon circumstances attending their spiritual baptism.

Some manifestations are mixt, both as to their design and circumstances. That the iniquity of Isaiah should be put away, and St. Paul converted, were not uncommon things; they are the common effects of ordinary manifestations: but that the prophet should be commissioned to preach to the Jews, and the apostle to open the eyes of the Gentiles, were extraordinary circumstances; as also a flying cherub appearing to the one, and a light brighter than the sun blinding the other.

IV. For want of distinguishing properly between what is ordinary and extraordinary, in mixt manifestations, persons who are not possessed of a clear head, or what is worse, of an honest heart, conclude, that none but enthusiasts speak now of Divine manifestations. If they hear it affirmed, that they must be converted as well as St. Paul, they pertly ask, whether they are Jews, and whether they must be struck to the earth by a voice from heaven? They wilfully forget that our Lord spake to his hearers as sinful men, and not as bigoted Jews, when he said, "Except ye be converted, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." They obstinately refuse to see that the circumstances of the apostle's falling to the ground, &c, were not essential to his conversion, and had no other use than to make his call more remarkable for the conversion of the Jews and comfort of the Christians. When the same prejudiced persons are told that they must be "born of the Spirit, and receive the Holy Ghost," as well as Cornelius and his servants, over-looking the ordinary baptism of the Spirit, they pitch upon the extraordinary circumstance of the gift of tongues, imparted for a season, to remove the prejudices of the Jews, and to draw the attention of the Gentiles; and think, with a sneer, and a charge of enthusiasm, to overturn the apostolic saying, "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Be not deceived, sir, by these persons. Acknowledge, that so sure as you want the regenerating knowledge of Christ, you want the manifestation of his Spirit, without which he can never be known savingly. To return:-

Though I contend only for the ordinary manifestations of Christ, I am far from supposing that all extraordinary or mixt manifestations have ceased. Such a concession would savour too much of the spirit of in fidelity, which prevails in the

Church. They are more frequent than many imagine. To instance, in one particular, how far I am from acquiescing in that infidel spirit:-I am so attached to that old book, the Bible, as to say of many, who pass for ministers of Christ, “Wo to the foolish prophets,” that follow their own spirit, “and have seen nothing; that say, The Lord says, and the Lord hath not sent them.”-I think the desire of being styled reverend, and right reverend, and the prospect of a living or a mitre, are very improper motives for assuming the sacred character. And I am such an enthusiast as to believe our Church in the right for requiring that all her ministers should not only be called, but even MOVED by the Holy Ghost to take the office of ambassadors for Christ upon themselves. (*Ordination*.)

V. Having manifested the design and use of ordinary manifestations, it may not be improper to touch upon the abuse of them. Their genuine tendency is to humble to dust. The language of those who are favoured with them is, “Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him!” Now, that I “see thee, I abhor myself. I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies. I am dust and ashes.” But as there is nothing which the heart of man cannot be tempted to corrupt and pervert, so, as soon as the power attending the manifestation is a little abated, Satan begins to shoot his fiery darts of spiritual pride. “You are a peculiar favourite of Heaven,” whispers that old serpent, “few are so highly blessed. All your enemies are scattered; you need not be so watchful in prayer, and so strict in self denial; you shall never fall.” If the believer is not upon his guard, and quenches not these fiery darts with his shield, as fast as the enemy throws them, he is soon wounded, and pride kindles again upon him.

St. Paul himself was in danger from this quarter: “There was given him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations.” Aaron and Miriam fell into this snare, when they spake against Moses, saying, “Hath the Lord indeed only spoken by Moses? Hath he not spoken by us also?” David likewise acknowledges his error in this respect: “In my prosperity, I said, I shall never be moved, thou Lord, of thy goodness, hast made my hill so strong;” but my heart was lifted up, and my confidence partly carnal; therefore “thou didst turn thy face from me, and I was troubled.” The way to avoid the danger is to foresee it: to look much to the lowly Jesus, and upon the first approach of a temptation to pride, to give, with double diligence, all the glory to Him that graciously bestowed all, and to take, with double care, all the shame of our sins to ourselves. St. Paul's direction in this case is excellent: “Because of unbelief some were broken off; and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear.”

Another genuine effect of Divine manifestations is an increase of confidence in the Lord, and of activity in his service. What holy boldness filled the souls of those worthies, who, “through faith, wrought righteousness, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens!” How did the love of Christ constrain the disciples to speak and act for God after the day of pentecost! Nothing could exceed their fortitude and diligence. Nevertheless, if the temptation to pride is yielded to, the Comforter is grieved, and

carnal security, indolence of spirit, and indulgence of the flesh, insensibly prevail. The deluded professor, though shorn of his strength, like Samson, fancies himself the same. "Soul," says he, "thou hast goods laid up for many years," even for ever; though the Lord manifest himself to thee no more, be neither uneasy nor afraid: he changes not. Sometimes the delusion grows to that height, that the farther he goes from the kingdom of God, the stronger he imagines his faith. He even speaks contemptuously of that kingdom. He calls "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," a frame, a sensible feeling, a low dispensation, beyond which he has happily got. He thanks God, he can now rest upon the bare word, without an application of it to his heart; that is to say, he can be fully satisfied with the letter without the Spirit, he can feed upon the empty husks of notions and opinions, as if they were power and life.

The end of this dreadful mistake is generally a relapse into gross sin. Witness the falls of David and Solomon; or, what is not much better, a settling in a form, without the "power of godliness," as the Laodiceans of old, and too many now, who "have a name to live and are dead." The only way to avoid this precipice is to follow the light of the first manifestation, and look daily for new visits from Christ, till he makes his "abode with us," and we "walk in the light as he is in the light." A manifestation of the Spirit last year will no more support a soul this year, than air breathed yesterday will nourish the flame of life to-day. The sun which warmed us last week must shine again this week. Old light is dead light. A notion of old warmth is a very cold notion. We must have fresh food daily, and though we need not a new Christ, we need, perpetually, new displays of his eternal love and power. The Lord taught us this important lesson, by making the manna he gave Israel in the wilderness to disappear every day, and causing that which was not gathered fresh to "breed worms and stink." Nevertheless, as the mysterious food kept sweet in the golden pot in the ark, so does the heavenly power in Christ, to whom every true Israelite will come daily for new supplies of hidden manna, for fresh manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Thousands, by not considering this, seek the living among the dead, fancying that a living Saviour is to be found in dead experiences, and that all is well, though they "live after the flesh," and are perhaps "led captive by the devil at his will." But when their souls awake out of this dangerous dream, they will be sensible of their mistake, and frankly acknowledge, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living;" and that, "if after they have escaped the pollution of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning."

Leaving these lukewarm, formal Laodicean professors to the mercy of God, I subscribe myself, sir, yours, &c,

JOHN FLETCHER.

LETTER IV.

SIR,-VI. That some persons are blessed with clearer, stronger, or earlier manifestations than others is undeniable; and why it is so is one of the mysteries of God's kingdom, that shall not be explained until the day of judgment. In the meantime the following reflections may possibly cast some light on that dark subject, and help us to say, He does all things well.

1. Our Lord suits the manifestations of himself to the various states of the Church. Under the Mosaic dispensation, which consisted much in externals, Divine manifestations had, generally, some external circumstances; but the Christian Church, being formed upon a more spiritual plan, is favoured with revelations of a more spiritual and internal nature.

2. The Lord considers us as rational creatures in a state of probation. Were he to indulge us with powerful, incessant, overwhelming discoveries of himself he would rather violently force than gently lead us to repentance and obedience. Every day is not a day of pentecost. Soon after the Son of God had seen the "heavens open," he was "led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil;" and so is his spouse after him, Hosea ii. 14. St. Paul, by observing that he was "not disobedient to the heavenly vision," and that he "kept his body under lest he should become a castaway," intimates that his bright manifestation was not of such continuance and force but he might have disobeyed, as Jonah did in a similar case. Some have, in fact, resisted bright manifestations in their day; witness Cain, Judas, Balaam, Saul, Nebuchadnezzar, and the Israelites who perished in the wilderness: and too many backsliders are resisting them now. So sure, then, as there is a time of trial for faith, hope, and patience, there is also an abatement of the power which attends Divine manifestations.

3. Our wise Redeemer proportions the means to the end. If the effect of a manifestation of his love is to be exceeding great, the manifestation must be exceeding bright. Suppose the burden of guilt and hardness, temptation and sorrow, under which one groans, is ten times greater than that which oppresses another, it is plain, the manifestation which is to remove the tenfold weight is to be ten times stronger. The same rule holds also with regard to sufferings and labours. The hotter the fight of afflictions which God's children are to go through, the stronger and the. brighter also is the celestial armour put upon them at the revelation of the Captain of their salvation.

4. Neither can it be doubted, but that our good God, in fixing the degree of Divine manifestation, hath a particular respect to the state and capacity of the souls to whom he discovers himself. The deeper sinners mourn for him the deeper he makes them drink of the cup of salvation at his appearing. "Blessed are they that" greatly "hunger and thirst after righteousness;" their souls are thereby greatly enlarged to receive the oil of gladness and the wine of the kingdom. "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" those whose souls are empty as the vessels of the desolate widow in the days of Elisha;

when the heavenly prophet shall visit them, the streams of his fulness shall certainly flow according to the degree of their emptiness.

5. A skilful physician prescribes weaker or stronger medicines, according to the state of his patients. So does the Physician of souls: he weighs, if I may so speak, every dram of the heavenly power in the scales of goodness and wisdom. He knows what quantity of the heavenly cordial our spirits can bear, and will not, without the greatest care, put the strong wine of his powerful love into a weak vessel. He sees, that as some persons can stand, for a time, the sight of the meridian sun, when others are hurt by the first appearance of a taper, so some Christians can bear the strong beams of his gracious presence, while others are almost overpowered by his fainter rays.

6. If some live and die without any manifestations of the Redeemer's love and glory, the reason of it may possibly be found in the abysses of his justice and goodness. They “grieve” and “quench the Spirit” that “convinces the world of sin:” and it is very fit they should not have him as a “Comforters,” whom they obstinately reject as a “reprover.” Add to this, that as our Lord foresees, if such people were favoured with tokens of his more distinguishing condescension they would only abuse them as Cain and the Pharisees did, he puts them not to the trial, nor suffers them to enhance their guilt by trampling richer mercy and love under foot; so that this seeming severity is in fact real benignity.

7. The Lord not only proportions the degree of his powerful appearance to the weakness of our souls, but also to that of our bodies. He knoweth whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but flesh. If the natural sun, that glorious emblem of our Emmanuel, were to approach as near our earth, and shine as bright as possible, the insufferable blaze and heat would instantly blind and consume us. By a parity of reason, were our bright Sun of righteousness to manifest his unclouded glory, or to appear without the tempering medium of his manhood, no flesh could support the sight. The brain, unable to bear the high operations of the soul, would turn; the heart of the wicked, swelled with intolerable pangs of fear, and that of the righteous dilated by overwhelming transports of joy, would instantly burst. God, therefore, says, “No man can see my face,” without some dimming veil, “and live.” Hence arose, likewise, the grateful exclamations of Manoah and others, when the Lord had manifested himself to them, concealed under human appearances: “We have seen God and live!” We have beheld him, and are not consumed!

8. This may, perhaps, help us to account why the Lord still hides his face from some of his sincere seekers. They sit begging by the way of his ordinances, and yet he does not pass by so as to restore to them their spiritual sight, that they might know him. In all probability he designs them such a bright manifestation as they are not yet able to bear. When their hearts are strengthened for the heavenly vision, it shall speak. Let them only wait for it. “Let patience have her perfect work,” and faith in the word be tried to the uttermost; and “he that cometh, will come, and will not tarry.” He will bring “his reward with him;” and a moment of his presence will make

them abundantly amends for the waiting of an age. Were he to appear before they are prepared by the humiliation of repentance and the patience of hope, they would be in the case of those carnal Israelites, who, far from being able to commune with God, could not so much as speak to Moses when he came down from the mount, without first obliging him to put a veil over his shining face.

Peter, James, and John were, it seems, the foremost of the apostles in spiritual strength and boldness; nevertheless, the manifestation they had of Christ on the mount almost overwhelmed them. Their body sunk under the weight of his glory, and when they came out of their sleep or trance, they could not recover themselves, "they knew not what they said." This had been before the case of Daniel, and was once more that of St. John. The "comeliness" of the man "greatly beloved" was "turned to corruption:" he retained no strength. And the beloved apostle, when he saw his Saviour with some additional beams of glory, fell at his feet as dead. St. Paul not only lost his sight on such an occasion but was near losing his life, being unable to take any refreshment for three days and three nights. And it is also generally supposed that Moses actually died under the overpowering displays of the Redeemer's love. Hence we learn that God's way and time are best, and that we are to leave both to his gracious wisdom; using the means in which he has promised to manifest himself to those who diligently seek him.

VII. What those means are is what I come in the last place to consider. The agent or author of every Divine manifestation is the eternal God, one in three, and three in one. The Father reveals, the Son freely discovers himself, and the Holy Ghost freely testifies of him. Nevertheless, the Scriptures, in general, attribute this wonder of grace to the blessed Spirit. "No man can" experimentally "say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." It is his peculiar office to "convince the world of righteousness," by giving us to know savingly the Lord our righteousness. "He shall glorify me," says Christ, "for he shall take of mine, and show it unto you." And this he does without any merit of ours, in the means which God hath appointed, and which he enables us to use aright.

These means are both outward and inward. The outward are what our Church calls "the means of grace," particularly hearing or reading the word, partaking of the sacraments, and praying together with one accord for the manifestation of the Spirit, as the primitive Christians did, Acts ii. 1. These means are to be used with the greatest diligence, but not to be trusted to; the only proper object of our confidence is God, who works all in all. It was not Moses' rod which parted the Red Sea, but that Almighty arm, which once divided the water from the water without a rod. Nevertheless, as Moses was not to throw his rod away under pretence of trusting in God alone, neither was he to rely on the weak instrument, as if the Divine power resided in it.

Though the Lord in general works by means, he ties himself to none, and sometimes works without any. The same Spirit, which fell upon Cornelius, while Peter preached, fell upon Peter on the day of pentecost without any preaching. And

the same Lord, who opened Lydia's heart, by the ministry of St. Paul, opened the heart of St. Paul by the sole exertion of his power. We hence learn, that as, on the one hand, we ought not, with the profane and enthusiasts, to tempt the Lord by neglecting the use of any of the means he hath appointed: so, on the other hand, we must beware of confining God to particular means, times, and places, as the bigoted and superstitious do; remembering, that when we are cut off from all outward means, it is our privilege to wait for the immediate display of God's arm, in the use of the inward means.

Of these the first is, "Believing there will be a performance of the Lord's promise," and that he is willing and able to manifest himself to us, as he does not to the world: this is the very root of prayer, fervency, hope, and expectation. Without the actings of this preparatory faith, the soul droops, and becomes an easy prey to despondency, vanity, or sloth. Where this talent is buried, the Lord seldom works. "Believest thou that I am able to do this for thee?" is generally the first question he puts to the seeker's heart. If it is answered in the negative, he can do no great miracle, because of this unbelief. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged, that St. Paul was blessed with the revelation of the Son of God, without any previous desire or expectation of it. In him and others was this scripture fulfilled, "I was found of them that sought me not; I was manifested to them that asked not after me." But, in general where the Gospel is preached, the Lord will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do this; and if he visit any with conviction, as he did St. Paul, it is only to make them pray as that apostle did, until he manifests himself by the Holy Ghost, in a way of consolation and love.

The second inward means of the manifestation of Christ is resignation as to the particular manner, time, and place of it. "Through patience," as well as faith and prayer, "we inherit this promised" blessing. Some, according to their carnal wisdom and forward imagination, mark out the way in which salvation is to come to their hearts; but the Lord generally disappoints those unhumbled seekers, though, as in the case of Gideon, he may gratify one in a thousand: for believers are "not born of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The Jews expected the Messiah, and there they were right: but they expected him "in their own way," and there they stumbled and fell. While they looked for a mighty conqueror, another Alexander, to make them great, they overlooked the lowly Prince of Peace, who came to make them good; and at last they crucified him as a base impostor. This Jewish disposition is in all by nature. Hence Christ is commonly rejected in the Spirit by Christians, as he was in the flesh by the Jews. We would have him come to give us an idle rest, but he appears to teach us to deny ungodliness, and fight the good fight of faith: this we do not like. Our nature wants to step at once into a throne: but he offers first to nail us to the tree, and to crucify our flesh with its affections and lusts: and from this we shrink as from the grave. We expect to be carried at once to the top of Mount Tabor, to see unutterable glory; but he leads us to Gethsemane to watch and pray, or to Calvary to suffer and die with him: here we recoil, and do not choose to know him. Our forward impatience dictates that he shall instantaneously turn our midnight into noon day; but instead of manifesting himself at once as the meridian sun, he will,

perhaps, appear only as the morning star, that our light "may shine more and more unto the perfect day." This defeats our counsel, "we despise the day of small things," and do not think so low an appearance worth our notice and thanks. If you, sir, ever seek the saving knowledge of Jesus, never stop till you can witness your sun goes down no more; but, in the meantime, never slight the least ray of the heavenly light. The least may open into the broad day of eternity. Cease from your own false wisdom, and become as a "little child," or you "cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, and see the King in his beauty."

The third and last inward means I would recommend to mourners in Sion, is "a tender regard for the reproofs of the Spirit, a constant attention to the drawings of the Father," obedience to the calls they have to secret prayer, and a fear of depending upon their duties, and not solely upon the faithfulness of Jesus. Whoever follows these directions, according to the grace given to him, will, of course, cease from outward evil, and do, as he can, the little good his hands find to do. This is a better way of waiting for the revelation of Christ, than to lie down in dejection and hopeless unbelief. All those, who sullenly bury their one talent, and wilfully retain the accursed thing, complain in vain that their Lord makes long tarrying. They obstinately grieve his convincing Spirit, and then absurdly clamour, because he does not reward them for it, by the comforts of his heavenly presence. Let us not be so unreasonable. Let us "strive to enter in at the strait gate," remembering that "many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." But let us "strive lawfully," not making ourselves a righteousness of our own seeking, knocking, and striving. The sun shines, not because we deserve it by undrawing our curtains, but because it is his nature. Jesus visits us, not because of any merit in our prayers, &c, but for his own sake, because his truth and compassion fail not. Free grace opens the door of mercy, not to works and merit, but to want and misery. That you and I may knock and press in, with all needy, penitent, believing sinners, is the earnest wish of a heart, which prompts me to subscribe myself, sir, yours, &c,

JOHN FLETCHER.

LETTER V.

SIR,-When I told you that, in all ages, Jehovah Jesus manifests himself in a peculiar manner to his people, you exclaimed against the assertion as altogether new and unscriptural. It lies upon me, therefore, to prove, that antiquity and Scripture are on my side. I shall then in this letter appeal to the manifestations recorded in the Old Testament. You cannot expect all the revelations of any child of God, much less those of every one, to be mentioned in so short a history as that of the Bible. Nevertheless, enough is said on the point to convince us that, in every age of the Church, God hath favoured the sons of men with peculiar displays of his presence.

Let us go back as far as Adam himself. Did not the Lord familiarly converse with him before the fall, both when he presented him a partner, and when he brought every beast of the field before him, to see what he would call them? Did he not visit him

after the fall, to pronounce his sentence, and to promise that he would become the woman's seed, and bruise the serpent's head? Was not this manifestation granted to Abel, when the Lord had respect to his sacrifice: the very cause of Cain's envy, wrath, and murder? Did not Enoch's walking with God imply a constant union and communion with Emmanuel? And how could this union have taken place, if the Lord had not first revealed himself to the patriarch? Must not two persons meet and agree, before they can walk and converse together?

"Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord," and in consequence of it, was made acquainted with his righteous designs, and received directions how to escape from a perishing world. The history of Abraham is full of accounts of such manifestations. In one of them the Lord called him out of his sins, and from his kindred, to go both to the heavenly and earthly Canaan. In others he promised him Isaac, and Isaac's mysterious seed. Several years after, for the trial of his faith, he commanded him to sacrifice that favourite son; and when the trial was over, he testified his approbation of Abraham's conduct. He went farther. Read Gen. xviii, and you will see how the Divine philanthropy, or the love of God toward man appeared, in his condescending to clothe himself, beforehand, with the nature he was to assume in the virgin's womb, and to converse, in this undress, with the father of the faithful as a prince with his favourite, or a friend with his confident.

Sarah and Agar, Isaac and Rebekah, had their Divine manifestations; but those of Jacob deserve our particular attention. When he fled to Syria from the face of his brother Esau, and lay desolate in a field, having only a heap of stones for his pillow, the God of all consolation appeared unto him: "and behold the Lord stood on the mysterious ladder, on which the angels of God ascended and descended, and said, I am the Lord; behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places, whither thou goest. And Jacob called that place Bethel, the house of God, and the gate of heaven:" as if he had wanted to intimate, no one ever found the gate of heaven but by a manifestation of Christ, who is alone the way to the Father, and the door into glory. When the same patriarch returned to Canaan, and was left alone one night, there wrestled a man with him till the breaking of the day. And when this extraordinary person said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh; he replied, I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me; and he blessed him there, acknowledging that he had power with man and God," even with him whose name is Emmanuel, God with us. "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, [the face of God,] for he said, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." The design of' this manifestation was merely to strengthen his faith, and we learn from it, that the children of faithful Abraham wrestle in prayer with the God-man, as Jacob did, till they prevail and are blessed as he was.

Moses was favoured with numberless manifestations, sometimes as prime minister of the King of the Jews, and at other times only as a common believer. "There appeared to hind in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, the angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush; and when Moses saw it, he drew near, and the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, I am the God of thy fathers," &c, Acts vii. 30. Many partook

of a sight equally glorious: “Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, went up and saw the God of Israel, and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness; and upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand; also they saw God and did eat and drink,” Exod. xxiv. 10, 11. “Behold, (said Moses upon the occasion,) the Lord our God hath showed us his glory, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire, and we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth,” Deut. v. 24. All Israel shared sometimes in the glorious manifestation. 'They all drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, (says St. Paul,) and that rock was Christ.” The cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, says the Jewish historian, and fire was upon it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel. “It came to pass as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar ascended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses, and all the people saw the cloudy pillar, and rose up and worshipped, every man in the door of his tent. And the Lord spake to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend.” So indulgent was Emmanuel to him, that when he said, “I beseech thee, show me thy glory, the Lord answered, l will make my goodness pass before thee; but thou canst not see my face [without some veil] and live. And [O astonishing condescension!] the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And Moses made haste, bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.” These displays of Divine goodness and glory left a Divine impression on the countenance of the man of God; his face shone so transcendently glorious, that the children of Israel were afraid to come nigh him; and he was obliged to put a veil over it, before he could converse with them. Though this appears very extraordinary, the apostles inform us that what happened to the countenance of Moses, happens to the souls of believers. By faith they behold the Lord through the glass of Gospel promises, and beholding him they “are made partakers of the Divine nature: they are changed into the same image from glory to glory.”

Joshua, Moses’ successor, was blessed with many such manifestations, each of which conveyed to him new degrees of courage and wisdom. To instance in one only: “When he was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him, with his sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went to him, and said, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said Nay, but as Captain of the Lord's host am I come. And Joshua, [sensible it was Jehovah] fell on his face to the earth, worshipped, and said to him. What says my Lord to his servant? And the Captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground; and Joshua did so,” Josh. v. 13. Every true discovery of Christ hath a similar effect. It humbles the sinner, and makes him worship in the dust. He sees “holiness to the Lord” written upon every surrounding object; he is loosed from earth and earthly things, and the towering walls of sin fall before him, as those of Jericho, soon after this manifestation, did before Joshua.

When that chief was dead, the same heavenly person, called “the Angel of the Lord, came from Gilgal to Bochim,” and spake such words to all the children of Israel, that the people were universally melted; “they lift up their voice, wept,” and

sacrificed, Judges ii. 1. Nothing can so effectually make sinners relent as a sight of Him whom they have pierced. When they have it, whatever place they are in becomes a Bochim, a valley of tears and adoration.

Not long after, the Lord manifested himself to Deborah, and by the wisdom and fortitude communicated to her in that revelation, she was enabled to judge Israel, and lead desponding Barak to certain victory, through nine hundred chariots of iron.

The condescension of our Emmanuel appears in a still more striking light, in the manifestation which he vouchsafed to Gideon. This mysterious "Angel of the Lord [again and again called Jehovah] came and sat under an oak in Ophra," appeared to Gideon, and said, "The Lord is with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. And the Lord looked upon him [what a courage-inspiring look was this! as powerful, no doubt, as that which met cursing Peter's eye, and darted repentance to his heart!] and he said, Go in this thy might; have not I sent thee? And Gideon said, Alas! O Lord God, for because I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee, fear not, thou shalt not die." Thus strengthened and comforted, he built an altar to Jehovah-Shalom, and threw down the altar of Baal, Judges vi. 12, &c. Hence we learn that, when Jesus manifests himself to a sinner, he fills him with a noble contempt of Baal, an effectual resolution to break down his altars, and a Divine courage to shake off the yoke of the spiritual Midianites. He imparts to him a comfortable assurance that the bitterness of death is past, and that "Jehovah Shalom, the God of peace, even Christ our peace," is with him; and the sinner, constrained by the love of Christ, gives him his believing heart, and offers sacrifices of thanksgiving on that best of altars. Here begins such a free intercourse between the Lord and Gideon, only of a far more spiritual and delightful nature.

Some years after, the same Angel of God appeared to Manoah's wife, and promised her a son. Her husband prayed for the same manifestation-God hearkened to his voice. The heavenly personage manifested himself a second time. Manoah asked him his name, and the "Angel said to him, Why askest thou after my name, seeing it is secret?" I am not yet called Jesus. Manoah offered a burnt offering, the Angel received it at his hands; and, while he ascended in the flame of the altar, Manoah fell on his face to the ground, knew that he was the Angel Jehovah, and said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God." She comforted him under his fears; and the birth of Samson, instead of their death, was the consequence of this twofold manifestation.

There was a time when Samuel did not yet "know the Lord, neither was the Word of the Lord," that Word which was afterward made flesh, yet revealed unto him. The devoted youth worshipped in the dark, till "the Lord appeared again in Shiloh, came, stood, and called, Samuel, Samuel: for the Lord revealed himself to him there, by the Word of the Lord." From that memorable time the "Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." The intercourse between God and his prophet

soon grew to so great a degree, that the sacred historian says, “The Lord told him in his ear,” what he wanted him to be informed of, 1 Sam. iii. 7; ix. 17.

David had many manifestations of Christ and his pardoning love; and, far from supposing this blessing peculiar to himself as a prophet, he declares that “for this every one that is godly shall pray to God, when he may be found,” Psalm xxxii. 6. He knew his Shepherd's inward voice so well that, without it, no outward message, though ever so comfortable, could restore peace to his troubled mind. When he had been convinced of his crimes of adultery and murder, by the close application of Nathan's parable, the prophet assured him that the Lord had “put away his sin, he should not die.” This report would have contented many of our modern penitents; but nothing short of an immediate manifestation of the forgiving God could comfort the royal mourner: “Wash thou me, (says he,) and I shall be clean.” Nathan's words, though ever so true, cannot do this: speak thyself, merciful God, “make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.”

Exceeding remarkable was the revelation his son Solomon was favoured with. “In Gibeon, [where he was gone to sacrifice,] the Lord appeared unto him in a dream by night, and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.” Conscious of his greatest want, “he asked an understanding heart. The speech pleased the Lord, and God said, Because thou hast asked this thing, I have done according to thy word: lo, I have given it thee; and that also which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour.” Though this promise was made to him in a dream, he knew by the chance which he found in himself when he awoke, and by the powerful evidence which accompanies Divine manifestations, that it was a glorious reality. Fully persuaded of it, he scrupled not to offer peace-offerings, and make a feast to all his servants on the occasion, 1 Kings iii. Nor was this the only time Solomon was thus favoured. When he had built the temple, and prayed for a blessing upon it, “the Lord appeared to him a second time, as he had appeared to him in Gibeon, and said, I have heard thy prayer,” 1 Kings ix. 2.

Elijah is so famous for the power he had to obtain Divine manifestations by the prayer of faith, that St. James proposes him to the Church for a pattern of successful wrestling with God. And who is the Lord God of Elijah but the God that manifests himself to his worshippers, in opposition to Baal and other false gods, from whom neither visits nor answers can be obtained? The Lord answered him by fire at the foot of Mount Carmel, and by showers on the top; and when he lodged in Mount Horeb in a cave, “behold, the Word of the Lord came to him, and said, What dost thou here, Elijah?” “Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord.” “And behold the Lord passed by;” and in his still, small voice, comforted, supported, and directed him, 1 Kings xix. 9.

Micaiah, another man of God, “saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left,” 1 Kings xxii, 19. Elisha was not only blessed with frequent manifestations of the Lord and his power, but of his heavenly retinue also. He saw in an hour of danger “the mountain full of horses

and chariots of fire," ready to protect him; and at his request the Lord condescended to open his servant's eyes, that his drooping spirits might revive at the sight, 2 Kings vi. 17.

"Eliphaz, one of Job's friends, related to him, that "in thoughts from visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear and trembling came upon him. Then a spirit passed before his face; it stood still, but he could not discern [i.e. clearly distinguish] the form thereof. An image was before his face, and he heard a voice saying, Shall mortal man be more pure than God?" As for Job, when he had long contended with his friends, the Lord answered him out of the whirlwind, and manifested himself in a manner to which that good man was before a stranger. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," Job xxxvii. 1, and xlii. 5. Hence we learn that nothing but a discovery of the Lord can silence the vain reasonings of self righteous pleas and unbelieving fears; this alone makes us to lie in deep prostration at our Maker's feet.

St. John informs us that "Isaiah saw Christ's glory, and spake of him," when he described the glorious manifestation in which he received a new seal of pardoning and sanctifying love. "I saw the Lord," says he, "sitting upon his throne, high and lifted up; his train filled the temple. The seraphim, covering their faces with their wings, cried one to another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. Then said I, Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." "Then flew one of the seraphim, and touching me with a live coal from off the altar," he said, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged," Isa. vi. 1, &c. Many never witness the forgiveness of their sins till they see by faith the Lord of hosts, and are melted into repentance, and inflamed with love at the glorious sight. Isaiah not only beheld Christ's glory, but was blessed with the clearest views of his sufferings. He saw him as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs:" and asked him, "Why he was red in his apparel, and his garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat?" These revelations were not only calculated for the good of the Church, but also for the establishment of the prophet's faith.

I shall not mention those of Ezekiel; they are so numerous, that a particular account of them would alone fill a letter. I refer you to the book itself. Jeremiah, speaking of God's people, says, in express terms, The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee," Jeremiah xxxi. 3. Daniel enjoyed the same favour. "He saw the Ancient of days, and one like the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven." We may naturally suppose that Daniel's three companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, were sensible of their heavenly Deliverer's presence. Theft were more concerned in the discovery than Nebuchadnezzar, who cried out, "Lo I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

It would be absurd to suppose that the lesser prophets and other men of God to whom the word of the Lord came, had no discovery of the Lord himself, the essential Word. If some display of his presence had not attended their every revelation, might they not have said, Thus says my warm imagination,-Thus says my enthusiastic brain, as well as, Thus says the Lord?

From the variety and authenticity of these manifestations left upon sacred record, I conclude, that the doctrine I maintain, far from being new and unscriptural, is supported by the experiences of God's children for 3600 years, viz. from the creation of the world till the close of the Old Testament.

With respect to what is extraordinary, as to the design, and barely external, as to the circumstances of some of these manifestations, I refer you to the distinctions I made on that subject in my second letter. Should you object, that the contents of this prove only, that God favoured the patriarchs and Jews with immediate revelations of himself, because they had neither the Gospel nor the Scriptures: I answer,

1. The Gospel was preached to them as well as to us. The patriarchs had tradition, which answered the end of the Scriptures in their day. The Jews, in the time of the judges, had not only tradition but a considerable part of the Scriptures, even all the writings of Moses. Under the kings they had the Psalms, Job, Ecclesiastes, the Proverbs, and a thousand and five songs of Solomon, one of which only has been handed down to our times. They had also the book of Nathan the prophet, the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the visions of Iddo the seer, which are now lost. These contained the substance of the Bible.

2. When the Lord answered Saul no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams, the reason assigned for it by the Holy Ghost is, not that the canon of Scripture was filled, and there was no more occasion for immediate revelations; but that “the Lord was departed from him,” and was become his enemy.

3. David, who had the honour of being a sacred writer himself, after his relapse into sin, could not be satisfied with the psalms he had penned down, but mourned, prayed, and watered his bed with his tears, inconsolable till the Lord immediately revealed his pardoning love, and said to his soul, “I am thy salvation.”

4. If, because we have the letter of Scripture, we must be deprived of all immediate manifestations of Christ and his Spirit, we are great losers by that blessed book, and we might reasonably say, “Lord, bring us back to the dispensation of Moses. Thy Jewish servants could formerly converse with thee face to face, but now we can know nothing of thee but by their writings. They viewed thy glory in various wonderful appearances, but we are indulged only with black lines, telling us of thy glory. They had the bright shekinah, and we have only obscure descriptions of it. They were blessed with lively oracles, and we only with a dead letter. The ark of thy covenant went before them, and struck terror into all their adversaries; but a book, of which our enemies make daily sport, is the only revelation of thy power among us.

They made their boast of *Urim and Thummim*, and received particular, immediate answers from between the cherubim; but we have only general ones, by means of Hebrew and Greek writings, which many do not understand. They conversed familiarly with Moses their mediator; with Aaron their high priest; and Samuel their prophet: these holy men gave them unerring directions in doubtful cases; but, alas! the apostles and inspired men are all dead, and thou Jesus, our Mediator, Priest, and Prophet, canst not be consulted to any purpose, for thou manifestest thyself no more. As for thy sacred book, thou knowest that sometimes the want of money to purchase it, the want of learning to consult the original, the want of wisdom to understand the translation, the want of skill or sight to read it, prevent our improving it to the best advantage, and keep some from reaping any benefit from it at all. O Lord, if because we have this blessed picture of thee, we must have no discovery of the glorious original, have compassion on us, take back thy precious book, and impart thy more precious self to us as thou didst to thy ancient people."

5. St. Paul declares, though the Mosaic dispensation was "glorious," that of Christ "exceeds it in glory." But if Christ revealed himself immediately to the Jews, and to Christians only mediately by the letter of a book, it is plain the apostle was mistaken; for no one can deny it is far more glorious to see the light of God's countenance and hear his voice, than merely to read something about them in a book.

6. That particular manifestations of Christ, far from ceasing with the Jewish, have increased in brightness and spirituality under the Christian dispensation, I shall endeavour to prove in my next. I am, sir, &c.

JOHN FLETCHER.

LETTER VI.

SIR,-According to my promise I shall now prove that the New Testament abounds, as well as the Old, with accounts of the particular revelations of the Son of God.

Before his birth he manifested himself to the blessed virgin, by the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost. She "rejoiced in God her Saviour," and gloried more in having him revealed as God in her soul than in finding him conceived as man in her womb. Soon after, Joseph, her husband, was assured in a heavenly dream, that the child she bore was "Emmanuel, God with us." He revealed himself next to Elizabeth. When she "heard the salutation of Mary, she was filled with the Holy Ghost," and made sensible that the virgin was the mother of her Lord. So powerful was this manifestation that her unborn son was affected by it. "The babe leaped in her womb for joys" and "was filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb."

So important is a particular knowledge of Jesus, that an angel directed the shepherds, and a miraculous star the wise men, to the place where he was born; and there the Holy Ghost so revealed him to their hearts, that they hesitated not to

worship the seemingly despicable infant as the majestic God, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain.

Simeon, “who waited for the consolation of Israel, had it revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.” The promise was fulfilled; and while his bodily eyes discovered nothing but a poor infant, presented without pomp in the temple, his spiritual eyes perceived him to be the light of Israel, and the salvation of God. Nor was this extraordinary favour granted only to Simeon, for it is written, “All flesh shall see the salvation of God;” and St. Luke informs us, that Anna partook of the sight of the old Israelite, gave thanks to her new-born Lord, and “spake of him to all that waited for redemption in Jerusalem.”

When he entered upon his ministry, he first manifested himself to his forerunner. “I knew him not” personally, said John; “but he that sent me to baptize with water, said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he who baptizes with the Holy Ghost.” “And I saw, and bear record, that this is the Son of God, the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world.”

Jesus had manifested himself spiritually to Nathanael, under the fig tree; and the honest Israelite, being reminded of that Divine favour, confessed the author of it: “Rabbi,” said he, “thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.” Our Lord, pleased with this ready confession, promised that he should see greater things, enjoy brighter manifestations than these; that he should even “see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”

The bare outward sight of our Saviour's person and miracles rather confounded than converted the beholders. What glorious beams of his Godhead pierced through the veil of his mean appearances, when, with supreme authority he turned the buyers and sellers out of the temple: when he entered Jerusalem in triumph, and all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And when he said to those who apprehended him, “I am he, and they went backward and fell to the ground!” Nevertheless, we do not find that one person was blessed with the saving knowledge of him, on any of these solemn occasions. The people of Galilee saw most of him, and yet believed least in him. “What wisdom is this, which is given to this man,” said they, “that such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary? And they were offended at him.” Some went even so far as to ascribe his miracles to a diabolical power, affirming, that he cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Hence it appears, that if he had not, in some degree, revealed himself to the hearts of his disciples, when he said to them, Follow me, they would never have forsaken all immediately and followed him. “He manifested forth his glory,” says St. John, “and his disciples believed on him:” and yet, when the manifestation was chiefly external, how weak was the effect it produced even upon them! How was our Lord after all obliged to upbraid them with their unbelief, their little faith, and, on a particular occasion, with their “having no faith!” If we know, savingly, that Jesus is “God with us; flesh and blood” [i.e. mere man with all his best powers,] “hath not revealed this to us, but our Father who is in heaven.” “And as no man knoweth the

Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him; so no man knoweth the Son but the Father," and he to whom the Spirit proceeding from the Father does reveal him. "For no man can, [savingly] say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost:" and "he that hath seen me," by this Divine revelation, says Jesus, "hath seen the Father also: for I and the Father are one."

Had not our Lord revealed himself in a peculiar manner to sinners no one would have suspected him to be "God manifest in the flesh." Till he discovers himself, as "he does not unto the world, he hath no form nor comeliness," says Isaiah, "and when we see him, there is no beauty in him, that we should desire him; we hide as it were our faces from him; he is despised and we esteem him not." He was obliged to say to the woman of Samaria, "I that speak to thee am He;" and to say it with a power, that penetrated her heart, before she could "believe with her heart unto righteousness." Then, indeed, Divinely wrought upon, she ran, and invited her neighbours to draw living water out of the well of salvation she had so happily found.

If our Lord had not called Zaccheus inwardly as well as outwardly; if he had not made him come down from the pinnacle of proud nature, as well as from the sycamore tree; if he had not honoured his heart with his spiritual, as he did his house with his bodily presence; the rich publican would never have received him gladly, nor would the Lord have said, "This day is salvation come to thy house, forasmuch as thou art a son of faithful Abraham."

Salvation did not enter into the heart of Simon, who admitted our Lord to his house and table, as well as Zaccheus. The penitent woman, who kissed his feet and washed them with her tears, obtained the blessing, which the self-righteous Pharisee despised. It was to her contrite spirit and not to his callous heart, that the Lord revealed himself, as the pardoning God.

The blind man, restored to his bodily sight, knew not his heavenly Benefactor, till a second and greater miracle was wrought upon the eyes of his blind understanding. When Jesus found him, some time after he was cured, he said to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered, Who is the Lord, that I might believe in him?" And Jesus, opening the eyes of his mind, and manifesting himself to him, as he does not unto the world, said, "Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." Then, and not till then, he could say from the heart, "Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him."

Both the thieves, who were crucified with him, heard his prayers and strong cries; both saw his patience and meekness, his wounds and his blood. One continued to make sport of his sufferings, as though he had been a worse malefactor than himself; while the other, blessed with an eternal revelation of his Godhead, implored his mercy, trusted him with his soul, and confessed him to be the King of glory, at the very moment when he hung tortured and dying as the basest of slaves.

St. Peter speaks so highly of the manifestation with which he and the two sons of Zebedee were favoured on Mount Tabor, that we ought not to pass over it in silence. They saw the kingdom of God coming with power; they beheld the King in his beauty. "His face did shine like the sun, and his raiment became white as light; a bright cloud over-shadowed him, and behold a voice out of the cloud," which said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

Nor did our Lord reveal himself less after his resurrection. Mary sought him at the grave with tears. As she "turned herself, she saw him standing, but knew not that it was Jesus. He said unto her, Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener," inquired after the object of her love; until Jesus, calling her by her name, manifested himself to her as alive from the dead. Then she cried out, "Master!" and in her transport, would have taken her old place at his feet.

With equal condescension he appeared to Simon, that he might not be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. True mourners in Sion weep, some for an absent God, as Mary, others for their sins, as Peter; and they will not be comforted, no, not by angels, but only by Him, who is nigh to all that call upon him, and is health to those that are broken in heart. He that appeared first to weeping Mary, and next to sorrowing Peter, will shortly visit them with his salvation. He is already "with them," as he was with Mary, though they know it not; and he will soon be "in them," the sure and comfortable hope of glory.

This observation is farther confirmed by the experience of the two disciples, who walked to Emmaus, and were sad. Jesus drew near, joined, and comforted them. He made their "hearts to burn within them while he talked with them by the way, and opened to them the Scriptures. But still their eyes were held, that they should not know him," before they were prepared for the overwhelming favour. And it was not until he sat at meat with them, "that their eyes were opened, and they knew him," in the breaking of bread. By a fatal mistake, many professors in our day rest satisfied with what did not satisfy the two disciples. They understood the Scriptures, their hearts burned with love and joy; Jesus was with them, but they knew him not, until the happy moment when he fully opened the eye of their faith, and poured the light of his countenance on their ravished spirits. Happy those, who, like them, constrain an unknown Jesus by mighty prayers to tarry with them, until the veil is taken away from their hearts, and they "know in whom they have believed."

Frequent were the manifestations of Jesus to his disciples before his ascension. An angel appeared-to two of the holy mourners, and said to them, "Fear not; for I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is risen from the dead. As they ran with fear and great joy to tell his disciples, Jesus met them, saying, All hail! and they came, held him by the feet, and worshipped him. The same day in the evening, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews came Jesus and stood in the midst;" they were terrified, but with his wanted goodness, "he said, Peace be unto you! He showed them his hands and his feet;" ate with them as he had done of old with Abraham; and to testify an inward manifestation of the Holy

Ghost, which he imparted to them, breathed upon them, as his Spirit breathed upon their minds; and thus “he opened their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures.” Out of condescension to Thomas, he showed himself to them a second time, in the like manner; and a third time at the sea of Tiberias; and “afterward he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.”

You will perhaps say, sir, that these manifestations ceased when Christ was ascended to heaven. This is true with respect to the manifestation of a body of such gross flesh and blood, as may be touched with material hands. In this sense believers “know Christ after the flesh no more.” Our Lord, by his gentle reproof to Thomas, discountenanced our looking for carnal manifestations of his person, and I have declared again and again that they are not what I contend for.

But, that spiritual manifestations of Christ ceased at his ascension, is what I must deny, if I receive the Scripture. On the contrary, they became more frequent. “Three thousand were pricked to the heart" on the day of Pentecost; and felt the need of a visit from the heavenly Physician. He then came revealed in the power of his Spirit, with whom he is one. They received the gift of the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to manifest the Son. For “the promise was unto them and their children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Witness the last words of Christ in St. Matthew's Gospel, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

Time would fail me to tell of the five thousand converted some days after, of Cornelius and his household, Lydia and her household; in a word, of all who were truly brought to Christ in the first age of Christianity. The Lord “opened their hearts. The Holy Ghost fell upon them, and they walked in his comforts. Christ was evidently set forth crucified before their spiritual eyes. He dwelt in their hearts by faith; they lived not, but Christ lived in them.” They agreed in saying with St. Paul, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ,” by whom he is savingly known, “he is none of his.”

Stephen's experience is alone sufficient to decide the point. When brought before the council, they “all saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.” Being “full of the Holy Ghost,” he wrought no miracle, he spake no new tongue, but “looked steadfastly up into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” This manifestation was calculated only for the private encouragement and comfort of the pious deacon. It answered no other end but to enrage the Jews, and make them account him a greater blasphemer and a wilder enthusiast than they did before. Accordingly they cried aloud, stopped their ears, ran upon him, cast him out of the city, and stoned him; while Stephen, under the powerful influence of the manifestation, “kneeled down and called upon God, saying, fiord Jesus, receive my spirit, and lay not this sin to their charge.” Hence we learn, first, that nothing appears so absurd and wicked to Pharisees and formalists, as the doctrine I maintain. They lose all patience when they hear that Christ really manifests himself to his servants. No blasphemy is like this in the account of those who are wise, learned, and prudent in their own eyes. Secondly, that the most exalted saints need a fresh manifestation

of the glory, love, and presence of Christ, that they may depart this life in the triumph of faith.

If you object that Stephen was thus favoured, because he was about to suffer for Christ, and that it would be great presumption to expect the like support, I reply in five following observations. (1.) We are called to suffer for Christ, as well as Stephen, though perhaps not in the same manner and degree. (2.) We often need as much support from Christ, to stand against the children of men that are "set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongues a sharp sword;" and to "quench the fiery darts of the devil," as the martyr did to stand a shower of stones. (3.) It is perhaps as hard to be racked with the gout, or to burn several days in a fever, on a sick bed, as you or I may be forced to do, as to be for a few minutes with Shadrach and his companions in a burning furnace, or to feel for a fleeting moment the anguish of bruised flesh, and a fractured skull, with our triumphant martyr. No one knows what pangs of body and agonies of soul may accompany him through the valley of the shadow of death. If our Lord himself was not above being strengthened by an angel that appeared to him from heaven, surely it is no enthusiasm to say that such feeble creatures as we are, stand in need of a Divine manifestation, to enable us to fight our last battle manfully, and to come off more than conquerors. (4.) We betray unbelief, if we suppose that Christ cannot do for us what he did for Stephen; and we betray our presumption, if we say we want not the assistance which this bold champion stood in need of. (5.) The language of our Church is far different: "Grant," says she, in her collect for that saint's day, "O Lord, that in all our sufferings here on earth for the testimony of thy truth, we may steadfastly look up to heaven, and, by faith, behold the glory that shall be revealed; and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love and bless our persecutors, by the example of the first martyr, St. Stephen, who prayed for his murderers, O blessed Jesus, who standest at the right hand of God to succour all those who suffer for thee."

You see, sir, that I have the suffrage of the Church of England; and yours too, if you do not renounce our excellent liturgy; so that, if I am an enthusiast for expecting to be "filled with the Holy Ghost," and by faith to behold the glory that shall be revealed, as well as St. Stephen, I am countenanced by a multitude of the best and greatest men in the world.

But suppose you reject the testimony of St. Stephen, and of all our clergy (when in the desk) touching the reality, and the necessity too, of our Lord's manifesting himself on earth, after his ascension into heaven, receive at least that of St. Luke and St. Paul. They both inform us, that as Saul of Tarsus went to Damascus, "the Lord, even Jesus, appeared to him in the way. Suddenly there shone a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun," so that "he fell upon the earths and heard a voice, saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." So powerful was the effect of this manifestation of Christ, that the sinner was turned into a saint, and the fierce, blaspheming persecutor into a weeping, praying apostle.

Methinks I hear you say, true, into an apostle; but are we called to be apostles? No, sir, but we are called to be Christians-to be converted from sin to holiness, and from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of “God's dear Son.” St. Paul's call to the apostleship is nothing to his being made a child of God. Judas was a Christian by profession, an apostle by call, and a devil by nature. And what is Judas in his own place to the meanest of God's children-to poor Lazarus in Abraham's bosom? All who go to heaven are first “turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” This turning sometimes begins by a manifestation of Christ: witness the authentic account of Colonel Gardner's conversion, published by his judicious friend, Dr. Doddridge; and the more authentic one of our apostle's conversion, recorded three times by St. Luke. And I dare advance, upon the authority of one greater than St. Luke, that no one's conversion ever was completed without the revelation of the Son of God to his heart. “I am the way and the door," says Jesus; no man cometh to the Father but by me. “Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.” Our looking to him for salvation would be to as little purpose, were he not to manifest himself to us, as our looking toward the east for light if the sun were not to rise upon us.

The revelation of Christ, productive of St. Paul's conversion, was not the only one with which the apostle was favoured. At Corinth the Lord encouraged and spake to him in the night by a vision. “Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall hurt thee.” On another occasion, to wean him more from earth, Christ favoured him with the nearest views of heaven. “I knew a man in Christ,” says he, “whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, who was caught up into the third heaven, into paradise, and heard words which it is not possible for man to utter.” And he informs us farther, that “lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, a messenger of Satan was suffered to buffet him.” When he had been brought before the sanhedrim for preaching the Gospel, St. Luke informs us that “the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.” The ship in which he sailed being endangered by a storm, there stood by him “the Angel of God, whose he was, and whom he served, saying, Fear not, Paul,” &c.

St. Paul was not the only one to whom Christ manifested himself in this familiar manner. Ananias of Damascus was neither an apostle nor a deacon; nevertheless, to him “said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord; and the Lord said, Arise, and go into the street, which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus; for behold he prayeth.” In like manner, Philip was directed to go near and join himself to the eunuch's chariot. And St. Peter being informed that three men sought him, the Lord said to him, “Arise and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them.”

Whether we place these manifestations in the class of the extraordinary, or of the mist ones, we equally learn from them: (1.) That the Lord Jesus revealed himself as much after his ascension as he did before. (2.) That if he does it to send his servants

with a Gospel message to particular persons, he will do it much more to make that message effectual, and to bring salvation to those who wait for him.

As for the revelations of Christ to St. John, they were so many, that the last book of the New Testament is called the Revelation, as containing chiefly an account of them. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," says the apostle; "and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying. I am the first and the last. I turned to see the voice that spake with me, and I saw one like unto the Son of man, &c. When I saw him I fell at his feet as dead; and he laid his hands upon me, saying, Fear not, I am the first and the last." Write the things which are and shall be. One of the things which our Lord commanded John to write, is a most glorious promise, that "he stands at the door" of the human heart, ready to manifest himself even to poor lukewarm Laodiceans; and that "if any man hear his voice and open the door," if they are made conscious of their need of him, so as to open their hearts by the prayer of faith, "he will come in," and feast them with his gracious presence, and the delicious fruits of his blessed Spirit. Therefore the most extraordinary of all the revelations, that of St. John in Patmos, not only shows that the manifestations of Christ run parallel to the canon of Scripture, but also gives a peculiar sanction to the ordinary revelations of him, for which I contend.

Having thus led you from Genesis to Revelation, I conclude by two inferences, which appear to me undeniable. The first, that it is evident our Lord, before his incarnation, during his stay on earth, and after his ascension into heaven, hath been pleased, in a variety of manners, to manifest himself to the children of men, both for the benefit of the Church in general, and for the conversion of sinners, and for the establishment of saints in particular. Secondly, that the doctrine I maintain is as old as Adam, as modern as St. John, the last of the inspired writers, and as Scriptural as the Old and New Testament, which is what I wanted to demonstrate. I am, sir, &c.

J. FLETCHER.

PASTORAL AND FAMILIAR LETTERS:[1]

CONTAINING SEVERAL ORIGINAL LETTERS, WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN PUBLISHED IN ANY PRECEDING COLLECTION.

LETTER I.-*To the parishioners of Madeley*.

BRISTOL, *October*, 1776.

To all who fear and love God in and about Madeley: grace and peace, power and love, joy and triumph in Christ, be multiplied to you, through the blood of the Lamb, through the word that testifies of the blood, and through the Spirit who makes the application.

I expected I should have been with you to see your love, and be edified by your conversation, but Providence has hindered. Twice I had fixed the day of my departure from this place; and twice, the night before that day, I was taken worse than usual, which, together with the unanimous forbiddings of my spiritual, temporal, and medical friends here, made me put off my journey. The argument to which I have yielded is this: "There is yet some little probability, that if you stay here you might recover strength to do a little ministerial work; but if you go now you will ruin all." However, God is my witness, that, if I have not ventured my life to come and see you, it was not from a desire to indulge myself, but to wait and see if the Lord would restore me a little strength, and add a few years to my life, that I might employ both in your service; just as a horse is sometimes kept from his owner, and confined to the yard of a farrier, until he recovers the ability of doing his master some service. I only desire to know, do, and suffer the will of God concerning me; and I assure you, my dear brethren, if I saw it to be his will, that I should give up the means of health I have here, I would not tarry another day, but take my chance and come to my dear charge, were the parish situated ten times more north than it is.

I do not, however, despair of praising God with you in the body; but let us not stay for this to praise him. Let us bless him now; and if any of you are under a cloud of unbelief, and see no matter of praise in being out of hell, in being redeemed by Christ, crowned with thousands of spiritual and temporal mercies, and called to take possession of a kingdom of glory; t beg you would praise him on my account, who raises me so many friends in time, who afflicts me with so gentle a hand, who keeps me from all impatience, and often fills me with consolation in my trouble; giving me a sweet hope that all things work, and shall work, together for good.

Love one another. The love you show to one another will greatly refresh my heart. Keep united to our common head, Jesus. Pray for your infirm minister, as he does for you; and let me hear of your growth in grace, which will be health to the withering bones of your unprofitable servant,

J. FLETCHER.

P. S. Medicine does not seem to relieve me; but I rejoice that, when outward remedies fail, there is one, the blood, and word, and Spirit of Jesus, which never fails; which removes all spiritual maladies, and will surely give us eternal life. Let me recommend that remedy to you all: you all want it, and, blessed be God, I can say, *Probatum est-tried*.

J. FLETCHER.

II.-*To the parishioners of Madeley.*

NEWINGTON, Jan. 13, 1777.

MY DEAR COMPANIONS IN TRIBULATION,-I find much comfort in my weak state of health, from my relation to my "covenant God:" and by my relation to him as my

covenant God, I mean, 1. My clear, explicit knowledge of the Father as my Creator and Father; who so loved the world, you, and me, as to give his only begotten Son, that we should not perish, but have everlasting life. O my dear friends, what sweet exclamations, what endearing calling of Abba, Father, will ascend from our grateful hearts, if we say, with St. Paul, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how freely will he give all things” with that capital gift!

2. I mean by my covenant relation, my relation to the adorable Person, who, with the strength of his Godhead, and the strength of his pure manhood, took away my sin, and reconciled our fallen race to the Divine nature, making us capable of recovering the Divine union from which Adam fell. O how does my soul exult in that dear Mediator! How do I hide my poor soul under the shadow of his wings! There let me meet you all. Driven to that true mercy seat by the same danger, drawn by the same persevering and redeeming love; invited by the same Gospel promises, and encouraged by each other's example, and by the example of that cloud of witnesses, who have passed into the kingdom of God by that precious door, let us by Christ return to God; let us in Christ find our reconciled God: and may that dear commandment of his, “Abide in me,” prove every day more precious to our souls. If we abide in him by believing that he is our way, our truth, and our life; by apprehending him as our Prophet or wisdom, our Priest or righteousness, our King or sanctification and redemption, we shall bear fruit, and understand what is meant by these scriptures: “In him I am well pleased:” “Accepted in the Beloved:” “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus:” “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,” &c. O the comfort of thus cleaving to Christ by faith; of thus finding that Christ is our all.

Love one another, my dear brethren, I entreat you: by the pledges of redeeming love which I have so often given you, while I said in his name, “The body of Christ which was given for thee; the blood of Christ which was shed for thee,” to reconcile thee to God, and to cement thee to the brethren: by these pledges of Divine love, I entreat you to love one another, and is the Holy Spirit is with you:” but if you plead the promise of the Father, which, says Christ, you have heard of me, he will be in you. He will fill your souls with his light, love, and glory, according to that verse which we have so often sung together,

Refining fire, go through my heart,
Illuminate my soul,
Scatter thy life through every part,
And sanctify the whole.

So shall we live and die in the faith, going on from faith to faith, from strength to strength, from comfort to comfort, till Christ is all in all to us all.

J. FLETCHER.

P. S. I earnestly recommend to you all my dear brother Greaves. Show him all the love you have shown to me, and, if possible, show him more, who is so much more deserving.

III.-*To the brethren in and about Madeley*.

NYON, *Feb*. 11, 1779.

MY DEAR COMPANIONS IN TRIBULATION,-Peace and mercy, faith, hope, and love be multiplied to you all in general, and to each of you in particular, from the Father of mercies, through the Lord Jesus Christ, by the Spirit of grace. I thank you for your kind remembrance of me in your prayers. I am yet spared to pray for you. O that I had more power with God! I would bring down all heaven into all your hearts. Strive together, in love, for the living faith, the glorious hope, the sanctifying, perfecting love, once delivered to the saints. Look to Jesus. Move on: run yourselves in the heavenly race, and let each sweetly draw his brother along, till the whole company appear before the redeeming God in Sion, adorned as a bride for the heavenly Bridegroom.

I hope God will, in his mercy, spare me to see you in the flesh; and if I cannot labour for you, I shall gladly suffer with you. If you will put health into my flesh, marrow into my bones, joy into my heart, and life into my whole frame, be of one heart and of one soul. Count nothing your own, but your sin and shame; and bury that dreadful property in the grave, the bottomless grave of our Saviour. Let all you are and have be his that bought you, and his members', for his sake. Dig hard in the Gospel mines for hidden treasure. Blow hard the furnace of prayer, with the bellows of faith, until you are melted into love, and the dross of sin is purged out of every heart. "There is a river that maketh glad the city of God;" it is grace that flows from his throne. Jesus is the vessel, the heavenly ark: get together into him, and sweetly sail down into the ocean of eternity. So shall ye be true miners, furnace men, and bargemen. Farewell in Jesus.

J. FLETCHER.

IV.-*To the Rev. Charles Wesley*.

LONDON, *Dec*. 12, 1758.

MY DEAR SIR,-If my silence were owing to forgetfulness, I should blush at not availing myself more frequently of your permission to write; but the idea I entertain, that nothing but your great condescension can make my correspondence supportable, makes me sometimes act in a manner quite contrary to the sentiments of my heart.

Before I left Tern, the Lord gave me a medicine to prepare me to suffer what awaited me here.

This humiliation prepared me so well, that I was not surprised to learn that a person in London had spread abroad many false and scandalous things of me during my absence: and that the minds of many were prejudiced against me. In one sense I took a pleasure in thinking that I was going to be rejected by the children of God, and that my Saviour would become more dear, under the idea, that as in heaven, so now on earth, I should have none but him. The first time I appeared in the chapel, many were so offended that it was with difficulty they could forbear interrupting me in my prayer, to tell me, “Physician, heal thyself.” I was on the point of declining to officiate, fearing I should only give fresh offence; indeed, I should have done so had it not been for my friend Bernon, who pressed me to stand firm, representing the triumph my silence would give my enemies, &c. His reasons appeared to me so cogent, that as your brother did not reject my assistance, I read prayers, and engaged to preach sometimes in a morning, which I have accordingly continued to do.

The same day I arrived in London our poor friend Bernon took to his bed, as if the Lord had waited my presence to give the blow. Three days after the fever increased and appeared to be dangerous. The next day, which was Wednesday, he settled his temporal concerns. Friday evening he was free from fever and I had some hopes of his life; but on Saturday it appeared that the fever was the lightest part of his malady, and the physician said he would die of an inflammation in his bowels, which was the case on Monday, after an illness of eight days. I sat up with him three nights and saw him as often as I could by day; and blessed be God, I did not see him for a moment without the full assurance of faith. His soul was, in general, divided between the exercise of repentance and of faith in the blood of the Lamb; however, from time to time, repentance gave place to rejoicing; and when he appeared better, he expressed much fear of returning to life. Nevertheless, one day when I was not with him, he had a conflict with the enemy of his faith, which continued an hour or two, when he came off conqueror. The violence of the fever sometimes threw him into a delirium, and that was the case some hours before his dissolution. The last words he uttered, before the strength of his disease deprived him of speech, were, “O what love, what love!” I have in my heart a clear testimony that he died the death of the just. Thus to recompense me for the injury Satan has done me by a false friend, the Lord hath taken to himself a true one, whom he will restore to me again in the last great day. Such a loss is a real gain.

I sincerely rejoice in the health of Mrs. Wesley. Present my compliments to her-not those of the children of this world, but those of the servants of Christ; and do not forget to give your little Charles a kiss of peace and prayer for me. Adieu.

J. FLETCHER.

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V.-*To the Rev. Charles Wesley.*

LONDON, *March* 22, 1759.

MY DEAR SIR,-You left me without permitting me to say farewell; but that shall not hinder me from wishing you a good journey, and I flatter myself that you are in the habit of returning my prayers. I have even shared the joy of Mrs. Wesley in seeing you again. Happier than the afflicted Jesus, you leave your own and they regret your absence; you return to your own, and they receive you with joy. You cannot yet be rendered perfect by suffering; your father and mother have never forsaken you: but no matter, you have no doubt your afflictions! And probably the Lord puts you secretly in a crucible, that you may go forth as gold seven times tried in the fire. May he lay his hand upon you and fill you with his strength! He will not forget Mrs. Wesley: I have had some assurances that he will not when I have been enabled to lay at the feet of Jesus, the delightful burden you put upon me by interesting me in her present critical circumstances. If I were more humble I would beg you to present her my humble respects; and if I were strong in faith like Elizabeth, I could say like her, with that fulness of the Spirit which should go to her heart, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!" But it becomes not me to presume so far: I shall be happy if my good wishes may be found sincere before God.

The adversary avails himself mightily of the enthusiasm of Miss A----d to prevent the success of my preaching in French; but I believe that my own unworthiness does more for the devil than ten Miss A----'s. However, I have thought it my duty to endeavour to stem the torrent of discouragement, praying the Lord to provide for this poor people a pastor after his own heart, whom the wandering sheep may be willing to hear, and who may bring them to himself.

Give me some account of Mrs. Wesley and of the god-father she designs for your little Charles: and that she may not labour under a deception, tell her how greatly I want wisdom, and add that I have no more grace than wisdom. If, after all, she will not reject so unworthy a sponsor, remember that I have taken you for a father and adviser, and that the charge will in the end devolve upon you. Adieu. May the plenitude of Christ fill you, and may some drops of that precious oil run from you to me!

J. FLETCHER.

VI.-*To the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley.*

TERN, *Oct*. 24, 1759.

MY DEAR SIR,-For some days past, the hope of hearing from you has been balanced by the fear that you were not in a condition to write. This last idea prevails so much, that I take my pen to entreat you to deliver me from the inquietude which I suffer from your silence. If the gout prevents you from writing, employ the hand of a friend.

If you are in the third heaven of contemplation and love, let brotherly love for a moment bring you down; if you wander in the desert of temptation, let sympathy unite you to a miserable man who feels himself undone.

Since my last, I have taken some steps toward the knowledge of myself. If you inquire what I have learned? I answer, that I am naked of every thing but *pride* and *unbelief*. Yesterday I was seized with the desire of making rhymes, and I versified my thoughts on the present state. of my soul in a hymn, the first part of which I now send you. If the poetry does not deserve reading, the language will recall to mind your French.

How does Mrs. Wesley and your little family do? The rumour here is, that the French are at Liverpool. I am glad they do not think of Bristol. Salute the trembling half of yourself from me, and tell her how much I rejoice that her quarters have been in safety hitherto; and that my hope is they will continue so to the end of the war.

May the care you take of your health have the success I wish: and while I wait the event, may He who enabled St. Paul to say, "When I am weak, then am I strong," sustain you in all your infirmities, and fill your inward man with his mighty power! At the moment I was going to seal mine, I received your dear letter. You will see by the hymn; in which I have attempted to paint my heart, that I have at present far other things to do than to think of going on to perfection, even laying the *foundation* of the spiritual house; much less, then, can I help forward those who seek it; I am, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

VII.-*To the Rev. Charles Wesley.*

LONDON, *Nov*. 15, 1759.

MY DEAR SIR,-Your letter was not put into my hand till eight days after my arrival in London. I carried the enclosed agreeably to its address, and passed three hours with a modern prodigy-*an humble and pious countess*. I went with trembling, and in obedience to your orders; but I soon perceived a little of what the disciples felt, when Christ said to them, "It is I, be not afraid." She proposed to me something of what you hinted to me in your garden, namely, to celebrate the communion sometimes at her house in a morning, and to preach when occasion offered; in such a manner, however, as not to restrain my liberty, nor prevent my assisting you, or preaching to the French refugees; and that only till Providence should clearly point out the path in which I should go.

You ask, "Whether I can, with confidence, give you up to the mercy of God?" Yes, I can; and I feel that for you, which I do not for myself; I am so assured of your salvation, that I ask no other place in heaven, than that I may have at your feet. I doubt even if paradise would be a paradise to me, unless it were shared with you; and the single idea which your question excited, that we might one day be separated,

pierced my heart, and bathed my eyes with tears. They were sweet tears, which seemed to water and confirm my hope, or rather the *certainty* I have that He who hath begun a good work in us, will also finish it, and unite me to you in Christ, by the bonds of an everlasting love! And not only to you, but to your children and your wife, whom I salute in Christ. Adieu. I am, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

VIII.-*To the Hon. Mrs. -------.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,-To a believer, Jesus is alone the desirable, the everlasting distinction and honour of men. All other advantages, though now so proudly extolled, so vehemently coveted, are, like the down on the thistle, blown away in a moment, and never secure to the possessor. Riches are incapable of satisfying, friends are changeable and precarious, the dear relations, who are the delight of our hearts, are taken away at a stroke; pain and sickness follow ease and health in quick succession; but, amidst all the possible changes of life, Christ is a rock. To see him by faith, to lay hold, to rely upon him, this is the refuge from the storm, the shadow from the heat. May it be given to you abundantly! And in order to obtain it, nothing more or less is required of you, than a full and frequent confession of your own abominable nature and heart, then kneeling as a true beggar at the door of mercy, declaring you came there expecting notice and relief only because Christ our Saviour came to redeem incarnate devils, and, for the glory of his grace, to convert them into saints and servants of the living God, into the children of God, and heirs of glory.

I think you take a sure method to perplex yourself, if you want to see your own faith, or look for one moment at yourself for the proof of your faith; others must see it in your works, but you must feel it in your heart. The glory of Jesus is now, by faith, realized to the mind, in some such manner as an infinitely grand and beautiful object which appears in the firmament of heaven: it arrests and fixes the attention of the spectators on itself; it captivates them, and by the pleasure it imparts, they are led on to view it: so, when Jesus is our peace, strength, righteousness, food, salvation, and our all, we are penetrated with a consciousness of it. We should never rest short of this feeling, nor ever think we have it strong enough. This is to keep the faith; and our chief conflict and most constant labour must be against our own hearts, the things of the world, and the suggestions of our great enemy, which are all intent to divert us from this one object, which Mary placed herself before; or to make us doubt whether in the life and death of Emmanuel there were such unsearchable riches and efficacy, such a complete salvation for all his people, or whether we are in that number. For my own part, I am often tempted to suspect whether I am not speaking great swelling words of Christ, and yet am not more than “sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal:” and I find the only successful way of answering this doubt, is immediately to address to Jesus a prayer to this effect: “Whosoever cometh to thee thou wilt in no wise cast out:” Lord, have not I come to thee? Am not I, as a brand plucked out of the fire, depending upon thee for life? “See if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

My eye looks to the blessed Jesus, my heart longs to be more in his service, my love-O that it were greater toward him! I mourn deeply for my corruptions, which are many and great. When I look at him, and contemplate his great salvation, I admire, I adore, and in some measure I love: but when I look at myself, my heart rises at the sight: black and devilish, selfish and proud, carnal and covetous, and most abominably unclean, I want all things which are good. But I have a blessed, blessed Lord, Christ Jesus, in whom all fulness dwells for me, and for the dear friend to whom I am writing! A fulness of pardon, wisdom, holiness, strength, peace, righteousness, and salvation; a fulness of love, mercy, goodness, truth: all this, and a thousand times more than all this, without any worthiness of merit, only for receiving. O blessed free grace of God! O blessed be his name for Jesus Christ! What a gift! And for whom? For you, my dear friend, if you are without strength, if you are in your nature an enemy, all this is for you. What says the: everlasting God? Believe that he gave his Son for sinners; and, as a sinner, believe in Jesus. He came to save the lost: then, as a lost soul, believe in him. He came to cleanse the filthy: then, as a filthy soul, believe in him. And why should we not thus believe? Can God lie? Impossible! Can we have a better foundation to build on than the promise and oath of God?

My dear friend, I know you will not be angry at my preachment; I aim it all at my own heart; I stand more in need of it than you. I always feel my heart refreshed when I am talking or thinking of Jesus. It is a feast to my sinful soul, when I am meditating on the glories which compose his blessed name. But O how dark and ignorant, how little, how exceeding little, do I know of him! O. thou light of the world, enlighten my soul! Teach me how to know more of thy infinite and unsearchable riches, thou great God-man, that I may love thee with an increasing love, and serve thee with an increasing zeal, till thou bringest me to glory!

J. FLETCHER.

IX.-*To the Rev. Charles Wesley*.

MADELEY, *April* 27,1761.

MY DEAR SIR,-I have just received your letter, which at once fills me with pleasure, and covers me with shame. You kindly cast a veil over my faults, instead of exposing them as they deserve. This generous conduct will, if I am not incorrigible, help to cure me of what you style my imprudent simplicity, but what I call by its proper title of stupid ingratitude: but what do I say? Nothing can cure me but a lively faith in that Jesus, who is made to us, of the Father, wisdom. O that he were my wisdom!

A young person, the daughter of one of my rich parishioners, has been thrown into despair; so that every body thought her insane, and indeed I thought so too. Judge how our adversaries rejoiced; and for my part, I was tempted to forsake my ministry and take to my heels; I never suffered such affliction. Last Saturday I humbled myself before the Lord, on her account, by fasting and prayer; and I hope that the Lord has

heard my prayer. She found herself well enough to come to church yesterday. You will do well to engage your colliers at Kingswood to pray for their poor brethren at Madeley. May those of Madeley one day equal them in faith, as they now do in that wickedness for which they were famous before you went among them.

Mr. Hill has written me a very obliging letter, to engage me to accompany the eldest of my pupils to Switzerland; and if I had been in any other country than the place where I am, I should perhaps have been tempted to go. At present, however, I have no temptation that way, and I have declined the offer, as politely as I could. I am, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

X.-*To the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley.*

MADELEY, *Sept*. 20, 1762.

MY DEAR SIR,-It is well for me I have not an implicit faith in your half promises to come to see me. I am sorry that my delay has furnished vou with an apology; but comfort myself still with the idea that you will not wholly deprive me of the pleasure of embracing you; and that your visit is only postponed for a little season.

The "*Crede quod habes, et habes*," (Believe that you have it and you have it,) is not very different from those words of Christ, "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them," Mark xi. 24. The humble reason of the believer and the irrational presumption of the enthusiast, draw this doctrine to the right hand or to the left. But to split the hair-here lies the difficulty. I have told you that I am no party man; I am neither for nor against the witness for Christian perfection without examination. I complain of those who deceive themselves; I honour those who do honour to their profession; and I wish we could find out the right way of reconciling the most profound humility with the most lively hopes of grace. I think you insist on the one and Maxfield on the other; and I believe you both sincere in your views. God bless you both, and if either of you go too far, may the Lord bring him back. Adieu, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

XI.-*To the Rev. Charles Wesley.*

MADELEY, *Nov*. 22, 1762.

MY DEAR SIR,-The debates about the illegality of exhorting in houses (although only in my parish,) grew some time ago to such a height that I was obliged to lay my reasons before the bishop; but his lordship very prudently sends me no answer. I think he knows not how to disapprove, and yet dares not approve this Methodistical way of procedure.

Brother Ley arrived safe here yesterday, and confirms the melancholy news of many of our brethren overshooting sober and steady Christianity in London. I feel a great deal for you and the Church, in these critical circumstances. O that I could stand in the gap! O that I could, by sacrificing myself, shut this immense abyss of enthusiasm, which opens its mouth among us!

The corruption of the best things is always the worst of corruptions. Going into an extreme of this nature, or only winking at it, will give an eternal sanction to the vile aspersions cast, on all sides, on the purest doctrines of Christianity: and we shall sadly overthrow-overthrow in the worst manner, what we have endeavoured to build for many years.

The nearer the parts that mortify are to the heart, the more speedily is an amputation to be resolved upon. You will say, perhaps, “But what if the heart itself is attacked?” Then let the heart be plucked out as well as the right eye. Was not Abraham's heart bound up in the life of Isaac? Yet he believed, that if he offered him up, God was able to restore him, even from the dead: and was not God better to him than his hopes?

I have a particular regard for M----- and B-----: both of them are my correspondents: I am strongly prejudiced in favour of the witnesses, and do not willingly receive what is said against them; but allowing that what is reported is one half mere exaggeration, the tenth part of the rest shows that spiritual pride, presumption, arrogance, stubbornness, party spirit, uncharitableness, prophetic mistakes; in short, that every sinew of enthusiasm is now at work in many of that body. I do not credit any one's bare word, but I ground my sentiments on B-----'s own letters.

May I presume, unasked, to lay before you my mite of observation? If I had it in my power to overlook the matter, as you have, would it be wrong in me calmly to sit down with some unprejudiced friends, and lovers of both parties, and fix with them the marks and symptoms of enthusiasm; then insist, at first, in love, and afterward, if necessary, with all the weight of my authority, upon those who have them, or plead for them, either to stand to the sober rule of Christianity, or openly to depart from us?

Fear not, dear sir; the Lord will take care of the ark; and though hundreds of Uzzahs should fall off, most of them would return with Noah's dove. Have faith in the word, and leave the rest to Providence. “The Lord will provide,” is a most comfortable motto for a believer. I am, with most hearty prayers that God would fill you more than ever with wisdom, steadiness, meekness, and fortitude, Rev. and dear sir, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

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XII.-*To the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley*.

MADELEY, *Jan*. 5, 1763.

MY DEAR SIR,-I congratulate you on the strength the Lord gave you last year, and I beseech him to supply the lamp of your days with new oil, during the course of that upon which we are now entering. Above all, may he fill the vessel of your heart with the oil of gladness, and prepare you for all events which time may bring forth. May he enable you to carry the light of his glorious Gospel into the hearts of thousands by your writings, and sermons, and wisdom; and grace into mine by your letters and conversation.

My soul does not experience a new life in this renovation of the year. O, may the Almighty enable me to conclude it in a better spirit than I have begun it! What I want is the light and mighty power of the Spirit of my God. Happy should I be, if, in the midst of all my pressing wants, I had the power and the will constantly to cast my burdens at the feet of the Lord. As to my parish, we are just where we were: we look for our Pentecost, but we do not pray sufficiently to obtain it. We are left in tolerable quiet by all but the sergeant, who sent a constable to make inquiry concerning the life of his majesty's subjects, upon information that the cry of murder had been heard in my house on Christmas day. This report originated in the cries of a young woman, who is of our society, and whom Satan has bound for some months.

It seems to me as if that old murderer proposed to ruin the success of my ministry at Madeley as he did at London, in the French church, by means of Miss A----d. She emaciates her body by fasting, falls into convulsions, sometimes in the church and sometimes in our private assemblies, and is perpetually tempted to suicide: her constitution is considerably weakened as well as her understanding. What to do in this case I do not know; for those who are tempted in this manner pay as little regard to reason as the miserable people in Bedlam. Prayer and fasting are our only resources: we propose to represent her case to the Lord on Tuesday next, and on all the following Tuesdays. Aid the weakness of our prayers with all the power of yours. Adieu. That the Lord may strengthen you and yours in body and soul, is the earnest prayer of yours, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

XIII.-*To Mr. Samuel Hatton.*

MADELEY, *April* 22, 1763.

DEAR SIR,-I am glad to find by your welcome letter that Jesus is still precious to you. O may he be so a hundred fold more both to me and you! May we live only to show forth his praise, and grow up into him in all things!

As for me I have reason to praise God that he gives me patience to throw in my weak line till he gives the word, and enables me to cast the net on the right side, and enclose a multitude of sinners. The hope of this bears me up above the toils of a night of ignorance, perplexity, and trials of every sort. I find, blessed be God, that all things work together for my good, whether it be success or want of success, joy or grief, sickness or ease, bad or good report-all encourages or humbles me!

With respect to Miss Hattons, I hope they will call no man upon earth master, and that they will steer clear of the rocks of prejudice and bigotry, against which so many professors split daily, even when they think they are at the greatest distance from them.

I am quite of your opinion about the mischief that some professors (puffed up in their own fleshly minds) do in the Church of Christ, under the mask of sanctity; but my Master bids me bear with the tares until the harvest, lest in rooting them up I should promiscuously pull up the wheat also. As to Mr. Wesley's system of perfection, it tends rather to promote humility than pride, if I may credit his description of it in this lines following:-

Now let me gain perfections height,
Now let me into *nothing* fall
Be *less than nothing* in my sight,
And feel that Christ is *all in all*.

More than this I do not desire, and I hope that short of this nothing will satisfy either my dear friend or me.

With respect to “one Mr. B-----n, having been so bold as to assert in your room that our salvation is conditional,” he may be orthodox enough, in my poor judgment, although he said so. Indeed, the meritorious part of our salvation is unconditional on our side, and if Mr. B-----n talks of meritorious conditions, he is a stranger to the Gospel: but, that the application of this salvation is conditional, I gather from every doctrinal chapter in the Bible, especially from Luke xiii. 3, and Mark xvi. 16.

Have you drunk in the doctrine of particular redemption, contrary to the thoughts of your esteemed friend, Count Zinzendorf? But be that as it will, let us still make the best of our way to the dear Saviour, and drop all our particular opinions in his universal, unbounded love; and whereinsoever any of us is wrong, the Lord will reveal it unto us. Pray for my flock; and pray for, dear sir, your sincere friend and affectionate brother in Christ,

J. FLETCHER.

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XIV.-*To the Rev. Charles Wesley*.

MADELEY, *July* 26,1763.

MY DEAR SIR,-I have for two months waited impatiently for some news of you, but in vain. Are you alive, paralytic, gouty, slothful, or too busy to write a letter to your friends at Madeley? If you have not leisure to write a line, write a word, I am well, or I am ill-God grant it may be the former!

Every thing is pretty quiet here now. Many of our offences die away; though not long ago I had trials in abundance, but, blessed be the Lord, he gave me his peace. It is not, however, without fighting that I keep it. One of my late trials might have had consequences to make me quit Madeley, and I praise God I am ready to do it without looking behind me, even this day. The young person I mentioned as being sorely tempted of the devil, is happily delivered; and we have had the testimonies of Mr. Mould, who preached here three weeks ago, and of Mr. R-----, who spent four days here, and preached last Sunday. He is an excellent young man, and only wants a little of the Methodist zeal to temper the reserve of Mr. W------.

When will you come to Madeley? What do you do at London? Have you repaired the breach, and healed the plague? May the Lord give you all the wisdom, the patience, the zeal, the gentleness, and the health you stand in need of! Ask them for your poor brother,

J. FLETCHER.

XV.-*To Miss Hatton*.

MADELEY, *Aug*.19, 1763.

MADAM,- Mrs. Hatton gave me this morning your serious letter. You wisely observe therein the continual need professing Christians have to guard against religious *chit chat*, and conclude by requesting a few lines, when I should have an opportunity of writing; but, as there is nothing in your letter which requires an answer, I was thinking whether I could answer it without being guilty of religious chit chat; for as there is such a thing in speaking, no doubt in writing also. I believe I should have sacrificed to conscience what the world calls good manners, had I not just after accidentally opened Lopez's Life upon the following passage, which I shall transcribe, hoping it will be blessed both to the reader and copier:-" He was as sparing of words in writing as in speaking: he never wrote first to any one, nor did he answer others, but when necessity or charity obliged him to it: and then so precisely, and in so few words, that nothing could be retrenched. I have several of his letters in my hands of five or six lines each. In answer to those he had received from the viceroy of Mexico, he sent him one containing only these words, 'I will do what you command me.' And although this manner of writing might seem disrespectful

to persons of so high quality yet it gave no offence from one who was so far from all compliments and who never spoke any thing superfluous."

Now, madam, for fear of writing any thing superfluous, I shall conclude by wishing both you and I may follow Lopez, as he followed Christ; and subscribing myself, madam, the ready servant of you and yours in the Gospel,

J. FLETCHER.

XVI.-*To Miss Hatton*.

MADELEY, ------.

MY DEAR FRIEND IN THE LORD,-I thought last Sunday, that you were not far from the kingdom of God: had your wisdom stooped a little more to "the foolishness of the cross," you would have been the little child to whom God reveals what he justly hides from the wise and prudent. I longed to have followed you, and given you no rest till you had drunk "the cup of blessing," which your Lord had mixed for you with his bitter tears, and most precious blood. And how glad was I to find last night that you had no aversion to Jesus and his love, nor to the simple, foolish way of entertaining him in your heart, as you can by mere faith. How often since has my heart danced for joy in hope that the time is come, when the Lord will fully open your heart like that of Lydia, to attend, without cavilling or objecting, to his still, small voice, "I am thine, and thou art mine." "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, thou worm Jacob. I have graven thy name (that is, sinner) upon the palms of my hands. I shall see in thee the travail of my soul, and shall be satisfied. Let me not upbraid thee longer for wilful unbelief and hardness of heart; but believe upon the testimony of my word and servants that I am risen for thy justification. Say not, I must ascend into heaven, or descend into the deep: I must feel first such a height of joy or depth of sorrow: no; believe simply that 'the word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, namely, the word of faith preached unto thee.' I am 'the Lamb of God;' I have carried away thy sins, and 'I do not condemn thee,' though thou condemnest thyself. 'I am he that [for mine own sake] blotteth out thy sins as a cloud, and thy iniquities as a thick cloud: because I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, namely, on him who will be saved in my way, by that faith which stumbles the Jew, and is foolishness to the Greek, but which will prove to thee both the wisdom and power of God. Fear not, then, O thou of little faith; wherefore shouldst thou doubt any longer? Do I despise the day of small things? Do I break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax?' Am not I the 'good Shepherd, who carrieth the lambs in his bosom?' Does a mother forsake her sucking child because it is weak, sickly, unable to walk, or even to stand? Yea, though a mother should so forsake her child, 'yet will I never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' Only lean on thy beloved, and I will bring thee up out of the wilderness. Abandon thyself wholly to my care, and I, the keeper of Israel, will care for thee; and thy business shall be henceforth to repose on my bosom, and wash thee in my bleeding heart; and my business shall be to carry

thee safe through, or above all thy enemies. Only remember, thy business is to believe and love: and trust me for a faithful discharge of mine to save thee with a high hand."

Thus, my friend, will your dear Saviour speak to your heart, if you do not drown his voice by the objections of your false wisdom. O down with it; it is the fruit of the tree of death. Away to the tree of life; take freely, eat and live: I know you are willing through grace; and Christ, who hath made you willing, is ten thousand times more willing than you: how, then, can he cast you out? What hinders, but that you should, as a spiritual Rebekah, say, "Now and ever I will have that man?" You go upon a sure bottom, you need not fear being slighted; for in the letter he hath wrote you from heaven, to invite you to the marriage, he says, "I have betrothed thee to me with everlasting, yea, with bleeding kindness." Indeed, indeed he sends me to you, to assure you he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and were you the sister of Magdalene in outward wickedness, he sends you word that you may kiss his feet, and rejoice that much is forgiven you, even though you should not have one tear to wash them with: his blood, his precious blood hath washed his feet, and does wash your heart, and will wash it white as snow. O let it be your business to consider it with a believing thought. That is the way to apply it to your heart.

I would have called on you this morning, had not my intended journey prevented it: till I have an opportunity of calling, I beg, as upon my knees, you would make use of the directions which I herewith send you, &c, (*See Mr. Fletcher's Life*,) which I think as truly applicable to your state, as they are truly evangelical: and pray for him who earnestly prays for you; I mean, for your unworthy servant,

J. FLETCHER.

XVII.-*To Mrs. Glynne*.

MADELEY, *Sept*. 2, 1763.

DEAR MADAM,-I thank you for your kind remembrance and good wishes, that I might eat the everlasting bread of our Father's house, expressed by a present of the most incorruptible bread our earth affords. I should be glad to take the opportunity of Mr. Wesley's stay at Salop, to thank you in person and eat with you the bread, the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, handed out by him; but I am obliged to set out to-day for Lady Huntingdon's college, and shall not, I fear, be in Shropshire when Mr. Wesley comes.

If the Father of lights have drawn your soul in any warmer desires after the glorious sense of his love, and enabled you to sit down and count the cost, and give up fully whatever may have a tendency to keep you out of the delightful enjoyment of the pearl of great price, I shall rejoice greatly; for it is my hearty desire that all my Christian friends and I might grow up daily toward the measure of the full stature of Christ.

I return you my most affectionate thanks, madam, for your book, and for the franks you added to it. May you use all the promises of the Gospel, as franks from Jesus, to send momentary petitions to heaven. and may an unwearied faith be the diligent messenger!

What proved a disappointment to you was none to me, having been forced by many such disappointments to look for comfort in nothing but these comprehensive words, “Thy will be done!” A few more trials will convince you experimentally of the heavenly balm they contain to sweeten the pains and heal the wounds that crosses and afflictions may cause. We often improve more by one hour's resignation than by a month's reading; and when we can exercise neither gifts nor graces, one of the last is always excepted-*patience*; which is then worth all the rest. O let us make the best of our day, madam;-a day of grace-a Gospel day-a day of health-a precarious day of life! Let us believe, hope, love, obey, repent, spend and be spent for Him who hath loved us unto death.

Mr. M. said your portmanteau would go to-day; but whether it goes or stays, let neither wind nor tide keep us back from Jesus Christ. That his love may fill our hearts is the repeated wish of, dear madam, your unworthy friend and servant in Christ,

J. FLETCHER.

XVIII.-*To the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley*.

MADELEY, *Sept*. 9, 1763.

MY DEAR SIR,-I see that we ought to learn continually to cast our burdens on the Lords who alone can bear them without fatigue and pain. If M-return, the Lord may correct his errors, and give him so to insist on the fruits of faith as to prevent Antinomianism. I believe him sincere; and though obstinate and suspicious, I am persuaded he has a true desire to know the will and live the life of God. I reply in the same words you quoted to me in one of your letters, “Do not be afraid of a wreck, for Jesus is in the ship.” After the most violent storm, the Lord will perhaps all at once bring our ship into the desired haven.

You ask me a very singular question with respect to women; I shall however answer it with a smile, as I suppose you asked it. You might have remarked that for some days before I set off for Madeley, I considered matrimony with a different eye to what I had done: and the person who then presented herself to my imagination, was Miss Bosanquet. Her image pursued me for some hours the last day, and that so warmly, that I should perhaps have lost my peace, if a suspicion of the truth of Juvenal's proverb, *Veniunt a dote sagittae*, had not made me blush, fight, and flee to Jesus, who delivered me at the same moment from her image and the idea o f marriage. Since that time I have been more than ever on my guard against admitting

the idea of matrimony, sometimes by the consideration of the love of Jesus, which ought to be my whole felicity, and at others by the following reflections:-

It is true that the Scripture says, that a good wife is a gift of the Lord; and it is also true that there may be one in a thousand; but who would put in a lottery where are 999 blanks to one prize? and suppose I could discover this phoenix, this woman of a thousand, what should I gain by it? A distressing refusal. How could she choose such a man as me? If, notwithstanding all my self love, I am compelled cordially to despise myself, could I be so wanting in generosity as to expect another to do that for me which I cannot do for myself-to engage to love, to esteem, and honour me?

I will throw on my paper some reflections, which the last paragraph of your letter gave rise to, and I beg you will weigh them with me in the balances of the sanctuary.

REASONS FOR AND AGAINST MATRIMONY.

1. A tender friendship is, after the love of Christ, the greatest felicity of life; and a happy marriage is nothing but such a friendship between two persons of different sexes.	1. Death will shortly end all particular friendships. The happier the state of marriage, the more afflicting is widowhood; beside, we may try a friend and reject him after trial; but we can't know a wife till it is too late to part with her.
2. A wife might deliver me from the difficulties of housekeeping, &c.	2. Marriage brings after it a hundred cares and expenses; children, a family, &c.
3. Some objections and scandals may be avoided by marriage.	3. If matrimony be not happy, it is the most fertile source of scandals.
4. A pious and zealous wife might be as useful as myself; nay, she might be much more so among my female parishioners, who greatly want an inspectress.	4. I have 1000 to 1 to fear that a wife, instead of being a help, may be indolent, and consequently useless; or humoursome, haughty, capricious, and consequently a heavy curse.

Farewell. Yours,

J. FLETCHER.

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XIX.-*To Miss Patton.*

MADELEY, *Sept*. 3, 1764.

MADAM,-I think the estate your soul is in, is not uncommon. The only advice I can at present give you, is not to look to self, except it be to believe it away. Be generously determined not to live easy without the thoughts of Jesus on your mind, and his love, or at least endeavours after it in your heart. Then get that love or the increase of it, by obstinately believing the love of Christ to you, till you are ashamed into some return of it. A passage I have found much relief from, when my soul has been in the state you describe, is, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vi. 11. This reckoning by faith I find is not reckoning without one's host: but Christ is always ready to set his hand to the bill which faith draws.

As to your correspondent's letter, I approve its contents, but would have no one depend on my judgment, especially on the points it treats of; as I have been thought sometimes to consider them with a mind prepossessed in their behalf. This I know, that all cannot, ought not to receive some of the sayings that letter contains; and yet, happier far, in my opinion, are those that can and do receive them. Let every one follow grace and Providence, and we shall be guided aright. I am, &c,

JOHN FLETCHER.

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XX.-*To Miss Hatton.*

MADELEY, *Dec*. 1764.

MADAM,-I am sensible how much I want advice in a thousand particulars, and how incapable I am safely to direct any one; I shall, nevertheless, venture to throw upon this sheet the following observations, as they came to my mind on the reading your letter.

You cannot expect, on the Gospel plan, to attain to such a carriage as will please all you converse with. The Son of God, the original of all human perfection, was blamed, sometimes for his silence, and sometimes for his speaking, &c; and shall the handmaid be above her Master?

There is no sin in wearing such things as you have by you, if they are not out of character; I mean if they are necessary for your station, and characterise your rank.

There is no sin in allowing yourself a little more latitude of speech, provided you listen to Christ, by inward attention to his teaching, and the end of what you say may be to introduce what is useful and edifying; for God judgeth of words according to the intention of the speaker. I may speak idly even in the pulpit; and I may speak to edification in the market, if what I say is either necessary or proper to introduce, or

drive the nail of a profitable truth. Some parables of our Lord would have been deemed idle talk, had it not been for the end he pursued, and, upon the whole, accomplished by them. No particular rule can be given here; a thousand circumstances of persons, tempers, places, times, states, &c, will necessarily vary a Christian's plan.

There is no sin in looking cheerful. No, it is our duty to be cheerful. Rejoice evermore; and if it is our duty always to be filled with joy, it is our duty to appear what we are in reality. I hope, however, your friends know how to distinguish between cheerfulness and levity.

If you want to recommend religion to those you converse with, and, in many instances, to pluck up offence by the root, let your heart lie where Mary's body did. Keep close to Jesus, be attentive to his still, small voice, and he will fill you with humble love, and such love will teach you, without any rule, as by the instinct of your new nature, “to become all things to all men.”

You ask what the apostle meant by that expression. It is certain he did not mean to overset his own precept, “Be not conformed to the world.” I apprehend, that in every case, wherein we might promote the spiritual or temporal good of any one, by doing or suffering things of an indifferent nature, or even painful and disagreeable to us, we ought to be ready to become all things to all; provided the good we propose is superior to the inconveniences to which we submit. Here also we stand in need of humble love, and meek wisdom, that we may so weigh circumstances, as to form a right judgment in all things.

I am glad the Lord strips you; I wish self may never clothe you again. Beware of stiff singularity in things barely indifferent-it is self in disguise; and it is so much the more dangerous, as it comes recommended by a serious, self-denying, religious appearance.

I hope the short comings of some about you will not prevent your eyeing the prize of a glorious conformity to our blessed Head. It is to be feared, that not a few of those, who talk of having attained it, have mistaken the way; they are still something, and I apprehend an important step toward that conformity, is to become nothing! Or rather, with St. Paul, to become in our own eyes “the chief of sinners,” and the “least of saints.”

Mr. Harris seems to me one among ten thousand; he has left a particular blessing behind him in this place. The God of peace give us the blessings that the Messenger and the Mediator of the new covenant brought with him, at this time, into the world! May we so receive him, that, by a blessed exchange, as he was clad with our flesh, so we may put him on, and be covered with his righteousness, and filled with his Spirit! Salute the Church in your house. From your servant in the gospel.

J. FLETCHER

XXI.-*To Miss Hatton.*

MADELEY, *Jan.* 31, 1765.

MADAM,-"You strive, pray, resist, but are little the better;" yet pray, strive, and resist on. It is good to be tried, and to get a blessing in the very fire; we shall then know how to value it properly. But let me be free with you, madam: do you pray, resist, and strive against wanderings with any steadiness, and do you do it in cheerful hope to overcome through the blood of the Lamb? When you have been unhinged from Christ, in mind or heart, do you with stronger indignation against wanderings, a calmer expectation of the assistance of the Spirit, and a deeper agony of faith, seek to be avenged of your adversary? Do you imitate the importunate widow? If this be the case, you will not complain long; for whatsoever we thus ask in the name of Christ, we shall surely receive: and should the Lord, for reasons best known to himself, try your faith and hope; yet that longer trial will be found to praise and honour in the end. Only faint not; and when you find yourself inclined to do so, in all haste fly to the cordial of the promises, and determine to take nothing else, till your heart is revived and made strong again.

The same power of God, through praying faith, is necessary to keep you from reasoning unprofitably. Whenever this arises to any height, there is one thing wanting, a steadily exerted will, never thus to reason. We cannot be so easily betrayed, or slide away into this snare of the devil so easily, as into the other. I apprehend that whosoever abides steadily purposed not to reason, shall not do it. The will starts aside first, the resolution of course followeth, and the tempter easily takes their place. Get willing, truly willing under the cross, and keep there, to keep your will in continual subjection to the will of God.

Last Sunday I preached two sermons upon Hebrews xi. 1. I see so much in that faith of the apostles, that I can hardly pray for any thing beside "that evidence of things not seen, that substance of things hoped for." To how many mistakes and fatal errors have we opened the door, by varying from the apostle, and pretending to be wiser than the Holy Ghost! The Lord fill you and yours with that faith. Farewell.

J. FLETCHER.

XXII.-*To Miss Hatton.*

MADELEY, *June* 2, 1765.

MADAM,-I thank you for the letter of your correspondent. What he says about luminous joy may sometimes be the case in some of God's dear children; but I apprehend that God's design in withholding from them those gracious influences, which work upon and melt the sensitive, affectionate part in the soul, is to put us more upon using the nobler powers, the understanding and the will. These are always more in the reach of a child of God, while the other greatly depend upon the texture

of the animal frame; and if they are not stirred in a natural way, the Spirit of God can alone, without any concurrence in general, excite them. Do you believe, love, take up your cross, and run after Jesus?

You must let friends and foes talk about your dress, while you mind only Jesus, his word, and your own conscience. You talk of hearing me soon. I dare never invite any one to hear me, though I am glad to see my friends: but now I can invite you with pleasure to come and hear a preacher, who, under God, will make you amends for the trouble of a journey to Madeley. His name is M------; he may possibly stay a Sunday or two more with me; but Jesus has promised to be always with his poor followers: to his merciful hands I commend both you and your unworthy friend,

J. FLETCHER.

XXIII.-*To Miss Hatton*.

MADELEY, *Aug*. 8, 1765.

MADAM,-Mr. Mather and I have considered your objections to our little confession of faith; be pleased to take the following short answers:-

I. We do not forget that God works all good in all men: this is clearly implied in our first article; but we do not believe that his working is generally irresistibly, or that it supersedes our being workers together with him.

II. Can any one work out his salvation by a faith productive of sanctification, and yet neglect good works? Impossible!

III. Obdurate sinners, if their day of grace is not over, have always power to believe some legal truths at least, and to renounce some abominations in consequence of that belief: if they resist the Spirit here, what wonder that he does not proceed any farther! Convictions of sin as well as of righteousness are not always so strong as to carry all before them. As the dew falls more frequently on the earth than hard showers, so more gentle, less observable, and more gradual droppings of grace descend upon earthly hearts more frequently than driving storms of fear or strong transports of love: their effects may be as gracious though less forcible, and God hath all the glory of the one, as well as of the other.

IV. “Can convinced sinners, under the sound of the Gospel, believe with the heart?” &c. Through the power of God, always more or less present, they can believe with the heart those truths which are “suited to their wants, and properly proposed to them.” If they cannot, why does God call upon them to believe, and send them word they shall be damned if they do not? As to your query: “Does not God sometimes delay to confer the power to believe, for a trial of the grace of conviction?” We answer, that we see no such thing in the New Testament, and that the assertion seems to be a piece of human wisdom. Why were not the convictions of the harlot, of the

three thousand, the five thousand, the jailer and others, tried by a refusal of the gift of faith? If, therefore, persons truly convinced of sin do not believe to the comfort of their souls, we apprehend the reason to be their being kept in the dark as to the Gospel way of salvation, their confounding faith and its fruits, their disregarding the one talent, and despising the little leaven, and the faith which is small as a grain of mustard seed; in short, their rejecting an inward Christ, because he does not make his appearance, at first, as a mighty, glorious conqueror, but as a weak, naked, crying babe, who wants both milk and swaddling clothes for his present sustenance.

"It is granted that convinced people should be pressed to make an effort to believe, not doubting of the Lord's concurrence with their attempt." Here, we apprehend, you grant us what we contend for; it being absurd to make any attempt toward what is totally impossible. If such people ought to attempt to believe now, and not to doubt of the Lord's concurrence with their attempt, it follows that either you press them not to doubt of a lie, or that the Lord now helps them to believe, if they will accept his help in the manner and way it is offered.

We cannot conceive what ingredient more you would require to make faith, than, on the one side, the promise of God, and the gracious help of his Spirit; and, on the other, genuine conviction, and an humble attempt to cast ourselves on the fidelity, mercy, and power of the Lord.

Indeed, you insinuate that God's concurrence perhaps may not be granted now. "Perhaps, not now," are your words; but not those of Ananias, who said to convinced Saul, "Arise, why tarriest thou? Wash away thy sins, calling, or believing on the name of the Lord." If God does not concur now to help convinced sinners to believe, we still affirm, that they cannot, without cruelty, be called upon now to attempt an utter impossibility, or, if we may use your expression, "to touch heaven with their hands." This proviso of yours, this "perhaps, not now," seems the common way of clogging and mangling the Gospel. We see nothing of it in Holy Writ; there we read, "Believe and thou shalt be saved; fear not, only believe," &c. We never read, "believe,-but perhaps not now. Only believe,-but first wait God's time, he does not, perhaps, choose thou shouldst believe now." There is the quintessence of the poison of the old serpent, in the supposition that God commands *now*, but is not, perhaps, willing that we should obey him *now*. Believe,-*perhaps, not now*; repent, be chaste, be honest, be sober, be charitable,-*perhaps, not now*. Good God! What room will this *not now* leave for present infidelity, uncleanness, drunkenness, injustice, &c, and every imaginable abomination!

Upon second thoughts, we would hope, that your *perhaps, not now*, does not regard our believing, but God's bringing forth the top stone, while we shout grace unto it: and in this sense we find faith and hope are often tried, yea, to the uttermost. Isaac was not born immediately on God's making the promise, or Abraham's believing it. A joy unspeakable and full of glory does not always immediately accompany the belief of the promise of forgiveness of sin, and of deliverance from its dominion: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? After that ye

believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing," &c. This was the language of St. Paul; and we dare not confound what he distinguishes, namely, "believing and tasting all the rich fruits of faith." Concerning some of these, which faith does not, in general, immediately produce, we allow you to say, *perhaps, not now*; but *though they tarry, yet wait for them, for they will surely come*.

Restless, *resign'd*, for these I wait,
For these my vehement soul stands still.

But observe, (1.) That this earnest is one of the blessed fruits of faith, and not something previous to it, as you seem to imagine. (2.) That we do not suppose it necessary for those, who are truly convinced of sin, and desire to be justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ, to wait *at all* before they believe, that "he is made unto them of God righteousness, for the present pardon of their sins: nor for those who are truly weary of their carnal mind to wait before they believe, that "he is made unto them of God sanctification," for the present destruction of it: for the promise is even now "to us, and to our children," (those that are afar off not excepted) if they lay hold on it by faith. But greater discoveries, riper fruits, richer tastes, fuller enjoyments of these blessings, together with a being more strengthened, established, and settled in them, is what we esteem our privilege to expect, and wait for, in the manner you describe.

V. You seem to suspect that this faith, on the one hand, leads to Antinomianism, and on the other, takes from God the glory of our salvation.

As to the first suspicion, I hope it is obviated in our second and fourth answers, it being impossible that a faith, consequent upon real conviction and weariness of sin, and begotten by the pure Gospel word, through the Spirit; a faith which leads us to sanctification and the destruction of the carnal mind; a faith which is productive of all the ripest fruits of the Spirit, can be merely notional, or have the least tendency to Antinomianism.

And as to the second, we detest the thought of having the least share in the glory of Christ, as our only Redeemer, or of the Spirit, as our only Sanctifier. We abhor it as much as the proud and mad conceit of sharing with God the glory of our Creator and Preserver. We constantly ascribe to free grace all the honour of man's salvation, and are persuaded that from the first half-formed desire raised in the heart, and the least degree of power given for the improvement of it, to the final victory over our last enemy, all is of grace-of mere grace. But as we may give God all the glory of our creation and preservation, without supposing that he must breathe, eat, drink, rest, dress, plough, and reap for us; so, we apprehend, we may give Christ all the glory of our redemption and salvation, without excusing ourselves from the performance of what he enjoins, and, of his own free, undeserved grace, gives us both will and power to do.

I rejoice that your soul prospers: you need not look back any more. When you are tempted to hurry or inward impatience, remember you are not obliged to give way to it. Take up these little crosses patiently, by believing, looking inward, and finding Jesus in the midst of business. "He is here, he is here, as my all," will break many, yea, ten thousand snares. May the peace of God be with you and yours! Farewell.

J. FLETCHER.

XXIV.-*To Mr. Alexander Mather*.

MY DEAR BROTHER,-I thank you for your last favour. If I answered not your former letter, it was because I was in expectation of seeing you, and not from the least disregard. I am glad you enjoy peace at Wellington, and I hope you will do so at the Trench when you go there. My reasons for stepping there myself were not to seize upon the spot first, (as the accuser of the brethren may have insinuated,) but to fulfil a promise I made to the people of visiting them, if they would not countenance a lying wretch who went to them from the Bank: all this was previous to my knowledge of the invitation they gave you. I desire you will call there as often as you have opportunity. An occasional exhortation from you, or your companion, at the Bank, Dale, &c, will be esteemed a favour; and I hope that my stepping, as Providence directs, to any of your places (leaving to you the management of the societies) will be deemed no encroachment. In short, we need not make two parties; I know but one heaven below, and that is Jesus' love; let us both go and abide in it, and when we have gathered as many as we can to go with us, too many will still stay behind.

I find there are in the ministry, as in the common experience of Christians, times which may be compared to winter: no great stir is made in the world of grace beside that of storms and offences, and the growth of the trees of the Lord is not showy; but when the tender buds of brotherly and redeeming love begin to fill, spring is at hand. The Lord give us a harvest after seed time. Let us wait for fruit as the husbandman, and remember that he who believes does not make haste. The love of Christ be with us all. Pray for

J. FLETCHER.

XXV.-*To Miss Hatton*.

MADELEY, *May*, 1776.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I am sorry, after the manner of men, that you are ill, but glad in the spirit that the will of God takes place in you, and that he purges you, that you may bring forth more fruit. Now is the time for you to begin to be a Christian in good earnest; I mean, to follow the "Man of sorrows;" and to do it as a lamb who goes to the slaughter, and opens not his mouth by way of complaint; though as a Christian, I apprehend you may and ought to open it by way of praise.

One advice I will venture to give you, or rather to transcribe for you, out of Isaiah: "The believer does not make haste," to doubt, to hurry, to forecast, to reason after the manner of men: "If I am a child of God, why am not I thus and thus?" Let Christ, either suffering for you, or ordering your sufferings, be so eyed that you may in a manner forget and lose yourself in him; or if a weak and pained body makes you think of wretched self, let it be to lay it down with composure at Jesus' feet, or to take up the burden of the cross with cheerful resignation. I hope to hear soon of your being recovered in body, and strengthened in soul by thus affliction.

"Is any prayer acceptable to God, which is not the dictates of his own Spirit?" If you mean by the dictates of the Spirit, his influence on the mind to show us our wants, and upon the heart to make us desire a supply of them: I answer, no; for a prayer which hath not, at least, the above mentioned qualities, is only a vain babbling.

"Does a believer always pray with the Spirit's assistance?" Yes, when he prays as a believer and not as a parrot; for at his lowest times he has, more or less, a sight of his wants, and a desire to have them supplied; and this he could not have, did not the Spirit work upon his mind and heart.

I hope you sink inwardly into nothing, and through nothing into the immensity of God. I see a little, through mercy, into the beauty of humiliation; I find the ministry of condemnation glorious; and I love to take, every moment, the curse out of Moses' hand, as well as the blessing out of Christ's. The Lord grant that you and I, and all our friends, may do it more feelingly and constantly every hour!

May the Physician of soul and body refresh, strengthen, establish, and thoroughly heal you, by the virtue of his blood and the word of his power! Bear well, and farewell. Your unworthy servant,

J. FLETCHER.

XXVI.-*To Miss Hatton.*

MADELEY, *May* 27, 1766.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I am glad to hear that the God of all mercies and grace has raised you from the bed of sickness, where his love had confined you. It is good to see his works in the deep, and then to come and sing his praises in the land of the living. A touch of pain or sickness I find always profitable to me, as it rivets on my soul the thoughts of my nothingness, helplessness, and mortality; and shows me, in a clearer light, the vanity of all the transitory scenes of life. May your afflictions have the same effect upon you, as long as you live! May you be more steadfast than I am, to retain the deep impressions which God's gracious rod may have left upon your soul! And may you learn to lay yourself out more for the Lord, and to do whatsoever your hand findeth to do, with all your might, knowing that there is no wisdom, nor device in the grave, whither we are going.

If a sparrow falleth not to the ground, nor a hair from our heads, without our heavenly Father's leave, it is certain that the higher circumstances of our life are planned by the wise and gracious Governor of all things. This kind of faith in Providence I find of indispensable necessity, to go calmly through life, and, I think too, through death also.

How far it might have been expedient to have postponed preaching regularly in my parish, till the minister of ------ had been reconciled to the invasion of his; and how far this might have made my way smoother, I do not pretend to determine: time will show it, and in the meanwhile I find it good to have faith in Providence.

I fear I have left as great a stink at Bath, as Mr. Brown has a sweet savour here. Every thing is good to me that shows me my unprofitableness more and more; but I desire to grieve that the good of my private humiliation is so much overbalanced by the loss of many about me. The Lord fill you with all peace and joy in your soul, and with all strength and health in your body. My respects wait upon your mother and sister, and all friends. Farewell.

JOHN FLETCHER.

XXVII.-*To Miss Hatton*.

MADELEY, *June* 21, 1766.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I am much concerned to hear, by Mrs. Power, that you are so weak; but my concern has greatly increased, since I was told that the foundation of your illness was laid at Madeley, and, I am afraid, by my imprudence in taking you to the woman with whom we received the sacrament. I ask God's pardon and yours for it, and I hope it will be a mean of humbling me, and making me more tender of my friends.

The advice you give me about my health is seasonable: I hope to follow it; nor am I conscious that I have neglected it at all; however, I will endeavour that there be not so much as a shadow of a call for repeating it.

If the air of Wem does not agree with you, could you not come so far as Madeley? The remedy is often most successfully applied where the wound was given; and though I am no nurse, though I have been the contrary of one to you, I hope we should wait upon you with more tenderness than when you were here last. Mrs. Power would nurse you, and I would talk to you of the love of Jesus as well as I could.

You know that I perceived your bodily weakness when you were here, and charged you with what you charge me with, “a neglect of your body.” If I was right, I hope you will follow yourself the advice you give me: I am sure you will. The burnt child will dread the fire for the time to come.

With regard to kneeling, you must consider what your body can bear, without inconvenience to your health. To recover that is your outward calling now; therefore, so split the hair between the indolence of nature and the weakness of your body, that neither of the two may be increased.

Offer yourself to God for life or death, for ease or pain, for strength or weakness. Let him choose and refuse for you; only do you choose him for your present and eternal portion. I want you to be a little bolder in venturing upon the bosom of our Lord. We lose, (I for one,) much sweetness and many degrees of holiness in being shy of the Friend, the loving Friend of sinners. Pray, for God's sake, don't forget that your physician is your husband. The joy of the Lord, as well as his peace, is to be your strength. Love is the passion that wants to be stirred; do it in all calmness. "I will love him, I do love him a little, I shall love him much, because he has first loved me," &c. Ply, I pray you, this sweet Gospel task. Accustom yourself to look upon your body as the temple of the Holy Ghost, and meet him in your heart by simple recollection, and a steady belief of these Gospel truths, "He is here, he is in me," &c: nor do you let them go for any thing you do feel, or you do not feel. May God bless, comfort, establish, and raise you! Farewell.

J. FLETCHER.

XXVIII.-*To Miss Ireland.*

MADELEY, *July* --, 1766.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,-The poor account your father has brought us of your health, and his apprehensions of not seeing you any more before that solemn day when all people, nations, and tongues shall stand together at the bar of God, make me venture (together with my love to you,) to send you a few lines; and my earnest prayer to God is, that they may be blessed to your soul.

First, then, my dear friend, let me beseech you not to flatter yourself with the hopes of living long here on earth. These hopes fill us with worldly thoughts and make us backward to prepare for our change. I would not for the world entertain such thoughts about myself. I have now in my parish a young man who has been these two years under the surgeons' hand. Since they have given him up, which is about two months ago, he has fled to the Lord, and found in him that saving health which surpasses a thousand times that which the surgeons flattered him with; and he now longs to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. To see the bridge of life cut off behind us, and to have done with all the thoughts of repairing it to go back into the world, has a natural tendency to make us venture forward to the foot of the cross.

2dly. Consider, my dear, how good the Lord is to call you to be transplanted into a better world before you have taken deeper root in this sinful world: and if it is too hard for nature to die now, how much harder do you think it would be if you lived to

be the mother of a family, and to cleave to earth by the ties of many new relations, schemes of gain, or prospects of happiness?

3dly. Reflect, by your illness the Lord, who forecasts for us, intimates long life would not be for his glory nor your happiness. I believe he takes many young people from the evil to come, and out of the way of those temptations or misfortunes which would have made them miserable in time and in eternity.

4thly. Your earthly father loves you much;-witness the hundreds of miles he has gone for the bare prospect of your health: but, my dear, your heavenly Father loves you a thousand times better; and he is all wisdom as well as all goodness. Allow, then, such a loving, gracious Father to choose for you; and if he chooses death, acquiesce and say, as you can, “Good is the will of the Lord;” his choice must be best!

5thly. Weigh the sinfulness of sin, both original and actual, and firmly believe the wages of sin is death. This will make you patiently accept the punishment; especially if you consider that Jesus Christ by dying for us, has taken away the sting of death, and turned the grave into a passage to a blessed eternity.

6thly. Try, my dear, to get nearer to the dear Redeemer. “He hath delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 9. He hath quenched the wrath of God in his atoning blood. By his atoning blood, by his harmless life, and painful death, he has satisfied all the demands of the law and justice of God; by his resurrection he asserted the full discharge of all our spiritual debts; by his ascension into heaven, where he has gone to prepare us a place, he has opened a way to endless glory. By his powerful intercession, and the merits of his blood which plead continually for us, he keeps that way open; and to encourage us he assures us, “He is the way, the truth, and the life, and that him who comes to him he will in no wise cast out.” He mildly offers rest to the heavy laden, pardon to the guilty, strength to the feeble, and life to the dead. You know his words, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall newer die.”

7thly. When you have considered your lost estate as a simmer by nature, together with the greatness, the fulness, the freeness, and suitableness of Christ's salvation; and when you have diligently viewed the glories and charms of his person, believe in him. Without any ceremony choose him for your physician, your husband, and your king. Be not afraid to venture upon and trust in him; cast yourself on him in frequent acts of reliance, and stay your soul on him by means of his promises. Pray much for faith, and be not afraid of accepting, using, and thanking God for a little. The smoking flax he will not quench! Only pray hard that he would blow it up into a blaze of light and love.

8thly. Beware of impatience, repining, and peevishness, which are the sins of sick people. Be gentle, easy to be pleased, and resigned as the bleeding Lamb of God. Wrong tempers indulged, grieve, if they do not quench the Spirit.

9thly. Do not repine at being in a strange country, far from your friends; and if your going to France does not answer the end proposed to your body, it will answer a spiritual end to your soul. God suffers the broken reeds of your acquaintance to be out of your reach, that you may not catch at them, and that you may at once cast your lonesome soul on the bosom of Him who fills heaven and earth.

10thly. In praying, reading, hearing any person read, and meditating, do not consult feeble, fainting, weary flesh and blood! For at this rate, death may find you idle and supine, instead of striving to enter in at the strait gate, and when your spirits and vigour fail, remember that the Lord is the strength of your life and your portion for ever. "O death, where is thy sting? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Many pray hard for you that you may acquit yourself, living or dying, in ease or in pain, as a wise virgin, and as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; but above all, Jesus, the Captain of your salvation, and the High Priest of your profession, intercedes mightily for you. Look to him and be saved, even from the ends of France. To his pity love, and power, I recommend you. May he bless you, my dear friend-lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace and courage, repentance, faith, hope, and patient love, both now and evermore! I am your affectionate, sincere friend and servant in Jesus,

J. FLETCHER.

XXIX.-*To Miss Hatton.*

MADELEY, *July* 17, 1766.

MY VERY DEAR FRIENDS-I want to hear of you, if I cannot hear from you by a line. The last account I had of your state of health was a very poor one. What hath the Lord done for your body since?

My dear friend, we are all going the way of all flesh; and though you are more sensible of the journey in your body than I am at present, yet I follow you, or perhaps you follow me. I often feel a desire to beat your load for you; but the impossibility of this makes me rejoice that Jesus who does not faint as I might do, will and does carry both you and your burden. By a firm unshaken faith, you know, we cast our souls upon Jesus, and by that power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself, he receives and bears that which we commit to him.

That this faith may be the firmer on our part, let it be rational as well as affectionate; affectionate as well as rational. God is good: he does not want us to take

his word without proof. What expectations of the dear Messias from the beginning of the world! What amazing chains of miracles and wonders were wrought in favour of that people and family from which he was to come! What prophecies fulfilled that we might rationally believe! What displays of the Godhead in that heavenly man Christ Jesus! "In him dwelt, of a truth, the fulness of the Godhead bodily." You see the power of God in his miracles; the goodness of God in his character; the justice and mercy of God in his death; the truth and faithfulness, the glory of God in his resurrection, in the coming of his Spirit, and the preaching of his everlasting Gospel. O my friend, we may believe rationally: we may with calm attention view the emptiness of all other religions, and the fulness of assurance that ours affords. And shall we not believe affectionately also? Let us stir up ourselves to love this Jesus who hath given himself to us with all his blood, all his grace, and all his glory. Come, give him your whole soul, my dear friend, and take him with all his pardons, all his love, all his strength. If he wants you to embrace him in his faint, bloody sweat, or in his racking tortures on the cross, draw not back; love him, love him, and let not the grave frighten you. It is good to drop our clay in his quiet sepulchre, and to follow him on the wings of faith and love, without a clog of sickly flesh to heaven. "He died for us and rose again, that whether we live or die, we might be together with him. To us to live is Christ, and to die gain. He hath blotted out"---

I am happily interrupted by your kind letter. Blessed be God for the prospect of recovery you mention! All is well that Jesus does: sick or well, living or dying, we will be Jesus'.

With regard to your complaint of slothfulness, your body cannot bear the strong exertions of a wrestling faith; therefore you are called, I apprehend, with a calm consent to accept of the Gospel tidings, and, with the quietness of a child at the breast, to suck the milk of Divine consolation. Inward, loving, believing recollection and resignation is the path into which our dear heavenly Friend wants now to lead you. Be faithful, be bold, to follow where he leads; make no words, no unbelieving words, and all will be well. Farewell in body and soul.

J. FLETCHER.

XXX.-*To Miss Hatton*.

MADELEY, *July* 28, 1766.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I hear still a very indifferent account of your health. I stand in doubt as to your bodily life; but it is in the hand of Jesus, and Jesus is wise, Jesus is good, Jesus is almighty; he will, therefore, dispose of you for the best. While you see the scales hovering, and it may be that of life slowly descending toward a quiet grave, calmly look at Jesus; and when the feebleness of your spirits prevents you from crying out, in ecstatic love, "My Lord and my God!" let your devoted, resigned, patient heart still whisper, "Thy will be done!"

Your last letter raised my hopes of your recovery; Mr. Perry, who saw you since, damps them again: but "whether we live, we live to the Lord, or whether we die, we die to the Lord. Not for works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saveth us. Glory be to God for his unspeakable gift!" Jesus remembers you in his all-prevailing intercession, and, I might add, I do in my prayers, if the weight of a dancing mote deserved to be mentioned, after that of an immense mountain. I am, with Christian respects to our kind, loving friends at Wem, your poor Madeley friend,

J. FLETCHER.

XXXI.-*To Miss Hatton.*

MADELEY, *July* 30, 1766.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-So you are likely to be at rest first! Well, the Lord's will be done; I should be glad to have you stay to help us to the kingdom of God; but if God wants to take you there, and house you before a storm, I shall only cry, "One of the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" and try to make the best of my way after you.

A calm receiving of the Gospel tidings, upon a conviction of your lost estate, with suitable tempers, is a sign that you are in a safe state; but I want you to be altogether in a comfortable one. Your business, I apprehend, is not to turn the dung hill of nature, but to suck the Gospel milk: dwell much, if not altogether, upon "free justification through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." View the sufficiency, fulness, suitableness, freeness of his atonement and righteousness; and hide yourself without delay under both. Look at death only as a door to let you out of manifold infirmities and pains, into the arms of Jesus, your heavenly Bridegroom. Stir up faith, hope, and love; that is trimming your lamp. Since last Monday, I find the burden of your soul upon mine in a very particular manner, and I hope that I shall not cease to pray for you, that you may go not only calmly, but joyfully, the way of all flesh. I have got some praying souls to share with me in that profitable work, and I hope you will meet our spirits at the throne of grace as we do yours.

Let me have the comfort of thinking that you are with your Physician, Husband, and all; who will order all things for the best. Pray hard, believe harder, and love hardest. Let the cry of your soul be, "None but Jesus living, none but Jesus dying." Let Christ be your life, and then death, whether it comes sooner or later, will be your gain.

Mr. Glazebrook waits for these lines, and I conclude by again entreating you to believe. *"Only believe,"* said Jesus to the ruler-and faith will work by love, and love by a desire to depart and be with Christ. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, bless, uphold, and comfort you! Farewell, and forget not to pray for your helpless friend,

J. FLETCHER.

XXXII.-*To Miss Hatton*.

MADELEY, *Sept*. 1766.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,-God wonderfully supports your tottering clay, that he may fill up what is lacking in your faith. Concur with the merciful design; arise in spirit, shake off the dust of earthly thoughts, put on your glorious apparel-put on, every moment, the Lord Jesus Christ. Dare to believe; on Christ lay hold: wrestle with Christ in mighty, or even in feeble prayer. He breaks not the bruised reed; let the reed be grafted, by simple faith, in the true vine-in the tree of life, and it will bring forth glorious fruit; not only resignation, but power to welcome the king disarmed of his terrors, and turned into a messenger of joy, and a guide under Christ, to heavenly happiness. Let not one feeble breath pass, without carrying an act of desire, or of faith, toward Christ. Bestir yourself to lay hold on God, and when you find an absolute want of power, be you the more careful to lie at the feet of Him who hath all power given him in earth and heaven for you. Farewell, my dear friend; that is, be found in Christ, for there only can we fare well whether we live or die.

J. FLETCHER.

XXXIII.-*To Miss Hatton*.

MADELEY, *Jan*. 9, 1767.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-The alteration for the worse I discovered in your health, the last time I had the pleasure of seeing you, makes me sit down to take a survey of our approaching dissolution. The dream of live will soon be over; the morning of eternity will soon succeed. Away then with all the shadows of time. Away from them to the eternal substance-to Jesus, the first and the last, by whom, and for whom all things consist.

We stand on the shore of a boundless ocean: death, like a lion, comes to break our bones: let us quietly strip ourselves of our mortal robes, that he may do with us as the Lord shall permit. In the meanwhile, let us step into the ark; Christ is the ark. My dear friend, believe in Jesus; believe that your sins, red as crimson, are made white as snow, by the superior tincture of his blood. Believe yourself into Christ. By simple faith believe he is your everlasting head; nor can you believe a lie, for God hath given that dear Saviour to the worst of sinners, to be received by a lively faith; and hath declared that it shall be done unto us “according to our faith.” If you simply take Jesus to be your head, by the mystery of faith, you will be united to the resurrection and the life. The bitterness of death is passed, my dear friend. Only look to Jesus: he died for you-died in your place-died under the frowns of Heaven, that we might be spared. Stand, then, in him; he found in him; plead that he hath wrought a sinless righteousness for you, and hath more than sufficiently atoned for you by his cruel

sufferings and ignominious death. Regard neither unbelief nor doubt; fear neither sin nor hell; choose neither life nor death; all these are swallowed up in the immensity of Christ, and triumphed over in his cross. Believe that he hath made an end of sin, that you are comely in him, that you are pardoned, accepted, and beloved of God, in the one mediator Jesus Christ. Reason not with the law, but only with him who says, “Come, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” Fight the good fight of faith. Hold fast your confidence in the atoning, sanctifying blood of the Lamb of God; through his blood the accuser of the brethren is cast out. Confer no more with flesh and blood. Hunger and thirst after righteousness; eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Redeemer; and live in Christ, that you may die in him. Up, and be doing the work of God. Believe in him whom he hath sent: kiss the Son, lest he be angry; grasp him, as one who hath fallen into deep waters grasps the branch that hangs over him.

O slumber no more! Go meet the Bridegroom. Behold he cometh! Trim your lamp; hold up the vessel of your heart to the streaming wounds of Jesus, and it shall be filled with the oil of peace and gladness. Quit yourself like a soldier of Jesus. Look back to the world, the things and friends about you, no more. I entreat you as a companion in tribulation; I charge you, as a minister, go at every breath you draw, according to the grace and power given you, to the Physician who gives nobody over-that says, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;” and, “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

Ere long there will be time no more. O my friend! stir up yourself to lay hold on him by faith and prayer; and let not those few sands that remain in your glass, flow without the blood of Jesus. They are too precious to be offered up to slothful flesh, which is going to turn out its immortal inhabitant. Gladly resign your dust to the dust whence it was taken, and your spirit to him who gave and redeemed it. Look to him in spite of flesh and blood, of Satan and unbelief; and joyfully sing the believer's song, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!” Let your surviving friends rejoice over you, as one faithful unto death-as one triumphing in death itself.

I am just informed of dear Miss Fragena's death. She caught a fever in visiting the poor, sick of that distemper, and lived a week to stand and rejoice in dying pains. As she lived, she died-a burning and a shining light. Ere long you will meet her in Abraham's bosom, whence she beckons you to follow her, as she followed Christ. Be of good cheer, be not afraid; the same God who helped her, will carry you through. Your business is to commend yourself to him, and to keep safe that which you commit to him unto that day. To his faithfulness and love I commend you; and am, my dear friend, yours in him,

J. FLETCHER.

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XXXIV.-*To Mrs. Hatton.*

MADELEY, Jan. 30, 1767.

DEAR MADAM,-I heard last night the news of Miss Hatton's death. As the stroke had long threatened you, and as she had, through mercy, long ago resigned herself to it, I hope it hath not found you without the shield of resignation, patience, and confidence in God. A sparrow, you know, falls not to the ground without his permission, much less can a member of his Son fall into the grave without his direction. Surely his wisdom is infallible: he hath chosen the better part both for you and your daughter; he hath chosen to take her out of her misery, to translate her to the place where the weary are at rest, and to give you, by removing her, an opportunity of caring for your soul as you cared for her body.

Now, what have you to do, madam, but to put your hand upon your mouth and say, "It is the Lord; he gave, and he hath taken away, blessed be his holy name!" If you sorrow, let it be in hope of meeting her soon, all glorious within and without, whom you lately saw such a spectacle of mortality. David observed (in the lesson for this morning) that the love of Jonathan had been better to him than the love of women. O dwell much upon the consideration of the love of Jesus, and you will find that it far surpasses that of the most dutiful children; and comfort yourself by the believing thought, that Jesus lives, lives for you, and that your daughter lives in him; where you will soon have the joy to meet her as an incarnate angel.

I am, with prayers for you and Miss Fanny, to whom I wish much consolation in her elder, never-dying Brother, dear madam, your unworthy obliged servant in Christ,

J. FLETCHER.

XXXV.-*To James Ireland, Esq.*

MADELEY, *Feb*. 1767.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,-The Lord will spare your daughter as long as she can get good, and do you and others good by the sight of her sufferings. When that cup is drunk up, she will be willing to go, and you to let her go. Remember, she is the Lord's, much more than yours: and that what we call dying, is only breaking the shell of a troublesome body, that Christ may fully come at the kernel of the soul, which he hath bought.

Poor Miss Hatton died last Sunday fortnight, full of serenity, faith, and love. The four last hours of her life were better than all her sickness. When the pangs of death were upon her, the comforts of the Almighty bore her triumphantly through; and some of her last words were, "Grieve not at my happiness: this world is no more to me than a bit of burnt paper. Grace! grace! A sinner saved! I wish I could tell you half of what I feel and see. I am going to keep an everlasting Sabbath. 'O death,

where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory, through my Lord Jesus Christ!'" It is very remarkable that she had hardly any joy in her illness, but God made her ample amends in her extremity. He kept the strongest cordial for the time of need; he does all things well. Blessed, for ever blessed, be his holy name!

Worcestershire also lately lost a wise virgin of a truth, dear Miss Fragena, Mr. Biddulph's sister. The morning before she expired, she said, "I have had a stronger conflict last night than I ever had in all my life; it was sharp and terrible; but Jesus hath overcome, and he will also overcome for you and me: be of good courage; believe, hope, love, and obey."

I wish you had often such meetings as that you mention; every one should have as many thrusts at that crooked serpent, that holy devil, bigotry, as he can. If I can leave my parish, I believe it will be to accompany Lady Huntingdon to the Goshen of our land-Yorkshire, to learn the love of Christ at the feet of my brethren and fathers there. I am obliged to you for the present you mention; I have taken again to the drink of my country, water, which agrees well with me, and I shall not want it for myself: if it is not sent, diminish or stop it according to this notice. Farewell in the Lord Jesus.

J. FLETCHER.

XXXVI.-*To Miss Bryan*.

MADELEY, *Feb*. 1767.

I HOPE my friend Mr. Ireland will not grudge me the room I take in this letter to thank you for your last. It is travelling about, seeking its fortune, as well as the first; who knows but, before it comes home, it will, like a baited hook, bring a fish along with it. I hope you go on and prosper, and do valiantly. I am glad to see the Lord leads you in the exalted way of exulting faith, triumphant hope, and rapturous love: mount higher and higher: there is no fear of your losing yourself, except it be in the boundless tracks of Divine mercy, and on the eternal hills of redeeming love: and to be lost there is to be happily found. I rejoice that you do not lose sight of the depths of human misery and depravity,-out of Jesus. With this ballast, the strongest blasts of spiritual rapture will never overset you. I also thank God that your faith works by love, and that you love not in pen and word only, but in deed and in truth; see that you abound herein more and more. As I trust you love to do well to your neighbours' bodies, see that you use well that of a neighbour of mine, whose name is Bryan, and put her in remembrance to pray for her affectionate brother and unworthy servant,

J. FLETCHER.

XXXVII.-*To James Ireland, Esq.*

MADELEY, *March* 30, 1767.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,-I am glad you keep up your catholic meeting: a dozen of your way of thinking and acting would break the legs of that thief, bigotry, who reviles the crucified members of the crucified Jesus. God, who vouchsafed to meet even Balaam, when he went to curse Israel, will not fail to bless you when you go to bless the scattered Israel of our Christ.

To return to your present; I return you my sincere thanks for it as well as for all your former favours, and for your kind offers of new ones. I have one to ask now, which is, that you would stay your hand, and allow me to consume and wear out the old presents, without overcharging me with new ones. I do not say stay your heart; no, let the oil of prayer flow from the cruise of your soul for me and mine, till our poor vessels are filled with the oil of humble love.

What you say about Miss Ireland's filling, puts me in mind of that worse disease of my heart, the dropsy of self. God gives me good physic and good food, but, instead of digesting both properly, self retains what it should not. I fill, instead of remaining empty for fresh food; I lose my appetite, I swell, and am good for nothing but another operation. May the Lord so tap us that all our swellings may go down, and return no more! The good Samaritan, who is also a good physician, wants to tap you spiritually, by the bodily tapping of your daughter. To be cut in the fruit of our body is, sometimes, more painful than to be cut in our own body; may both she and you reap the fruit of the successful operation whenever it takes place! I am, with cordial affection, my dear sir, your very much obliged, though very unworthy servant,

J. FLETCHER.

XXXVIII.-*To James Ireland, Esq.*

MADELEY, *April* 27, 1767.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,-I have just received your letter, upon my arrival from Wales, with dear Lady Huntingdon, who is, of a truth, a tried stone built upon the corner stone; and such as you have seen her, such I am persuaded you will find her to the last; a soul devoted to Jesus, living by faith; going to Christ himself by the Scriptures, instead of resting in the letter of the Gospel promises, as too many professors do.

I have just time to tell you, with regard to the Bristol journey, that I must come first from the north, before I dream of going to the south. God help us to steer incessantly to the grand point of, our salvation, “Jesus the crucified.” To him I

recommend myself and you, and my noble guests. Love him, praise him, serve him who hath loved you, bought you, and died for you. I remain, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

XXXIX.-*To James Ireland, Esq.*

MADELEY, *Oct*. 14, 1768.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,-I think I told you at Trevecka that we had no farmers at Madeley who feared God and loved Jesus. This generation among us are buried in the furrows of their ploughs, or under the heaps of corn which fill their granaries. Now that I am on the spot, I do not see any one who makes it necessary for me to change my opinion:[2] your bailiff cannot come from this Nazareth.

Present my respects to your son, and tell him that last week I buried three young persons of a malignant fever who on the second day of their illness, were deprived of their speech and senses, and on the fifth, of their lives. Of what avail are youth and vigour when the Lord lifts his finger? And shall we sin against the eternal power, the infinite love, the inexorable justice, and the immense goodness of this God, who gives us, from moment to moment, the breath which is in our nostrils? No: we will employ the precious gift in praising and blessing this good God, who is our Father in Jesus Christ.

I hope that you learn, as well as I, and better than I, to know Jesus in the Spirit. I have known him after the flesh, and after the letter; I strive to know him in the power of his Spirit. Under the Divine character of a quickening Spirit he is every where. All that live, live in him; and they who are spiritually alive have a double life. The Lord give us this second life more abundantly! Yours,

J. FLETCHER.

XL.-*To the Rev. Mr. Sellon.*

MADELEY, *Oct*. 7, 1769.

MY DEAR BROTHER,-I thank you for your letter and books; they came safe to hand, and I shall give you the amount at the first opportunity. I have inquired what the Calvinists think of them, but I do not hear much about it. They choose rather to be silent; a sign that they have not any great thing to object. Mr. R. looked at one here in my house, and objected to Ελεησω ον αν ελεω, Rom. ix. 15. He says ελεω is, "I have mercy," not, "I should have mercy." I observed to Mr. Glascott, it is the subjunctive mood, and may take the sign, should, would, or could, according to the analogy of faith.

I long to see Cole answered: my request to you is, that you would answer him in the cool manner you have the synod; and my prayer to God is, that you may be assisted for that important work.

I know two strong Calvinist believers, who lately took their leave of this world with “I shall be damned!” O what did all their professions of perseverance do for them? They left them in the lurch. May we have the power of God in our souls, and we shall readily leave unknown decrees to others!

The Lord give you patience with your brethren. The best way to confound them is, to preach that kingdom of God, which they cast away, with real righteousness and present peace and joy in believing: that is poison to the synodical kingdom.

I despair of seeing you before I have seen Switzerland, which I design to visit next winter. Mr. Ireland takes me as far as Lyons in my way.

There are some disputes in L. H.'s college; but when the power of God comes they drop them. The Calvinists are three to one. Your book I have sent them as a hard nut for them to crack.

May the Lord spare you, and make you a free, joyful soldier of the Lord Jesus; as tough against sin and unbelief as you are against Calvin and the synod. The Lord hath overruled your leaving S. for good. Let us trust him, and all will be well. Farewell.

J. FLETCHER.

XLI.-*To Mr. ------,*

MY DEAR FRIEND,-My delay has, I hope, driven you to the Lord, who is our Urim and Thummim, whose answers are infallibly true and just. Not so those of men; nevertheless, the Lord generally helps us by each other: may he therefore help you by these lines.

You got safe out of Egypt with gladness, and now you seem entangled in the wilderness; but it may be needful for the trial of your faith, patience, self denial, &c, that you should be left, for awhile, to feel your own barrenness. Therefore, hold fast what you have till the Lord comes with more; equally avoiding discouraging thoughts, and slight indifference. Retire more inwardly, and quietly listen to what the Lord will say concerning you: refusing creature comforts, and acting faith in God your Creator, Christ your Redeemer, and the Spirit your Comforter.

You have always a feeling which, properly attended to, would make you shout, “I am, I am out of hell!” I beg that this wonderful mercy may not appear cheap to you: if it does, you have got up, and must come down; for it is proper that the Lord should bring down your spirit, and keep you upon crumbs, till you have learned to be thankful for them.

At the first reading your letter, three things struck me, (1.) You are wanting in the venture of faith: you do not give enough to that kind of implicit confidence in Christ, which says, "I will trust in thee, though thou slay me." Now this is a lesson which you must learn. Sink or swim, a believer must learn to cast himself headlong into the boundless sea of Divine truth and love. (2.) You have not learned to hold fast what you have, and to be thankful for it, till the Lord comes with more; till he baptizes you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. (3.) You do not make a proper use of the *joy of hope*, which, nevertheless, is to be your strength till the Lord comes to his temple to make his abode there Adieu.

J. FLETCHER.

XLII.-*To Mr. Henry Brook*.

MADELEY, *Sept*. 6, 1772.

DEAR SIR,-If to do was as present with me as to wish, you would have been half ruined in the postage of letters. I cannot tell you how often I have thought of thanking vou for your kind letter. My controversy made me put it off some time, and when I was going one day to answer you, a clergyman called upon me, read your letter, said you were a sensible author, and if I would let him have it he would let me have the "Fool of Quality," of which I had never heard. I forgot to take your direction, and my backwardness to writing had a very good excuse to indulge itself. However, it ceases now: after some months my friend has sent me back your unexpected but welcome flavour, for which I give you my sincere thanks. Accept them warm from my heart to yours; and thence may they return like a thousand drops into that immense ocean of goodness, truth, love, and delight, whence come all the streams which gladden the universe, and ravish the city of God.

I thankfully accept the pleasure, profit, and honour of your correspondence. But I must not deceive you. I have not yet learned the blessed precept of our Lord in respect of writing and receiving letters: I still find it more blessed to receive than to give; and till I have got out of that selfishness, never depend on a letter from me till you see it, and be persuaded, nevertheless, that one from you will always be welcome.

I see by your works that you have truth, and that you will force your way through all the barriers of prejudice, to embrace it in its meanest dress. That makes me love you. I hope to improve by your example and your lessons. One thing I want truly to learn, that is, that creatures and visible things are but shadows, and that God is God, Jehovah, the true eternal substance. To live practically in this truth is to live in the suburbs of heaven. Really, to believe that in God we live, move, and have our being, is to find and enjoy the root of our existence: it is to slide from self into our original principle, from the carnal into the spiritual, from the visible into the invisible, from time into eternity. Give me, at your leisure, some directions how to cease from busying myself about the husks of things, and how I shall break through the shell till

I come to the kernel of the resurrection, life and power, that lies hid from the unbeliever's sight. You mention, “A short sketch of your path already passed and of your present feelings.” I believe it will be profitable to me for instruction and reproof; therefore, I shall gladly accept it.

Pray, my dear sir, about feelings. Are you possessed of all the feelings of your Clinton, Clement, and Harry? Are they natural to you, I mean, previous to what we generally call conversion? I have often thought that some of the feelings you describe depend a good deal upon the fineness of the nerves and bodily organs: and as I am rather of a Stoic turn, I have sometimes comforted myself in thinking that my want of feeling might, in a degree, proceed from the dulness of my Swiss nerves. If I am not mistaken, Providence directs me to you to have this important question solved,-May not some persons have as much true faith, love, humanity, and pity, as others who are ten times more affected, at least for a season? And what directions would you give to a Christian Stoic, if these two ideas are not absolutely incompatible? My stoicism helps me, I think, to weather out a storm of displeasure which my little pamphlets have raised against me. You see, I at once consult you as an old friend and spiritual casuist, nor know I how to testify better to you, how unreservedly I begin to be, my very dear friend, yours in the Lord,[3]

J. FLETCHER.

XLIII.-*To Mr. Vaughan*.

MADELEY, *Feb*. 11, 1773.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,-You complain you are not on the Rock of ages, where you might defy the rage of the tempest; but billows of temptation drive you from the haven, where you would be, and you cry out still, “O wretched man! who shall deliver me?”

Here I would ask, Are you willing, really willing to be delivered? Is your sin, is the prevalence of temptation, a burden too heavy for you to bear? If it is, if your complaint be not a kind of religious compliment, be of good cheer, only believe. Look up, for your redemption draws near. He is near that delivers, that justifies, that sanctifies you. Cast your soul upon him; an act of faith will help you to a lift, but one act of faith will not do;-faith must be our life, I mean, in connection with its grand object. You cannot live by one breath; you must breathe on and draw the electric vital fire into your lungs, together with the air. So you must believe and draw the Divine power and the fire of Jesus’ love, together with the truth of the Gospel, which is the blessed element in which believers live.

My kind Christian love to Mrs. Vaughan. Tell her I am filled with joy in thinking, that though we no more serve the same earthly master, yet we still serve the same

heavenly one; who will, ere long, admit us to sit with Abraham himself, if we hold fast our confidence to the end.

Beware of the world. If you have losses, be not cast down, nor root in the earth with more might and main to repair them. If prosperity smile upon you, you are in double danger. Think, my friend, that earthly prosperity is like a coloured cloud, which passes away, and is soon lost in the shades of night and death. Beware of hurry. "Martha, Martha, one thing is needful." Choose it, stand to your choice, and the good part shall not be taken from you by sickness or death. God bless you and yours with all that makes for his glory and your peace! I am, my dear friend, yours, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

XLIV.-*To James Ireland, Esq.*

MADELEY, *Sept*. 21, 1773.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,-I do not hear from my brother: my views of a journey abroad continue the same. I have considered what you say about the translation of my Appeal; and, I think, I might from it take the hint and do it some day. Nay, I tried to turn a paragraph or two the day after I received your letter, but found it would be a difficult, if not an impossible work for me. I am sure I could not do it abroad. On a journey I am just like a cask of wine-I am good for nothing till I have some time to settle.

What you say about Mr. Wesley adds weight to your kind arguments; but supposing he, or the people, did not alter his mind, this would not sufficiently turn the scale in point of conscience, though it is already turned in point of affection. My spiritual circumstances are what I must look at. I am brought to a point; like a woman with child, I must have a deliverance into the liberty of a higher dispensation, and I tremble lest outward things should hurt me. The multiplicity of objects, circumstances, and avocations, which attend travelling, is as little suited to, my case, as to that of a woman with child. I think that all things considered, I should sin against my conscience in going, unless I had a call from necessity, or from clearer providences. Should Mr. Wesley find a desire of accompanying you, I think you might set out with a single eye according to your light and faith; and I trust the journey would be of service to both, and in that case my heart shall go along with you. If you go, pray find out, and converse with the Convulsionaries. My request is, that you may see your way plain, be fully persuaded in your own mind, and be led and covered by the cloud of Divine protection.

I thank you for having dared to speak a word for me at Worcester, but the stream of prejudice ran too high for you to stop it. It was drowning yourself without saving your friend. It is good to know when to yield.

My last Check will be as much in behalf of free grace as of holiness. So I hope, upon that plan, all the candid and moderate will be able to shake hands. It will be of a reconciling nature; and I call it an Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism. Adieu.

J. FLETCHER.

XLV.-*To James Ireland, Esq.*

MADELEY, *Feb*. 6, 1774.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-Though my mind has travelled fast to Bath on reading your letter, yet an embargo is laid upon my body. "I must not go yet." I am the more inclined to take the hint for two reasons. I will tell you my heart about it. The more I see her ladyship's generosity, and admire the faithfulness or the friendship that she has for many years honoured me with, the more I ought to take care not to bring burdens upon her. It might lessen her influence with those she is connected with; and might grieve some of her friends, who would possibly look upon her condescension as an affront to them: this is the first reason. The second respects myself. I must follow my light. A necessity is laid upon me to clear my conscience with respect to the Antinomian world, and to point out the stumbling block that keeps many serious people from embracing the real doctrines of free grace. I cannot do this without advancing some truths, which I know her ladyship receives as well as myself, but which, by my manner of unfolding them, will, at first sight, appear dreadful touches to the Gospel of the day. I am just sending to the press "A Scriptural Essay upon the astonishing Rewardableness of the Works of Faith." Though it consists only of plain scriptures, and plain arguments, without any thing personal, I think it will raise more dust of prejudice against me, than my preceding publications. With respect to myself, I do not mind it, but I am bound in love to mind it with respect to her ladyship. My respect to her ladyship, therefore, together with the preceding reason, determines me to defer paying my respects personally to her, till after the publication of my Essay, and Scripture Scales: and if she do not then revoke the kind leave she gives me, I shall most gladly make the best of my way to assure her in person, as I do now by this indirect means, that I am, and shall for ever be, her dutiful servant in what appears to me the plain Gospel of our common Lord.

The smartness of the letter writer, in the Westminster Journal, and his bringing college charges against me, made me think he was probably the author of "The Whip for Pelagian Methodists." Well! after all, St. John's love will carry the day. If I have all faith, and have not that, I am nothing: but when you plead for love, you plead for the chief work I contend for; so you are almost as deep in the mud, as I am in the mire. With love to yourself, and dutiful love to our noble friend, I am, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

XLVI.-To Miss Mary Cartwright.

MADELEY, ----, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-As it may be long before you have an opportunity to hear a sermon, I find myself drawn by friendship and pastoral care, to send you a few lines to meditate upon to-morrow.

As I was longing for an opportunity to offer life, friends, and liberty to Him who is worth a thousand such ails, I thought I must wait for no other opportunity, and found another blessing in using the present moment. I did not forget to offer you among my friends, and I found it on my mind to pray and praise with you; and to beseech you to fulfil my joy, by giving me to see you all glorious within, and full of eager desire to be with our everlasting Friend. O let us take a thousand times more notice of him, till the thought of him engrosses all other thoughts, the desire of him all other desires.

Nothing can reconcile me to let my friends go but the fullest evidence that they are going to Jesus. If you go before me, let me not want that comfort. Let me never see you, but fill of an earnest desire to do and suffer the will of our God. I wanted to see heavenly joy and glory beaming from your eyes last night, and, I feared, I saw them not. Pardon my fears, if they have no foundation. Charity thinks no evil, hopes all, and yet is jealous with a godly jealousy; and, the warmer the charity, the stronger and keener the jealousy. A doubt passed through my mind, whether you had not caught our dulness, whether your soul is as near to God as it was some weeks ago. O! if the multiplied mercies of God toward us do not rouse us to the third heaven of gratitude, what will?

My prayer, my ardent prayer to God, and I make it now afresh, with tears of desire, is that you may live as one who does not depend on another breath. Come, my dear friend, up with your heart, and spread the arms of your faith. Welcome Jesus. Believe till you are drawn above yourself and earth; till your flaming soul mounts and loses itself in the Sun of righteousness. I want you to be a burning, shining light, setting fire to all the thatch of the devil, and kindling every smoking flax around you. Disappoint not the Saviour's hope, and mine. I expect to see you not only a risen Lazarus, and a spared Hezekiah, but a Mary at Jesus' feet, a Deborah in the work of the Lord. There is what St. Paul calls a being beside ourselves, which becomes you so much the better, as you are restored to us against hope; and for how long we know not.

Fulfil my joy, I say, which must droop till I can rejoice over you living, dying, or dead, "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Give yourself much to believing, thankful, solemn prayer. I was condemned for not making more of the solemn opportunity I had with you last Thursday. O! if we are spared to meet again, let us pray until we wind our hearts into ardent praise, and then let us praise till we are caught up into heaven. Hold up your hands tomorrow, and if we meet on Monday,

be it in the name of Christ, to pour the oil of joy into each other's hearts, by confessing him more heartily our God, our life, our present and never-dying Friend. Farewell in him every way. Yours, &c.

J. FLETCHER.

XLVII.-*To James Ireland, Esq.*

MADELEY, *Aug*. 24, 1776.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I have received the news of your loss, and of the gain of your younger daughter. She has entered into port, and has left you on a tempestuous sea with Fanny. The account of her death did not surprise me: when you received that of her illness, this passage came strongly to my mind: "Two shall be in one house: one shall be taken and the other left." I recommend to Mrs. Ireland the resignation of David when he lost his son, and do you give her the example. The day of death is preferable to that of our birth: with respect to infants, the maxim of Solomon is indubitable. O what an honour is it to be the father and mother of a little cherub, who hovers round the throne of God in heavenly glory! Comfort yourselves, and rejoice that the Lord has taken one and left the other.

R--q--t dead and buried! The jolly man who last summer shook his head at me as at a dying man! How frail are we! God help us to live to-day! to-morrow is the fool's day. I am glad you encourage my hopes of finding some in Bristol, who will tarry, with one accord, for a pentecostal day of the Son of man. I meet with some, I hope, that feel a want of it; but my constant removals prevent my enjoying the benefit of waiting together in one place. When God shall be about to take away the reproach of his people, he will work a double miracle,-his grace will prepare their hearts, and his providence their outward circumstances. I am altogether yours in Jesus Christ,

J. FLETCHER.

XLVIII.-*To Messrs. Hare, Terry, Fox, and Good, at Hull; and Messrs. Preston, Simpson, and Ramsden, at York.*

LONDON, *Nov*. 12, 1776.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,-I thank you for your kind letters and invitations to visit you and the brethren about you, should the Lord raise me to any degree of my former strength. I have often found an attraction to my companions in tribulation in Yorkshire. My desire was indeed a little selfish; I wanted to improve by the conversation of my unknown brethren. If God bids me be strong again out of weakness, I shall be glad to try if he will be pleased to comfort us by the mutual faith both of you and me. My desire is that Christ may be glorified both in my life and death. I am glad you wish that the power of godliness may flourish among the professors of the faith. If I have any desire to live at any time, God is my witness, that

it is principally to be a witness in word and deed of the dispensation of power from on high; and to point out that kingdom which does not consist in word, but in power, even in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of power. I am writing an essay upon that important part of the Christian doctrine, and hope that it will be a mite in the treasury of truth, which the Lord has opened for the use of his people.

Should I be spared to visit you, the keep of a horse, and the poor rider, will be all the burden that I should lay on you; and that will be more than my heavenly Master indulged himself in. I am just setting out for Norwich with Mr. Wesley, whose renewed strength and immense labours astonish me. What a pattern for preachers! His redeeming the time is, if I mistake not, matchless.

Should I never have the pleasure of thanking you in person for your brotherly regard, I beg you will all endeavour to meet me in the kingdom of our Father, where distance of time and place is lost in the fulness of Him that is all in all. "The way ye know,"-the penitential way of a heart-felt faith working by obedient love. In that good, though narrow way, I trust you will help by your prayers and example, my dear brethren, your affectionate brother, and willing servant in Christ,

J. FLETCHER.

XLIX.-*To Mr. William Wase.*

NEWINGTON, *Jan*. 13, 1777.

MY DEAR BROTHER,-I am two kind letters in your debt. I would have answered them before, but venturing to ride out in the frost, the air was too sharp for my weak lungs, and opened my wound, which has thrown me back again.

I am glad to see, by your last, that you take up your shield again. You will never prove a gainer by vilely casting it away. Voluntary humility, despondency, or even a defeat should not make you give up your confidence; but rather make you hug your shield and embrace your Saviour with redoubled ardour and courage. To whom should you go but to Him "who hath the words of everlasting life;" and if you give up your faith, do you not block up the way by which you should return to him? Let it be the last time you compliment the enemy with what you should fight for to the last drop of your blood.

You must not be above being employed in a little way. The great Mr. Grimshaw was not above walking some miles to preach to seven or eight people; and what are we compared to him? Our neighbourhood will want you more when Mr. Greaves and I are gone: in the meantime grow in meek, humble, patient, resigned love; and your temper, person, and labours will be more acceptable to all around you. I have many things to say to you about your soul; but you will find the substance of them in two of Mr. Wesley's sermons, the one entitled "The Devices of Satan," and the other "The

Repentance of Believers." I wish you would read one of them every day till you have reaped all the benefit that can be got from them; nor eat your morsel alone, but let all be benefited by the contents. I am, &c.

February 18. You talk of my "last trials;" I can hardly guess what you mean, unless Mr. ------ should have mistaken tears of holy shame before God, and of humble love to my opponents, for great trials; but they only indicated such a trial, as I pray God to make me live and die in,-I mean a deep sense of my unworthiness, and of what I have so often prayed for in these words,-

I would be by myself abhorred,
All glory be to Christ my Lord.

I thank you, however, for the comfort you administer to me upon, I suppose, Mr. -----'s mistake.

With respect to our intended room, I beg Mr. Palmer, Mr. Lloyd, and yourself to consult about it, and that Mr. Palmer would contract for the whole. For my own part I shall contribute 100*l*. including 10*l*. I have had for it from Mr. Ireland, and 10*l*. from Mr. Thornton. Give my kindest love to all friends and neighbours. I would mention all their dear names, but am strictly forbidden a longer epistle. Farewell in Jesus. Yours,

J. FLETCHER.

P. S. If the room cannot be completed for what I have mentioned, and 20*l*. more be wanting, ask Mr. Lloyd how much the royalty might come to, and tell him I would appropriate it to the building.

L.-*To the Rev. Vincent Perronet.*

NEWINGTON, *Jan*. 19, 1777.

DEAR FATHER IN CHRIST,-I beg you would accept my multiplies thanks for your repeated favours. You have twice entertained me, a worthless stranger; and not yet tired of the burden, you kindly invite me, weak and troublesome as I am, to share in the comforts of your house and family. Kind Providence leaves no room, at present, to hang a third burden upon you. The good air and accommodations here, and the nearness to a variety of helps, joined to the kindness of my friends and the weakness of my body, forbid me to remove at present. God reward your labour of love and fatherly offers! Should the Lord raise me, I shall be better able to reap the benefit of your instructions-a pleasure which I promise myself sometime, if the Lord pleases.

J. FLETCHER

LI.-*To Miss Perronet.*

NEWINGTON, *Jan*. 19, 1777.

DEAR MADAM,-I thank you for your care and kind nursing of me when at Shoreham; and especially for the few lines you have favoured me with. They are so much the more agreeable to me, as they treat of the one thing needful for the recovery of our souls,-the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind; together with our need of it, and the grand promise that this need shall be abundantly supplied,-supplied by a baptismal outpouring of that "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which makes us free from the law of sin and death." May we hunger and thirst after righteousness in the Holy Ghost, and we shall be filled! May we so come to our first Paraclete, Advocate, and Comforter, as to receive the second as an indwelling and overflowing fountain of light, life, and love. My view of this mystery is, I trust, Scriptural. The Father so loved the world as to give us the first Advocate, Paraclete, and Comforter, whom we love and receive as our Redeemer. The first Advocate has told us it was expedient that he should leave us, because in that case he would send another Advocate, Paraclete, or Comforter, to abide with us, and be in us for ever, as our Sanctifier, our Urim and Thummim, "our lights and perfections," our oracle and guide. This is the grand promise to Christians; called "the promise of the Father," and bought by the Son. O may it be sealed on our hearts "by the Spirit of promise!" May we ever cry,

Seal thou our breasts, and let us wear
That pledge of love for ever there!

Then we shall be filled with pure, perfect love; for the love of the Spirit perfects that of the Father and Son, and accomplishes the mystery of God in the believing soul. Come, then, let us look for it; this great salvation draws nigh. Let us thank God more thankfully, more joyfully, more humbly, more penitently, for Christ our first Comforter; and hanging on his word, let us ardently pray for the fulness of his Spirit, for the indwelling of our second Comforter, who will lead us into all truth, all love, all power. Let us join the few who besiege the throne of grace, and not give over putting the Lord in remembrance, till he has raised himself a Pentecostal Church again in the earth; I mean a Church of such believers as are all of one heart and one soul. Nor forget to ask, that, when you press into that kingdom and Church, you may be followed by, dear madam, yours, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

LII.-*To Mr. Greenwood.*

LONDON, -----, 1777.

MY dear companion in tribulation, and in the patience of Jesus. Peace be multiplied unto you, and resignation by the cross of Jesus. I bear your foot on my heart, and cast my heart on Him, to whom all burdens are lighter than a feather.

Paschal said, when the rod of tribulation was upon him, “Now I begin to be a Christian,” meaning a follower of the Man of sorrows. By his pierced feet may yours be eased. Hold this fast, “Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.” Accept a rod as a token of your adoption, and be willing to be made perfect in patience by sufferings. In the meantime rejoice that Christ's sufferings are over,-that they are atoning,-and that they have purchased our comforts. If you can come safely to-morrow, you will bring a blessing to your poor pensioner, who remains in the bonds of grateful, brotherly love, yours,

J. FLETCHER.

LIII.-*To James Ireland, Esq.*

NEWINGTON, *Feb*. 24, 1777.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-Let us abandon ourselves without reserve to God, who is alike the God of all grace when he chastises, as when he blesses us. Be a son of Abraham,-be an imitator of God. Abraham refused not to offer up his Isaac, and God has delivered his only Son to death for us. Refuse nothing to this God of love and tender compassion. The sacrifice of those things which are most precious to us, is the least unworthy of him; and had we a thousand Isaacs, we ought to keep back nothing from him. Perhaps the Lord hath heard your prayer and ours. If your Isaac lives, may he be devoted to the Lord as was Samuel; and may the God of Elijah have all the glory of his recovery. If he be dead, prepare to follow him, and do not envy him the sweet repose which he enjoys, and in which we shall soon share with him.

Adieu. They forbid my writing, but I will write to the last, “Blessed be God who giveth us the victory over death and its pains, by Jesus Christ!” In him I am, and shall always be altogether yours. I am your ten thousand times obliged friend,

J. FLETCHER.

P. S. Your second letter, which reached me when the above was written, informs me of your loss; but why should I call God's securing your son, and giving him eternal life, your loss? It is Christ's gain, who sees in that sweet child the travail of his childhood; and it is your son's gain, since his conflicts and dangers are now over, and nothing awaits him but an eternal increase of happiness. Who knows but that God, who foresees all the storms of corruption, and rocks of sin we are likely to meet with in the sea of life, has taken your dear child at the best, and by this premature death secures him from eternal death? Come, then, do not repine. God has made you the instrument of adding one more little cherub to the heavenly host. And in this light you may well say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord!” He is better than ten sons. Your son is in his bosom, and this new cord should now draw you from earth to heaven with a fresh degree of power-with an irresistible attraction.

I thank you ten thousand times over for all your repeated marks of love and generosity to me and mine: the burden is too great to bear; I must cast it upon Him who can bless you ten thousand times over, and turn all your seeming losses into the greatest blessings. May the God of all consolation help you to reap the earliest and ripest fruit of the affliction whereby he gives you a new token of your adoption. Remember my kind love, and present my best thanks to Mrs. Ireland. Yours, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

LIV.-*To Miss Perronet.*

NEWINGTON, *April* 21, 1777.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-A thousand thanks to you for your kind, comfortable lines. This prospect of going to see Jesus and his glorified members, and among them your dear departed brother, my now everliving friend-this sweet prospect is enough to make me quietly and joyfully submit to leave all my Shoreham friends, and all the excellent ones of the earth. But why do I talk of going to leave any of Christ's members, by going to be more intimately united to the Head?

We all are one, who him receive,
And each with each agree;
In him the *One*, the *Truth*,-we live,
Blest point of unity!

A point this, which fills heaven and earth; which runs through time and eternity. What an immense point! In it sickness is lost in health, and death in life. There let us ever meet. There to live is Christ, and to die gain.

Thank dear Mrs. Bissaker for all her love to my dear departed friend; and may our kindred spirits drink deeper into God, till they are filled with all the fulness which our enlarged souls can admit. Nor let your niece, to whom I send my thanks, keep aloof. Let us all tend to our original centre; and experience that life and death are ours, because the Prince of life, who is our resurrection and life, has overcome sin, death, and the grave for you, and for your obliged, unworthy brother,

J. FLETCHER

LV.-*To Miss Thornton.*

BRISLINGTON, -----, 1777.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,-I shall not attempt to express my gratitude to you for all your charitable care of a poor sickly worm. As we say, that silence speaks often the best praises of our great Benefactor, so I must say here. I hope these lines will find you leaving the things that are behind, and pressing forward toward the mark,-the

prize of our high calling on earth. In heaven we are called to be filled with all we can hold of the glorious fulness of God; and what that is we know not, but we shall know if we follow on to know the Lord. But here also, we are called to be filled with all the fulness of God. God is love, you know: to be filled with all his fulness is then to be filled with love. O may that love be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us, and abiding in us! I still look for that ineffable fulness; and I beg, if you have not yet attained, you would let nothing damp your hope, and slacken your pursuit.

I spend more time in giving my friends an account of my health than the matter is worth. You will see by the enclosed, which I beg you would send to the post, when you have showed it to Mr. John and Charles Wesley, if they think it worth their while to run it over, to see how their poor servant does.

What shall I say? Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gifts,-for Jesus,-for the Spirit of Jesus,-for the members of Jesus' mystical body, and in particular am I bound to return thanks for those who have ministered and still do minister to my wants, and share in my infirmities. Your meek humility forbids my saying that among the many who, for Christ's sake, have debased themselves so far as to take up my cross with me, and help me to bear it after my Lord, you stand in the first rank, and the first fruits of my gratitude are due to you. Simon of Cyrene bore our Lord's cross by compulsion: you have borne that of the most unworthy of his servants without compulsion: and now, what shall I render? A silent tear whispers, I can render nothing. May the merciful, faithful God, who has promised that a cup of cold water given to the least of his followers shall not lose its reward: may that omnipotent God, who sees you in all the states of weakness which await you between the present moment and the hour of death, give you all that can make your life comfortable, your trials tolerable, your death triumphant, and your eternity glorious! I am your affectionate brother,

J. FLETCHER.

LVI.-*To the Right Hon. Lady Mary Fitzgerald.*

MADELEY, *Oct.* 21, 1777.

HONOURED AND DEAR MADAM,-With respect to the hints you drop in your letter, concerning your external circumstances, I find it upon my heart to say, Abide in the state in which you have been called, till Providence makes a way for you to escape out of what may be contrary to your new taste. Your cross has changed its nature with your heart; and we may, in some cases, be called to take up a worldly as well as a heavenly cross. Joseph and Moses did so once in Egypt, Esther in Susa, Daniel in Babylon, John the Baptist at Herod's court, and our Lord in the house of the rich Pharisee. Some great end, to yourself or to others, may be answered by patiently bearing your worldly cross, till it be taken from you, or you are removed from under it. Continue to make it matter of earnest prayer to know the will of God concerning

you; and while your eye watches the motions of the providential cloud, and your heart listens for the Lord's call, endeavour to keep your will as an even balance at his feet, that the least grain of intimation-clear intimation from him, and the least distinct touch of the hand of Providence, may turn the scale either way, without resistance on your part. Being thus fully persuaded you will do and suffer all, with the liberty and courage of faith, I am, madam, your obliged servant,

J. FLETCHER.

LVII.-*To the Rev. Dr. Conyers*.

MACON, IN BURGUNDY, *May* 18, 1778.

HON. AND DEAR SIR,-I left orders with a friend to send you a little book, called "The Reconciliation;" in which I endeavour to bring nearer the children of God, who are divided about their partial views of Divine truths. I do not know whether that tract has, in any degree, answered its design; but I believe truth can be reconciled with itself, and the candid children of God one with another. O that some abler hand, and more loving heart, would undertake to mend my plan, if it be worth mending, or draw one more agreeable to the word of God! My eyes are upon you, dear sir, and those who are like minded with you, for this work: disappoint me not of my hope. Stand forth, and make way for reconciling love, by removing, so far as lies in you, what is in the way of brotherly union. O sir, the work is worthy of you! Take courage! Be bold for the reconciling truth. Be bold for peace. You can do all things through Christ strengthening you; and as Doctor Conyers, you can do many things; a great many more than you think. What if you go, sir, in Christ's name, to all the Gospel ministers of your acquaintance, exhort them as a father, entreat them as a brother, and bring them, or as many of them as you can, together! Think you that your labour would be in vain in the Lord? Impossible, sir! O despair not! Charity hopeth all things, and as Kempis saith, "It trieth all things, and bringeth many things to pass which would appear impossible to him who despaireth, hateth, or careth not for the sheep."

If you want a coach or a friend to accompany you, when you go upon this errand of love, remember there is a Thornton in London, and an Ireland in Bristol, who wish you God speed, and make your way plain before vou: and God will raise many more to concur in the peaceful work. Let me humbly entreat you to go to work, and to persevere in it. I wish I had strength to be at least your position when you go. I would drive, if not like Jehu, at least with some degree of cheerful swiftness, while Christ smiled at the Christian attempt. But I am confident you can do all in the absence and without the concurrence of him who is, with brotherly love and dutiful respect, Hon. and dear sir, your obedient servant in the Gospel,

J. FLETCHER.

LVIII.-*To Mr. Thomas York*.

NYON, *Sept*. 15, 1778.

MY DEAR BROTHER,-I thank you for your love, and generous care of my little temporal concerns. I long to know how you all do. You may see in the enclosed how I do in body. Blessed be the God of all consolation, though I have still very trying, feverish nights, and nothing but forced evacuations, I am kept in peace of mind; resigned to his will, who afflicts me for my good, and justly sets me aside for my unprofitableness. Well, though I am a bruised vessel, yet I rest on him; he does not break me, yea, he comforts me on every side. His grace within, and his people without, turn my trying circumstances into matter of praise.

Give my love to all your dear family, and to the two or three who may yet remember me at Shiffnal. Also give my love to Daniel, and desire him, when he gathers the Easter dues, to give my love and thanks to all my parishioners. Adieu! Yours,

J. FLETCHER.

LIX.-*To Mr. William Wase*.

NYON, *Feb*. 11, 1779

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I have just received yours of the 24th Jan., and rejoice to hear of the welfare of your friends; but there is no blessing here without some alloy of grief, and such was to me the account of the poor state of dear Mrs. Wase's health. The Lord be with her as "a Comforter and Sanctifier," if he does not choose to be with her as a Physician. Tell her I should be glad to hold up her hands in her fight of affliction, but if the poor, unprofitable weak servant is far off, the Master, who is rich in mercy, who fills the whole world with his goodness and patience, who has all the power given him as "our brother, Son of man," in heaven and earth;-this kind Master is near to her, and all his afflicted ones. Bid her from me, entreat her in my name, or rather, in his dear name, Jesus, salvation, resurrection, life, light, and love, to look to him, and to make a free, and constant use of him in all his offices.

I recommend to her two remedies; the one is a cheerful resignation to the will of God, whereby her animal spirits will be raised and sweetly refreshed; the other is four lumps of heavenly sugar, to be taken every half hour, day and night, when she does not sleep. I make a constant use of them to my great comfort. They have quickened my soul when I was dying, and I doubt not but they will have the same effect upon hers. Our Church has already extracted that Divine sugar from the Scripture, and put it into the common prayer book, as the heavenly bait which is to draw us to the Lord's table. Though they have often passed through my mouth, when I have called her there, they have lost nothing of their sweetness and force. "God so loved the world," &c. "If any man sin," &c. "It is a faithful saying," &c. "Come unto me all ye that

are weary," &c. God grant her abundance of the faith which rolls these heavenly pills in the mind, and much of that love which sucks their sweetness in the heart. Tell her they go down best if taken in the cup of thanksgiving; into which a tear of desire, of humility, of repentance, or of joy, might be dropt occasionally. That tear is to be had by looking simply to Him who sells oil to the virgins, who offered a springing well to the woman of Samaria, and opened a fountain flowing with heavenly blood and water when he hung for us upon the cross. To him be praise and glory for ever! Amen!

Tell my little god daughter, Patty Cartwright, she is big enough and bad enough to take them; and that the holy child Jesus came on purpose into the world to make them up for her. What a shame it is, to have such a remedy so near and not to make more use of it to subdue our unbelief, and cure our stupid ingratitude!

Thank brother Costerdine and his fellow labourers for their occasional help, and may He, who gives the increase abundantly, bless it to them and to our friends. May the Lord vouchsafe to consecrate our little Zoar by calling one sinner and establishing one saint. How abundantly shall we be repaid for our little expense and trouble! I am yours, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

LX.-*To Mr. Michael Onions*.

NYON, *May* 18, 1779

MY DEAR BROTHER,-Yesterday I spoke with a carrier from Geneva to take me to London, who said he would give us a fortnight's notice. The Lord is always ready to give our hearts a lift to the kingdom of grace, through which we must pass to the kingdom of glory. May we be ready also! The comfort of this journey is, that we all may travel together, though our bodies are asunder; for Christ the way is every where, and faith in his word is, like his word, one and the same, in every age and country. So is holiness the narrow way; for in all places we may love God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves. I hope you, and all your serious friends, travel thus, and that your journey is like that of St. Paul, who travelled hard, as one running for a prize,-even for a crown of life.

Give my kind love to all who travel in this manner. Invite kindly all who have not yet set out. Stir up earnestly those that loiter, especially Thomas Powis, over whom my heart yearns. Above all, give them the example of leaving the things behind, and pressing toward the mark with renewed vigour. Tell your wife I hold her to her promise, of being the Lord's more than ever, because the time is shorter for us both. Tell your mother I expect to find her a bruised reed in herself, and a pillar in Christ Jesus. The Lord bless your brother and his wife, with that Child born, that Son given, who shall live to restore us to those whom death carries away. I hope Patty Cartwright, with her parents, will be made strong in faith and patience, if not in the

body. Tell Mrs. Ford I hope she is better in soul for her bodily weakness. If Mrs. Brooke is yet with her I hope to find them sisters in Christ more than in Adam. I experience here that kindred in the former is stronger and dearer than in the latter. Tell Mr. Wase I hope that he is a widower in the Lord, devoting himself to the bringing up of the Lord's family and his own: both of which require close attendance. My love to your fellow leaders, and by them to the companies you meet in prayer; also to Mr. Hatton and the preachers who help in the circuit. My love also waits on I. Tranter, T. Poole, and T. Banks, and all who meet in their houses. Tell them I hope to find them growing up into Christ in all things, particularly in heavenly zeal and humble love. Salute all our dear friends and neighbours for me. Farewell in the Lord. I am yours in him,

J. FLETCHER.

LXI.-*To Mr. William Wase*.

NYON, *Sept*. 15, 1780.

MY DEAR BROTHER,-You are also entitled to many thanks; receive them from me till I can return you something more substantial. Give my love and thanks to the preachers who come and help us. Enforce my little exhortation to the societies in much love. Go and comfort from me Mrs. Palmer and Mrs. Cartwright; and since God has placed you all in a widowed state, agree to take Jesus for a never-dying friend and bridegroom. Your Maker is your husband. He is all in all; and what then have you lost? Christ is yours, and all things with him. The resurrection day will soon come. Prepare yourselves for the marriage feast of the Lamb, and till then rejoice in the expectation of that day. I sympathise with our sickly friends, widow Matthews, M. Blummer, L. Whitaker, I. York, and S. Aston. Salute them kindly from me. Help them to trim their lamps and wait for the Bridegroom. Bid them not be discouraged. Thank Thomas and Nelly Fennel for their love to the preachers, and give them mine as well as John Owen, &c., by whom I send it to the little companies they meet with, to call for strength, comfort, and help in time of need. Fare ye all well in Jesus; I say again, farewell. I am yours,

J. FLETCHER.

LXII.-*To Mr. John Owen*.

NYON, *Feb*. 14,1781.

I THANK you, my dear brother, for your kind lines. I have deferred answering them till I could inform you of the time of my departure hence, which you will see in my letter to Mr. Wase. I hope you help both Mr. Greaves and the preachers to stir up the people in my parish. Strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die. I hope you take counsel with Michael Onions, Mrs. Palmer, and Molly Cartwright, about the most effectual means to recover the backsliders; and to keep together to Christ, and

to each other, those who still hold their shield. Salute them kindly from me, and tell them I hope they will give me a good account of their little companies and of themselves.

If I were not a minister I would be a school master, to have the pleasure of bringing up children in the fear of the Lord: that pleasure is yours: relish it, and it will comfort and strengthen you in your work. The joy of the Lord, and of charity, is our strength. Salute the children from me, and tell them I long to show them the way to happiness and heaven. Pray, have you mastered the stiffness and shyness of your temper? Charity gives a *meekness, an arguability, a childlike simplicity and openness*, which nature has denied you, that grace might have all the honour of it. Let me find you shining by these virtues, and you will revive me much. God bless your labour about the sheep and the lambs.

J. FLETCHER.

LXIII.-*To Mr. William Wase*.

NYON, *Feb*. 14,1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I am exceeding glad that there is a revival on your side the water, and that you are obliged to enlarge your room.

I wish I could contribute to shake the dry bones in my parish; but I have no confidence in the flesh; and what I could not do, when I was in my strength, I have little prospect of doing now that my strength is broken. However, I do not despair: for the work is not mine, "but the Lord's." If the few who love the Gospel would be simple and zealous, God would again hear their prayers for those who are content to go on in the broad way. I thank you for your view of the iron bridge. I hope the word, and the faith that works by love, will erect a more solid and durable bridge, to unite those who travel together toward Sion.

My friend Ireland invites me to go and join him in the south of France; and I long to see whether I could not have more liberty to preach the word among the Papists, than among the Protestants. But it is so little I can do, that I doubt much whether it is worth while going so far upon so little a chance. If I were stronger and had more times the fear of being hanged should not detain me. I trust to set out next month and to be in England in May: it will not be my fault if I be not there in April.

Remember me in much love to Mr. Greaves, Mr. Gilpin, and the preachers who labour with us. O! my friend, give yourself wholly up to the Lord, and you will have that peace and joy, through Christ and righteousness, which will be worth a little heaven to you. Adieu. Yours,

J. FLETCHER.

LXIV.-*To Mr. Michael Onions*.

NYON, *March*, 1781.

I THANK YOU, my dear brother, for your kind remembrance of me, and for your letters: I hope to bring my fuller thanks to you in person. Come, hold up your hands. Confirm the feeble knees Set up an Ebenezer every hour of the day. In every thing give thanks; and in order to this, pray without ceasing, and rejoice evermore. My heart sympathizes with poor Molly Cartwright. Tell her from me that her husband lives in Him who is the resurrection, and that I want her to live there with him. In Christ there is no death, but the victory over death. O! let us live in him, to him, for him, who more than repairs all our losses. I long to rejoice with her in hopes of meeting our departed friends, where parting and trouble shall be no more.

My love to your wife; tell her she promised me to be Jesus', as well as yours. I trust her mother ripens faster for glory than for the grave. I hope to find her quite mellowed by the humble love of the Gospel. My love to John Owen, and all our other leaders, and by them to the few who do not tire by the way. With regard to the others, take them in the arms of prayer and love, and carry them out of Egypt and Sodom, if they are loath to come. Despair of none. You know charity hopeth all things, and bringeth many things to pass. All things are possible to him that believeth, all things are easy to him that loveth. God be with you, my dear brother, and make you faithful unto death. It is my prayer for you, and all the society, and all my dear neighbours, my dear parishioners, to whom I beg to be remembered. I have no place to write their names; but I pray they may be all written "in the book of life." God is merciful, gracious, and faithful; I set my seal to his loving kindness: witness my heart and hand,

JOHN FLETCHER.

LXV.-*To the right Hon. Lady Mary Fitzgerald*.

MADELEY, *Sept*., 1781.

MY MUCH HONOURED LADY,-Two days ago, I came here, after an absence of above a month; and yesterday I received the honour of your letter without date, which has been, I am told, waiting here some time. What a pity I did not rejoice sooner in the good news you send me, that you desire to be entirely devoted to God. Indeed, complaints follow; but heaven is in that holy desire. If you cultivate it, it will produce all that conformity to a holy God, which love can bring to a human soul, called to partake the Divine nature. As for your complaints, they are the natural expression of that repentance which precedes, in our hearts, the coming of the Comforter who is to abide with us for ever. I am ready to rejoice, or to mourn with my honoured friend; and I have abundant cause to do both, with respect to myself, my ministrations, the Church, and my people.

And will you, indeed, find it in your heart to honour my house with your presence, and perfume also with your prayers the plain apartments occupied by your friend Johnson? I wonder at nothing on earth, when I consider the condescension with which Emmanuel came down from heaven and filled a stable with his glory. Your time, my condescending friend, will suit me best. You will be queen in my hermitage, the Lord will rule in our hearts, and you will command under him within our walls. You smile, perhaps, at the vastness of your new empire, but if you can be content and happy in God in my homely solitude, you will make greater advances toward bliss than if you obtained the principality of Wales. But if you cannot be happy with Jesus, prayer, praise, godly conversation, and retirement, expect a disappointment. However, my honoured friend, if you come, as the serious Catholics go on a pilgrimage, as French noblemen go to the Carthusian convent at La Trappe, as the French king's aunts went to the Carmelites: come and do evangelical penance. Our good friend Johnson will tell you of an upper room where we crucify our old man, and have had many a visit from the new. If you do not bring her with you, bring her faith, which brought him down, and then you shall not pine for the company of earthly princes. The Prince of Peace and Life himself will keep his court in our cottage, and your heart shall be one of his favourite thrones.

I hope, my lady, you will bring us good news of our friends in St. James' Place. My heart visits them often, and if bodies could move as quick as thought, they would be importuned frequently with my company. If you write to them before I do, convey my Christian and grateful love in your letter, and accept it yourself from my honoured and dear lady, your dutiful servant in Christ,

J. FLETCHER

LXVI.-*To Miss Perronet.*

MADELEY, *Sept*. 4, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-You want "some thoughts on the love of God," and I want the warmest feelings of it. Let us believe his creating, feel his preserving, admire his redeeming, and triumph in his sanctifying love. Loving is the best way to grow in love. Look we, then, at the love of our heavenly Father, shining in the face of our elder Brother, and we shall be changed into love, his image and nature, from one glorious and glorifying degree of love to another. Love always delights in the object loved. "Delight thou in the Lord, then, and thou shalt have thy heart's desire;" for we can desire nothing more than the supreme good and infinite bliss: both are in God. When, therefore, we love God truly, we delight in what he is, we share in his infinite happiness; and by Divine sympathy, his throne of glory becomes ours; for true love rejoices in all the joy of the object it cleaves to. Add to this, that when we love God, we have always our heart's desire; for we love his will, his desires become ours, and ours are always perfectly resigned to his. Now as God does whatever he pleases both in heaven and earth, his lovers have always their heart's desire, forasmuch as they always have his will, which is theirs. Submitting our private will to his is only

preferring a greater good to a less, as our Lord did in the garden; and we are called to do it in afflictions. Farewell, my dear friend, and excuse these reflections, which you could make much better than your humble servant,

J. FLETCHER.

LXVII.-*To the Right Hon. Lady Mary Fitzgerald.*

MADELEY, *Sept*. 29, 1781.

MY DEAR AND HONOURED FRIEND,-You have been in the fire of affliction, where faith is tried, where patient hope is exercised, and where perfect love, which casts out fear, and endureth all things, is proved worthy of Him who made bare his breast, and said to his Father, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God!" I come to be obedient unto death, even the painful, shameful death of the cross!

Continue to offer your body as a living, or if it please God, as a lingering, dying sacrifice to him, who has decreed, that if we will reign with Christ, we must suffer with him. This is our reasonable service; for it should be absurd, that our Lord should have been perfected by sufferings, thorns, and the cross, and that we should have nothing but enjoyment, roses, and a crown. How faithful, how merciful is our God! He brings you once more from the verge of eternity: well, my dear friend, I welcome you back into life, and into the enjoyment of farther opportunities of receiving and doing good,-of growing in grace, and perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

Chastened, spared like you, and more and more convinced that I am helplessness itself, and that there is help laid on our Surety and Saviour for us, I invite you to say with me, "When I am weak," Christ my life is strong still: "for me to live shall be Christ, and to die gain." Dear madam, to know the bare cross is uncomfortable; but to know, and gather the fruit of that tree, is life from the dead, it is more abundant life after fainting. Let us then know, that is, consider, and embrace Jesus Christ crucified to make an end of sin; shedding tears, and his most precious blood, to cleanse us from all sin; to trace again the Divine image, goodness, love, and happiness on our souls, and seal our firm title to glory.

"Not a text," say you, "came to me, only I knew none perished at his feet;" then you remembered Christ, the sum and substance of all the Scriptures; then you believed on him, in whom all the sweetest texts, and all the promises are "Yea, and Amen." O believe more steadily, more confidently! Dare even to obey the apostolic precept, "Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God by Jesus Christ our Lord." Embrace, with more earnestness, the righteousness of faith, and you will have more peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Rejoice in Christ your peace: yea, rejoice in God your Saviour; and if there is a needs be, for your being in heaviness for a season, rejoice in tribulation; "sorrowful, but always rejoicing." "When I am destitute of all comfort, this shall yield me comfort," saith Kempis, "that thy will is done." If Abraham believed in hope against hope, that is, against human, natural

hope; can you not, through grace, as a daughter of Abraham, rejoice in heavenly hope against all natural feelings, and even against all temptations? "Count it all joy," says St. James, "when you fall into divers temptations and trials." Don't be afraid of the storm; Christ is in the ship, and he does not sleep, as unbelief is apt to fancy.

I thank you, my dear lady, for your friendly wish of leaving your clay here. I return it, by wishing you may leave all the body of sin, now, in that mysterious grotto of Mount Calvary, where myriads of sinners have buried their doubts, their fears, and their old man. Prop up your clay a little longer; for I want to sing with you, "Salvation to God and the Lamb." I want you to help me, with the understanding and the voice, to witness that Jesus "saves to the uttermost, all who come to God through him;" that he can not only "make an end of sin, but bring in an everlasting, triumphant righteousness."

I am not without hope of seeing you in London, before you see your future hermitage. All my brotherly love goes to town, and salutes you and your good nurses, Mrs. C-----, Mrs.-----, Mrs.-----, Mrs. L-----; to whose continued care, as well as to that of our dear Redeemer, I earnestly recommend you. I am, my dear lady, your obedient, affectionate servant,

J. FLETCHER.

LXVIII.-*To the right Hon. Lady Mary Fitzgerald.*

MADELEY, *Aug*. 28, 1782.

MY HONOURED FRIEND,-Grace, mercy, and humble love be multiplied to you from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, through the eternal Spirit; in whose name we were baptised into the body of the Church, the spouse of the Son of God. The Lord has peculiar favours in store for your ladyship, and for me: the proof is, that we are afflicted. Have you been in a weak state of health? I have had the honour to drink of your cup: the influenza has laid me down, but the Lord has raised me up again; and when I was partly well, I broke my shin accidentally (should I not say providentially?) against a bench, and the consequence was my being confined by a bad leg to my bed, whence I write these lines. O may they be lines of consolation to my dear friend! May the God of all grace, who comforts unworthy me, rejoice your oppressed heart, and make it overflow with his patient love and sanctifying truth.

You still complain of vile self: I wish you joy, for your knowing your enemy. Let vile self be reduced to order, and, though he be a bad master, he will become *an excellent servant*. If you say, How shall I do this? I reply, by letting the Lord, the Maker, the Preserver, the Redeemer, the Lover of your soul, ascend upon the throne of your thoughts, will, and affections. Who deserves to engross and fill them better than he does? Is he not your first Lord, your best Husband, your most faithful Friend, and your greatest Benefactor? If you say, "I do not see him;" I reply, that you never saw the soul of any of your friends;-nor do you see even the body of him you call

your idol. O! allow Jehovah, the Supreme Being, to be to you, what he deserves to be, “all in all.” One lively act of faith, one ascent and consent to this delightful truth, that your Father, who is in heaven, loves you a thousand times more than you love your idol, (for God's love is like himself, “infinite and boundless,”) will set your heart at liberty, and even make it dance for joy. What, if to this ravishing consideration, you add the transporting truth, that the Son of God, fairer than the sons of men, and brighter than angels, has loved you unto death-to the death of the cross, and loves you still more than all your friends do, were their love collected into one heart; could you help thinking, with a degree of joyous gratitude, of such an instance of Divine condescension! No, your *vile self* would be *ennobled, raised, expanded*, and set at liberty, by this evangelical thought; and if you did not destroy this Divine conception, if you nourished this little degree of the love of Christ, Emmanuel, the God of love would be more fully manifested in you, and salvation would from this moment grow in your soul. Jesus would grow in your believing, loving heart; self would be nobody, Emmanuel would be all in all; and Lady Mary would share all the happiness, and, ere long, all the glory of that favoured virgin whom all the nations shall call blessed. You bear her name: let her Son, by the incorruptible seed of the Word, be also formed in you through faith; and you will be so taken up with this wonder of Divine love, so employed in praising your Father's mercy, and Saviour's love and tenderness, that you will have little time to speak either of good or bad self. When self is forgotten as nothing before God, you put self in its proper place; and you make room for the heavenly Being, whose holy and happy existence you are to shadow out.

If you have left off attending on the princess, attend on the Prince of Peace with double diligence. If you have been wanting in that sweet and honourable duty, it is because the enemy has told you lies of your Saviour, and has cast a veil over the love of his heart, and the beauty of his face. See the snare and avoid it.

Shall we ever have the honour of seeing you, my lady? My wife, who joins in-respectful love and thanks to your ladyship for your remembrance of her, says she will do her best to render our cold house safe for you if not convenient. You would have had a repeated invitation from us, if fear and a concern for your health, heightened by the bad weather, had not checked our desires to have an opportunity of assuring you here how much we are devoted to your service. But the roads and the weather beginning to amend, we venture to offer you the best apartment in our hermitage. I wish it were large enough to take in dear Mrs. G----- , and our dear friends in St. James’ Place; but we have only two small rooms; to which, however, you would be received with two enlarged hearts: I mean those of, my honoured lady, your ladyship’s obedient devoted servants,

J. AND M. FLETCHER

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LXIX.-*To Mrs. Dolier*.

MADELEY, *Nov*., 1783.

AND were my dear brother and sister Dolier pleased by the receipt of a letter from such an unworthy worm? O that I could convey some word from the mouth of my adorable Lord to your hearts! O that he would permit me, his poor creature, to drop a sentence which may prove an encouragement to my dear friends in their way! You ask, “Shall I hope to obtain the clean heart, and walk in purity while here below?” Why not? “Abraham hoped against hope, and there sprang from him, as good as dead, as the stars of the heaven for multitude.” Does unbelief say, “Thou art dead; thou hast outstayed thy day, and it is all over?” Then arise out of the dust, rouse up all your powers, “against hope believe in hope,” and by faith receive strength to apprehend the fulness of God. Remember, Christ is in “your faith;” hold faith and you hold Christ. If vou know not how to get hold on faith, remember it is “in the promise” seek for a promise, and lay hold there. But if you cry out, “I see the links of the chain so far off, that, alas! I cannot take hold on the promise; I don't know which is for me, I cannot reach so far:” well, don't faint yet; there is another link still lower, that is to say, your wants. Can you be sure there is a wound within? Are you certain you are a sinner? Well, then, reach your hand hither, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” Are you a helpless sinner? “To them who have no might he increaseth strength.” Are you an ungrateful, backsliding sinner? Hear him say, " Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; but return unto me, saith the Lord;” and if you doubt whether you may believe for a great measure of holiness; whether your soul, already in old age and barren, shall believe for abundant fruitfulness; answer yourself my dear friend, from that word, “Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely.” I have just told Mrs. Smyth of one of your sisters here, once a deeper unbeliever than yourself, but now quite full of God; I refer you to her letter. O my God, in mercy let thy power rest on thy dear servants! Convey, even by this poor scrawl, some power to their poor hearts; some fresh light into the mighty chain which begins with man's wickedness, hangs on God's mercy in the promises, is continued by faith and victory springing therefrom, and ends with Christ's fulness becoming all in all. We pray the God of love to be with your children, and all who meet with them. Tell sister Hammond to keep hold on the chain: it shall draw her into the holy of holies. With our kindest and most grateful remembrance of you both, we remain your sincere, but unworthy friends,

J. AND M. FLETCHER.

LXX.-*To Mr. Henry Brooke*.

MADELEY, *April* 27, 1784.

MY DEAR BROTHER,-Mercy, peace, and perfect love attend you, your dear partner, and the dear friends under your roof, with whom I beg you may abide under the cross, till, with John, Mary, and Salome, &c, you all can say, “We are crucified with him,

and the life we now live, we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us."

You are certainly right when you prefer the inward to the outward: the former is the safer, but both together make up the beauty of holiness. The inward life may be compared to the husband, the outward to the fruitful wife: what God hath joined together, let no man, nor even angel, put asunder.

With respect to the glory of the Lord, "it is at hand, whatever false wisdom and unbelief may whisper to our hearts: it can be no farther off than the presence of Him who fills all in all. Our wrong notions of things are a main hinderance to our stepping into it: and perhaps our minding more the cherubim of glory than the plain tables and the manna hid in the ark." "There is a passing," says Bromley, "from the outward to the inward, and from the inward to the inmost, and it is only from the inmost that we can see the Lord's spiritual glory." Pray, my dear brother, when you get so fixed in the inmost, as not to lose sight of Him who dwells in the light and in the thick darkness, may we share your joy. Love will make me partake of your happiness.

With respect to what you say of the kingdom not coming with outward pomp, which is discoverable by the men of the world, it is strictly true; but that there is an inward display of power and glory, under Pentecostal Christianity, is undeniable, both from our Lord's promises to his disciples, and from their experiences, after the kingdom was come to them with power. It is sometimes suggested to me that, as the apostasy hath chiefly consisted in going after the pomp of the whore of Babylon, so that while the woman, who fled into the wilderness, remains there as a widow, she must be deprived even of those true ornaments, and of that spiritual glory which was bestowed upon her on the day of pentecost, the day of her espousals. I do not, however, close in with the suggestion, as I am not sure that it cannot come from Satan transformed into an angel of light to rob me of a bright jewel of my Christian hope. To wait in deep resignation, and with a constant attention to what the Lord will please to do, or say, concerning us, and his Church; and to leave to him the times and the seasons is what I am chiefly called to do; taking care in the meanwhile of falling into either ditch: I mean into speculation, which is careless of action, or into the activity, which is devoid of spirituality. I would not have a lamp without oil, and I could not have oil without a lamp, and a vessel to hold it in for myself, and to communicate it to others.

I thank you, my dear friend, for the books you have sent me. My good wishes attend your brothers. Fare you all well in Christ: so prays,

J. FLETCHER.

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LXXI.-*To Mrs. Greenwood.*

MADELEY, *June* 20, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I shall never forget the mercy which the living and the dead have showed me; but the sight of Mr. Greenwood in his son, has brought some of my Newington scenes fresh to my remembrance, and I beg leave to convey my tribute of thanks back by his hands. Thanks! thanks! What, nothing but words? Here is my humbling case! I wish to requite your manifold kindness, but I cannot; and so I must be satisfied to be ever your insolvent debtor. Nature and grace do not love it. Proud nature lies uneasy under great obligations; and thankful grace would be glad to put something in the scale opposite to that which you have filled with so many favours. But what shall I put? I wish I could send you all the bank of England, and all the Gospel of Christ; but the first is not mine; and the second is already yours; so praying the Lord Jesus to make up my deficiencies with you, as he has done with his Father, I remain your still unprofitable, and still obliged Lazarus,

J. FLETCHER.

LXXII.-*To Mr. John Fennel.*

MADELEY, *Nov*. 28, 1784.

DEAR JOHN,-I rejoice to hear that you think of a better world, and of the better part, which Mary and your late mother, another Mary, chose before you; may all her prayers, but above all, may the dew of heaven come down upon your soul in solemn thoughts, heavenly desires, and strong resolutions to be the Lord's, cost what it will. Let the language of your heart and lips be, at any rate, "I will be a follower of Christ; yea, a member of his, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." A noble promise this! and of which I have so peculiar a right to put you in mind. But in order to be this happy and holy soul, you must not forget that your Christian name, your Christian vows, and ten thousand reasons beside, bind you to turn your back upon the world, the flesh, and the devil; and to set yourself steadfastly to look to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

My dear John, you have no time to lose: we have calls here to the young without end; they die fast. I lately buried two brothers and sisters in the same grave. Be you also ready! I was some nights ago praying for you on my bed, in my sleepless hours, and I asked for you the faith of righteous Abel, the chastity of Joseph, the early piety of Samuel, the right choice of young Solomon, the self denial and abstinence of Daniel, together with the zeal and undaunted courage of his three friends. But above all, I asked that you might follow John the Baptist, and John the apostle, as they followed our Lord. Back, earnestly, constantly back my prayer. So shall you be faithful, diligent, and godly; a blessing to all around you; and a comfort to your affectionate old friend and minister,

J. FLETCHER.

LXXIII.-*To the Right Hon. Lady Mary Fitzgerald.*

MADELEY, *Feb*. 11, 1785.

MERCY, righteousness, peace, and joy be multiplied to dear Lady Mary, and to all who are dear and near unto her, from the Father of mercies, through the Son of his boundless love, and through the Spirit of infinite love, which the Father breathes continually toward the Son, and the Son toward the Father! So prays John Fletcher. And who are we, my lady, that we should not be swallowed up by this holy, loving, living Spirit, which fills heaven and earth? If we could exclude him from our hearts, we might vilely set up self in opposition to him who is all in all. But whether we consider or not, there he is, a true, holy, loving, merciful God. Assent to it, my lady; believe it, rejoice in it. Let him be God all in all; your God in Christ Jesus; your brother, who is flesh of your flesh, bone of your bone; your surety, who payeth all your debt, in whom the Father was reconciling you and us unto himself, and in whom we are accepted. What an ocean of love to swim in-to dive into! Don't be afraid to venture and to plunge with all yours; especially our dear friends in St. James' Place, Mrs. G---- and Mrs. L-----, &c. I am, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

LXXIV.-*To Mr. Henry Brooke.*

MADELEY, *Feb*. 28,1782

MY DEAR BROTHER,- am now led to be afraid of that in my nature, which would be for pomp, show, and visible glory. I am afraid of falling by such an expectation into what I call a spiritual judaizing; into a looking for Christ's coming in my own pompous conceit, which might make me reject him, if his wisdom, to crucify mine, chose to come in a meaner way; and if, instead of coming in his Father's glory, he chose to come meek, riding, not on the cherubim, but on the foal of an ass. Our Saviour said, with respect to his going to the feast, "My time is not yet come." Whether his time to come and turn the thieves and buyers out of the outward Church is yet come, I know not. I doubt Jerusalem and the holy place are yet given to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles. But my Jerusalem! Why it is not swallowed up of the glory of that which comes down from heaven, is a question, which I wait to be solved by the teaching of that great prophet, who is alone possessed of Urim and Thummim. The mighty power to wrestle with him is all Divine; and I often pray,

That mighty faith on me bestow,
Which cannot ask in vain,
Which holds, and will not let thee go,
Till I my suit obtain:

Till thou into my soul inspire,
That perfect love unknown,
And tell my infinite desire,
"Whatever thou wilt, be done."

In short, the Lord crucifies my wisdom and my will every way; but I must be crucified as the thieves. "All my bones must be broken;" for there is still in me that impatience of wisdom, which would stir, when the tempter says, "Come down from the cross." It is not for us to know the times and seasons, the manner and mystical means of God's working; but only to hunger and thirst, and lie passive before the great Potter. In short, I begin to be content to be a vessel of clay or of wood, so I may be emptied of self; and filled with my God, my all. Do not give up your confident hope: it saves still secretly, and hath a present, and, by and by, will have a great recompense of reward. We are your obliged friends,

J. FLETCHER.

LXXV.-*To Mr. Melville Horne*.

MADELEY, *May* 10, 1785.

DEAR BROTHER,-I am sorry you should have been uneasy about the books: I received them safely after they had lain for some time at Salop. I seldom look into any book but my Bible; not out of contempt, as it I thought they could not teach me what I do not know; but because "*Vita brevis, Ars longa:*" I may never look into either of them again.

Go on improving yourself by reading, but above all by meditation and prayer: and allow our Lord to refine you in the fire of temptation. Where you see a want, at home or abroad, within or without, look upon that want as a warning to avoid the cause of the leanness you perceive, and a call to secure the blessings which are ready to take their flight; for sometimes true riches, like those of this world, make themselves wings and fly away: the heavenly dove may be grieved and take its flight to humbler and more peaceful roofs. I am glad you do not want hard or violent measures: I hope you never will countenance them, no, not against what you dislike. I believe things will turn out very well at the conference, and I shall be a witness of it, if the Lord of the harvest give me a commission to be a spectator of the order and quietness of those who shall be there: if not, I shall help you by prayer to draw from far the blessing of love upon our friends.

In being moderate, humble, and truly desirous to be a Christian, that is, to be the least, the last, and the servant of all, we avoid running ourselves into difficulties, we escape many temptations and many mortifying disappointments. For my part, as I expect nothing from men, they cannot disappoint me; and as I expect all good things from God, in the time, way, measure, and manner it pleaseth him to bestow, here I cannot be disappointed, because he does, and will do all things well.

I trust you labour for God and souls, not for praise and self. When the latter are our aim, God, in mercy, blesses us with barrenness, that we may give up Barabbas, and release the humble Jesus, whom we crucify afresh by setting the thief on the throne, and the Lord of glory at our footstool: for so do those who preach Christ out of contention, or that they may have the praise of men. That God may bless you and your labours, is the prayer of your old brother,

J. FLETCHER.

LXXVI.-*To Mr. John Wesley.*

TERN, *Nov*. 24, 1756.

REV. SIR,-AS I look upon you as my spiritual guide, and cannot doubt of your patience to hear, and your experience to answer a question proposed by one of your people, I freely lay my case before you.

Since the first time I began to feel the love of God shed abroad in my soul, which was, I think, at seven years of age, I resolved to give myself up to him, and to the service of his Church, if ever I was fit for it; but the corruption which was in the world, and that which was in my heart, soon weakened, if not erased those first characters which grace had written upon it. However, I went through my studies, with a design of going into orders; but afterward, upon serious reflection, feeling I was unequal to so great a burden, and disgusted by the necessity I should be under to subscribe to the doctrine of predestination, I yielded to the desire of my friends who would have me to go into the army: but just before I was quite engaged in a military employment, I met with such disappointments as occasioned my coming to England. Here I was called outwardly three times to go into orders; but upon praying to God, that if those calls were not from him they might come to nothing, something always blasted the designs of my friends; and in this I have often admired the goodness of God, who prevented my rushing into that important employment, as the horse into the battle. I never was more thankful for this favour, than since I heard the Gospel in its purity. Before, I had been afraid, but then I trembled to meddle with holy things; and resolved to work out my salvation privately, with out engaging in a way of life, which required so much more grace and gifts than I was conscious I possessed; yet, from time to time, I felt warm and strong desires to cast myself and my inability on the Lord, if I should be called any more, knowing that he could help me, and show his strength in my weakness: and these desires were increased by some little success which attended my exhortations and letters to my friends.

I think it necessary to let you know, sir, that my patron often desired me to take orders, and said he would soon help me to a living; to which I coldly answered, I was not fit, and that, beside, I did not know how to get a title. The thing was in that state, when, about six weeks ago, a gentleman I hardly knew, offered me a living, which, in all probability, will be vacant soon; and a clergyman I never spoke to gave me, of his own accord, the title of curate to one of his livings. Now, sir, the question which

I beg you to decide is, whether I must and can make use of that title to get into orders? For, with respect to the living, were it vacant, I have no mind to it; because I think I could preach with more fruit in my native country, and in my own tongue.

I am in suspense. On one side, my heart tells me I must try, and it tells me so whenever I feel any degree of the love of God and man; on the other, when I examine whether I am fit for it, I so plainly see my want of gifts, and especially of that soul of all the labours of a minister,-love, continual, universal, flaming love, that my confidence disappears; I accuse myself of pride to dare to entertain the desire of supporting one day the ark of God, and conclude, that an extraordinary punishment will, sooner or later, overtake my rashness. As I am in both of these frames successively, I must own, sir, I do not see which of these two ways before me I can take with safety; and I shall gladly be ruled by you; because, I trust, God will direct you in giving me the advice you think will best conduce to his glory, which is the only thing I would have in view in this affair. I know how precious your time is, and desire no long answer,-persist or forbear, will satisfy and influence, Rev. sir, your unworthy servant,

J. FLETCHER.

LXXVII.-*To Miss Hatton*.

MADELEY, *Nov*. 1, 1762.

MADAM,-I thank you for the confidence you repose in the advice of a poor fellow sinner. May the Father of lights direct you through so vile an instrument! If you build all your hopes of heaven upon Jesus Christ in all his offices, you do not build without a foundation, but upon the true one.

That there is a seal of pardon, and an earnest of our inheritance above, which you are as yet a stranger to, seems clear from the tenor of your letter; but had I been in the place of the gentleman you mention, I would have endeavoured to lay it before you, as the fruit of faith, and a most glorious privilege, rather than as the root of faith, and a thing absolutely necessary to the being of it.

I believe many people know when they receive faith, and all people when they receive the seal of their pardon: when they believe in Christ they are justified in the sight of God; and when they are sealed by the Spirit, they are fully assured of that justification in their own conscience. Some receive faith and the seal of their pardon in the same instant, as the jailer, &c; but most receive faith first, as the dying thief, the woman of Canaan, David, the people of Samaria, Acts viii. 12, 16, and the faithful at Ephesus, Eph. i. 13. Suppose, then, God gave you faith, i.e. a hearty trust in the blood of Christ, and a sincere closing with him, as your righteousness and your all, while you received the sacrament, (which seems to me very probable, by the account you give me,) your way is exceedingly plain before you. Hold fast your confidence, but do not trust nor rest in it; trust in Christ, and remember he says, I am

the way; not for you to stop, but to run on in him. Rejoice to hear that there is a full assurance of faith to be obtained by the seal of God's Spirit, and go on from faith to faith, until you are possessed of it. But remember this, and let this double advice prevent your straying to the right or left: first, that you will have reason to suspect the sincerity of your zeal, if you lie down easy without the seal of your pardon, and the full assurance of your faith. Secondly, while you wait for that seal in all the means of grace, beware of being unthankful for the least degree of faith and confidence in Jesus; beware of burying one talent, because you have not five; beware of despising the grain of mustard seed, because it is not yet a tree.

May the Lord teach you the middle path, between resting short of the happiness of making your calling and election sure, and supposing you are neither called nor chosen, and that God hath not yet truly begun the work. You can never be too bold in believing, provided you aspire still after new degrees of faith, and do not use your faith as a cloak for sin. The Lord despises not the day of small things; only beware of resting in small things, and look for the seal and abiding witness of God's Spirit, according to the following direction:-

Restless, resigned for this I wait,
For this my vehement soul stands still.

As to deep sights of the evil of sin, the more you go on the more you will see Christ exceeding lovely, and sin exceeding sinful: therefore look up to Jesus, as a vile and helpless sinner, pleading his promises: this is going on, and trust him for the rest.

With respect to myself, in many conflicts and troubles of soul I have consulted many masters of the spiritual life; but Divine mercy did not, does not, suffer me to rest upon the word of a fellow creature. The best advices have often increased my perplexities; and the end was to make me cease from human dependence, and wail upon God from the dust of self despair. To him, therefore, I desire to point you and myself, in the person of Jesus Christ. This incarnate God receives weary, perplexed sinners still, and gives them solid rest. He teaches as no man ever taught; his words have spirit and life; nor can he possibly mistake our case. I am, madam, your fellow servant in the patience and kingdom of Jesus,

J. FLETCHER.

LXXVIII.-*To Miss Ireland*.

MADELEY, *Dec*. 5, 1768.

MY DEAR AFFLICTED FRIEND,-I hear you are returned from the last journey you took in search of bodily health. Your heavenly Father sees fit to deny it you, not because he hateth you, “for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,” but because health and life might be fatal snares to your soul, out of which you could not escape, but by tedious illness, and an early death. Who knows also, whether by all you have

suffered, and still suffer, our gracious Lord does not intend to kill you to the flesh and to the world, and both to you? Beside, our hearts are so stupid, and our insensibility so great, that the Father of our spirits sees it necessary to put some of his sharpest and longest thorns into our flesh, to make us go to our dear Jesus for the balmy graces of his Spirit.

I believe some are driven out of all the refuges of crafty and indolent nature, only by the nearest and last approaches of that faithful minister and servant of Christ,-Death. Of this I had a remarkable instance no later than last Monday, when God took to himself one of my poor afflicted parishioners, a boy of fifteen years of age, who was turned out of the infirmary two years ago as incurable. From that time he grew weaker every day by the running of a wound; but his poor soul did not gather strength. In many respects one would have thought his afflictions were lost upon him. He seemed to rest more in his sufferings, and his patience under them, than in the Saviour's blood and righteousness. Being worn to a skeleton, he took to his death bed; where I found him the week before last, with his candle burning in the socket, and no oil seemingly in the vessel. I spent an hour in setting before him the greatness of his guilt in this respect, that he had been so long under the rod of God, and had not been whipt out of his careless unbelief to the bosom of Jesus Christ. He fell under the conviction, confessed that particular guilt, and began to call on the Lord with all the earnestness his dying frame would allow. This was on the Wednesday; and, on the Wednesday following, the God, who delivers those that are appointed to die, set one of his feet upon the rock, and the next Sunday the other. He had chiefly used that short petition of the Lord's prayer, “Thy kingdom come;” and spent his last hours in testifying, as his strength would allow, that the kingdom was come, and he was going to the King; to whom he invited his joyful, mournful mother to make the best of her way after him. Five or six days before his death, my wicked, unbelieving heart might have said, To what purpose hath God afflicted so long and so heavily this poor worm? But the Lord showed that he had been all that while driving the spear of consideration and conviction, till at last it touched him in a sensible part, and made him cry to the Saviour in earnest. And whoever called upon him in vain? No one. Not even that poor indolent collier boy, who for two years would not so much as cross the way to hear me preach. Yet how good was the Lord! because his body was too weak to bear any terrors in his mind, he showed him mercy without. The moment I heard him pray and saw him feel after a Saviour, my fears on his account vanished; and though he had not been suffered to testify so clearly of God's kingdom, yet I should have had a joyful hope that God had taken him home.

Like the poor youth and myself you have but one enemy, my dear friend,-an indolent, unbelieving heart; but the Lord hath driven it to a corner, to make you cry to him, who hath been waiting at the door all these years of trouble, to bring you pardon, peace, and eternal life, in the midst of the pangs of bodily death: Jesus is his name. Salvation and love are his nature. He is the Father of eternity;-your Father of course. All the love that is in Mrs. Ireland's breast, is nothing to the abyss of love that is in your Creator's heart. A mother may forget her sucking child, “but I will not forget thee,” says he to every poor distressed soul that claims his help.

O fear not, my friend, to say I will arise and go to this Father, though I have sinned greatly against heaven and in his sight. Lo he rises and runs to meet and embrace you. He hath already met you in the virgin's womb; there he did so cleave to your flesh and spirit that he assumed both, and wears them as a pledge of love to you. Claim in return, claim as you can his blood and Spirit. Both are now the property of every dying sinner that is not above receiving by faith the unspeakable gift.

Your father has crossed the sea for you; Jesus has done more: he hath crossed the abyss that lies between heaven and earth, between the Creator and the creature. He has waded through the sea of his tears, blood, and agonies, not to take you to the physicians at Montpelier, but to become your Physician and Saviour himself; to support you under all your bodily tortures, to sanctify all your extremities, and to heal your soul by his multiplied stripes. Your father has spared no expense to restore you to health; but Jesus, who wants you in your prime, hath spared no blood in his veins to wash you from, your sins, write your pardon, and seal your title to glory.

O my friend, delay not cheerfully to surrender yourself to this good Shepherd. He will gladly lay you on the arm of his power, torn as you are with the bruises of sin and disease, and will carry you triumphantly to his heavenly sheepfold. Look not at your sins without beholding his blood and righteousness. Eye not death but to behold, through that black door, your gracious Saviour, saying, "Fear not, O thou of little faith; wherefore dost thou doubt?" Consider not eternity but as the place where you are going to enter with the Bridegroom of souls, and rest from all your sins and miseries. View not the condemning law of God, but as made honourable by Him, who was a curse for you, and bore the malediction of the law, by hanging, bleeding, and dying on the cursed tree, in your place. If you think of hell, let it be to put vou in mind to believe that the blood of God incarnate hath quenched its devouring flames. If you have no comfort, mistrust not Jesus on that account; on the contrary, take advantage from it to give greater-glory to God, by believing, as Abraham, in hope against hope. And let this be your greatest comfort, that Jesus, who had all faith and patience, cried out for you in his dying moments, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" As your strength will bear exertion, and his grace apprehended will allow, surrender yourself constantly to him as the purchase of his blood, and invite him earnestly to you, as a poor worm, perishing without him. In this simple, Gospel way, wait the Lord's leisure, and he will comfort your heart. He will make all his goodness to pass before you here, or take you hence to show you what you could not bear in flesh and blood, the direct beams of the uncreated beauty of your heavenly Spouse.

I hope you take care to have little or nothing else mentioned to and about you but his praises and promises. Your tongue and ears are going to be silent in the grave;-now, or never, use them to hear and speak good of his name. Comfort your weeping friends. Reprove the backsliders. Encourage seekers. Water and you shall be watered. Death upon you, makes you through Christ a mother in Israel. Arise as Deborah. Remember the praying, believing, preaching, though dying thief. And be not afraid to drop a word for him who openeth a fountain of blood for you in his

dying, tortured body. Suffer, live, die at his feet, and you will soon revive, sing, and reign in his bosom for evermore. Farewell in the Conqueror of death, and Prince of life.

J. FLETCHER.

LXXIX.-*To Lady Huntingdon*.

MADELEY, *Jan*. 3, 1768.

MY LADY,-A thousand thanks to your ladyship for the letter you were so kind as to favour me with; it relieved me, in a great measure, of the fears I had concerning your health. Blessed be our GOD who spares you to see the beginning of a new year, and to fill up the space of it with inward acts of faith and love toward Him who did not abhor the virgin's womb and outward attempts to promote every where the savour of his knowledge. May the child born, and the Son given, show himself more abundantly than ever to be *wonderful* in his works and ways with regard to your ladyship's soul and projects! May you find him turning this year into a Christian jubilee wherever his providence shall direct your steps; and may your very enemies be forced to confess that *the mighty God* and *the Prince of Peace* is your sun, shield, and exceeding great reward. What this year may bring forth who knows? This, however, we know;-all will be welcome that he shall be pleased to appoint; and nothing will befall us but by his appointment, for the very hairs of our head are all numbered. With what angelic peace and martyr-like intrepidity ought this consideration to inspire us! O for more faith to persevere, as seeing the invisible, as carrying this Saviour in arms of love with the sensibility of exulting Simeon! I am through mercy in some feeble manner penetrated with a sense of the necessity of abandoning myself to the holy child JESUS, as a worthless mite toward the reward of his humiliation. If the Word was made flesh; if the Most High exchanged his throne for a manger, his heaven for a stable, and his transcendent majesty for the apparent feebleness of an infant, good God, into what abyss of shame and humility should I plunge myself! Methinks, if my eyes were truly opened to see this mystery of godliness, I should instantly be dissolved into tears of astonishment and love. O pray for me, insensible me, that the Holy Ghost may teach me to sound the depths of incarnate love, or at least to lose myself in their immensity together with your ladyship. It is an ocean without bottom. May we fall into it every moment, as insignificant drops of gall, to be absorbed in those pure and mighty waters. There the mountains of our iniquities, and the valleys of our deficiencies, are more effectually covered than the highest mountains were by the waters of the flood. Our temptations, transgressions, losses, and pains, are lost here like drops or showers in the sea. We are in this sea; it fills heaven and earth; and if we meet now and then in it with a dash against the rock of adversity, or a storm from the boisterous winds of temptation, it is only to make our scum go from us as ISAIAH says. Welcome then even contrary winds; they are in reality favourable. Some will no doubt blow upon your ladyship from that little point of the compass, *Trevecka*; but the LORD hath them in his hands; fear not, the government is still upon his shoulders. I thank your ladyship for having

recommended me to Easterbrook. I hope he will be the captain of the school, and a great help to the master as well as a spur to the students. He hath good parts, a most happy memory, and a zeal that would gladden your ladyship's heart. He has preached no less than four times to-day; and seems indeed in his own element when he is seeking after the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He is employed every evening in the work of the LORD; and I give him the more opportunity to exercise his talent, as it appears he does it far better than I. I beg two things for him; first, that it may hold; secondly, that he may be kept humble. He would at first live upon potatoes and water; but finding it may impair his health, I have got him to table with me, and shall gladly pay his board; he works for me, and the workman is worthy of his hire. Our young collier seems a little discouraged with regard to the hopes of his being admitted one of your students; he thinks he stands no chance if all must be qualified as he is. With regard to books, I am in doubt what to write to your ladyship. Having studied abroad, and used rather foreign than English books with my pupils, I am not acquainted with the books Great Britain affords well enough to select the best and most concise. Beside, a plan of studies must be fixed upon first before proper books can be chosen. Grammar, logic, rhetoric, with ecclesiastical history, and a little natural philosophy and geography, with a great deal of practical divinity, will be sufficient for those who do not care to dive into languages. Mr. Townsend and C. Wesley might, by spending an hour together, make a proper choice, and I would recommend them not to forget Watts' Logic, and his History of the Bible, by questions and answers, which seem to me excellent books of the kind for clearness and order. Mr. Wesley's Natural Philosophy contains as much as is wanted, or more. Mason's Essay on Pronunciation will be worth their attention. Henry and Gill on the Bible, with the four volumes of Baxter's Practical Works, Keach's Metaphors, Taylor on the Types, printed at Trevecka, Gurnal's Christian Armour, Edwards on Preaching, Johnson's English Dictionary, and Mr. Wesley's Christian Library, may make part of the little library. The book of Baxter I mention, I shall take care to send to Trevecka, as a mite toward the collection, together with Usher's Body of Divinity, Scapula's Greek Lexicon, and Littleton's Latin Dictionary.

With regard to those who propose to learn Latin and Greek, the master your ladyship will appoint may choose to follow his particular method. Mr. Wesley's books printed for the use of Christian youths, seem to me short and proper, and their expense less, which, I suppose, should be consulted. Two or three dictionaries of Bailey or Dyke, for those who learn English, with two or three Cole's dictionaries, Screvelius' and Pasor's, for those who will learn Latin and Greek, may be a sufficient stock at first.

The woman I mentioned died as happy, I trust, as I described her; but she remained speechless some days through the violence of her disorder. Another I buried the same week, who died as triumphant as Mr. Janaway. God prepare us for that solemn change! Mr. Easterbrook joins me in duty to your ladyship. We have rejoiced greatly together at the opening made by the death of Lord B------ , tor the spreading of the Gospel: may many enter in at that door, and especially all the relations he hath left behind. Mr. James Stillingfleet is presented by Mr. Hill to the living of Shawbury,

eight miles from Shrewsbury, and twenty from here. I thank the Lord for this fellow helper. My Christian respects wait upon all that love Jesus about your ladyship. I am your ladyship's unworthy servant,

J. FLETCHER.

LXXX.-*To James Ireland, Esq*.

MADELEY, *Dec*. 30, 1769.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-Last night I received your obliging letter, and am ready to accompany you to Montpelier, provided you will go with me to Nyon. I shall raise about twenty guineas, and with that sum, a gracious Providence, and your purse, I hope we shall want for nothing: if the Lord sends me, I should want nothing, though I had nothing, and though my fellow traveller was no richer than myself.

I hope to be at Bristol soon, to offer you my services to pack up. You desired to have a Swiss servant, and I offer myself to you in that capacity; for I shall be no more ashamed of serving you, as far as I am capable of doing it, than I am of wearing your livery.

Two reasons (to say nothing of the pleasure of your company) engage me to go with you to Montpelier; a desire to visit some poor Hugonots in the south of France, and the need I have to recover a little French, before I go to converse with my compatriots.

The priest at Madeley is going to open his mass house, and I have declared last Sunday, that I propose to strip the whore of Babylon, and expose her nakedness to-morrow. All the Papists are in a great ferment, and they have held meetings to consult on the occasion. One of their bloody bullies came to “picks up,” as he said, a quarrel with me, and what would have been the consequence had not I providentially had company with me I know not. How far more their rage may be kindled tomorrow, I don't know: but I question whether it will be right for me to leave the field in these circumstances. I forgot to mention that two of our poor ignorant Churchmen are going to join the mass house, which is the cause of my having taken up arms also. Farewell. Yours,

J. FLETCHER

LXXXI.-*To James Ireland, Esq*.

TREVECKA, *Jan*. 13, 1770.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I know not what to think of our journey. My heart frequently recoils. I have lost all hopes of being able to preach in French, and I think if I could they would not permit me. I become more stupid every day; my memory fails me in

a surprising manner. I am good for nothing but to go and bury myself in my parish. I have those touches of misanthropy which make solitude my element: judge, then, whether I am fit to go into the world. On the other hand, I fear that your journey is undertaken partly from complaisance to me, and in consequence of the engagement we made to go together. I acquit you of your promise, and if your business does not really demand your presence in France, I beg you will not think of going there on my account. The bare idea of giving you trouble would make the journey ten times more disagreeable to me than the season of the year.

The day after I wrote to you I preached the sermons against popery, which I had promised to my people: and Mr. S--t--r called out several times in the church yard as the people went out of church, that "there was not one word of truth in the whole of my discourse, and that he would prove it," and told me that "he would produce a gentleman who should answer my sermon, and the pamphlet I had distributed." I was therefore obliged to declare in the church, that I should not quit England, and was only going into Wales, from whence I would return soon to reply to the answer of Mr. S--t--r and the priest, if they should offer any. I am thus obliged to return to Madeley by my word so publicly pledged, as well as to raise a little money for my journey. Were it not for these circumstances, I believe I should pay you a visit at Bristol, notwithstanding my misanthropy.

The hamper, which you mention, and for which I thank you, provided it be the last, arrived three days before my departure; but not knowing what it was, nor for whom it was intended, I put it in my cellar without opening it. I want the living water rather than cider, and righteousness more than clothes. I fear, however, lest my unbelief should make me set aside the fountain whence it flows, as I did your hamper. Be that as it may, it is high time to open the treasures of Divine mercy, and to seek in the heart of Jesus for the springs of love, righteousness, and life. The Lord give us grace so to seek that we may find, and be enabled to say, with the woman in the Gospel, "I have found the piece of silver which I had lost."

If your affairs do not really call you to France, I will wait until Providence and grace shall open a way for me to the mountains of Switzerland, if I am ever to see them again. Adieu. Give yourself wholly to God. A divided heart, like a divided kingdom, falls naturally by its own gravity, either into darkness or into sin. My heart's desire is, that the love of Jesus may fill your soul, and that of your unworthy and greatly obliged servant,

J. FLETCHER.

LXXXII.-*To the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley*.

MADELEY, *Jan.*, 1775.

MY VERY DEAR SIR,-I thank you for your letter, and your very friendly postscript to your brothers I am glad you did not altogether disapprove of my "Essay on Truth."

The letter, I grant, professeth but little until the Spirit animates it. I had, some weeks ago, one of these touches, which realize, or rather spiritualise the letter, and it convinced me more than ever, that what I say in this tract of the Spirit and of faith is truth.

I am also persuaded that the faith and spirit, which belong to perfect Christianity, are at a very low ebb even among believers. When the Son of man cometh to set up his kingdom, shall he find Christian faith upon the earth? Yes; but I fear as little as he found of Jewish faith when he came in the flesh.

I believe you can rest either with the easy Antinomian or the busy Pharisee. You and I have nothing to do but to die to all that is of a sinful nature, and to pray for the power of an endless life. God make us faithful to our convictions, and keep us from the snares of outward things. You are in danger from music, children, poetry; and I from speculation, controversy, sloth, &c, &c. Let us watch against the deceitfulness of self and sin in all their appearances.

What power of the Spirit do you find among the believers in London? What openings of the kingdom? Is the well springing up in many hearts? Are many souls dissatisfied, and looking for the kingdom of God in power? Watchman, what of the night?-What of the day?-What of the dawn?

I feel the force of what you say in your last about the danger of so encouraging the inferior dispensation, as to make people rest short of the faith which belongs to perfect Christianity. I have tried to obviate it in some parts of the Equal Check, and hope to do it more effectually in my reply to Mr. Hill's *Creed for Perfectionists*. Probably I shall get nothing by my polemic labours but loss of friends, and charges of “novel chimeras,” on both sides. I expect a letter from you on the subject: write with openness, and do not fear to discourage me, by speaking your disapprobation of what you dislike. My aim is to be found at the feet of all, bearing and forbearing, until truth and love bring better days. I am, Rev. and dear sir, your most affectionate brother and son in the Gospel,

J. FLETCHER.

LXXXIII.-*To Mr. Charles Perronet*.

BRISTOL, *July* 12, 1776.

MY VERY DEAR BROTHER.-Having an opportunity of writing a line to you, by a friend whom I meet daily at the hot well, and who is about to set out for Canterbury, I gladly embrace this opportunity of thanking you for your last favour about my health. I am here, drinking the waters; with what effect time will show. The Lord keeps me hanging by a thread: he weighs me in the balance for life and death: I trust him for the choice: he knows, far better than I, which is the best; and I leave all to his unerring wisdom. The fumigating medicine you recommend me, is advertised in the

pump room; but my physician says it is not proper in my case. I fumigate my lungs with vinegar, drink the waters, and live upon vegetables. These, with some pills, change of air, and moderate exercise, make the whole of my physical regimen, if you add bleeding.

With respect to my mind, I am calm, and wait in submission what the Lord will say concerning me. I wait to be baptized into all his fulness, and trust the word, the faithful word of his grace. Afflictions and shakes may be a ploughing necessary to make way for the heavenly seed, and to prepare me to bring some fruit in life, or in death. Whether it be in the former or in the latter, I hope I shall live and die the object of your love, and subject of your prayers, as you are of the cordial affection and good wishes of, my very dear friend, your devoted brother, and obliged companion in tribulation,

J. FLETCHER.

LXXXIV.-*To James Ireland, Esq.*

MADELEY, *Sept*. 7, 1776.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,-I thank you for your kind letter, and am glad you will continue to oppose bigotry, though I would not have you bring a whole house about your ears, for the sake of so insignificant a creature as I am. As many, who espouse the sentiments of my opponents, condemn me without having heard me out, and upon the dreadful charges which they have brought against me, they are not much to blame; for what good man can think well of a blasphemer, and an enemy to the Gospel? I hope, for my part, to do what shall be in my power to remove prejudices, and trust to gain some resignation and patience, by what I shall not be able to remove. God is my witness, that I honour and love them, though I will never part with my liberty of exposing error, wherever I shall detect it. Why might I not endeavour to take off a spot from a friend's sleeve, without running the risk of losing his friendship, and incurring his ill will?

My health is, I thank God, better than when I wrote last. I have not yet preached, rather from a sense of my duty to my friends, and high thoughts of Mr. Greaves' labours, (who does the work of an evangelist to better purpose than I,) than to spare myself; for, if I am not mistaken, I am as able to do my work now, as I was a year ago.

A fortnight ago I paid a visit to West Bromwick: I ran away from the kindness of my parishioners, who oppressed me with tokens of their love. To me there is nothing so extremely trying as excessive kindness. I am of the king's mind; when the people showed their love to him on his journey to Portsmouth, "I can bear," he said, "the hissings of a London mob, but these shouts of joy are too much for me." You, my dear friend, Mrs. Ireland, Mrs. Norman, and all your family, have put me to that severe trial, to which all trials caused by the hard words that have been spoken of me

are nothing. I return you all my warmest thanks, and pray that, excess excepted, you may all meet, in the day of your weakness, as kind nurses and benefactors, as you have proved to me.

At our age, a recovery can be but a short reprieve: let us, then, give up ourselves daily to the Lord, as people who have no confidence in the flesh, and do not trust to to-morrow. I find my weakness, unprofitableness, and wretchedness, daily more and more; and the more I find them, the more need I have to sink into self abhorrence. Nor do I despair to sink one day so in it, as to die to self, and revive in my God. Farewell.

J. FLETCHER.

LXXXV.-*To the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley*.

MADELEY, *Sept*. 15, 1776.

MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,-I lately consulted a pious gentleman, near Lichfield, famous for his skill in the disorders of the breast. He assures me I am in no immediate danger of a consumption of the lungs; and that my disorder is upon the nerves, in consequence of too much close thinking. He permitted me to write and preach in moderation, and gave me medicines, which, I think, are of service in taking off my feverish heats. My spitting of blood is stopped, and I may yet be spared to travel with you as an invalid.

If God adds one inch to my span I see my calling. I desire to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified, revealed in the Spirit. I long to feel the utmost power of the Spirit's dispensation; and I will endeavour to bear my testimony to the glory of that dispensation, both with my pen and tongue. Some of our injudicious or inattentive friends will probably charge me with novelty for it; but be that as it will, let us meekly stand for the truth as it is in Jesus, and trust the Lord for every thing. I thank God I feel so dead to popular applause, that, I trust, I should not be afraid to maintain a truth against all the world; and yet I dread to dissent from any child of God, and feel ready to condescend to every one. O what depths of humble love, and what heights of Gospel truth do I sometimes see! I want to sink into the former and rise into the latter. Help me by your example, letters, and prayers; and let us, after our forty years' abode in the wilderness with Moses and John, break forth after our Joshua into the Canaan of pure love. I am, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

LXXXVI.-*To the Rev. Joseph Benson*.

LOWESTOFF, *Nov*. 21, 1776.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-Mr. Wesley having invited me to travel with him to see if change of air, and motion, will be the means of restoring me to a share of my former health, I have accompanied him through Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, and Norfolk: and I hope I am rather better than worse. I find it good to be with this extraordinary servant of God: I think his diligence and wisdom are matchless. It is a good school for me: only I am too old a scholar to make a proficiency. However, let us live to God to-day, and trust him for to-morrow: so that whether we are laid up on a sick bed, or in a damp grave, or whether we are yet able to act, we may be able to feel and say,

"God is the sea of love
Where all my pleasures roll;
The circle where my passions move,
And centre of my soul."

I find the nearer I am to you the more glad I should be to be strengthened by the mutual faith of you and me. The bearer saith he hopes to be soon at Newcastle, and I send this scrawl by him, to assure you of my repentance toward God, my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, my lively expectation of the kingdom in the Holy Ghost, and my brotherly love toward you. The Lord fill you with every grace and gift which can complete the Christian and the evangelist! And what I ask for you, I trust you will not forget to ask for your affectionate friend and brother,

J. FLETCHER.

LXXXVII.-*To James Ireland, Esq.*

NEWINGTON, *Jan*. 29, 1777.

THANKS be to God, and to my dear friend, for favours upon favours, for undeserved love, and the most endearing tokens of it. I have received your obliging letters, full of kind offers, and your jar full of excellent grapes. May God open to you the book of life, and seal upon your heart all the offers and promises it contains; and may the treasures of Christ's love, and all the fruits of the Spirit, be abundantly open to my dear friend and unwearied benefactor!

Providence sent me last Sunday Dr. Turner, who, under God, saved my life twenty-three years ago in a dangerous illness; and I am inclined to try what his method will do. He orders me asses' milk, chicken &c, forbids me riding, and recommends the greatest quietness. He prohibits the use of Bristol water; advises some waters of a purgative nature; and tries to promote expectoration by a method

that so far answers, though I spit by it more blood than before. It will be in order to cure one way or other.

With respect to my soul, I find it good to be in the balance, awfully weighed every day for life or death. I thank God, the latter has lost its sting, and endears to me the Prince of life. But, O! I want Christ, my resurrection, to be a thousand times more dear to me; and doubt not he will be so when I am filled with the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. Let us wait for that glory, praising God for all we have received, and do daily receive; and trusting him for all we have not yet received. Let our faith do justice to his veracity, our hope to his goodness, and our love to all his perfections. It is good to trust in the Lord, and his saints like well to hope in him. I am provided here with every necessary and convenient blessing for my state. The great have even done me the honour of calling: Mr. Shirley, Mr. Rowland Hill, Mr. Peckwell, &c. I exhort them to promote peace in the Church, which they take kindly. I hope God will incline us all to peace, living, and dying. Lady Huntingdon has written me a kind letter also. O for universal, lasting kindness! This world to me has now become a world of love. May it be so to my dear friend also. My kindest love and thanks wait on yourself, Mrs. Ireland, and all your family.

J. FLETCHER.

LXXXVIII.-*To Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood.*

BRISLINGTON, *May* 28, 1777.

MY very dear friends and benefactors, Charles and Mary Greenwood. My prayers shall always be, that the merciful may find mercy, and that the great kindness I have found under your quiet roof, may be showed you every where under the canopy of heaven. I think with grateful joy on the days of calm retreat I have been blessed with at Newington, and lament my not having improved better the opportunity of sitting, like Mary, at the feet of my great Physician. May he requite your kind care to a dying worm, by abundantly caring for you and yours, and making all your bed in your sickness! May you enjoy full health! May you hunger and thirst after righteousness, both that of Christ and that of the Holy Spirit, and be abundantly filled therewith! May his rod and staff comfort you under all the troubles of life, the decays of the body, the assaults of the enemy, and the pangs of death! May the reviving cordials of the word of truth be ever within the reach of your faith, and may your eager faith make a ready and constant use of them; especially, when faintings come upon you, and your hands begin to hang down! May you stand on the cliffs of the Rock of ages, and there be safely sheltered when all the storms of justice shall fall around. May you have always such temporal and spiritual helps, friends, and comforts, as I have found in your pleasing retreat!

You have received a poor Lazarus, though his sores were not visible. You have had compassion, like the good Samaritan: you have admitted me to the enjoyment of your best things; and he, that did not deserve to have the dogs to lick his sores, has

always found the members of Jesus ready to prevent, to remove, or to bear his burdens. And now, what shall I say? What, but, “Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!” and thanks be to my dear friends for all their favours! They will, I trust, be found faithfully recorded in my breast, “when the great Rewarder of those, who diligently seek him, will render to every man according to his works.” Then shall a raised Lazarus appear in the gate to testify of the love of Charles and Mary Greenwood, and of their godly sister.

I thought myself a little better last Sunday; but I have since spit more blood than I had done for weeks before. Glory be to God for every providence! His will be done in me, by health or sickness, by life or death! All from him is, and, I trust, will always be welcome to your obliged pensioner,

J. FLETCHER.

LXXXIX.-*To Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood.*

1777.

TEN thousand blessings light upon the heads and hearts of my dear benefactors, Charles and Mary Greenwood! May their quiet retreat at Newington become a Bethel to them! May their offspring be born again there! And may the choicest consolations of the Spirit visit their minds, whenever they retire thither from the busy city! Their poor pensioner travels on, though slowly, toward the grave. His journey to the sea seems to him to have hastened, rather than retarded his progress to his old mother, earth. May every providential blast blow him nearer to the heavenly haven of his Saviour's breast; where, he hopes, one day, to meet all his benefactors, and among them, those whom he now addresses. O my dear friends, what shall I render? What to Jesus? What to you? May He who invites the heavy laden, take upon him all the burdens of kindness you have heaped on your Lazarus! And may angels, when you die, find me in Abraham's bosom, and bring you into mine, that, by all the kindness which may be shown in heaven, I may try to requite that which you have shown to your obliged brother,

J. FLETCHER.

XC.-*To Mrs. Thornton.*

BRISLINGTON, ---- 1777.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-You should have heard from me, if sometimes want of spirits to hold a pen, and for some days, want of paper, had not stood in the way of my inclination. Now I have paper and a degree of strength, how can I employ both better, than in trying to fulfil with my pen the great commandment, which contains my duty to God and my neighbour? But what can a pen do here? It can just testify what my heart feels: that no words can describe what I owe to my heavenly Benefactor, to my

earthly friends, and to you in particular, who have had so much patience as to stand by me and bear a share in my burdens, for so many months at home and abroad.

What shall I say? Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gifts;-for Jesus,-for the Spirit of Jesus;-for the members of Jesus' mystical body; and in particular am I bound to return thanks for those who have ministered, and still do minister to my wants, and share in my infirmities. Your meek humility forbids my saying, that among the many who, for Christ's sake, have debased themselves so far as to take up my cross with me and help me to bear it after my Lord; you stand in the first rank, and the first fruits of my gratitude are due to you. Simon of Cyrene bore our Lord's cross by compulsion: you have borne that of the most unworthy of his servants without compulsion, and now, what shall I render? A silent tear whispers, I can render nothing. May the merciful, faithful God, who has promised that a cup of cold water given to the least of his followers shall not lose its reward-may that omnipotent God who sees you in all the states of weakness, which await you between the present moment and the hour of death, give you all that can make your life comfortable, your trials tolerable, your death triumphant, and your eternity glorious!

What I ask for you, I also peculiarly beg for your dear brother and sister, who have vouchsafed to bind so dry, so insignificant (I had almost said, so rotten) a stick as myself in the bundle of that love with which they embrace the poor, the lame, the helpless, the loathsome, and those who have their sores without, as Lazarus, or within, as I. May we all be found bound up together in the bundle of life, light, and love with our Lord! And when he shall make up his jewels, may you all shine among his diamonds of the finest water and the first magnitude!

You want possibly to know how I go on. Though I am not worth a line, I shall observe, to the glory of my patient, merciful Preserver and Redeemer, that I am kept in sweet peace, and am looking for the triumphant joy of my Lord, and for the fulness expressed in these words, which sweetly filled the sleepless hours of last night:-

"Drawn,-and redeemed,-and seal'd,
I bless the One and Three;
With Father, Son, and Spirit fill'd
To all eternity."

With respect to my body, I sleep less and spit more blood than I did when you were here: nor can I bear the least trot of an easy horse. If this continues many days, instead of thinking to go and see my friends on the continent, I shall turn my steps to my earthly home, to be ready to lay my bones in my church yard: and in such a case, I shall put you in mind of your kind promise, that you would do to the last the office of a guardian angel,-hold up my hands in my last conflict, and close my eyes when it is over. Two of my parishioners came to convey me safe home, and had persuaded me to go with them in a post chaise; but I had so bad a night before the day I was to set out, that I gave it up. My prospects and ways are shut up, so that I have nothing to look at but Jesus and the grave. May I so look at them, as to live in him, my

resurrection and life; and die in all the meekness and holiness of any Lord and my all! I humbly request a continued interest in your fervent prayers, that I may be found completely ready when my Lord's messenger shall come for my soul. Adieu, my dear friend. God bless and reward you. I am your most affectionate friend and brother,

J. FLETCHER.

XCI.-*To the Rev. Mr. Greaves*.

NYON, *Sept*. 15, 1780.

MY DEAR FELLOW LABOURER,-I had fixed the time of my departure for this month; but now two hinderances stand in my way. When I came to collect the parts of my manuscript, I found the most considerable part wanting; and after a thousand searches, I was obliged to write it over again. This accident obliged me to put off my journey; and now the change of weather has brought back some symptoms of my disorder. I speak, or rather whisper with difficulty; but I hope the quantity of grapes I begin to eat will have as good an effect upon me, as in the last two autumns. Have patience then a little while. If things are not as you could wish, you can do but as I have done for many years-*learn patience by the things which you suffer*. Crossing our will, get ting the better of our own inclinations and growing in experience, are no mean advantages; and they may all be yours. Mr. Ireland writes me word, that if I return to England now, the winter will undo all I have been doing for my health for many years. However, I have not quite laid by the design of spending the winter with you; but do not expect me till you see me. I am, nevertheless, firmly purposed, that if I do not set out this autumn, I shall do so next spring, as early as I can.

Till I had this relapse I was able, thank God, to exhort in a private room three times a week: but the Lord Lieutenant will not allow me to get into a pulpit, though they permit the school masters, who are laymen, to put on a band and read the Church prayers: so high runs the prejudice. The clergy, however, tell me that if I will renounce my ordination, and get Presbyterian orders among them, they will allow me to preach: and, on these terms, one of the ministers of this town offers me his curacy. A young clergyman of Geneva, tutor to my nephew, appears to me a truly converted man; and he is so pleased when I tell him there are converted souls in England, that he will go over with me to learn English, and converse with the British Christians. He wrote last summer with such force to some of the clergy, who were stirring up the fire of persecution, that he made them ashamed, and we have since had peace from that quarter.

There is little genuine piety in these parts; nevertheless, there is yet some of the form of it; so far as to go to the Lord's table regularly four times a year There meet the adulterers, the drunkards, the swearers, the infidels, and even the materialists. They have no idea of the double damnation that awaits hypocrites. They look upon partaking that sacrament as a ceremony enjoined by the magistrate. At Zurich, the first town of this country, they have lately beheaded a clergyman, who wanted to

betray his country to the emperor, to whom it chiefly belonged. It is the town of the great reformer Zuinglius; yet there they poisoned the sacramental wine a few years ago. Tell it not in Gath! I mention this to show you there is occasion and great need to bear a testimony against the faults of the clergy here; and if I cannot do it from the pulpit, I must try to do it from the press. Their canons, which were composed by two hundred and thirty pastors, at the time of the reformation, are so spiritual and apostolic, that I design to translate them into English if I am spared.

Farewell, my dear brother. Take care, good, constant care of the flock committed to your charge; especially the sick and the young. Salute all our dear parishioners. Let me still have a part in your prayers, public and private; and rejoice in the Lord, as, through grace, I am enabled to do in all my little tribulations. I am your affectionate friend and fellow labourer,

J. FLETCHER.

XCII.-*To the societies in and about Madeley.*

NYON, *Sept*. 15, 1780.

GRACE and peace, truth and love be multiplied unto you all. Stand fast in the Lord my dear brethren, stand fast to Jesus; stand fast to one another; stand fast to the vow we have so often renewed together upon our knees, and at the Lord's table. Resolve to save yourselves altogether. Do not be so unloving, so cowardly, as to let one of your little company fall into the hands of the world and the devil: and agree to crucify the body of sin altogether.

I am still in a strait between the work which Providence cuts out for me here, and the love which draws me to you. When I shall have the pleasure of seeing you, let it not be imbittered by the sorrow of finding any of you half hearted and lukewarm. Let me find you all strong in the Lord, and increased in humble love. Salute from me all that followed with us fifteen years ago. Care still for your old brethren. Let there be no Cain among you, no Esau, no Lot's wife. Let the love of David and Jonathan, heightened by that of Martha, Mary, Lazarus, and our Lords shine in all your thoughts, your tempers, your words, your looks, and your actions. If you love one another, your little meetings will be a renewed feast; and the God of love, who is peculiarly present where two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, and in the spirit of love, will abundantly bless you. Bear me still upon your hearts in prayer, as I do you upon mine! and rejoice with me, that the Lord, who made, redeemed, and comforts us, bears us all upon his heart. I am yours in him,

J. FLETCHER.

XCIII.-*To Miss Loxdale.*

MADELEY, *May* 24, 1781.

DEAR MADAM,-I embrace the first opportunity of thanking my unknown friend for her kind Christian letter. As I believe you are sincere, and mean what your pen has traced upon paper, I may rejoice over a greater treasure than that of the Indies; I mean the treasure of a Christian friend; for nothing but Christianity could give you the courage to express any degree of friendship for so contemptible a neighbour. I shall preach here next Sunday, please God. If you can, and if you are not afraid of dining upon a bit of cold meat, come and dine with your new and yet old friend, who, though he cannot converse long with his friends, on account of his weakness, will find a quarter of an hour to assure you that, in the faith, hope, and love of the Gospel, he is, madam, your obliged friend and obedient servant,

J. FLETCHER.

XCIV.-To Miss Loxdale.

MADELEY, *June* 22, 1781.

GRACE, mercy, and truth, power, love, and joy, be multiplied to my dear friend, from the Father, Son, and Spirit, the threefold spring of life, light, and love. I never doubted your sincerity, my dear friend; and with pleasure I acknowledge, against the accuser of the brethren, that I can, without wavering, and with the assurance of faith and love, confess you a member of my Lord, a child of my heavenly Father, and a fellow heir of the kingdom, purchased for penitent believers. May the accuser fall as lightning, and his accusation be cast down by this word of my testimony. I believe too that you have received more than forgiving love. thee John xx. 22. But whether you have received the other Comforter in his fulness, or the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Ghost, is what it concerns you to inquire into. You may know that measure of grace by the following marks. It is great grace, and abundant life; it destroys self, it fills with power from on high, it perfects in one, it perfects in love. It is, at least, accompanied with the gift of prophecy.[4] It makes us always to triumph in Christ.

Ah! my friend, I sympathize with you in the weakness of your body, which does not permit you to take the kingdom of heaven by the violence of that praying, agonizing faith, which some can put forth when their souls come to a pinching want, or to a birth of desire. Take two or three observations about it: (1.) There are two kinds of wrestlings; the one, in which the Spirit of God in us is very active, and we are almost passive. You may thus passively wrestle, if the power of the Highest helps your infirmities. So some dying persons wrestle sometimes. (2.) There is another wrestling, in which we are very active, and the Spirit of God helps us imperceptibly. Follow, seek, wait-quietly, meekly, humbly wait for the former power. The latter kind of wrestling may not be so suitable for you. I advise you to imitate the Virgin Mary. Let strong people wrestle in the second manner, but do you gently, believingly, lifting

up your head in calm expectation, say, till you are overwhelmed with the power from on high, "'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to thy word.' For, as for me, I can do nothing but wait for thy salvation, and give glory to thy word of promise." You shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is unto you. Believe and pray with the will and the understanding, more than with the passions; with your sublimer, rather than with your inferior powers. I rejoice in you, your aunt, and sister, as of three who will be of a hundred and twenty in Shropshire, called to be all of one heart and one soul, all believing, loving, prophesying. Remember me to them in Christian regard, and permit my spirit to twist itself with the threefold cord, when you pull blessings from heaven upon yourselves and the Church. I thank you for the direction to Mr. Wesley. I shall now forward my letter to him. I am dear Miss Loxdale's affectionate servant,

J. FLETCHER.

XCV.-*To the Rev. Mr. Wesley*.

MADELEY, *June* 24, 1781.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,-As to Miss L-----, I believe her to be a simple, holy follower of the Lord. Nothing throws unscriptural mysticism down like holding out the promise of the Father, and the fulness of the Spirit, to be received now, by faith, in the two promisers, the Father and the Son. Ah! what is the penal fire of the mystics, to the burning love of the Spirit, revealing the glorious power of the Father and the Son, according to John xiv. 26, and filling us with all the fulness of God? Plain Scripture is better than all mystic refinements.

When I was at N----, near Geneva, three ministers received the word, and preached the truth. When persecution arose because of the word, the two pastors were afraid; but the curate of the first pastor, a burgess of the town, stood by me. This Timothy opened his house, when the pastors shut both their pulpits and houses; and I heard him preach a discourse before I came away, worthy of you, sir, upon the heights and depths of holiness. He wrote an apology for me, which he sent to the head of the persecuting clergy, and so stopped the torrent of wrath. He made observations upon the mischief done to Christianity by a bad clergy, such as George Fox, and you, sir, would not disown. When I told him of you and the Methodists, he expressed a great desire to come to England, to hear you, to see the English brethren, and to learn English, that he might read your works, and perhaps translate some of them. He can have no living in his own country, because he will not swear to prosecute all who propagate Arminian tenets; which is more honest than the clergy, many of whom are Arians, Socinians, or Deists, and do not scruple to take the Calvinian oaths! I shall endeavour to wait upon you at Leeds at the time of the conference; in the meantime, I am, Rev. and dear sir, your obedient servant, and affectionate son in the Gospel,

J. FLETCHER.

XCVI.-*To the Rev. Mr. Perronet.*

MADELEY, *Sept*. 4, 1781.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,-Your last favour I received, and rejoice that like a father in Christ, inured to disappointments and losses, you greet your friends in light, and commend, with deep resignation, those who survive, to the mercy of that God, who hath stood by you many years. O! dear sir, he will do better for them and for us than we either can ask or think. We need not then be staggered, when we see a black cloud hanging over our earthly enjoyments; even over the life of our choicest friends. We must hope against hope, that great good-yea, spiritual and eternal good, will come out of the external, transitory evils we fear or feel. We shall know hereafter why the Lord dealt so by us; in the meantime, let us say, like the Jews, "He has done all things well!"

I have been for some weeks in Yorkshire, chiefly at the house of an old friend of mine, Miss Bosanquet's, whose happy family put me in mind of yours. At my return home, I have found a letter from my brother, who informs me that my dear friend, your son, continues very weak. He is now at Gimel, a fine village between Lausanne and Geneva, where Miss Perronet's sister is settled. There he rides, and drinks asses' milk, and breathes the purest air. The Lord give his blessing to those means of health! and if he refuses it, may he give the best of blessings, saving health, and eternal life in Him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification! Mrs. Perronet is there with her two daughters, and my dear friend, so that if his illness should grow more grievous, he will not want for good attendance, and the most tender nursing.

I design to write soon to him and to Miss Perronet. Support him, dear sir, by your fatherly exhortations; they are balm to his blood, and marrow to his bones. Recommending myself to your prayers and blessing, I am, Rev. and dear sir, your affectionate and dutiful son in the Gospel,

J. FLETCHER.

XCVII.-*To Miss Hatton*.

YOU seem, madam, not to have a clear idea of the happiness of the love of Jesus, or at least of your privilege of loving him again. Your dulness in private prayer arises from the want of familiar friendship with Jesus. To obviate it, go to your closet, as if you were going to meet the dearest friend you ever had. Cast yourself immediately at his feet; bemoan your coldness before him; extol his love to you, till your heart breaks with a desire to love him; yea, till it actually melts with his love. Be you, if not the importunate widow, at least the importunate virgin, and get your Lord to avenge you of your adversary-I mean your cold heart.

You ask from me some directions to get a mortified spirit. To get this get recollection. Recollection is a dwelling within ourselves; being abstracted from the

creature, and turned toward God. It is both outward and inward. Outward recollection consists in Hence from all idle and superfluous words, and a wise disentanglement from the world; keeping to our own business, observing and following the order of God for ourselves, and shutting the ear against all curious and unprofitable matters. Inward recollection consists in shutting the door of the senses; in a deep attention to the presence of God, and in continual care of entertaining holy thoughts for fear of spiritual idleness. Through the power of the Spirit, let this recollection be steady, even in the midst of hurrying business: let it be calm and peaceable, and let it be lasting. Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. To maintain this recollection, beware of entering too deeply, and beyond what is necessary, into outward things; beware of suffering your affections to be entangled by worldly vanities, your imagination to amuse itself with unprofitable objects, and of indulging yourself in the commission of what are called small faults. For want of continuing in a recollected frame all the day, our times of prayer are frequently dry and useless; imagination prevails, and the heart wanders; whereas we easily pass from recollection to delightful prayer. Without this spirit, there can be no useful self denial, nor can we know ourselves; but where it dwells, it makes the soul all eye, all ear; traces and discovers sin, repels its first assaults, or crushes it in its earliest risings. But take care here to be more taken up with thoughts of God than of yourself; and consider how hardly recollection is sometimes obtained, and how easily it is lost. Use no forced labour to raise a particular frame; nor tire, fret, nor grow impatient if you have no comfort; but meekly acquiesce, and confess yourself unworthy of it; lie prostrate in humble submission before God, and patiently wait for the smiles of Jesus. May the following motives stir you up to the pursuit of recollection. (1.) Without it, God's voice cannot be heard in the soul. (2.) It is the altar on which we must offer up our Isaacs. (3.) It is instrumentally a ladder, (if I may be allowed the expression,) to ascend to God. (4.) By it the soul gets to its centre, out of which it cannot rest. (5.) Man's soul is the temple of God; recollection the holy of holies. (6.) As the wicked by recollection find hell in their hearts, so faithful souls find heaven. (7.) With out recollection, all means of grace are useless, or make but a light and transitory impression. If we would be recollected, we must expect to suffer. Sometimes God does not speak immediately to the heart; we must then continue to listen with a more humble silence. Sometimes assaults of the heart, or of the temper, may follow, together with a weariness, and a desire to turn the mind to something else: here we must be patient. By patience unwearied we inherit the promises. Dissipated souls are severely punished. If any man abide not in Christ, he is cast out as a branch;-cast out of the light of God's countenance, and barrenness follows in the use of the means. The world and Satan gather and use him for their service. He is cast into the fire of the passions, of guilt, of temptation, and perhaps of hell. As dissipation always meets its punishment, so recollection never fails of its reward. After a patient waiting, comes communion with God, and the sweet sense of his peace and love. Recollection is a castle, an inviolable fortress against the world and the devil: it renders all times and places alike, and it is the habitation where Christ and his bride dwell.

I give you these hints, not to set Christ aside, but that you may, according to the light and power given to you, take these stones, and place them upon the chief corner

stone, and cement them with the blood of Jesus until the superstructure, in some measure, answers to the excellence of the foundation. I beg an interest in your prayers for myself and those committed to my charge; and am, with sincerity, madam, your servant for Christ's sake,

J. FLETCHER.

XCVIII.-*To the Hon. Mrs. C.*

CROSS HALL, YORKSHIRE, *Dec*. 26, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-Your favour of the 4th instant did not reach me until a considerable time after date, through my being still absent from Madeley; a clergyman of this neighborhood having made an exchange with me, to facilitate my settling some affairs of a temporal nature in this county. The kind part you take in my happiness demands my warmest thanks; and I beg you will accept them multiplied by those which my dear partner presents to you. Yes, my dear friend, I am married in my old age, and have a new opportunity of considering a great mystery, in the most perfect type of our Lord's mystical union with his Church. I have now a new call to pray for a fulness of Christ's holy, gentle, meek, loving Spirit, that I may love my wife as he loved his spouse, the Church. But the emblem is greatly deficient. The Lamb is worthy of his spouse, and more than worthy, whereas I must acknowledge myself unworthy of the yoke-fellow whom Heaven has reserved for me. She is a person after my own heart; and I make no doubt we shall increase the number of the happy marriages in the Church militant. Indeed, they are not so many, but it may be worth a Christian’s while to add one more to the number. God declared it was not good that man, a social being, should live alone, and therefore he gave him a helpmeet for him: for the same reason our Lord sent forth his disciples two and two. Had I searched the three kingdoms, I could not have found one brother willing to share gratis my weal, wo, and labours, and complaisant enough to unite his fortunes to mine; but God has found me a partner, a sister, a wife, to use St. Paul's language, who is not afraid to face with me the colliers and bargemen of my parish, until death part us.

Buried together in our country village, we shall help one another to trim our lamps, and wait, as I trust you do continually, for the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom. Well; for us the heavenly child is born, to us a double Son is given, and with him the whole kingdom of grace and glory. O my dear friend, let us press into, and meet in both of these kingdoms. Our Surety and Saviour is the way and the door into them; and blessed be free grace, the way is free, as the king's highway, and the door open, like the arms of Jesus crucified.

January 1st, 1782. I live, blessed be God, to devote myself again to his blessed service in this world, or in the next, and to wish my dear friends all the blessings of a year of jubilee. Whatever this year brings forth, may it bring us the fullest measures of salvation attainable on earth, and the most complete preparation for heaven. I have

a solemn call to gird my loins and keep my lamp burning. Strangely restored to health and strength, considering my years, by the good nursing of my dear partner, I ventured to preach of late as often as I did formerly, and after having read prayers and preached twice on Christmas day, &c., I did, last Sunday, what I had never done,-I continued doing duty from ten till past four in the afternoon, owing to christenings, churchings, and the sacrament, which I administered to a church full of people; so that I was obliged to go from the communion table to begin the evening service, and then to visit some sick. This has brought back upon me one of my old, dangerous symptoms, so that I had flattered myself in vain to do the whole duty of my own parish. My dear wife is nursing me with the tenderest care, gives me up to God with the greatest resignation, and helps me to rejoice that life and death, health and sickness, work all for our good, and are all ours, as blessed instruments to for ward us in our journey to heaven. We intend to set out for Madeley to-morrow. The prospect of a winter's journey is not sweet; but the prospect of meeting you and your dear sister, and Lady Mary, and Mrs. L. and Mrs. G., and all our other companions in tribulation, in heaven, is delightful. The Lord prepare and fit us for that glorious meeting! As soon as I reach Madeley, I shall write to Lady Mary. Give my best respects to her, to our dear sister, and to the ladies I have just named; and believe me to be, my dear friend and fellow traveller to Zion, your most obliged and affectionate servant,

J. FLETCHER.

The following letters, addressed principally to Mr. William Perronet, explain the circumstances under which they were written. They have been obligingly communicated, exclusively for this edition, by Mrs. Grey of Walthamstow, a pious descendant of the late reverend Vincent Perronet, vicar of Shoreham. Extracts from a few of them have been inserted by the late Rev. Joseph Benson, in his excellent life of the amiable author. Published now in a regular series, according to their respective dates, though they may be regarded chiefly as letters of business, they will afford strong additional proofs of Mr. Fletcher’s heavenly skill, in compelling the most common topics of daily occurrence to contribute something, either in the form of simile or contrast, toward exalting the honour and glory of his gracious Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

Mr. William Perronet was a surgeon and apothecary in London. The friendship which subsisted between the different branches of his family and Mr. Fletcher, induced him to wait upon the latter, and to offer him the benefit of his professional advice, while this dear friend of his venerable father was an invalid in the house of Mr. Greenwood at Stoke Newington, and afterward at Bristol, to which city he repaired, by the direction of his medical advisers, in April, 1777.

Of this young gentleman Mr. Benson gives the subjoined account:-“One of those who visited him at Newington, was Mr. W. Perronet; a pious, sensible, benevolent, and amiable man, who was snatched hence in the strength of his years. He often said, the first sight of Mr. Fletcher fixed an impression upon his mind, which never wore

off, till it issued in a real conversion to God, accompanied with a most affectionate and lasting regard for the instrument of that happy change. Of this friendly man, Mr. F. writes thus to Miss Perronet:-'I cannot tell you how much I am obliged to your dear brother for all his kind, brotherly attendance as a physician. He has given me his time, his long walks, his remedies: he has brought me Dr. Turner several times, and will not so much as allow me to re-imburse his expenses.'"

XCIX.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

BRISTLETON, *Nov*. 19, 1777.

DEAR SIR,-I thank you for your two favours from London, added to so many received at Newington and here. May the Lord visit you when you shall be sick! And may he raise you such kind friends, helpers, and comforters, as he has raised to me! I have kept plying the bark since you went, and have taken a pound, I think. It seems to be blessed to me as well as the rhubarb. My spitting of blood is almost stopped; my breast stronger. I am, I hope, better upon the whole; and, if I do not relapse, I might yet be able to preach, according to your dear father's prophecy. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing and thanking you, sir, and Dr. Turner, in my way to Dover, some time the week after next. I have not seen any physician since you went. Hope to wait this week on Dr. Ludlow to thank him. I am much obliged to your dear sister for her letter and receipt. Hope to answer the former, though I shall not, I think, make use of the latter.

O my dear friend, Jesus is at the end of the race. Your dear brothers [5] have run it out; we follow them. O for more speed-more winged despatch-more faith-more of that power which takes the kingdom of heaven by violence!

That the Lord would give us more power, and make us more faithful to that which we have, is, dear sir, the earnest prayer of your obliged friend and obedient servant,

J. FLETCHER.

C.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

NYON, IN SWITZERLAND, *June* 2, 1778.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-When I wrote to you last month, by Mrs. Ireland, I mentioned, that, at Morges, I had seen two ladies of your family, two Miss Perronets, who have married two brothers, Messieurs Monod. Since that time they have requested me to send to your father the enclosed memorial, which, I hope, will prove of use to your family. As the bad writing, and the language, may make the understanding of it difficult to you, I send you the substance of it, and of the letter of the ladies' lawyer, as follows:-

Mr. Emanuel Perronet, chief justice at Chateau d'Oex, in the canton of Berne, had an estate worth six or seven thousand pounds sterling. By will, he left it to his son, and his son's children. His son had a son, the Rev. Mr. Theodore Perronet, who died at Geneva in 1770, without will, and without children. Now, Mr. Emanuel Perronet, his grandfather, had ordered in his will, that if his son, or his grandson, should die without issue, his estate was to go to his nephews and nieces; namely, to the then unborn children of his three brothers, Mr. James Louis Perronet, Mr. Christian Perronet, and Mr. David Perronet, and to Mr. Beat Rodolph Perronet, a nephew of his (then born) by another brother, who, I suppose, was then dead.

Without any attention to this entail, some rich gentlemen of Geneva, who were related to Mr. Theodore Perronet by his mother, have taken possession of the estate, as being his nearest relations. Now Mr. James Louis Perronet, Mr. Christian Perronet, Mr. David Perronet, and their children are all dead, or supposed to be dead. (I hope, by the by, your father is one of them.) The estate has been claimed by the ladies I have seen, who are grand daughters of Mr. James Louis Perronet, the oldest brother of the testator, and who consequently were only grand nieces of the testator, and not his nieces. And they have lost their suit on that account, because the will of Mr. Emanuel Perronet mentioned his brothers, and his nephews, and nieces, but made no mention of the sons and daughters of his nephews and nieces. Had the father of the ladies, (who was also a clergyman,) been alive eight years ago, the estate would have been his, and the entail would have taken place without difficulty. But his daughters being one degree farther off, the judges on that account gave it against them at Geneva, where the case was tried.

Though the ladies have not succeeded, they should be glad that your father did; and he undoubtedly will, if he can *legally prove* that he is either Mr. Christian Perronet, or Mr. David Perronet, or the son of either of them. For then, as *brother* or *nephew* of the testator, and as being expressly mentioned in the will, he will recover the estate without any difficulty.

The ladies send their love to all your family, and desire to hear what account your father can give of his father, and what light can be thrown upon this affair. The Mr. Perronet, whose estate has been thus contended for, for want of one of the nephews mentioned in the will, is probably the same clergyman from whom I saw a letter at your house. His end had something tragical in it. He unfortunately fell into the Rhone at Geneva, and was drowned. This accident probably prevented his making a will. In what degree was your father related to him? If the estate be his, it is no charity to leave it to those who have laid their hands upon it; for they are very rich without it.

While I invite you to make your title clear to a precarious estate on earth, permit me to remind you, my dear sir, of the heavenly inheritance entailed on believers. The will, the New Testament, by which we can recover it, is proved. The court is just and equitable, the Judge gracious and loving. To enter into possession of a part of the estate here, and of the whole hereafter, we need only believe, and *prove evangelical1y,* that we are believers. Let us then set about it now, with earnestness,

with perseverance, and with a full assurance, that (through grace) we shall infallibly carry our point. Alas! what are estates and crowns, to grace and glory! The Lord grant that we, and all our friends, may choose the better part, which your brother, my dear friend, so happily chose! And may we firmly stand to the choice, as he did, to the last! My best respects wait upon your dear father, your sisters, and nieces. God reward your kindness to me upon them all!

Remember me in grateful love to Dr. Turner. I have had a pull back since I wrote last. After I left Mr. Ireland at Macon, to shorten my journey, and enjoy new prospects, I ventured to cross the mountains, which separate France from this country. But on the third day of the journey I found an unexpected trial: a large hill, the winding roads of which were so steep that, although we fed the horses with bread and wine, they could scarcely draw the empty chaise. This obliged me to walk in all the steepest places. The climbing lasted several hours, the sun was hot, I perspired violently, and the next day I spit blood again. I have chiefly kept to goats' milk ever since, and hope I shall get over this death also, because I find myself (blessed be God!) better again, and my cough is neither frequent nor violent.

I have not ventured on preaching in this country. It is delightful. If you come to see it, and claim the estate, bring all the papers, anecdotes, and memorials your father can collect, and come to share a delightful apartment, and one of the finest prospects in the world, in the house where I was born. The weather is not (hitherto) too hot for me, and I design to try this fine air some months longer. We have a fine shady wood near the lake, where I can ride in the cool all the day, and enjoy the singing of a multitude of birds, which (though sweet) does not come up to the singing of my dear friends in England. There I meet them in spirit several hours in the day. Give my love and thanks to those you know, and particularly to dear Messrs Wesley, Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood, Miss Thornton, Mr. Atlay, and all the Foundery family. Do not forget my god daughter, her mother, and brothers. God bless you my dear friend! And believe me, dear sir, your obedient, obliged servant,

J. FLETCHER.

CI.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

NYON, IN SWITZERLAND, *May* 15, 1778.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,-I have received your kind letter, and the directions and prescriptions which it contains; for which I return you, and Dr. Turner, my sincerest thanks. I have laid aside upon it my pills of soap and aloes, and shall use no physic but in case of absolute necessity. The climate and prospect, the fine roads and pure air which I enjoy here, had contributed to strengthen me a little, when an accident (I think) has pulled me back.

About a month ago, something I chewed got into my windpipe, and caused a fit of coughing, with the greatest efforts of the lungs, for half an hour. I began to spit

blood again; and ever since I have had a bad cough, which has sometimes held me violently for an hour after my first sleep. My cough has been better these two days again, and I hope it will go off if I can spit. My friends here, (through a national prejudice,) have opposed my taking the senna. This delay hurt me; and for peace sake I have taken, now and then, a glass of a diet drink, made of manna dissolved in water, which answers the end of the senna and prunes. I have bought a quiet horse, whose easy pace I can bear; and I ride much. Upon the whole, if my cough leaves me, I may yet recover my strength; but if it fixes, it will probably be my last. The will of the Lord be done!

I have not ventured upon preaching since I came here. It would be impossible for me now to go through it. If the weather should grow hot, I may go to the foot of the hills, which is but five or six miles off. I drink goats' milk, and have left off meat since the cough, but design eating a little again at dinner.

I passed last Monday through a town called Morges, fifteen miles off, where I was told there was a gentlewoman of your name. I waited upon her; she is an elderly person, about forty five; lives with her sister who is a widow lady. They received me kindly. I gave them an account of their friends in England, and the dear Shoreham family. They were very glad to hear of them. Their father was a clergyman, nephew, or first cousin to your venerable father. The clergyman with whom your family corresponded, was another who died at Geneva. They seemed well inclined, but (like the people of this country) not deep in internal religion. The husband of the lady (who is a widow) was one of Lady Guyon's correspondents; at least, I remember to have seen among her printed letters, one directed to him at Morges. They invited me to call again, which I design to do, if I can, and shall let you know more of the matter. They told me they had two relations of your name; one a merchant at Marseilles and another a great man at Paris, worth much money, being general inspector of all the roads and bridges in the kingdom. I told them they had some relations greater still, as being possessed of "*the pearl of great price, the new name, and the new and living way to glory*." I would have stopped longer with them, but my company did not permit it. I exhorted them to pray for your branch of the family, as I was sure yours had done, and would do for them; and I rejoiced at being with your relations, telling them how much I was indebted to you, and at meeting the dear Shoreham family in their distant friends. My best respects to them all, as well as to Dr. Turner, whose kindness, in conjunction with yours, draws the deepest prayers and thanks from, my very dear friends, your much indebted and obliged servant,

J. FLETCHER.

By favour of Miss Thornton.

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CII.-*To the Rev. V. Perronet.*

NYON.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,-Last week I received your kind letter, and immediately sent an extract of it to Mr. Monod, who married a Miss Perronet, and who some weeks ago came on purpose from Morges to inquire after your family. As it was he that had gone to law about recovering the estate of your family, and he appeared to me a person of sense and good nature, I requested he would direct me what to write to you, with respect to the cautions necessary to be taken to recover your estate. As his answer contains all I could say, and more, I send it you as the best guide. If you can any how get a copy of the register of the place where you was baptized, duly authenticated before two witnesses, it will be an important piece. If you can but prove yourself to be your father's son, I see no difficulty in the getting of your right. May we stand to our Christian baptism, and get by that means the heavenly inheritance! May the extract be found written in my heart with as much faithfulness, and in as deep characters, as, I trust, it is in yours! I hope your son will soon bring us good news of the faith and health, grace and resignation of every branch of your family which I salute much in the Lord.

J. F.

CIII.-*To Mr: W. Perronet.*

NYON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-Bring along with you all the papers which can prove your Swiss origin; and, trusting a good Providence, come to your patient, who (blessed be God!) is in better health than he ever thought he should be, though far from being strong yet. The air here agrees with me, and hope it will with you. By the lawyer's talk, I said the estate would be six or seven thousand pounds. I find by your relation's talk, who knows better, it will be but half that sum; but let not that discourage you. It is proper there should be a draw back on our earthly expectations; but the riches of Christ are unsearchable. We shall find more than ever was told us: "The one half," said the queen of Sheba, "has not been told me;" and she spoke but of an earthly Solomon. If the war with France has broke out, you must come by Harwich, Helvoet Sluys, Rotterdam, Bois le Due, Maestricht, Aix la Chapelle, Cologne, Francfort, Basil, Berne, Lausanne, Morges, Nyon, where (please God) you will find me near the church; and the God of Jacob be your guide and protector! My thanks and respects wait on dear Dr. Turner: pray, if you see him, be so kind as to tell him, that by eating great quantities of little black cherries, I find my body better; and ask him, if I might venture to bathe in the lake of Geneva. I have spit blood but once since I wrote last. Adieu.

J. F.

CIV.-*To Miss Thornton.*

NYON.

THE heavenly dove loves no selfishness. My tract was not contrived to please but to reconcile parties; party people, therefore, will never like it. And neuters are seldom valiant in the cause of peace. The sword may do what pens cannot. Any thing that will make us all shelter together under the wings of our heavenly protector and peace maker, will be a blessing. I am glad your late trial has had that effect.

Closer and closer let us cleave,
To his beloved embrace;
Expect his fulness to receive,
And grace to answer grace:-

Grace received to answer that which is promised,-the grand promise not excepted!

Poor England! But God's kingdom ruleth over all. I have ventured to preach once. The birds of my fine wood have almost done singing; but I have met there with a parcel of children whose hearts seem turned toward singing the praises of God. And we sing every day from four till five. Help us by your prayers. One of them, I hope, received the love of Christ this week. My love to Thomas and Sarah. Accept it from your obliged friend,

JOHN FLETCHER.

CV.-*To Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood.*

MY DEAR BROTHER, SISTER, AND BENEFACTORS,-I thank you for the favour of your letter, as well as for former mercies shown to an unworthy wretch. I wish I could help you also to an estate here. But a sure one awaits us all in heaven. Let us go with full assurance to the throne of grace and demand, in Jesus' name, the earnest of it. God sanctify all trials and blessings to you! The former word is useless, because trials from our heavenly Father are but blessings of another kind. Hold out faith and patience! If you will go into the country for change of air, all I have at Madeley house-horse and field is yours. Go and God will bless the journey. My duty, love, and thanks, &c, wait on Mr. Wesley, Mr. Atley, Mr. Phipps, Miss Ray, Mrs. Carteret, and her honoured friends, all friends at the Foundery, and every where.

JOHN FLETCHER.

CVI.-*To the Rev. Mr. Perronet.*

January 2, 1779.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,-I thank you for the favour of your letter, and for the bearer, [Mr. W. Perronet,] who makes shift with me in this strange land of our fathers. All who have seen the titles he brings, think them good except the interested, who find them not sufficient. This will oblige us to go to Chateau D'Oex, and then the shortest will be to make an agreement with your cousins, who will be much better able to recover what is owing to you in whole or in part.

May we make use of our better title to the heavenly inheritance! If from the date of this letter we subtract about thirty three years, we shall find the date of the Testator's will, and be able to say, "The kingdom that cannot be moved was bequeathed in the year 34; and the will and deed of conveyance were then sealed with the Testator's own blood, and proved by the Judge of all, when he spoke from heaven and said, 'Hear ye him, the Testator!' who, delivering the bloody titles, said himself, 'It is finished.'"

That you, dear sir, your whole family, and dear Mrs. Bissaker, (to whom, as well as to Miss Perronet and Miss Briggs, I beg to be remembered,) may all, without deputy, sue and take possession of *that estate*, is the wish and prayer of your affectionate brother and servant,

J. FLETCHER.

CVII.[6]-*To the Rev. Vincent Perronet.* (*From his son William.*)

NYON, *Feb*. 8, 1779.

HONOURED AND DEAR SIR,-Your last letter, (dated Jan. 6,) I did not receive till the 5th of this month; and it seems that mine was nearly as long in getting to Shoreham, which, I am told, is owing to the badness of the roads at this season: however, we have hitherto had (blessed be God!) a very fine, though a very sharp winter.

The storm which my sister mentions in her letter, was felt here; but I believe (though it was very violent) no mischief was done in this place. Indeed, the houses here, like the mountains which surround them, are so strong, so enormously heavy, that no ordinary hurricane is able to affect them. The house we live in is like an old castle, and is supposed to have been built near five hundred years: and as to the church, it would be no easy matter to draw or describe it; for it is so surrounded by old walls and buildings of one kind or other, that we can scarce see it, though we live close to it. However, it is something like Oxford church; only the spire is not quite so high.

Last week Mr. Fletcher, Mr. Monod, (the lawyer,) and myself, went again to Geneva, and, at the request of those who have possession of the estate, lodged a copy of our papers in the hands of their lawyer; who is to inspect them, and then to give his opinion with regard to the validity of our claim. But what time he will require for this, or what his determination will be, we know not; but I trust that the cause is in better hands than those of cunning and artful lawyers, namely, in the hands of Him who is able to overrule and dispose them both to peace and justice.

I am very thankful to hear that you are so well recovered from your late illness. But both Mr. Fletcher and myself are of opinion that it is absolutely necessary you should have some one to assist you. It has been upon my mind ever since I left England, that should it please God to give us any part of this estate, the money could not be applied to a better purpose. However, I would not have it turn on that event, (which is at present so uncertain,) but wish it were done out of hand. Mr. F. recommends two persons; a Mr. Bailey, (who is at present at Kingswood,) a very pious, worthy young man, in all respects qualified for orders, and who only waits for a title. The other is Mr. Benson, who was formerly in Lady Huntingdon's college; and Mr. F. says that he was in every respect the best master they ever had there: but his religious sentiments not happening to agree with those of her ladyship, he was dismissed, and is now a travelling preacher with Mr. Wesley. Mr. F. says that if he wanted a curate himself, he should scarce know which of the two to choose. But poor Mr. F., so far from wanting another curate, says he does not know how he shall be able to keep what he has already, as he gives him fifty pounds a year, (which is ten more than is usual,) and his friends at Madeley sent him word that it is more than they can raise out of the living. I am, honoured and dear sir, your dutiful son,

W. PERRONET.

CVIII.-*To the Rev. Vincent Perronet.*

NYON, *Feb*. 8, 1799.

HONOURED AND DEAR FATHER IN CHRIST,-I have had the pleasure of accompanying your son to your father's birth place. It is a charming country for those who have a taste for highland prospects, but what is it to our heavenly Father's hill of Zion? Thither may we all travel summer and winter, and there may we all have a happy meeting, and find an eternal inheritance!

Whether you will come to your earthly estate in these parts, by possession as by right, is yet to me matter of doubt. A little time, I hope, will decide the question; and as Providence will throw in the turning weight, it will be for the best, which way soever the affair ends. My friend is tolerably well, and I hope Providence will bring him back safe to you, more out of conceit with the vanity of earth; and may we all be more in love with the blessings of Heaven! I beg to be remembered to Miss Perronet, Miss Briggs, and dear Mrs. Bissaker; and, begging an interest in your prayers, I am, with dutiful respect, yours, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

CIX.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.* (*Who was then at Lausanne*.)

NYON, *Nov*. 9, 1779.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-You must not expect to see me as I designed. I am deprived of that pleasure by a rheumatic pain, which fastened on my left shoulder the Sunday after you set out. I have been almost crippled by it at times; and it has robbed me of a good deal of sleep. However, it is not so violent now; and I find it a good goad to make me go to the Spring of help, health, and comfort. No letter here for you or me. When do you come back? Remember me to Miss Perronet, and believe me your affectionate friend and obliged brother,

J. FLETCHER.

CX.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

NYON, *Nov*. 18.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I thank you for your letter. I have been advised to apply a great plaister of turpentine to my shoulder; and I have partly recovered the use of it, (thank God!) though it is still very weak. They have no good hartshorn drops in this country: but I drink a decoction of pineapple, from the fir tree, which is as warm as guaiacum. My writing does not go on: but the will of the Lord is done, and that is enough.

I have had a letter from Mr. Ireland, who sends his love to you. He sends no news. He stays in England to serve the office of sheriff. I have stopped my chimney with straw, so I cannot have the draught occasioned by a fire. I would press you to come back soon if I was not persuaded you are better off with Miss Perronet. I have been afraid our bad meat here would make you lose all your flesh. And, for the honour of Switzerland, I should be glad you had some to carry back to England, if we live to go and see our friends there. However, when it will suit you to return, your company will particularly oblige, my dear friend, your obliged friend and servant,

J. FLETCHER.

CXI.-*To Mr. W. Perronet*.

Dec. 31, 1779.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-How do you do? I send a line to let you know how I am, and to wish you a Christian Christmas, and a happy new year.

Now for me. My niece was married last Wednesday to a man who has grand children. The old colonel is already here, with two maids and a whistling, saucy footman. I would have got off already but I have not the key of the new lodging; my sister will not lead nor drive, so I must stay. I do not offer you a room now, for I do not know whether I shall stay there, as the place is damp by report. I would go and try Lausanne, if I could spare my brother's help and company. I wish myself with you: O, for quietness and English friends! I have had letters from my parish, and they are not very good; I hope yours were better. I sent your papers to Mr. Monod, to proceed with those weapons. They went by the post. I hope he received them; inquire.

My health is tolerable. I am glad you have got a comfortable Zoar, and a quiet resting place under Miss Perronet's roof. Remember me to her. Trust, believe, hope, love, and rejoice in hope, and pray for your affectionate friend,

J. FLETCHER.

CXII.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

NYON, *Jan*. 17, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I thought you would have been here long ago, which prevented my acknowledging the favour of yours. My sister has taken a little box where I am. There is but a little room, with a chimney, beside the kitchen. She herself lies here in the old house. If you come, we shall make shift for a little while in this country. I hope your business and mine advance, though slowly. I send you a letter from our friends. I have heard from Mr. Ireland, who has been ill, and talks of coming to meet us.

Lord, meet and direct us in all things! Do not be dismayed; cast all your care on the Lord, and God will appear for England and for us. My love to Miss Perronet. My brother and sister send theirs to you. Farewell. Yours, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

CXIII.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

NYON, *Friday*, Feb. 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I long to know how you do, and to engage you to let me know it, I will tell you that I am pretty well, thank God. I have fenced myself, as well as I could, against the wind and cold, and have escaped a relapse into my rheumatic pains. I try to finish one of my little things to carry to Lausanne, and see you; but I do not get on as I wish. However, I have done my work, but the copyist has not yet done his, nor have I yet mended after him. I have had no news from England since I wrote last. How do your affairs go on? We have been chiefly without a maid here; for my sister sent off Marianne at Christmas: and soon after she sent off the girl, who

caught a bad cold in tugging the wood from one house to the other. However, she is come again this week. Pray, have you got your hanger? We have not found it among your things which have been carried here. Mr. Pache, I suppose, called here with a parcel for you.

My brother and sister desire to be remembered to you; she often asks me how you do this cold winter. No solid peace for us but in the Lord; and (blessed be God!) in him there is: I hope you take it freely, and enjoy it comfortably. Peace be with you and our dear friends in England! Remember me to Miss Perronet, and believe me yours, in Jesus Christ,

J. FLETCHER.

If you choose to come to Nyon, you know you may have a bed at my brother's, or half of mine here; for there is no other in the house, and my sister still goes to lie in the old house.

CXIV.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

March, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I thank you for the letters you have sent me; I add, at the end, a line of thanks to your dear father. I am about two hundred pounds in debt in my parish, by a letter lately received. I must send them the money I designed to lay out in printing my little things. I should be glad to send fifty louis d'ors immediately, could you by means of Miss Perronet, or of some English at Lausanne, procure me a draught for London. I would have the money paid into Mr. Greenwood's hands, to be remitted to Mr. York, at Shriff Hales, near Shiffnal, Shropshire. If the carrier would take it, and give security, I have it by me; and would send it to you to Lausanne, if you do not find a more expeditious foray. I think a bill is better in such times as these. If you are ready to set out, the weather is fair; and as my way seems every where blocked up here, I shall go back when you please. Remember me to Miss Perronet.

Believe in the Lord; cast all care of body, soul, family, friends, king, and countrymen upon Him who cares for us, and trust to see his full salvation. My friends desire to be remembered to you. I no more invite you to half of my bed, unless you will help me to make it; for the little maid is gone again. Send me word how you do; and believe me yours,

J. FLETCHER.

I would write to our dear friends, but I fear the carrier is gone. If he is, please to put *Angleterre* upon my letter, and send by the post.

CXV.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

Good Friday, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I send you another letter; be so good as to put it in your packet. Mr. Bouvereau and I talk of setting out in the month of May: I hope you will not let us go without you. I shall have time to prepare one of my little things for the press, but I still am in the mire and clay, and get on but little. I have had a few lines from Mr. Ireland, who says that the dissenters try to stir up the people against the king. God give us peace with and love to all men! Farewell in Jesus! The carrier waits; so I conclude with my love to you and your kind hostess. God bless you! Pray for yours,

J. FLETCHER.

Good news! Christ to-day has slain the enmity, made reconciliation, and sealed the new covenant testament, by which we are heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Believe, love, rejoice, and be thankful.

CXVI.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

July 26, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I have received your packet. My brother and I think, that, to apply again at Berne to ——, would be wire drawing, and setting Berne and Geneva together by the ears: that would require much time, trouble, and expense; and the best way is, now to agree with the co-heirs, and make the best composition you can. You must wait for the instructions M. Monod promises to give you. It does not seem the co-heirs deny your right. That question IS not touched in the letters. God deliver us from the hands of men! My brother joins me in love to you and Miss Perronet. I do my little jobs as fast as I can, but seem stalled as well as yourself However, you should try to conclude, that we may all set out in September.

Cast all your burdens upon the Lord. Let nothing make you uneasy. Peace is better than money. Our heavenly inheritance is in good hands. The New Testament is in full force. Jesus keeps possession of the estate for us, and the people of Geneva have no influence before the great tribunal. I do not know when I shall go to Lausanne: however, I hope it will be soon. Farewell, my dear friend! I am yours, in Jesus Christ,

J. FLETCHER.

CXVII.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

NYON, *Tuesday* 3, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I thank you for your letters; they have given me much pleasure, as I see that you will at last end your affair, and get ready to set out in the spring, with Mr. Ireland, who comes with his family I know not where, I hope not so far as Barcelona. I think he will spend the winter at or about Avignon. If you will go and join him, I should be glad to do it, for the stream under the house does not make it very wholesome. I am, however, better of my cold, thank God! My brother thinks, as well as myself, that you may conclude upon the terms you mention. "Better is a dinner of herbs with peace, than a stalled ox and noise therewith." I hope to go to Lausanne directly after vintage, to offer a manuscript to the censors, to see if they will allow its being published: so I do not invite you to share my damp bed. My sister was so kind as to look for another house, but we find none to let under a year. When you write to Shoreham, send my duty and love. Present it to Miss Perronet and her friend. We are here travellers; so we must expect some difficulties, and a good many inconveniences. If Mr. Ireland goes to Marseilles, you might go and see your cousin there. Lift up your heart, and see by faith our Lord and Saviour, our heavenly Kinsman and Brother: and when you rise there, take by the hand of prayer your affectionate friend,

J. FLETCHER.

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CXVIII.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

NYON, *Sept*. 20, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-What are you doing, and how do you do? I long to know; I thought we should by this time be at Ostend, or in England. I have got a bad cold and a hoarseness, but, nevertheless, I am ready to venture upon the journey. I send you a letter. I write to the grandmother of the young lady I was to see safe in England. Were it not for this engagement, I would stay till next spring. Be so good as to deliver the letter, and settle that affair with the lady. If you will set out, in case I do, we should go directly to Geneva, and settle with the people there, upon the most tolerable terms. If you cannot, you might postpone your journey till the spring, and go back with Mr. Ireland who comes over with his family to spend the winter in France, having obtained leave to go any where but to a sea port.

The misfortune I hint at in my French letter, is the mislaying of a considerable part of my manuscript. After a thousand searches, giving it up as lost, I fell to work again, waded through the double toil, and when I had done last night, I found accidentally what I had mislaid. This has put me back a great deal. The Lord's will be done in all things I thank God, I have been kept from fretting on the occasion, though I would not for a great deal have such another trial. Mr. Ireland sent me word, the colonies would return to the king's allegiance this autumn: I am afraid the two India fleets

taken will put off that event for ever: that evil seems to be from the Lord; so it will be a good thing in the end. I envy you sometimes the pleasure of being with Miss Perronet. Remember me to her and to her friend, and believe me yours,

J. FLETCHER.

I hope you cast all your burdens upon the Lord: follow your sister's directions. Believe and you will hope, hope and you will love, love and all will be well.

If you are short of money, let me know; and I shall borrow for you and for me. Do not be distressed while you have a friend so near. My vineyard, so fine last year, has very few grapes, and unripe ones, this year. But I have bought the crop of a little corner of one of my sisters.

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CXIX.-*To the Rev. Vincent Perronet.*

NYON, *Dec*. 5, 1780.

REV. AND DEAR FATHER IN CHRIST,-You know better than I, that patience must have its perfect work, and that we are all called to bear our share of what remains of Christ's sufferings for the purifying of his members, that they may reign with him after having suffered with him. Our wise and good God thinks fit to try my dear friend, your son, with a want of appetite and uneasiness in his bowels, which makes him often return the little food he takes. He came some time ago here from Lausanne, and we went to Geneva together, where he settled your affair with three of the Geneva co-heirs, upon the same footing he had settled with those of Chateau d'Oex. The fourth is, they say, insolvable, or affects to be so. They may possibly refund something: at least we are made to hope so. When my friend shall be a little better, he will give you a more particular account.

For the benefit of a ride, he went lately to Geneva with my sister, who took him to Dr. Manget, her physician, whom he preferred to Dr. Tissot. He prescribed. My friend being come home, took the medicine ordered, and was a good deal tried by it. The physician of our town attends him; and we hope, that, by little and little, his stomach will be settled, and his appetite return. He bears his weakness with so much patience and resignation, that my sister-in-law (who is an English woman) is quite edified.

Blessed be God, he has no fever, and the tightness of his breast is not so great as it was two days ago. I had yesterday a letter from Mr. Ireland, who will be to-morrow at Lyons on his way to Montpelier, where we design (please God to give us more health and strength) to go and join him, to return all together early in the spring. Pray for us, that we may be directed into the right way, by that kind Providence which watches over us. In the meantime we sit still and wait for the moving of the cloud; determined to trust in his wisdom and mercy, though he should slay us: for we are persuaded that all works together for good to them that love him even in the feeblest

manner, and wait for the fulness of his love. We join in love to Miss Perronet, Miss Briggs, Messrs. Wesley, Mr. Greenwood and his dear family, Mr. Staniford, and all friends: and patient in tribulation, or rejoicing in hope, I am, Rev. and dear father in Christ, your affectionate and dutiful son,

J. FLETCHER.

CXX.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

NYON, *Thursday, Dec*. 31, 1780

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I send you a few lines I received from our friend Ireland at my return here, where I came safe after a very wet journey, in which I got a cold. I wish you a Christian Christmas, with all the blessings Christ brought us from heaven! I am easier in seeing you in so quiet a family, and in so good an apartment; but I want to know how is your stomach, and if you can keep some food.

Ten thousand thanks to dear Miss Perronet, for all her kindness to me, my brother, and yourself. I beg to be remembered to Mrs. Perronet also. Tell your cousin that a notion came into my mind the evening I left you, that she had given me back, *twice*, the crown I lent her at Rolle: I have the most treacherous memory in money matters; and if she is not absolutely clear, she has not paid me twice, I beg you would return her a crown, which I shall return you. God bless you, and her, and all his people! Come, my dear friend, let us rejoice in God in the midst of all our little or great trials! Farewell in Jesus,

J. FLETCHER.

CXXI.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

NYON, *Saturday, Jan*. 14, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-This morning I received the enclosed: I wish it may contain comfortable news. I am sorry your weakness of stomach presses upon you still. I wish you would consult Dr. Tissot. I have received a letter from Ireland this week, who says, if your complaint is bilious, castor oil and travelling are the best things for you. He came from Bristol, with two ladies, sisters, one of whom is in the second stage of consumption. They think to return to England in the beginning of March, all together; perhaps they could give us a lift, as they have four chaises.

Mr. Favre has lately sent back my brother's memoirs, with some directions, according to which my brother is going to alter some places, before he sends it to you.

Trust in the Lord, my dear friend: the hairs of your head are all numbered. You are better than many lilies and many sparrows, all of whom are cared for by infinite love

and a watchful Providence. Jesus is always near, and the Divine pharmacy, the treasure of his grace, is at hand.

Much love to you from our friends here: give mine to Miss Perronet and her mother.

J. FLETCHER.

CXXII.-*To Mr. W. Perronet*.

NYON, *Tuesday noon, Feb*. 1, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I thank you for the extract of your father's letter. I wish you joy about his health, both of soul and body! I wish you may abundantly share it. With respect to me, I am pretty well, except the inconveniency of a breaking out in my back. My rheumatic pain returned; I applied a plaister, which drew pimples The pain went off, but the smaller inconveniency remains.

Mr. Ireland sends me word, he thinks to set out for England in the beginning of March: and I reply, that it is hardly worth while taking a February journey to come back. I do not know yet how we shall contrive. I ask him whether he could take our boxes, in case he could take us: for it would be disagreeable to leave our things behind, after all. I trust Miss Perronet to take care of you. You could not have a better room at Montpelier. I only beg you will eat all you can, and as often as you can.

Let us trust in the Lord, that he may rule and overrule all our little matters. He is ever ready to carry for us the heaviest end of all our crosses; they would sink us. But worlds are sands to his omnipotence. When you answer, send a thousand thanks, and much love from me to all our dear friends at Shoreham. Remember me also in much love to Miss P. and her mother, and believe me, my dear friend, your affectionate friend,

J. FLETCHER.

CXXIII.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

NYON, *Saturday, Feb*. 10, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I heartily rejoice the Lord hath given some success to your long diet, and you are a little better. I hope the Divine blessing, travelling, and the pleasure of going to our friends in England, will be of farther service to you.

Last Wednesday I went to Geneva, with my brother, to get his son out of the scrawl; and we came back safe the same evening. I saw Mr. Provost, who told me that Messrs. Comparel would give you each twenty-five louis d’ors; so you will have seventy-five, reserving all your right upon him who is at Lima. They will engage to

pay that sum by the first of June. So your affair is ended: for I hope you will choose that composition, rather than drive them to a bankruptcy by a law suit. *Your* call to England seems to be quite clear now; nor is *mine* less clear.

My friend Ireland urges me to join him. I will venture upon a visit to the south of France, with you, if you can bear the journey. He supposes your affair will not be ended this summer; and he proposes that we should come and fetch you this autumn. I have wrote to him, that, if he can give you a place in his chaise, I hope I shall be able to ride, provided he does not drive Jehu-like. We should go south by Lyons, and come back to Paris by the heart of the kingdom. He says they (the French) are as quiet as if it was peace. We shall have the chance of occupying the room of the dying lady. If these things should break, we will go by the stage, as you say.

I have received two letters from my parish, where I am wanted on particular reasons: so necessity draws me, and my promises drive me. I finish to-day my book, that detained me, as your affair detained you; and my sister will gladly return to her Gingins. The weather is mild. Send me word if you will go to Geneva to sign your agreements and thence we will set out for Montpelier.

My brother has just received another letter from Mr. Ireland, urging my departure. Come as soon as you can, do not make it (if possible) much longer than a week. Send me words by the return of the post, how you are, and when you can come, or whether you will stay till next year. The Lord strengthen, bless, and direct you! Cast all your burdens upon him. Give my sincere love to Miss Perronet and her mother; and believe me yours,

J. FLETCHER.

CXXIV.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

NYON, *Feb*. 20,1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-I am sorry I am likely to lose the pleasure of your company in my return to England. I had solemnly promised to my friend, Mr. Ireland, to go and join him at Montpelier, if he came over. I have so long put off, that I cannot well do it any longer. If the weather were fine, I might urge you to venture with me; but as the winter sets in, I dare not do it. I think to set out next week by the stage, if I hear of no fellow traveller to take a chaise with me. I shall endeavour to go to Lausanne to see you, and take a packet of letters for Shoreham. Prepare it against I call.

I have received your portmanteau, for which I thank you. I shall leave my box here, as I fear there would not be room for it in Mr. Ireland's carriages.

Do not forget to deduct from your Chateau D'Oex money all you have spent to get it: that will make the fine much lighter. I fear the Geneva people will fine you also, if you do not come away as fast as you can.

Let us return to our heavenly country and inheritance: nothing will draw back a part of it, unless our unbelief and sins do it: the Lord crush them both!

My love to Miss Perronet and her mother. We all join here in wishes for your perfect recovery; but none more heartily than your old obliged friend,

J. FLETCHER.

CXXV.-*To Mr. W. Perronet.*

LYONS, *April* 6, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,-We are both weak, both afflicted; but Jesus careth for us. He is every where, and here he has all power to deliver us, and he may do it by ways we little think of. "As thou wilt, when thou wilt, and where thou wilt," said Baxter: let us say the same. It was of the Lord you did not come with me: you would have been sick as I am. I am overdone with riding and preaching. I preached twice in the fields. I carry home with me much weakness, and a pain in my back, which I fear will end in the gravel. The Lord's will be done. I know I am called to suffer and die. The journey tires me; but through mercy I bear it. Let us believe and rejoice in the Lord Jesus.

J. FLETCHER.

In the beginning of March, 1781, Mr. Fletcher took a final leave of Switzerland, and proceeded to the south of France, where he was engaged to meet his friend, Mr. Ireland, and to return with him from thence to England. Nothing particular is known of his journey, except that during the short time he stopped at Montpelier, he somewhat impaired his health by too great exertion in the pulpit; and on their arrival at Paris, his attendance on a sick person would have brought on him the censure of an intolerant Church, had not Mr. Ireland, who was mistaken for him by the police officers, quietly suffered them to remain in their error, until Mr. Fletcher, who was apprized of his danger, had proceeded too far on his journey to be overtaken. The friends afterward joined each other, and arrived safely in England in the middle of April, after an absence of three years and four months. Calling at London, Mr. Fletcher preached at the new chapel, City Road, slept at Newington, April 27, and the next day set out for Bristol. He stayed there only a short time, and then retired to Mr. Ireland's, at Brislington. "When I was informed of Mr. Fletcher's arrival at Brislington," says Mr. Rankin, "I rode over to Mr. Ireland's, the day after, and had such an interview with him, as I shall never forget in time or eternity. As I had not seen him for upward of ten years, his looks, his salutation, and address struck me with a mixture of wonder, solemnity, and joy." As Mr. Ireland was then confined by affliction, and wished to accompany his friend to Madeley as soon as he should be able, Mr. Fletcher stayed a few days at Brislington, waiting for his recovery, before he set out for his parish. Upon their arrival there, it was his first care to inquire into the spiritual state of his dear flock; but he did not find such cause of rejoicing as he had fondly expected.

CXXVI.-*To the Rev. Mr. Perronet, Shoreham.*

NEWINGTON, *April* 28, 1781.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,-I have brought from Switzerland a letter from your dear son: I wish I had brought him himself; but the snow setting in at the time I had engaged to set out, he thought it unadvisable to come with me, and I durst not urge him to do any thing against his mind.

I went to Lausanne to see him two days before my departure: I found him weak and low; but the frequent vomitings he had some months ago have left him, and his appetite returns. He is very well taken care of: Miss Perronet and her mother are as kind to him as my dear friends here were to me when I lay sick in this house. He gives you himself, probably, a fuller account of his health. His physician hoped the return of the fine weather would be very favourable to him. I would not have come away without him if he had not urged me to do it, considering my engagements and circumstances. His mind is quite easy: he is sweetly resigned to the will of God; and my sister-in-law was quite edified to see his meek resignation, while he lay sick at her house.

I leave London this morning, sorry not to have had time to wait on you and Mrs. Perronet, to ask your blessing, and to answer any question you might have asked me concerning my dear friend, your son. I shall write to him, please God, as soon as I shall be in Shropshire. I offered to go and fetch him at the end of the year, if he chose to spend another winter in Switzerland: but he said, he made no doubt he should have good company to come before, if God permitted.

I hope you will give me your blessing, and grant me a share in your prayers, which I should have been glad to sit under; but in these bodies we can be but in one place; and I comfort myself with these words of St. Paul: soon "we shall be ever with the Lord," and with all his people. In that sweet hope I remain, Rev. and dear sir, your affectionate son and servant in Christ,

J. FLETCHER.

I desire to be remembered in Christian love to Mrs. Perronet and Miss Briggs.

In Mr. Benson's excellent Life of Mr. Fletcher, it is said: "Mr. Perronet had expected to gather strength as the spring advanced and the weather became milder. In this, however, the Lord saw meet, in a great measure, to disappoint his expectations. Spring, and even sum mer, bringing warm weather, came; but still he continued in a similar and even increasing state of weakness. On the 15th of May, he writes:--'As to my health, it is not yet restored to me. It has pleased God to break down my strength in my journey, and to continue me in that weak condition to this time, notwithstanding all the efforts of any friends and physicians, and my own

endeavours, in using a little very gentle exercise from time to time as I was able. Whenever I go out, every one stops to stare at me, and many express their astonishment at the sight of such a spectre; so greatly am I reduced and altered.' On the 12th of June following he seemed to himself to be rather gaining a little ground, but, says he, 'the continual, sudden, and severe changes in the weather here, tear me almost to pieces, and seem to throw me back as fast as I recover.' Soon after this, he removed to a pleasant village, called Gimel, between Lausanne and Geneva where Miss Perronet's sister was settled. There he rode out, drunk asses' milk, and breathed the purest air. 'Mrs. Perronet is there,' says Mr. Fletcher to his father, 'with her two daughters. So that if his illness should prove more grievous, he will not want for good attendance and the most tender nursing. Support him, dear sir, with your fatherly exhortations. They are balm to his blood and marrow to his bones.'

"As the reader will undoubtedly wish to know the sequel of the story of this benevolent man, I shall here insert an extract from another of his letters. Being returned to Lausanne, Oct. 23, he wrote from thence to his father as follows:-

CXXVII.-*To the Rev. Vincent Perronet.*

HONOURED AND DEAR SIR,-I wrote some time ago by a private hand: but that is not always either the safest or the most expeditious method of conveying intelligence. My letter, however, contained little more than an account of my return from the mountains, where I seemed to have gained very little in point of health and strength. I mentioned, likewise, my earnest wishes to return to England, in case it should please God to assist me in the means. This, I humbly trust, is in good measure effected: for I have quite unexpectedly met with a very worthy gentleman, (a Swiss, whom I formerly knew in England,) who sets out for London within about a week or fortnight. We shall travel in a chaise, and he is so kind as to promise to suit his mode of travelling to my weakness, which indeed is very great.: We may possibly be on the road when this letter reaches you, and I doubt not but my friends will assist me with their prayers. The season for travelling is late, it is true, especially for one in my weak state: but I choose this rather than venture to stay another winter in this terrible climate. Beside, I consider it as a providential call to return; and I have taken your advice, to put what remains to be done in my affairs into trusty and good hands. I am, honoured and dear sir, your dutiful son,

W. PERRONET.

"He soon after left Switzerland, and with great pain and difficulty reached Douay, in French Flanders, where he was taken worse and died in peace, Dec. 2, 1781. A little time after, Mr. Fletcher wrote as follows to his father:-

CXXVIII.-*To the Rev. Vincent Perronet.*

REV. AND DEAR SIR,-While I condole with you about the death of my dear friend and your dear son, I congratulate you about the resignation and Christian fortitude with which you, Abraham-like, lay him upon the altar of our heavenly Father's

providential, good, and acceptable will. We shall one day see why he made your sons go before you, and my kind physician before me. About the time he died, so far as I can find by your kind letter, a strong concern about him fell upon me by day and by night, insomuch that I could not help waking my wife [7] to join me in praying for him, and at once that concern ceased, nor have I since had any such spiritual feeling; whence I concluded that the conflict I supposed my friend to be in, was ended. But how surprised was I to find it was by death! Well, whether Paul or Apollos, or life or death, all things are ours through Jesus, who knows how to bring good out of evil, and how to blow us into the harbour by a cross wind, and even by a dreadful storm.

If, my dear friend, your son has not quite completed his affairs in Switzerland, and an agent is necessary there for that purpose, I offer you the care and help of my brother who was our counsellor, and who, I am sure will do what lies in him to oblige the father of him whom he had the pleasure of having some time under his roof, as a sick monument of Christian meekness and resignation. I am but poorly, though I serve yet my Church without a curate, Mr. Bailey being wanted at Kingswood. But what are we? Poor mortals, dying in the midst of a world of dying or dead men. But in the midst of death, we are in Christ, the resurrection and the life, to whom be glory for ever. So prays Rev. and dear sir, your affectionate son and servant in the Gospel,

J. FLETCHER."

ENDNOTES

[1 The reader will observe, that those of Mr. Fletcher's Pastoral and Familiar Letters, which were inserted in the narrative of his life, by the late Rev. Joseph Benson, are here omitted.]

[2 Thank God, this is not now the character of all the farmers of Madeley!-Editor.]

[3 Mr. Fletcher, when he wrote the above, mistook Mr. Henry Brook, Jun. for Mr. Henry Brook, Sen., the author of the Fool of Quality, and when he wrote this letter, had only seen a small extract from that work.]

[4 That is, speaking to the edification of those with whom they converse.]

[5 Messrs. Vincent and Charles Perronet, who with other branches of their family had died in great peace and triumph.]

[6 This communication is inserted to explain some passages in the succeeding letters, as well as to exhibit the amiable disposition of Mr. Fletcher's friend and correspondent.]

[7 He was then married.]

A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

A MINISTER AND ONE OF HIS PARISHIONERS,

ON

MAN'S DEPRAVITY AND DANGER

IN HIS NATURAL STATE.

———

BY THE REV. JOHN FLETCHER,

VICAR OF MADELEY.

PREFACE TO THE DIALOGUE.

I HAVE found among my papers a manuscript of the late Rev. Mr. Fletcher, entitled, "A Dialogue between a Minister and one of his Parishioners, on Man's Fallen and Lost Estate." It consists of three parts, which are completed and have been transcribed, in a fair and legible character, in his own hand writing. It was intended, it seems, to be followed by four more, of which I know and can learn nothing. Indeed, I cannot now recollect how I became possessed of these: but suppose that they had been put into my hands by himself, or into the hands of some friend who transmitted them to me to look over. For I find on the title page the following request and declaration, written also with his own hand, and in different parts of the work sundry of my corrections and alterations, evidently made long ago:-

"Any lover of truth, who will have patience to read these sheets, is desired to write on the white side his observations, and to mark, if he thinks it worth his while,

"1. Bad or weak arguments.

"2. Bad English, tedious turns, vain repetitions.

"3. What is useless to the subject, or too prolix.

"4. Conclusive arguments forgotten.

"N. B. Beside these three parts, there are four more on the same subject.

"The fourth part contains an answer to the plea of the self-righteous moralist and formalist.

"The fifth, an appeal to his conscience and experience.

"The sixth, the testimony of the Church for the doctrine.

"The seventh, some objections answered, with some directions and encouragements given.

"The grand objection that the author hath to the whole, is the length, μεγα βιβλιον, μεγα κακον; (A great book is a great evil.) For want of skill and judgment, he knew not how to lop off luxuriant branches properly, and requests the help of Jesus' friends, if they judge that by dint of amputations and emendations, this work might become worth reading."

I would observe farther, that this dialogue was manifestly composed by Mr. Fletcher, before he wrote or published his “Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense,” on the same subject: and that it is probable, after he had conceived the design of that larger work, he laid aside the intention of publishing this. Although many of the arguments and sentiments, and even some of the expressions here used, are very similar to some in *the Appeal*; yet as the subject appears here in a new form, and as no one sentence of it, I believe, is entirely the same, it appears to me, that it will both please and profit the readers, to whom the memory of that man of God is very dear, and every thing that dropped from his pen acceptable. I wish I could also furnish the remaining four parts.

J. BENSON.

A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

A MINISTER AND ONE OF HIS PARISHIONERS.

———

PART FIRST.

Containing an account of the doctrine to be examined.

PARISHIONER.-Though I have hitherto avoided conversing with you on religious subjects, I hear you in the church, and am well acquainted with the doctrines you chiefly enforce. They always appeared to me so singular, (to use no harsher expression,) that I could not help being greatly prejudiced against you; but having at length reason to hope, from the exemplariness of your life, that you mean well, and are open to conviction, I come to lay my objections before you, with the freedom of a well wisher to your ministry, and the simplicity of an inquirer after truth.

Minister.-The motive of your visit makes it doubly agreeable. One of my greatest pleasures is to converse with such of my parishioners as are willing to expostulate, or advise with me about spiritual things: but, alas! most of them, through strong prejudice or false shame, refuse me this satisfaction and delight.

Par.-I never could prevail with myself to wait upon you before last Sunday; as you was then reading the twenty fifth chapter of the Acts, I was struck with the 16th verse, where Festus says, “that it was not the custom of the Romans, [who were but heathens,] to condemn any man, before he had had his accusers face to face, with liberty to answer for himself, concerning the crime laid against him.” And I concluded that I came short of heathen honesty, in condemning you as an enthusiastic preacher, before I had given you an opportunity of answering for yourself.

Min.-You see that “all Scripture is profitable for reproof, or for instruction:” may we in all cases apply it with as much candour as you have done in this! If you please, then, propose your objections; the more frank and open you are, the more I shall account you an advocate of truth, and a friend to me.

Par.-Your request agrees with my design; and I shall, without apology, tell you what gives me offence in your doctrine. And to begin with what you often begin with yourself, let me ask, Do you not go much too far when you speak of man's depravity and danger?

You say that we are all in a fallen, lost, undone state by nature, that our understanding is blind in spiritual things, our reason impaired, our will perverse, our conscience defiled, our memory weakened, our imagination extravagant, our affections disordered, our members instruments of iniquity, and our life altogether sinful. You suppose that till a change pass upon us we remain dead in sin, under the curse of God's broken law, and exposed every moment to eternal destruction of body and soul. You represent us as so amazingly helpless, that we can no more, without the power of Divine grace, recover ourselves out of this deplorable state, than we can raise the dead: and, in short, you declare, that unless we are duly sensible of these melancholy truths, we neither can truly repent, nor unfeignedly embrace the Gospel. Is not this a true account of your doctrine?

Min.-It is: I readily assent to it.

Par.-Believe me, the oddity, harshness, and uncharitableness of these tenets disgust the generality of your hearers, as well as myself. We live in an age when people have too much sense to imbibe such dismal notions, and too much wisdom to be frightened into godliness. Let me advise, let me entreat you to give over preaching damnation at this rate. Do but condescend to be more fashionable, and your character will be less offensive.

Min.-I thank you for your advice of becoming fashionable. I will follow it as soon as I am convinced that a preacher is to discard truth, and take fashion for his guide: but till then, “whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, I must not shun to declare to you the whole counsel of God,” Ezek. ii. 7; Acts xx. 27. And, if some parts of it do not suit your taste, consider that, as the best medicines may be very unpalatable, so the most necessary doctrines may be extremely unpleasant. You value your physician for consulting your health rather than your taste; blame not me then for what you approve in him, and remember that our Lord himself, though filled with “the meekness of wisdom,” could not avoid offending “many of his disciples;” for St. John says that when they heard him “they murmured and went back,” with the usual complaint, “This is a hard saying: who can bear it?” John vi. 60.

Par.-If our Lord's doctrine was disagreeable to the Jews, it was true and salutary: but yours is generally supposed to be false and pernicious.

Min.-If the doctrine of our fallen state, as you have just now represented it, is not true, and conducive to spiritual health, I advise you myself to reject it, though it were preached by an angel from heaven. But, should its truth and importance be asserted by the joint testimony of Scripture, reason, experience, and our own Church, I hope that you will receive it as a good though unpalatable medicine.

Par.-Reason and experience will convince a candid Deist, and the declarations of our Church, supported by revelation, will silence the objections of an honest Churchman: you may therefore assure yourself, that if your doctrine is confirmed by this fourfold authority, I shall oppose it no more.

The minister, having expressed the satisfaction which his visitor's answer gave him, and the pleasure he should feel in being directed right if he were wrong, resumed the subject in the

SECOND PART.

Wherein the apostasy and misery of man are proved from Scripture.

Min.-Let us first bring the doctrine of the fall to the touchstone of Scripture: “To the law and to the testimony, (says the prophet,) for if we speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in us,” Isa. viii. 20.

We read, Gen. i. 26, that God made man not only in his natural image, with life, understanding, and will, which constitute the being of good or bad spirits: but also after his moral likeness, i.e. “in righteousness and true holiness,” according to St. Paul's definition of it, Eph iv. 24. In this moral resemblance of God consists the well being, or Divine life of good spirits. While man continued in it, his spotless soul was actuated by the Spirit of God, as our bodies are by our souls, and eternal truth itself pronounced him very good, Gen i. 31.

But how soon-how low did he fall! In the third chapter we see him overcome by the tempter in disguise: he wickedly believes the father of lies before the God of truth: he proudly aspires to be equal with his Maker; and, in order to it, madly places appetite on the throne of reason. Thus unbelief, the besetting sin of man; pride, which the apostle calls “the condemnation of the devil,” l Tim. iii. 6; and sensuality, the characteristic of the beast, invade his unguarded soul. And now, “when lust had conceived, it brought forth sin,” Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, “and sin, when it was finished, brought forth death,” James i. 15. It instantly quenched the Spirit, put an end to the breathings of prayer and praise in man's heart, defaced the image of God's moral perfections from his breast, “alienated him from the life of God,” Eph. iv. 18, and infected his whole nature with the poisonous seeds of temporal and eternal death.

Par.-So small a sin as that of tasting some forbidden fruit, could never have so dreadful an effect.

Min.-If Adam's transgression were small, as you say, I could put you in mind that the least spark can blow up the greatest ships, or fire the largest cities; and that the smallest drop of poison (for instance, the froth of a mad dog) can infect the whole animal frame, and communicate itself to millions of men and beasts, by means of the smallest bite.

But this is not the case with regard to that sin, under which “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain until now,” Rom. viii. 22. I readily grant the prohibition was small; but this made the sin so much the greater: for it argues the height of rebellion, deliberately to refuse paying so insignificant a homage to so great

a Being. Beside, if you consider all the circumstances of our first parents' disobedience, you will find in it a complication of some of the most heinous crimes. Not to mention again unbelief, pride, and sensuality: an unreasonable discontent in their happy condition, a wanton squandering away of the richest patrimony, a barbarous disregard of their offspring, a base ingratitude for the highest favours, and an impious confederacy with Satan against the kindest of benefactors, are some of the black ingredients of what you call a small sin, but might justly term *an execrable transgression*.

Par.-Suppose Adam's offence was as great as you conceive it to be, you should not conclude, without strong proofs, that it totally destroyed God's moral image, in which his soul was at first created.

Min.-The sad effects which it had upon him, are such proofs as amount to a demonstration. Follow the wretch after the commission of his crime, and you will find him proud and sullen, in the midst of shame and disgrace. So stript is his soul of original righteousness, that he feels, even in his body; the shameful consequence of his spiritual nakedness, Gen. iii. 7. So perverted are his affections that he dreads, hates, and runs away from his bountiful Creator, who was before the object of his warmest love and purest delight, Gen. iii. 8. So impaired is his boasted reason, that he attempts to hide himself from Him "who fills heaven and earth, and whose eyes are in every place." So amazingly weak is his understanding, that he endeavours to cover his guilt and shame with an apron of fig leaves, verse 7. So impenitent, so stubborn is his breast, that he does not vouchsafe to plead guilty, or once ask forgiveness, verse 10. So seared is his conscience, and malicious his heart, that he tries to excuse himself, by indirectly accusing his Maker, and turning evidence against the unhappy partner of his crime: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me," says he, "she gave me of the tree," I did not take of it myself, verse 11. Do you see, through all his behaviour, the least remains of God's moral image? For my part, I discover in it nothing but the strongest features of the fiend, with the stupidity of one of the silliest creatures upon earth.

Par.-"The stupidity of one of the silliest creatures upon earth!" What do you mean by this?

Min.-You might have read in natural history, that when the ostrich is closely pursued she hides her head in a bush, in hopes that the pursuers will not see her, because she does not see them. That creature, which, Job says, "God hath deprived of wisdom," is wise, if you compare her to Adam "hid among the trees of the garden;" for by this weak device she endeavours to trick only short-sighted man, but our first parent attempted to impose on the all-seeing God.

Par.-You are excessively severe upon Adam!

Min.-Not so severe as the just Judge, who, by driving him out of paradise, deprived him of a privilege which the very beasts enjoyed before the fall. See the

apostate flying before the cherub's flaming sword; and in what a miserable condition! In what a wretched dress! Spiritually dead, according to that irrevocable sentence, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,”-dead to God,-“dead while he lives,” 1 Tim. v. 6; “dead in trespasses and sins,” Eph. ii. 1; he wears the badge of death, in the skins of those beasts which had probably bled in death in his stead, Gen. iii. 21. Happy, if going beyond the type, he apprehends, by faith, the righteousness of “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” Rev. xiii. 8; and covers with that “best robe,” the nakedness and shame of his fallen soul!

Par.-If Adam was banished out of paradise, no other punishment was inflicted upon him.

Min.-You forget that beside the spiritual death he had already suffered, he had two deaths more to undergo, the seeds of which already wrought in his breast: for pain, toil, sorrow, and sickness began to ripen his body for temporal death; while sin, guilt, remorse, and tormenting passions made him antedate the horrors of the “lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death,” Rev. xxi. 8. Happy, if during his reprieve, the woman's promised seed took sin, the sting of death, out of his heart, and by regeneration fitted him again for paradise and heaven!

Par.-You speak often of a dreadful curse attending sin, but I do not see that any curse seized upon man after his offence. God cursed the serpent and not Adam, Gen iii. 14.

Min.-The Lord had pronounced Adam's curse beforehand, when in a prophetic manner he uttered the sentence already mentioned, “In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,” i.e. thou shalt die spiritually and be filled with the seeds of temporal and eternal death, Gen. ii. 17. This heaviest of curses having already taken place, it would have been needless to repeat it. And so far was God from reversing it, that he extended an additional unthreatened curse to all the habitable globe: “Cursed is the ground for thy sake, (said he,) in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life,” Gen. iii. 17. From that time “the whole creation was made subject to vanity, and began to groan under the bondage of corruption,” Rom. viii. 21; and ever since, “thorns and thistles,” the natural product of a cursed earth, have been lively pictures of the briers of sin, which naturally overspread our apostate souls, Gen. iii. 18.

To the “curse of the ground,” you may add “the sorrow of the woman in bringing forth children,” which may be considered not only as a peculiar curse upon her for having been “first in the transgression,” but also as a remarkable intimation of the polluted birth of her offspring, Ezek. xvi. 5: for if our first parents brought a heavy curse on the earth which they tread upon, how much heavier one did they entail on the immediate fruit of their bodies! Having infected their whole nature, it was impossible that they should not infect their remotest posterity, which they not only represented, as kings do their subjects, but also seminally contained, as an acorn contains all the future oaks that may grow from it.

Par.-I cannot believe this. It does by no means follow, that it Adam ruined himself, he ruined also his posterity.

Min.-The Scripture plainly affirms that he did. What says St. Paul? "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: for by the offence of one judgment came upon all to condemnation," Rom. v. 12, 18. And so terrible were the effects of the fall on his posterity, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart," unrenewed by grace, "was only evil," without mixture of good, "and that *continually*," without any interruption of the evil; insomuch "that it repented the Lord that he had made man, and it grieved him at his heart," Gen. vi. 5.

Par.-This was spoken of the impious generation which was destroyed in the days of Noah.

Min.-The waters of the flood which washed that generation from off the face of the earth, could not wash inbred sin from the hearts of the surviving few; for the Lord charges upon them, after the deluge, what you would confine to the antediluvian world, i.e. "the corruption of the imagination of man's heart from his youth," Gen. viii. 21; Noah the best of them as it were to prove the charge true, "lies uncovered in his tent;" and that second parent of mankind makes himself so vile by his *drunkenness* and *nakedness*, that he becomes a laughing stock even to his accursed son, Gen. ix. 41.

Par.-The prophets who came after Moses spake more favourably of mankind than he.

Min.-Not at all: they describe the baseness and sinfulness of man as fully and clearly as he does. One of Job's friends observes, that "man is born like a wild ass' colt;" like the ass whose stupidity is natural; like the wild ass which is unruly as well as stupid; nay, and like the wild ass' colt which is still more refractory and blockish than its dam, Job. xi. 12.

"The Lord looked down from heaven," says David, "upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God: they are all gone aside, they are altogether become abominable: there is none that doeth good, no not one," Psalm xiv. 3. And no wonder, for St. Paul informs us that the "carnal mind," the mind of every natural man, "is enmity with God," Rom. viii. 7. Jeremiah confirms the mournful truth, where he says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," chap. xvii. 9; and our Lord himself sets his seal to it where he tells us, "Out of the heart, [as out of their natural source,] proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, blasphemies," and all moral evil, Matt. xv. 19.

Par.-I apprehend that these scriptures must be understood of heathens and not of mankind in general, much less of the people of God.

Min.-Your apprehending this to be the case, does not prove it. The words man, mind, and heart, are all unlimited, and belong to every individual of the human race; and God, so far from supposing his people better than others by nature, complains, “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people doth not consider: it is a sinful nation, a nation laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers: Jacob is a transgressor from the womb,” Isa. i. 3; xlviii. 8.

Par.-This respects the corrupted state of the Jews, and hath no reference to Christians.

Min.-Suffer the prophet to answer, and the apostle to silence your objection. Isaiah says, in speaking of those for whom the Messias was wounded, (and I hope you will not exclude Christians from that number,) “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one unto his own way,” Isa. liii. 6; and St; Paul adds, “Are we better than they? No, in no wise, for we have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles,” which make up the whole world, “that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.” Therefore, till grace comes, “there is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Every mouth is stopped, and all the world become guilty before God,” Rom. iii. 9, 19, 22.

Par.-God forbid that there should be no natural difference between me and a heathen! The apostle's rule is not without exception.

Min.-Jesus Christ, “the Lamb of God, without spot and blemish,” because he was conceived of the Holy Spirit, is the only exception to the fatal and universal rule: “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh,” John iii. 6. Had there been any other, “the man after God's own heart,” or he who was “separated of God from his mother's womb,” might have made a better claim to it than you. But hear David’s lamentable confession: “Behold I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me,” Psalm li. 5. Hear St. Paul's mournful declaration: “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh,” in my natural self, “dwelleth no good thing. I am carnal, sold under sin. O wretched man! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Rom. vii. 18, 24.

Par.-The apostle does not complain here of his natural depravity, but of bad habits he had contracted in his youth.

Min.-You affirm this, but I hope to prove the contrary. “Touching the righteousness of the law, he was so blameless,” that his enemies who “had known his manner of life from his youth,” could lay no immorality to his charge, Phil. iii. 6; Acts xxvi. 4. Nevertheless, tracing the streams of his depravity to their source, he declares, that both he and the Christians to whom he wrote, were, not by habit or education, but “by nature, children of wrath even as others,” Eph. ii. 3.

Par.-You would make us believe that children are born with a sinful nature, as young vipers are with a venomous one; but St. Paul himself says, that the children of believers are holy, 1 Cor. vii. 14.

Min.-The word holy often means consecrated to God, and set apart for his service: " holy Sabbath, holy vessels, holy garments," are common Scriptural expressions: in this sense the children of believers are holy, having been consecrated to God from the womb, by many prayers, and dedicated to him at their baptism. And if some are holy in a higher sense, i.e. sanctified by the Spirit, this is not owing to nature, but to grace early subduing their natural corruption, and blessing the endeavours of pious parents, as the case of Timothy, 2 Tim. i. 5, and iii. 15.

Par.-Our Lord had more favourable thoughts of children than you: “Suffer little children,” says he, “to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Now, if the kingdom of God be theirs, how can they be naturally depraved as you suppose?

Min.-The portion of Scripture you quote establishes what you want to overthrow; for if infants must come to Christ, it follows they are lost sinners, through the depravity of their nature, though not yet doubly lost through the corruption of their lives: otherwise they would not stand in need of being brought to the Physician of souls, who “came to seek and to save [only] that which was lost.” And if our Lord added, “Of such is the kingdom of heaven,” i.e. the dispensation of the Gospel and the Church of Christ, it was to show that infants are in as great want of the Gospel, of the advantages of Church fellowship, and as welcome to them as persons of riper years.

Par.-If children were naturally sinful, our Lord would never have told his disciples, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Min.-This passage refers no more to the natural state of children, than that where Christ says, “I will come as a thief,” refers to the dishonesty of a thief. If our Lord affirms that we must become as little children, it is not in natural sinfulness and foolishness: but in “desiring the sincere milk of the word, as new-born babes desire the breast,” 1 Peter ii. 11; in being conscious of our ignorance and helplessness; in submitting to the teaching of our heavenly Master, without unbelieving reasonings; and in gladly beginning the spiritual life, as children begin the natural one.

Par.-Do you really think then that infants are sinful?

Min.-I not only think it, but am persuaded you will make no doubt of it yourself, if you consider three things: FIRST, the providence of a just God who condemns them to drink their daily share of the cup of sorrow and death, which is the “wages of sin,” Romans vi. 23. SECONDLY, their early propensity to do evil, not only before they are taught it, but also when it is expressly forbidden. “They are froward even from their

mother's womb," says David. "As soon as they are born they go astray, and tell lies as soon as they can speak," Psalm lviii. 3. We have a third proof of their depravity in one of the sacraments, both in the Jewish and Christian Church. The Lord, "who knows what is in man," ordered them to be circumcised under the law, because they stand in need of "the circumcision of the heart;" of which that in the flesh was only an emblem: and under the Gospel they are admitted to baptism, both because they want the sprinkling of Jesus' blood, typified in that ordinance; and because the promise of the regenerating Spirit "belongs to us and our children;" who therefore stand in need of it on account of their original corruption, as well as we on account of our actual pollutions, Acts ii. 39.

Par.-You surely mistake when you say that infants have a sinful disposition: what can look more innocent and harmless than a suckling babe?

Min.-If your argument holds, it will prove, that young vipers have no mischievous disposition, and sucking lions no bent to fierceness, because they are really very harmless, and look exceeding pretty in their kind: but you know that the apparent harmlessness of those dangerous creatures is wholly owing to the feebleness of their organs, and their want of bodily strength.

Par.-You love to pour contempt on the dignity of human nature; I would blush to compare my fellow creatures to beasts that perish,-to vipers and lions, some of the worst of them.

Min.-I do not blush to follow the Scriptures; and if you allow me to quote them, you will see that they go much farther in this respect than I do. They inform us that "man is like the beasts that perish," Psalm xlix. 12; that "he might see that he himself is a beast," Eccles. iii. 18, and that till he is taught of God, he is "foolish and ignorant," in spiritual things, "even as it were a beast before him," Psalm lxxiii. 22. They send him to the ant and swallow to learn diligence and wisdom in the things that concern his future welfare, Proverbs vi. 6; Jeremiah viii. 7. They affirm that he is more stupid, in religious matters, than the ox and ass are in civil affairs, Isaiah i. 3. They compare him to the lion for fierceness, Psalm lviii. 6. To the bull for madness, Psalm xxii. 12. To the fox for mischievous craftiness, Luke xii. 32. To the dog for baseness, churlishness, and rage, Mark vii. 28; Phil. iii. 2; Matt. vii. 6. To the swine for brutish sensuality, Matt. vii. 6. And to "the sow wallowing in the mire, or the dog returning to his vomit," for execrable filthiness, 2 Peter ii. 22. In short, they declare, that he is as "venomous as the poison of a serpent, even like the deaf adder that refuses to hear the charmer's voice," Psalm lviii. 4.

Par.-St. James, far from aspersing the human race at this rate, intimates, that men ought not to curse one another, because "they are made after the similitude of God," James iii. 9.

Min.-This expression of the apostle agrees exactly with what I said before. In Adam we were originally made after God's *moral* image; and since the fall we have

still glorious remains of his *natural* likeness in our understanding, will, and the eternal duration of our souls. These grand ruins ought not only to make us avoid *cursing* each other, but should also induce us to "honour all men," 1 Peter ii. 17.

Par.-And is it "honouring all men," to say that *they are all abominable by nature?* Is it not rather slandering all men together?

Min.-The expression you exclaim against is not mine, but David's, who had it from the God of truth, Psalm xiv. 4. And l hope you will allow your Maker to speak a lamentable truth without being called to your bar as a slanderer. If a physician, under pretence of honouring his sick prince, obstinately declared him immortal, and in perfect health, would he hereby do honour either to him or his own judgment? Without waiting for the obvious answer, I conclude, that they who extol the rectitude of our sin-sick nature, far from "honouring all men," pass a bitter jest upon them, and expose their own want of self knowledge.

Par.-If this doctrine respecting our fallen state were true, our Saviour would have preached it; but I do not remember that he once touches upon it in all his discourses.

Min.-Inattention and prejudice can veil the plainest truths. Why did our Lord so strongly preach to Nicodemus the necessity of a "new birth," and to his disciples, that of "conversion," but because we are all "conceived in sin," as well as David; and "children of wrath by nature," as well as St. Paul? John iii. 3; Matt. xviii. 3. Why did he say again and again, that "the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick," if it were not to make us deeply sensible that the mortal disease of sin is upon us? Matt. xi. 12; Mark ii. 17; Luke v. 31. Why did he invite those "that travail, and are heavy laden, to come to him for rest," if we have not all a burden of iniquity to part with? Matt. xi. 28. Why did he declare that he was "come to seek and save that which is lost," if we are not all in a lost estate? Matt. xviii. 11. Why did he tell his apostles, that "without him they could do nothing; and that no man can come unto him except the Father draw him," but to convince them and us of our total inability to do spiritual good? John xv. 5; vi. 44. In short, why did he affirm, that "except we do eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we have no life in us," John vi. 53; that "he who believeth not on him, is condemned already;" that "the wrath of God abideth on him;" that "he shall die in his sins?" Why? but because the most unblamable and moral, without him, are loaded with guilt, and ripe for destruction, John iii. 18, 36; viii. 24; Mark xvi. 16.

Par.-It appears, by these scriptures, that our Saviour looked upon all as helpless, guilty creatures; but he made some difference between persons of a decent behaviour and notorious offenders; whereas, according to your uncharitable doctrine, both are in equal danger of endless ruin.

Min.-Certainly they are till they be converted; and the difference which our Lord made confirms the doctrine which you oppose. There is no doubt of the lost state of scandalous sinners, for the Father of mercies says of one of them who had repented,

“This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found,” Luke xv. 24. The question is, whether Christ spake more favourably of those who depended upon their morality and forms of piety, that is, the scribes and Pharisees: let his own words decide it: “Ye are of your father the devil.” “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers; how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” “Publicans and harlots shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before you,” John viii. 44; Matt. xxiii. 33; xxi. 31. Thus, in our Lord's account, both those who are seemingly virtuous, and those who are openly vicious, till they “are in him new creatures,” travel, though by different roads, to the same mansions of horror: and if the one way is more apt to deceive the traveller than the other, it is that of the Pharisee.

Par.-Shocking! At this rate the notorious sinner hath an advantage over persons of a reputable character. How do you account for this strange paradox in our Lord's doctrine?

Min.-You must not suppose that gross sinners can be saved without conversion, or that we must be guilty of enormities to be proper subjects for converting grace. Far be these wild notions from us, as they were from our Saviour. His meaning is, that those who depend on the imaginary rectitude of their nature, and the chimerical merit of their works, look at him with as much indifference as a healthy man looks at the physician; while those who have no seeming merit to cover their guilt and depravity with, see them without a veil, and stoop more readily to the Saviour of the lost.

Par.-I do not blame you for affirming that all are sinners, and stand in need of Divine mercy: but what you say of our misery and danger in a state of nature, is enough to provoke any one.

Min.-What the Scriptures say of it is enough to provoke any one,-not to anger,-but to repentance. O that it had that happy effect upon us! They represent the unrenewed man as “the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt,” Isaiah lvii. 20. They paint him as either “weaving the spider's web,” working out a useless and filthy righteousness, or “hatching cockatrice eggs, till the viper break out,” contriving vanity or mischief in his heart, till it break out in his conversation, Isa. lix. 5.

Par.-How can the natural man be always sinning, as you suppose he is?

Min.-He is not always doing what is evil, but the uninterrupted depravity of his heart corrupts those actions which otherwise are good or indifferent in themselves: therefore all that he does is sin. (1.) His natural actions are sin, “whether he eats or drinks, or does any thing else,” he sins, by not doing it to the glory of God, l Cor. x. 31, compared with Zechariah vii. 6. (2dly.) His civil actions, having no higher principle or end than self interest or his own glory, are sinful: “The ploughing of the wicked is sin,” Prov. xxi. 4. (3dly.) His religious duties are sin, because he performs them not “in spirit and in truth,” John iv. 24. “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: therefore, if he offers an oblation, it is as if he offered

swine's blood; because he hath chosen his own ways," Prov. xv. 8; Isaiah lxvi. 3; and if he receives the Lord's Supper, "he eats and drinks his own condemnation, not discerning the Lord's body," 1 Cor. xi. 29. In short, he is lost; for, says St. Paul, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them," 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. Whence you see, that previous to our being savingly acquainted with the Gospel, we are all, without exception, in a lost estate, and blinded by Satan, the god of this world. And as blind Samson did grind for the Philistines, so we work for our spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil: "We are the servants of sin, and yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," Rom. vi. 19, 20: "Making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof:" "Yea, the lusts of our father the devil we do," Rom. xiii. 14; John viii. 44.

Par.-If the natural man sins in all that he does, he is not bound either to pray or work, for no one is bound to sin.

Min.-He is bound to pray and work, though he is not bound to sin in doing either. As it is a less offence to do one's duty badly than to omit it entirely, of two evils he is to choose the least. Or rather he ought, with the next breath, to apply to the Saviour of the lost for pardon and strength; and "He that justifies the ungodly" will forgive and help him "for his own name's sake."

Par.-Notwithstanding all that you say of the natural man's misery, he often thrives in the world better than those who make much ado about their souls.

Min.-This thriving proves an addition to his misery; "his eyes may swell out with fatness and he may do even what he lusts; but how suddenly will he perish, and come to a fearful end," if he become not a new creature! Psalm lxxiii. 7, 18. So long as he remains "an enemy in his mind by wicked works," Col. i. 21, "the curse of the Lord is in his house," Prov. iii. 33. "I have cursed his blessings," says the Lord, Mal. ii. 2: "his basket and store are cursed," Deut. xxviii. 17: "his table is a snare to him," Rom. xi. 9: he abuses alike the rod and staff of the Lord, adversity and prosperity: as on one hand temporal chastisements harden him, as they did Pharaoh; so, on the other, "the good things he receives in this life" make him venture upon the next, thoughtless as the wealthy farmer, and unprepared as the rich glutton, Luke xii. 20; xvi. 25. Thus he fearfully evidences the truth of Solomon's saying, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them," Prov. i. 43.

Par.-If the unconverted man hath the fatal art of extracting poison out of every dealing of Providence, he can also extract a remedy out of every dispensation of Divine grace.

Min.-Just the contrary: he hath the wretched skill to turn every spiritual blessing into a curse. (l.) Does the Lord send his "law as a school master to bring him to Christ?" Gal. iii. 24. It is to him a dead letter. Ignorant of its spiritual meaning, he

contents himself with performing the outward duties it requires, and like the Pharisees, whose leaven has infected his soul, Mark viii. 15, “he goes about to establish his own righteousness,” by the law, instead of fleeing, before it, to “Christ who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,” Rom. x. 2. (2.) Does Jesus bless him with a written or preached Gospel? He “rejects the counsel of God against himself;” and what should be “a savour of life unto life” unto him, proves a “savour of death unto death,” Luke vii. 30; 2 Cor. ii. 16. (3.) Christ himself, “the precious corner stone laid in Sion,” for lost sinners to build their hopes upon, becomes to him “a stumbling stone, and a rock of offence,” 1 Pet. ii. 8; Rom. viii. 33. He sins on without fear, because “God is merciful” to those who forsake their sin; and he “blesses himself in his iniquity,” because Christ died to redeem him from all iniquity, Tit. ii. 14.

Is it any wonder then if “God is angry with him every day,” and declares that “if he will not turn, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, made it ready, and prepared for him the instruments of death; even the worm that dieth not, and the fire which is not quenched,” Mark ix. 44; Psalm vii. 12.

Par.-You are very forward in sentencing people to eternal death. God is more merciful than you; and I hope none of us shall go into everlasting burnings. It is barbarous to doom to unquenchable fire people who never were guilty of any notorious crimes.

Min.-If there be any barbarity in the case, I am not chargeable with it. I simply tell you what I see in the Scriptures, and quote the chapter and verse that you may not think I impose my sentiments upon you. With regard to your objection, I make no doubt but the righteous Judge will punish those sinners, whose iniquities have peculiar aggravations, with torments peculiarly aggravated: but though the unconverted man’s sins should not have been of the scandalous sort, his doom will be most fearful.

Par.-This requires a solid proof, and you produce only a bare assertion.

Min.-Every wilful sin (and the natural man commits some such daily) hath in it the principle of all iniquity; viz. the contempt of that sovereign authority which is equally stamped upon all the commandments of God. You know that, even according to the civil law, he who genteelly robs a traveller of one piece of silver, forfeits his life, as well as he who barbarously murders him and carries off a thousand pieces of gold; because both equally break the law which forbids robbery, though one does it with less horrible circumstances than the other.

Par.-But shall we say the law of God is upon the same plan as the law of the land, in this respect?

Min.-Yes, exactly, as to the tenor of it, it is: “The soul that sinneth,” and not the soul that committeth a crime of such or such a blackness, “it shall die,” Ezek. viii. 3.

“The wages of sin,” whether it be scandalous or fashionable, “is death,” Rom. vi. 23; “for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all unrighteousness of men,” and not only against offences of the grosser kind, as you fondly suppose, Rom. i. 18. The Scriptures agree that “they are cursed who do err,” more or less, “from God's commandments,” Psalm cxix. 21; that “cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,” Gal. iii. 10; and that “whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all,” James ii. 10.

Par.-The passages you quote are very express; but I hope the curse which they mention is not so terrible as you imagine.

Min.-“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” Heb. x. 31. “Our God is a consuming fire,” to unbelievers, Heb. xii. 29: he declares, by his servants, that “they all shall be damned that believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness;” that “the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God;” that “the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that know him not, and obey not his Gospel;” that “they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;” and lastly, that the fearful curse will be fixed, for ever, by Christ the Judge of all, who will say to the unconverted, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,” 2 Thess. ii. 12; Psalm ix. 17; 2 Thess. i. 8; Matt. xxv. 41.

Thus you see that it is not ministers who condemn impenitent sinners to eternal death, but God's unchangeable law, which passes sentence upon them in this world, and the loving Jesus himself, who will ratify and execute it in the world to come. Nor is there any other place of refuge from this dreadful curse, but the shadow of the Saviour's wings, who vouchsafes to “redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,” Gal. iii. 13.

Here the minister ceased to speak, and his opponent, instead of making a quick reply, sat pensive some moments, as if he were at a loss to find new objections; but soon recovering himself, he began the third part, in which the fall and misery of man are proved from reason.

PART III.

In which the apostasy and misery of man are proved from reason.

Par.-I confess you have silenced me by Scripture: but does reason agree here with revelation? Many say that the doctrine of original sin is “original nonsense.”

Min.-It is easy to cavil against, but difficult to overturn the truth. If the oracles of God maintain this doctrine, reason is not against it. Sound reason is for it, as I hope to prove by a variety of rational arguments.

FIRST ARGUMENT.-Reason tells us that some mystery of iniquity lies hid under the shocking circumstances of the labour of women and birth of children; and that if our nature were not sinful, the gracious God could not, in justice, suffer millions of infants, who never actually sinned, to go through the miseries of a lingering life, and the agonies of an untimely death.

Par.-Your argument would seem to me unanswerable if it did not prove too much; but it unhappily proves that beasts also are sinful, for they are brought forth with sorrows and end a toilsome life by a painful death, as well as the children of men.

Min.-Your objection, far from overturning my argument, gives me an opportunity of strengthening it by three considerations.

1. Search the whole earth, and you will not find in it one species of creatures that brings forth its young ones, in general, with half the pangs and dangers wherewith women bring forth their children; and is not this a call to look for the cause of this evil where it is most sensibly felt?

2. The curse of fallen man having seized upon the whole creation, caused a general degeneracy in every species of living creatures. The majesty of the lion sunk into cruelty, and the courage of the tiger into fierceness. All the ranks of milder animals were stamped with dulness, wildness, or untractableness, and this fatal change made them hasten to their dissolution. Remember, therefore, that it is only in consequence of our curse rebounding upon beasts, and causing them to degenerate from their original perfection, that toil follows, and death overtakes them.

3. Though this degeneracy cannot be called sinfulness in beasts, it can in man, not only because it came from him, and is much stronger in him; but also because he is naturally a moral agent; whereas beasts are not. Therefore, the degeneracy, sufferings, and death of beasts prove the depravity and misery of man, as strongly as the effect proves the existence of its cause.

Par.-You surprise me in affirming that the death of beasts is a consequence of their degeneracy, and their degeneracy a consequence of our curse and sinfulness: I thought that beasts would have died even in paradise.

Min.-This thought seems to want both the sanction of reason and that of revelation: reason dictates that as a wise artist will never make a watch to get it bruised in pieces under the smith's hammer; so the wise God never originally made an animal for the stroke of death: and revelation informs us, that “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;” and that “by one man's offence, death reigned by one,” Romans v. 12, 16. As therefore no creature would have died, if man had not brought sin and death into the world, so the death of every creature proves the sinfulness of man; and if even the death of an insect proves this, how much more man's own death!

Par.-The force of your argument depends, in great measure, on a pretended degeneracy of beasts, which I am not bound to admit upon your bare assertion.

Min.-You may safely admit it upon the following proofs:-

1. Reason tells us that the bad properties of beasts never came from a good God: and as beasts were not created with them, it necessarily follows that they have degenerated.

2. Moses confirms this, when he says, that "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was VERY GOOD:" but the cruelty of tigers, and the poison of serpents, are not good at all: therefore tigers were not cruel, nor asps venomous, when they came out of their Creator's hands.

3. We read that God "gave Adam dominion over every living thing that moveth upon the earth; and brought every beast of the field to him, to see what he would call them," Genesis i. 26; ii. 19. But had then been wild, untractable, and ravenous as they are now, far from governing them, or staying to give them names, he would have wished for the swiftness of the hind to run out of paradise, before they had torn him in pieces.

4. Isaiah, describing the paradisiacal state of the earth, after the *restitution of all things*, informs us that "the wolf shall [again] dwell with the lamb, the leopard lie down with the kid, and the calf with the lion, which shall eat straw [or grass] like the ox." He adds, that "the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child put his hand on the cockatrice's den;" and that "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain," Isaiah xi. 6, &c. In this picture of the restitution, we clearly see what the animal creation once was, by what it will be when it is restored to its original state; and we may well conclude from this, that if beasts themselves must undergo a change, it is not contrary to reason to affirm, that man must also be born again, that is, be totally changed.

5. St. Paul confirms Isaiah's prophecy of the restitution of the animal world, when he assures us, that the creature degenerated, or, as he expresses it, was "made subject to vanity," but not without hope of recovery; for, adds he, "it shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God," Romans viii. 21, compared with Psalm civ. 30, and Acts iii. 21.

Par.-You have so cleared your first argument from my objections, that I desire to hear a few more of your rational proofs of our depravity and misery.

Min.-SECOND ARGUMENT.-Our vicious inclinations, which too often lead us out of the path of duty, in spite of all the remonstrances of conscience; and our sensual appetites, which impel us forward in the ways of sin, notwithstanding the clearest dictates of reason, prove that human nature hath suffered as great a revolution as

these realms did, when a king was seen bleeding on the scaffold, and a usurper placed in the seat of majesty.

THIRD ARGUMENT.-The universal corruption of the morals of mankind, and the innumerable crimes committed in all parts and ages of the world, notwithstanding the restraint of human and Divine laws, are such bitter fruits as could never universally grow without a bitter root: and unprejudiced reason tells us that this root can be no other than our natural depravity.

Par.-I apprehend you give way to prejudice yourself: we can easily account for the corruption of mankind, from a particular constitution, bad education, or ill example: there is no need of supposing it natural.

Min.-I grant that a peculiar habit of body, and a bad education, or ill example, will, like rich soil and rank manure, cause the weeds of natural corruption to shoot the higher: but, that we bring the seeds of it into the world with us, is evident, from the wilfulness, selfishness, greediness, anger, revenge, or obstinacy, which little children betray, before they can take notice of ill examples, understand bad counsels, or be at all wrought upon by youthful temptations: and these vices break out even in the presence of the most pious parents, who too often complain that the evil propensities of their children baffle the force of the earliest precepts and best examples.

Par.-You are very apt to make the worst of a bad matter. Immorality is not so general as you suppose. Thousands, I hope, live free from bad inclinations and bad practices.

Min.-None live so exemplarily as God's children, and none are so ready to acknowledge, with the prophet, “the deceitfulness of our desperately wicked heart,” Jeremiah xvii. 9. As they see by the light of Divine grace, “the abominations that” every man hath “portrayed in the dark chambers of his imagery,” Ezekiel viii. 10, 12, they can say with David, that “their heart showeth them the wickedness of the ungodly,” Psalm xxxvi. 1: and, discovering their natural depravity more clearly, they lament it also more deeply than the rest of mankind. See Jeremiah ix. 1.

2. The more you are acquainted with yourself, with the history of the dead, and the transactions of the living; the more you will be persuaded that the distemper is universal, affecting all ranks of people, in every age and country, and working, more or less, through all sorts of constitutions.

3. Some, it is true, boast of their harmlessness, and the goodness of their hearts: they suppose they have no vice, because they live outwardly in none; they fancy that the tree of sin is dead, because it is stripped of its leaves, and the fruit does not appear; they imagine that the fountain of corruption is dried up, because the main stream runs under ground, or in a new channel: but experience and time will convince them that their innocence is only like the seeming harmlessness of Paul's

viper; as soon as the fire of temptation comes near enough to stir it, it will unexpectedly bite, if grace do not interpose, even to eternal death.

This melancholy truth is confirmed by striking examples. The apostles, after they had “left all to follow Jesus,” needed to take heed of such beastly sins as “surfeiting and drunkenness,” Luke xxi. 34. Peter, the oldest of them, after the strongest protestations of fidelity, lied, cursed, swore, and denied his Lord. And good-natured Hazael was at last guilty of that barbarity, the bare mention of which made him say, “Am I a dog that I should do this thing?” 2 Kings viii. 12. So true is Solomon's saying, “that he that trusteth his own heart is a fool!” Prov. xxviii. 26. So just is that observation of David, “The children of men are deceitful upon the weights, they are altogether lighter than vanity itself!” Psalm lxii. 9.

Par.-If all the children of Adam are naturally depraved, their depravity must be equal, for the same cause will produce the same effect: but as this is not the case, our depravity cannot be natural.

Min.-“They are altogether become abominable,” says David, Psalm xiv. 4. But they do not all remain so. The renewing grace of God makes a real difference in those who receive it: “For if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,” 2 Cor. v. 17. With regard to the harmlessness, for which some of the unregenerate are remarkable, it is not owing, I am afraid, to a better nature, but to a happier constitution, a cooler blood, a stricter education, or a greater measure of restraining grace: perhaps also to the want of natural boldness, and of a fair opportunity, or suitable temptation to sin. As for the seeming virtues of the unconverted, a little attention will show you that they spring from real vices. The fear of contempt, the desire of praise and popularity, or, it may be, secret envy, excite the voluptuous to generous actions: the thirst of money, or of a title, stirs up the indolent to industry and diligence: cowardice, or the love of pleasure, keeps the ambitious loyal and quiet; and while ostentation makes the miser or spendthrift charitable, self righteousness renders the Pharisee religious. But the richest spring of the natural man's morality, if he is moral at all, is a sense of decency, a particular regard for his character, a desire to make a figure by his goodness among his fellow creatures; or, at most, the impious conceit of making amends for his sins, purchasing heaven by his works, and so becoming his own saviour. By these antichristian motives, his depravity is confined to his heart, as a wild beast is confined to his den by the light of the sun: but, as the couching lion is a lion still, though he appears quiet as a lamb, so the natural man remains abominable, though he seems as moral as a Christian. Our Lord confirms this by comparing him to a “whited sepulchre, which indeed appears beautiful outwardly, but within is full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness,” Matt. xxiii, 27.

Par.-If we are all depraved, and have brought this depravity with us into the world, it is as natural to us as a black complexion to the Ethiopians; nor can we be blamed for not being virtuous, with any more justice than a negro for not being white.

Min.-Your objection hath more subtilty than strength. Though we cannot help our being born corrupted, we can often choose whether we will let our natural corruption break out into external sins, or not; and we may use or neglect those means which God hath appointed, under Christ, to remedy it.

2. A moral depravity which we have increased ourselves, by the wilful commission of sins which were avoidable, leaves us as accountable for it as an Ethiopian would be for his blackness, if he contrived to bathe in ink daily.

3. Suppose a negro were credibly informed that his natural complexion would cost him his life, and that nothing in the world could change it but a liquid made with his prince's blood; and suppose, that being presented with the precious wash, he were obstinately to reject it, and roll himself in a heap of soot, would he not be justly punished for remaining black, suppose he were excusable for being born so? This is exactly the case of every natural man: he wilfully rejects the blood of Christ, and obstinately wallows in the filth of sin. Therefore "the wrath of God [justly] abideth on him," John iii. 36.

Par.-Your answers to my objections are satisfactory: return, I pray you, to your rational proofs of our apostasy.

Min.-FOURTH ARGUMENT.-The present disordered ruinous state of the globe shows, to an impartial inquirer, that its chief inhabitant is disgraced by the God of nature and providence. Murder and battle, plagues and famine, lightning and thunder, burning heat and piercing cold, cities and mountains on fire, together with storms, inundations, and earthquakes, concur to make this earth a vast prison for rebels, who are already "tied and bound with the chain of their sins," a boundless scaffold for their execution, an immense "field of blood," and, if I may be allowed the expression, the charnel house of the universe.

FIFTH ARGUMENT.-Reason agrees with Scripture in deciding that man, as the noblest creature upon earth, should, "according to the fitness of things, bear rule over all the rest." But "how is the crown fallen from his head!" Worms lodge within his bowels even before his death; and insects too base to be named, but not too base to humble a proud apostate, prey upon his flesh, and feast on his blood, from the cradle to the grave. And would the wise, gracious, and just Governor of the world, suffer despicable vermin (to say nothing of savage beasts) thus to rebel against man, if man were not himself a rebel against God?

SIXTH ARGUMENT.-Reason discovers that the effect cannot rise higher than the cause, and that light will as soon spring from darkness as a pure, heavenly nature from an earthly, sensual one. Our first parents having infected their souls and bodies, by taking the poison of sin, and the seeds of death, could not, without a miracle, transmit to their offspring a better nature than they now had themselves. It would be irrational to expect wholesome streams from a corrupted fountain; and Job, after

inquiring “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” rationally answers, “Not one.”

Par.-Your last argument, strong as you may think it, is inconclusive: you do not consider that the body, being only organised matter, is as incapable of sinning as a corpse, because matter is not susceptible of moral defilement: and you forget that our Lord affirms, even “adulteries proceed out of the heart,” or soul, which each of us had immediately from God. Therefore, it is absolutely impossible we should be born in sin: unless you can believe it possible for a holy God to create sinful souls, or for a good God to create pure spirits, in order to send them into impure bodies, that they may be defiled by the contact. The last of these notions is not less repugnant to philosophy, than the first is to divinity, for if a dung hill cannot defile the light of the sun, much less can matter defile a spirit.

Min.-Your subtle objection is entirely founded on the odd notion that children derive nothing from their parents but a body; and that their soul comes immediately from God, who continually creates and emits spirits into bodies, at the beck of every fornicator and adulterer; but that this is a mistake, appears from the following considerations:-

1. It is said that “God rested on the seventh day from all his work” of creation, Gen. ii. 3: but upon this scheme he is hourly creating new souls.

2. All living creatures, “after their kind,” received power to propagate their species in its whole nature; and it does not appear why beasts should be more privileged than man in this respect.

3. When God blessed our first parents, and bade them “be fruitfu1 and multiply,” he addressed himself to the soul as well as to the body, which, without the soul, can neither receive nor execute a command. Therefore, by the force of the Divine blessing and appointment, the whole man can multiply, and the soul may light the flame of life, under proper circumstances, as one taper can light another.

4. All agree, that, under God, we receive life from our parents; and if life, then certainly our spirit, which is the principle of life, and without which the body is nothing but a lump of refined clay. Gen. xlvi. 26.

5. The *regeneration* of our souls is insisted upon, by our Lord, as absolutely necessary; and if they are to be *regenerated*, it follows, that they were first *generated*, John iii. 6; Ephesians iv. 23.

6. Lastly. the Scripture informs us that fallen “Adam begat a son in his own likeness, and after his image,’ Genesis v. 3: but had he generated only a body without a soul, he would have been the father of a corpse, and not of a man; for what is man but *an embodied spirit?*

Par.-What you advance would carry great weight, if it were not written, that “God is the Father of the spirits of all flesh,” and that “the spirit returns to God who gave it.” From these passages I always concluded that the soul is not propagated, but immediately created.

Min.-Give me leave to retort, that it is also written, that Job and David “were fearfully and wonderfully made; and fashioned by the hands of God in their mother's womb,” Job x. 8; Psalm cxxxix. 4, &c; and that “we are the offspring of Him who made of one blood all nations of men,” Acts xvii. 26, 28. If you think that these scriptures prove that Job, David, and “all nations of men” had their bodies from God, without the instrumentality of any parents, I will agree, that the passages you quote prove also that we have our souls immediately from God. Nevertheless, I do not deny that the Lord is peculiarly “the Father of the spirits of all flesh,” because “he breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life,” and *gave him the spirit* by which *he became* immediately, and every other man *mediately, a living soul*, Gen. ii. 7.

Par.-This hypothesis affects, I am afraid, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; for if the spirit is generated with the body, it will also perish with it.

Min.-1. Chaff is, in some respects, to the wheat what the body is to the soul; it is formed, and subsists awhile with it: but would you conclude from thence that the wheat cannot subsist when the chaff is destroyed? You know the contrary, though wheat and chaff are material substances, growing from the same clod. How much more can the soul subsist, in a separate state, after the corruption of the body, seeing it is of a nature so diametrically opposite to flesh and blood! That essential, vital breath, which came from heaven,-from God himself, cannot then be destroyed by the fall of a little dust of the earth that clogs it for awhile.

2. The immortality of the soul is no more affected, nor the nature of a spirit impaired, by spiritual traduction, than the eternity of God the Father is affected by the generation of his “only begotten Son,” Hebrews i. 5; John i. 18; or his glorious Godhead impaired by the continual emanations of his Holy Spirit, Psalm civ. 30; 1 John v. 18.

3. So far is dissolution from being a necessary consequence of the propagation of our souls, that it would not so much as have followed the generation of our bodies, if Adam had not brought sin and death into the world. Yea, the beasts themselves, as I proved just now, enjoyed, in the paradisiacal state, the power of propagating their species, together with immortality.

Par.-Now that you have proved the traduction of human souls, what inference do you draw from it?

Min.-A very remarkable one: viz. that according to the previous appointment of God, and the law of our nature, Genesis i. 28, “Adam begat a son,” with whatsoever

was essential to his own wretched likeness and fallen image, Genesis v. 3; that is to say, with a body tainted all over with mortality, and a soul polluted and infected with sin. Thus your objections are answered, and the propagation of sin and death are, not only Scripturally, but rationally and philosophically accounted for.

Par.-If Adam repented and became holy, as it is supposed he did, he could not impart a sinful nature to his posterity, for our Lord tells us that "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit."

Min.-Your objection can be answered various ways. 1. The holiness which Adam regained was not free from mixtures of corruption.

2. Imperfect as it was, it could not be attained by any of the children of men, in any other way than that in which Adam himself, and Abel his son got it, viz. *by faith* in the promised seed, Hebrews xi. 4.

3. As a tree, naturally growing from the kernel of the best apple, can produce nothing but mere crabs, till it is ingrafted; so the children of the best parents can have, by nature, nothing but sinful dispositions, till grace ingrafts holy ones.

4. Lastly: good men beget their children as *men*, not as *good men*; they cannot impart to their children what they never receive from their parents; therefore, by generation all are naturally "children of wrath;" when any become "children of light," it is supernaturally by regeneration. And then they "are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 13.

Par.-It seems to me both absurd and unjust, that we should be born in sin, because Adam chose to sin: by what law are we bound to suffer for the faults of another? We had no hand in our first parents' transgression, why should the consequences of it fall so heavy upon us?

Min.-You do not think parallel cases either absurd or unjust. Adam was the general head, representative, and father of mankind, and we suffer for his rebellion-as *justly* as the children of a bankrupt suffer for their parent's imprudence, or those of a traitor for their father's treason,-as *naturally* as subjects super for the public faults of their prince,-as *necessarily* as the offspring of one who hath ruined his constitution by intemperance, partakes of the parent's enfeebled habit of body.-and as *unavoidably* as an unborn child shares the fate of its desperate mother, when she hath poisoned herself.

2. As we are all seminally contained in the loins of Adam, it would have been as impossible to save us from the defilement of sin, as to preserve part of your blood free from all infection, if you were dying or dead of a fever.

3. If Adam had stood, and the happy consequences of his obedience had reached down to you, you would not have thought it unjust to enjoy them; yet, as he fell, it is reasonable that you should submit to the sad alternative.

4. Did God appoint, for our representative and head, *the first Adam*, who ruined us without our fault? He hath also graciously appointed the *second Adam*, Jesus Christ, who redeemed us without any merit on our part: it ill becomes, therefore, those who talk of salvation by the cross of the Son of God to speak against the doctrine of our natural depravity through the fall of Adam: for, if the one be rational, the other can never be absurd.

5. If any perish now, it is by their own choice, for "there is help laid on one mighty to save," Psalm lxxxix. 19. "The soul that sinneth," (unto death,) by rejecting, to the end, the life offered in Jesus, "it shall die" eternally, and only that soul: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, "The son shall not [finally] bear the iniquity of the father," Ezekiel xviii. 20.

6. Do sin and misery abound without our choice by the fall of Adam, grace and glory *abound much more* by the free, unsought redemption that is in Jesus Christ, Romans v. 20; and "it must be owing to our own perverseness and our own negligence," says the ingenious Mr. Hervey, "if we do not levy a tax upon our loss, and rise even by our fall."

Par.-Did not God foresee Adam's sin, and its fatal consequences? And if he foresaw them, why did he not, as the wise Governor of the world, prevent them all together?

Min.-It is not right for creatures who cannot account for the most common things in the natural world, such as the colour of the grass, or that of flowers, to call their Creator to the bar for his transactions in the moral world. That God permitted sin to enter into the world, we know by sad experience; and that he does all things in wisdom, we are no less certain; therefore we are sure that wisdom subscribed the awful permission, and till he unfold to us the mysteries of his providence, a modest inquirer will, I apprehend, be satisfied with the following reflections:-

1. God made man in his natural image, part of which consists in liberty of choice; and if God's making a free agent is not against his wisdom, the wrong choice or sin of a free agent is no impeachment of that Divine attribute.

2. God, it is true, might have made man as the good angels are now; but then they would not have been men, but angels: and he was no more bound to do it, than to make all his creatures of a size, or all horses men. On the contrary, a variety in the works of creation becomes "the manifold wisdom of God."

3. He did all that a wise and good ruler of rational creatures could do to prevent sin. (1.) He gave to Adam a strong propensity to obedience. (2.) He forbad sin. (3.) He enforced the prohibition by the fearful threatening of present death. (4.) He promised to crown his continuance in duty with eternal life, Rom. x. 5. To have gone farther, would have been as inconsistent with the nature of a moral agent, and that of the Divine law, as the confining or chaining down every one who may turn thief, is contrary to the liberty of Englishmen, and the laws of the realm. Perhaps also,

4. God permitted, not ordered sin, because he both would and could overrule it to the glorious display of several of his attributes, which must otherwise have remained unknown to, and unglorified by his creatures: such as his boundless mercy, his wonderful patience, his inflexible justice, and admirable wisdom in bringing good out of evil.

5. As those who never knew what sickness and want are, do not half value the blessings of health and plenty, it is not unlikely that God saw it expedient to suffer, not procure; the apostasy and misery of this world; or, (to use a Scriptural expression,) to permit the loss of his hundredth sheep, that the ninety nine who never were lost might be more sensible of, and thankful for preserving grace. And lest there should be any reason to impeach his goodness, he sent his only begotten Son to take the curse of the law upon him, to destroy the works of the devil, and, as “a good Shepherd, to bring back the lost sheep,” the world that had strayed from the path of pious obedience, Luke xv.

6. Lastly. The contrast between sin and holiness, between earthly misery and heavenly bliss, will heighten to all eternity the beauty of holiness, and the joys of the blessed: so that the wickedness and wretchedness of this earth, which is but a point with regard to the universe, when they shall have been overruled by Divine wisdom, mercy, justice, and power, will answer the end of shades properly thrown into a piece of painting, or that of night tempering the day of paradise. They will make the light of God s perfections appear unspeakably brighter, and the day of heaven shine infinitely more glorious.

Par.-In answering my objection you start another, which you will not easily solve. If sin will answer the end of shades in a picture, it will have its use, and I do not see why we should be punished at all for what will set off the Divine perfections, and in the end redound to the glory of God.

Min.-It is sin *properly pardoned*, or *justly punished*, not sin *committed with impunity*, which will answer this end. Rebellion is always abominable in itself; nevertheless, a wise king overrules it to good purposes; a pardon granted to penitent rebels attaches them for ever to their merciful prince, and endears him to all his faithful subjects; and at the same time, the public execution of the stubborn reflects praise on the steadiness of his government, and makes all stand in awe of his justice.

Par.-I do not deny that sin deserves some punishment; but I cannot see how it is consistent with justice to say, as you do, that God will punish the sins of a short life with the torments of a boundless eternity. Reason discovers no sort of proportion between the offence and the punishment; and I do not wonder if some of our neighbours believe, on that account, that hell is an engine contrived by crafty priests and rulers to keep the superstitious and vulgar in awe.

Min.-I answer, 1. That though short-sighted reason sees no uniting power between the loadstone and iron, it is matter of fact that the mineral attracts the metal, therefore there are realities above the reach of reason in the material world: how much more in the spiritual!

2. You are tempted to disbelieve the existence of a state or place of misery, called hell, because you advert not to the strong intimations of it which Providence gives you daily. Millions of beasts, which never sinned, go through a hell of toil, pain, and misery, because the curse of sinful man rebounds to them here! You see this continually, and yet you question whether there will be a hell for impenitent sinners hereafter. Is this reasonable?

3. God is all holiness and happiness in himself; and unconverted sinners, being the reverse of holiness, must of course be the reverse of happiness also: therefore, so long as they remain *unholy*, they must remain *miserable*: and what is hell but complete misery?

4. Every unbeliever hath already the ingredients of this misery in his own breast. What are the chains of sin, the tumults of unruly appetites, the gnawings of fretful tempers, the uproars of turbulent passions, the disappointment of sanguine hopes, the gripings of covetousness, the burnings of lust, the stings of an evil conscience, together with a guilty shame for what is past, and foreboding fears of what is to come! What are all these plagues which the unconverted feel from time to time, but sensible proofs,-proofs which they carry in their own breast, that there is a hell for the ungodly?

5. The dread of various torments after death, hath been in all ages the strongest bulwark against the overflowings of secret ungodliness. The world cannot be ruled without this fear; and were it imaginary, it would follow that God (shocking to think!) keeps mortals in awe by a lie; and that Christ, who is the truth itself, spoke falsehood when he said, “These shall go into everlasting punishment,” Matt. xxv. 46.

Par.-You prove the reality of a state of misery for the wicked, but prudently avoid answering what I said of the disproportion there is between momentary sins and eternal torments.

Min.-That part of your objection will fall also, if you let the following arguments have their proper weight on your mind.

1. God, who rewards the godly with endless glory, may justly punish the wicked with endless ruin. Death must be in the balance with life, eternal misery with eternal happiness, or else there is no proportion between the punishment threatened, and the reward promised.

2. A rebel who hath stabbed an earthly prince but once, and deeply repents of his crime, is mercifully dealt with, if he be imprisoned for life, were he to live a thousand years. An impenitent sinner hath risen against the majesty of Heaven a million of times, and "crucified the Prince of life afresh," for it may be ten, twenty, forty years: what is more, he goes on still in his rebellion; and his talk of repenting to-morrow is only a contrivance to sin with more cheerfulness to day. Now if he die in this state, shall God be unjust in condemning him for life to the prison of hell, and punishing with infinite wo sins committed against an infinite Majesty,-sins from which he should have been deterred by considerations of infinite force,-in short, sins in which he would have lived for ever, had not death interposed?

3. When a distemper rages with an immense violence, the remedy ought to have an immense force. But, dreadful as the threatenings of eternal punishments are, they prove not half dreadful enough to deter sinners from their iniquity. Therefore, it does not become us to complain that God's severity toward the impenitent is too great, when our conversation shows that it is too little to bring us to repentance and godly fear.

4. If a man breaks his leg by a fall, and obstinately refuses to have it set, in the nature of things he must feel the consequence of his obstinacy till he drops his lame body into the grave; but as a stubborn sinner cannot drop at death his immortal soul, which is his very self, he must, in the nature of things, bear the consequences of his stubbornness for ever.

5. God does not punish sinners, who die impenitent, barely for the momentary acts of their past sins, but chiefly for the habit of them, which is eternal. As a wolf who hath no lambs to tear remains a wolf, and may justly be chained or killed; so the rich glutton, who hath not "a drop of water to cool his tongue," remains a glutton, and is justly shut up in hell, which is nothing but the prison and death of an immortal soul.

6. Add to this that the sinful habits of the impenitent will eternally produce sinful acts of rage, revenge, malice, despair, and blasphemy; nor will any one say, that uninterrupted acts of sin do not deserve uninterrupted strokes of punishment; or that it is not highly agreeable, both to reason and justice, that the line of Divine vengeance should extend as far as that of human insolence, that is, to all eternity.

7. Lastly. If you consider the inflexible justice of God, as seizing upon the holy Jesus, whose purity, majesty, and power were infinite; and remember how it forced a bloody sweat from all his pores, the most amazing complaints from his lips, and at last his very breath from his tortured body, you will ask yourself, "If these things are

done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Luke xxiii. 31. If stern justice pursued "the Prince of life unto death, even the death of the cross," what will it not do to a sinful worm, who not only rebelled all his life against the infinite goodness, holiness, and majesty of his Creator, but trampled under foot, to the last, the free offers of infinite glory, to the last did despite to the Spirit of grace, and rejected, to the last, an interest in the infinite merits of the Redeemer's blood?

Par.-You have so cleared my difficulties, and answered my objections, that I begin to think reason is on your side, as well as Scripture.

Min.-As you are candid enough to acknowledge the impression that rational truths make on your mind, I beg you will be patient enough to consider one more argument in favour of the doctrine of our sinfulness, danger, and misery, in a state of nature. I hope it will weigh so much the more with you because I have it from your own mouth. Did I not hear you this very day call Jesus "SAVIOUR?" Can you deny it?

Par.-*Deny it*!-God forbid! Shall I be ashamed to confess that he came to die for us, and to save us from hell and everlasting ----?

Min.-Enough, sir. You have granted me more than I want to convince a man of sense. If Christ died for us, reason tells us that death is our desert. If he came to save us from hell, it is plain that he saw us in a damnable state: unless you will charge him with the unparalleled folly of coming from heaven to save, from their sins, people that were very good, and bleeding to death to save from hell people who were in no danger of going there.

Par.-I never saw things in this light! But now that Christ hath died for us, all danger is over, the bitterness of eternal death is past.

Min.-Yes, for those who are savingly interested in his merit: and who these are the apostle tells us. "They that are Christ's," says he, "have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts;" for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," Gal. v. 24; 2 Cor. v. 17. And these will readily acknowledge, that "in them [as considered out of Christ] dwells no good thing, and that they are by nature children of wrath even as others," Rom. vii. 18; Eph. ii. 3. As for the rest of mankind, far from being out of danger, our Lord tells us himself, that "the wrath of God abides on them, and that they are condemned already," John iii. 18, 36.

Here the parishioner, unable to stand his ground any longer on the field of reason, attempted to make as honourable a retreat as he could: and that he might not seem to have lost the day, he erected a new battery against the doctrine of our corrupted and lost state, which introduced the fourth part of the dialogue.

Caetera desunt.

A VINDICATION

OF

THE REV. MR. WESLEY'S

“CALM ADDRESS TO OUR AMERICAN COLONIES:”

IN THREE LETTERS TO MR. CALEB EVANS

———

BY THE REV. JOHN FLETCHER,

VICAR OF MADELEY, SALOP.

THE WORKS
OF THE
REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER

NOTICE BY THE AMERICAN EDITOR.

THE following tracts of Mr. Fletcher were written at a time of great political excitement. And though we can by no means accord to the sentiments advanced in them, nor justify the strong denunciations against the Americans, yet we can find an apology for their author in that love of country which is natural to every genuine patriot, and that abhorrence of civil commotion with which the bosom of every Christian is pervaded. Both Wesley and Fletcher thought the American people did wrong in taking up arms against the mother country; and being true loyal subjects, they considered it their duty to vindicate the cause of their king and country, and to denounce the colonists as rebels.

Mr. Wesley lived to see and acknowledge the hand of God in our independence as a nation; and to assist in establishing a Church in this country which recognized our independence and national sovereignty; and we his followers have had the happiness to witness with pious gratitude the blessed effects of that ecclesiastical economy in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom throughout this free and happy land.

Notwithstanding the objectionable features of the following tracts, considered in a political point of view, in republishing a complete edition of Mr. Fletcher's Works, they could not consistently be omitted nor abridged; and we presume that every admirer of this pious and excellent author, would wish to read all he has written, reserving to himself the liberty of determining on what is just and true, according to the light of Scripture and reason. Infallibility in all things is what no man claims, for either Wesley or Fletcher, however much he may admire them as ministers of the sanctuary; and we must confess that we very much prefer following them as divines than as leaders in political science. In the former character they moved and shone in their own appropriate sphere; while in the latter they exhibited those eccentricities which indicated that they had wandered n little from their wonted course. We make these remarks to show that in publishing the following patriotic and spirited addresses, we neither subscribe to the sentiments expressed, nor withdraw our charity and veneration for the man who thus dared to utter his thoughts in defence of what he considered the rights of his king and country. Should political convulsions ever threaten to shake our own country, and to prostrate our happy constitution, we should rejoice to find a mind equally pious and ardent, engaged from the same conscientious feeling of duty, in their preservation, though we might wish him a more successful issue of his labours.

NEW YORK, *May* 23, 1833.

THE WORKS
OF THE
REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER

PREFACE

TO A VINDICATION OF THE CALM ADDRESS.

———

IT will probably seem strange that clergymen should meddle with a controversy which has hitherto been considered as altogether political. But the reader's surprise, in this respect, will probably cease, if he give himself the trouble to read these letters. He will then see that the American controversy is closely connected with Christianity in general, and with Protestantism in particular; and that, of consequence, it is of a *religious* as well as of a civil nature.

Is it not granted, on all sides, that the Gospel leads to the practice of strict morality? Is it not an important branch of such morality "to honour and obey the king;" to extend that honour and obedience, in a Scriptural and constitutional manner, to "all that are put in authority under him; to submit ourselves to all our governors; to order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters; to hurt nobody by word or deed, and to be true and just in all our dealings;" give every one his due, "tribute to whom tribute is due, and custom to whom custom?" Do we not teach this doctrine to our children, when we instruct them in the first principles of Christianity? If divinity, therefore, can cast light upon the question which divides Great Britain and her colonies, is it impertinent in divines to hold out the light of their science, and peaceably to use what the apostle calls "the sword of the Spirit," that the material sword, unjustly drawn by those who are in the wrong, may be sheathed, and that a speedy end may be put to the effusion of Christian blood?

Another reason influences the author to write upon the question which is now so warmly agitated in England,-so dreadfully debated in America. Many of the colonists are as pious as they are brave; and while their undaunted fortitude makes them scorn to bow under a hostile arm, which shoots the deadly lightning of war, their humble piety may dispose them (or some of them) to regard a friendly hand which holds out an olive branch, a Bible, and the articles of religion drawn by their favourite reformer. Had more care been taken to inform their judgment, and to work upon their consciences, by addressing them, not only as subjects, but as free men, brethren, and Protestants, it is probable that numbers of them would never have so strongly embraced the unscriptural principles which now influence their conduct.

Should it be said that it is too late now to use spiritual weapons with the colonists, I reply, that this objection bears too hard upon their candour; it can never be too late to hold out plain Scripture and solid arguments to judicious Protestants. It is only to Papists strongly prejudiced, or to those who relapse into popish obstinacy, that the

light of God's word, and of sound reason, can come too late. Beside, the mistakes which have armed the provincials against Great Britain, begin to work in the breasts of many good men among us: witness the principles of *Americanus*. Now, therefore, is the time to keep these well meaning men from going to the same extremes to which the colonists are gone: now is the time to prevent others, whose judgment is yet cool and sober, from drinking in errors by which such numbers are intoxicated.

THE WORKS
OF THE
REVERENDJOHN FLETCHER

A VINDICATION, &C.

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LETTER I.

The doctrine of taxation, maintained by the author of the Calm Address, is rational, Scriptural, and constitutional.

REVEREND SIR,-Thankful for the religious and civil liberty which I enjoy as a subject of Great Britain; persuaded that many warm, well-meaning men mistake an unreasonable opposition to the king and the minister, for true patriotism; sensible of the sad consequences of national misunderstandings; ardently wishing that all things may be so ordered and settled upon the best and surest foundation, (which, if I mistake not, are reason, Scripture, and our excellent constitution,) that peace and harmony may, for all generations, be established between Great Britain and her flourishing colonies; and desirous to inspire you, sir, and my dissatisfied, dissenting brethren, with the same loyal sentiments, I take the pen to expostulate with you about the system of politics which you recommend to the public in your "Letter to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, occasioned by his Calm Address to the American Colonies."

It is at this time peculiarly needful to throw light upon the question debated between Mr. Wesley and you; for if you are in the right, the sovereign is a tyrant; taxing the colonists is robbery; and enforcing such taxation by the sword is murder. We cannot hold up the hands of our soldiers by prayer, without committing sin: nor can they fight with Christian courage, which is inseparable from a good conscience, if they suspect that they are sent to rob good men of their properties, liberties, and lives.

Mr. Wesley asserts, "That the supreme power in England has a legal right of laying any tax [I would say any *proportionable* tax] upon the American colonies, for any end beneficial to the whole empire, with or *without* their consent." And you reply, "If the Americans are indeed subject to such a power as this, their condition differs not from that of the most abject slaves in the universe."

Sir, I venture to assert that you are mistaken, and that Mr. Wesley's proposition is rational, Scriptural, and constitutional. And, promising you to show in another letter the absurdity of your proposition, I enter upon the proof of any assertion, by an appeal to reason, Scripture, and your own letter. In following this method, I shall address you as a man, a divine, and a controvertist. First, as a man:-

Does not your mistake spring from your inattention to the nature of civil government? You represent the power which the king and parliament claim of disposing of some of the money of the colonists without their consent, as an encroachment upon British liberty; as an unjust, tyrannical pretension; nay, as a species of “robbery.” But did you never consider, sir, that in the nature of things our sovereign in England, (I mean by this word the king and his parliament, first jointly making laws not contrary to the laws of God, whose supreme dominion must always be submitted to by all created lawgivers; and secondly, executing the laws which they have made, by imparting to magistrates and other officers of justice a sufficient power to put them in force;) did you never consider, I say, that our sovereign, whether we have a vote for parliament men or not, has both a right and a power to dispose, not only of our money, but also of our liberties and lives; so far as that disposal may answer ends agreeable to the law of God, beneficial to the peace of society, and conducive to the general good? If this political doctrine be explained, you will, I am persuaded, assent to it, as an indubitable truth.

Could the sovereign rule and protect us, if he had not this right and this power? I injure your property, or, what is worse, your reputation. You sue me for damages; but how can the sovereign act the part of protector of your property and good name, if he cannot command my property, and take from me by force what I unjustly detain from you, and what may make you satisfaction for the injury done to your character? And suppose you had wronged me, how could the sovereign protect me, if he could not dispose of your property without your consent?

This is exactly the case with respect to *liberty*. If you stop me on the road, and unjustly deprive me of the liberty of going about my business, can the sovereign protect me, unless he has a right of depriving you of your lawless liberty, that I may quietly enjoy my lawful liberty? And does not equity demand, that if I am the petty tyrant, who pretend to the liberty of tar feathering you, the sovereign should have the same power of protecting you, by binding me to my good behaviour, or by ordering me to the stocks or to jail?

This power extends to *life* as well as liberty. I demand your money or your life. How can the sovereign secure you more effectually than by taking my life for having attempted to take yours? By the rule of reciprocation, if you endeavour to take away my life, I cannot be protected; and if you murder me, my blood cannot be properly avenged, unless the sovereign has power to pus you to death. Hence it is, that prosecutions for capital offences are carried on in the name of the king, who is the head of the legislative power, and who, as he insists (in his capacity of lawgiver and protector of his subjects) upon the infliction of capital punishments, has also the royal prerogative of pardoning criminals condemned to die.

Come we now to taxes. If the sovereign rules and protects his subjects; and if it is his office to avert the dangers which threatened them, and to see that justice be done to the oppressed; he has his noble, I had almost said his *Divine* business; and

he has a *right* to live by his business: yea, to live in a manner which may answer to the importance and dignity of his business. Hence it follows, that he is not only as much entitled to a royal sustenance from his subjects, as a school master is entitled to a school master's maintenance from his scholars; or a minister to a pastoral supply from his flock; but that his right is so much the more conspicuous as his rank is higher than theirs. Now this royal sustenance chiefly arises from custom and taxes. Hence it is evident, that to deny proper taxes to the sovereign who protects and defends us, is, at least, as gross an act of injustice, as to reap the benefit of a lawyer's study, a physician's attendance, a nurse's care, and a master's instructions, and then to cheat them of the emolument which such study, attendance, care, and instructions reasonably entitle them to. This is not all.

In a vast empire, where the sovereign uses thousands of officers to keep the peace and administer justice, there is absolute need of a great revenue for the maintenance of those officers; and the collecting of this revenue is the employment of thousands more. If the state is in danger from external or internal foes; a sufficient force in constant readiness is absolutely necessary to suppress seditions, quell rebellions, obtain restitutions, prevent invasions, and hinder encroachments. Hence the need of a navy, an army, a militia. Hence the need of sea ports, docks, fortifications, garrisons, convoys, fleets of observation, ministers at foreign courts, arms, artillery, ammunition, magazines, and warlike stores without end: hence, in short, prodigious expenses. Now, as all these expenses are incurred for the protection and dignity of the *whole* empire, do not reason and conscience dictate, (l.) That all those who share in the protection and dignity of the empire should contribute in due proportion toward defraying the national expense: (2.) That, of consequence, the supreme power has an indubitable right of laying moderate taxes upon the subjects for any end beneficial to the whole empire: (3.) That subjects have absolutely no right to complain of taxation, unless they are taxed exorbitantly, or without due proportion: (4.) That if colonies of subjects, settled by a grant from the sovereign, within the limits of the empire, have been spared in their state of infancy, either to encourage their growth, or because the revenue, which might have arisen from taxing them at first, would hardly have defrayed the expense of raising taxes; it by no means follows that, when such colonies have gathered strength, and are as well able to bear a share in the national burden as the mother country, they should still be excused: and lastly, that to say, "You shall not tax me without my consent," is as improper a speech from a subject to his sovereign as to say, "You shall not protect the empire without my consent; if I steal, you shall not send me to jail without my consent; if I raise a rebellion, you shall not hang me unless I give you leave; you shall not dispose of my property without my permission; although (by the by) I will dispose of the property of my fellow subjects, not only without *their* permission, but also in full opposition to *your* authority:" an absurd, unjust disposition this, which too many of the Bostonian patriots evidenced when they imperiously disposed of the cargo of our ships, forcibly threw the goods of our merchants into the sea, to the amount of many thousand pounds, and set all America in a flame, as soon as the sovereign insisted that the port of Boston should be shut up, till the perpetrators of this daring act were

delivered to justice, or, at least, till satisfaction was made to his oppressed subjects, whose ships have been boarded in a piratical manner, and whose property has been feloniously destroyed, when they quietly traded under the sanction of English laws, and the protection of the British flag; trusting to the faith of Christians; depending on Protestant usage in the harbour of a Protestant city; expecting brotherly love, or at least common honesty, from the sons of pious Englishmen; little thinking-but enough of this black scene: may it be palliated by a speedy restitution, and a lasting repentance!

I hope, sir, that the preceding remarks, which naturally flow from the principles of reason and humanity, recommend themselves to your conscience; and having thus addressed you as a rational creature, I take the liberty to address you next as a *Christian*; yea, a *preacher* of the Gospel of Christ. As such, you will not wonder at my producing a passage or two from the venerable book, which ought to be the rule of our conduct, sermons, and publications. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, [in lawful things,] resisteth the power, [which Providence calls him to obey,] resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves condemnation, &c. Wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for this cause, *pay* you *tribute* [that is, taxes] also, &c. *Render*, therefore, to all their *dues*; tribute to whom tribute is *due*, custom to whom custom," Rom. xiii. 1, &c.

I need not remind you, reverend sir, that our Lord himself scrupulously followed this doctrine; setting us an example that we should follow his steps. For although no Jew had a representative in the Roman senate; although the emperor of Rome had not half the right of taxing the Jews which our Protestant king has of taxing the colonists, who are his natural subjects; although none of that emperor's predecessors had made the Jews a grant of their country; although Christ could have insisted on being exempted, as the Son of God and the King of kings; yea, although he could have pleaded absolute indigence as the Son of man: yea, rather than set a pattern which Christians might have abused in after ages, he unveiled his Godhead; his omniscience searched the depth of the sea, his omnipotence inverted the course of nature: he called the animal creation to his assistance: he wrought a miracle to pay his tax. And to whom? To a foreign power; to a heathen prince; to a bloody tyrant; to Tiberius, who was the third of the Cesars.

Nor was our Lord's doctrine less loyal than his practice. His words are as strong as those of St. Paul: "The Herodians said to him, Master, we know that thou teachest the way of God in truth, &c. Tell us, therefore, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute to Cesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought to him a penny. And he said to them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say to him, Cesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's," Matt. xxii. 16, &c.

Permit me, sir, to clothe this Christian doctrine in language adapted to our controversy. The colonists ask you, Shall we pay, to the king and parliament of Great Britain, taxes which they have laid upon us without our consent? You answer, Show me some of your lawful money newly coined, that I may see who rules and protects you now. They bring to you a guinea, with a royal head on one side, and the British arms on the other. You say to them, Whose is this image and superscription? They reply, King George's; and they read this motto, "George III, by the grace of God, king of Great Britain," &c. Now, reverend sir, unless you will coin new money, together with a new Gospel, as you regard the word and authority of Jesus Christ, you are bound to answer the colonists as he answered the Herodians: and, in this case, instead of imposing upon them the Antinomian paradoxes of your letter, and throwing oil upon the flame of revolt, you will say, "Render, therefore, to George III," as head of the legislative protective power of Great Britain, "the things which are his;" that is, pay to him, by his officers, the reasonable taxes which are laid upon you; for in so doing you only give him his due. You owe him obedience and taxes, as your supreme governor and protector. Hence it appears that Mr. Wesley only unfolds our Lord's doctrine, when he says, "The reception of any law draws after it, by a chain which cannot be broken, the necessity of admitting taxation." The primary right of taxation is inseparable from the supreme power, and if our respective parishes at home, and our colonies abroad, have a right to cess themselves, with respect to their private expenses; it is only a delegated, subordinate right, which by no means exempts them from the taxes laid upon them to defray the general expense of the government. And, therefore, to pretend that parish rates, and colony rates, ought to supersede taxation by the sovereign in a body political, is as absurd as to affirm that the pulses in the human body ought to supersede the vital motion, or capital beating of the heart.

Having expostulated with you as with a conscientious man and a minister of the Gospel, permit me, sir, to address you, thirdly, as a consistent writer. You give us to understand that the act of parliament, by which the colonists are taxed, is an unconstitutional act; because the colonists, as inheriting the privileges of Britons, cannot be constitutionally taxed by a parliament to which they are not allowed to send representatives. But do you not, in your very letter to Sir. W., overthrow this grand plea? Do you not grant the very truth, on which he rests his doctrine of the constitutional reasonableness of the taxation you represent as tyrannical? Undoubtedly you do: for, considering that many large towns, as Birmingham, &c, send no representative to parliament, when the hill called Old Sarum sends two; and that myriads of men, who have their fortune in ready money, in goods, in trade, or in the stocks, have no right to vote for parliament men, because they have no freehold; when a poor man, who has a mortgaged freehold on which he starves, has a right to choose his representative; considering this, I say, you tell Mr. W., "In England-the people are by no means equally represented."

We thank you, sir, for this concession, which (by the by) you could not help making. You grant then that the constitution allows of unequal representation; since it allows that some towns, and some men, shall send representatives to parliament,

when other towns and other men are not permitted to send any. And in granting this, you indirectly grant that Boston may be constitutionally taxed without a peculiar representative, as well as Birmingham; and that the rich merchants of Boston may be as legally taxed, as the rich merchants of Birmingham, who are not entitled to a vote. Now, sir, if the constitution allows of unequal representation, and if the taxation of myriads of men, who send no representatives to the house of commons, is *constitutional* I ask, in the name of consistency, why do you represent such taxation as *unconstitutional* with respect to the colonists?

You reply: "This is an acknowledged defect of the constitution." So, sir, your zeal for the constitution throws off the mask, and you impeach the constitution! Might you not have said at once, The parliament may indeed constitutionally tax the colonists, for it taxes millions of Britons who have no vote for parliament men; but the constitution is *defective*, and we patriots, we friends of the constitution, will avowedly find fault with the constitution till we can find an opportunity of casting it into a new mould? And what this mould is, which, I fear, rash patriots are getting ready as fast as they can, and into which they hope to cast the inflamed minds of the populace, you, sir, help us to guess, where you say, "It is glaringly evident," (to such good friends of the constitution as you are,) "it is glaringly evident, that there is not a man in England, who is able to boil a pot, in ever so despicable a hovel, but may, if he pleases, have a voice in the disposal of his property." That is, in laying on or taking off taxes, or (which comes to the same) in making and repealing laws. Sir, I would no more encourage a tyrannical monarch, and an oppressive parliament, than you: but supposing our mild king were a tyrant, and his parliament consisted of three hundred and ninety-nine little tyrants, would it not be better, upon the whole, to be ruled by four hundred tyrants, than to be at the mercy of four hundred thousand? If you calmly weigh this question, I am persuaded, sir, that your prejudices will subside. In the meantime remember, that if you are right as a patriot, you are wrong not only as a man and a Christian, but also as a *controvertist*; and that, whether the constitution is defective or not, and whether you can mend it or not, you have granted that unequal representation is constitutional, and of consequence that the taxation of myriads of Britons in England, and sons of Britons in America, who send no representatives to parliament, is perfectly agreeable to the constitution.

You strengthen your cause by quoting a French and an English judge. As Mr. Wesley has taken particular notice of these quotations in the last edition of his Address, I shall only transcribe his answers. You write, "All the inhabitants," &c, says Montesquieu, speaking of the English constitution, "ought to have a right of voting at the election of a representative, except such as are so mean as to be deemed to have no will of their own." Nay, (answers Mr. W.,) "If all have a right to vote that have a will of their own, certainly this right belongs to every man, woman, and child in England. A man has a will of his own, whether he be twenty or thirty years old, and whether he have forty pence or forty shillings a year."

One quotation more. Judge Blackstone says, “In a free state, every man, who is supposed to be a free agent, ought in some measure to be his own governor; therefore one branch at least of the legislative power should reside in the whole body of the people.” Mr. Wesley answers: “But who are the whole body of the people? According to him, every free agent. Then the argument proves too much; for are not women free agents? Yea, and poor as well as rich men? According to this argument, there is no free state under the sun.” From these just answers it is evident that your scheme drives at putting the legislative power in every body's hands, that is, at crowning king mob.

To conclude: Upon the force of the preceding arguments, I ask, first, is not the demand of proportionable moderate taxes, which the sovereign of Great Britain has upon our wealthy fellow subjects settled in the British dominions on the continent, both rational, Scriptural, and constitutional? *Rational*, as being founded upon a reasonable, self-evident right, flowing from the nature and fitness of things, and acknowledged by every civilized nation under heaven? *Scriptural*, as being supported by the explicit commands of St. Paul, and Christ himself? And *constitutional*, since the constitution enjoins that millions of Britons at home, who have no voice at elections, or are represented by men whom they voted against; and that myriads of Britons abroad, whether they are freeholders or not, (and some of them are not only freeholders, but members of parliament also,) shall be all taxed without their consent?

I flatter myself, sir, that this appeal to your conscience, your Bible, and your legal patriotism, will soften your prejudices, and prepare your mind for my next letter. In the meantime I earnestly recommend to your thankful admiration, the excellence of the British government, which equally guards our properties, liberties, and lives, against the tyranny of unjust, arbitrary, or cruel monarchs; and against the ferocity of that Cerberus, that hydra, that Briareus, that many-headed monster, a mob of ungrateful, uneasy, restless men, who despise dominion; speak evil of dignities; give to illiberal behaviour, scurrilous insolence, and disloyalty unmasked, the perverted name of patriotism; commit enormities under pretence of redressing grievances; and set up the ensign of devastation wherever they erect their standard of lawless liberty. Hoping, sir, that a panic fear of a virtuous king, a lawful parliament, and a conscientious minister, whose crime is only that of making a constitutional stand against the boisterous overflowings of civil Antinomianism; hoping, I say, that such an absurd fear will never hurry you into groundless discontent, and unguarded publications; entreating you to take no step which may countenance King Mob, his merciless minister, Rapine, and his riotous parliament summoned from the “most despicable hovels;” requesting you to exalt our Divine Lawgiver, who sums up his *law of liberty* in these precious statutes, “Render to Cesar the things which are Cesar's, and to God the things which are God's. A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you;” wishing you, sir, all Scriptural success in the Gospel, which says, “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors, as unto

them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well:" ardently praying that when the governors, generals, and forces going to America, shall land there, our disobedient fellow subjects may be found doing well, that is, penitently submitting themselves to their sovereign, that the threatened punishment may be turned into deserved praise: and begging you would take in good part the freedom of this well-meant expostulation, I declare that I am as much in love with liberty as with loyalty; and that I write a heart-felt truth, when I subscribe myself, reverend sir, your affectionate fellow labourer in the Gospel, a republican by birth and education, and a subject of Great Britain by love of liberty and free choice,

J. FLETCHER.

MADELEY, *Nov*. 15, 1776.

LETTER II.

The doctrine of Americanus is highly unconstitutional, and draws after it a long train of absurd consequences.

REVEREND SIR,-1 hope I have proved, in my first letter, that Mr. Wesley's doctrine of government is rational, Scriptural, and constitutional; and that a right of taxing subjects, with or without their consent, is an inseparable appendage of supreme government. I shall now attempt to prove that your doctrine of liberty, and taxation only with our own consent, is absurd and unconstitutional; and that, while you try to break the lawful yoke of civil government laid on the colonists, you doctrinally bind the greatest part of the English with chains of the most abject slavery, and fix a ridiculous charge of robbery on the king and parliament, for taxing some millions of Britons, who are no more represented in parliament than the foreigners who sojourn in England, or the English who live abroad.

Permit me to state the question more particularly than I have done in my former letter. Mr. Wesley thinks that the colonists are mistaken when they consider themselves as put on a level with slaves, because they are taxed by a parliament in which they have no representatives of their own choosing: I say, *of their own choosing*, because I apprehend that as all the freeholders and voting burgesses in Great Britain virtually represent the commonalty of all the British empire,[1] and as such freeholders, &c, virtually represent all that commonalty, whether it be made up of voters or non-voters, of poor men or men of property, of men at home, at sea, or on the continent; so the house of commons virtually represents all the freeholders and voting burgesses in Great Britain; whether they voted or not at the last election, or whether they voted for or against the sitting members.

With an eye to this virtual representation, which draws after it a passive submission to taxation, Mr. W. asks, "Am I and two millions of Englishmen," who have no right to vote for representatives in parliament, "made slaves, because we are taxed without our own consent?" You reply, "Yes, sir, if you are taxed without your

own consent, you are a slave." You consider such taxation as "the very quintessence of slavery;" you declare that if the Americans submit to it, "their condition differs not from that of the most abject slaves in the universe:" and you insinuate that whoever attempts to tax them otherwise than by their direct representatives, "attempts an injury; whoever does it, commits a robbery; he throws down the distinction between liberty and slavery. Taxation and representation [you mean direct representation] are coeval with, and essential to this constitution." But when you publish such assertions, which justify the armed colonists, and represent the majority in parliament as a gang of robbers, does not an enthusiastic warmth for lawless liberty carry you beyond the bounds of calm reflection? And are you aware of the stab which you give the constitution; and of the insult which you offer, not only to your superiors, but also to millions of your worthy countrymen, whom you absurdly stigmatize as some of the "most abject slaves in the universe?"

Probably not one in five of our husbandmen, sailors, soldiers, mechanics, day labourers, and hired servants, are freeholders, or voting burgesses. And must four out of five, in these numerous classes of free-born Englishmen, wear the badge of the most abject slavery, in compliance with your chimerical notions of liberty? We are not allowed to vote so long as we are minors; and must also all our blooming young men, from seventeen years of age to twenty-one, be considered as "most abject slaves?" You may say, indeed, that they are represented by their parents or guardians: but what if these guardians or parents have no vote themselves? Beside, if minors can be thus represented, why should not our colonies be represented in the same manner by the mother country, which has so tenderly nursed, and so carefully protected them from their infancy? To return. If the wives of freeholders are supposed to vote by their husbands, what must we say of those who have buried their husbands? Have all widows buried their liberty with the partners of their beds? A freeholder has seven children; he leaves his freehold to his eldest son; and because he cannot leave a freehold to all, will you reproach him as the father of six abject slaves? Another freeholder, to pay his debts, is obliged to sell his freehold, and of consequence his rights taxing himself. Does he sell his liberty with his freehold, and "involve himself in absolute slavery?" The general election comes on: a young gentleman wants a few months of the age which the law requires in a voter; and of consequence he cannot yet choose his own representative; must he continue a slave till the next election? A knight, disapproved by most voters in the county, offers to represent them; they try in vain to get some other gentleman to oppose him; and the candidate whom they tacitly object to, sits in the house chiefly for want of a competitor. Is their liberty at all affected by this kind of involuntary representation, which draws after it a kind of involuntary taxation?-At the next election, perhaps, the opposition runs high between several candidates; one has (I suppose) two thousand votes; another, one thousand nine hundred; and a third, one thousand seven hundred. The first is elected: two thousand freeholders are taxed by a representative of their own choosing, and three thousand six hundred voters go home disappointed of their choice, and having the mortification of being taxed by a man whom they did not vote into parliament; nay, by a man whom they opposed with all their might. Their choice is perhaps equally

frustrated with regard to the other knight of the shire. Now, are these three thousand six hundred voters in any degree reduced to a state of slavery, till they can have an opportunity of being represented according to their minds? Again: a free-born Englishman is possessed of a house, which he lets for thirty-eight shillings a year; for want of two shillings more in his yearly income he is no freeholder: and, like the colonists, he is taxed without his consent; is he “an abject slave” on this account? Wild patriotism answers in the affirmative; but impartial men smile and say, What! is British liberty so mean a blessing as to depend upon a couple of shillings? Could a Jew make it turn on a hinge more contemptible than this? O, sir, what a low price does your system indirectly fix upon a jewel, on which you seem to set so immense a value!

Once more: during the last election, myriads of Englishmen were abroad, some upon their travels for their health, and others upon civil, military, or mercantile business; nor had they any more share in the choice of the members of parliament who now tax them, than the American colonists; and will you aver, sir, that if all these Englishmen were collected, they might constitutionally reform the constitution, and tax themselves by a congress composed of men who stimulate them to discontent? Will you assert, that such a congress would do well to make laws in opposition to the statutes of the king and parliament? And would you call the members of such a congress loyal subjects, if they raised an army to drive the king's forces out of his own dominions; yea, out of those very provinces where they hold their land by gracious grants of the crown; where they have acquired their wealth under the protection of the mother country; and where the sovereign's forces, which they endeavour to cut off, have kindly fought their battles.

To come nearer to the point; some years ago, Lord Clive, member for Shrewsbury, went to the East Indies; and Lord Pigot, member for Bridgenorth, is now gone thither. Their estates are immensely large; yet in consequence of their leaving England, the former lord was, and he latter is, taxed without his consent. And will you stand to your absurd doctrine, sir, and infer, that the burgesses of Shrewsbury were, and that those of Bridgenorth are, reduced to a partial, temporary state of slavery, by the emigration of one of their representatives; and that Lord Clive was, and Lord Bigot now is, an absolute slave; because, in consequence of their emigration, the former was, and the latter is, taxed without his consent? If you say that Lord Clive came back to England, and that Lord Pigot may return and tax himself if he please; I reply, this is exactly the case with the colonists. By emigration they are prevented from sharing in the legislative power of the parliament But let them come back, if they have set their hearts upon legislative honours. The mother country and the parliament house are as open to them as to any free-born Englishman. They may purchase freeholds, they may be made burgesses of corporate towns, they may be chosen members of the house of commons; and some of them, if I mistake not, sit already there. The colonists are then on a level not only with Britons in general, but with all members of parliament who are abroad. And therefore to demand superior privileges,

is to demand rights which no Britons have, and which the members of parliament who go out of Great Britain never thought of, our British nabobs not excepted.

As mountains rise upon mountains among the Alps, so absurdities rise upon absurdities in your system: take some more instances of it.-If we believe you, sir, *he* is an abject slave who is taxed without his consent. Hence follows another absurdity. The day that a bill for an additional land tax to subdue the colonies passes, the knights of a large shire are absent; the one, I suppose, is kept from the house by illness, and the other is called into the country by business or pleasure: neither votes for the bill. Now, sir, are they and the county they represent made slaves by being taxed without their consent? If you reply, that their not opposing the bill implies that they consent to it; I answer, the inference is not just. I did not oppose the last murder which was committed in the county, but you will wrong me, if you infer that I consented to it. Many clergymen will not oppose your letter, who, nevertheless, reprobate the doctrine it contains.

But, granting that your inferences are just, I press you closer, and point out two knights (suppose the members for Middlesex) who oppose the bill with all their might: and yet the bill passes. Now, sir, if your scheme of liberty be right, it follows that our great patriots and the little patriots whom they represent, are abject slaves; for they are evidently taxed, not only without their consent, but against their warmest opposition; seeing they are additionally taxed to bring their mistaken friends to reason. How excessively absurd then is your scheme, sir, since it not only puts the badge of the most abject slavery upon all the Britons who are not electors, but also upon all the electors and members of parliament who call themselves patriots with as much confidence as some mistaken divines call themselves orthodox!

You reply, “In all collective bodies the determinations of the majority of that, body are always considered as the determinations of the whole body; and every man who enters into society implicitly consents it should be so.” Mr. W. and I, sir, thank you for this concession. If you and the colonists stand to it, you will throw down your pen, and they their arms. For every body knows that Great Britain and her colonies make a collective, political body, called the British empire: and you declare that, “in all” such bodies, “the determinations of the majority are always considered as the determinations of the whole body.” Now, sir, if you do but allow that Great Britain is the majority of the British empire, and you cannot reasonably deny it, considering the glory, wealth, fame, and invincible navy of the mother country, together with the grant she made to the colonies of the large provinces, which they hold under her, as cottagers hold their gardens and habitations under the lord of the manor, who gave them leave to enclose and build upon a part of the waste within the limits of his jurisdiction; if you do but allow, I say, that Great Britain is the majority of the British empire, according to your own concession the determinations of Great Britain are always to be considered as the determinations of the whole British empire: and every colony “implicitly consents it should be so.” But the American colonies have not only implicitly consented it should be so; they have also done it explicitly, by humbly

thanking the king for their charters, one of which says, in express terms, you are exempt from paying taxes to the king for seven years; plainly implying, says Mr. W. with great truth, that after those seven years they were to pay taxes like other subjects, if the sovereign taxed them; and if the king and parliament have allowed them a longer time, it is absurd and wicked to draw from this indulgence a plea to palliate a notorious breach of trust. As for the charter of Pennsylvania, it says in express terms that they are liable to taxation by the parliament, and therefore their rising against such taxation is ingratitude, perverseness, and a notorious breach of charter.

One more remark upon your important concession. If you grant that the minority in parliament has implicitly and passively consented to the measures of the majority, though very much against their will, witness their warm petitions, protestations, remonstrances, &c, do you not abundantly grant this leading proposition of Mr. Wesley's Address, in a thousand cases, “Any other than this kind of consent the condition of civil life does not allow?” Thus (so great is the force of truth!) after all your outcry against your opponent, you yourself lay down his grand principle: you come back to the very point whence he started, and are reduced to the mortifying necessity of maintaining that our English patriots, so called, are some of the most abject slaves in the universe; or that our American colonies are some of the most unreasonable colonies in the world, since they take up arms to oppose a legislative body to which they have consented, not only implicitly and passively, as the minority does to the majority in parliament, but explicitly and actively: witness the charter of the colony in which the congress is assembled, and the constant submission which for many years the colonists paid to the British laws; supreme laws these, according to which they have suffered their lives, and the liberty of their persons, to be disposed of; though they had no more hand in actually making those laws, than the great Mogul; most of them having been made long before any living Englishman drew his breath.

To show that taxation and your narrow ideas of representation are inseparable according to the constitution, to Monsieur *Montesquieu's* erroneous account of the British constitution you add the bare assertion of Lord Camden and Lord Chatham. But permit me to observe, sir that all the Frenchmen and English lords in the world, can never overthrow a doctrine which, as I have proved in my first letter, stands or falls with reason, Scripture, and matter of fact.

If your noble auxiliaries, to whom you join Mr. Locke, mean an indirect representation, we readily assent to your assertion: and we reply, that in this sense the taxation of the colonists is not separated from representation; for the colonies of Great Britain are indirectly represented by Great Britain, as the children of electors are indirectly represented by their fathers; as the non-voters at elections are indirectly represented by the voters, and as the electors who are at sea, or on the continent, are indirectly represented by those who are in the island. But if those lords mean a direct representation, they are desired to show how all the myriads of men, non-voters in

Great Britain, to say nothing of minors, widows, maidens, bed ridden or imprisoned burgesses, and absent freeholders, are directly represented in the parliament which now taxes them, if (through a variety of insurmountable obstacles) they neither did, nor could, vote for a representative at the last election.

Till you, sir, or the lords who patronize your system, have removed this difficulty out of the way of your patriotism, you will allow us to think that you deal in irrational, unscriptural, and unconstitutional paradoxes, when, speaking of taxation and direct representation, you say, “God has joined them: no British parliament can separate them: to endeavour to do it, is to stab our vitals.”

When you have rashly charged nonsense upon God, you may well indirectly charge robbery upon the sovereign: accordingly your patriotism mounts the rostrum, and makes this convincing speech: “My position is this, I repeat it, I will maintain it to the last hour: taxation and representation are inseparable: this position is founded upon the law of nature: it is more; it is an eternal law of nature.” I grant it, sir, if by nature you mean the fallen nature of the men who say, “With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?” Psalm xii. 4. But you go on: “Whatsoever is a man's own, is absolutely his own: no man has a right to take it from him without his consent, either expressed by himself or his representative.” Nay, you grow so warm as to say, “Whoever attempts to do it, [that is, agreeably to the context, whoever attempts to tax a man, who has not consented to the tax, either personally or by his direct representative,] attempts an injury: whoever does it, [and the sovereign has done it,] commits a robbery.” What a speech! God save the king from such severe judges as you are!

Nothing can be more erroneous, sir, than the principle on which you found your bold, though indirect indictment: “Whatsoever is a man’s own, is *absolutely his own*.” I do not scruple to assert that this principle is detestable, as being *unscriptural, irrational,* and highly *unconstitutional*.

1. *Unscriptural*. For the Scriptures teach us that God is the first and grand proprietor of all things; that the powers that be are ordained of him; and that, for the ends mentioned in my first letter, he delegates his dominion and authority to kings and magistrates. Hence it is, that both in the Old and New Testament, those who make and enforce laws are called *gods*, and that St. Paul declares, “He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of GOD.” To say, therefore, that what we have is absolutely our own, is to shake off the yoke of God's supreme dominion, and of the delegated dominion of kings, lawgivers, and magistrates, who are his lieutenants and representatives.

2. Your principle is *irrational*: for, if whatever a man has, “is *absolutely* his own,” it follows that non-voters and foreigners, who never consented to our laws, either personally or by appointing their representatives, can never be taxed, imprisoned, or hanged, unless they first sign the warrants by which their property, liberty, and life,

is legally disposed of. And if to dispose of their property by taxation is robbery, by the same rule we may say, that to dispose of their liberty and life by legal warrants which they may have not indorsed, is inhospitable tyranny and downright murder.

3. Your principle is highly *unconstitutional*. But few, comparatively, of the inhabitants of Great Britain have a share in the legislative power; nevertheless, the properties, liberties, and lives of *all*, are disposed of according to law. The constitution allows it; the constitution enjoins it. And yet you tell us, that disposing of the property of non-voters is *unconstitutional*, and that to lay taxes upon them is to commit robbery. Now, sir, if you are right, the government robs two hundred and twelve families in my parish only. With two of my neighbours I have just calculated the number of housekeepers in our little district: upon a moderate computation we find seventy-eight freeholders in two hundred and ninety families. Hence it follows, that two hundred and twelve families, out of two hundred and ninety, have no share in legislation, either personally, or by sending any representative to parliament. And yet all these families are taxed: the masters of some of them, who live upon large farms, for which they pay the land tax, pay more to the government than most freeholders. To say nothing of the land tax and highway money, they are all taxed in most of the articles which they use in housekeeping. The tea and sugar they drink in the morning, the salt they eat at noon, the candle they burn at night, the shoes they wear all the day, are taxed; their tobacco, snuff, gin, ale, and rum, great articles with too many of them, are all taxed: thus, according to your unconstitutional doctrine, they are robbed from morning till night. The freeholders, officers of excise, and collectors of taxes, are little robbers, and the king and his parliament the great robbers. Did ever any patriot pour more contempt upon the constitution than you inadvertently do? If you could proselyte me to your patriotism, sir, I would no more celebrate the fifth of November as a day of thanksgiving. I would wish success to any man who would venture his neck in order to blow up the den of thieves, with all the robbers who assemble therein.

You insinuate that these two hundred and twelve non-voters are “able to purchase a freehold if they choose it,” and to become voters for themselves and their families. But you are mistaken, sir; I know my parish better than you do. Some of the housekeepers I mention could not vote on account of their sex, though they should have twenty estates; and most of the rest would find it, through their poverty, much more difficult to purchase a freehold, than most of our American patriots.

You answer, if this be the case, their “property must be so small, that it can be of no consequence to them who has the granting of it.” But I argue in a quite contrary manner: for, if my poor parishioners have little of the necessaries of life, by every dictate of common sense, it is of the greatest consequence to there, not to be robbed of that little. Those who have blood to spare, may trust their arm in the hands of almost any surgeon; but those, whose veins are already drained, are deeply interested in the choice of him who is to let out the precious drops which they can so ill part with. The parting with a couple of shillings, or the losing of two days’ work in

mending the highways, is more to a poor man who has a large family, than the losing of £2000 is to a man of fortune. Taxes are never felt by the rich; because they pay them out of their superfluous abundance: whereas the poor part with some of the necessaries of life, whenever they part with a penny. Beside, the poor, not being able to buy meat, live chiefly upon bread, which is the cheapest food. They eat a pound of it, where the rich eat an ounce. Therefore, when our wealthy legislators raise the price of bread, by allowing a bounty for the exportation of corn, or by forbidding the importation, or permitting the distilling of it, they reap the principal benefit, and the poor bear the principal burden. You advance, then, a monstrous paradox, when you insinuate that legislation "can be of no consequence" to the poor; for the capital branch of legislation, which raises or sinks the price of corn, chiefly concerns the lowest class of mankind, by whom corn is chiefly consumed.

This is not all. The legislative power disposes of our life, and locomotive liberty, as well as of our property. I have seen some free-born Englishmen, who never had any share in legislation, put in the stocks, or sent to jail: I have seen others loaded with irons, ready for transportation: and others with a rope about their neck, ready for the gallows. Now, as the poor are as much concerned in the disposal of their locomotive liberty and life as the rich, do you not betray gross partiality, sir, when you represent the poor as persons who may be doomed to abject slavery, which your system supposes to be inseparably connected with our having no share in the legislature? Indigence and slavery are not naturally connected. The poor Indians are as jealous of their liberty as you. And when the Lacedemonians and the Romans were in the lowest circumstances, they valued their liberty most.

It is true, you insinuate that all who cannot purchase a freehold are not absolutely obliged to remain slaves; because a place in the legislature is a "privilege extended in a few boroughs to every one that boils a pot." But does not this very argument pour fresh contempt upon your notions of slavery and liberty? Does it not make English liberty, or abject slavery, to turn upon the boiling or not boiling of a pot? However, suppose that all who are not able to purchase freeholds could avoid slavery by crowding with their families into the few boroughs you mention; which many colonists could do with greater ease than thousands of Britons: or, supposing this peculiar privilege were extended to all the pot boilers in Great Britain, would you mend the constitution by these means? No: you would only avoid one inconveniency by running upon another; for the rich would justly complain of a levelling scheme which would allow every starving cottager to have as good a right of granting their property, as they have themselves.

Again: if Britons, and sons of Britons, must be "equally represented," with respect to the disposal of their property, in order to be free men; have not the rich a right to make a congress, and to enact, that, as the man who has forty shillings a year in land, has one vote; so he who has twice forty shillings, should have two votes; and he who has ten thousand pounds a year, should have five thousand votes: by which means he might return himself member for any poor borough in the kingdom? On the other

hand, will the poor not have as good a right to rise in their turn, and to form another congress, under pretence that rich men have but one body, and one life, any more than the poor: and therefore it is unreasonable that the rich should have so much greater a part in legislation than they? Nor will the mischief stop here: the wise and experienced will rise also, and urge, it is absurd that a young man, or a fool, should have as great a share in the legislature as a wise, aged man; and they will insist on having votes according to their wisdom and years; nor will their claim be, in my judgment, the most unreasonable.

This is not all. Every little market town, and every ancient village, will insist on sending two representatives to parliament, as well as *Wenlock* and *Old Sarum*. By the rule of proportion, large towns, cities, and populous counties will claim a right of sending a number of members so much greater, as they are larger than Cornish boroughs, and more populous than Huntingdonshire. Thus we shall have an army of parliament men, who, like the Polish nobility at their diets, will not be able to hear one another speak, and will be more ready to draw the sword, than to make laws. And if such a parliament is to be chosen every year, as you intimate it should, the nation will spend half her time in raising armies of pot boilers, to raise another army of lawgivers.

From these, and many such inconveniences, it appears, sir, that your scheme of equal representation is absurd and impossible; and that, before you can bring it to bear, you must first get all Britons to be equally wise, rich, noble, learned, experienced, and diligent. Secondly, you must take all of one age and sex: and thirdly, you must contrive to make them all live in the same place, and at the same time. If you consider the difficulty of such a task, I flatter myself, sir, that you will be less ready to find fault with the constitution, and to make the injudicious wish for a revolution productive of equal representation, that is, of an absolute impossibility. Much less will you persuade injudicious patriots, that the king and the majority in parliament “commit robbery,” and “stab our vitals,” when they tax the colonists, as they do two out of three of their subjects in England, that is, without a direct representation.

You try, indeed, to obviate this difficulty, by intimating that the vast body of free-born Englishmen, who have no right to choose their representatives, or who, through absence, cannot exercise their right, may “consent to the disposal of their property, because they have always this security, that those who take an active part in the disposal of their property, must, at the same time, dispose of an equal proportion of their own.” Whereas, “the American can have no voice in the disposal of his property; and what is worse, those who are to have the power of disposing of it are under every possible temptation to abuse that power, because every shilling they take out of the pocket of an American, is so much saved in their own.”

As this is your capital argument, I shall give it a full answer. (1.) It is improbable that our lawgivers would save a dirty shilling in their pockets, by oppressively taking

one out of an American's pocket. If I am rightly informed, they are so far from abusing their power in this respect, that when they take sixpence for the use of government out of an American's pocket, they take sixteen shillings out of their own. (2.) Our excellent constitution obviates your ungenerous suspicion, by ordering that the legislators, who compose the lower house of parliament, shall all be men of fortune, raised by their circumstances above the felonious trick you speak of (3.) You mistake, when you say that "the American can have no voice in the disposal of his property;" for as many of the colonists as choose to purchase a freehold in England, may become electors; and as many as have a sufficient fortune, may become candidates at the next election. You speak yourself of your "late American candidate, who was a friend to America." If I mistake not, we have American members in the house; and the papers inform us that ----- Sayer, Esq., who is a native of Boston, claims a seat in the parliament; and, if he obtain it, he will not only represent his borough, but also, in connection with his fellow members, he will represent the commonalty of all the British empire. Hence it is, that the minority in parliament, though they are not the special representatives of the colonists, plead their cause so warmly, even against the privileges of the electors whom they particularly represent. (4.) Supposing these American members have no estates beyond the Atlantic; are there not several members in both houses of parliament who have a large-a very large property in America; and who, when they tax the colonists, take far more money out of their own pockets, than they probably do out of the pockets of Messrs. Adams and Hancock? (5.) If the colonists were afraid of being taxed more heavily than the rule of proportion allows, should they not have humbly requested the parliament, that before they were taxed at all, their jealousies might be removed by an act drawn up in such a manner as to set bounds to their taxes, in proportion to the bounds which are set to their commercial privileges? And would not our lawgivers have granted them so reasonable a request? But, to rise absolutely against all taxation by act of parliament, merely because it is taxation by the legislative power of Great Britain; to destroy the property of our fellow subjects by raising riotous mobs against them; and to take up arms against the sovereign to defend such proceedings, argues, in my judgment, a temper which you may call patriotism, but looks too much like the sin forbidden in Rom. xiii. 2. Lastly. If pleading that our superiors may abuse their power over us, were a sufficient reason to shake off the yoke of lawful authority; all apprentices (though ever so well used) might directly emancipate themselves; for they might adopt your argument, and say, My master, indeed, uses me well; but "he is under every possible temptation to starve me;" since every meal which he will save in denying me proper food, will be a meal saved for himself or his own children; and therefore I will cut and carve for myself, or I will acknowledge him as a master no more.

I shall be less prolix in my answer to the rest of your arguments.-You appeal to the Irish, who are taxed by their own Parliament.[2] But their case is very different from that of the colonists; for Ireland was annexed to the dominions of the king of England, not as a colony or a kingdom *naturally* and *originally* subjected to England, but as a sister kingdom; and as such, she has enjoyed the supreme power of making

her own laws, and (in part) of coining her own money. This was the case with Scotland also; and therefore the Scots were allowed to send a number of representatives to both houses of parliament, when the two kingdoms were united into one. Not so the colonies. They never were on a level with England; they never had supreme dominion; they were always the subjects of the king and parliament of England, who granted them the territories they enjoy; and therefore, for them to demand, in opposition to their charters, rights superior to those of the Britons, who settle abroad under the protection of Great Britain; and for them to claim the prerogatives of sister kingdoms, is as great a stretch of lawless liberty, as for chartered corporations in England, or for the English settled in Minorca, Jamaica, Gibraltar, Bengal, &c, to claim the prerogatives of supreme governments, and the privileges of the kingdoms which were joined by mutual agreement to the crown of England.

You likewise appeal to the palatinate of Chester, whose inhabitants pleaded, "that the English parliament had no right to tax them; that they had a parliament of their own," &c. But, granting that the parliament of that palatinate was once as independent on the English parliament as the palatinate in Germany, can you, without absurdity, infer from thence, that the colonists are so? Permit me to make you sensible of the inconclusiveness of your argument, by bringing it to light, thus: "The palatinate of Chester was formerly independent on the parliament of England: they could produce grants or charters to demonstrate, that they had a parliament of their own, and the prerogative of making their own laws; and therefore the colonies, which have no such grants and charters; the colonies which have always been subject to the English parliament; the colonies, whose grants directly or indirectly mention subjection to the English parliament, shall not be subject to the English parliament." If Mr. W. had advanced such an argument as this, you might have as reasonably complained that he deals in "childish quirks," as you now do without reason; for common sense dictates, that it is as absurd to conclude, that the peculiar privileges enjoyed by the palatinate of Chester ought to be granted to all the colonies, as it is to infer that the peculiar privileges of the house of commons belong to every corporation in the kingdom.

To this refutation of your arguments permit me to add a remark upon your answer to Mr. W.'s most striking plea. You are sensible of the advantage which he has over you, where he appeals to the express terms of the charters granted to the colonists. You know that honest men dare not go from their bargain; and that a charter is nothing but a solemn bargain committed to writing, whereby the sovereign makes such and such grants to such subjects, upon such and such terms: and you know, that if the subjects accept the grants, they agree to the terms on which these grants are made. Mr. W. says, "Remember your last charter, that of Pennsylvania, says, in express terms, you are liable to taxation." Here, sir, you seem embarrassed; and, to get off as well as you can, you tell us that the clause of the charter which stir. W. appeals to, "was never understood to mean a power of internal taxation for the purpose of raising a revenue; but merely the laying on of such duties as might be

necessary solely for the regulation of trade." But your mistake was lately demonstrated before the house of lords, by the testimony of Governor Penn. Lord Denbigh asked him at the bar of the house, if he was well acquainted with the charter of Pennsylvania? He replied, "that he had read the charter, and was well acquainted with the contents." Lord Denbigh asked, "if he did not know there was a clause which specifically subjected the colony to taxation by the British legislature?" and he answered, "He was well apprized there was such a clause." Now, sir, as you are so evidently mistaken in your account of the charter of Pennsylvania, you will permit me to think, that you give us as fabulous an account of the charter of Massachusett's Bay, when you say, you are credibly informed that the exemption from taxes for seven years, which was granted to the colonists of that province, "had no reference to what we commonly mean by taxes, but to" something, which you call "quit-rents." An odd criticism this, which I should imitate, if I insinuated, that when the apostle changes us to pay custom, he does not mean, that we should pay what we commonly understand by custom; but only that tenants should pay their rent. From this specimen, it is easy to determine who have most reason to complain of "mutilated charters," the patriots or the parliament.

Having so long pleaded the cause of my sovereign and my country, I may be allowed to bestow a few paragraphs upon my friend. You say to him, "It is fallacious to the last degree, and unworthy of a man of integrity and candour to insinuate, as you are pleased to do, that the people have ceded to the king and parliament the power of disposing, without their consent, of both their lives, liberties, and properties." I shall make no remark, reverend sir, on the Christian courtesy of this address. We, who pass for abject slaves, expect such liberal hints from you patriots; and to tell you the truth, we think it an honour to share them with our king, and our legislature. But may not I ask a few questions, which will throw some light upon Mr. W.'s remark? When did all the freeholders, who have estates from fifty to ninety-nine pounds a year, consent to be deprived of the liberty to carry a gun, and to shoot a hare on their own land? When did all the Quakers consent to pay tithes, for the non-payment of which their property is forcibly taken from them according to act of parliament, to the amount of several thousand pounds a year? When did all the clergy, who lately petitioned the parliament for the repeal of the thirty-nine articles, consent that the act which orders subscription to these articles, should continue in force? When did all the freeholders in Middlesex consent to be additionally taxed, in order to enforce the taxation of the colonists? When did all our blustering gentlemen consent to be sent to the house of correction, or to pay five shillings every time they demean themselves by profane cursing or swearing? When did all the dissenters consent to the law which obliges them to conform to the Church of England, if they will have places under the government? And, to sum up all in one question, When did one half of the lords, who distinguish themselves by their violent opposition to the measures of the government, consent that their liberty, estate, title, and life should be forfeited, if they should assist their fellow patriots who take up arms against the king and parliament? If you give me a satisfactory answer to these queries, I will give you leave to reflect on my friend's integrity for his assertion. But remember, sir, that if you flee to the back door

of an implicit consent to make your escape, Mr. Wesley, like an honest man, will meet you face to face; and stopping you in the name of consistency, he will demonstrate that, according to your evasive doctrine, you yourself have taxed the colonists, “committed robbery,” and “stabbed our vitals.”

You try another method to overthrow Mr. Wesley's arguments. You object, that five years ago he did not defend the measures taken with regard to America; because he “doubted” whether they were at all defensible; and you have been informed that he has since represented the Americans as “an oppressed, injured people;” and has warmly expressed his fears with respect to the danger of our liberties. But who could blame Mr. Wesley then; and who can blame him now? Is not a good man bound by his conscience to judge without partiality, according to the best information he has? When Mr. W. heard the clamours of the patriots, so called, who inveighed against the sovereign for breach of charter, he really thought that they had truth, and the charters of the colonists on their side; and therefore he considered the claims of the government upon the colonists as subversive of charter, and consequently as faithless, injurious, and oppressive. Nor is it surprising that, upon such wrong information, he should have thought our liberties in danger; for if the sovereign had really violated the charters of the colonies, he might next have attempted to violate the great charter of England. But when Mr. W. was better informed; when he found that the charters of the colonies were as much for the sovereign as the patriots had insinuated they were against him, Mr. W. would not have acted as a conscientious man if he had not altered his mind, according to this important and decisive information.

But supposing I mistake the reason which has determined Mr. W. to defend the claims of Great Britain; and supposing you have been rightly informed concerning the change of his political sentiments; what can you infer from thence, but that he once leaned too much toward your overdoing patriotism? He once “doubted” the equity of the sovereign’s claims. His strong patriotism gave a hasty preponderance to his doubts; but his candour having proceeded to a close examination of the question, light has sprung up; conviction has followed; and he has laid before the public the result of his second thoughts, and the arguments which have scattered his doubts. For my part, far from thinking the worse of a rational conviction, because it follows a doubt, and has met with some opposition in a good man's mind, I am inclined to pay it a greater regard. And if my friend's warm patriotism has been forced to yield to the strength of the arguments contained in his Calm Address, I am thereby encouraged to hope that your warm patriotism, sir, will not be less candid than his; and that you will yield to the arguments contained in this calm Vindication. Should this be the case, the public will see in you both, that reason and conscience can, at last, perfectly balance patriotism and loyalty in the breast of a good man.

With respect to me, sir, I had not deeply entered into the merits of the cause either way, before I saw Mr. W.'s Address, and your answer to it. I contented myself to wish and pray for peace in general, without inquiring who was right and who wrong. But

after an attentive perusal of your publications, I was fully convinced that Mr. W.'s doctrine of government and taxation is rational, Scriptural, and constitutional; and that yours, sir, draws after it a chain of the most absurd consequences, has a tendency to promote licentiousness, and is subversive of all the Scripture precepts which I have quoted in my first letter: and therefore my reverence for God's word, my duty to the king, and regard for my friend, my love to injured truth, and the consciousness of the sweet liberty which I enjoy under the government, call for this little tribute of my pen. And I pay it so much the more cheerfully, as few men in the kingdom have had a better opportunity of trying which is the most eligible,-a republican government, or the mild tempered monarchy of England. I lived more than twenty years the subject of two of the mildest republics in Europe: I have been for above that number of years the subject of your sovereign: and from sweet experience, I can set my seal to this clause of the king's speech, at the opening of this session of parliament: “To be a subject of Great Britain, with all its consequences, is to be the happiest subject of any civil government in the world.” That you, sir, and all my dissatisfied fellow subjects, may be as sensible of this truth as myself; and that we may all be daily more thankful to God, to the king, and to the parliament, for the religious and civil liberty which we enjoy, is the cordial wish of, reverend sir, your affectionate fellow labourer in the Gospel,

J. FLETCHER.

LETTER III.

Observations on the origin of power-on high republican spirit-on the manner in which Cromwell overthrew both Church and state with this dreadful engine-on the republican enthusiasm of many of the first Protestants-on the articles of religion by which the latter reformers struck at that enthusiasm-on tyranny-on slavery-and on the peculiar liberty of the subjects of Great Britain-The author’s wishes with respect to a speedy reconciliation with the colonists-the happy consequences of such a reconciliation.

REV. SIR,-My wishes for your happiness, and my concern for the public peace, prompt me to try all the means in my power to remove your prejudices, and to stop the ferment raised by your mistakes. Having therefore addressed you as a man, a Christian, and a Briton, I shall now expostulate with you as a Protestant, and a friend to liberty.

The distinguishing character of a Protestant is to rest his doctrine upon reason and Scripture. But upon which of these foundations, sir, do you rest your doctrine of power? You insinuate that the power of kings ascends from the people: you blame your opponent for having intimated, that it descends from God; and you recommend a levelling scheme of equal representation, founded upon a natural, equal right of sharing in the legislative power; a scheme this, which presupposes that one man in society has naturally as much right to make and repeal laws as another. Whence it

evidently follows, that subjects have a right to rise against their sovereign whenever they think proper to make (in connection with their neighbours) a decree or law of insurrection; and that every individual, in conjunction with other individuals, has a supreme right to dispose of property and royal honours, whether it be by equalizing ranks and fortunes, or by putting down one king and setting up another.

I own to you, sir, that although this scheme would give me a significancy in life which I never dreamed of, I dare not embrace it. The vanity of considering myself as a member of the body, which your doctrine represents as the supreme lawgiver, the judge of legislators, and the maker of kings; this flattering vanity, I say, cannot induce me to renounce the dictates of reason, and the declarations of Scripture.

Reason informs me that the first man was endued with a power to protect and rule mankind: that all men are born in a state of civil society, because no child was ever his own father, his own mother, his own nurse, or his own protector; and that, of consequence, all men were under as strong an obligation of submitting to the first man, (in all things agreeable to God's supreme dominion,) as the first man was of submitting to God. If Adam had not sinned and died, to this day he would have been, under God, the monarch of all the earth; and all kings would have been bound to acknowledge his supreme authority. This Divine right of dominion Adam received from God. At his death he left it behind him; and even before his death it began to subdivide itself into every branch of family government, and national administration. Hence it is, that “the powers that be,” are said to be “ordained of God;” and that magistrates and governors are called gods in the Old and New Testament. It appears to me, therefore, as irrational to say that the power of sovereigns comes originally from the people, as to say that the sanction of the fifth commandment comes originally from man. Nor dare I any more assert, that the people have a natural right to enthrone and dethrone kings, than I dare maintain that children and scholars have a natural right to bestow or take away paternal and magisterial authority; or that the hands and feet have a natural right to rule the head and heart. I grant, that if all the people will rebel against their rightful sovereign, they are able to depose and destroy him. But arguing from *might* to *right* is the logic of a tyrant, a robber, and a mob; not that of a man, a Christian, and a Protestant. If all the sons of Adam had plotted his destruction, they probably could have effected it: but their having a power to sin would have been no proof that they had a license so to do. You may call this a “Jacobite doctrine,” sir, but such a name does no more make it unreasonable, than your calling Mr. Wesley a slave deprives him of his liberty.

As this doctrine of power, so far as power is exercised in subordination to God's supreme dominion, is agreeable to reason, so is it to Scripture. Search the sacred records, sir, and you will see that “they who resist the” above-described “power, resist” not the ordinances of the people, but “the ordinances of God” himself, Rom. xiii. 2. Kings, in the sacred pages, are said to be “the Lord's anointed,” and not the anointed of the people; and the men of God inform us, that “God removeth kings, and setteth up kings” in his own right, Dan. ii. 21.

I grant, that when the Lord designs to punish a nation, or a tyrant, he often suffers the people, or some ambitious man from among the people, to usurp his right, and to procure an unlawful coronation. Nor do I deny, that, in lawful coronations, the Lord invites the people to fall in with his providential choice; and that, sometimes, he brings his choice about by means of the people. But the fullest concurrence of the people does not deprive him of his Divine prerogative. Hence it is, that the psalmist says, "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor yet from the south. And why? God is the [supreme] Judge: he putteth down one and setteth up another," Psalm xxv. 7, 8. This is his incontestable right. If the people therefore stand in need of a rod of iron, to bruise their stubborn backs; he may "give them a [cruel] king in his anger," Hos. xiii. 11. Or, what is still worse, he may suffer them to set over themselves a tyrant, whose name is "Legion, for *they* are many." And "Legion" will drive them into a sea of trouble, as fiercely and as arbitrarily as a certain legion formerly drove a herd of unruly, obstinate animals into the sea of Galilee. May our American brethren never be given over to so dreadful a delusion!

If legislative, royal power ascended from the people, the Lord would not have elected Moses to be the lawgiver, and Joshua to be the leader of Israel, without first consulting the twelve tribes. Nor would he have raised them judges afterward, without previously asking their consent. Much less would he have anointed Saul, David, Jehu, and others to be kings over Israel, in so arbitrary a manner as he did. To prove your doctrine, therefore, you must appeal to the right exercised by some lawless citizens, mentioned by our Lord, who unjustly hated their sovereign, and said, "We will not have this man to reign over us," Luke xix. 14. And if you please, to this precedent you may add the example of those Pharisaic, fickle patriots, who once insisted upon making Christ their king, and afterward cried, "We will have no king but Cesar; let Jesus be crucified." From the designs of such uneasy religionists, such makers and killers of kings, may God deliver the king and his dominions! Let a Theudas, a Barabbas, a Caiaphas, make insurrections against Cesar, and raise mobs against Christ himself; but let not pious Christians who dissent from the Church of England, dissent from the prophets and apostles, when they say, "My son, fear thou the Lord, and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change," Prov. xxiv. 21. "Submit to the king as supreme. Fear God. Honour the king. Yea, honour him with thy substance, *by* paying tribute, *or taxes*, not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake," 1 Peter ii. 3, &c; Rom. xiii. 5, 6; Prov. iii. 9.

The levelling scheme, on which you found your doctrine of a right to equal representation, is the rock upon which rigid republicans perpetually run. Against this very rock many of the first overdoing Protestants steered their course, and dashed their ark in pieces. They had long groaned under popish tyranny; and when the yoke which had galled them for ages was broken, they did not know how to contain themselves. Like a high-spirited horse, which takes to a mad gallop, and furiously leaps over the bounds of the pasture into which it is turned after a long confinement, they disdained all restraint. Nothing short of lawless proceedings seemed to them to deserve the name of *liberty*. Because they had shaken oft the antichristian yoke of

ecclesiastical tyrants, they concluded that they had a right to shake off the Christian yoke of Civil governors. They paid an unjust tribute to the pope no more; and, therefore, they would pay just taxes to their sovereign no longer. In short, they asserted that they had as much right in the legislature as their legislators. They brought on a general election, at which they elected themselves lawgivers; and as you may easily conceive, one of their first laws was, that goods should be common; thus they began, *facere rem-pub1icam*, to make a republic, a commonwealth, in the strictest sense of the word. All things were theirs. They were to call no man master upon earth. They were all to be literally kings with Christ, and they anointed themselves to "reign with him a thousand years." This scheme could not fail to please the pot boilers in Germany, who had nothing to lose; and it was highly applauded by those who hoped to get more than they had. They rose therefore in riotous mobs to "proclaim liberty to the captives," and "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." They were to "undo all heavy burdens," to "break off every yoke," to "bind kings with chains," and "nobles with fetters of iron." whey actually began their levelling march, headed by some well meaning enthusiasts, and by some designing men, who, like Cromwell, made their way to supreme authority, by striking dreadful blows at all authority. And under pretence of asserting "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," they committed all the outrages which can be expected from a lawless populace, who mistake licentiousness for freedom.

This mischief had begun in the Church. Some of the German reformers had, at times, spoken so unguardedly of the ceremonial law of Moses, which St. Paul absolutely discards, as to pour contempt upon the moral law of Christ, which the apostle strongly enforces. Luther himself, in his zeal for salvation without works, had been ready to burn the epistle of St. James, because it speaks honourably of Christ's royal law, by which Christians shall stand or fall when they shall be "judged [that is, justified or condemned] according to their works." When warm men had been taught to bid defiance to God's law, as well as to iniquity and Satan; what wonder was it if some of them went beyond their teachers, and began to infer, that as they were made free from the law of God, so they were made free from the law of the land! The transition from ecclesiastical to civil Antinomianism is easy and obvious; for as he that reverences the law of God will naturally reverence the just commands of the king; so he that thinks himself free from the law of the Lord, will hardly think himself bound by the statutes of his sovereign.

This republican, mobbing spirit, after having tossed Germany, began to agitate England. Permit me, sir, to transcribe some passages from Bishop Burnet's *History of the Reformation*. They refer to my subject, and will throw much light upon it: "At this time there were many Anabaptists [3] in several parts of England. They were generally Germans, whom the revolutions there had forced to change their seats. Upon Luther's first preaching in Germany, there arose many, who, building on some of his principles, carried things much farther than he did." Here the historian candidly observes that, although these men were called Anabaptists because they agreed to explode the baptism of infants, they were not all of the same temper. "Some," says

he, “were called the gentle or moderate Anabaptists. But others denied almost all the principles of the Christian doctrine, and were men of fierce and barbarous tempers. They had broke out into a general revolt over Germany, and raised the war called *The Rustic War*: and possessing themselves of Munster, made one of their teachers, John of Leyden, their king, under the title of King of the New Jerusalem.

“There was another sort of people, of whom all the good men in that age made great complaints. Some there were called Gospellers, or readers of the Gospe], who were a scandal to the doctrine they professed, &c. I do not find any thing objected to them as to their belief, save only that the doctrine of predestination having been generally taught by the reformers, many of this sect began to make strange inferences from it, reckoning that since every thing was decreed, and the decrees of God could not be frustrated, therefore men were to leave themselves to be carried by the decrees. This drew some into great impiety of life, &c. One of the ill effects of the dissoluteness of people's manners broke out violently this summer, (1549,) occasioned by the enclosing of lands. While the monasteries stood, there were great numbers of people maintained about these houses, &c. But now the number of the people increased much; marriage being universally allowed. They had also more time than formerly by the abrogation of many holidays, and the putting down of processions and pilgrimages; so that as the numbers increased, they had more time than they knew how to bestow."

The historian tells us next how the popish priests availed themselves of these favourable circumstances to raise a dreadful rebellion in Devonshire; and then he goes on thus: “When this commotion was grown to a head, the men of Norfolk rose; being led by one Ket, a tanner. These pretended nothing of religion, but only to suppress and destroy the gentry, to raise the commons, and to put new counsellors about the king. They increased mightily, and became twenty thousand strong, but had no order or discipline, and committed many horrid outrages. Ket assumed to himself the power of judicature, and under an old oak, called from thence the oak of the reformation, did such justice as might be expected from such a judge in such a camp. When the news of this rising came into Yorkshire, the commons there rose also; being farther encouraged by a prophecy, that there should be no king nor nobility in England; that the kingdom was to be ruled by four governors, chosen by the commons, who should hold a parliament, in common, to begin at the south and north seas. They, at the first rising, fired beacons, and so gathered the country, as if it had been for the defence of the coast, and meeting with two gentlemen, with two others with them, they, with out any provocation, murdered them, and left their bodies unburied. At the same time that England was in this commotion, the news came that the French king had sent a great army into the territory of Boulogne; so that the government was put to most extraordinary straits. There was a fast proclaimed in and about London. Cranmer preached on the fast day at court. He chiefly lamented the scandal given by many who pretended a zeal for religion, but used that for a cloak to disguise their other vices. He set before them the fresh example of Germany, where people generally loved to hear the Gospel, but had not amended their lives upon it,

for which God had now, after many years' forbearance, brought them under a severe scourge." (*History of the Reformation*, book i. part ii. ed. 2, pp. 110-118.)

From this quotation it appears that the wild, republican spirit which animated Ket and his army, worked, in those days, just as licentious patriotism works in ours. Ket, the great patriot, would redress grievances. He raised the commons under pretence of putting new counsellors about the king. He got the mob together, as if it were for the defence of the coast, or of public liberty. But his real design was probably to be one of the four governors chosen by the commons, who were to make an end of the king and nobility of England, and to turn the monarchy into a republic. As for modest John of Leyden, he got more than the name of protector; for he was actually proclaimed king. this sort of republican patriotism leads therefore to honour, though this honour, like that of the German and English levellers, frequently ends in shame.

The wildness of this high republican spirit having fixed a foul blot on the reformation in Germany, the latter reformers, to throw off the shame, and to obviate the mischief of this delusion, took particular notice of it in their confessions of faith. Though you dissent from the Church of England, sir, yet as it is presumed you pay a deference to what are called her doctrinal articles, permit me to transcribe a part of the thirty-eighth, which is levelled at the levelling pot boilers of Germany. and at the dupes of Ket, who had taken upon him to dispose of property under the oak of reformation in England. "The riches and goods of Christians are not common, as touching the right, title, and possession of the same; as certain Anabaptists do falsely boast."

Calvin himself, though a strong republican, was frightened at the rapid progress of this civil enthusiasm. Hence it is, that when he drew up a confession of faith for the Reformed Churches of France and Geneva, he bestowed the two last articles of it upon the error which our American brethren, and you, sir, are running headlong into. As you are probably a perfect stranger to these articles, I shall faithfully translate them from my French Common Prayer Book.

"ART. XXXIX. We believe that God will have the world to be governed by laws and civil powers, that the lawless inclinations of men may be curbed. And therefore he has established kingdoms and republics, and other sorts of governments, [some hereditary and some otherwise] together with whatsoever belongs to judicature. And he will be acknowledged the author of government. To this end he has put the sword in the hands of rulers to punish, not only the sins which are committed against the commandments of the second table, but also those which are committed against the precepts of the first table. We ought, then, not only to bear for his sake, that rulers should have dominion over us, but it is also our bounden duty to honour them, and to esteem them worthy of all reverence; considering them as God's lieutenants and officers, which he has commissioned to execute a lawful and holy commission.

“ART. XL. We maintain, therefore, that we are bound to obey their laws and statutes, to pay tribute, taxes, and other duties, and to bear the yoke of subjection freely, and with good will, though they should be unbelievers: provided the supreme dominion of God be preserved in its full extent. And therefore we detest the men [he means republican levellers] who reject superiorities, introduce community and confusion of property, and overthrow the order of justice.”

Sir, you are a Calvinist. You follow the French reformer when he teaches the absolute reprobation and the unavoidable damnation of myriads of poor creatures yet unborn. O! forsake him not when he follows Christ, and teaches God (and not the people) is to be acknowledged the author of power and government, and that we are bound to bear cheerfully, for his sake, the yoke of Scriptural subjection to our governors. Represent no more this honourable, this Divine yoke, as abject slavery. And, instead of insinuating that the king and parliament are robbers, because they lay a moderate tax upon their American subjects, help Mr. W. to undeceive those whom the uneasy levellers of the day work up to almost as high a degree of republican wildness, as John of Leyden and Ket worked up the German and English mobs two or three hundred years ago. So will you show yourself a true minister of the Prince of Peace, and a wise Protestant, who, like Cranmer and Calvin, ought equally to level his doctrine at a tyrant and a mob: and to pour like contempt upon the republican vanity of a tanner, who assumes the dignity of lawgiver under the oak of reformation, and upon the imperial pride of a monk, who, from St. Peter's humble chair, pompously holds out his foot to meet the adoration of prostrate princes.

Be entreated, sir, to rectify your false notions of liberty. The liberty of Christians and Britons does not consist in bearing no yoke; but in beating a yoke made easy by a gracious Saviour and a gracious sovereign. A John of Leyden may promise to make us first lawless, then legislators, and kings; and by his delusive promises he may raise us to-a fool's paradise, if not to-the gallows. But a true deliverer and a good governor says to our restless Antinomian spirits, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” We can have no rest in the Church but under Christ's easy yoke: no rest in the state, but under the easy yoke of our rightful sovereign. To aim at breaking this yoke, because we have some objection to the minister or the king, is as great a piece of folly as for the crew of a ship to aim at cutting the rigging, and destroying the rudder of the ship in which they sail, because they have a pique against the pilot or captain. Suppose they should be so unhappily fortunate as to succeed, what will they gain by their success? Will they be better able to bear the tossings of the next storm? Will they not be at the mercy of every wave-the sport of every blast-ready to be dashed against every rock?

I am so fully convinced of the truth and importance of Calvin’s two last articles of religion, that, though I have for years checked his errors, if I had the wings of lightning, and a voice like thunder, I would, this instant, shoot myself across the Atlantic, and preach his loyal doctrine to our deluded brethren.

A seed of the error of the republican Anabaptists has remained in England ever since the reformation; and the fiery zeal of some Independents and later Anabaptists, was the chief ladder by which the artful Cromwell climbed to the height of supreme power, under pretence of forming a commonwealth. That you may not charge me with misrepresentation, I shall draw my proof from the Rev. Mr. R. Baxter's Life, written by himself His testimony is worth that of twenty others, because he had few equals in his time, for piety, wisdom, moderation, abundant labours, and ministerial success; and because he was an eye witness of many things which he relates, having been chaplain to a regiment of horse in Cromwell's army; a place, this, which he accepted chiefly with an intention to oppose, by his preaching, the headstrong republican spirit of those men who, after having taken up arms with a design to redress grievances, and oppose arbitrary power, bore them with an intention of putting down hierarchy and monarchy together. Baxter failed in his attempt, partly through the forbidding coldness with which Cromwell looked upon him, and partly by a severe fit of sickness, which obliged him to leave the army when his moderation was most wanting there. The following extract is taken from a folio volume printed in London, 1696, entitled, "*Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Baxter's Narrative of the most memorable Passages of his Life and Times*."

Page 26. Having told us that what hastened on the war, on the side of the parliament, was, "(1.) The people's indiscretion that adhered to them; (2.) The imprudence and violence of some members in the house, who went too high," &c; he explains what he means by the people's indiscretion thus:-"Some were yet more indiscreet; the remnant of the old Separatists and Anabaptists in London was then very small, and scarce considerable; but they were enough to stir up the younger sort of religious people to speak too vehemently-against the bishops and the Church-and all that was against their minds. These stirred up the apprentices to join with them in petitions, and to go in great numbers to present them: as they went, they met with some of the bishops in their coaches going to the house, and (as is usual with the passionate and indiscreet when they are in great companies) they too much forgot civility, and cried, *No bishops*!" Page 27: "When at last the king forsook the city, these tumults were the principal cause alleged by him, as if he himself had not been safe [in the midst of these mobbing petitioners.] Thus rash attempts of headstrong people do work against the good ends which they themselves intend. Overdoing is the ordinary way of undoing. And some members of the house did cherish these disorders: and because the subjects have liberty to petition, they made use of this liberty in a disorderly way. Some particular members concurred with the desires of the imprudent reformers, who were for no less than the utter extirpation of the bishops and liturgy. Those members, &c, did much encourage the petitioners, who, in a disorderly manner, laboured to effect it."

Page 39. "I make no doubt that the headiness and rashness of the younger inexperienced sort of religious people, made many parliament men and ministers overgo themselves to keep pace with those hot spurs; no doubt but much indiscretion appeared, and worse than indiscretion, in the tumultuous petitioners, and much sin

was committed in the dishonouring of the king, and provocation of him. But these things came principally from the sectarian spirit, which blew the coals among foolish apprentices: and as the sectaries increased, so did this insolence increase."

Pages 50, 51. "When the Court Newsbook told the world of the swarms of Anabaptists in our armies, we thought it had been a mere lie, because it was not so with us. But when I came to the army among Cromwell's soldiers, I found a new face of things, which I never dreamt of: I heard the plotting heads very hot upon that which intimated their intention to subvert both Church and state. Independency and Anabaptistry were most prevalent. A few proud, self conceited, hot-headed sectaries had got into the highest places, and were Cromwell's chief favourites; and by their very heat and activity, bore down the rest, or carried them along with them, and were the soul of the army, though much fewer in number than the rest; being, indeed, not one in twenty throughout the army; their strength being in the generals, &c. I perceived that they took the king for a tyrant and an enemy, and really intended absolutely to master him, or to ruin him. They said, What were the lords of England, but William the conqueror's colonels? Or the barons, but his majors? Or the knights, but his captains? *Per fas aut nefas*, by law, or without it, they were resolved to take down all that did withstand their way. They most honoured the Separatists, Anabaptists, and Antinomians; but Cromwell and his party took on them to join themselves to no party, but to be for the liberty of all."

Page 53. "My life among them [Cromwell's soldiers] was a daily contending against seducers. I found that many honest men, of weak judgments, &c, had been seduced into a disputing vein, and made it too much of their religion to talk for this opinion, or for that; sometimes for state democracy, and sometimes for Church democracy. I was almost always, when I had opportunity, disputing with one or another of them; sometimes for our civil government, and sometimes for Church government; sometimes for infant baptism, and often against Antinomianism, and the contrary extreme. But their most frequent and vehement disputes were for liberty of conscience, as they called it; that is, that every man might not only hold, but preach and do in matters of religion what he pleased, &c. Because I perceived that it was a few men that bore the bell that did all the hurt among them, I acquainted myself with those men, and I found that they were men that had been in London, hatched up among the old Separatists," &c.

Pages 56, 57. "I found that if the army had but had ministers enough that would have done but such a little as I did, all their plot might have been broken, and king, parliament, and religion, might have been preserved. Therefore I sent abroad to get some more ministers among them, but I could get none. Saltmarsh and Dell were the two great preachers at the head quarters. When any troop or company was to be disposed of, he [Cromwell] was sure to put a sectary in the place; and when the brunt of the war was over, he looked not so much at their valour as at their opinions: so that by degrees he had headed the greatest part of his army with Anabaptists, Antinomians, &c, and all these he tied together by the point of liberty of conscience,

which was the common interest in which they did unite. Yet did he not openly profess what opinion he was of himself; but the most that he said for any, was for Anabaptism and Antinomianism, which he usually seemed to own. He would not dispute [with me] at all, but he would in good discourse very fluently pour out himself in the extolling of free grace."

Page 58. "I called the ministers again together who had voted me into the army: I told them that the forsaking of the army by old ministers, and the neglect of supplying their places by others, had undone us; that the active sectaries were the smallest part of the army among the common soldiers but Cromwell had lately put so many of them into superior command, and their industry was so much greater than that of others, that they were like to have their will: that whatever obedience they pretended, I doubted not but they would pull down all that stood in their way in state and Church, both king, parliament, and ministers, and set up themselves. I told them that for this little that I have done, [in opposing the high republican spirit,] I have ventured my life. The wars being now ended, I was confident they would shortly show their purposes, and set up for themselves."

Page 59, &c. Baxter tells us that when the royalists were all killed or scattered, and the king himself taken prisoner, Cromwell began to serve the parliament as he had done the king; availing himself of the absolute power he had over the army, by the influence of the hot-headed sectaries whom he had promoted, some of whom were called agitators; and as they now stood in his way to the supreme power, he began to serve them in their turn, as he had served the king and parliament. Take Baxter's own words: "When Cromwell had taught his agitators to govern, and could not easily unteach them again, there arose a party who adhered to the principles of their agreement of the people, [upon the high republican plan,] which suited not with his designs: and to make them odious, he denominated them levellers, as if they intended to [4] level men of all qualities and estates. At last they rendezvous at Burford to make head against him. But Cromwell had presently his brother Desborough, and some other regiments, ready to surprise them there in their quarters, before they could get their numbers together; so that above fifteen hundred being scattered and taken, and some slain, the levellers' war was crushed in the egg."

Page 64. "The king being thus taken out of the way, Cromwell takes on him to be for a commonwealth, (put all in order to the security of the good people,) till he had removed the other impediments which were yet to be removed; so that the rump [that is, the rest of the house of commons, whom Cromwell still allowed to sit, after he had turned out the members who displeased him most] presently drew up a form of engagement to be put upon all men, viz. 'I do promise to be true and faithful to the commonwealth, as it is now established without a fling or house of lords.' So we must take the rump for an established commonwealth, and promise fidelity to them."

In the following pages Baxter tells us how Cromwell put down the rump at last, and, page 74, he gives this account of the manner in which he farther laid aside his

trusty friends, the Anabaptists, who had done him so much service. “The sectarian party in his army and elsewhere he [Cromwell] chiefly trusted to and pleased, till, by the people’s submission and quietness, he thought himself well settled; and then he began to undermine, and by degrees to work them out: and though he had so often spoken for the Anabaptists, now he findeth them so heady, and so much against any settled government, and so set upon the promoting of their way and party, that he does not only begin to blame their unruliness, but also designeth to settle himself in the people's favour by suppressing them. In Ireland they were grown so high, that the soldiers were, many of them, rebaptized as the way to preferment: and those that opposed them they crushed with much uncharitable fierceness. To suppress these, he sent thither his son, Henry Cromwell, who so discountenanced the Anabaptists, as yet to deal civilly by them, repressing their insolencies: and Major-general Ludlow, who headed the Anabaptists in Ireland, was fain to draw in his head. In England, Cromwell connived at his old friend Harrison, while he made himself the head of the Anabaptists and fanatics here, till he saw it would be an acceptable thing to the nation to suppress him, and then he does it easily in a trice, and maketh him contemptible who but yesterday thought himself not much below him.”

From this short account of the reign of the rump, and the craft of Cromwell, it is evident that the high republican spirit, and the injudicious zeal of sectaries, especially of the Anabaptists and Antinomians, were the chief means by which that ambitious man ascended the seat of supreme power. And I wish, sir, that your injudicious, well-meant zeal, may not prove a spur, or a saddle, to some ambitious, false patriots, who, under pretence of mounting the great horse liberty, to fight our battles, and to deliver us from what you call “abject slavery,” will ride over us with as little ceremony as Cromwell did over King Charles, the parliament, and the rump.

Before I take my leave of Baxter, permit me to transcribe what he says concerning the *origin of power*; I accidentally found it in turning over his book for the preceding quotations; and his judgment, which exactly coincides with mine, confirms me in the sentiments which I have expressed in the beginning of this letter.

Page 41. “For the parliament's cause, the principal writing was, Observations written by Mr. Parker, a lawyer: but I remember some principles, which, I think, he misapplied, viz. that the king is *singulis major*, but *universis minor*; (superior to every one of his subjects, but inferior to the collective body of all;) that he *receiveth his power from the people, &c.* For I doubt not to prove that his power is so immediately from God, as that there is no recipient between God and him, to convey it to him; only, as the king by (his charter) maketh him a mayor or bailiff whom the corporation chooses; so God (by his law, as an instrument) conveyeth power to that person, or family, whom the people consent to; and their consent is but a *conditio sine qua non*; and not any proof that they are the fountain of power, or that ever the governing power was in them; and, therefore, for my part, I am satisfied, that all politics err, who tell us of a *majestas realis* in the people, as distinct from the *majestas personalis* in the governors. And though it be true, that *quoad naturalem*

bonitatem, &c, (with respect to natural goodness, &c,) the king is *universis minor* (inferior to the whole body of his subjects)-yet as to *governing power* (which is the thing in question) the king is, as to the people, *universis major*, as well as *singulis*, (superior to the whole body of his subjects, as well as to every one of them.) For if the parliament have any legislative power, it cannot be as they are the body of the people, &c, but it is as the constitution twisteth them into the government. For if once legislation (the chief act of government) be denied to be any part of government at all, and affirmed to belong to the people as such, who are no governors, all government will thereby be overthrown."

If Baxter be right here, (and I believe you cannot prove him to be wrong,) is it not evident, sir, that when you insinuate, "Every one, who is a free agent, or has a will of his own, or boils a pot, ought to have a place in the legislature, before he can be properly subjected to taxation, and, of consequence, to the laws," you countenance one of the most dangerous principles of the levelling Anabaptists? A principle whereby all government may be overthrown by those who know how to draw just consequences from false premises.

To return:-

You say, sir, that your opponent is a slave because he cheerfully submits to taxation without having a direct representative in parliament. But who is the greatest slave, Mr. Wesley or the tools of lawless patriotism? Have we not seen these dupes turned by their error, not only into despicable slaves, but into a new species of domestic animals? Have we not seen them worked up to such a pitch of delusion, as to refuse, with leonine fierceness, the easy, honourable yoke of their sovereign's authority, and to count it an honour to take the place of coach horses, and to draw, with asinine meanness, the chariots of their new triumphers?

What ranks have they regarded, when they have poured themselves along by thousands in our streets? Have they paid any respect to our noblemen? Have they reverenced the king himself? Nay, have they not gloried in their tyrannical contempt of his sceptre and person? Have they not treated him as a well-bred gentleman would be ashamed to treat his groom? Have they not followed him with scurrilous hissings, when he rode with a pomp becoming the first legislator in the kingdom? And, to add the poignancy of contrast to their serpentine sport, have they not filled the sky with shouts of applause, when they have graced the popular triumphs of his avowed opposers? What press has not groaned under the invectives which their imperious tribunes cast upon the legislative power? What periodical paper has not been soiled with the unjust sarcastic blots, which these plebeian dictators have fixed upon the minister who pilots us through the rocks which they throw in the way of our peace and prosperity? Because the parliament would not be carried away by the torrent of their boisterous oratory, has not that venerable body seen insulted, hectored, bullied? Have they not attempted to lord it over the king himself? Have they not insisted on his sitting on the throne, that when he appeared in the greatest height of royal dignity,

they might appear his superiors, and pour upon his anointed head the indecent floods of their lordly remonstrances? Have they not sharpened their tongues like swords, and their pens like spears, sportively to wound him through the side of his minister? And have not those who have done it with the greatest boldness been preposterously cried up as the greatest patriots? In short, has not taxing subjects, vindicating the legislative power, protecting our merchants, and making a stand against the impetuous overflowings of popular rage in St. George's fields, and in Boston: has not, I say, this commendable holding of the reins of government been represented as tyranny, felony, robbery, murder?

If these men dare to take such astonishing liberties with their sovereign, how will they treat their fellow subjects? How will they handle you and me, should they be suffered to step into the sovereign's place? If the king, in the midst of his guards, can but just keep them from treading his honour in the dust, what will they not be able to do to us, who refuse to "go with them to the same excess of riot?" How shall we escape, if we fall into the power of their guards their armies of pot boilers? Those Tritons, who have turtled themselves into "beasts," [5] to draw the chariots of their semi-gods, will probably endeavour to turn us into birds, to make us adorn the triumphs of their goddesses, licentiousness and Antinomian liberty; and we shall possibly think ourselves well off, if we come out of their bands stript of our money, watches, and clothes, and covered with tar, feathers, and infamy.

They have already given us tokens of what we may expect from their lawless patriotism, should it prevail every where as it has in some places. Not to mention the king's officers, who have escaped with the utmost danger of their lives in Boston: not to dwell upon the case of Mr. Christie, a rich British merchant, whom the provincial congress of Maryland is reported to have fined and banished for ever, for writing a confidential, guarded letter to a friend, which contained nothing improper: not to mention, I say, these, and the like tyrannical proceedings in America; have not those who live under the immediate protection of the sovereign in London felt the iron sceptre of king mob? Has not that tyrant, who, with his hundred arms, threw our goods into the sea, in sight of Boston-has not that many-headed tyrant, I say, destroyed that part of our houses in London, which the missile implements of impotent rage could break in pieces? And, as if it had not been enough to attack and injure us in our ships and houses, [6] have they not deprived us of our locomotive liberty? Have they not insolently stopped us in the streets, and on the highway? Have they not taken a temporary possession of our coaches and doors, to mark them with their insulting numbers, and with the names of their principal agents? Have they not wantonly stigmatized our backs, and chalked us out for laughing stocks? Have they not lifted their hands against the peers of the realm? Have they not, without judge or jury, burned one of them in sarcastic effigy? Have they not insulted the prime minister in sight of the senate house? Have they not mobbed the first magistrate of the city of London, in the mansion house? And almost mobbed the king himself in his own palace? And all this under pretence of liberty! O sir, if this be the beginning of liberty, how dreadful will be the end! Is not the tyrannical Scylla, upon whom you

so eagerly push us, more dreadful than even the Charybdis, from which you fancy we are in so great danger? What unprejudiced citizen would not prefer the light yoke of the present government, to the ponderous yoke of such anarchy? And what undesigning Briton will not (upon second thoughts) choose to honour King George, rather than to tremble and fall down before king mob?

Should you do these observations justice, I hope, sir, you will see, that to overdo, in *constitutional* doctrines, is as dangerous to the state, as to overdo, in *evangelical* doctrines, is perilous to the *Church*. If we miss the medium of wisdom and moderation, it little matters whether we miss it, by going out of the way on the right hand, or on the left; it does not signify which of the two we countenance in the Church;-Pharisaism, or Antinomianism: it is indifferent which of the two we set up in the state-an arbitrary king, or an arbitrary mob. Nay, I repeat it; of the two political extremes, the latter is so much worse than the former, as it is more dreadful to be under the dominion of millions of lawless tyrants, whom you may meet every where, and who inflame, screen, and hide one another; than to be under the dominion of one lawless tyrant, who can be but in one place at once, and who stands so exposed to public view, that he cannot, without folly, hope to conceal his enormities.

But thanks be to Divine Providence, and to the wisdom of our ancestors, our constitution (defective as you represent it) displays the happy medium between the high monarchical extreme, and the high republican extreme: it equally guards against the opposite errors of Dr. Sacheverel and Oliver Cromwell. For the liberties of mankind are alternately struck at; on the right hand by lawless kings, and on the left by lawless mobs: but the balance is wisely kept by our two houses of parliament, whose most important and delicate business is (if I mistake it not) to hinder the scale of the king from unconstitutionally outweighing that of the people, as arbitrary monarchs could wish: and to prevent the scale of the people from making that of the king kick the beam, as tyrannical mobs desire. The present king follows the laws, as his royal ancestors have done before him. He takes no capital step without his parliament; and therefore, at present, we are under no danger on his side. But I cannot say this of the people; they are inflamed by designing or enthusiastical republicans; they avowedly break the laws; they glory in doing it; they take up arms against the king and parliament; they commit outrages. Therefore all our danger is, at present, from king mob; and this danger is so much the greater, as some dissenters among us, who were quiet in the late reign, and thought themselves happy under the protection of the toleration act, grow restless, begin openly to countenance their dissatisfied brethren in America, and make it a point of conscience to foment divisions in the kingdom. Whether they do it merely from a brotherly regard to the colonists, who chiefly worship God according to the dissenting plan, or whether they hope that a revolution on the continent would be naturally productive of a revolution in England; that a revolution in the state here. would draw after it a revolution in the Church; and that, if the Church of England were once shaken, the dissenting Churches among us might raise themselves upon her ruins; whether, I say, there is something of this under the cry of slavery and robbery, which you set up, is a question, which, I said,

in the preceding editions, you could determine far better than I: but now I recall it; because, though I may consider that part of the controversy in that unfavourable light as a politician; yet, as a Christian, I ought to think and hope the best.

It is the custom of most controvertists to raise a variety of objections against the system of their opponents, while they overlook the greatest difficulties which attend their own system. Lest you should think, sir, that I follow this disingenuous method, I will now answer the grand question which you propose to Mr. Wesley: “If every man who is taxed without his consent is not a slave, wherein consists the difference between slavery and liberty?”

If you mean by a slave one who is bought with money, as the negroes are by the colonists, your question is unwise; for every body knows that such slaves, having nothing at all, can never be taxed. When they work, their masters receive the wages; when they bear children, they bear them for their masters: their own body is the property of another.-Since, therefore, they have no property, to talk of their being taxed with, or without their consent, is absurd.

But if, by a slave, you mean a subject oppressed by a tyrannical sovereign: I reply, that the difference between such slaves and the subjects of Great Britain, who have no share in the legislature, is prodigious. A slave, in this sense of the word, is not only taxed as happy subjects are, but he is taxed without proportion, without judgment, and without mercy. The taxes laid on him are so many, and so heavy, that he can hardly bear the burden, supposing he does not quite sink under it. If he dissent from the established mode of worship, he cannot serve God according to his conscience, without being disturbed and insulted by a profane populace, who are countenanced and encouraged by persecuting magistrates. Nay, it is well if he be not prosecuted, fined, imprisoned, or put to death. If he be committed to jail, he can never be bailed out on any occasion. If he be sent to prison ever so unjustly, he can recover no damages for false imprisonment; if he be wronged of his property, in a variety of cases, at the peril of his life, he dares not complain. If he be maliciously robbed of his good name, he cannot recover it by law, together with suitable damages. If his bed be defiled, he can get no satisfaction for that capital injury. His house can be forcibly entered into at any time; he is obliged to work so long for the sovereign gratis, that he cannot mind his own business; if he be wantonly struck by a great man, there is no law for him, and the wisest thing which he can do is to say nothing; if he be murdered, little or no notice is taken of it; a plebeian assassin can easily make his escape, and nobody dares prosecute a noble murderer. If he freely speak his mind, either upon religious subjects, or political affairs, he is summoned before an ecclesiastical and civil inquisitor; and it is well if he escape with the reprimand, which a chief magistrate in a mild republic gave to a gentleman of my acquaintance, who modestly hinted at a method of redressing an avowed grievance: “Who has appointed you, sir, a teacher of your sovereigns? They know their business: learn to know your own.” But what is worst of all, if he be capitally accused, his accusers are perhaps his judge and jury. He is put in a dungeon, without knowing

why; his witnesses are not suffered to speak for him; he is kept so long on the rack, that he is perhaps obliged to turn false accuser against himself.-He is tried secretly. His fortune and life lie, possibly, at the mercy of two or three judges only. Nay, he may fall a sacrifice to the prejudice, caprice, envy, hatred, or hurry of one single man. Being tried by his peers, or by twelve of his fellow citizens, is an invaluable blessing, of which he has not the least idea.

Not so the happy subjects of Great Britain. Whether they have a freehold or not, they all enjoy this advantage: and, if the law be put in force, they are partakers of all the branches of civil and religious liberty, which are opposed to the above described branches of hard vassalage.-And (what is most wonderful) the poor enjoy these blessings as well as the rich-the plebeian shares them with the nobleman. Hence it is, that the subjects of Great Britain are the freest of all the men who live under any civil government in the world. And hence it appears, that when you assert there is no difference between having no share in legislation, and being an absolute slave, you display an amazing unacquaintedness with the civil governments of Europe; you betray an astonishing want of gratitude to God and the sovereign, for the civil and religious liberty which we enjoy; and you verify the observation of an ingenious foreigner, who has lately written upon the British constitution, and who intimates, the blessings of liberty are so familiar to the English, that they neither relish nor know them. They may, in this respect, be compared to the children of princes, who, being born and educated in a palace, are so accustomed to its elegance and grandeur, and so unacquainted with the sordidness of cottages, and the gloominess of dungeons, that they never heighten their happiness, and excite their gratitude, by comparing the blessings they enjoy with the hardships that others endure.

Just as this comparison may be with respect to you, sir, it can however hardly suit the case of many of the colonists. Some of them, alas! know too well what tyranny and cruel servitude are. When poor, naked, bleeding slaves, ready to expire under the repeated strokes of a cutting whip, are obliged to keep their groans, and stifle their sighs, for fear of raising the cruelty of their tyrants to a higher pitch of fierceness;-when this is the case, I say, of all the men upon earth, it least becomes the hard masters-the domestic sovereigns of these poor creatures, to complain of the mild government they are under, and to scream Tyranny! slavery! robbery! murder! And why? Truly because some of them are enjoined to pay taxes, about thirty times lighter than those which millions of their fellow subjects, who have no votes, cheerfully pay in England: because the parliament will not suffer them to destroy, with impunity, the property of our merchants; and because the king will not have the collectors of the public revenue to be in continual danger of being murdered among them. O partiality, how high is thy glaring throne; and how many are thy warm votaries in America, and thy sanguine advocates in England!

I shall esteem myself happy, sir, if this check to licentiousness recommend itself to your conscience as a Protestant, and to your candour as a well wisher to the cause of true liberty. Think not the plainness, with which I have addressed you, springs

from malice or disrespect. Though I have bluntly attacked your errors, I sincerely love and honour you as an enemy to tyranny, and a (mistaken) asserter of British liberty.-Therefore, while I blame your dangerous performance, I gladly do justice to your good meaning; and I cordially join you, where you express a loyal, ardent wish, that a speedy reconciliation may take place between us and our colonies, upon an honourable, constitutional basis, and that our beloved sovereign may long live to sway the sceptre over a free people; provided you do not mean by a “free people,” a tumultuous, mobbing people, making liberty to consist in refusing to pay taxes, and in giving to the Scriptural yoke of civil government the opprobrious name of “abject slavery.”

Should you accuse me, sir, as you do Mr. Wesley, of “inflaming the minds of the people here against our American brethren;” you will do me as much injustice as you do to my friend. Our only design is to promote a proper obedience to those parts of the Gospel of peace, which enjoin us a due subjection to our superiors; and to enforce the articles of religion which the last reformers drew up, to keep overdoing Protestants from the enthusiasm of wild republicans. Far from being prejudiced against the colonists, I feel a deep concern for their spiritual and temporal welfare. Yea, such is my partiality to them, and my fear of a greater effusion of the blood of Britons, and sons of Britons, that I even wish the government would make the easy yoke of which they causelessly complain easier still, by granting them some privileges, denied not only to millions of Britons here, but also to the members of parliament, and to the king's own brothers, who, while they are out of England, are all taxed without being consulted. I humbly wish that our legislators would condescend to talk with the colonists about the taxes which suit their country and circumstances best. And as British senators know how to pity the prejudices of mankind, especially the prejudices of sons of Britons, with respect to the precious blessing of liberty; I wish that the king and parliament would extend their greatest mercy to subjects who have been hurried out of the way of loyalty chiefly by their inattention to the blessings which they enjoy, and by the delusive hopes, with which, it is to be feared, some of our own countrymen have rashly flattered, and artfully seduced them. In a word, I ardently wish that, upon the return of the colonists to their duty, the government would bind them to their mother country, both by the silken cords of pardoning love, and by the silver bands of some prerogatives, which may convince them that Great Britain considers them not only as subjects, but also as younger brothers.

Such kindness, together with the scourge of a civil war, which they so severely feel already, would probably attach them to the parent state for ever. Should this be the case, how great will be the joy of those who properly value the blessings of peace and order! And how full the disappointment of the demon of discord, who envies us the singular blessings which we enjoy! Great Britain and America will then become the fixed, the unrivalled seats of truth, arts, sciences, and commerce. They will collect the treasures of the old and new world. They will play into each others hands the wealth of the universe. And, joined together, they will be more than a match for

their combined enemies. So shall genuine Protestantism, sober liberty, uninterrupted peace, and growing prosperity, conspire to crown the richest island, and finest continent in the world. Happy, for ever happy will they be, if their riches and grandeur do not corrupt and intoxicate them: and if civil and religious phrenzy never hinder them more from paying an humble regard to our Lord's important precept, “Render to Cesar the things which are Cesar's, and unto God the things which are God’s.” That you, sir, I, and all our fellow labourers in the Gospel, may faithfully practise, and zealously preach this neglected part of the doctrine of Christ; that our most sanguine patriotism may always be tempered by a due sense of what we owe to our governors; and that our warmest loyalty may always be attended with a proper consciousness of what we owe to God, to our fellow citizens, and to posterity, are the Christian, constitutional prayers which I ardently offer to the King of kings, and in which I invite you to join, reverend sir, your affectionate brother, and obedient servant,

J. F

ENDNOTES

[1 Mr. Fletcher added in a parenthesis here “except Ireland, which being a kingdom by itself, and no English colony, coins its own money, and has its peculiar parliament.” As Ireland is now incorporated with Great Britain in one empire, and sends representatives to the British parliament, that clause is here omitted.]

[2 N. B. This was written in the latter end of the year 1775, or in the beginning of the year 1776.]

[3 This word, according to its Greek etymology, means Rebaptizers. Mr. Evans, and the Protestants of his denomination, are called by this name, because their grand peculiarity is to *rebaptize* those who were baptized in their infancy. No Church-of-England man can enter their Church, but at the door of *rebaptization*. Nor can he go through that door without renouncing his former baptism and all his communions. Dreadful abjuration! Hence it is that too many of those who have taken that rash step, are as zealous for rebaptization as the Christians who have renounced their baptism for Turkish ablutions, are zealous for their new washings. They exceed all others in zeal for making proselytes. I do not say this to prejudice the reader against the Anabaptists: on the contrary I could have him think, as I do, that many of them are very good people, and that most of them mean well; and I believe this is the case with my opponent.]

[4 Did Cromwell absolutely wrong them when he said this? Is it not probable that some of them leaned to the levelling principles of the head strong Anabaptists? Was it not when such Anabaptists were most in favour, that England saw a Church without bishops, a parliament without lords, and a king without a head? And were not these some important steps taken toward levelling Anabaptistry; though Cromwell’s ambition prevented republicans and levellers from proceeding any farther, as Baxter soon observes? The reader will be glad to see what Lord Clarendon says of the levelling agitators:-

“The agitators would not be so dismissed from state affairs, of which they had so pleasant a relish, &c; and therefore, when they were admitted no more to consultations with their officers, they continued their meetings without them and thought there was as great need to reform their officers, as any part of the Church or state. They entered into new associations, and made many propositions to their officers, and to the parliament, to introduce an equality into all conditions and a party among all men; from whence they had the appellation of levellers, which appeared a great party. They did not only meet against the express commands of their officers,

but drew very considerable parties of the army to rendezvous, without the order or privity of their superiors; and there persuaded them to enter into such engagements as would in a short time have dissolved the government of the army, &c. The suppression of this license put Cromwell to the expense of all his cunning, dexterity, and courage; so that after he had cajoled the parliament, as if the preservation of their authority had been all he cared for, &c, and had sent some false brothers to comply in the counsels of the conspirators by that means having notice of their rendezvous, he was unexpectedly found with an ordinary guard at those meetings; and with a marvellous vivacity, having asked some questions of those whom he observed most active, and receiving insolent answers, he knocked two or three of them on the head with his own hand, and then charged the rest with his troop, and took such a number of theirs as he thought fit; whereof he presently caused some of them to be hanged, and sent others to London to a more formal trial. By two or three such encounters, [of which that at Burford, mentioned by Baxter, seems to have been one,] for the obstinacy continued long, he totally subdued that spirit in the army, though it continued and increased very much in the kingdom; and if it had not been encountered at that time, with that rough and brisk spirit of Cromwell, it would presently have produced all imaginable confusion in the parliament, army, and kingdom (*History of the Reb*. book x.)]

[5 The servants of God may sometimes be allowed to make use of strong metaphors. David speaks of "the BEASTS of the people, who refuse to bring pieces of silver," or to pay taxes to their lawful sovereign. And St. Paul says, that he "fought with BEASTS at Ephesus," because he narrowly escaped being torn in pieces lay the mob there. If the reader would see an admirable picture of the "beasts," with which the apostle fought, and to which our overdoing patriots endeavour to "give the power," I do not refer him so much to Rev. xvii. 14, as to Acts xix. 28, &c, where he will find a masterly description of a mob.]

[6 It is not in London and Boston only, that this tyrannical spirit breaks out. It probably makes its appearance in most American cities. Philadelphia is the seat of religious liberty and brotherly love no more. Persecuting tyranny and fierce insolence openly patrol in the once free and peaceful city. One of my parishioners, who went to settle there, sends his friends word that the day on which a fast was kept to obtain success upon the arms of the provincials, his windows were broken by the mob, because his religious principles did not permit him to fast on such an occasion, and because he quietly taught his scholars to read the Scriptures. A vociferous mob has no ears, though it has arms and tongues more than enough: or else the pacific sufferer might have made his godly persecutors ashamed of their devotions, by setting his scholars to read Isaiah lviii. 4, "Behold ye fast for strife and debate; and to smite with the fist of wickedness; ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast as I have chosen?" This text might have suited the solemnity, unless the following had been judged still more proper:-"Rebuke the company of the spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people that delight

in war," Psalm lxviii. 30. My late parishioner was not the only one who was injured on that memorable day. Among others, a quiet Friend, who ventured to open his china shop, is said to have had his goods broken by the new king for this offence, to the amount of many pounds.]

AMERICAN PATRIOTISM

FARTHER CONFRONTED WITH

REASON, SCRIPTURE, AND THE CONSTITUTION:

BEING

OBSERVATIONS ON THE DANGEROUS POLITICS

TAUGHT BY THE

REV. MR. EVANS M. A., AND THE REV. DR. PRICE.

WITH

A SCRIPTURAL PLEA

FOR THE

REVOLTED COLONIES.

———

BY J. FLETCHER, VICAR OF MADELEY, SALOP

———

"Skill in politics contributeth not a little to the understanding of divinity. I learned more from Mr. *Lawson* than from any divine: especially his instigating me to the study of *politics*, in which he much lamented the ignorance of divines, did prove a singular benefit to me." (*Rev. Mr. R. Baxter's Life*, pp. 107, 108.)

PREFACE TO AMERICAN PATRIOTISM.

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What distinguishes this pamphlet from those which have been written on the same subject-Nothing but Scripture and reason can make the colonies properly submit to Great Britain.

THE author of these letters considers the American controversy chiefly in a *religious* light, which gives him an opportunity of making some remarks, that have probably escaped the attention of other writers on this subject. The duty of paying taxes to the protective power is so strongly connected with Christianity, that the colonists must practically give up the Scriptures, or submit to the reasonable demands of the British legislature. It is to be wished that we had made use of the Bible in this controversy. For, how much soever that venerable book is disregarded by some of our great men, the bulk of the Americans, and our religious patriots in England, dare not despise it. Mr. Evans, for one, speaking of the doctrine defended in these sheets, says, "Should you indeed prove it to be a SCRIPTURE doctrine, &c, I am not afraid to promise you the most absolute submission to it as a Christian. The authority of SCRIPTURE I revere above every other." The contested doctrine is here defended by Scripture against Mr. Evans; and if he stand to his "promise," we may hope soon to see him give the colonists an example of due "submission."

When a great empire is divided against itself: when a powerful mother country and a number of strong colonies, draw up all their forces to encounter each other in the field: when the two contending powers are subdivided into a warm majority and a heated minority, ready to begin a second intestine war; and when every individual is concerned as an actor, sufferer, or spectator, in the bloody tragedy which is acted; it is natural for all lovers of their country to ask, How can the dreadful controversy be ended? Is it by the dictates of Scripture and reason, or by the force of arms?

If the author is not mistaken, arms [though useful in their place] will never properly end the contest. Should we overpower the American colonies, they will remain unconvinced. Far from being reconciled to their mother country, they will still look upon her as an imperious step-mother, who adds tyranny to oppression, and murder to robbery. Nor will they submit to her any longer than the force, which has subdued them, shall continue to press and keep them down. And what shall we gain by this method, but perplexity, danger, and continual alarm? The condition of the colonists will be as wretched as that of indignant prisoners, who are under a military guard: and our state will be as uncomfortable as that of a jailer, who watches over a numerous body of desperate captives, intent upon making their escape at the hazard of their lives. Under God, far more may then be expected, in the issue, from Scripture

and reason than from arms. Beasts and savages can be conquered by fire and sword; but it is the glory of men and Christians to be subdued by argument and Scripture. Force may indeed bend the body, but truth alone properly bends the mind. While our armies prepare to engage the majority in America with the dreadful implements of war, it will not therefore be amiss to engage the ecclesiastical minority in England with the harmless implements of controversy. On some occasions, one pen may do more execution than a battery of cannon: a page of well-applied Scripture may be of more extensive use than a field of battle: and drops of ink may have a greater effect than streams of blood. If a broadside can sink a man of war and send a thousand men to the bottom, a good argument can do far more; for it can sink a prejudice, which fits out a hundred ships, and arms, it may be, fifty thousand men. How inferior then is the spear of Mars to the sword of the Spirit! And how justly did Solomon say, "A wise man is strong;" especially if he is mighty in the Scriptures, which can make us wise to salvation!

The author dares not flatter himself to have the knowledge of logic and divinity, which are requisite to do his subject the justice it deserves: but having for some years opposed false orthodoxy, he may have acquired some little skill to oppose false patriotism; and having defended evangelical obedience to God, against the indirect attacks of some ministers of the Church of England, he humbly hopes that he may step forth a second time, and defend also constitutional obedience to the KING, against the indirect attacks of some ministers who dissent from the established Church. Those whom he encounters in these sheets, are the leading, ecclesiastical patriots of the two greatest cities in the kingdom; Mr. Evans being the champion of the minority in Bristol, as Dr. Price is in London.

The capital arguments of these two gentlemen are here brought to a triple test, against which they cannot decently object. And, if the author's execution keeps pace with his design, their politics are proved to be contrary to reason, Scripture, and the constitution. Should his proofs be found solid, and the public vouchsafe to regard them, the boisterous patriotism, which has of late disturbed our peace, will give place to sober and genuine patriotism; the political mistake which produces our divisions, will be plucked up by the roots; the minds of our uneasy fellow subjects will be calmed; our bloody contest for supremacy will give place to a sweet debate between parental love and filial duty: parental love will overcome the colonies with benign, lenient, and endearing offers of pardon and peace; while filial duty will disarm the mother country by kind and grateful offers of manly submission.

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AMERICAN PATRIOTISM, &c.

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To the Rev. Mr. Evans.

LETTER I.

The arguments by which Mr. Evans tries to support his American politics, are shown to be contrary, I. To sound reason. II. rob plain Scripture. And, III. To the British constitution.

REVEREND SIR,-The interests of truth are often as much promoted by the inconclusiveness of the arguments with which she is attacked, as by the force of the reasons with which she is defended. If my Vindication of the Calm Address has thrown some light upon the American controversy, your Reply, sir, in the issue, may possibly throw much more. Supposing that plain truth can be compared to a good steel, and keen error to a sharp flint, I venture to say, that the more any one strikes the steel with such a flints the more will the fragments of the broken stone show the superior solidity of the impugned metal; and the more easily will sparks be collected to light the bright candle of truth. The public will judge which arguments, yours or mine, will serve the cause of truth, by flying to pieces in the controversial collision.

Desirous to share the blessings which our pacific Lord promises to the “meek” and the “peace makers,” I shall, in these sheets, neither throw oil upon the flame of the American revolt, nor blow up the coals of indignations which glow in the breasts of our insulted governors. Whatever my performance and success may be, moderation and reconciling truth are my aim: I can assure you, sir, that my utmost ambition is to draw the line between unruly patriotism and servile subjection, in such a manner as to give you, and our readers, an equal detestation of both these unconstitutional extremes.

After throwing away all your first letter upon a useless [1] question, and beginning the second with an idle [2] report, you step into the tribunal of the reviewers, and condemn my Vindication before you have refuted one of my arguments. As if you were both judge and jury, without producing one true witness, page 24, you authoritatively say, “Instead of argument, I meet with nothing but declamation; instead of precision, artful colouring; instead of proof, presumption; instead of consistency, contradiction; instead of reasoning, a string of sophistries.”

To support this precipitate sentence, you represent me as saying things which I never said. Thus, page 25, you write: “One while you tell us that our constitution

guards our properties, &c, against the tyranny of unjust, arbitrary, or cruel monarchs; then you preach up, with great solemnity, &c, that their subjects have no more right to resist, than children or scholars have a right to take away paternal or magisterial authority." I desire, sir, you would inform me where I advance such a doctrine. Far from "preaching it with great solemnity," I abhor and detest it. If a Nebuchadnezzar commanded me to worship his golden image, I would (God being my helper) resist him as resolutely as did Shadrach. And suppose the king and parliament were to lay a tax upon me, in order to raise money for the purchasing of poison, wherewith to destroy my fellow subjects, I would resist them, and absolutely refuse to pay such a tax.

When you have made my doctrine odious, by lending me principles which I never advanced, or drawing consequences which have not the least connection with my sentiments, you prejudice the public against my book, by insinuating that I contradict myself, where it is plain I do not. Thus you say, page 26: "In one letter you tell us the colonists are on a level with Britons in general; in another, that they were never on a level with England." This last sentence I spake of the colonies, as independent legislatures, and not of the colonists: and both sentences in their place are perfectly consistent. For, although not one of the *colonies* was ever on a level with England (an *independent kingdom*) with respect to supreme dominion; yet all the *colonists* are on a level with Britons in general, with respect to several particulars enumerated just before, as appears by the whole argument, which (Vind. p. 450) runs, thus: "The mother country and the Parliament house are as open to them [the colonists] as to any free born Englishman: they may purchase freeholds; they may be made burgesses of corporate towns; they may be chosen members of the house of commons, and some of them, if I mistake not, sit already there. The colonists are then on a level, not only with [absent] Britons in general, but with all our members of Parliament who are abroad." Had you, sir, quoted any words in this manner, your readers would have seen that there is something in my letters beside contradiction and sophistry; but it is more easy to shuffle the cards, than to win the game.

Permit me, sir, to produce another instance of your polemical skill. You say, page 24: "Your reasoning upon the quotation I made from the very learned Judge Blackstone, is equally conclusive, &c. In a free state, (says Judge Blackstone,) every man who is supposed a free agent, ought to be in some measure his own governor; and therefore a branch, at least, of the legislative power should reside in the whole body of the people. You reply: Your scheme drives at putting the legislative power into every body's hands." No, sir, this is not my reply, but only a just inference which I naturally drew from my solid answer. My reply (Vind. p. 446) runs thus: "But who are the whole body of the people? According to Judge Blackstone, every free agent. Then the argument proves too much; for are not women free agents? Yea, and poor, as well as rich men?" This, and this only; I advance as a reply to Judge Blackstone's argument. I cannot, therefore, help being surprised at your mistake. You keep my real answer to your argument out of sight; you render me ridiculous by producing as my answer, what is not my answer at all; and, before you conclude, you make me amends

for this piece of patriotic liberty, by calling me “one of the most unmeaning and unfair controvertists.” The reader's patience would fail were I minutely to describe the logical stratagems of this sort by which you support your cause, which I confess stands in need of all manner of props.

However, in your second letter you come to the question, which is, Whether the colonists, as good men, good Christians, or good subjects, are bound to pay moderate, proportionable taxes, for the benefit of the whole British empire, when such taxes are legally laid upon them by the supreme, protective power, that is, by the three branches of the British legislature.

In my Vindication of the Calm Address, I have produced the arguments which induce me to believe that the doctrine of such taxation is rational, Scriptural, and constitutional: and in your Reply you attempt to prove that it is contrary to reason, Scripture, and the constitution. Let us see how your attempt is carried on, and,

FIRST, How you disprove the reasonableness of the taxation I contend for.

Page 27, you say that you do not deny “the necessity and propriety of subjects paying taxes.” But in not denying this, sir, do you not indirectly give up the point? Do you not grant that, as the colonists are not protected by the king alone, but by the whole legislative power of Great Britain, they are not under the jurisdiction of the king alone, but of all the British legislature? Now, if they are not the subjects of the king, as unconnected with the British parliament, but as constitutionally connected with that high court, which supplies him with proper subsidies to protect his American dominions, it is evident that they owe taxes to the king and the British parliament, for you yourself acknowledge “the necessity of subjects paying taxes” to the supreme power which protects them. But which tax have they, of late, consented to pay? Has it been a tax upon tea, or upon stamped paper?

Should you reply that they have offered to pay taxes to the king and their provincial assemblies, I reply, that this is not paying capital tribute to whom capital tribute is due: for capital tribute is due to the capital protective power; and the capital power that protects the colonists is not the king and the regency of Hanover, nor the king and the Irish parliament, much less the king and a provincial assembly; but the king and the British parliament. Had the Americans got their wealth under the protection of the Irish; had the Hanoverian fleets kept off the Spanish ships from the American coasts; or had squadrons of American men of war beat off the French fleets, I would not hesitate a moment to affirm, that the colonists ought to pay proportionable taxes to the king and the Irish parliament; to the elector and regency of Hanover, or to the king of British America and the American assemblies. But when all this has been done for the colonists by the king and the British parliament, I confess to you, sir, that setting aside the consideration of the love and duty which colonies owe to their mother country, I cannot see what law of gratitude, equity, and

justice, the colonists can plead to refuse paying the king and the British parliament moderate and proportionable taxes.

Page 36, you indirectly appeal to the case of “the patriots of Charles’ days,” who refused to pay the tax called ship money: but their cause was far better than that of the Americans. The ship money was demanded by the king alone; but the king alone is not the supreme legislative power that protects the subjects of Great Britain, because he can make no laws, and of consequence raise no taxes, without the concurrence of the parliament. The patriots of the last century were not then absolutely bound either by the law of God, or the law of the land, to pay, a tax which had not the sanction of the legislative power; a money bill passed by the king alone being no law at all, according to the British constitution. But a proportionable money bill, as the stamp act, a bill passed by the complete legislative power of Great Britain, is every way binding in all the dominions of Great Britain. Whoever resists such a law breaks off with the legislative power, affects independence, and commences a petty sovereign.

I have said that a rightful “sovereign has a right to live by his noble business;” and because I have observed, that in England the sovereign (i.e. the legislative and protective power) is the king and his parliament, you suppose I have poured shame upon the cause I defend. “So, &c, (say you, page 25,) a member of parliament, instead of vacating his seat, ought to have a palace provided for him, upon his becoming a member of the legislature.” No, sir; your inference has no connection with my doctrine. If you had said that every member of parliament, while he attends the parliament, has a right to a public maintenance suitable to his share in the legislature, you would have said what I mean, and what no unprejudiced person will deny. If the king and parliament ordered that all the attending members shall be honourably entertained during the session, at the expense of the public; and that a proper sum shall be annually raised to discharge this expense; what Briton would be so niggardly, ungrateful, and unjust, as to find fault with such a statute? Was our Lord mistaken when he said, “The labourer is worthy of his hire?”' If the speaker, who is the principal member of the house of commons, enjoys, as speaker, an income of some thousand pounds a year, does he not “live by his business?” Might not all the other members do the same in due proportion? When they exempt themselves and their friends from paying the tax which we call postage, do they not show that the legislature have pecuniary rights which other Britons have not? And if their generosity prevents their using those self evident rights, should we not extol their disinterestedness, rather than pour contempt upon their reasonable and constitutional prerogative?

Unable to invalidate my doctrine by any just argument, you have recourse to a polemical stratagem which will do your cause no credit. To render the politics I defend odious to your readers, you insinuate, that, upon my principles, the sovereign “is entitled to just what he pleases, and may take it with or without consent, whenever he thinks proper.” This doctrine, which you impute to me, page 27, has no

more connection with my system, than darkness with the rising sun. I abhor it as well as you, sir; being fully persuaded that legislative power is to be used for good, and not for evil; for protection, and not for tyranny. If the king and parliament had laid disproportionable and unreasonable taxes upon our American fellow subjects, I would no more have taken the pen in defence of such taxation, than I would take it in vindication of robbery.

Nor do my appeals to the propriety of giving the lawyers and physicians whom we employ the proper fees they demand of us, prove that I hold the doctrine of despotism; for as I should be a knave if I refused to give a gentleman of the faculty a reasonable fee for his attendance; so should I be a fool if I supposed that he “is entitled to just what he pleases.” I only assert that, as a good man will find a medium between dishonesty and folly, with respect to the fees due to his physician and lawyer; so a candid colonist will find a middle way between the injustice of the patriots, who refuse moderate taxes to the legislative power that protects them, and between the slavish tameness of the poltroons, who suffer a rapacious tyrant to grind their faces and suck their blood. Nevertheless, I dare affirm, that as we trust, to a certain degree, a lawyer’s conscience, an apothecary's discretion, and a physician's candour, with respect to their bills and fees; we may also trust, to a certain degree, the discretion of our governors with respect to their money bills and taxes. And, therefore, nothing can be more contrary to good manners, loyalty, reason, and conscience, than to represent the sovereign who protects the colonists as a robber and a tyrant, for laying a moderate tax upon them, in order lo discharge the national debt, and the daily expenses of government.

You indeed insinuate that the case is not parallel, because we employ our physicians and lawyers “voluntarily.” But have not the colonists “voluntarily” reaped for a hundred years the benefit of protection from the king and parliament? And, supposing they can now support themselves without British protection; yet are they not guilty of injustice if they now refuse to pay proportionable taxes? What would you think of my honesty, if the following case were matter of fact? I “voluntarily” employ a lawyer for ten years to recover an estate. When I have gained my ends, he demands fees, which, on account of my poverty, he forbore doing before. I storm on the occasion; I run up and down, screaming, Robbery! tyranny! And at last I turn my back upon him with such a speech as this: “Sir, I can do without you now; and as I am not willing to employ you any more, you have no right to demand fees of me as your due. I am a free man, and you shall not treat me as an abject slave, by insisting on fees with or without my consent.” If I put off my industrious lawyer with this American plea, would not your moral feelings brand me as a man devoid of conscience and honour?

I grant, however, that the case between the taxes of the sovereign, and the fees of a lawyer, is not exactly similar: but if the parallel fails, it is in a point which does your cause no service. For although I am perfectly at liberty to dismiss my honest lawyer as soon as I please, when I have paid him his reasonable fees: I cannot cast off

the authority of my rightful sovereign as soon as I please, when I have paid his reasonable taxes; and I prove it by the following reasons. (1.) I may possibly live fifty years without going to law, but I cannot safely live one day in society without being protected. (2.) As an unconnected individual, I may neglect the care of my property as I please; and if a man unjustly demands my cloak, I may let him have my coat also: but, as a man joined with others in civil society, I am a debtor to all the society with which I am connected: I must defend my property as a part of the common stock; and, of consequence, I must pay taxes, and help to support the sovereign, who protects and guards the whole society. Hence it is, that those who live in the centre of the kingdom pay as much toward the fleet as those that live on the sea coast; though they are not half so much exposed to the depredations of invaders and pirates. (3.) The laws of God and of the land bind me to obey my rightful sovereign rather than another king, in all things which are just and reasonable: but none of these laws bind me to employ one lawyer rather than another, under the fearful penalties due to rebellion and high treason. If the American patriots considered this, would they not blush to insinuate, that we may change our sovereigns as we do our tradesmen; and that, as the colonists no longer demand the protection of Great Britain, the British legislature has no longer any right to demand taxes of them? Who could sufficiently wonder at the insolence and injustice of the following plea, which I suppose to be urged by Yorkshire non-voters? "Neither we, nor our county, are represented in parliament according to our wishes. We are not afraid of an invasion. Yorkshire is large and populous. We can protect ourselves: and therefore we refuse to pay any thing toward the protection of the British dominions. What we have is absolutely our own: nor will we be robbed by any body; no, not by the legislature. For as we are desirous that the sovereign would keep his protection to himself; so we are determined to keep our money to ourselves." I question, sir, whether, prejudiced as you are in favour of the American patriots, you would not be one of the first to exclaim against such Yorkshire patriots.

Nor do you weaken my argument taken from the proper fees due to lawyers, by intimating that such fees are "lawful, accustomed fees," and that "in England the sovereign has no power to recover a debt even for himself, but according to law." Has it not been in all ages, and in all parts of the world, the "custom" of civilized nations to pay taxes to the protective power they are under? Is it not the "custom" of all just sovereigns, to lay those taxes according to the wants and emergencies of the government? When such taxes are properly laid by the supreme power which makes and executes every law, are they not "lawful?" Is it not "according to law," that the king and parliament laid a little tax upon our American fellow subjects? And are there no statutes enjoining that the goods of perverse subjects, who refuse to pay lawful and reasonable taxes, shall be distrained; and that, if such subjects oppose the distraint, they shall be farther proceeded against according to law; especially if, instead of paying taxes, they break into ships, and tyrannically destroy the property of their fellow subjects?

If these observations overthrow your reply to the *rational* arguments, by which I have supported the doctrine of taxation laid down in the Calm Address; I may consider,

SECONDLY, How you answer my SCRIPTURAL arguments, on which, as a *Christian*, I lay the *greatest* stress.

Page 52, you say, "The golden rule of Scripture, both for governors and governed, is this: 'As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.' Now I presume the good people of England would not be willing that the Americans, in their assemblies, should tax English property here; and why should we therefore desire, in our parliament, to tax American property there?"

I reply, The case is not similar. The Americans are *protected*, and the British legislature is the *protecting* power. The protected owe taxes to their protectors, and not the protectors to the protected. You apply "the golden rule of Scripture" to the case in hand, as unfortunately as I should do, if I said that this rule entitles my servant to command me, because I have a right to command him; and that I may justly demand a fee of the physician who attends me, because he justly demands a fee of me for his attendance. Nay, if your argument be just, it proves that the king is bound to pay you taxes. You may go to his majesty and address him thus, according to your patriotic doctrine: "O king, the golden rule of Scripture, both for governors and governed, obliges thee to do to me as thou wouldst that I should do to thee. Now, thou wouldst that I should pay thee taxes, and, therefore, drop thy British partiality, commence an American patriot, and confess that thou oughtest to pay me taxes."

If the objection, which you draw from our Lord's golden rule, is trifling, may not that which you raise from his blessed example be affirmed to be deplorable? Our reformers say, in their HOMILY *against wilful rebellion*, part ii: "No example ought to be of more force with us, Christians, than the example of Christ our Master, who, though he was the Son of God, yet did always behave himself most reverently to such men as were in authority in the world in his time. He behaved not himself *rebelliously*; but openly did teach the Jews to pay tribute to the Roman emperor, though a foreign and a Pagan prince: yea, himself with his apostles paid tribute unto him." How different is your doctrine from that of those loyal champions of truth! That very example of our Lord's *loyalty*, which they so highly extol, you indirectly represent as an instance of weakness. How could he, say you, p. 54, "avoid paying the tribute demanded of him?" So it seems that our Lord paid tribute because he could not avoid paying it! He did it through necessity! He broke his own commandments delivered by St. Peter and St. Paul: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: ye must be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake." Fear of wrath, and human prudence, were the slavish motives of his loyal action! Nay, you intimate, p. 55, that he thought it lawful to pay tribute to Cesar, only in the same sense in which it is "lawful to give a highwayman our

money," and, p. 54, you roundly assert that such a [forced] submission as this is all the submission our Lord's example can be supposed in the least to countenance."

If you could prove this assertion, sir, the brightness of our Lord's moral character would suffer a total eclipse. For if "what a man has is absolutely his own," and if the Roman emperor had not, as protector of the Jews, a reasonable claim to their tribute money, did not our Lord prevaricate, and was not an untruth found in his mouth, when he said to the Jews who showed him the tribute money, "Render, therefore, to Cesar the things which are Cesar's?" In what sense could he say that this money was Cesar's, if Cesar had no more right to it than a highwayman? And with what moral propriety could he bid the Jews to render such money to Cesar as a part of Cesar's property?

This is not all: the manner in which our Lord enforced paying taxes to Tiberius, shows that he rested this branch of our duty to our neighbour upon the very same authority on which he rested our obedience to God himself. To be convinced of it, we need only consider his evangelical charge, "Render, therefore, to Cesar the things which are Cesar's, and to God the things which are God's." The manner in which the two pasts of this injunction are connected, demonstrates that we must pay taxes to the civil power by which we are protected, as conscientiously as we pay adoration to the Divine power by which we exist. But, according to your patristic doctrine, our Lord's solemn precept degenerates into a charge as absurd and profane as the following: "Your money is absolutely your own; render it therefore to Cesar, or to a highwayman, for it is his if he demands it; nor forget, in like manner, to render your all to God; for it is his, as your money is a highwayman's." What monstrous doctrines does your patriotism couple together! *Geminantur tigribus agni*! And how hard is it to do justice to Scripture, when we directly or indirectly part these inseparable precepts, "Fear God and honour the king," that is, the protective power: honour him with a reasonable part of thy substance, as well as by thy respectful behaviour."

Let us see if you are more successful in your attempt to overthrow what you call my "grand plea from Scripture," taken from Rom. xiii. St. Paul there proves, by various reasons, that taxes are due to the higher powers that protect us. Such powers are ordained of God: resisting them, when they lay reasonable taxes upon us, is "resisting the ordinance of God:" those who resist, in such a case, shall receive to themselves damnation: "they are God's ministers to us for good;" their grand business being to protect us in the way of virtue, and to curb or punish us in the way of vice: and they attend continually to do this very thing, that is, to our protection when we do well, and to our punishment when we break the laws. "Render, therefore, to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due," &c.

To set aside the force of this nervous comment of St. Paul upon the words of our Lord, "Render unto Cesar," &c, you tell us, p. 63, that "the apostle does not take upon him, in the least, to determine to whom tribute was due." But are you not

mistaken, sir? Does he not explicitly say to whom, when he mentions the higher powers that protect us? Now if the king and the British parliament be the higher powers that have hitherto protected the colonies, does not the apostle decide our controversy as much as if he said, Let the American colonies pay taxes to the king and parliament, who are the higher powers that have continually attended to the protection of the colonists when they did well, and now attend to the punishing of them because they do ill?

But you add also, “The apostle does not take upon him to determine what quantum of tribute might be due.” True: for he did not attend continually to the dangers of the state, and to the best means of averting them. He minded his own business, instead of reflecting upon the higher powers in the execution of theirs. He knew no more than you and I, what expense those powers might be at, to protect him and all his fellow subjects; though he could easily conceive that such expense was prodigious, since the “chief captain, Lysias,” employed once an army to rescue him from the charge of mobbing religionists; and protected him on another occasion, by granting him “a guard of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen,” Acts xxiii. 23, 27. Now as Paul did not know but myriads of his fellow subjects stood in need of such a guard as well as himself, and as he did not claim a place in the legislature *jure divino*, he did not pretend to determine the *quantum* of tribute necessary to maintain a sufficient protecting force, all over the Roman empire. But what has this to do with the question? Could not Paul make Christians understand that they must pay rent to their landlords, and taxes to the higher powers, without “determining the *quantum* of such rents and taxes? Must not a divine, who makes so frivolous an objection, be at a strange loss for arguments?

But you go on: p. 63, “The apostle only enjoins the conscientious payment of what was due, according to the nature of the government under which they lived.” True, sir, if by “the nature of the government under which we live,” you mean the reasonable demands of the legislative power which protects us. But if you mean by this phrase, as your scheme requires, that we are to pay taxes only according to the nice speculations of men, who cry up the constitution one hour, and decry it the next, if it does not suit their chimerical notions of equal representation, and their injudicious ideas of liberty; your doctrine is subversive of the apostle's loyal precept, opens the door to all manner of sedition, and leaves Christians at an utter uncertainty with respect to a capital branch of morality, the payment of taxes: and I prove my assertion by the following observations:-

1. The Jews were divided among themselves, with respect to the nature of the government they were under. While some of them said, We are under the Roman government, “we will have no king but Cesar;” the patriots said, “We were never in bondage to any man: we are freemen, we are under the Mosaic constitution: we owe no taxes to Cesar. To pay taxes to a heathen prince, is to give up the excellent constitution which our ancestors have transmitted to us.” Now, in full opposition to these plausible notions, our Lord bid the Jews pay taxes to Cesar, according to the

Roman government; another government this, than that which the patriots said they were under.

2. When Joseph and the Virgin Mary went to Bethlehem, to be taxed according to the decree of Cesar Augustus, the ablest politicians were at a loss to say what was precisely the nature of the Roman government, which the Jews and most other nations were then under; so many were the changes which it had undergone. At first it was a monarchy, by and by a republic, headed by consuls, and by and by a republic headed by a dictator. One time the supreme power had centered in a decemvirate; at another time a triumvirate had held the reins of administration. At that juncture the government wore the form of a monarchy again; but there was yet a considerable minority, who held the high republican principles of Cato, Brutus, and Cassius, the three great patriots of the day. This minority considered Cesar Augustus as a tyrant and a robber, to whom no taxes were due; asserting that the government, which the Romans were under, was entirely republican Now what must subjects do in such a case? Must they refuse to pay taxes to the power that actually protects them till the minority and the majority be perfectly agreed concerning "the nature of the government under which they live?" Or must they lose their time in trying to decide nice political questions, which puzzle the men who have studied civil law all their lives?

3. As it was next to impossible to determine, with exactness, what was the nature of the Roman government, so it requires more wisdom than millions of people in the British empire were masters of, precisely to determine the nature of the British government. The strong whigs are for the republican government, which obtained in the days of Cromwell and the rump. The strong tories contend for the high monarchical government which prevailed in the days of King James II. You and I, sir, are for the government which has obtained since the revolution. Nor are you satisfied even with this, for you speak of an avowed defect in the present constitution. You are for an equal representation of the people, that is, for an utter impossibility: and, p. 98, you inform us, "that till the eighth year of Henry VI, all the residents in a county were permitted to elect representatives without exception;" insinuating, that now "the representation here in England is imperfect," because that practice is disused. Now, sir, if this kind of representation be essential to the nature of the government we live under; and if we be not bound to pay taxes which are not laid according to the ancient form of the constitution; it is clear, that no man in Great Britain is bound to pay any tax at all; for no tax is laid, according to your levelling scheme of representation, and according to the nature of government, which obtained before Henry VI. Hence it appears, that as the pope's bulls formerly loosed Britons from the oaths of fidelity which they had taken to their sovereign, and by this mean raised and fomented rebellion, so your political refinements loose not only the colonies, but Great Britain also, from the obligation of paying taxes to the king and parliament. So true it is, that overdoing is the way of undoing; and that your politics tend to kindle the flame of rebellion in England, and to keep it up in America. I say your politics, because

candour obliges me to do justice to your good meaning, and to make a friendly distinction between your person and your opinions.

4. Should you say, that though it cannot be expected that every subject should study the nature of all the wheels and springs which compose that piece of political mechanism we call the constitution; yet every subject may choose his own representative, whose business it is to decide what taxes must be paid according to the constitution: I reply, that in most Christian governments the people are not allowed to choose any representatives, and therefore in such states every individual must, upon your plan, revolt, or personally study politics, that he may know how to pay taxes according to the nature of the constitution.

Things, I grant, are upon another footing in England. But this does not remove the difficulty; for (not to mention that perhaps nineteen subjects in England out of twenty cannot choose representatives) the members of parliament are as much divided among themselves as the Romans were in the days of Augustus, and the Jews in the days of Tiberius. The minority declare that the colonists are taxed against the nature of the constitution; while the majority assert that they are constitutionally taxed. Thus your patriotic comment absolutely unnerves St. Paul's doctrine of taxation, and leaves Christians in the greatest uncertainty with respect to the payment of taxes, which are the sinews of government. For if that payment be suspended on our notions of the nature of the government we are under, it might as well be suspended on the shape of the clouds, and the colour of a pigeon's neck.

Should you reply, that when our representatives do not agree, touching the nature of the government we live under, we must follow the majority; I answer, that the majority has decided the question. But what care some patriots for the majority? Does not Americanus openly oppose their decisions, and wishfully quote the misapplied saying, "*Dulce pro patria mori*;" just as if *mori pro pertinacia* were the same thing as *pro patria mori*? O, sir, if the former be sweet, the latter is the quintessence of bitterness; for the Scripture declares that wilful "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft," and that "stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

We have seen by what arguments you have endeavoured to prove that the doctrine of taxation espoused by the sovereign is irrational and unscriptural. Let us see,

THIRDLY, How you attempt to prove that it is unconstitutional.

Permit me, sir, to lay this doctrine before you with some capital improvements. The king and parliament believe that the constitution allows of indirect representation, and that among the several sorts of indirect representation, some are less, and others are more indirect. This sentiment is founded on the following facts: (1.) Though the constitution allows a woman, for instance, Queen Elizabeth, or Queen Anne, to be the head of the legislative power, yet no woman subject can have any share in the legislature; but all women are indirectly represented by the men, be

their rank ever so high, and their property ever so considerable. (2.) According to the constitution, all the voters, who actually choose parliament men, indirectly represent all the voters who do not, or cannot attend the election, whether the absent voters be at home or abroad, in jails or on sick beds. (3.) Though the number of the non-voters exceeds ten or twenty times the number of the voters, yet, according to the constitution, the voters indirectly represent the countless body of the non-voters, whether such non-voters be poor men of age, or rich men under age. (4.) The constitution allows that men of a certain profession shall be particularly represented, when men of other honourable professions are not. Thus the clergy are particularly represented, when the rich body of our merchants, the gentlemen of the law, those of the fleet, those of the army, and those of the faculty are not allowed a particular representation. This constitutional partiality does not stop here: the whole order of bishops is admitted into the house of lords; but not one seat in the house of commons is appropriated to the order of the priests. Such is the latitude which the constitution allows herself, when she decides concerning the right of representation! (5.) According to the same prerogative, she orders that the little county of Rutlandshire shall send as many members as the large county of Yorkshire, so that if Yorkshire be ten times more populous than Rutlandshire, the representation of a Yorkshire freeholder is by ten degrees weaker or less direct than the representation of a Rutlandshire freeholder. And, suppose the city of Bristol contains a thousand times more freemen than the decayed borough of Old Sarum, the constitution allows that a burgess of Old Sarum shall be a thousand times more directly, or particularly represented. than a freeman of Bristol. (6.) On the same plan, some flourishing and populous towns are not allowed to send any representative, when some poor and deserted Cornish or Welsh boroughs send as many members as some of the greatest cities in the kingdom. (7.) The constitution allows that the present members shall represent all those who are absent; and that the majority of the present members shall indirectly represent the minority; and that the parliament shall determine the affairs of all the British settlements in Europe, Asia, Africa, and in the West Indies; although the colonists settled in those parts have no direct representatives in parliament: I say *no direct representatives*, because the constitution supposes, that as the men indirectly represent all the women; the burgesses all that are not burgesses; and the freeholders all that have no freehold; and as the majority in parliament indirectly represents the minority, and the members who are in the house indirectly represent those who are absent; so the three branches of the legislature indirectly represent all the political body which is called the British empire, just as the head, the heart, and the breast, indirectly represent all the natural body; whether the hands and feet touch each other, or whether they are widely extended toward the east and the west. (8.) The prosperity of the mother country being as closely connected with the prosperity of the colonies, as the welfare of parents is connected with that of their children, Great Britain has as rational and natural a right to represent the colonies, as parents have to represent their children; present burgesses those that are absent; and voting freeholders those that have no vote. Lastly: matter of fact demonstrates that the American colonies are indirectly represented in parliament, and matter of fact bears down ten thousand sophisms. I have already made appear that the constitution allows

of various degrees of indirect representation, some proximate, and others more remote. And that the colonists are represented in one of the degrees which the constitution allows, is evident by the following remark:-As a lawyer who pleads your cause in a court of judicature, is indirectly your representative, whether you choose him or not: so the members who plead the cause of the colonists in the high court of parliament, show themselves the indirect representatives of the colonists, whether the colonists choose them or not. And, therefore, to deny that the provincials are indirectly represented in parliament, is as bold an imposition upon the good sense of the public, as to deny that the minority, in both houses of parliament, opposes the claims of Great Britain, and votes for the colonies: for reason, conscience, and the constitution, agree to decide, that if the colonists are not indirectly represented in parliament, the members who plead their cause have no more right to vote for them than you and I have. My demonstration is short: a considerable number of parliament men vote in both houses that parliamentary taxation is unjust with respect to the colonies; all the members have a right to vote in their favour, and would do it, if their conscience permitted, and therefore the colonists are incontestably, though indirectly, represented in the parliament. Nor can one of the members who compose the minority, give his vote for the Americans, without confuting himself, if he denies that they are indirectly represented in the parliament; and if they are indirectly represented in parliament, they may be constitutionally taxed by the parliament. On this ground, which is firm as matter of fact, the majority are ready to stand the minority and you, in all the courts of reason, which are or can be erected in Great Britain or America.

Consider we now what you object to this constitutional doctrine. Page 37, you say, “The non-voters here can point out their virtual representatives, as clearly as the voters can point out their direct representatives. But who are the specific, virtual representatives of America? Who are appointed to represent the property there?” I reply, (1.) The whole body, in which the legislative power is lodged, is appointed by the constitution to protect the property of all the subjects of Great Britain. (2.) Your ideas of representation are far too much circumscribed. Though the members of a Cornish borough directly represent the burgesses of that borough, yet they indirectly represent the commons of all England, and of all the British dominions. If it were not so, they could have no voice in the house, except when the petty concerns of their borough are debated. Now, sir, by the same constitutional rule by which the members of a Welsh borough are appointed to manage the affairs of all England, the members of Middlesex are appointed to manage the affairs of all British America. If you want me to point out some of the indirect, virtual representatives of the Americans, I take up the first newspaper and point at the names of the members who distinguish themselves by their zeal to support what they judge to be the rights of the Americans. And I ask, if these lords and gentlemen do not indirectly represent the rich and the poor in our colonies, what right have they to vote for the colonists, more than the members of the Irish parliament?

Page 31, you intimate that it is “perfectly unconstitutional to exclude the Americans from having a voice in the disposal of their property, whose estates may

amount to thirty-nine pounds per annum;" though you grant that "a man in England can have no voice in the disposal of his property, whose estate amounts to no more than thirty-nine shillings per annum." But have you forgot that the constitution allows "the pot boilers in the despicable hovels of some boroughs" to have votes for parliament men, while some "freeholders in Gloucester, Hereford and London, have no votes for town or country," because they are neither freemen nor liverymen. On this important concession, which you make, page 98, I rest the following queries:-If the constitution allows the taxation of some freeholders in the cities of Gloucester, Hereford, and London, although such freeholders, through an accidental cause, have no votes for town or country, why can it not allow the taxation of some freeholders who, through an accidental cause, have no votes for England or America? And if you grant that the constitution permits that some men who possess a freehold in the centre of Great Britain, are constitutionally taxed by the parliament, though they have no vote, do you not expose your prejudice before all the world, if you say that the colonists cannot be constitutionally taxed by the parliament, merely because they have no vote?

I have pressed you with the case of some members of parliament, who are constitutionally taxed with or without their consent, so long as they choose to live abroad. Pages 31, 32, you reply, "The Americans are at home." You insinuate that my doctrine supposes they "are never at home," and you humourously say, "Were I a colonist, the prerogative I would humbly sue for, should be that of being permitted to be at home; for home is home, says the old proverb, be it ever so homely." I answer, Lord Pigot, a member of parliament, who is in the East Indies, and Mr. Hancock, a member of the congress, have the full leave of the constitution to be at home. Only it must be remembered, that, by emigration, they have their home in two places; as the gentlemen who have a house in London, and another in the country. They have their legislative home in Great Britain, and their actual home: Lord Pigot in Bengal, and Mr. Hancock in Philadelphia. If they will enjoy the prerogatives of their legislative home, they must return to England, just as the gentlemen who fill their seats in the parliament, and enjoy their honours at court, must leave their country seats and repair to London. Nor say that the distinction I make between our actual and our legislative home is frivolous; for Dr. Price, your oracle, says, "They [the colonies] gloried in their relation to us; and they always spoke of this country, and looked to it as their home." Now, as the colonists were never so destitute of good sense as to look on England as their actual home; it remains that your oracle has spoken nonsense, or that England is their principal, legislative home. And would to God they were not grown so uneasy as to despise this "home, be it ever so homely!"

You hint indeed at the inconvenience and impossibility of the colonists coming back to their legislative home; but this objection makes as much against your scheme of representation as against ours; for you insinuate that all the non-voters in England may go and settle in the few boroughs where the constitution allows every pot boiler to be a voter; and you give us a hint that if they do not, "it is their own fault." But is it not more practicable for all the freeholders in America to crowd into Great Britain,

than for all the non-voters in Great Britain to crowd into such privileged boroughs as you speak of; or for all the women, who have freeholds in England, to change their sex, that they may have a vote at the next election?

You reply, p. 38, “The representation in England is unequal, owing to a great variety of casual circumstances which it would be useless to enumerate.” Now, sir, applying to all the British empire what you say of England, I answer, The representation, with respect to America, “is unequal, owing to a great variety of casual circumstances,” such as emigration, distance, interposing seas, and the impropriety of multiplying [3] parliaments, which would as much weaken the empire, as you would do a piece of clock work, if you contrived to make each wheel move by means of a separate spring. Thus, if I am not mistaken, your own concessions, backed by one of Dr. Price’s observations, show that, so far, your attempt to demonstrate that the parliamentary doctrine of taxation is contrary to the constitution, only shows that it is truly constitutional.

Come we now to your capital argument, the first part of which runs thus:-“The American can have no voice in the disposal of his property; and what is worse, those who are to have the power of disposing of it, are under every possible temptation to abuse the power, because every shilling they take out of the pocket of an American is so much saved in their own.” To this I reply, (Vindication, p. 456,) “You mistake: for as many of the colonists as choose to purchase a freehold in England, may become electors; and as many as have a sufficient fortune may be candidates at the next election;” adding, that you yourself speak of a *late American candidate, who was a friend to America*. But you take no notice of this sufficient answer.

Pressing you still farther, I remind you that “there are several members in both houses of parliament who have a very large property in America, and who, when they tax the colonists, take far more money out of their own pockets than they probably do out of the pocket of Mr. Hancock.” To this you reply, page 41, “But what security have the Americans that there will always be such members in parliament?” I answer, They have the same security for it which we have, that there will always be a prince to fill the throne, and a number of peers to compose a house of lords. It is not impossible that a plague should sweep away all the royal family, and all the nobility: but would it be right to distress the public by such a supposition? Would it not be ridiculous to frighten the simple by telling them that the constitution is in danger, and that as we have no security that all the royal family and all the nobility will not die of the plague, or be blown up by a second gunpowder plot, “our constitution is almost lost,” and we are likely soon to have another rump parliament, without king, and without house of lords?

But you add: “Unless all the members of the British parliament had American property, they would not be on a level with the non-voters in England.” I reply, If the American colonies are, as some patriots suppose, the capital spring of British wealth, all the members of parliament have a particular, though indirect concern in the

prosperity of the colonists; nor does the constitution require that taxed subjects should be on a level with each other in every possible respect. the Americans should be thankful for being on a level, not only with the nonvoters of England, in the important right of qualifying themselves to be voters, or candidates for seats in parliament, but also with the freeholders in London who have no vote, and with the members of parliament abroad, who, through emigration, cannot actually share in the legislature. I repeat it, to attempt to bring about a representation, equal in every respect, is as absurd as to attempt making all our fellow subjects of one size, one age, one sex, one country, one revenue, one rank, and one capacity.

Another of my answers to your grand argument ran thus:-"It is improbable that our lawgivers would save a dirty shilling in their pockets, by oppressively taking one out of an American's pocket. Being men of fortune, they are raised by their circumstances above the felonious trick you speak of." Page 40, you humoursly reply, "I suppose, sir, if you should lend a few thousands to any of our legislators, you would not pretend to ask for a bond. It would be ungenerous to suspect men of such circumstances, as the constitution obliges all our lawgivers to be, of such a felonious trick as not paying you again." But this reply of yours is fully obviated by my fifth answer, which is as follows:-"If the colonists were afraid of being taxed more heavily than the rule of proportion allows, should they not have humbly requested that the parliament would settle the matter by an act, or a 'bond,' which might have been an effectual check upon the abuse of the power of taxation?"

You think to unnerve this answer by saying, page 42, "What the colonists should have done is one thing, and what the British parliament has done is another." True: the parliament has laid upon the colonists a little tax, and they have revolted, instead of paying it with the loyalty which becomes good subjects, and with the prudence which becomes men jealous of their liberty; and therefore their conduct is unjustifiable, and that of the parliament reasonable. You farther insinuate, that as you are not obliged "to conform to the Established Church," so the colonists were not obliged to submit to British taxation in the prudential manner I have mentioned. But the case is not parallel. Neither Christianity nor the constitution obliges us to conform to the Established Church; whereas both enjoin us to "render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due," that is, to the supreme, protective power.

You have another string to your bow. Sensible that the preceding argument is not strong enough to shoot the arrow of conviction into a thinking man's breast, you add, page 42, "A man that robs me on the highway may think that I should have previously asked him if he did not want my money. But I presume this will not justify his robbing me." So, sir, you will always insinuate, that we are no more bound to pay reasonable taxes to the legislative power which protects us, than we are bound to give our money to a robber who demands it! But when Americanus argues in this manner, does he not contradict St. Paul, Jesus Christ, and Mr. Evans himself, who, page 27, not only grants "the necessity of subjects paying taxes," but intimates that a man who denies the propriety of that custom, and the ground of that propriety is "one of the

most unreasonable beings in the universe, and a mere political Quixotte?" It does not become me to decide how far you have drawn your picture in this candid concession; but, as you finish your answer to my argument by this display of your consistency, I may desire the public to judge whether your reply gives a finishing stroke to the cause of the parliament, or to your own.

The other part of your capital argument runs thus:-The Britons who have no vote, or who are unable to vote by emigration, may "consent to the disposal of their property because they have always this security, that those who take an active part in the disposal of their property must, at the same time, dispose of an equal portion of their own." I have already shown that the colonists have considerable degrees of security, that the parliament will not tax them disproportionably. And if they had properly asked a fuller security, instead of fleeing to arms, the parliament would undoubtedly have granted their request. But, without dwelling upon this answer, to overthrow your argument, I need only observe that it is inconclusive, because it can be retorted, and saps the foundation of what you call "the fundamental privilege" of the commons; which is, that no money bills can reasonably "originate but from themselves:" for, if money bills always originated from the lords, who are richer than the populace, the commons would have always this security, that the lords, in taking an active part in the disposal of the people's property, must at the same time dispose of an equal proportion of their own. So easily can your grand argument be turned against your own cause! And so great is the inconsistency of a system, one part of which you cannot support, without totally undermining the other!

If these remarks recommend themselves to your reason, piety, and sober patriotism, I hope, sir, you will confess that truth is a file which we bite in vain; that it is as imprudent to attack a good argument in the field of controversy, as to lay hold of an antagonist's sword with a naked hand in a field of battle; that your Reply has given me an opportunity of confirming my Vindication; and that the doctrine of taxation, embraced by the parliament, is truly rational, Scriptural, and constitutional. Q.E.D. I am, reverend sir, your friendly opponent, and obedient servant in the Gospel,

J. FLETCHER.

LETTER II.

A view of Mr. Evans' mistake concerning, I. The absoluteness of our property. II. The nature of slavery. III. The origin of power. And IV. The proper cause of the war with America. A note concerning the Anabaptists.

REVEREND SIR,-I would have taken my leave of you in the preceding letter, had I not considered that a patient controvertist ought to contend for truth till she enjoys her full liberty. The truth I defend is not yet free. She is still bound with three or four

of the chains with which you have loaded her. Nor can I complete my rescue, without breaking them with my polemical hammer.

I. The first of these chains is your error, or that of Lord Camden, concerning the absoluteness of our property.

Page 34, you still insinuate that "what a man has, is absolutely his own." Nevertheless, pressed by my objection, you indirectly grant that God has a right to our property. But if God has a right to our property, does he not delegate his right to our political gods, I mean to our lawgivers and governors, who are his lieutenants and representatives? And in this case, how can you say that no man has a right to take our property from us without our consent, our property being absolutely our own? I still farther assert, that so long as we live in society, our property is a part of the common wealth; but if it be absolutely our own, how can it be a part of the common wealth? And if it be a part of the common wealth, how can it be absolutely our own? I support this dilemma by the following queries:-Who is such a novice in politics, as not to know that private interest, in a thousand cases, is to yield to public good; and, of consequence, private possession to public claims? If a man have a thousand bushels of wheat, which he hoards up in time of scarcity, may he not be justly compelled to sell it at a reasonable price, though he and his representatives should cry out ever so loud, "Oppression! tyranny! robbery!" If a nobleman found rich mines of coals in his estates near London, could he not be legally hindered from working those mines, lest the Newcastle colliers, and a thousand sailors, should starve for want of employment? If Bristol were besieged, and you had a house near the walls, where the enemy might lodge his forces to annoy the city, might not your house be justly pulled down, though you and your American representative should refuse your consent to the very last? If you have rich meadows, which you delight in, and if the general good requires that a fort be erected upon them, or a canal cut through them, may you not be made sensible that the public has a superior right to your property, and that your ground is not so absolutely your own but you may be compelled to part with it for the good of the kingdom? If you have a ship laden with goods, brought from the Levant, and you want to sell them immediately, to prevent their being spoiled; and if there be some reason to fear that they will convey the plague, may not a magistrate, in spite of you and a hundred representatives, if you had a right to choose so many, force you to let your goods be spoiled, rather than to endanger the lives of thousands? And, to some to the case of the colonists, if you and your representative fancied that you owe nothing to the sovereign for protecting you in time past, and that you can very well protect yourselves for the time to come; and if, upon such a fancy, you refused to contribute to the expense of the general protection; think you the public would be duped by your conceit, and grant you to live as free from taxes in England, as David did in Israel, when he had slain Goliah? Would not our governors justly seize upon a proportion of your property, whether you and your representative reasonably consented to it, or whether you absurdly raised the neighbourhood by the patriotic cry of "Tyranny! robbery! murder?"

Nor is it only our property which is not absolutely our own, when we live in civil society: for what I have said of our goods, may be applied to our persons. We are not absolutely our own. Hence it is, that in all civilized countries, when the sovereign wants soldiers for the protection of the commonwealth, a militia is raised; and if the lot fall upon a pacific farmer, notwithstanding his objections, and the opposition of his parliamentary representative, he must bear arms, either in his own person, or in the person of his military representative. And when no such representatives can be procured, the men who are able may be personally pressed into the service of the commonwealth. Hence it is, that in an emergency, the sovereign issues press warrants to raise sailors for manning the fleet. A hardship this, which, great as it is, is not so great as the general overthrow of the state.

II. Your first error about the absoluteness of our property, naturally leads you into a second concerning abject slavery, which you confound with loyal subjection. Hence you say, p. 44, &c, “If there be any man, call him by what name you please, [you should have said, agreeably to the case in debate, if there be any set of men, call them by what name you please, lawgivers, magistrates, or officers of the legislative power,] who has [or have] a right to take it [his property] without his consent expressed by himself or representative, what is this but the quintessence of slavery? Wherein does the case of such a man differ from that of the most abject slaves in the universe? God's lieutenants may, it is true, be very mild, and kind, and reasonable in their demands, and require no more of such a man than it is highly just he should pay: but what then? If my property be at their disposal, not my own, what becomes of my liberty? The man that robs me of five shillings only, commits a robbery as much as the man that robs me of five pounds. The most abject slave in the universe may chance to have a very good master; but still, if he be at the disposal of his master, he is equally a slave when treated well as when treated ill.”

The plausibility of this argument rests upon the following mistakes: (1.) You still suppose, that insisting on moderate taxes, as a reasonable equivalent for protection, is a species of robbery; whereas such a demand, by the consent of all men, except the patriots of the day, is as reasonable as the demand of a moderate fee, which a diligent lawyer has upon his client. (2.) You do not consider that the colonists, being indirectly represented in parliament, have as much consented, by their indirect representatives, to pay taxes to the parliament, as the patriots and you have consented by your direct representatives to be additionally taxed in order to bring the colonies to reason. (3.) The Latin word *servus*, means not only a servant, but a bondsman and a slave; and the English word servitude, means both slavery and the state of a servant. But would it be right in me to avail myself of this analogy, to put all the patriotic servants in the kingdom out of conceit with their servitude, and to make them shake off the yoke of dependence, under pretence that servitude is abject slavery, whether a servant is treated well or ill? (4.) In Hebrew the word [*obed*] servant, means both a slave and a subject. But would you have approved of Absalom's conduct, if, on this account, he had alienated the minds of his father's subjects, and made an injudicious populace believe, that whosoever fully submits himself to good government,

commences an abject slave? Who does not see the inconclusiveness of this argument? An abject slave is bound to submit himself reasonably or unreasonably to his lawless sovereign: a loyal subject is bound to submit himself reasonably to his lawful sovereign: and therefore, as they are both bound to submit or subject themselves to their sovereign, they are both "abject slaves." Such logic, sir, may convert heated Americans to your overdoing patriotism; but, if I am not mistaken, it will confirm judicious Britons in their constitutional loyalty. (5.) You conclude your argument by saying, "A slave is equally a slave, when treated well as when treated ill:" and you might have added, a subject is equally a subject when treated well as when treated ill; but then the pill would not have been properly gilded; and your own loyalty, as well as piety, would have taken the alarm at a doctrine which bears so hard upon this Gospel precept, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers."

For my part, whatever you may say of my "meanness," I will be the servant, the subject, and if you please, sir, the slave of good government. I am determined to glory in the subjection, of which you seem to be so afraid and ashamed. And applying to a freeman what the apostle says of a son, I do not scruple to assert, that a freeman, so long as he lives in society, and is a subject, differeth nothing from a servant or slave who "is well treated," but is under governors (lawgivers and magistrates) until the time appointed of his heavenly Father for his removing from earth, and leaving the society of mortals, Gal. iv. 1, 2. To oppose this doctrine is to overthrow subjection and government, which stand or fall together.

III. A word about the origin of power. I believe, with St. Paul, that "the powers that are, are ordained of God," who is the fountain of all power, and the author of all good government. I date the Divine communication of power from the paradisiacal age; yea, from the hour in which God said to Adam and Eve, "Multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over-every living thing," Gen. i. 28. Here, sir, is the original grant of power; and whosoever wantonly resisteth the power which Providence calls him to obey, breaks this great political charter of God, which is so strongly and so frequently confirmed in the Gospel.

You reply, p. 74, "The first man could have no power to protect and rule mankind, till there were some for him to rule." But is not this a mistake? Might not God endue him with a protective, as well as with a prolific power, before the earth began to be replenished? Would you not wonder at my positiveness, if I insisted, that God could not give to Adam power to multiply and rule his species, because his species was not yet multiplied and governable; and that our Creator could have no creative power, till creatures rose into positive existence?

But you add, p. 75, "When Adam became a father, he had as much power as any other father." And p. 77, you ask, "Does not every father receive the same Divine right of dominion?" asserting, that "there is nothing to be inferred from the parental authority of Adam, but is equally applicable to all parents without exception." I reply, that it is contrary to all divinity to say that every parent is endued with all the

authority which Adam was invested with, when God said to him, “Subdue the earth and have dominion.” You are too judicious a divine, not to speak a different language in the pulpit. You know, sir, that Adam was invested with characters which he could not communicate to *all* his posterity, and which consequently are not common to all men. A simile will possibly convince you of your mistake. King George the Third is, with respect to his children, what Adam was with respect to his posterity. He is a *father* and a *king*. The *first* character he can entail upon all his sons; but the *second* he can entail upon none but the prince of Wales. This shows the inconclusiveness of the argument you draw from “Eve’s motherhood,” and “petticoat government.” I reverence the queen; and if she filled the throne as Queen Anne did, I would submit myself to her good government, not because of Eve’s motherhood, but because God said to Eve (as well as to Adam) in her regal capacity, “Have dominion;” and because he says in the decalogue, “Honour thy [political] mother,” as well as thy political “father.” Nor should I be ashamed to advance these two capital scriptures in support of the English constitution, if you excited me to dethrone an English queen, and urged the propriety of the *loi salique*-a French law this, which, in all cases, excludes princesses from the right of succeeding to the crown.

You try to embarrass the question by saying, p. 79, “You must tell us who is Adam's heir. What does it signify what power Adam had, or what power he left behind him to his [governing] successors; unless we certainly know who those successors are?” But I reply, that, in every country, those who share in the dominion given to Adam and Eve in their regal capacity, are as much known as the king and parliament are known in England, the doge and senate at Venice, the emperor and diet in Germany, the monarch in France, and the despot in Prussia. Whoever, by the good providence of God, is endued with the legislative and protective power in the country where I reside, and retains that power by the consent of a majority of the people, is the higher power which I consider as actually ordained of God for my protection. To that power I will cheerfully submit, so far as it is used for good: and to that power I will conscientiously pay taxes, for the protection which I enjoy. And suppose that power were possessed by a usurper, I would lament the usurpation, and hear my testimony against it, till the same overruling Providence which removed Absalom, John of Leyden, Ket, the rump, and Cromwell, took that usurper out of the way also. But if Divine Providence, instead of removing the usurper, established his power, as it did that of Jeroboam in the days of Solomon’s son, which I would know by the general and lasting consent of the people, I would no longer oppose that power, but submit myself to it as religiously as the Christians of the fourth century did to Constantine the Great, and as cheerfully as the French do to the ancient family of the Capets; though Hugues Capet, the first king of that house, was only a noble usurper. Such are, if I mistake not, the loyal views which the Scriptures give us of the origin of power; and such the marks by which we may know the power that Divine Providence calls us to obey.

Consider we now what are your views of the same doctrine. Page 66, you say, “Every good government is of God. Nor will the personal vices of our governors, nor

any slight error in their administration of government, justify our resisting them." Here, sir, you speak as a Christian and a Briton; and, so far, I heartily set my seal to your politics. But who are our governors? Are they not the men who are invested with governing, legislative, and supreme power? Now, sir, according to this just definition of the word governors, you have thrown down the distinction between the governors and the governed, and, before you are aware, you have crowned king *mob*. I prove my assertion by your own words. Page 71, you write, "Perhaps you will say, The supreme power in every government must be lodged somewhere, and this power must be omnipotent and uncontrollable. I allow it. But the glory of the British constitution is, that the people have never parted with this power, but have most religiously kept it in their owls hands." Thus, sir, according to your doctrine, the supreme and governing power belongs not to the governors, but to the people, that is, to the governed. Was ever a more preposterous doctrine imposed upon injudicious patriots? O, sir, what you call "the glory of the British constitution," would be the shade of the worst government. Nay, upon this plan, there could be no government at all. For, so long as the governed "most religiously [should you not have said most impiously and absurdly?] keep the [governing] power in their own hands," that power is in every body's hands. And the moment this is the case, there is an end of government; anarchy takes place; king *mob* breaks all the laws with a high hand; and a tyrannical populace fiercely trample upon all order, and carry devastation wherever they turn their steps. Thus, sir, you have helped me to prove the truth of this deep proposition of judicious Mr. Baxter, who, after having studied Christian politics near thirty years, left it upon record, that "if once legislation, the chief act of government, be denied to be any part of government at all, and affirmed to belong to the people as such, who are no governors, all government will thereby be overthrown," and the grand principle of the fierce, mobbing, and levelling [4] Anabaptists will be "most religiously" set up.

This doctrine of yours, sir, brings to my remembrance an anecdote, to which a loyal and pious Anabaptist undesignedly helped me some weeks ago. In order to convince me that what Mr. Baxter says of the high republican spirit of the Anabaptists and Independents is not true, he sent me the fourth volume of "Blennerhasset's History of England," which contains all account of the proceedings of the mangled tyrannical parliament known by the name of the rump. This author informs us, p. 1541, that just before King Charles I. was beheaded, "the commons voted, that the people, under God, are the original of all just power; and that the commons of England, being chosen by the people, had the *supreme* authority of this nation: and what *they* enacted should be law, without the king or lords' concurrence. This squared exactly with the Independents, who were for turning the monarchy into a republic." Now if the *Anabaptists* were at least as zealous republicans as the *Independents*, I leave you to judge, sir, whether my neighbour's book was a better proof of Baxter's mistake than your own; and whether it is not evident, from this quotation, that when you teach the world that "the people most religiously keep the supreme power [that is, the power of their governors] in their own hands," as their

indubitable right, you plough with the wild, mischievous heifer of Cromwell and the rump.

IV. A word concerning the proper cause of the war with America.

Page 51, you say, “Should it be made to appear that the British parliament have authority from Scripture to tax their unrepresented brethren in America, and to cut their throats, burn their towns, and spread universal devastation among them, because they do not choose to submit to such taxation, it would furnish a stronger objection, &c, against the Divine original of the sacred code, than has ever yet been produced.” You insinuate by these words, that the *proper* and *immediate* cause of cutting throats in America, is the demand which the king and parliament make of taxes. But are you not mistaken, sir? And does not your mistake make you throw an undeserved odium upon the sovereign? For my part, I conceive that the *immediate* occasion of the bloodshed which we lament, is not so much the parliamentary demand of taxes, as a chain of causes which chiefly contains the following links; (1.) The heat of some Bostonian patriots, who, with felonious audacity, boarded our ships, seized upon the property of our merchants, and wantonly threw it into the sea. If the patriots would not buy tea subjected to a tax, could they not have kept their own money? Was it right in them to undo our innocent traders, by destroying their goods? (2.) The demand which the government made of restitution, or satisfaction, for that act of glaring injustice; a just demand this, which the sovereign could not avoid making without being guilty of injustice; it being evident that it would be unjust in the legislative power to receive taxes of our merchants for the protection of their property, and then to look on unconcerned, when that property is feloniously destroyed. (3.) The obstinacy with which the mobbing patriots and their abettors refused to make satisfaction to our injured merchants. (4.) The prudence with which the parliament farther interposed, by passing the bill for shutting up the port of Boston, that by this unbloody and mild method, the Bostonians might gently be brought to make restitution. And, lastly, the flame of revolt, which on this occasion rapidly spread through British America.

Had the Algerines insulted the British flag, and injured British subjects as the mobbing Bostonians have done, the government would not have shown them the same lenity. A fleet would immediately have sailed for the inhospitable coast, and the admiral would have sent a card to the legislature of Algiers: “I am come to demand satisfaction for the injury done to British subjects. Send me, by to-morrow, £30,000, being the value of the goods which you, or the men whom you screen, have feloniously taken from our merchants, or I will do them and my country justice.” Instead of using this peremptory method as Admiral Blake would have done, our admiral quietly stationed his ships before Boston, and General Gage, far from “cutting throats,” amicably quartered his forces in or about that city; patiently waiting till remorse of conscience, a sense of equity, a spark of loyalty, or some tear of the power, wrought upon the patriots, so called, and inclined them to do an act of justice, which Mohammedans would hardly have refused to do. But all in vain. The mobbing

patriots, and their ringleaders, hardened by this lenity, availed themselves of the kind delay. While humanity and brotherly love suspended the stroke of justice, enthusiastic demagogues sounded a false alarm, and engaged the misinformed colonists to countenance their obstinacy. In short, the Americans, seduced by misrepresentations, took up arms against Great Britain; and the forces sent by the sovereign, instead of obtaining the satisfaction they demanded, were obliged to provide for their own safety by attempting to seize some of the artillery and ammunition, brought from all quarters to destroy them. Hence the engagement at Lexington, and the fight at Bunker's Hill, where the forces raised by the congress pressed those of the sovereign by an audacious blockade.

Should you object that the colonists once offered to make restitution on condition that they should never be taxed by the power that protected them; I reply, that by such an offer they only added injustice and revolt to felons. Suppose the Scotch plundered an English ship, and the sovereign insisted on speedy restitution, do you think they would deserve the name of *patriots* if they said, We will pay for the goods we have destroyed on condition that you shall exempt us from paying the window tax for ever; or, in other terms, we will be just to some of our fellow subjects, to shake off your authority, and to break Christ's capital commandment, "Render to all their due, especially taxes to Cesar?"

If this be a true state of the case, are you not partial, sir, when you represent the parliament as "cutting the throats" of the colonists, because the colonists will not be taxed by the parliament? Is it not rather the colonists who want to cut the throats of our soldiers, because the king and parliament justly insist on proper satisfaction for the injury done to British merchants by the petty tyrants of Boston?

An illustration will make you still more sensible of your mistake. Suppose I harbour a parcel of house breakers, or ship breakers, who have stolen or destroyed your goods, and suppose you obtain a legal warrant, and come, attended with a number of armed constables, to recover your property, or apprehend the felons; if I raise a mob to hinder the constables from doing their office, and if some throats are cut, in the endeavours which the constables make not to fall into the hands of the armed mob which surrounds them, is the guilt of cutting throats chargeable upon you, who act according to law, and in a just cause? Is it not rather chargeable upon me, who wantonly oppose the legislative power, and can say nothing in defence of myself and my mob, but that the felons I protect are not felons, but spirited patriots; or that I shall pay you for damages, if you will promise to suffer yourself to be wronged of more money than the wrong you have sustained amounts to?

Suppose that the doctrine of taxation, which is the remote cause of our divisions, admits of some objections, as the plainest doctrines always do, (for the brightest clouds have their obscure side, and the most shining diamonds cast a faint shade,) yet the immediate cause of the American war, the refusing to make restitution for goods feloniously destroyed, has no shadow of difficulty. Whoever is honest enough to

disapprove the malicious destruction of an innocent man's property, whoever is conscientious enough to praise the steadiness of a governments which stands by oppressed subjects whom it is bound to protect, and whoever is so far a lover of order, as to blame a wanton opposition to the sovereign when he discharges his duty, must confess that the guilt of "cutting throats" in America, is properly caused by the obstinate injustice of the American patriots, and not by the moderate taxes laid by the British legislature. To assert the contrary is almost as great a mistake in politics, as it is in divinity to hint that the miseries consequent upon man's fall, were not properly caused by the tempter's artful misrepresentations, and by Adam's wilful rebellion; but by God's reasonable demand of a little proof of Adam's loyalty.

And now, sir, if I have duly confirmed my proofs, that the doctrine of taxation, which you oppose, is just in every point of view; if I have shown that you confound loyal subjection with abject slavery; if I have demonstrated that your notions concerning the supreme power of the people are subversive of all government; and if I have made appear, that you do not fix the charge of wantonly "cutting throats" upon those who are properly guilty of that atrocious crime, may I not call upon your rational and moral feelings to decide, if I have not vindicated my Vindication? And are you not as precipitate, when you pronounce me "one of the most unmeaning and unfair disputants that ever took up the polemical gauntlet," as when you insinuate that the British legislature "commits robbery," because it lays a moderate tax upon those who have long basked in the beams of its protection, and have acquired immense wealth under the guardian shadow of its flags and standards?

Hoping that no controversial heat will make us forget that we are fellow creatures, fellow subjects, fellow Protestants, and fellow labourers in the Gospel of truth and love; I ask a part in your esteem, equal to that which, notwithstanding your heats and mistakes, you have in the cordial respect of, reverend sir, your affectionate brother, and obedient servant,

J. FLETCHER.

LETTER III.

Dr. Price's politics are shows to be as irrational, unscriptural, and unconstitutional as those of Mr. Evans-His principal arguments are retorted-The foundation of his capital error is sapped-The legislative freedom of the members of the house of commons is asserted, in opposite to the legislative pretensions of plebeian levellers-The partiality and inconsistency of the London patriots are pointed out-On Dr. Price's levelling principles there is an end of all subjection both on earth and in heaven-A conditional reproof to Mr. Evans and Dr. Price.

REVEREND SIR,-If I have answered you in the preceding letters, I may look your second in the face: I mean the ingenious Dr. Price, whom you call to your help in your notes, and whose arguments you introduce by this high encomium: "Dr. Price's

most excellent pamphlet, just published, carries conviction in every page, and breathes that noble spirit of liberty, for which the author so ably pleads!"

Page 46, your first quotation from him runs thus: "In the sixth of George II, an act passed for imposing certain duties on all foreign spirits, and sugars imported into the plantations. In this act the duties imposed are said to be given and granted by the parliament to the king, &c, and a small direct revenue was drawn by it from them." The doctor intimates soon after, that "this revenue act was at worst only the exercise of a power, which then they [the colonists] seem not to have thought much of contesting; I mean the power of taxing them externally." I thank Dr. Price and you, sir, for thus granting that the colonists were taxed before the present parliament and the present reign. This shows that the odium cast upon the present government, springs more from prejudice than from reason. If George II, his whig ministry, and his approved parliament, raised a "direct revenue," by taxing the colonies, why do the American patriots insinuate that George III, the present ministry, and the present parliament are robbers, because they raise a direct revenue by taxing the colonists? And how strangely does Dr. Price forget himself, where he says, "How great would be our happiness could we now recall former times and return to the policy of the last reigns!" What have our lawgivers done after all? Truly, they have recalled former times, and returned to the policy of the last reigns; and yet Dr. Price, instead of being thankful for our happiness, frightens the public with the most dreadful hints about the infatuation of our governors, and the danger of "a general wreck;" just as if his grand business was to spirit up the colonists, and to deject his own countrymen.

The doctor, it is true, tries to obviate this difficulty by making a distinction between external and internal taxes; insinuating that in the late reign the colonists were taxed externally, whereas in the present reign they have been taxed internally. But if this distinction be frivolous, will it reflect any praise on your patriotism? And that it is such I prove by the following argument: a distinction about taxation, which has no foundation in reason, Scripture, or the constitution, is frivolous: but Dr. Price's distinction has no foundation in reason, Scripture, or the constitution, and therefore it is frivolous in the present controversy. Should you contest the second proposition of this syllogism, I ask, By what dictates of reason does it appear, that if taxes are due from subjects to their sovereign, they may not be levied internally, by rates upon the goods we already possess, as well as externally, by duties upon goods imported, which purchase has not yet made our own? Where does St. Paul charge Christians to pay taxes, if they are externally taxed; and to fly to arms if they are taxed internally? Did not Christ speak of internal taxes, when he commanded the Jews to render to Cesar what was his? And is there any law, either of God or of the realm, which allows the legislative power to tax the subjects of Great Britain externally, and precludes it from taxing them internally?

The doctor's distinction is not only unscriptural and unconstitutional, but unreasonable; inasmuch as it would, in a great degree, enable subjects to avoid paying taxes at all. Suppose, for example, we could be taxed only externally, by

means of duties laid upon imported goods, such as tea, coffee, foreign wines, and rum; might we not, if I may so speak, starve the government, by drinking only sage, or balm tea, ale, made wines, and spirits distilled from our own wheat? The doctor's distinction is not only unreasonable, but unjust. Why should the colonies enjoy greater privileges than the mother country? Why should Britons be taxed externally and internally, whether they have votes or not, and the Americans only externally; when both have their property internally and externally guarded by the protective power? If I owed my lawyer reasonable fees, amounting to ten pounds, what would you think of my honesty, if I said to him, Sir, I give you leave to pay yourself by demanding a shilling from me every time I drink a glass of claret or a dish of chocolate: but I declare to you, that, except in such cases, I will take you for a robber, if you lay claim to any part of my property? The doctor's distinction is not only unjust in the present case, but it might prove destructive to the commonwealth. It is granted on all sides, that taxes and money are the sinews of the government. If external taxes did not bring in money enough to discharge the necessary expenses of the state; and if the sovereign could not lay internal taxes to supply that deficiency, what would become of the kingdom? Must it not fall a wanton sacrifice to Dr. Price’s political refinements? I hope, sir, that if you weigh these observations, you will own that his book, ingenious as it is, far from “carrying conviction in every page,” carries frivolousness and mischievous absurdity in the very first quotation which you produce from him. And we may well suppose you did not pick out his weakest argument to support the praises which you bestow on his “most excellent pamphlet.”

But let us hear him out. You continue, p. 47, to quote him thus: “The stamp act was passed. This being an attempt to tax them internally; and a direct attack on their property, by a power which would not suffer itself to be questioned; which eased itself by loading them; and to which it was impossible to fix any bounds, they were thrown at once, from one end of the continent to the other, into resistance and rage.” This sounds well to the ear; but judicious patriots who expect to find the kernel of truth under the specious shell of fine words, may be a little disappointed. Permit me, sir, to break the shell, and to see if the kernel be sound.

(1.) An attempt to tax subjects internally is a direct attack on their property! And what if it be? When reasonable taxes are due, may they not be directly demanded? And that they are due, do you not grant, p. 27, where you so much resent my supposing that you deny “the necessity of subjects paying taxes,” whether they be external or internal? (2.) The legislative power of Great Britain would not suffer itself to be questioned! The doctor should have said, that it would not suffer itself to be deprived of its right of demanding reasonable taxes for expensive protection; an incontestable right this, which you allow none deny but “political Quixottes.” (3.) But this power eases itself by loading them! And what if it do? Is the sovereign to bear all the national expense, without being eased by his subjects? Or are some of the subjects to bear all the burden, without being eased by others who are to help them? Where is either the equity or reasonableness of this objection? (4.) But it is impossible to fix any bounds to this power! I have already shown, that nothing can

be easier than to fix proper bounds to the power of taxing the colonies. The parliament can enact that the colonists shall be taxed as the Britons are; making the colonists a proper allowance for the superior commercial privileges of the mother country. Supposing, for instance, that the privileges of British subjects are four times greater than the privileges of American subjects, the taxes of the American subjects might be four times lighter than ours. Thus, when we pay four shillings in the pound, they might pay only one shilling: and when four articles of equal importance are taxed in England, only one might be taxed in America. It is therefore excessively wrong in Doctor Price to assert, that it is impossible to fix any bounds to the power of parliamentary taxation: and none but heated patriots will praise him for increasing, by such a groundless assertion, the absurd "rage into which the colonists" have "thrown" themselves, "from one end of the continent to the other."

Page 48, you take up again "Doctor Price's truly valuable tract, and enrich" your "piece with a note from this capital writer upon the subject. In reference to the American charters, he speaks with true dignity as follows:-'The question with all liberal inquirers ought to be, not what jurisdiction over them (the colonies) precedents, statutes, and charters give, but what reason and equity, and the rights of humanity, give.'" Sir, this is the very first test to which I have brought your "American Patriotism." The doctor insinuates, indeed, that the power which taxes the Americans will not suffer its rights to be questioned. But this is a mistake. The legislature of Great Britain is too equitable not to give up the right of reasonably taxing the colonists, whom they have so long protected, if you, sir, Doctor Price, or the congress, can prove that reason, equity, and the rights of humanity, are against such taxation. Have you not yourself granted the propriety and necessity of subjects paying proportionable taxes, for the good of the whole empire? Is it reasonable or equitable that Great Britain should bear all the burden of the navy, which protects the colonies and their trade? Is it contrary to "the rights of humanity," to demand a penny for a penny load or, which comes to the same thing, to demand reasonable taxes for royal protection? Or do parent states violate "the rights of humanity," in demanding some assistance from the growing states to which they have given birth, when those states are well able to bear the easy burden? As soon will Doctor Price persuade me that it is contrary to "the rights of humanity," in twelve lubberly young fellows, who have always enjoyed the benefit of their father's house, and who can get more money than their father, to give him something toward the payment of the window tax, when he is burdened with debts, and wants some assistance to pay that tax.

Page 49, you continue to quote the doctor thus: "Did they not settle under the faith of charters which promised them the enjoyment of all the rights of Englishmen?" Granted. But did these charters promise them rights superior to those of Englishmen? Is it not evident, that if the colonists enjoy the right of being protected by the legislative power of Great Britain, without paying taxes to that power, they enjoy a right superior to that of Englishmen, who are bound to pay taxes for British protection? The doctor goes on: "These charters allowed them to tax themselves, and to be governed by legislatures of their own, similar to ours." Granted in one sense,

namely, in the same sense in which charters have been granted to corporations. Corporate bodies are allowed to tax themselves in a subordinate manner, and to be governed by legislatures of their own, similar to that of Great Britain. Thus the city of London is governed by a lord mayor, who represents the king; by a court of aldermen, which represents the high court of parliament, and by a body of liverymen and freemen, which answers to the body of voting burgesses and freeholders in Great Britain. And I suppose all together can raise money for the support of the corporation, by means of some peculiar rates, or subordinate taxes. Now if the citizens of London rose against parliamentary taxation under pretence that they are, and always have been, taxed by their own magistrates, they would show themselves as unjust as the colonists, and as good logicians as Dr. Price. What have subordinate taxes for the maintenance of lamplighters, watchmen, and trained bands, to do with the primary taxes by which the army and navy are supported? When rash patriots avail themselves of the payment of the former taxes, to refuse paying the latter, do they show more wisdom and equity than I should do, if I quarrelled with my physician for demanding of me ten guineas for ten visits, and dismissed him with the following speech:-Sir, I claim all the rights of Englishmen, nor will I be duped by you. I do not deny paying fees, but I will not pay any to you. I will discharge my apothecary's bill, but as for your demands, they are contrary to "reason, equity, and the rights of humanity." American patriots might give me thanks, and compliment me with the freedom of London in a golden box, for such a spirited opposition to tyranny and robbery; but I am of opinion that British patriots would hardly think me worthy of the freedom of Old Sarum in a wooden box: and if the physician were "thrown into a rage" by my provoking injustice, he might possibly think that I deserved a very different box from that which Doctor Price has been lately presented with.

But the doctor has an answer ready. Speaking of the colonists, he says, "They are taxed to support their own governments: must they maintain two governments? Must they submit to be triple taxed?" To show the frivolousness of this argument, I need only farther apply it to my physician's case thus:-Sir, you demand fees of me for your attendance, but I have already feed my apothecary: must I maintain two of you? Must I submit to be triple taxed? What! must I pay my surgeon too? You unreasonable men, will you all agree to enslave me? You pack of r--s, will you leave me nothing that I can call my own?

While you are struck with the fallacy of this patriotic argument, I proceed to some observations upon Doctor Price's doctrine with respect to the charters of the colonies. To suppose that their charters exempt them from paying taxes to the British government for ever, is not only contrary to the express terms of the charter of Pennsylvania, but also to all probability. What ruling power would be so unwise as to suffer the emigration of subjects out of a country which is not overstocked with inhabitants, into one where that power has claims and possessions, unless it was assured of retaining the right of supremacy over those emigrated subjects? Is it reasonable to think that a power would thus weaken itself? And is not the right of supreme taxation inseparably connected with the right of supreme government?

Again: when one of our kings granted a charter to the colonists, did he not grant it as being the head of the legislative power of Great Britain: a power this whose ships had taken possession of North America? Was it not as the representative of all this power, that he signed the charter? Suppose the lord mayor of London, as political head of that city, had granted one leave to build a house upon some waste ground belonging to the city; and suppose he had helped me to build it with some materials, the property of the city, and had from time to time preserved it from being robbed and burned, by sending me watchmen, firemen, and fire engines from the city, would it be right in me to say, I acknowledge myself indebted to the lord mayor, as a lord; but as for his London mayoralty, and the council of aldermen, I bid them defiance, and deny my being under the least obligation of submitting myself to them. In short, I am willing that the mayor of London should be my governor; but if the body of the corporation claim authority over me, and demand of me, who am neither one of the livery nor a freeman, city rates to pay the watchmen or buy new fire engines, I will show both them and the lord mayor that I am a patriot, and that I can defend my property and protect my person. Could you help smiling at the absurdity of such a speech? And think you Dr. Price himself could prove that the distinction which the colonists make between the king and the parliament, between the head and the body of the British legislature, is not as trifling and ungenerous as the distinction I make between the lordship of the mayor of London, and the London mayoralty, or between the head and the body of that respectable corporation?

To return. After saying that the arguments drawn from the charters for the colonies appear to him “greatly to outweigh the arguments against them,” Doctor Price speaks thus: “But I lay no stress on charters. They [the colonies] derive their rights from a higher source. It is inconsistent with common sense to imagine that any people would ever think of settling in a distant country, on any such condition, as that the people from whom they withdrew should for ever be masters of their property, and have power to subject them to any modes of government they pleased.” The flaw of this argument consists in imputing to Great Britain false claims, which never entered into the minds of our legislators. When did the parliament say they would “for ever be masters of the property of the colonists,” any otherwise than they are masters of the property of Englishmen? If the king and parliament claim the right of “making statutes of sufficient force to bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever,” does not candour dictate, that they only mean all cases wherein they have power to bind Englishmen? And is not Doctor Franklin too warm, when, availing himself of the laconic manner in which this reasonable claim is expressed, he renders the legislative power odious, by insinuating that it pretends to the authority of “compelling the colonists, if it pleases, to worship the devil?” Once more: when did the British legislature claim the right of “subjecting the Americans to any modes of government they please,” be these modes ever so foolish or tyrannical? Is it not wrong in Doctor Price and Doctor Franklin to fix upon our doctrine invidious consequences, which have not the least connection with our principles? What character could I not blast, and whom could I not represent as a rapacious tyrant, if I intimated, that whenever a master claims the authority of reasonably commanding his servants in all things, he

assumes the authority of making them “worship the devil, if he pleases;” and that, whenever the lord of a manor insists on his chiefrie, a lawyer on his fees, a minister on his tithes, and a sovereign on reasonable taxes, they pretend to be “for ever masters of the property” of their vassals, tenants, clients, flocks, and subjects; so that the abject slaves can call nothing which they have their own? Can we lament too much the mistakes of divines, who, by such ungenerous insinuations, inflame the heated patriots, and pour contempt on their rightful governors?

Page 49, you continue to quote Doctor Price thus: “Had there been express stipulations to this purpose in all the charters of the colonies, they would, in my opinion, be no more bound by them than if it had been stipulated with them, that they should go naked, or expose themselves to the incursions of wolves and tigers.” The doctor is highly worthy to be your second, sir. We have seen how you confound the right which the protecting power has to reasonable taxes, with the right which a highwayman has to a traveller’s money: and we see here that Doctor Price absurdly compares a Scriptural demand of moderate taxes, with an immodest command of going naked; and with a tyrannical edict of encountering “wolves and tigers.” If such method of arguing is consistent either with sound logic or Christian candour, I consent that the doctor's gold box be set with rubies and diamonds.

The doctor's argument is not only founded on an absurd comparison, but it can also be retorted in this manner: “I lay no stress on charters:” the king and parliament “derive their rights” of taxing their American subjects “from a higher source.” “Had there been express stipulations in all the charters,” that the colonies should ever be protected by Great Britain, without paying proportionable taxes as other subjects, it may be queried if the king and parliament would be any more bound by such stipulations, than they would be bound by a charter of the late king, supposing he had granted to all the Scotchmen and Yorkshiremen who have no vote, the privilege of paying no taxes to the government for ever. Might not such a charter be repealed on account of its unjust partiality? Should not the taxes be laid as proportionably as it is possible upon all the subjects? Can the king absolutely give up the rights of one part of his subjects to the other, any more than he can justly say, that when the parliament lays a tax of 4*s*. in the pound, Middlesex shall pay nothing for ever, because the trade at London brings in an immense revenue to the government? If these queries recommend themselves to your reason, sir, is it not evident that Dr. Price's argument can be properly retorted, and that he is equally mistaken, whether he appeals to “charters,” or to “a higher source?”

Pass we on to his doctrine concerning the origin of power. Page 69, you introduce him as speaking thus: “I am sensible that all I have been saying would be very absurd, were the opinions just, which some have maintained concerning the origin of government. According to these opinions, government is not the creature of the people, or the result of a convention between them and their rulers: but there are certain men who possess in themselves, independently on the will of the people, a right of governing them, which they derive from the Deity.” From this quotation it

is evident, that, according to Doctor Price's principles and your own, "government is the creature of the people." In full opposition to this doctrine, I assert, that government is the creature of God. It is as absurd to say that government is the creature of the people, as to maintain that religion and marriage are the creatures at the people. All that I can reasonably grant the doctor is, that as adultery and fornication, superstition and idolatry, are the creatures of immoral and irreligious men; so bad government, which includes confusion and tyranny, is the creature of wicked men.

Government is not less necessary in the moral world, than the subordinate motion of the planets in the natural. As God appointed the greater luminaries to rule the day and the night; so he appointed the higher powers to rule the less. When he manifested himself to rationals by his works or his word, and impressed their minds with a sense of their high obligations to him, he instituted religion. When he said, "I will make man a help meet for him," and joined Adam and Eve together in their human capacity, bidding them increase and multiply, he instituted marriage. And when he said to them, in their regal capacity, "Have dominion;" he delegated governing power, and instituted government on earth; or, to speak more properly, he caused that celestial plant to take root in paradise; whence, with divers degrees of degeneracy, it has overspread the civilised parts of the earth. If this be the case, is not Doctor Price under a capital mistake when he makes government "the creature of the people?" And does he not flatly contradict St. James, who says, "Do not err: every good gift [and consequently government, one of the best public gifts] is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights?"

You will probably endeavour to render this doctrine odious by insinuating, that it makes the people altogether passive in matters of government, religion, and marriage. Nay, Doctor Price does it already where he says, that, according to the scheme he opposes, some men possess a right of governing "independently on the will of the people." This assertion is true in one sense, and false in another. It is true that the higher power must govern the less, and that sovereigns have a right of ruling their subjects for good, "independently on the will of the people." That is, supposing the people wantonly dethroned their sovereigns, to set up anarchy on the ruins of every legislature; it is true that such sovereigns would still have a right to rule such unruly subjects, just as a captain, against whom his soldiers wantonly rise, has still a right to command them, whether they will be commanded or not. If this were not true, rebellion and treason were no sin at all; the heinousness of those crimes consisting in a wanton resisting of a power, which possesses a right of governing us, whether we will be governed or not. But if Doctor Price intimates that our doctrine supposes the will of the people has absolutely no share in our doctrine of government, he greatly mistakes; for we think that the will of a majority of the people is indispensably necessary for the support of civil government in the state, as the will of a majority of the soldiers is necessary to the support of a military government in the army. Nevertheless, the consent of the people to be governed by their sovereign, and of the soldiers to be commanded by their general, is not the ground or origin of

the sovereign's and general's authority. It is only [*causa sane qua non*] a requisite without which sovereigns and generals cannot exercise their authority.

Some illustrations may help you to understand this nice point of doctrine. Men are bound to pay God a reasonable service, whether they will or not. A wife is bound to obey her husband in all reasonable things, whether willingly or unwillingly. And subjects are bound to obey their sovereign in all reasonable and lawful things, however averse they may be to it. Nor is it less absurd to make a lawful sovereign's claim to the obedience of his subjects depend upon their will, than to make the right which a husband has of ruling his wife depend upon her caprice, or the right which God has to our adoration turn upon our consent. Nevertheless, if wives will absolutely refuse to submit to their husbands, sinners to their God, and subjects to their king, they can shake off the yoke of subjection, and affect domestic, religious, and civil independence. But then the purposes of marriage, religion, and government, are defeated, and a threefold rebellion takes place.

It will be proper here to trace back to its source the error about liberty, which Dr. Price has adopted from Rousseau, the great Geneva patriot; a fatal error this, by which that fanciful politician has kindled the flame of discord in his own country. This error consists in inferring that, because a savage, who lives alone in a wood, is his own governor, and can legislate for himself, a man who lives in civil society can do the same. But is not this as absurd as to suppose that because a man who is not listed, and of course is under no military government, can go backward or forward as he pleases; therefore a soldier in the field of battle has a right to legislate for himself, and advance or retire, just when he thinks proper?

I grant, that if a number of savages, living like wild beasts, without religion, marriage, and government, could be prevailed on to enter upon a religious, conjugal, and civil life, among all the religions, women, and governments which they could choose, they might undoubtedly choose those which they thought best. This, after a close inquiry, would be both their right and their duty. And suppose they had mistaken idolatry for religion, an incestuous union for marriage, and tyranny for government; they would be bound to alter their plan, because such capital mistakes are destructive of the salutary ends proposed in *religion*, *marriage*, and *government*. Again: when they had agreed to embrace a religious, conjugal, and civil life, they might agree to worship God standing or kneeling, in open air, or in a place of worship, in hymns or in prayers, &c. They might agree to marry before two witnesses, or two hundred, and to do it by giving and receiving a ring, or only by joining hands. And they might embrace a monarchical, aristocratical, or democratical government; or they might, as the English have done, combine those three sorts of governments, and submit at once to a king, a house of lords, and a house of commons. But if they had once espoused a true religions lawful wives, and a lawful government, they would sin against God, their neighbour, and their own souls; they would be guilty of impiety, adultery, and rebellion, if they wantonly changed their religion, their wives, and their sovereign.

The reason is evident: men who never had any religion, wife, or sovereign, are tied to no religion, wife, or sovereign. But as soon as they are bound by sacramental ordinances to profess a certain religion; by conjugal promises to cleave to a certain woman; and by oaths of allegiance to submit to a certain sovereign; they are highly guilty if they break through their engagements without a capital reason. I say without a capital reason, because as God allows divorce in case of undeniable adultery, so he permits our renouncing a Church undeniably and capitally corrupt, and our withdrawing from a government undeniably and capitally tyrannical. I lay a peculiar emphasis upon the words undeniably and capitally, to make room for the Scriptural doctrine which you advance, page 66, "The personal vices of our governors, and any slight error in their administration, will not justify our resisting them;" much less will an imaginary error, or a groundless suspicion, do it. And of this nature are undoubtedly the American conceits, that reasonable, legal taxes are not due by subjects to the supreme power which protects them; that a direct and equal representation in parliament is constitutionally necessary to the lawfulness of a money bill; and that the British legislature uses the colonists in a tyrannical manner, because it insists upon satisfaction for the depredations wantonly committed by the mobbing Bostonians. From the whole, I hope I may safely conclude, that the foundation of Dr. Price's peculiar patriotism is laid in a gross mistake; a mistake which consists in confounding the lawless liberty of a savage, who lives under no sort of government, with the lawful liberty of a subject who is protected by a civil government; and that government, instead of being the creature of the people, or the result of a convention between them and their rulers, is the creature of God, and (when considered in the theory) is the cause, and not the result, of such a convention as the doctor speaks of.

Page 69, you continue to quote him thus: "It is a doctrine which avowedly subverts civil liberty." No; it is a doctrine which avowedly secures a due submission to the governors that guard our civil liberty. "It represents mankind as a body of vassals, formed to descend like cattle from one set of owners to another, who have an absolute dominion over them. It is a wonder that those who view their species in a light so humiliating, should ever be able to think of themselves without regret and shame." This argument appears to me illogical and invidious. (1.) *Illogical*. Logic forbids us to alter the terms of a proposition. This Dr. Price does when he substitutes the words "absolute dominion," for reasonable dominion, which our doctrine requires. I am so far from asserting that human sovereigns have an "absolute dominion" over their subjects, that I steadily oppose the pretended orthodoxy of the men who ascribe such a dominion to God. I need not inform either you, sir, or Dr. Price, that there are divines in England who teach that God's dominion over his unborn creatures is so absolute, that he not only can, but does absolutely reprobate some of them, and appoint them to unavoidable and eternal ruin, before they hang yet at their mothers' breasts; nor need I remind you that, in opposition to these men, I assert that God's sovereignty, far from being thus absolute, is always circumscribed by his goodness, wisdom, and justice. (2.) The doctor's argument is, I fear, invidious. What would he think of my candour, if, treading in his steps, I reflected on the

subordination of wives to their husbands, soldiers to their generals, flocks to their pastors, servants to their masters, and creatures to their Creator, in the same manner in which he reflects on the subordination of subjects to their sovereigns? I shall apply his argument only to the case of married women, thus: “The doctrine of the reasonable dominion, which all husbands have over their wives, represents womankind as a body of vassals. And those who marry two or three husbands, one after another, are formed to descend like cattle from one owner to another, who has an absolute dominion over them. It is a wonder that those who view their sex in a light so humiliating, should ever be able to think of themselves without regret and shame.” For my part, far from being brought over to American patriotism by this logic, I think it is a wonder that reasonable and good men should ever be able to think, without regret and shame, upon the public encomiums and rewards with which they have crowned such illogical and dangerous arguments.

The rest of your quotation from Dr. Price is an insinuation that arts and sciences flourish no more in a country where the people submit to a monarch who will be obeyed, whether high republicans will submit or not. The whole of his argument is summed up in these concluding lines: “With what lustre do the ancient free states of Greece shine in the annals of the world! How different is that country now, under the great Turk! the difference between a country inhabited by men, and by brutes, is not greater.” I am not for an absolute monarchy. I repeat it, the English constitution, which places the legislative power in a king, a body of patrician senators, and a house of plebeian lawgivers, appears to me the most perfect upon earth; because it collects in one political focus all the advantages of the French monarch, the Venetian aristocracy and the new American democracy. Nevertheless, as a lover of truth and matter of fact, I shall venture to propose some queries relative to Dr. Price's insinuation. What people are more self governed, or more free from supreme authority, than the Hottentots; and what people can come nearer than they to the wildness and stupidity of brutes? Were not the Lacedemonians, with all the ado they made about liberty, surprisingly regardless of arts and sciences? Did not learning so flourish in Egypt and Babylon, under absolute princes, that the Greeks formerly went thither for improvement, as we now do to our renowned universities? When did arts and sciences flourish more in Judea, than in Solomon's reign; and whoever was a more absolute monarch? When did they reach a higher perfection in Rome, than under the reign of Augustus? And yet Augustus was a despot. What king ever ruled the French with a higher hand than Louis XIV? And was it not under his reign that the French literature shone in her meridian glory? When did Russia emerge out of a sea of barbarity and rude ignorance? Was it not when Peter the Great, her despotic emperor, lent her his powerful hand? And do not at this day arts and sciences continue to make rapid progress there, under the patronage of the present despotic empress? What people are under a more absolute government than the Prussians? And in what part of Germany do the “belles lettres” flourish more than in Prussia? If Dr. Price do these hints justice, he will own that a high monarchical government is at least as favourable to the improvement of arts and sciences, as a high republican

administration. But I repeat it, the middle, constitutional way is preferable to both these extremes.

Page 73, you favour me with another quotation from Dr. Price. The doctrine of it centres in the last paragraph, which runs thus:-"All delegated power must be subordinate and limited." Granted. All governing power is delegated from the King of kings, and therefore it is subordinate to him, and is limited by the bounds which he has fixed, that is, by reason and Scripture, and the apparent good of the people. The doctor goes on: "If omnipotence can, with any sense, be ascribed to a legislature, it must be lodged where all legislative power originates, that is, in the people."

This is a groundless supposition, which the doctor and you take for granted; a mischievous supposition, which is directly contrary to Scripture and reason. And first, to Scripture: "Put then in mind [says the apostle] to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates." And why Christians are to be thus subject, he informs us where he says that "the powers that be are ordained of God, [not of the people; and that] they who resist, resist the ordinance of God," and not of the people. A people who have no governors, may, indeed, choose their governors, just as a single woman may choose a husband; but the authority of the governors, once chosen, depends upon the people no more than the authority of a husband depends upon his wife, though she choose him preferably to all other men; no more than the legislative authority of our plebeian lawgivers depends upon the freeholders or burgesses who elected them preferably to other gentlemen.

This will probably offend our republican levellers, who fancy they are all born legislators, and can confer the power of legislation on the members of the house of commons, just as the king can confer the honour of knighthood upon a gentleman. But I must speak the truth, and do my subject justice, whoever is displeased at me for it. And I am ready to defend the following proposition against all our levellers and mistaken patriots. The people, that is, the governed, can no more create governing or legislative power, and bestow it upon the members of parliament whom they choose, than the aldermen, who have the right of choosing a mayor, can create a mayoralty; no more than the women, who have the right of choosing a husband, can create masculine supremacy; no more than the servants who have chosen a master, can create masterly power; or the soldiers, who choose to list under this or that captain, rather than another, can create the military authority to which they submit.

You possibly reply, What, is not Edmund Burke, Esq., my representative? laid not I choose him to represent me in parliament? Did not I invest him with my legislating power? And do not I, in his person, share in the government of Great Britain? Indeed you do not, sir, any more than I partake of the royal dignity in the person of the king. Permit me to hand you out of your imaginary paradise of legislation, by the following important distinction:-Every member of the house of commons has two characters. The first is that of representative of the commons of all the British empire in general, and of a certain borough or shire in particular. The second and nobler character of a

member of parliament is that of representative of God himself. According to the former character, he is an agent of the people: but with respect to the latter, he is, in his degree, the substitute of God. According to the former capacity, he spreads before the legislature the wants or wishes of the people in general, and of his borough or shire in particular; and, according to the latter capacity, he, in his degree, makes laws, if the majority of the legislating body concur with him.

Should you say that this is a political refinement, which originates from my fancy, I reply, that it is a solid distinction, which has its source in the very nature of things: and I prove it by a parallel case, which will strike you so much the more, as it is probably your own. The majority of a certain congregation of Protestants in Bristol expressed a desire to have you for their pastor, and upon this title you were ordained. But does it follow that your authority to preach the Gospel ascends from your flock to you? If your congregation insisted upon your preaching to them smooth things, and prophesying deceits, because they chose you to be their minister, would you not directly convince them of their folly, by a distinction similar to mine? Would you not say, Gentlemen, though I am your minister, and though I was ordained in consequence of your suffrages, yet, now I am ordained, I have an authority which you never gave, nor can give. I am the minister of God, as well as your pastor. My commission to preach the Gospel I have received from Christ, and not from you; and by order of that commission, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, I must preach to you severe as well as soothing truths. Apply this, sir, to our political question, and you will see that the members of parliament, in their capacity of legislators, are no more authorised by the people to make laws, and bound to vote according to the directions of their constituents, than you and I receive authority from our flocks to preach the (gospel, and are bound in the delivery of our message to the people to consult their various humours; because legislators derive their authority from God, just as Gospel ministers receive their commission from Christ. Were this observation properly attended to, our lawgivers would study Christian politics with assiduity, that they might fully understand the will of God, the supreme Lawgiver whom they represent, and to whom they shall one day give a strict account for the precious talent of legislation with which they are entrusted; and Dr. Price would no longer poison the minds of thousands with the antichristian doctrine that every man is, or ought to be, his own legislator, and that legislative power ascends from the people, and governing power from the governed.

Secondly. As this notion is contrary to Scripture, so it is to reason. For reason dictates, that if governing power came from the people, the people might, whenever they pleased, choose to disobey their governors, and would have a right to do so. A parallel case will make you sensible of the truth of this assertion. Supreme, legislative authority belongs to me within the narrow compass of my family, as you suppose that it belongs to the people throughout the wide extent of the British dominions. I may, if I please, delegate to my servant the right of making house-hold regulations. And if I had delegated my right, and in consequence of this delegation my servant commanded me to breakfast at eight o'clock, is it not evident that, if I pleased, I

might instantly resume my delegated power, and say, You are only my representative; my authority exceeds yours; I insist upon breakfasting an hour later? Leaving the application of my simile to your good sense, I conclude, that whenever you and Dr. Price teach that the power of the governors originates from, or is delegated by the governed, you sap the foundation of all government, and indirectly bring in the lawless democracy which a sacred historian describes, where he says, “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”

But the doctor adds, “For their [the people’s] sakes government was instituted; and theirs is the only real omnipotence!” And what if it be, does this prove that governing power is delegated by the governed? Would not the meanest corporation in the kingdom dishonour itself, if it complimented me for saying military government is instituted for the sake of soldiers, and theirs is the only real omnipotence of the army; therefore the power of the general and other officers is delegated by, and originates from the soldiers. Equally conclusive, O ye American patriots, is your grand argument concerning the origin of power.

Page 76, introducing the doctor for the last time, you say: “To prove the right Great Britain has to tax America, it is very common to plead, We are the parent state. Hear Dr. Price upon this subject.”-“These are the magic words which have fascinated and misled us. The English came from Germany. Does that give the German states a right to tax us?” To this triumphant question I answer, No; because the Germans do not protect us: but if the German Diet had, to this day, kept up fleets to guard our coasts, and an army to fight our battles; and if we had always called the emperor of Germany our sovereign, had received his lieutenants as our governors, and admitted his coin as our lawful money, I would think it a great piece of disloyalty and injustice to refuse him a reasonable tribute. For protection and reasonable taxes are equivalent to each other, as the customer's money is equivalent to the tradesman's goods. Nor is it less unreasonable in the colonists, who have got their immense wealth under the protective wings of Great Britain, to refuse Great Britain the return of reasonable taxes, now they are able to pay them, than it would be in you to receive the goods of a mercer, and to refuse making him a proper acknowledgment by paying the reasonable bill he sends you, when he thinks you can discharge it without distressing yourself. And as it would be a shameful excuse in a gentleman to say to his tradesmen, who kindly delayed sending in their bills till he had received their rents, Why did you not send me your bills before? So it is an unjust excuse in the colonists to say to the protective power, Why did you not pass bills of internal taxation before the stamp act? For a just right, founded on the eternal nature and fitness of things, can never be lost, though it should never be exercised. If you pay your servant wages for fifty years, without ever commanding him to go on one single errand, and at last order him to do something which he is able to do, he cannot plead prescription with any decency. He would betray an ingratitude equal to his insolence, if he said, Sir, you never commanded me to go on your errands before, and therefore you have lost your claim to my obedience. Had such a servant a grain of modesty and duty, he would argue in a manner diametrically opposite; he would say, I am doubly bound

to go on all your errands to the utmost of my power. Your not calling upon me to exert my strength for you before, lays me under a double obligation to do it now with cheerfulness.

This brings to my mind another curious argument of Dr. Price. “Had the colonies [says he] been communities of foreigners, over whom we wanted to acquire dominion, &c, they [some Englishmen] are ready to admit that their resistance would have been just. In my opinion, this is the same with saving, that the colonists ought to be worse off than the rest of mankind, because they are our brethren.” To show the inconclusiveness of this argument I need only bring it to open light, thus: You have more right to command your own children and servants, than to command strangers; and therefore your own children and servants are worse off than strangers. Or thus: The British legislature has more right to tax British subjects than the subjects of France or Spain; and therefore British subjects are worse off than Frenchmen and Spaniards. The subjects of France and Spain would justly rise against British taxation, and therefore the subjects of Great Britain may also justly rise against it. Or thus: Englishmen have more authority over their wives than over the wives of the Turks; therefore English women are worse off than the rest of womankind, yea, than the wives of Turks, because they are our wives. I am grieved to see a doctor in divinity prostitute, by such arguments, Christianity, morality, and logic to the infatuation of a restless, levelling patriotism.

The preceding argument of Dr. Price is introduced by the levelling proposition which follows:-

“Unless different parts of the same community are united by an equal representation, all such authority [that is, all the authority exercised by one part of the community over the other] is inconsistent with the principles of civil liberty,” and “cannot be distinguished from the servitude of one” part “to another.” If this doctrine be true, are not the lord mayor, the aldermen, and the freemen of the city of London, chargeable with tyranny; as well as the king, the parliament, and the electors of Great Britain? Is not Middlesex filled with slaves, as well as America? And may I not address the London patriots thus:-Gentlemen, if Dr. Price's levelling doctrine be false, why do you honour and reward him for propagating it? And if it be true, why do you not follow it? Why do you not begin to level authority in your own jurisdiction, as you want the king and parliament to do in theirs? In a word, why do you not unite the different parts of your community by an equal representation? Your community is made up of two sorts of men: freemen, and men who have not the freedom of your city. These, who make by far the greater part of your community, have no share in the government of it. By keeping the right of legislating for the city in your own hands, you exclude them from an equal representation, and according to the admired principles of your champion, your authority cannot be distinguished from the servitude of one part of the city to the other; from the servitude of non-freemen to yourselves; and therefore you yourselves are as much involved in the guilt of enslaving your fellow creatures, as your scheme supposes the king and parliament

to be. Let your principles of civil liberty take place at home: level authority in the city; or, for decency's sake, never more reflect upon our legislators because they do not level it in the empire.

Dr. Price presents us with another bold plea for levelling patriotism; and it is so much the more curious, as it is a perfect jest upon the freedom of the city of London with which the patriots have presented him. This plea runs thus: "We [non-voters] submit to a parliament that does not represent us, and therefore they [the colonists] ought. How strange an argument is this! It is saying we want liberty, and therefore they ought to want it. Suppose it true, that they are indeed contending for a better constitution of government, and more liberty than we enjoy: ought this to make us angry? Is it generous, because we are in a sink, to endeavour to draw them into it? Ought we not rather to wish earnestly that there may be at least one free country left upon earth, to which we may flee when venality, luxury, and vice have completed the ruin of liberty here?" I own to you, sir, that if I were the author of Dr. Price's Observations, and the patriots of London rewarded me for my book, by giving me the freedom of their city, I would reject that honour with detestation, and say, Gentlemen, what do you mean by presenting me with the freedom of your city? Is not your intended favour a glaring proof that you enslaved me before, as you do all my fellow citizens who are not freemen? Will you bribe me into tyranny by a gold box? Far from accepting a place in your partial legislature, I will excite my enslaved fellow citizens to rise against you. I will contend for a better constitution of city government, and more liberty than we enjoy: ought this to make you angry? Is it generous, because the non-freemen are in a sink, to endeavour to keep them in it? Ought we not rather to wish earnestly, that there may at least be one free city left in Great Britain, to which we may flee when venality, luxury, and vice have completed the ruin of liberty in the kingdom? Till Dr. Price acts in this manner, and the city patriots recant their encomiums of his book, or abolish the distinction between freemen and non-freemen in their community, they must give the unprejudiced world leave to consider them as inconsistent men, who say and do not: as partial men, who lay upon other communities heavy burdens, which they will not suffer their own community to touch: and as restless, imperious subjects, who insist upon our legislators levelling authority in America, when they themselves will not level it in England; no, not in the city of London, where American patriotism has set up its standard. But I return to taxes.

You will perhaps object, that if the colonists once owed taxes to the British legislature for protection, yet they owe them now no more, because all ties and natural contracts are now broken; the mother country having turned her protection into acts of open hostility; I reply, that Great Britain chastises the colonies for their disobedience with the reluctance of a fond parent, who, when she corrects an undutiful child, is ready to take his part against a murderer. Were it not for the terror of our fleets, some greedy European powers would, perhaps, at this very time, fall upon the colonies, and endeavour to annex them to their dominions. Again: if your servant or your son had abused you, and you gave him correction to bring him to a

sense of his duty, would he not add folly to wickedness if he said, Sir, my obligation to obey you ceases; for instead of using me as a master, or a father, you prepare to correct me; nay, you strike me! Every relation, therefore, is now at an end between us. You have cut the last knot which tied me to you, and I will now fight you as an open enemy. This immoral excuse brings to my remembrance the obstinacy of some incorrigible men, whom David describes thus: “The wrath of God came upon them” for their disobedience, “and slew the fattest of them. For all this they sinned still-yea, they sinned yet more against him”-their Divine Sovereign. But I hope better things of our pious American brethren. Notwithstanding the unwearied endeavours of some patriots to confirm them in their unnatural resistance, they will, I trust, submit to God and the king.

Page 76, you continue to quote the doctor thus: “Children having no property, and being incapable of guarding themselves, the Author of nature has committed the care of them to their parents, and subjected them to their absolute authority. But there is a period when, having acquired property, and a capacity of judging for themselves, they become independent agents; and when, for this reason, the authority of their parent ceases, and becomes nothing, but the respect and influence due to benefactors.” This argument is as illogical as it is ingenious: the flaw of it consists in confounding the double relation which the colonists sustain, namely, that of sons, and that of subjects of Great Britain; granting, therefore, to Dr. Price, that according to the law of nature, there is a time when children become independent by acquiring property and wisdom; yet this is not the case with respect to subjects; but whatever be their wealth and age, and whatever capacity they have of judging for themselves, they continue to be dependent agents; being still bound to obey, in all reasonable things, the legislative power under which Providence has placed them. The plausible argument of your second, when touched with the finger of sound logic, shrinks, therefore, into a sophism as glaring as that which follows: when the prince of Wales shall be of age, he shall be independent on his father, and therefore he shall also be independent on the king. He shall have the liberty of taking a ride, whether his father consent or not, and therefore he shall also have the liberty of commanding the fleet and the army, whether his king consent or not. If you would be frightened at my wickedness, were I to stir up the prince to rebellion by such sophistry; why do you recommend as “excellent,” a pamphlet which supports the American revolt by so weak an argument?

You continue to quote the doctor: “Supposing, therefore, that the order of nature, in establishing the relation between parents and children, ought to have been the rule of our conduct to the colonies, we should have been gradually relaxing our authority as they grew up.” Another great mistake this, of which you will be sensible if you apply the doctor’s simile to the case in hand, thus:-If the sovereign ought to consider the colonists as the children of Great Britain, and to treat them in a parental manner; as they grew up in power he should have been gradually lessening their burdens. But is not the inference big with absurdity? Because parents lay no burden upon a sucking child, does it follow that they are to lay gradually less and less upon him as he grows

up? Does not every unprejudiced person see that, if a parent wants his children's assistance, he may increase, and has a right, as they grow up, gradually to increase the little burdens he wants them to carry; and that nothing would be more absurd than "gradually to relax his authority" in this respect, when their increasing strength begins to render that authority valuable? But supposing parents ought to require less and less of their children as they grow up, does it follow that sovereigns ought to do so too with respect to their subjects? Is there a legislature in all the universe so far sunk in stupidity as to say to their subjects, You have paid taxes to the sovereign for above a thousand years, you are now grown up into an ancient kingdom; the American patriots have insinuated that, as our subjects are our children, we should gradually relax our authority of taxing them as they grow up, and therefore we enact that you shall pay but one half of our taxes for fifty years, and in a hundred years you shall pay nothing, for the government will be old enough to support itself without any taxes at all: so shall we show the world that we are grey-headed lawgivers, that you "are no children," and that our once childish constitution is grown to manly wisdom and strength. Such are the reasonings of Dr. Price's "most excellent pamphlet!" Can feathers be lighter than these arguments, with which the American patriots hope to batter down British patriotism? Feathers however may do mischief, when they are closely compacted in a strong paper vehicle; when they are rendered ponderous by the weight of a gold box, and when busy prejudice hurls them through town and country with incredible ardour.

This part of the American controversy is so important, that I beg leave to throw light upon it by an apposite illustration. I live in a parish where the wealth of several men consists in the number and strength of their children. A poor collier has, it may be, five or six sons. He works night and day to maintain them, in hopes that they will one day help to maintain him, and borrows money to build a house; flattering himself that by the assistance of his children, as they grow up, he shall soon discharge the debt. When they are eight years of age, they get him a groat a day; at fourteen, a shilling; and at nineteen, eighteen pence: so that the poor man has a fair prospect of being soon, as he says, "on a level with the world." But alas! His hope proves abortive: a busy body, an envious neighbour, or some designing person, poisons the minds of his dutiful children with the politics of Dr. Price, and says, Your father does not use you well. He is a tyrant. The stronger you grow, the more burdens he lays upon you; whereas he should lay less and less. You "are no children:" you can maintain yourselves, and spend your own money. If I were in your place, this very day I would leave the old man and set up for myself. Too many of these deluded youths have I seen, first using their parent ill through such mischievous insinuations; and then turning their back upon him, to go and squander in riot and bloody sports, the money which they should have applied to the discharge of the family debt, which was contracted to build the house where they have lived rent free all their lives.

If I blame this conduct in my young, undutiful parishioners, can I approve of it in my American fellow-subjects, who despise a legislative power possessed of royal, as well as parental authority? Is it right in them to turn their backs upon their mother

country when she groans under the weight of a debt, which has been in part contracted for their sake? And can we wonder enough at the conduct of Dr. Price, who tells us of “the ruin with which the national debt threatens us; a debt much heavier than that which, fifty years ago, the wisest men thought would necessarily sink us;” an immense debt which we have no fair prospect of discharging but by the prudent management of growing taxes, and by the loyal, filial, and brotherly assistance which we have a right to expect from the colonies; can we, I say, wonder enough at the strange conduct of Dr. Price, who, while he tries to frighten us with the awful aspect of this national debt, says all he can to render us odious and contemptible to the colonies, by whose friendly and proportionable help we are in hopes of discharging it?

This conduct of Dr. Price is so much the more surprising, as he intimates, in his conclusion, that “the debt of England, &c, might be acknowledged the debt of every individual part of the whole empire, Asia, as well as America, included.” For my part, supposing subjects had a right to retire from their sovereigns, as grown-up children have to leave their parents, I do not see how the colonies could in conscience desire to set up for themselves, and form a separate empire before they have helped their mother country to extricate herself out of the difficulty of her national debt; nor can I conceive how the sovereign could justly permit them to commence independent; because the strength and wealth of all the British empire are the double security on which thousands of people have placed either the whole or a part of their fortune in the stocks; and it would be wronging the public to let so considerable a part of that security, as America, be lost.

However, (says Dr. Price, who is always unhappily ingenious in finding fault with the sovereign’s conduct,) “had we nourished and favoured America, with a view to commerce, instead of considering it as a country to be governed, &c, a growing surplus in the revenue might have been gained, which, invariably applied to the gradual discharge of the national debt, would have delivered us from the ruin with which it threatens us.” “This trade [with the colonies] was not only an increasing trade, but it was a trade in which we had no rivals-a trade certain, constant, and uninterrupted.”

But why was this trade “an increasing trade, in which we had no rivals?” Was it not because the colonists were so taken up with clearing ground, planting, and building, that they had no time to apply themselves to the culture of less necessary arts? But now that their houses are built, their fields in proper order, and their numbers multiplying fast, they must either idly look one at another, or erect manufactures, and provide themselves with a hundred articles with which they have been supplied from England. So shall they themselves naturally become our “rivals” in manufactures, and the moment this is the case, our trade with them will naturally decrease, and Dr. Price's scheme for discharging the national debt will prove an idle speculation, unless we should act so tyrannical a part as to put a total stop to industry among them. Hence appears the propriety and necessity of internal taxes, in order to

obtain from them a revenue, which may be at once rational, Scriptural, constitutional, and sure.

Again: why has our trade with the colonies been hitherto “a trade certain, constant, and uninterrupted?” Was it not because Great Britain, by maintaining her supremacy over the colonies, could confine their trade and make it flow in British channels? If she give up her supremacy, will she be able to confine the colonies to trade with her, more than with France, Holland, or Spain? Is it not evident, that in the same year when she loses her supremacy, not only her American dominions and taxes, but likewise her American ports and trade will be lost for ever, unless the colonists can get more by us than by other nations? I should wonder that so obvious a thought escaped so penetrating a genius as Dr. Price; if I did not know that the peculiar patriotism, which I oppose, is so intent upon looking for defects in the constitution, and for blemishes in our governors, that it frequently overlooks the most glaring truths.

Return we now to your quotation, and let us see if the conclusion is preferable to the beginning. Dr. Price goes on: “But, like mad parents, we have done the contrary; and at the very time when our authority should have been most relaxed, we have carried it to the greatest extent, and exercised it with the greatest vigour. No wonder then that they [the colonists] have turned upon us, and obliged us to remember, that they are not children.” Bring the doctor's meaning to open light; unfold his argument, and you will find the following propositions, which may be considered as the political creed of Dr. Price and the American patriots: (1.) Parents who do not relax their authority of laying some easy burdens upon their children, as their children grow more able to bear such burdens, are “mad parents.” (2.) Our political parents, that is, our legislators, who have not relaxed their authority of laying some easy taxes upon their American children, as these children grew more able to pay such taxes, are “mad” legislators. (3.) When children grow up and have got strength enough to bear a little burden for their heavy-laden parents; and when such parents desire their children to give them some filial assistance, it is no wonder that grown-up children turn upon their parents, and oblige them “to remember that they are not children.” (4.) the colonies have now got strength enough to ease Great Britain by bearing some small proportion of the taxes with which she is loaded; and therefore it is no wonder that they turn, sword in hand, upon their mother country, and oblige her to remember that they are not children. Such is the manner in which a doctor in divinity enforces the fifth commandment!

If this doctrine shock you, sir, what would you think of it, were I to apply it to the character of subjects of Great Britain; a character this, which the colonists bear, as well as that of sons of Britons? In this view of things, the doctor's patriotic creed naturally swells with the following articles: (1.) A sovereign who does not relax his authority of laying reasonable taxes upon his subjects, as they grow more able to pay such taxes, acts like a “mad” sovereign. (2.) When subjects have got strength and wealth enough to pay such taxes, they may “turn upon” their sovereign, and oblige

him to remember that they are no impotent subjects. And lastly, to make an application of the whole, the king and parliament have acted like mad lawgivers, by laying a reasonable tax upon their American subjects; and the colonists only oppose madness, when they rise up in arms against their sovereign, rather than pay the reasonable tax laid upon them. If there be a grain of piety, morality, or good sense in one article of this patriotic creed, I consent to forfeit my claim to a grain of common sense.

Dr. Price may possibly attempt to prove that the last articles of this creed do not belong to his doctrine; for he insinuates that the colonists are not the subjects of Great Britain. Take his own words:-"The people of America are no more the subjects of the people of Great Britain, than the people of Yorkshire are the subjects of the people of Middlesex." This proposition is true, if the doctor by the people of Great Britain mean you, me, and our British fellow subjects. But who ever pretended that the colonists are the subjects of Yorkshiremen or Cornishmen? No Briton but the king can say to a colonist, You are my subject. And if George the Third has a right to say it to every colonist, it is only as he is the head and representative of the whole legislative power, and can say it to every Englishman. When we assert that the colonists are the subjects of Great Britain, we do not set ourselves above them. We only mean that they are under the legislative power of Great Britain ss well as we. And Dr. Price inadvertently grants it, when he adds, "They are our fellow subjects." For if they are our fellow subjects, they are bound to obey the British legislature as much as we are; as much at least as the body of non-voters in England; a countless body this, which far exceeds the number of all the American colonists, as appears from the account which Dr. Price himself gives us of the inequality of our representation; and the prodigious difference which the constitution makes between Briton and Briton, with regard to the privilege of voting at elections. "In Great Britain, (says he,) consisting of near six millions of inhabitants, five thousand seven hundred and twenty-three persons, most of them the lowest of the people, elect one half of the house of commons; three hundred and sixty-four votes choose the ninth part." According to this account, and that which in other places he gives us of the colonies, which he says consist of "near three millions of people," it follows that when the parliament taxes the non-voters in England, it taxes at least two millions of persons more than when it taxes all British America.

With respect to the prerogative which Britons, as a more ancient people, enjoy when they choose parliament men, it may be as reasonably and legally invested in an elder community of subjects, as a family prerogative is invested in an elder brother. Add to this, than by paying heavier taxes, we now make, and I hope shall always equitably make, a compensation to the colonies for the superior privileges annexed to our eldership. Nor is it more just in the colonies to levy war against Britons on the present occasion, than it would be in younger brothers to fall sword in hand upon their elder brother, because custom and law allow him peculiar rights necessary to support the dignity of their family, which, as the first-born son, he peculiarly represents.

Should you say that, according to this doctrine, the colonists lose the birthright transmitted to them, as sons of free born Englishmen, namely, the right of being their own legislators; a sacred right this, "without which government is a curse," and subjection "abject slavery;" I reply, that what the people of England never had, cannot be lost by the people of England, much less by the people of America. "What! (says your scheme) have not the voters in England the right of making their own laws?" No, sir, no more than angels in heaven, and Frenchmen on earth. "What! do we not choose our own representatives? And are not our representatives lawgivers?" Yes, sir, but they are not lawgivers, as they are our agents and representatives; but as they are the agents and representatives of the great Lawgiver, who ordains the powers that are. "However, they legislate in consequence of our choice." True; but not through any legislative power communicated to them by virtue of our choice. You rule your own wife, if you have one, in consequence of the choice she made of you for a husband; but not by any authority she conveyed to you. If you have sons, and give them the choice of half a dozen masters, he whom they choose acquires a right to command them in consequence of their choice, but not through any authority conveyed to him by virtue of that choice. The authority of commanding your sons must come from a higher source than their election. If they could bestow magisterial authority, they could resume it as often as they are inclined to play the truant. "What! according to the British constitution, is it not the prerogative of certain men, whom we call freeholders and burgesses, to give their vote to certain gentlemen, who, in consequence of those votes, are admitted as members of the house of commons, in which a large share of the legislative power is lodged?" True: this is a peculiarity of the British government, just as it is a peculiarity of the Church of England, that some men called rectors, vicars, and patrons, can give a student in divinity a title, in consequence of which he is invested with authority to be an ambassador of Christ, and to preach the Gospel. But observe! this authority comes not from the rector, vicar, or patron; it descends from Christ himself. If I fancied, that authority to preach the Gospel originates from me, because I can give a candidate for orders a title, in consequence of which he may be admitted into holy orders, and preach for me, and to me, I should betray my spiritual vanity in the Church, as much as those men betray their political pride in the state, who fancy that they are born legislators, and that they can convey the power of making laws to the gentlemen for whom they vote at an election, just as you can convey the authority of dressing your horse to the man whom you choose for your groom. I have dwelt the more upon this part of our controversy, because the notion of self government and self legislation naturally belong to all men in general, and to the people and colonies of Great Britain in particular, is the ωρωτονψευδος, the capital error, from which flows your American patriotism. The moment that error is discovered, this boasted virtue visibly degenerates into a vice compounded of one or more of the following ingredients-inattention; prejudice, ignorance, conceit, pride, ambition, envy, refractoriness, and civil Antinomianism.

We have seen, in the preceding letter, how greatly you have wronged the sovereign in pointing out the cause of the war with America; let us see if Dr. Price does the

king and parliament more justice than you do. “The present contest (says his pamphlet) is for dominion on the side of the colonies, as well as on ours; but with this difference: we are struggling for dominion over others; they for self dominion, the noblest of all blessings. I am persuaded, that were pride, the lust of dominion, exterminated from every heart among us, &c, this quarrel would soon be ended. To sheath our swords in the bowels of our brethren-for no other end than to oblige them to acknowledge our supremacy: how horrid! This is the cursed ambition that led a Cesar, and an Alexander, and many other mad conquerors, to attack peaceful communities, and to lay waste the earth. This war can have no other object than the extension of power.” These patriotic assertions appear to me big with absurdity and gross injustice. Does Great Britain aim at an “extension of power,” when she protects our injured merchants, her oppressed subjects? Have not all sovereigns the right to defend wronged innocence? Nay, is it not their bounden duty so to do with respect to their own subjects? Does our legislature “extend her power” when she taxes the Americans? Has not Dr. Price himself granted that they were taxed in the late reign? And does not his own conscience declare, that protective powers have the right of reasonably taxing the protected; and that this right has been enjoyed by all sovereigns in all ages?

Again: if the king of Great Britain is the lawful sovereign of the colonies, and has as much right to command them as to command us; if all the men in power among them before the revolt took oaths of fidelity to him, as the king of Great Britain, who is inseparably connected with his British parliament; and if they have always submitted to British laws, and “always looked to this country as their home,” if this is the case, I say, can any thing be more unreasonable and unjust than to pour floods of odium upon the efforts which the sovereign makes to bring back the colonists to their former allegiance; and to compare those efforts to the lust of power which intoxicated Cesar and Alexander, when without any provocation they attacked and conquered foreign kingdoms? If a second Ket should arise in England, affect independency, play the tyrant, draw all the country people from their work, and engage half a dozen counties to revolt, would any man, except an American patriot, dare to say that it would be “savage folly to address the throne” for the suppression of the growing mischief? Could you insinuate, with candour, that if the king exerted his power on such an occasion, he would act the part of a “mad conqueror?” And would not your blood run cold, if you heard a Christian doctor put this wild plea into the mouth of a Ket and his adherents: “O king, the spirit of domination and the lust of power make thee mad. Thou wilt sheath thy sword in our bowels, and spread misery among a happy people for no other end than to oblige them to acknowledge thy supremacy. We confess that the present contest is for dominion on our side as well as on thine; but with this essential difference; thou art struggling for dominion over others; we for self dominion, the noblest of all blessings?”

This seditious sophism is sufficient to fill us with a just detestation of Dr. Price's politics. But a scheme which has a direct tendency so to level authority, as to subvert all government, and abolish all subordination in the universe-such a scheme, I say,

cannot be too strongly opposed: it should be totally extirpated. Archimedes said once, “Give me a point on which I may fix my engine, and I will move the earth out of its place.” And I may say, Give me Dr. Price's political principles, and I will move all kings out of their thrones, and all subjection out of the world. To convince you of the truth of this assertion, I need only work a moment his patriotic engine in your presence.

The collector of the land tax is at the door: fired with Dr. Price’s patriotism, I run to him and say, Sir, I am a freeman. You shall treat me neither as a beast, nor as a slave. I never yet chose a parliament man in all my life; nor will I be taxed till I am directly and adequately represented in parliament. And suppose I were, I could not in conscience pay taxes to maintain a government, which enslaves millions of my free-born fellow creatures, who are taxed without being directly or adequately represented. Beside, I pay parish rates, and the levies of my hundred; and must I submit to be triple taxed? Will those who send you insist upon such a supremacy over me, as will leave me nothing that I can call my own? Would you let me alone and suffer me to enjoy in security my property and parish government, instead of disturbing me, I would thank and bless you. But if you will not, I have a right to emancipate myself as soon as I can: I will show you, that I and my hundred have the right of legislating for ourselves. This blessing, when lost, we have always a right to resume: and I resume it now in the name of all the non-electors in the parish and hundred, who are the majority, and who should be as glad as myself to pay taxes only when they have a mind. *Dulce pro parochia mori!* But suppose they choose to be enslaved, I do not. Dr. Price has converted me to patriotism. I act according to his admired doctrine, which is summed up in the following propositions: “In a free state every man is his own legislator.” “To be free, is to be guided by one’s own will; and to be guided by the will of another is the character of servitude.” “As far as, in any instance the operation of any cause comes in to restrain the power of self government, [whether it be in an individual, in a parish, hundred, colony, province, principality, or kingdom,] so far slavery is introduced. Nor do I think that a preciser idea than this of liberty or slavery can be formed.” According to this doctrine, I can not only refuse paying taxes with the majority of my hundred, but alone, by virtue of my own personal right. For if every man is his own legislator, it is plain that he can make his own laws. Now, as I am a man, I am my own legislator; and as such I enact, that I ought not to pay the tax you demand of me. Should you say that the parliament has enacted I shall pay it, I reply, (in Mr. Evans’ and Dr. Price’s words,) “What a man has is absolutely his own: no man has a right to take it from him without his consent, expressed by himself, or by his own representative,” that is, by a representative of his own choosing. What authority has the parliament to cede my property? “Such a cession being inconsistent with the unalienable rights of human nature, either binds not at all, or binds only the individuals who made it,” and the men who chose such individuals for their representatives. This is not all: Dr. Price asserts that “all taxes are free gifts.” And can any thing be more absurd than to demand a free gift, as if it were a just debt; especially considering that I never promised such a gift, no, nor the majority of the parish, the hundred, the county, or the kingdom to which I belong; the

majority not having sent any member to parliament? A free gift is to be given freely; and whoever will take it from us against our own will, contradicts himself, tries to enslave us, stabs our vitals, and commits robbery. And is not such a gross abuse of power sufficient to rouse me into resistance? Beside, why should I be so much afraid of raising a rebellion? Does not Dr. Price say, “He who will examine the history of the world will find there has generally been more reason for complaining that they have been too patient, than that they have been turbulent and rebellious?” Should you object that, upon this footing, all the non-voters will soon rise against the voters and their representatives, and that the unity of the kingdom will be broken: I reply in the doctor's pious language, “If in order to preserve the unity, one half of it [the realm] must be enslaved to the other half, let it, in the name of God, want unity.” “Of such liberty, as I have now described, it is impossible that there should be an excess.” And I apply to your tyrannical demand the patriotic query, which he makes with respect to the sovereign’s claims on the province of Massachusett's Bay: “Can there be any Englishman, who, were it his own case, would not sooner lose his heart's blood, than yield to claims so pregnant with evils, and destructive to every thing that can distinguish a free man from a slave?”

Nothing can exceed the wickedness of this patriotic speech of mine about taxes, except the insolence of that which follows. I suppose it was made by Satan to the Son of God, when, according to Milton’s fancy, they encountered each other in the heavenly plains. I meet thee in the field (says the fiend) to defend my freedom, and assert the liberty of these heavenly legions. Before I pierce thy side with my spear, let me pierce thy conscience with my arguments. “In a free state [much more in heaven, where liberty is perfect] every one is his own legislator. To be free is to be guided by one's own will; and to be guided by the will of another, is the character of servitude.” They call thee Messiah the Prince; but forasmuch as thou sayest, “I do nothing of myself,” and art not ashamed to add, " Father, not my will, but thine be done," and to teach the mean spirits who follow thee to pray, “Thy will be done in heaven and on earth;” it is plain that thou “restrainest the power of self government,” and “introducest slavery.” Thou art lost to all sense of heavenly patriotism. Enslaved thyself, thou comest to damp the noble flame of liberty which glows in these angelical bosoms; and to make us wear the badge of the most abject slavery as thou dost. Thou proud and base tool of tyranny! Can thy reason blame us for our noble struggle, since we are not allowed to have our natural right of legislating for ourselves? And if those dastardly spirits who compose thy hosts say, “Neither have most of us;” I reply, “Then you so far want liberty, and your language is, We are not free, why will they be free?” “I have no other notion of slavery, but being bound by a law to which I do not consent.” Now I do not consent to the law which says, Thou shalt obey thy Divine Sovereign, and honour thy heavenly Father: I never made that law. And suppose I and my legions had made it, we have a right to repeal it. For “government is an institution for the benefit of the people governed, which they have power to model as they please.” “Liberty may be enjoyed in every possible degree.” “Liberty is most complete and perfect, when the people have most of a share in government, and of a controlling power over the persons by whom it is

administered." Now thou and thy Father are the persons by whom heavenly government is administered. "A spirit of domination, and lust of power, kindle thee into rage. The only object of the war thou wagest against us, is the extension of dominion." Thou wilt maintain thy usurped supremacy over us: and we will maintain our native or acquired supremacy over ourselves. The present contest is for dominion on thy side as well as ours: but (like a tyrant) thou art struggling for dominion over others; and we (like free spirits) are struggling for self dominion, the noblest of all blessings. "Of such liberty [or self dominion] as I have now described, it is impossible that there should be an excess." I, and these brave legions, will therefore fight for it, at the hazard of our happiness and glory. Self government and supremacy in hell, are preferable to servile obedience and subordinate grandeur in heaven.

I need not tell you, sir, that this speech of the patriotic seraph is formed upon the principles laid down in Dr. Price's pamphlet. You easily discern not only his sentiments, but his very words and doctrine. Should you reply, that the case of creatures is different from that of subjects, because creatures owe more to God than subjects to an earthly sovereign; I grant it, and assert, that on this account obedience to the true God is prescribed in the first table of the law, and reasonable subjection to our rightful sovereign in the second table. The former is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it in dignity and importance. Therefore, says St. Peter, "Fear God and honour the king." Give both God and Cesar their due. Subject yourselves to both in their place.

To return: if your doctrine directly or indirectly strikes at the authority of God and Cesar, as the two preceding speeches show it does, how dangerous is your patriotism! I shall not, however, brand it with the epithets which Dr. Price applies to the conduct of his governors, and loyal fellow subjects; nor shall I borrow from him the words "cursed ambition-madness-rage-savage folly," &c. But with a degree of the liberty with which Paul withstood Peter to the face, because he was to be blamed, I shall venture to expostulate a moment both with him and with you. You are not only men, but Britons, patriots, Christians, and ministers of the Gospel. But which of these names do you adorn, when you teach the wretched politics, which, I trust, I have refuted in these pages? If your capital arguments are irrational, have you shown yourselves men? If they sap the foundation of civil government, have you shown yourselves civilized men? If they are unconstitutional, betray Great Britain, tend to rend from her all her American dominions, and pour undeserved contempt upon our rightful lawgivers, have you shown yourselves Britons and patriots, deservedly so called? If they subvert an important part of Christ's doctrine, and defeat the effect of his loyal example, have you shown yourselves Christians? If they tend to kindle the fire of national discontent, to make uneasy subjects flee to arms, or rebellious subjects grasp, with new transports of enthusiasm, the swords which they wantonly bathe in floods of British blood, have you acted the part of preachers of the Gospel of peace? Have you shown that you either fear God or honour the king? If you have called all the powers of sophistry and oratory to your help, to hinder millions of subjects from paying obedience to God by rendering unto Cesar the things which are

Cesar's, have you not blown the trumpet of discord? And have you not sounded a false alarm through the British dominions, by representing our constitution as "almost lost" through the "weakness" and "violence" of our governors, when, if there is any likelihood of its being lost, the danger springs from the weakness or violence of the patriots, whom your publications intoxicate and "kindle into rage?" And shall I praise you for such a conduct? No: whoever they are that admire you as bold spirited citizens, I shall take the liberty to consider you as rash, injudicious patriots, who have more wit than prudence, and intend far better than you perform.

Should you say that you have the approbation of the minority in parliament, and of the patriots in the city of London; I reply, that the city patriots will not be your comforters on your death beds, nor your judges in the great day. And what if the majority of mankind were on your side; could they cause a doctrine which is irrational, unscriptural, and unconstitutional, to be agreeable to reason, Scripture, and the constitution? Permit me, then, my dear, mistaken fellow labourers in the Gospel, to beseech you to review our controversy, to study Christian politics, to drop your prejudices against our governors, to embrace genuine patriotism, and to second the efforts of the ministers of state and Gospel ministers, who try to stem the torrent of political enthusiasm which deluges America, and threatens to overthrow Great Britain itself. So shall you undo the harm which you have undesignedly done; and our revolted fellow subjects, instead of cursing the day when you confirmed them in their sin, will bless you for giving them an antidote as powerful as the error which now poisons their minds and distracts their country.

Should you wonder, sir, at my repeated opposition of your principles, I should urge two things by way of apology for it: (1.) Though I believe that you and your second mean well, yet some of your principles have, I fear, a tendency to raise or foment a spirit of disobedience, sedition, and anarchy. And, (2.) As a minister of the Church of England, I have subscribed to the doctrine of the homily against disobedience and wilful rebellion, which contains this remarkable ejaculation: "God of his infinite mercy grant unto us, that we may be good, natural, loving, and obedient subjects: not only showing all obedience ourselves, but as many of us as are able, to the utmost of our power, ability, and understandings [endeavouring] to stay and repress all rebels and rebellions against God, our gracious prince, and natural country, at every occasion that is offered unto us! And that, which we are all able to do, unless we do it, we shall be most wicked, and most worthy to feel in the end such extreme plagues, as God has ever poured upon rebels." I produce this quotation, not to charge you, sir, or Dr. Price, with disobedience and wilful rebellion, for I firmly believe you intend no such thing. I only want to remind you, that by my subscription as a minister, my baptism as a Christian, and my oath of allegiance as a subject, I am bound, "at the occasion offered me" by your reply and your quotations, "to do what I am able to do," in order to rectify your mistakes, and guard my readers against what appears to me the natural tendency of your principles. And now, sir, having cleared my conscience with respect to you, and the ingenious Dr. Price, whom you have called to your assistance, I quit the thankless office of a faithful reprover, and

resuming that of a friendly controvertist, I assure you that, notwithstanding the difference of our political and religious sentiments, I am, with Christian sincerity and love, reverend sir, your obedient servant in Christ,

JOHN FLETCHER.

POSTSCRIPT.

IN my first letter, I have omitted an important answer to your capital argument. You suppose, sir, that the colonists are enslaved and robbed, when they are taxed by the king and the parliament, because "every shilling which they [the members of the British parliament] take out of the pocket of an American, is so much saved in their own." To this I object the improbability that a British legislator would so far demean himself, as to save a dirty shilling in his purse, by oppressively taking one out of an American's pocket. You reply by insinuating that I have not so high an opinion of the honesty of our legislators as I express; and that, if I lent a few thousands to one of them, I should take care not to part with my money without receiving a proper bond. To the answer which I have given you, p. 498, permit me to add that which follows:-

Supposing that a member of parliament should act a knave's part for the sake of "a few thousands" wherewith he could enrich himself; yet it is absurd to suppose that he would turn robber, to share his booty with near six millions of people. For if a member of parliament pick an American's pocket by taxing him, the shilling which he takes from the American does not save a shilling in his own pocket, as you insinuate; it is only a shilling saved for Great Britain in general, that is, for near six millions of people. I shall not say then, What gentleman is there in parliament, but what felon is there in Newgate, who would think it worth his while to pick an American's pocket of a shilling, or even of three million of shillings, to share the profit of his villany among six millions of people? Your grand argument, therefore, considered in this light, wants not only solidity, but even plausibility; since it is founded on an absurd, uncharitable probability, which falls short of a rational probability, almost as much as a single unit falls short of six millions.

The preceding observation is applicable to your doctrine of liberty.-Civil liberty, if we believe you, sir, and Dr. Price, is one and the same thing with the power of making our own laws in common with our fellow subjects. According to this notion, supposing that, to make our own laws, we repealed all the laws which have been made in England by former legislators; supposing that all the subjects in Great Britain were free in your sense of the word; that their number was nine millions; and that one had as much right to make laws as another; supposing this, I say, upon your scheme it follows that the degree of legislative power, i.e. of liberty, which falls to the share of an Englishman, bears as insignificant a proportion to the full power of legislation, i.e. to full liberty, as a single voice bears to eight millions, nine hundred and ninety-nine voices. If the crown itself, and the power annexed to it, were divided into so many parts, they would be so little and so insignificant, that none but fools

would think it worth their while to contend an hour about one such part of the royal dignity. But this is not all: if the old adage, *Tot capita, tot sensus,* be true; if every man have his peculiar turn for legislation, as well as his peculiar complexion and look; if no one be free, but so far as he is governed according to his own legislative mind; if nine millions of British subjects have as much right to make British laws as Dr. Price; and if the majority are to carry their point against the minority; there are nine million degrees of probability to one, that Dr. Price, upon his own scheme, will be forced to give up his own legislative will; and that the laws made by others shall prevail against his own self made laws. And is not this a proof, that after all the ado he makes about liberty, he only leads us to a liberty which is as far from what he calls complete liberty, as a single unit is far from nine millions? And that he brings us as near the state which you are pleased to call abject slavery, as having only one share of that part of the legislative power, which is lodged in the house of commons, out of nine millions of shares, is near to having nothing to do with legislation at all? If these observations be just, is it not evident, sir, that your doctrine of civil liberty rests on frivolous and irrational refinements, as well as your American patriotism?

Permit me to make one more remark upon taxation. Page 508, I have quoted you and Dr. Price, who both agree to mention an act of parliament, where “certain duties, &c, are said to be given and granted by the parliament to the king.” Looking now into your pamphlet, I take notice that you put the words given and granted in italics. Should you do it to insinuate, that the taxes which we pay are not a debt, but a free gift from us and our fellow subjects, permit me, sir, to answer your indirect argument by observing, that the legislative power being chiefly lodged in the parliament, as the executive power is chiefly lodged in the king, the legislative power may with propriety give and grant to the executive power the revenue arising from such and such taxes. All that can therefore be reasonably inferred from the two expressions, on which you seem to lay so much stress, is that the legislative power gives and grants supplies to the king, as the first commander of the fleet and army. But to conclude froth thence that taxes are not due by the people to the legislative and protective power, is as absurd, unscriptural, and unconstitutional, as to conclude that all the freeholders are legislators, that all who have no vote for parliament men are slaves, and that the supreme and governing power is in the hands of the governed;-three dangerous opinions these, which are to your levelling patriotism, what the three heads of *Cerberus* are to that fabulous monster.

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LETTER IV.

Observations on Mr. Price's awful arguments taken from our immorality-What great share our national profaneness had in the ruin of the king, and in the subversion of the Church and state in the days of Cromwell-It becomes us to obviate the dangerous argument by which thousands of rash religionists are seduced into wild patriotism.

REVEREND SIR,-I should be inexcusable if I concluded my refutation of Dr. Price's antichristian politics without doing him the justice to confess. that he has advanced a Christian argument, which I cannot properly answer, and which is so awful, that it highly deserves the attention of all who wish well to Church and state: take it in his own words: "In this hour of tremendous danger, it would become us to turn our thoughts to heaven. This is what our brethren in the colonies are doing! From one end of North America to the other they are fasting and praying. But what are we doing? Shocking thought! we are ridiculing them as fanatics, and scoffing at religion. We are running wild after pleasure, and forgetting every thing serious and decent at masquerades. We are gambling in gaming houses; trafficking for boroughs; perjuring ourselves at elections; and selling ourselves for places. Which side then is Providence likely to favour? In America we see a number of rising states in the vigour of youth, &c, and animated by piety. Here we see an old state, &c, inflated and irreligious, enervated by luxury, &c, and hanging by a thread. Can we look without pain on the issue?"

There is more solidity in this argument, than in all that Dr. Price has advanced. If the colonists throng the houses of God, while we throng play houses or houses of ill fame; if they crowd their communion tables while we crowd the gaming table or festal board; if they pray while we curse; if they fast while we get drunk; and keep the Sabbath while we pollute it; if they take shelter under the protection of Heaven, while our chief attention is turned to our hired troops; we are in danger-in great danger. Be our cause ever so good, and our force ever so formidable, our case is bad, and our success doubtful. Nay, the Lord of hosts, who of old sold his disobedient people into the hands of their unrighteous enemies to chastise and humble them-this righteous Lord may give success to the arms of the colonies, to punish them for their revolt, and us for our profaneness. A youth that believes and prays as David, is a match for a giant that swaggers and curses as Goliath. And they that, in the name of the Lord, enthusiastically encounter their enemies in a bad cause, bid fairer for success than they that, in a good cause, profanely go into the field, trusting only in the apparent strength of an arm of flesh. To disregard the king's righteous commands, as the colonists do, is bad; but to despise the first table commandments of the King of kings as we do, is still worse. Nor do I see how we can answer it, either to reason or our own consciences, to be so intent on enforcing British laws, and so remiss in yielding obedience to the laws of God. If the capital command, "Fear God and honour the king," could be properly parted, should not every Christian prefer the former part to the latter? Will our honouring the king alone for our dishonouring

God? And can we expect that our loyalty shall make amends for our impiety or lukewarmness?

Is it not surprising, that amidst all the preparations which have been made to subdue the revolted colonies, none should have been made to check our open rebellion against God; and that in all national applications to foreign princes for help, we should have forgotten a public application to the Prince of the kings of the earth? Many well wishers to their country flattered themselves, that at a time when the British empire stands, as Dr. Price justly observes, “on an edge so perilous,” our superiors would have appointed a day of humiliation and prayer; a day to confess the national sins which have provoked God to let loose a spirit of political enthusiasm and revolt upon us; a day to implore pardon for our past transgressions, and to resolve upon a more religious and loyal course of life; a day to beseech the Father of lights and mercies to teach, at this important juncture, our senators wisdom in a peculiar manner, and to inspire them with such steadiness and mildness, that by their prudence, courage, and condescension, the war may be ended with little effusion of blood, and, if possible, without shedding any more blood at all. Thousands expected to see such a day; thinking that it becomes us, as reformed Christians, nationally to address the throne of grace, and intreat God to turn the hearts of the colonists toward us, and ours toward them, that we may speedily bury our mutual animosities in the grave of our common Saviour. And not a few supposed that humanity bids us feel for the myriads of our fellow creatures who are going to offer up their lives in the field of battle; and that charity and piety require us to pray that they may penitently part with their sins, and solemnly prepare themselves for a safe passage, I shall not say from Britain to America, but, if they are called to it, from time into eternity. Such, I say, were the expectations of thousands, but hitherto their hopes and wishes have been disappointed.

Dr. Price knows how to avail himself of our omission or delay in this respect, to strengthen the hands of the American patriots, by insinuating that Heaven will not be propitious to us, and that “our cause is such as gives us [no] reason to ask God to bless it.” None can tell what fuel this plausible observation of his will add to the wild fire of political enthusiasm which burns already too fiercely in the breasts of thousands of injudicious religionists. I therefore humbly hope that our governors will consider Dr. Price's objection, taken from our immorality and profaneness, and that they will let the world see we are neither ashamed nor afraid to spread the justice of our cause before the Lord of hosts, and to implore his blessing upon the army going to America, to enforce gracious offers of mercy, and reasonable terms of reconciliation.

And who, after all, should we be ashamed of asking help of God, as well as of German princes? Have we never read such awful scriptures as these? “Save us, O King of heaven, when we call upon thee. Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. Blessed be my strong helper, who subdueth the people unto me, and setteth me above mine adversaries.

Through thee will we overthrow our enemies, and in thy name will we tread them under that rise against us. For I will not trust in my bow. It is not my sword that shall [comparatively] help me. Be not afraid of this [5] great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God’s. All the assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with the sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's.”

Our own history, as well as the Scripture, confirms Dr. Price's objections, taken from our neglect of the religious means of success in the present contest. It is well known to many, that in the civil wars of the last age, a national disregard of the Lord's day, and the avowed contempt of God's name, which prevailed in the king's party, did him unspeakable injury. For multitudes of men who feared God, seeing profaneness reign in the army of the royalists, while religious duty was solemnly performed by the forces of the parliament, and being unable to enter into the political questions whence the quarrel arose, judged of the cause according to religious appearances, and sided against the king, merely because they fancied they sided against God. Nor were there wanting men of the greatest candour and penetration, who thought that this was one of the principal causes of the overthrow of our Church and state; Cromwell then availing himself of this appearance, as Dr. Price does now, to persuade religious people that he was fighting the Lord’s battles, and that opposing the king and the bishops was only opposing tyranny and a profane hierarchy. To show you how much our want of religious decency contributed toward the overthrow of our Church and government in the last century, I shall produce another extract from the Rev. Mr. Baxter’s Narrative of his Life and Times. That candid divine and judicious politician, after mentioning the unhappy differences between those who conform to the Church of England, and those who do not, says:-

Page 32, &c. “When they [the Nonconformists] had been for a while called by that name, [Puritans,] the vicious multitude of the ungodly, called all Puritans, that were strict and serious, were they ever so conformable; so that the same name in a bishop’s mouth? signified a Nonconformist, and in an ignorant drunkard’s or swearer’s mouth, a godly Christian. But the people being the greater number, became among themselves masters of the sense. The ignorant rabble, hearing that the bishops were against the Puritans, (not having wit to know whom they meant,) were emboldened the more against all those whom they called Puritans themselves; their rage against the godly was increased; and they cried up the bishops, &c, because they were against the Puritans. Thus the interests of the Diocesans, and of the profane sort of people, were unhappily twisted.

“As all the Nonconformists were against the prelates, [whose interest was closely connected with the king's,] so others of the most godly people were alienated from the bishops; because the malignant sort were permitted to make religious persons their common scorn; because they saw so many vicious men among the conformable clergy; because fasting and praying, &c, were so strictly looked after, that the bishops’ courts did make it much more perilous than common swearing and drunkenness proved to the ungodly; because the book that was published for

recreations on the Lord's day, made them think that the bishops concurred with the profane; because so great a number of conformable ministers were suspended or punished for not reading the book of sports on Sundays, and so many thousand families and many worthy ministers driven out of the land, &c; all these, upon my own knowledge were the true causes why so great a number of those persons who were counted most religious, fell in with the parliament; insomuch that the generality of the stricter sort of preachers joined with them. Very few of all that learned and pious synod at Westminster were Nonconformists before, and yet were for the parliament; supposing that the interest of religion lay on that side.

"Upon my knowledge, many that were not wise enough to understand the truth about the cause of the king and parliament, did yet run into the parliament's armies, or take their part, as sheep do together for company; being moved by this argument, 'Surely God will not suffer almost all his most religious servants to err in so great a matter. If these should perish, what will become of religion?' But these were insufficient grounds to go upon. And abundance of the ignorant sort of the country, who were civil, did flock into the parliament, and filled up their armies afterward, merely because they heard men swear that were for the common prayers and bishops, and heard others pray that were against them; and because they heard the king's soldiers with horrid oaths abuse the name of God, and saw them live in debauchery, and the parliament's soldiers flock to sermons, talk of religion, and pray and sing psalms together on their guards. All the sober men that I was acquainted with, who were against the parliament, were wont to say, The king has the better cause, but the parliament has the better men. And indeed this unhappy complication of the interest of prelacy and profaneness, and this opposition, of the interest of prelacy to the temper of the generality of the religious party, was the visible cause of the overthrow of the king in the eye of all the understanding world."

Page 31. "Though it must be confessed that the public safety and liberty wrought very much with most, especially the nobility and gentry, who adhered to the parliament; yet was it principally the differences about religious matters that filled up the parliament's armies, and put into their soldiers the resolution and valour which carried them on in another manner than mercenary soldiers are carried on. Not that the matter of bishops, or no bishops, was the main thing, though many called it *Bellum Episcopate*: for thousands that wished for good bishops were on the parliament's side. But the generality of the people (I say not all) who used to talk of God and heaven, and Scripture and holiness, and read books of devotion, and pray in their families, and spend the Lord's day in religious exercises, and speak against swearing, cursing, drunkenness, profaneness, &c; I say the main body of this sort of men adhered to the parliament. And on the other side, the gentry that were not so precise and strict against an oath, or gaming, or plays, or drinking, nor troubled themselves so much about God and the world to come, and the ministers and people that were for the king's book, for dancing and recreation on the Lord's days, and those that made not so great a matter of every sin but were glad to hear a sermon which lashed the Puritans, &c, the main body of these were against the parliament."

Page 44. “And here I must repeat the great cause of the parliament’s strength? and the king's ruin; and that was, that the debauched rabble through the land, emboldened by his gentry, and seconded by the common soldiers of his army, took all that were called Puritans for their enemies. And though some of the king's gentry and superior officers were so civil that they would do no such thing, yet that was no security to the country while the multitude did what they list. So that if any one was noted for a strict preacher, or for a man of a pious life, he was plundered or abused, and in danger of his life. And if a man did but pray in his family, or were but heard to repeat a sermon, or sing a psalm, they cried out, Rebels! round heads! and all their goods that were portable proved guilty, how innocent soever they were themselves. I suppose this was kept from the knowledge of the king, and perhaps of many sober lords of the council; for few could come near them, and it is the fate of such not to believe evil of those that they think are for them, nor good of those that they think are against them. But, upon my certain knowledge, this was it that filled the armies and garrisons of the parliament with sober, pious men. Thousands had no mind to meddle with the wars, but greatly desired to live peaceably at home, when the rage of soldiers and drunkards would not let them. Some stayed till they had been plundered, perhaps twice or thrice over; but most were afraid of their lives, and oft they sought refuge in the parliament’s garrisons, and were fain to take up arms, and be soldiers, to get bread.”

Mr. Baxter’s account of Cromwell’s character, and of his religious troop, is too remarkable not to deserve a place in this extract. Page 98, “No mere man was better and worse spoken of than he [Cromwell] according as men’s interests led their judgments. The soldiers and sectaries most idly magnified him till he began to seek the crown; and then there were so many that would be half kings themselves, that a king did seem intolerable to them. The royalists abhorred him as a most perfidious hypocrite, and the Presbyterians thought him little better. If, after so many others, I speak my own opinion of him, I think, that having been a prodigal in his youth, and afterward changed into a zealous religionist, he meant honestly in the main course of his life, till prosperity and success corrupted him. At his first entrance into the wars, being but a captain of horse, he had special care to get religious men into his troop. These men were of greater understanding than common soldiers, and therefore were more apprehensive of the importance of the war; and making not money, but that which they took to be the public felicity, to be their end, they were the more engaged to be valiant. For he that makes money his end, esteems his life above his pay, and therefore is likely enough to save it by flight when danger comes. But he that maketh the felicity of Church and state his end, esteemeth it above his life, and therefore will the sooner lay down his life for it. This Cromwell understood, and that none would be such valiant men as the religious. I conjecture, that at his first choosing such men into his troop, it was the very esteem and love of religious men that principally moved him; by this means he sped better than he expected. That troop did prove so valiant, that, as far as I could learn, they never once ran away before an enemy. Hereupon he got a commission, and brought this troop into a double regiment of fourteen full troops; and all these as full of religious men as he could get. These

having more than ordinary wit and resolution, had more than ordinary success. With their successes, the hearts both of captain and soldiers secretly rose both in pride and expectation; and the familiarity of many honest, erroneous men, Anabaptists, Antinomians, &c, began withal quickly to corrupt their judgments. Hereupon Cromwell's religious zeal gave way to the power of that ambition which still increased as his successes increased. Both piety and ambition concurred in his countenancing all that he thought godly. Piety pleadeth for them as godly, and ambition secretly told him what use he might make of them. He meant well in all this at the beginning, and thought that he did all for the safety of the godly, and the public good; but not without any eye to himself." [6]

From this extract it appears that Cromwell, like Dr. Price, rode the great horse religion, as well as the great horse liberty; and that the best way to counterwork the enthusiasm of patriotic religionists, is to do constitutional liberty, and Scriptural religion full justice, by defending the former against the attacks of despotic monarchs on the right hand, and despotic mobs on the left, and by preserving the latter from the opposite onsets of profane infidels on the left hand, and enthusiastical religionists on the right. I humbly hope that our governors will always so avoid one extreme as not to run into the other; and that, at this time, they will so guard against the very appearances of irreligion and immorality, as to leave Dr. Price, so far as in them lies, no room to injure our cause by arguments taken from our want of devotion, and of a strict regard to sound morals. What we owe to God, to ourselves, and to the colonists, calls upon us to remove whatever may give any just offence to those who seek occasion to reflect upon us. The colonists narrowly watch us; let their keen inspection make us diligently watch ourselves.

Let us especially take care neither to embezzle nor misapply the national income. But, as faithful guardians and stewards of the money raised for the necessary expenses of the government, let us (as many as are entrusted with the collecting or expending of that consecrated treasure) show ourselves to be disinterested, thrifty, and invariably just. Nothing can render our doctrine of taxation odious to conscientious people, but a needless rigour in the collecting, and a wanton profusion in the spending of the public revenue. I know that uneasy men, intent upon sedition and revolt, are apt to say whatever can palliate their crime. The least misdemeanor of individuals, let it be ever so much hid from, or disapproved of by our governors, will always appear to such men a sufficient reason to pour floods of reproach upon the administration. Thus, if we may depend upon the St. James' Chronicle, "Doctor Franklin, a member of the American congress, insinuates that the government is made detestable by governors, who, when they have crammed their coffers, and made themselves so odious to the people, that they can no longer remain among them with safety to their persons, are recalled, and rewarded with pensions: that the produce of the taxes is not applied to the defence of the provinces, and the better support of government; but bestowed where it is not necessary, in augmenting salaries or pensions; and that a board of officers composed of the most indiscreet, ill bred, and insolent men that can be found, live in open, grating luxury upon the sweat and blood

of the industrious, whom they worry with groundless and expensive prosecutions, before arbitrary revenue judges." I hope, for the honour of the administration, that prejudice guided Dr. Franklin's pen when it dropped these invidious hints. Should we have given them any just ground of complaint, it becomes us to remove it with all speed: setting our seal to the noble maxim, which Dr. Price advances after Lord Chatham, Rectitude is dignity: oppression only is meanness; and justice, honour.

"Righteousness exalteth a nation," says the wise man, "but sin is a reproach to any people," and may prove the ruin of the most powerful empire. Violence brought on the deluge. Luxury overthrew Sodom. Cruel usage of the Israelites destroyed Egypt. Complete wickedness caused the extirpation of the Canaanites. Imperiousness, and an abuse of the power of taxation, rent ten tribes from the kingdom of Judah. Pride sunk Babylon. Nineveh and Jerusalem, by timely repentance, once reversed their awful doom; but returning to their former sins, they shared at last the fate of all the states which have filled up the measure of their iniquities. And have we taken so few strides toward that awful period, as to render national repentance needless in this day of trouble? By fomenting contentions and wars among the natives of Africa, in order to buy the prisoners whom they take from each other; have not some of our countrymen turned Africa into a field of blood? Do not the sighs of myriads of innocent negroes, unjustly transported from their native country to the British dominions, call night and day for vengeance upon us; while their groans upbraid the hypocritical friends of liberty, who buy, and sell, and whip their fellow men as if they were brutes; and absurdly complain that they are enslaved, when it is they themselves who deal in the liberties and bodies of men, as graziers do in the liberties and bodies of oxen?

And is what I beg leave to call our nabob trade in the east more consistent with humanity than our slave trade in the south and west? Who can tell how many myriads of men have been cut off in the East Indies by famine or wars, which had their rise from the ambition, covetousness, and cruelty of some of our countrymen? And if no vindictive notice has been taken of these barbarous and bloody scenes, has not the nation made them in some degree her own? And does not that innocent blood, the price of which has been imported with impunity, and now circulates through the kingdom to feed our luxury-does not all that blood, I say, speak louder for vengeance against us than the blood of Abel did against his murderous brother? "The Justice of the nation," says Doctor Price, "has slept over these enormities: will the justice of Heaven sleep?" No: but it still patiently waits for our reformation; nor will it, I hope, wait in vain; but if it does, the suspended blow will in the end descend with redoubled force, and strike us with aggravated ruin. For God will be avenged on all impenitent nations: he has one rule for them and for individuals: "Except they repent," says Christ himself, "they shall all likewise perish."

Let our devotion be improved by the American controversy as well as our morals. Instead of "scoffing at religion," as Doctor Price says we do, let us honour the piety of the colonists. So far, at least, as their religious professions are consistent, sincere,

and Scriptural, let them provoke us to a rational concern for the glory of God, and our eternal interests. Were we to contend with our American colonies for supremacy in virtue and devotion, how noble would be the strife! How worthy of a Protestant kingdom, and a mother country! And does not political wisdom, as well as brotherly love, require us to do something in order to root up their inveterate prejudices against us and our Church? Have we forgotten that many of the first colonists crossed the Atlantic for conscience' sake: seeking in the woods of America, some a shelter against our once persecuting hierarchy; and others a refuge from our epidemical profaneness? And does not their offspring look upon us in the same odious light in which Doctor Price places us? Do they not abhor or despise us as impious, immoral men, "enervated by luxury;" men with whom it is dangerous to be connected, and who "may expect calamities, that shall recover to reflection [perhaps to devotion] libertines and Atheists" themselves?

And is it only for God's sake, for the sake of our own souls, and for the sake of the colonists, that we should look to our conduct and Christian profession? Are there not multitudes of rash religionists in the kingdom who suppose that all the praying people in England are for the Americans, and who warmly espouse their part, merely because they are told that the colonists "fast and pray," while "we forget every thing serious and decent," and because prejudiced teachers confidently ask, with Dr. Price, "Which side is Providence likely to favour?" Would to God that all our legislators felt the weight of this objection which can as easily mislead moral and religious people in the present age, as it did in the last! Would to God they would exert themselves in such a manner, that all unprejudiced men might see the king and parliament have "the better men," as well as "the better cause!" Would to God that by timely reformation, and solemn addresses to the throne of grace, we might convince Dr. Price, and all the Americans, that in submitting to the British legislature, they will not submit to libertinism and Atheism, but to a venerable body of virtuous and godly senators, who know that the first care of God's representatives on earth-the principal study of political gods, should be to promote God's fear, by setting a good example before the people committed to their charge, and by steadily enforcing the observance of the moral law!

I need not tell you, sir, what effect this would have on our pious American brethren. You feel it in your own breast. The bare idea of such a reformation softens your prejudices. Were it to take place, it would overcome Dr. Price himself; Pious joy would set him upon writing as warmly for the government, as he had done against it; and in the midst of his deep repentance for the dangerous errors he has published, he would have the consolation to think that one of his observations has done more good than all his sophisms have done mischief. These are some of the reflections which Dr. Price's religious argument has drawn from my pen, and which I doubt not but some of our governors have already made by the help of that wisdom which prompts them to improve our former calamities, and to study what may promote our happiness in Church and state. I am, &c,

J. FLETCHER.

LETTER V.

A Scriptural plea for the remitted colonies, with some hints concerning a Christian method of bringing about a lasting reconciliation between them and the mother country-The king and parliament humbly addressed on the subject.

REVEREND SIR,-Christians are, in a special manner, debtors to all mankind. I owe love to all my fellow subjects, as well as loyalty to the king, and duty to the parliament; and my love to our American colonies, as well as my regard for equity, obliges me to say what can reasonably be said on their behalf; that prejudice on both sides may give place to Christian forbearance and conciliatory kindness.

I hope, sir, you are by this time convinced that the American revolt is absolutely unjustifiable; and that the king and parliament have an indubitable right proportionably to tax the colonists, as well as the English; although the colonists are not directly and adequately represented in parliament, any more than multitudes of Britons who live abroad, and millions who reside in Great Britain. And now, sir, I candidly allow, that although the colonists cannot without absurdity insist on an equal representation, yet they may humbly request to be particularly represented in the British legislature; and that, although strict justice does not oblige Great Britain to grant them such a request, yet parental wisdom and brotherly condescension require her to grant something to the notion, that a direct representation in parliament is inseparably connected with cavil liberty. This notion, I confess, is irrational, unscriptural, and unconstitutional But it is a prevailing notion, and if we look at it in one point of view, it seems to wear the badge of British liberty, and therefore has some claim to the indulgence of Britons.

Permit me to illustrate my meaning by a Scriptural simile. Through a strong national prejudice, the Jews, who had embraced Christianity, fancied that no man could be a true Christian without being circumcised; and they supported their assertion by God's positive command to the father of the faithful; a command this which Christ had not expressly repealed, and to which he and his disciples had religiously submitted.-The apostles saw that the Christianised Jews were under a capital mistake. Nevertheless, in condescension to human weakness and national prejudice, they allowed them to circumcise their children: and Paul himself, though he detested their error, yielded to them so far as to have his convert Timothy circumcised. I grant that a direct and adequate representation in parliament is no more essential to British liberty, than circumcision to true Christianity. But, as the governors of the Christian Church made some concessions to Jewish weakness, might not also the governors of the British empire make some to American prejudice; especially considering that it will be as difficult for them peaceably to rule the Americans without such an act of condescension, as it would have been for the apostles to govern the Jews, without the above-mentioned complaisance?

Beside, in some cases, constitutional and unconstitutional taxation may border so nearly upon each other, that the most judicious politicians will be as much at a loss to draw the line between them, as the most skilful painter would be to draw the line between the primitive colours of the rainbow. This bordering of a faint constitutional privilege, upon an unconstitutional, absolute want of privilege, has deceived the colonists. As a man who is passionately fond of flaming crimson, takes a faint red to be no red at all; they have pronounced that to be no representation, which is an indirect representation discernible to all but the prejudiced. In their patriotic fright they have fancied that the ship of constitutional liberty struck on a rock, because it did not carry so many sails as they imagined it should. You may compare their mistake to that of impatient, suspicious passengers, who, when they have all their fortune on board a ship, are apt to think that she does not move at all, because her motion is not so rapid as they could wish; and because their anxious fears turn every sail they see into a privateer in chase of their property. Their error deserves then compassion, as well as blame; and will appear excusable to those who know the immense value of liberty.

Our lawgivers, who are peculiarly acquainted with the worth of this jewel, can above all men put a favourable construction upon the panic of a people afraid of being enslaved. Depending, therefore, on their condescension, I shall presume to ask, if now that the government has plainly asserted and powerfully supported the just claims of Great Britain, it might not safely relax a little the reins of authority, and kindly condescend to the fears of the colonists. And should the Americans show themselves just in indemnifying our injured merchants, penitent in laying down their arms, and loyal in acknowledging the right that Great Britain has to expect proportionable taxes from them; might not the king and parliament show themselves kind, in granting them the privilege of a special representation in the British legislature; or in passing an act of security, to fix just bounds to the power of parliamentary taxation with respect to the Americans; to promise the colonies that a proper allowance shall always be made them for the superior commercial privileges of Great Britain; to ascertain, in an equitable manner, the quantum of that allowance; and to remove their dread of being disproportionably taxed by the most solemn assurances, that their taxes shall always rise or fall in exact proportion to our own, according to the plan laid down in pages 510, 511?

I would not carry matters so far as to say, with the poet, *Summum jus summa injuria;* [7] but might I not observe, that parental love, brotherly kindness, and British equity require that some condescension be shown to the colonists? Should not British legislators show themselves gods, by imitating the God of gods,

Who conquers all, beneath, above,
Devils with force, and men with love?

While the Atlantic foams under the weight of the transports, which carry the troops sent over to subdue the revolted provinces, might not love suspend the

destructive stroke, and conquer them without farther effusion of blood? Is their hardness absolutely desperate? While the sight of a force so superior to that which quelled them at Bunker's Hill, works upon their prudence; and while Scriptural expostulations enlighten their consciences, might not some gracious and timely concessions work upon their gratitude, excite their admiration, and regain their confidence? O that you, sir, and I could imitate those courageous women, who, when the Romans, their husbands, and the Sabines, their brothers, were going to engage, rushed between the two armies, and so wrought upon them, by tender expostulations, that the fierce antagonists, instead of plunging their swords into each other's breasts, fell upon each other's necks, and turned the field of battle into a field of reconciliation! If a heathen country saw the delightful scene, might not a Christian land behold it also? The pleasing thought transports my mind: thy imagination, warmed by the fond hope, carries me beyond myself: methinks I rush between the parliament and the congress, and after having pleaded the sovereign's cause before the patriots, I plead that of the patriots before the sovereign. Fancying myself at the foot of the throne, and seeing the king raised on high above all the British lawgivers, on my beaded knees, from the dust, with trembling awe, I present my bold, mediatorial plea:-

O king, live and reign in righteousness for ever! And ye, his patrician and plebeian senators, [8] help him long to sway the sceptre with Christian gentleness and British fortitude! As his faithful assessors, and partakers with him of the legislative power, firmly support on his royal head the ponderous crown, which gives him the dominion over the British islands, half of the western world, and the whole aqueous globe!-One of your adopted subjects, warmed with gratitude for the religious and civil liberty which he enjoys under your mild government; and deeply concerned for your glory and the prosperity of your dominions, intrudes into your awful presence to intercede for his guilty brethren. If the King of kings and Lord of lords vouchsafes to receive his fervent addresses to the throne of grace for you; do not reject, O ye gods, his humble address for your American colonies.

It is not my design to extenuate their crime. An ingenuous confession becomes a prostrate suppliant. They have sinned against Heaven and against you. They have preposterously charged you with robbery, when they themselves robbed [9] God, by keeping from his political representatives the reasonable and legal taxes due to the supreme power; to a creative and protective power that gave them birth, and raised them from a state of infant weakness and want, to youthful vigour and growing opulence. Their crime is complicate: they have openly encouraged the lawless mobs which trampled upon your authority, and destroyed the property of your loyal subjects: they have obstinately protected felony and sedition: they have audaciously hindered the course of justice: their congress has met to oppose your claim of taxation in the capital of that very province, by the express terms of whose charter they are solemnly bound to pay you taxes: they have armed by sea and land to cut off your forces: and, not satisfied with asserting their assumed supremacy over the revolted provinces, they have aimed at making conquests: they have completed their

guilt by a daring attempt to annex your immense province of Canada to the empire they have newly set up. And now what can I say in their behalf? My grand plea, O ye insulted powers, is taken from yourselves. As your majesty is, so is your mercy. Ye are called Christians by the name of the mild Potentate who interceded for his mobbing murderers. When they poured floods of contempt upon his royal head: when they pierced his temples with thorns, his hands with nails, his heart with sarcasms: and when they prepared to pierce his side with a spear; even then he not only forgave them himself, but turned their excuser, and said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The Divine plea prevailed. It obtained an evangelical proclamation of pardon on the most condescending terms. "Where sin had abounded, there grace did much more abound." Where rebellion had set up her bloody banner, there mercy gloried, to erect her superior standard. Jerusalem, ungrateful, hypocritical, rebellious Jerusalem: Jerusalem, guilty of the murder of the King of kings: Jerusalem, the still rebellious and unrelenting city, was first blessed with the news of a free pardon; and thousands of relenting rebels submitted to the terms of the gracious proclamation. By this unexpected effort of mercy, the Lord of glory subjugated those stiff religionists. Pardoning love effectually conquered their stubbornness; and a nation of loyal subjects was born in a day.

And might ye not, O ye Christian rulers, imitate the Lord of glory without prostituting your dignity? Directed by the example of our meek Redeemer, might not thy mercy, O king, issue out a proclamation of pardon upon such terms as might raise the astonishment of an Adams and a Washington? Are Lee and Hancock fiercer against thee, than Saul of Tarsus was against his Saviour? Have they breathed out more threatenings and slaughter than that enthusiastic zealot, who, not satisfied with his personal contempt of the Lord of lords, compelled others to blaspheme him, and persecuted to death those who would not? Nevertheless, when he fell to the ground, mercy raised him up, not only to the dignity of a Christian, but to that of an apostle: and the service which he did the Church in that high office far exceeded the injury he had done her by his bloody enthusiasm. Could ye not, O ye Christian legislators, try the same successful method with your American subjects? If mercy alone would make them insolent, and if power alone would make them desperate, could not power and mercy, combined by your wisdom, effectually disarm them, and for ever attach them to your steady and mild government?

Nor will you by this means overcome the Americans alone. You will also disarm the minority of your respectable body, and their numerous partisans in the kingdom. When we are wrongfully accused of intending things we never thought of, does not prudence call upon us to remove the very appearances by which the charge seems supported? And how can these appearances be fully removed in the present case, otherwise than by granting your American subjects the privilege of some direct representation, together with some security that the taxes laid upon them shall always bear an equitable proportion to the taxes laid upon your British subjects?

Might I not also presume to ask, whether all the grievances complained of are imaginary, and whether no needless provocation has been given them by some of our countrymen, and no secret encouragement by others? Beside, are ye not divided among yourselves? And if ye have taught them the unhappy art of rising against you, by rising against each other, should you not pity them? And should ye not bear a little with their turbulency, since you are obliged to bear so much from those of your own body, who openly countenance their rash patriotism?

Again: if we are the politic parents of the colonists, are they not entitled to parental indulgence from you? My lord the king is an angel of God, to discern good and bad: he knows, and ye, his legislative assessors, know that political, as well as religious enthusiasm, is a fever of the mind, which throws those who are attacked with it, into a temporary delirium: and that, in the paroxysm, heated religionists and patriots, like delirious people, say and do a thousand things of which they are ashamed when they come to themselves again. If your own children were dangerously ill and light headed, would ye not treat them with an indulgence suitable to their deplorable case? And would not natural affection concur with reason, to make you overlook the petulance and wildness of their behaviour? Ye will extend your mercy to your American subjects with double readiness, if ye consider that they are not all guilty. A few warm men among them open the flood gates of patriotic licentiousness; and while the fierce and roaring torrent frightened myriads into a temporary compliance to revolt, it carried away myriads more before they knew what they were about. Nor have they perhaps had it yet in their power to recollect themselves. Vouchsafe, then, to show yourselves their tender physicians, as well as their indulgent parents; nor heal their moral fever by burning corrosives, so long as there is the least prospect of doing it by cooling applications. If Christianity commands us to “restore, in the spirit of meekness, those that are fallen, to become weak to the weak, yea, to become all things to all men, that by all means we may gain and save some;” be abundantly condescending to your American people, that you may save thousands of precious lives, prevent the devastation of your own dominions, and disappoint your enemies, who flatter themselves that, when Great Britain and her colonies shall have exhausted their strength in a destructive war, the British empire, or some part of it, will become an easy prey to their greedy and watchful ambition.

But I peculiarly address thee, thou majestic head, and executive hand of the legislative power. By thy steadiness thou hast shown thyself a king worthy of commanding a people who display lions in their standards. And now, like “Messiah, the Prince,” like the generous “Lion of the tribe of Judah,” vouchsafe to show thyself “the prince of peace.” Let all the earth know that thou art a representative of the God “of all grace, and of the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world.” Is not the right of showing mercy to the condemned, the noblest of all thy royal prerogatives, and the brightest jewel of thy imperial crown? O! let that jewel shine in this cloudy day, and it will reflect the light of the “Sun of righteousness” across the Atlantic, and cheer the western world. The proclamation of a general pardon, accompanied by the grant of a direct representation, and of a security for the equitable proportion, which their

taxes shall always bear to ours; such a proclamation, I say, enforced by the sound of thy trumpets, the roar of thy cannons the sight of thy fleets, and the terror of thy armies, will show that thou art eminently qualified to reign over a brave and free people. Thou mayest thus be merciful without weakness. A Lee and a Washington are resolute enough to stand for a time the shock of thy forces: An Adams and a Hancock are obstinate enough to bury themselves in the ruins of their country. But resolute and obstinate as they are, thy mercy confounds-thy indulgence disarms them. The paroxysm is over. Candour and loyalty return together. The fiery heroes come back to sober heroism; and the rash patriots to true patriotism. Thy royal mercy has melted them into tears. With shame they fix their weeping eyes on the ground; with admiration they lift them up to heaven. They claim the honour of bringing in person the restitution money thou insistest upon for thy injured subjects. They haste to throw themselves at the feet of a sovereign who knows how to protect, conquer and pardon. My imagination sees them cross the Atlantic: they enter your gates: they throw American swords at your feet: they ask pardon for themselves, and the guilty people they represent: they kiss the royal hand which has averted their impending ruin, and pour out their grateful souls in such words as these:-

"Merciful and great king, and ye his legislative assessors, permit us to distinguish ourselves by our penitential return, as we once did by our rash revolt. With feelings proportionable to the sense we have of our guilt, of the king's mercy, and the parliament's condescension, we lament our misapprehensions; and deploring the bloodshed which they have caused, we acknowledge that we owe you the reasonable taxes due to the supreme, protecting power, by the consent of all civilized nations, and by the express command of God; and since you condescend to grant us the privilege of a share in your legislature, we will not only religiously, but cheerfully pay them for the time to come. In the meanwhile we refund at your feet sums equivalent to the goods which our rash citizens buried in the sea; and we own it is just that we should, in due proportion, help to discharge the national debt, which has been in part contracted for our protection, and which our unhappy revolt has of late so greatly increased. Made wiser by our misfortunes, and taught both to revere and love our mother country, we shall, at every proper opportunity, express our grateful sense of her parental regard. We are indeed separated by the Atlantic ocean, which we lately looked upon as a boundary to your dominions, a vast moat to keep us asunder, and a rampart to defend our continent against your incursions: but now our views are changed, and we consider that wide sea as a magnificent channel, which Divine Providence seems to have prepared to facilitate our friendly and commercial intercourse; to enrich our respective countries with the treasures of the old and new world; to make us live in a constant exercise of the art of navigation, and enable us, by these means, powerfully to support the British claims to the empire of the sea. Such are the pleasing thoughts we have of our happy re-union. May they appear delightful to all who wish well to the British empire! And may the poisonous breath of discord, more dangerous than all the storms of the Atlantic, never break the sweet calm which royal mercy and parliamentary condescension have restored to our distracted provinces!"

"Take up your swords, ye brave, though rash patriots," replies the speaker. "Your courage and love of liberty entitle you to this honour of receiving them again, on condition that you beat them into plough shares, or use them only against our common enemies. It is the first, see that it be the last time they are stained with British blood, and lifted up against the breast that gave you suck. And as the world sees the political and military leaders of the colonies at the foot of the throne, and of a British senate; the world shall see that the king and parliament can not only

Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos,

but that they know how to conquer the generous friends of liberty by generous acts of condescending love. Rise, ye mistaken sons of liberty, rise to demonstrate, that, as we can fight like Britons, so we can forgive as Christians, and indulge as brethren. Take your seats among British senators, and particularly represent the American provinces. But beware of considering this privilege as a bribe bestowed by a timorous administration, much less as a reward for your rash revolt. Though we make allowance for your mistakes, and put a favourable construction upon your intentions, we abhor and bear our solemn testimony against your proceedings. But the mantle of royal mercy, and of your repentance, having covered all, we shall not upbraid you with antichristian principles, and bloody scenes, which we wish to be buried in eternal oblivion. If we grant you some seats in the house of commons, it is only to remove your jealousies by a condescension which becomes a mother country and a mild government; and to regain the filial confidence of our American colonies, by permitting the men, who have been most prejudiced against us, to be eye witnesses of our firm attachment to the constitution, of our impartial zeal for the dignity of the crown, of our guardian care for the constitutional liberty of the people, and of our prudent endeavours to secure the due obedience of the British subjects.

"The wound which the demon of discord has given to our union, can not be perfectly healed but by an amputation, or a consolidation. The former expedient is inconsistent with our mutual affection, and our common interest; but the latter is perfectly agreeable to both; and our consanguinity loudly demands that it should be preferred. Help us, then, to consolidate the lacerated parts of the British empire. Let your filial gratitude meet our paternal condescension half way; so shall reconciling love cast the bridge of union across the Atlantic, and firmly join our happy island with your fortunate continent. And may genuine, sober, Scriptural patriotism, like an adamantine key, for ever bind the solid arch! May one blood, one language, one constitution, one religion, one king, one supreme legislature, one temporal and eternal interest, combine to make us one flourishing empire, till the kingdom of God swallow up all other kingdoms! Nor let it be said any more,

Audiet rives acuisse ferrum,
Quo graves Turcaae melius perirent;
Audiet pugnas, vitio parentum
Rara juventus " [10]

While the speaker concludes this patriotic speech, my imagination returns from her pleasing excursion. The awful parliamentary scene vanishes “like the baseless fabric of a vision.” But “a wreck is left behind.” Hints of a Scriptural method of reconciliation are humbly suggested; and you have some expressions of my cordial concern for the glory of our sovereign, and the satisfaction of our American fellow subjects, to whom, as well as to Dr. Price and yourself, I sincerely wish all the sweets of Christian and British liberty, without any of the bitters of religious and civil licentiousness. “Of making many books, (says Solomon,) there is no end. Let us then hear the conclusion of the whole matter:-Fear GOD, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” Or, if you prefer St. Peter’s words, “Fear God, and honour the king,” for this is the sum of the two tables of Christ's law. That, instead of breaking one of these tables under pretence of keeping the other, we may always agree to pay a cheerful obedience to both, is the final and highest wish of, reverend sir, your obedient servant in a Gospel, which neither makes void the law through faith, nor supersedes loyalty through liberty,

J. FLETCHER.

ENDNOTES

[1 This useless question is, whether Mr. Wesley had, or had not, forgotten the title of I know not what book, which he had recommended to some of his friends and which, through forgetfulness, he asserted that he had never seen; till, upon perusing the book, he discovered and owned his mistake. Mr. Evans diverts the reader's mind from the true question, by setting before him eight letters, which passed between Mr. W. and others, about that insignificant particular. For my part, I admit the public acknowledgment which Mr. W. has made of his forgetfulness, rather than Mr. Evans' insinuation, that he is not "an honest man:" and I do it, (1.) Because it is best to be on the safer side, which is that of charity. (2.) Because it is highly improbable that a wise man, except in case of forgetfulness, would deny a fact which a number of proper witnesses can prove, and are inclined to prove against him. And, (3.) Because experience constrains me to sympathise with those whose memory is as treacherous as my own. On a Sunday evening, after preaching three times, reading prayers, and being all day in a crowd, or hurrying from place to place, my mental powers are so incapacitated to do their office, that, far from being able to recollect the title of a book which I have seen some months before, I frequently cannot, after repeated endeavours, remember one of the texts on which I have preached that very day. Now Mr. W. lives all the year round in the hurry and crowd in which I am on my busy Sundays; and he is between seventy and eighty years of age, a time of life, this, when even the men who enjoy uninterrupted rest, find that their memory naturally fails. If Mr. Evans consider this, he will not be surprised that his first letter has not had its intended effect upon me.]

[2 The idle report I mean is, that my Vindication "has received many additions and corrections from the pen of a celebrated nobleman." This is a mistake. I find, indeed, some errors of the press, which injure the sense of my book; but I do not discover one addition in it, except that of two words, and if Mr. Evans will be pleased to inspect my manuscript, he will see that the few little negative emendations in it, were made by Mr. Wesley's own pen.]

[3 Mr. Evans wants each American assembly to be invested with supreme power in conduction with the king, after the model of the Irish parliament; but I wish the British empire too well to be of his sentiment. The same rule holds in politics and in mechanics; the more a government and a machine are needlessly complicated, the weaker are their motions, and the greater the danger of their being out of order. It is the glory and strength of our constitution to be compact, "*in se totus teres atque rotundus*. As I could not admire a human body with one head and a dozen stomachs, I should not be pleased to see Great Britain and her colonies exhibiting to the world

a political body, with one royal head and a dozen supreme courts of parliament. If such needless divisions and multiplications do not tend to speedy dissolution, they certainly do to weakness, confusion, slowness of operation, and a thousand evils which France with her several unconnected parliaments so severely feels.]

[4 I call some Anabaptists fierce and levelling, to distinguish them from the "mild and moderate Anabaptists," whom I have mentioned, (Vind. p. 464,) where I commend the candour of Bishop Burnet for making a just distinction between these two sorts of Anabaptists; and for observing that "they were not all of the same temper." This, one would think, should have hindered our brethren, who contend for Anabaptism, to think that I reflect on "all" the people of their denomination for the political errors of some. Had I done this, I would publicly ask their pardon; being persuaded that nothing can be more cruel than to involve the innocent in undeserved guilt. Lest this construction should be put upon my quotations respecting the levelling Anabaptists, I inserted, in the second edition of my Vindication, p. 464, a note, where I say that "some Anabaptists are very good people, that most of them mean well, and that I hope this is the case with my opponent." And I gladly embrace this third opportunity of testifying more fully my brotherly love to that respectable body of dissenters; not doubting but there are numbers of truly pious and loyal Anabaptists both in Germany, England, and America. However, p. 84, my opponent says, "Your telling the world that I am, &c, an Anabaptist, &c, is a display of illiberality, meanness, and impertinence." But where did I tell the world, in the first edition of my book, that Mr. Evans is an Anabaptist? And if in a note inserted in the "second" edition (which, by the by, was not published when Mr. E. advanced this charge) I insinuate that he is one of the Anabaptists who "are very good people and mean well," I appeal to the unprejudiced, if this insinuation is not a display of candour and brotherly love, rather than of "illiberality, meanness, and impertinence?" I grant that I have enforced Calvin's doctrine of taxation upon my opponent, by reminding him that, as "he is a Calvinist," he cannot well avoid paying some regard to that excellent doctrine of Calvin. But wherein consists the "impertinence" of such an argument? Are controvertists the only men who cannot use an argument "ad hominem?" And has not Mr. E. as much reason to charge me with "meanness," because I have addressed him as a Briton and a Christian, and have pressed him, as such, with appeals to constitutional concessions, and his Christian profession? Some men will say what they please against their governors.

Their most groundless charges must pass for patriotism, and a spirited defence of our liberties; but if you drop a self-evident truth that embarrasses them a little, you are guilty of "Helvetic rudeness, illiberality, meanness, and impertinence." I appeal from this patriotic freedom and partiality to English candour, and British politeness.]

[5 Dr. Price, speaking of the numbers of the Americans, says: "To think of conquering that whole continent with thirty or forty thousand men, to be transported across the Atlantic, and fed from hence and incapable of being recruited after any defeat;-this is folly so great, that Language does not afford a name for it."]

[6 No historian having had so good an opportunity of knowing Cromwell as judicious Mr. Baxter, who was personally acquainted with him, and served in his army as chaplain; some of my readers will be glad to see what he farther says of that extraordinary man.

"When successes had broken down all considerable opposition, he [Cromwell] was in the face of all temptations, which conquered him, when he had conquered others. He thought that he had hitherto done well; that none but God had made him great; that if the war was lawful, the victory was lawful; that if it was lawful to fight against the king and conquer him, it was lawful to use him as a conquered enemy; and that it would be a foolish thing to trust him, when they had so provoked him. Hereupon he joined with that party in the parliament who were for cutting off the king, and raised with them the Independents and sectaries in the army, city, and country, to make a faction. Accordingly he modelled the army, disbanded the forces which were like to have hindered his design, pulled down the Presbyterian majority in parliament-and then the parliament; being the more easily persuaded that all this was lawful, because he had a secret eye to his own exaltation; thinking that when the king was gone a government there must be, and that no man was so fit for it as himself. Having thus forced his conscience to justify all his cause, he thought that the end being good and necessary, the necessary means could not be bad. And accordingly he gave his interest leave to tell him how far promises and vows should be kept or broken. Hence he thought secrecy a virtue, dissimulating no vice, and a lie, or perfidiousness, tolerable in case of necessity. His name stands as a monitory monument to posterity, to tell them the instability of man in strong temptations; what great success can do to lift up the mind; what pride can do to make man selfish; what selfishness can do to bribe the conscience, corrupt the judgment, and make men justify the greatest sins; and what bloodshed and great enormities a deluded judgment may draw men into." Hence it appears candid Mr. Baxter believed that Cromwell was once a good and pious man, who fell from God's fear into complicated wickedness, through the external allurements of success and ambition, and through the internal snare of Antinomianism.]

[7 Right, carried to the height, is the height of injustice.]

[8 There is a symmetrical excellence in the British constitution which escapes the attention of many Britons. I have observed that the capital business of the parliament is to keep the balance even between the king and the people; that neither oppressive despotism, (or the tyranny of one,) nor mobbing anarchy, (or the tyranny of many,) may prevail. I now add, that the two houses of parliament are two mediatorial courts between the king and the people. The house of commons is composed of senators chosen by the people, to be a check upon the king and nobles; and the house of lords is composed of senators chosen by the king, to be a check upon the people and their representatives. Hence it appears that the house of lords is peculiarly bound to maintain the prerogatives of the crown, against the encroachments of mobs and mobbing patriots; and that it is the peculiar duty of the house of commons to

maintain the privileges of the people, against the encroachments of despots and despotic ministers. In the last century the lords failing in their duty, the balance was broken: the commons prevailed; and the consequence was what might naturally be expected: the house of lords was set aside, the king beheaded, and the constitution overthrown. This remarkable event should teach our senators the wisdom peculiarly necessary to a faithful discharge of their high office.]

[9 I would not dare to use such an expression, if the Scriptures did not bear me out. The Lord, speaking by the Prophet Malachi, says: "Will a man ROB GOD? Yet ye have ROBBED ME. But ye say, Wherein have we ROBBED THEE? In TITHES," Mal. iii. 8. I infer from this answer, that if God accounts himself robbed, when tithes are detained from HIS priests; he does so much more when reasonable and legal taxes are detained from sovereigns, HIS primary representatives, whom he calls HIS anointed, and to whom he allows the title of gods.]

[10 Our posterity, thinned by our civil wars, will hear of our culpable contentions, and will lament our having turned against each other those swords which should never have been drawn but against our common enemies.]

We subjoin here, by way of postscript to the above letters, an extract [1] from a small pamphlet published soon after them, and entitled, "THE BIBLE AND THE SWORD, &c."

THE BIBLE AND THE SWORD:

OR,

THE APPOINTMENT OF THE GENERAL FAST VINDICATED;

IN AN

ADDRESS TO THE COMMON PEOPLE.

THE royal proclamation, which has been lately issued out, shows that the hopes expressed in a late publication [2] were well grounded. The heart of every good, unprejudiced man, must rejoice at reading this truly Christian decree:-"We, &c, command that a public fast and humiliation be observed throughout England, upon Friday, December 13, so that both we and our people may humble ourselves before almighty God, in order to obtain pardon of our sins; and may in the most devout and solemn manner send up our prayers and supplications to the Divine majesty, for averting those heavy judgments, which our manifold sins and provocations have justly deserved; and for imploring his intervention and blessing speedily to deliver our loyal subjects," &c. The sovereign acts herein the part of a Christian prince, and of a wise politician. As a Christian prince he enforces the capital duty of national repentance; and as a wise politician he averts the most formidable stroke which Dr. Price has aimed at his government. May we second his laudable designs by acting the part of penitent sinners and loyal subjects; though mistaken patriots should pour floods of contempt upon us on the occasion.

It would be strange if an appointment, which has a direct tendency to promote piety, to increase loyalty, and to baffle the endeavours of a disappointed party, met with no opposition. If we solemnly keep the fast, we must expect to be ridiculed by the men who imagine that liberty consists in the neglect of God's law, and the contempt of the king's authority. The warm men who have publicly asserted that his last speech from the throne is full of insincerity, daily insinuate that his proclamation is full of hypocrisy, and that it will be as wrong in you to ask a blessing upon his

arms, as to desire the Almighty to bless the arms of robbers and murderers. Nor are there few good men among us, who think that it is absolutely inconsistent with Christianity to draw the sword and proclaim a fast.

Lest the insinuations of such patriots and professors should cast a damp upon your devotion, and make you leave the field of national prayer to our revolted colonies, I beg leave to remind you of a similar case, in which God testified his approbation of a fast connected with a fight; yea, with a bloody civil war.

We read in the book of Judges, that "certain sons of Belial," belonging to the city of "Gibeah," in the land of Benjamin, "beset a house;" obliged a Levite who lodged there "to bring forth a concubine to them, and they knew her, and abused her all night" in such a manner, that "she died" in the morning. The Levite complained of this cruel usage to the eleven tribes. "All the men of Israel were gathered," on this occasion, "against the inhospitable city of Gibeah, and sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness is this that is done among you? Now, therefore, deliver us the sons of Belial, who are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin [instead of condescending to this just request] gathered themselves together unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel," Judges xix. 20.

Let us apply this first part of the story to the immediate cause of the bloodshed which stains the fields of British America, and we shall have the following state of the case. Certain sons of Belial, belonging to the city of Boston, beset a ship in the night, overpowered the crew, and feloniously destroyed her rich cargo. The government was informed that this felonious deed had been concerted by some of the principal inhabitants of Boston, and executed by their emissaries; and being justly incensed against the numerous rioters, it requested the unjust city to make up the loss sustained by the owners of the plundered ship, or to deliver up the sons of Belial who had so audaciously broken the laws of the land; and a military force was sent to block up the port of Boston, till the sovereign's just request should be granted. The other colonists, instead of using their interest with the obstinate inhabitants of Boston to induce them to do this act of loyalty and justice, gathered themselves together unto Boston, to go out to battle against the sons of Great Britain, and by taking up arms against the king to protect felons, made themselves guilty both of felony and high treason.

Return we now to the children of Israel, and let us see if God forbade them to bring their obstinate brethren to reason by the force of arms, and considered the prayers made to him on this occasion as improper and hypocritical. "The children of Israel (says the historian) arose and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin? And the Lord [instead of blaming their design] said, Judah shall go up first." In consequence of this direction, Judah marched up to the enemy. But, alas! the righteousness of a cause, and the Divine approbation, do not always insure success

to those who fight in the cause of virtue. Judah lost the day, and 22,000 men. The children of Israel, greatly afflicted with this misfortune, went up and wept before the Lord until even, and asked counsel of the Lord, saying, "Shall I go up [a second time] to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother?" And the Lord said, "Go up against him," Judges xx. 23. However, they were as unsuccessful in the second engagement as they had been in the first. "Then all the children of Israel, and all the people went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat before the Lord, and fasted that day until even. And the children of Israel inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the Lord said, Go up, for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand." And accordingly "the Lord smote Benjamin before Israel," Judges xx. 26, &c. And the few Benjamites that escaped the edge of the vindictive sword, lamented the obstinacy with which their infatuated tribe had taken up arms for the sons of Belial, who had beset the house in the inhospitable city of Gibeah.

To return. From the preceding Scriptural account, it evidently appears, (1.) That God allows, yea, commands the sword to be drawn for the punishment of daring felons, and of the infatuated people who bear arms in their defence, as the Benjamites formerly did, and as the revolted colonies actually do. (2.) That, in this case, a sister tribe may conscientiously draw the sword against an obstinate sister tribe; much more a parent state against an obstinate colony, and a king against rebellious subjects. (3.) That Providence, to try the patience of those who are in the right, may permit that they should suffer great losses. (4.) That while the maintainers of order and justice draw the sword to check daring licentiousness, it is their duty to go up unto the house of God, and to weep and fast before the Lord. (5.) what God makes a difference between the enthusiastical abettors of felonious practices, who fast to smite their brethren and rulers with the fist of wickedness, and the steady governors who, together with their people, fast to smite the wicked with the sceptre of righteousness; and that, while God testifies his abhorrence of the former fast, he shows that the latter ranks among the fasts which he has chosen, the end of true fasting being to repress evil without us, as well as within us. And lastly, that, although no war is so dreadful as a civil war, yet, when God was consulted three times following, all his answers show that the most bloody civil war is preferable to the horrible consequences of daring anarchy: and that it is better to maintain order and execute justice, with the loss of thousands of soldiers, than to let the mobbing sons of Belial break into ships or houses, to commit with impunity all the crimes which their lust, rapaciousness, and ferocity prompt them to.

Now if fasting and drawing the sword of justice be duties consistent with Scriptural religion, it follows that praying and using that sword are compatible ordinances. To be convinced of it, you need only consider the following scripture: "Moses said to Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek. Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur, went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass when Moses held up his hand [in earnest prayer] that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand Amalek

prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy, and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the Lord said to Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book," Exod. xvii. 9, &c.

"But supposing war and bloodshed were allowed under the Jewish dispensation, are they not absolutely forbidden under the Gospel? Is not Christ the Prince of Peace, and his Gospel the Gospel of peace? And is it not said that men shall neither hurt nor destroy in God's holy mountain? How then can we suppose that drawing the sword, and fasting on that occasion, can be evangelical duties?"

This objection is specious, and deserves a full answer.

1. Our Lord, who said to his apostles that a kind of raging spirit goeth not out but by fasting and prayer, said also to them, "He that hath not sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords: and he said, It is enough," Luke xxii. 36, 38. I grant, that when "Peter drew his sword, and [rashly] struck a servant of the high priest, Jesus said unto him, Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword [to use it rashly, as thou dost, without any order, and without the least probability of success] shall perish with the sword," Matt. xxvi. 52. From the whole of this evangelical account, it appears that our Lord allows his followers the use of the sword; and that he only blames it when it is precipitate, and likely to answer no other end than that of throwing the triumphant friends of vice into a greater rage.

2. If, indeed, all men were Christians, and every nominal Christian was led by the Spirit of Christ, there would be absolutely no need of the sword; for there would be nothing but justice, truth, and love, in the world. But reason dictates, that so long as the wicked shall use the sword in support of vice, the righteous, who are in power, must use it in defence of virtue. The Lord of hosts, and Captain of our salvation, who girds his two-edged sword upon his thigh, or causes it to proceed out of his mouth to devour the wicked-this righteous Lion of the tribe of Judah will never suffer Satan and his servants so to bear the sword as to engross the use of it. This would be letting them have the kingdom, the power, and the glory, without control.

3. The Psalms and Revelation are full of prophecies concerning the righteous wars which the godly will wage against the wicked, before iniquity be rooted out of the earth. When the place of the ungodly shall know them no more, and righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters do the sea, Isaiah's prophecy shall be fulfilled. "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it. The Lord shall then judge among the nations, &c, and they shall beat their swords into plough shares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," Isaiah ii. 2, 4. But till this happy time come, whenever one nation, or one part of a nation, unjustly rises up against another,

as the men of Boston did against our merchants, it will be needful to oppose righteous force to unrighteous violence. It is absurd, therefore, to measure the duty of Christians who live among lawless men, by the duty of those Christians who shall live when all lawless men shall have been destroyed.

4. If Michael and his angels fought in heaven against the dragon and his angels, I do not see why General Howe might not fight on earth against General Lee. And if the congress unsheathe the sword to protect felons, redress the imaginary grievance of an insignificant tax, and to load thousands of the king's loyal subjects with grievances too heavy to be borne, it is hard to say why he and his parliament should not use the sword to redress these real grievances, and to assert the liberty of our American fellow subjects who groan under the tyranny of republican despotism.

5. St. Paul, who knew the Gospel better than English mystics and American patriots, asserts the lawfulness of using the sword in order to maintain good government and execute justice. Hear his doctrine:-"The ruler is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, [of that God who says, 'If ye be obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword,' Isaiah i. 19, 20, and, of consequence, he is] a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil," Rom. xiii. 4. Hence it appears that the king is entrusted with the sword, and that if he do not use it to execute wrath upon criminals, he bears the sword in vain, and defeats one of the capital ends of his coronation: for "governors are sent by God for the punishment of evil doers," 1 Pet. ii. 14.

6. Some people rejoice that we have watchmen to guard our streets, constables to apprehend house breakers, jailers to confine highwaymen, and executioners to put them to death. And yet they blame the use of an army. Is not their conduct, in this respect, highly unreasonable? For, after all, what are soldiers but royal watchmen, royal constables, royal jailers; and, if need be, royal executioners? If it be lawful to place watchmen in long white coats at the corners of our streets for public security, why should it be unlawful to place there watchmen in red coats for the same purpose? If it be right to send an unarmed constable, with a justice's warrant, against an unarmed outlaw, or a defenceless debtor; can it be wrong to send thirty thousand armed constables, with the sovereign's warrant, to disarm a countless multitude of lawless men, who assume the supreme power of the sword with as much propriety as the pope does the power of the keys of heaven and hell? Again: if it be not contrary to Christianity to put under a jailer's care a number of dangerous men, who have already disturbed the public peace, and who seem lent upon doing it again; why should it be deemed contrary to Christ's religion, to check, by a military guard, a dangerous city or province which has forfeited its former liberty, by adding the guilt of felonious and treasonable practices, to that of daring licentiousness? Once more: if the king, by signing a death warrant, can justly, commission a sheriff, and an executioner to take away the life of a house breaker, or a man who has presented a pistol to you on the highway; why can he not, by the advice of his council and

parliament, give to his generals and soldiers a commission to shoot lawless men who have broken into a ship, to destroy the property of his loyal subjects, or have taken up arms in defence of the men that committed this crime; and who, instead of presenting a pistol to an individual, to rob him of a few shillings, have brought large trains of artillery into the field, to kill the embodied officers of justice, who bear the ruler's sword, and to rob the king himself of some of the brightest jewels of his crown? If you attend to these hints, you will not find fault with our sovereign for showing that he does not bear the sword in vain: and you will praise him if you consider, that the first commission, which he has given to the commanders of his forces, is a commission to offer gracious terms of peace to those very men, who, by wantonly shedding the blood of his loyal subjects, and by repeatedly pouring floods of contempt upon his sacred person, have forfeited all just pretensions to his royal favour.

7. Soldiers, like watchmen, jailers, and executioners, are a needful burden upon the public. I heartily wish we were virtuous enough to do without them: but as this is not the case, they are a strong, bitter, and costly remedy, which is absolutely necessary to prevent or cure our licentiousness. So long as human bodies shall want to be preserved by the amputation of painful, mortifying limbs,:we shall want surgeons: and so long as political bodies shall be in danger of being destroyed by the moral corruption of their members, we shall want soldiers to do bloody operations. May the Lord grant us a constant succession of wise, conscientious, mild, and yet steady rulers, who may never bear the sword in vain; and who may never use it but with the same tenderness with which a surgeon uses his knife when he cuts a mortified limb from the body of a beloved child. His heart bleeds, while the dreadful operation is performed; and yet his judicious, parental affection makes him consent to sacrifice a part of his son's body, in order to prevent the destruction of the whole. As punishing is God's strange work, so should it be that of governors, who are his political representatives. Wo to the man, who, to show that he has power to use a knife, wantonly cuts his own flesh! And wo to the ruler, who, to make appear that he bears the sword, butchers his loyal subjects, and wantonly cuts off the sound limbs of the political body of which he is the head! A crime which no candid person can lay to the charge of our mild sovereign.

To conclude: if Christianity had prohibited fighting for the execution of justice, the continuance of peace, and the support of good government, when penitent soldiers asked John the Baptist, "What shall we do?" he would undoubtedly have intimated that they should renounce their bloody profession as soon as they could. But, instead of doing it, he charged them to "do violence [or injustice] to no man, and to be content with their wages;" a direction which amounted to bidding them to continue to serve their country, by helping the ruler not to "bear the sword in vain." Nor was our Lord of a different mind from his fore-runner; for he praised a centurion, or captain in the Roman army, declaring "he had not found such faith in Israel," as he discovered in that Gentile; and he parted from him, as Peter afterward did from Cornelius and his devout soldiers, without giving him the least hint that his

profession was unlawful. From the whole I infer, that if Christianity allow a man to be a soldiers it allows him to fight for the maintenance of order. And, if it be lawfu1 to fight for this purpose, it must be lawful, nay, it is highly necessary, "to fast and pray," before an engagement. For the greater the temptation of soldiers to indulge uncharitable tempers, the more earnestly ought they to pray that they may fight in the same spirit of love in which Christ was, when he uttered his last wo against rebellious Jerusalem. "He beheld the" obstinate "city, wept over it," and pronounced its awful doom: "Thine enemies shall lay thee even with the ground, and shall not leave in thee one stone upon another."

Nor should soldiers fast and pray alone. We ought to bear a part in the solemn duty; because our sins have helped to fill up the measure of the national guilt which has provoked God to permit the colonists to rise against us. We owe much to the gentleness of the fleet and army. While they lift up the sword, which lingering justice has reluctantly drawn; while they stand between us and the desperate men who break into our ships, set fire to their own houses, tar, feather, goog, [3] and scalp their captives; whip, cut, and torture their slaves; and while they expose their lives, by sea and land, for our protection, or (which comes to the same thing) for the defence of the government that protects us; it is our bounden duty to feel for them, and to bear them on our hearts. Nay, we shall be guilty of inconsideration, uncharitableness, and base ingratitude, if we do not hold up their hands, by lifting up our own to the Lord of hosts in their behalf, and by asking that neither profaneness, lewdness, intemperance, nor cruelty, may stain their laurels; and that they may all be endued with every virtue, which can draw the love of their enemies, and fit them to live or die as faithful soldiers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Nor should we fast only with an eye to ourselves, and those who fight our battles. We ought also to do it out of regard to our American brethren. If they act at this time the part of enemies, does not our Lord say, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you?" Should we not remember that British blood flows in their veins-that they are not all guilty-that many of them have been deceived by the plausible and lying speeches of some of their leaders-that the epidemical fever of wild patriotism seized multitudes before they were aware of its dreadful consequences-and that numbers of them already repent of their rashness, earnestly wishing for an opportunity of returning with safety to their former allegiance?

If you consider these favourable circumstances, you will be glad to have an opportunity of solemnly approaching the throne of grace in behalf of your unhappy brethren: you will intercede for them with hearts full of forgiving love, and Christian sympathy. You will ardently pray that God would open the eyes and turn the hearts of the congressmen, and their military adherents; that he would fill the breast of the king, and of all who are in authority under him, with every virtue which can render his steady and mild government acceptable to the most discontented of his subjects; and that, on both sides of the Atlantic, all persons in power may cheerfully use all their influence to promote the speedy reconciliation and lasting union we wish for.

Should piety, loyalty, and charity thus animate your prayers; our day of fasting and humiliation will infallibly usher in a day of praise and general thanksgiving; and the eloquent senator, who, in the house of commons, lately condemned the religious appointment which I vindicate, will himself partake of the universal joy, and be sorry to have declaimed against a royal proclamation, which so justly deserves his assent, concurrence, and praises. I am, my dear fellow subjects, your obedient servant,

JOHN FLETCHER.

LONDON, *December* 6, 1776.

ENDNOTES

1 We term the following an extract, because we have judged it proper to omit the introductory part, it being merely a quotation from the fourth of the preceding letters, beginning with “Dr. Price has advanced an argument,” &c, p. 536; and concluding with the end of the letter, p. 545.]

[2 American Patriotism Confronted, &c.]

[3 A kind of American torture, which consists in wrenching a man's eyes out of their sockets.]

END VOLUME IV.