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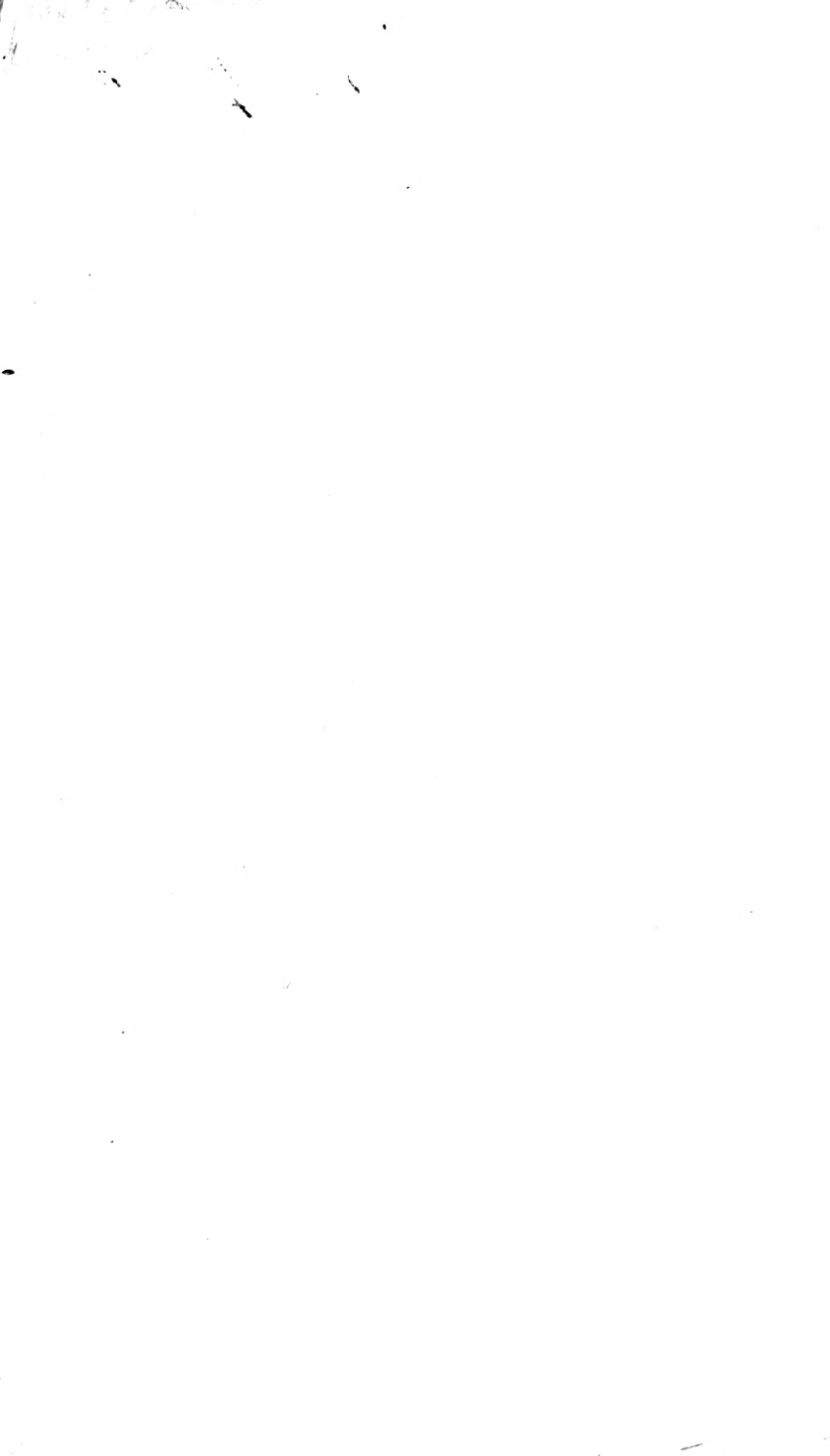
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EVANGELICAL PRINCIPLES
OF
RELIGION
VINDICATED,

AND THE
INCONSISTENCY AND DANGEROUS TENDENCY
OF THE
UNITARIAN SCHEME
EXPOSED;

In a Series of Letters,
ADDRESSED TO THE REV. T. WATSON:

IN REPLY TO HIS BOOK, INTITLED

“A Plain Statement of some of the most important Principles of Religion; and a
Preservative against Infidelity, Enthusiasm, and Immorality.”

By GEORGE YOUNG,

Minister of the Associate Congregation in Cliff Lane, Whitby.

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PREFACE.



AFTER so many valuable Works have been published in defence of *Evangelical Religion*, any new performance on that subject may be deemed superfluous. Fresh attacks on the doctrines of grace may be thought undeserving of notice, as they are only a repetition of attempts which have been frequently defeated. The arguments advanced have been refuted long ago, and the objections urged have been obviated an hundred times.

Yet, it is seldom advisable, to allow any considerable attempts against the essential articles of the christian faith to pass unnoticed. Such publications, though they may be said to have been refuted before they were written, will be read by numbers, who have neither opportunity, nor inclination, to consult the books where that refutation may be found.—Even where the attack is far from being formidable, it may be imprudent to overlook it. Great disasters have often arisen from despising a weak enemy. A slight wound, if neglected, may fester and prove fatal:

and though the affection should be only local and partial, it may be necessary to apply a local remedy.

Many may be of opinion, that the *Work*, which has occasioned the following *Letters*, is one of those which should be quietly left to sink into merited oblivion. It may be thought, that, where the arguments are too flimsy, and the misrepresentations too gross, to impose on the judicious, a reply would be inexpedient; since it might possibly run the risk of disseminating more widely the poison which it would be designed to counteract. Sentiments of this kind have served to delay the publication of these *Letters*: and indeed, were all men judicious, their appearance would be wholly unnecessary. But there are multitudes, who examine only the surface of things, with whom assertion passes for argument, and misrepresentation for sound reasoning. By such, a book that is unanswered will be judged unanswerable; and an assault unresisted will be counted a victory.—That truth, then, may not suffer, nor error seem to triumph; that the friends of evangelical doctrine may not be discouraged, nor its enemies exult; that the weak and unwary may

not be insnared, nor the unlearned and unstable misled ; some answer to Mr. Watson's performance appeared to be requisite.

It can scarcely be called self-praise, to say that these Letters contain a refutation of the work reviewed in them : for, where victory is so easy, there is no room for triumph. Had the author's object been solely to expose the fallacy of Mr. Watson's reasonings, the inaccuracy of his assertions, and the grossness of his misrepresentations, in regard to evangelical principles, a much smaller publication might have sufficed. But, in the hope of rendering this Vindication more extensively useful, he has taken a more enlarged view of the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, than a mere reply to the Plain Statement seemed to demand.

Some of the strictures contained in the following Letters, will perhaps be judged severe ; but it is hoped, that none of them will be found unjust. It is possible that, where there is so much ambiguity and incorrectness, a mistake of the meaning of some passages may have occurred ; but if any such mistakes have been committed, let them not be imputed to want of attention or of candour

—*The use that has been made of Mr. Watson's former works cannot be deemed unfair, as they are both recommended in this recent publication. (p. 94, 97.) It may be proper to add, that the references have been made to the first editions of these works.*

Perhaps some may object, that to appropriate the term Evangelical to the Principles here defended, implies a begging of the question. But it is sufficient to answer, that I have adopted the word in compliance with common usage, in the same way as I have applied to the friends of Mr. Watson's system the name Unitarians. They cannot complain of our claiming the one appellation, while we suffer them to usurp the other.

It is the author's earnest wish, that these Letters may, by the divine blessing, be rendered useful to Mr. Watson himself, and to all whom his book has injured; and be subservient to the interests of the truth as it is in Jesus, and of pure and undefiled religion. May the name of Immanuel be exalted in the earth, and the triumphs of his cross be gloriously multiplied!

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EVANGELICAL PRINCIPLES
OF
RELIGION
VINDICATED :

*In a series of Letters, addressed to the
REV. T. WATSON.*



LETTER I.

Introductory Observations.

SIR,

IN the close of the Introduction to your PLAIN STATEMENT, you anticipate the opposition which it would have to encounter, and you venture to foretell the character of its opponents and the nature of their attacks. You expect to be censured only by “those, who are more attached to their systems and party, than to the interests of virtue and of truth;” and that they will assail you with “abuse” and with “pious calumnies.” (p. viii.) If your book really is, what it pretends to be, this stigma may be justly fixed on all its adversaries; for, who but infidels, enthusiasts, or profligates, will reject “a preservative against infidelity, enthusiasm, and immorality.”

But there are many Publications which ill correspond with their titles, and that this is the case with your *Preservative*, the enlightened and candid reader will scarcely fail to perceive. It contains, indeed, like your former Publications, many excellent remarks on the attributes of God as displayed in creation and providence, on the duties of religion and of morality, and on some other interesting subjects: but, as a *Preservative against infidelity, enthusiasm, and immorality*, it is of little or no value: or rather, it seems, in some respects, calculated to increase the very evils which it proposes to remedy. If it shall appear, that you combat infidelity by surrendering almost all the points in dispute, all the doctrines for which christians in general value the gospel and infidels oppose it; that you encounter enthusiasm, by confounding it with vital religion, and by representing "all inward feelings in religion as the operations of darkness," (p. viii) as if religion, like a system of mathematics, were seated only in the understanding, and must cease to be genuine as soon as it affects the heart; and that you oppose immorality, by stripping the gospel of those doctrines which contain the strongest incitements to holiness, and by treating with disrespect some of those sacred institutions which are the best means of cherishing both piety and virtue:—then it will be obvious, that, whatever may have been your intentions in pre-

senting this Publication to the world, it must operate, not as a salutary antidote, but as a deadly poison; and its effects must be the more pernicious, as the many excellent sentiments which it contains, will serve, like a mixture of sweet ingredients, to conceal its baneful tendency, and render it palatable.

That this is the true character of your *Plain Statement*, may be partly presumed from its favourable reception among such as are tinged with infidelity; of whom, I regret to say, there are not a few in this place. If my information is correct, it is an agreeable companion for those who delight to misrepresent and vilify the peculiar doctrines of scripture, who ridicule all serious godliness under the *cant* names of enthusiasm, fanaticism or methodism, who consider frequent devotions as a sure indication of hypocrisy, and regard the strict observance of the Lord's day as pharisaical preciseness or needless austerity.

If such is the real tendency of your work, I need not be afraid that, by attempting to answer it, I shall enlist myself among the enemies "of virtue and truth;" for the interests of virtue and truth require that it should be refuted. Nor is it needful in this service to employ "abuse and calumny;" but, on the contrary, to use the honourable weapons of sober reasoning and candid investigation, for defending the doctrines of

grace from the "abuse" with which you have treated them, and rescuing their friends from the "calumnies" with which you have attacked them.

Yet it is not without some reluctance that I now enter the lists of controversy. To a person who desires to live peaceably with all men, it must be unpleasant to engage in polemical discussions; especially with one whom learning, character, and age have rendered respectable, and where long acquaintance and habits of friendship seem to make the attempt unnatural: but when the interests of truth and holiness are concerned, all inferior considerations must give way. If even a brother or a father pervert the gospel of Christ, he must not be suffered to escape animadversion. To offer some strictures on the exceptionable parts of your publication, appears to be a duty which I owe to my people, to the religious public, and even to yourself.

In undertaking this task, I am well aware of the difficulties which must attend it, and cannot but wish that it had fallen into better hands. These difficulties, however, are not owing to the acuteness of your reasonings or the strength of your arguments, for the controversial part of your work abounds much more with misrepresentation, sophistry, and dogmatical assertion, than with sound argument; but they arise from the multiplicity of the subjects to be considered, the

mysterious nature of some of them, and the vague and confused form in which you have discussed them.

It is not my intention, in these Letters, to criticise every objectionable sentiment, much less every inaccurate expression or clumsy sentence that occurs in your Performance; but, to give a fair statement of those evangelical doctrines which you have misrepresented, to combat the specious arguments with which you oppose them, to shew that they are conformable both to scripture and reason, and have nothing of that mischievous tendency which you ascribe to them; and at the same time, to prove that the doctrines which you would substitute in their place are unscriptural, and dangerous, and in some instances absurd.—On these topics I shall endeavour to address you “in the spirit of meekness,” while I would also “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

*On Mr. Watson's Treatise as A PRESERVATIVE
AGAINST INFIDELITY.*

SIR,

THE professed design of your work, as stated in the beginning of the Introduction, appears, at first sight, to be highly laudable: It is, "to shew that christianity is a rational system: that it is simple and plain; and that its great aim is to bring in and support universal righteousness." It is indeed a useful exercise, to prove that reason and scripture are not at variance, and to point out the practical influence of the gospel, in changing the heart and regulating the life. But it remains to be considered, whether you have kept these important ends uniformly in view, and have adopted the most likely methods for attaining them.—In this Letter I shall offer some general remarks on the manner in which you prosecute the first of these objects; or, in other words, I shall take a view of your book as a *Preservative against Infidelity*.

It is well known that infidels represent christianity as a system contrary to reason, and therefore, to counteract infidelity, it is necessary to

shew, as has been often done, that this contrariety is only imaginary; and that all the doctrines of scripture are *conformable* to reason, though some of them are *above* reason; or, to use your own expression, “are exalted above the perfect comprehension of men.” (p. 110.)—Had this been your method of opposing infidelity, your design would have been laudable; however imperfect the execution. But the plan which you follow is diametrically opposite. Instead of maintaining these peculiar doctrines of our religion against the assaults of unbelievers, you abandon them as untenable; nay, not content with surrendering the fortresses which you ought to have defended, you join with the enemy in a determined hostility to many of the fundamental truths of the gospel.

All those doctrines which infidels usually attack, you exclude from your system, as “doctrines which are dark and mysterious, which gender only strife, and can be applied to no good practical purpose;” and which you have therefore “studiously avoided,” except “when they stood directly in your way.”—The judicious reader will be at no loss to perceive, that these “dark and mysterious” points which you reject, are not metaphysical disquisitions about matters of no importance, or about which the divine word gives us no information, but those tenets which are generally called the *distinguishing* doctrines

of the gospel, as they constitute the chief difference between christianity and infidelity. These mysterious but sublime doctrines, you represent as “subjects of a speculative nature,” “abstruse points,” “things of no value,” “dark and useless disquisitions” (p. 110, 94); which are therefore unworthy of a place in your *Statement*.

That mysterious truths can have no practical influence, is a sentiment which is often uttered by unitarians, as well as by infidels; but it is a sentiment at once inconsistent with reason and with your own principles: For, of the doctrines retained in your system, there are some which are as much “exalted above the perfect comprehension of men,” as those which you exclude. God’s eternity, his omnipresence, his omniscience, a particular providence, and the resurrection of the dead, are subjects as incomprehensible as those points which you reject as dark and useless; and yet you justly conceive the former to be eminently conducive to practical religion:—A plain proof, that the true cause of the rejection of the latter is not to be sought for in their mysterious nature, nor in their want of efficacy. And I will venture to add, that this cause is to be found in one of the leading branches of their practical influence --their tendency to *humility*, that important grace, which is the very essence of christian holiness. They are opposed, not so much because they are *mysterious*, as because they are *humiliating*.

You wish “to shew that christianity is a *rational* system :”—But, to degrade those sublime mysteries which adorn the sacred page, and to stigmatize a great portion of the word of God as dark and useless, is surely a most preposterous method of proving it to be *rational*. If you believe that the scriptures contain such dark and useless tenets, then you must maintain this shocking sentiment, that the infinitely wise God has given us a revelation from heaven, of which a considerable part is of no value ; nay, is not only useless but pernicious, tending “only to gender strife,” and “doing infinite harm to the christian cause!” (p. 110.) If such a sentiment will recommend christianity to infidels, their minds must be singularly constructed.

This reflection, however, you might have easily prevented, by throwing off that ambiguity of expression, which you seem to have “studiously” adopted, and frankly owning that you have excluded these mysterious doctrines because you wholly disbelieve them, and consider these of them which you omit as forming no part of the gospel, any more than those which you openly attack.—That these are your real sentiments, it is not difficult to perceive. The mysterious tenets which are omitted or opposed in your *Plain Statement* are chiefly the following ; the doctrines of the Trinity—man’s total depravity

and inability—predestination—the incarnation and atonement of Christ—justification by faith alone—the necessity of regeneration—and the work of the Spirit in enlightening and sanctifying the soul.—That *all* these doctrines, as contained in the Articles of the Church of England, and the Confession of Faith of the Church of Scotland, are wholly rejected by you, though there are some of them which you barely omit, requires little demonstration. Your violent attack on justification, regeneration, and other doctrines, which, it seems, had the misfortune “to stand in your way,” affords a strong presumption of the treatment which their companions would have met with, had they also come before you: And when you occasionally glance at these in passing, it is with the frown of an enemy. Thus, it is insinuated (p. 98), that the incarnation of Christ, is one of those “dark and inexplicable” subjects, which you pronounce to be useless: A similar hint is thrown out respecting the atonement, which is obscurely alluded to (p. 102), as “the means of giving efficacy to repentance:” And in some instances you betray the same spirit of hostility to the divinity of Christ; as when you insinuate (p. 113), that it is only in respect of his example, that Jesus is “the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of his person;” and when you in-

timate (p. 169), that Christ will raise the dead, not by his own divine power, but merely as an agent subordinate to the Father.

But there is no need for appealing to your ambiguous phrases and dark innuendos, to prove your enmity to *all* the articles enumerated above; since those which you omit are so intimately connected with some of those which you avowedly condemn, that there are none who believe the one, without assenting to the other. Who is there that rejects the doctrine of justification by faith alone, who does not also deny the atonement? And where is the man, who denies the atonement, and yet acknowledges the Deity of Christ, and the Holy Trinity?

Indeed, the very omission of these doctrines is a proof that you deny them; for it is impossible to believe them at all, without viewing them as of the very highest importance. Besides, if you regard these tenets as belonging to the christian system, you have acted a most disingenuous part with infidels whom you would reclaim; for you pretend to set before them “distinguishing principles of christianity,” while those principles, which they conceive to furnish their chief objections to christianity, are kept out of sight.

Hence, we may fairly conclude; that not one of the doctrines mentioned above belongs to your Creed: and that though you may suffer the doctrine of the Trinity, &c, “to lie dormant” (p.119),

for the present, yet you would rejoice to see these *dark tenets* wholly exploded from the christian system. But why did you content yourself with omitting the doctrine of the Trinity, and not rather attempt to refute it? It stood as much in your way as some articles which you directly attack; for, if it be false, Trinitarians are all chargeable with idolatry, in giving divine honours to the Son and the Holy Spirit; and idolatry is nearly related to *immorality*. Why then, in your mighty zeal for the moral virtues, did you not solemnly warn your readers against such dangerous sentiments? Were you influenced by some remaining portion of respect for a creed which you once acknowledged? Or were you averse to shock the "religious prejudices" of some friends, who are still loath to consider you as a downright Arian or Socinian?

It appears, then, that you oppose infidelity, not by proving that what has been usually called christianity is "a rational system;" but, by assuring infidels that this is not christianity; that what they have hitherto attacked and christians have defended, as peculiar doctrines of the gospel, form no part of the gospel, but are dark, and useless, and dangerous tenets; that *pure* christianity approximates much more to deism than to these evangelical principles; and that, consequently, if infidels knew how trivial the difference between their system and this *rational*

gospel is, they would drop all their hostility, and readily assume the christian name.

The chief design of the following Letters is to prove that these Evangelical Principles, which you refuse to admit into your system, are not only a part of christianity, but a most important and salutary part.—In the sequel of this Letter, I shall offer some remarks, of a more general nature, on your plan for converting infidels by stripping the gospel of every thing offensive to them.

Every judicious reader must be struck with the vast dissimilarity between your system and what has hitherto been called christianity, both by the friends and enemies of revelation. If the doctrines which you reject are not derived from scripture, but owe their origin, as you insinuate, to ignorance and prejudice; how has it happened, that infidels, who may be supposed to be free from every *religious* prejudice, have always found them in the Bible, and have always viewed them as holding a prominent place in the christian scheme? And how has it happened that they have so long been held as fundamental articles of Jesus' religion, not by a few weak and ignorant men, but by the christian world in general? You acknowledge (p. 110), that "ever since the Reformation, doctrines of this kind have entered into the creeds of many professed christians;" and you might have said

“ of almost all professed christians,” in the Protestant churches ; for these “ *abstruse* points of religion ” are to be found, in the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England, in the Confession of Faith of the Church of Scotland, and in the creeds and confessions of almost all the Reformed Churches. They are the doctrines for which our Fathers so nobly struggled at the time of the Reformation, and which so many illustrious martyrs sealed with their blood ;*—doctrines, which have been professed and defended by hundreds of divines and scholars, at least as eminent for talents and learning, and for the love of truth and virtue, as the most distinguished among the *rational* christians of the present day.

It is therefore not very consistent with that modesty which you frequently affect, to set out with alleging, that in your attempt to simplify the gospel by divesting it of mysteries, you will have only to “ encounter religious prejudices ” and “ attachment to systems ; ” and to talk

* That the Martyrs died like fools, throwing away their lives in defence of such DARK AND USELESS TENETS, is a sentiment which Mr. W. avows in a former Publication : “ The doctrines for which some of them suffered, were so obscure and of so little importance to general virtue, as throws a suspicion on their knowledge or integrity. And in such cases, where some slight compliances, no ways injurious to their cause, or derogatory to their character, might have saved their lives, it gives room to suspect, that pride, or some preposterous ambition lurked at the bottom ” INTIM. AND EVID. OF A FUTURE STATE, p. 180, 181.—Hence we may infer, that if there never had been any believers more attached to the Gospel than RATIONAL christians, the name of martyr would have been almost unknown. Indeed we can scarcely think that in that case persecution would have ever existed.

as if reason and virtue were wholly on your side, and ignorance absurdity and immorality on the side of those whom you attack. But it might well be expected, that, in an attempt to explode the *humiliating* doctrines of religion, *that* temper of mind to which such doctrines are directly opposed, should make its appearance. In professed infidels, this disposition is very observable. It is not uncommon to meet with a silly coxcomb, who, having learned to retail a few commonplace objections against christianity, and deal out some profane jests on the scriptures, sets up for an oracle of wisdom, laughs at the folly of ancestors, and views with contempt those weak men called christians; while the poor creature is a stranger to the very elements of erudition, and to the first principles of sound reasoning and common sense. We need not then be surprised, to hear those who are equally hostile to the peculiar doctrines of revelation, also laying claim to *reason* as their exclusive property, and to find, not only Dr. Priestly himself, but some of the meanest of his disciples, assuming the title of *rational* christians, and regarding the rest of the professed followers of Jesus as weak people, who are biassed by "prejudice," or misled by "attachment to systems."

That attachment to a *system* of religious principles can of itself be a proper subject for obloquy, is a sentiment unworthy of an enlightened

mind. The truths which we believe, cannot be injured by arranging them systematically; on the contrary, such an arrangement will aid at once the judgment and the memory. And when a system of doctrines is found, upon due examination, to correspond with the sacred oracles, to have no attachment to it, would be criminal. Those who are loudest in raising the senseless outcry against systems, have no hesitation in adopting systems of their own. What is your *Plain Statement* but your system? And a meagre system it is:—Yet you seem to have as much attachment to it, and as strong prejudices in its favour, as others have for their systems.

That *your* pretensions to superior learning and wisdom do not rest on the firmest basis, may perhaps be made to appear in the following Letters. Nay, even the subject now under consideration requires me to notice some instances in which you betray your ignorance;—ignorance, not merely of the scriptures, (that is nothing uncommon in *rational* divines*), but of heathen morality; which is the more strange, as unitarian *moralists* usually speak of their pagan brethren with fraternal affection.

After having stripped christianity of what are

* Some Divines may be found, even among such as pass with the fashionable world for models of taste and learning, who appear to have never read their Bible once over. In one of Stern's Sermons we find that SENTIMENTAL author speaking once and again of HOSEA KING OF ASSYRIA! —SERMON ON 2 KINGS XVII, 7.

commonly called its peculiar doctrines, you are at a loss to find any thing remaining to discriminate it from natural religion, except the doctrine of a resurrection. To supply this deficiency, you introduce among *your* “distinguishing principles” some sentiments which were generally received among the heathen philosophers, but which you deny them the honour of maintaining.

Of this ignorance of heathen morality, you have given us a remarkable instance in the following passage: “Christian principles extend to the thoughts of the heart; and in this we meet with one of *its* distinguishing excellencies. It never entered into the conceptions of any of the excellent moralists of the heathen world, to prescribe any duties, which should extend to the thoughts. And the reason of this is very evident; because the sanctions of their law could have no force there. But in the christian system we are to pay a constant regard to the divine presence; and are assured, that God knows all our thoughts; hence we are to regulate them, from a regard to the presence of our Maker.—Our Saviour tells us, that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts &c; and that these are the things which defile a man. And undoubtedly, if we indulge in any vicious or impure thoughts, it requires but very little acquaintance with human nature, to be convinced, that these will have a very powerful influence on our lives.

Here then are two very powerful reasons for a serious attention to the discipline of our heart. Because, in the first place, wicked thoughts must be displeasing to that God, who knows our hearts, and is perfectly acquainted with every thing which passes there. And secondly, because indulging in vicious thoughts must of course produce vicious actions. This then is a degree of morality, to which no heathen philosophy could ever aspire." (p. 134, 135.)

I know not from what source you have derived your knowledge of the heathen philosophers; but if it was from the perusal of their works, you must have read them with uncommon carelessness, or confined your attention to a small portion of their writings; otherwise you must have discovered in their moral system those very principles, which in this passage you would appropriate to the gospel. What was the professed object of the heathen philosophy? Was it merely to direct the conduct, and not also to improve the heart, and regulate the thoughts? What was the great aim of the Stoic philosophy in particular? Was it not to control the passions, and to produce a constant tranquillity of mind?—That the Supreme Being knows our hearts, that we are accountable for our thoughts, that wicked thoughts are the source of wicked actions, and that we must shun not only the actual commission of sin but all approaches to it

in the thoughts and intentions of the heart, are sentiments, which not only “entered into the conceptions of the excellent moralists of the heathen world,” but abound in their writings.—Even the ancient Greek Poets, who sometimes give the most degrading pictures of the Deity, attribute to the Supreme God the knowledge of the human heart. Homer, in more than one instance, speaks of Jupiter’s infatuating the mind by a secret influence, which implies an acquaintance with the thoughts;* and he mentions the inward piety and goodness of Ulysses, as well known to the gods; to whom also he ascribes a knowledge of all things.† Hesiod asserts that the Deity perceives the wicked *purposes* of men, as well as their wicked actions, and exhorts Perses to restrain his *mind* from sin.‡ In the following beautiful passage of Theognis, the same ideas are clearly expressed: “Dear Jupiter, I admire thee; for thou rulest over all; thyself possessing honour and great might: and *thou knowest well the mind of men, even the soul of each individual*; and thy power, O king, is supreme!” || Philemon another ancient Poet, tells his friend Pamphilus, that he must not expect to make God propitious to him, by costly sacrifices or splendid ornaments, if his hands were stained with blood and violence, and

* Iliad. Lib. vi. 234.—Lib. ix. 377.

+ Odys. Lib. v. 8. 9.—Lib. iv. 370.

† Oper. et Dier. Lib. i. 264. 267. et 333.

|| THEOGNIS. SCHEFFER. 273. 274. *

his heart defiled with lust and avarice ; for God was present with him, and narrowly observed him : And he adds this excellent advice ; “ But sacrifice to God always in righteousness ; *with a pure heart*, rather than pure garments.”*—To these passages from the ancient Greek Poets, many more might be added, expressive of the same ideas. If you had attentively examined even the Hymn of Cleanthes, of which you have given us Mr. West’s translation, you might have seen that that poet and philosopher had some “conception” of “duties which extend to the thoughts ;” for he speaks of *obeying God’s law with the mind*, and prays *that his soul may be illuminated*, in order to praise him.†—That Socrates, the prince of heathen philosophers, considered the human mind as open to the divine inspection, and taught men to “attend to the discipline of the heart,” is obvious from the writings of Plato and Xenophon, his illustrious disciples. The latter informs us that that *excellent moralist* “believed that the gods know all things, whether words, or actions, or *secret purposes* ;” and that he instructed his followers to seek *inward* goodness.‡—In the works of Cicero, such sentiments occur in abundance.

* PHILEM. Sentent. † CLEANTH. Hymn. in JOVEN. v. 24, 30., 35.

‡ XENOPH. SOCR. Memor. Lib. i. c. 1, et 4. Lib. ii. c. 6

¶ The learned reader will excuse the omission of the original Greek, the Printer having no Greek Types.

That great philosopher affirms, that “ God cannot be ignorant of the state of any one’s mind;” * that he takes an account of the dispositions of all men; † that he knows even those prayers and vows which are not uttered with the voice; ‡ and that he must be worshipped “ with a pure, entire, and uncorrupted mind.” || The same elegant writer, in a passage where he is giving some directions about graceful motions of the body, observes, that “ it is of much more importance to regulate the motions of the soul;” and recommends *a serious attention to the discipline of our heart*, giving some useful precepts for managing the thoughts. §—The writings of the later heathen philosophers afford the most copious supply of proofs, that they did “ prescribe duties extend-

* Nec enim ignorare Deus potest, qua mente quisque sit.--De Divinat. Lib. ii. c. 60.

† Sit igitur jam hoc a principio persuasum civibus, dominos esse omnium rerum, ac moderatores Deos; --ct, qualis quisque sit, quid agat, quid in se admittat, qua mente, qua pietate colat religiones, intueri; piorumque et impiorum habere rationem.--De Leg. Lib. ii. c. 7.

‡ Ex quo fit, ut homines, etiam quum taciti optent quid, aut voveant, non dubitent quin Dii illud exaudiant.--De Divinat. Lib. i. c. 57.

|| Cultus autem Deorum est optimus, idemque castissimus, atque sanctissimus, plenissimusque pietatis, ut eos semper pura, integra, incorrupta et mente et voce, veneremur.--De nat. Deor. Lib. ii. c. 28.

§ Sed multo etiam magis elaborandum est, ne animi motus a natura recédant; quod assequemur, si cavebimus, ne in perturbationes atque exanimations incidamus; et si attentos animos ad decori conservationem tenebimus. Motus autem animorum duplices sunt; alteri, cogitationis; alteri, appetitus. Cogitatio in vero exquirendo maxime versatur; appetitus impellit ad agendum. Curandum est igitur, ut cogitatione ad res quam optimas utamur; appetitum rationi obedientem præbeamus.--De Offic. Lib. i. c. 26.

ing to the thoughts;" and that, upon the very principles which you assert to be peculiar to the gospel. I shall produce a few evidences out of many, furnished by Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.—“ God is near thee,” says Seneca, “ is with thee, is in thee: Yes, Lucilius, a holy spirit resides within us, the observer of our evil and good, and our guardian: As he is treated by us, so he treats us:”* Again he says: “ Indeed we ought so to live, as before witnesses; so to order our thoughts, as if some one could look into the bottom of our breast.—And there is one who can:—For what avails it that any thing is concealed from man? Nothing is hid from God. He is present in our souls, and comes into the midst of our thoughts.”† And again: “ Do you ask, what is the seat of the chief good?—It is the *mind*. Unless this is pure and holy, it does not receive God.”‡ The same author affirms, that a *good mind* is necessary to enjoy the divine favour;|| and, in his admirable epistle on the im-

* Prope est a te Deus, tecum est, intus est: Ita dico, Lucili, facer intra nos spiritus sedet, malorum bonorumque nostrorum observator, et custos: Eic prout a nobis tractatus est, ita nos ipse tractat.--Epist. 41.

† Sic certe vivendum est, tanquam in conspectu vivamus: sic cogitandum, tanquam aliquis in pectus intimum inspicere possit.--Et potest :-Quid enim prodest ab homine aliquid esse secretum? Nihil Deo clusum est. Intereſt animis nostris, et cogitationibus mediis intervenit.--Epist. 83

‡ Quis sit summi boni locus, quæris ?--Animus. Illic nisi purus ac sanctus est, Deum non capit.--Epist. 87.

|| Jubeo te habere mentem bonam, hoc est, propitios deos omnes: quos habet placatos et faventes, quisquis sibi se propitavit. F. pist. 110.

mortality of the soul, he remarks, that the hope of immortal glory will banish from the *soul* every thing vile, and mean, and cruel ; and teach us to live as in God's sight, as those who wish to be accepted before him, and to spend an eternity in his presence.*—Epictetus speaks the same language : “ You carry a God *within you*, and perceive not that you are profaning him, by *impure thoughts* and base actions. If even the image of God were present, you would not dare to do any of the things which you are doing : and are you not ashamed to *think* and act thus, when God himself is present within you, and sees and hears all ?” † And again : “ Do we ask, what are those things which the philosophers tell us ? —That we must first learn that there is a God ; and that his providence is over all ; and that it is impossible to conceal from him, not only our actions, but even our *thoughts and conceptions*.” ‡—Marcus Aurelius is equally explicit on the subject. In the very beginning of his *Meditations*, he states, that his mother taught him to abstain from evil thoughts, as well as from wicked actions. § He often speaks of a divine Monitor residing within him, to inspect and regulate his thoughts. ¶ He observes that *we must check all*

* Hæc cogitatio nihil fordidum animo subfidere finit, nihil humile, nihil crudele. Deos omnium rerum esse testes ait, illis nos approbari, illis in futurum parari jubet, et æternitatem proponere Epist. 102

† ARRIANI EPICT. Disput. Lib. ii. c. 8. ‡ Ibid. c. 14

§ M. ANTON. Lib. i. 3. [Edit. Gatak.] ¶ Ibid. Lib. i. 17. iii. 5, 16. v. 10, 27.

improper thoughts, lest they be followed by improper actions ;* that our thoughts should be so regulated, that if any person should inquire what we are thinking, we may not be ashamed to tell him ;† that our inner part should be such as to bear the inspection of God, to whose eye all souls are naked and open ;‡ and that we ought always to act and think as persons who are soon to depart from this world. ||—I shall only add, that the heathen moralists charged their disciples not only to refrain from the actual commission of sin, but to shun all approaches to it in the thoughts of the heart. An excellent exhortation to this effect, we find in one of the discourses of Epictetus :§ and similar passages frequently occur in the writings of Seneca, ¶ and of other philosophers.

It may seem superfluous to have quoted so many authorities on a subject which can admit of no dispute ; but my design in making these quotations is not merely to prove the inaccuracy of your Statement, in appropriating to christianity what does not exclusively belong to it, but

* Ibid. Lib. iv. 24. † Lib. iii. 4. ‡ Lib. xi. 13. xii. 2. || Lib. ii. 11. xii. 7.
§ Lib. ii. c. 18.

¶ Optimum est primum irritamentum in æ protinus spernere, ipsique repugnare feminibus, et dare operam ne incidamus in iram.--SENECA de Ira. Lib. i. c. 8.

Verum est, irasci nos læsuris; sed ipsa cogitatione nos lædunt, et injuriam qui facturus est, jam facit. Ibid. c. 3.

Vide etiam SENECA de Benef. Lib. v. c. 14.

also to shew how nearly the morality of the heathen philosophers approximates to that of the gospel, and how little the superiority of the latter will appear, if it must be viewed only as a system of ethics, and divested of those sublime and precious doctrines, which are most efficacious in transforming the heart, and which consequently lay the surest foundation for the *practice* of morality. It was not so much in the *theory* of morals, as in the *practice*, that the heathen philosophers were deficient: And, if the powerful principles of the gospel are exploded, and almost nothing of christianity retained except its moral precepts; the difference between it and the systems of the most enlightened heathens, will be comparatively trivial. In fact, it would not be difficult to collect, from the writings of these heathens, a system of religion very little inferior to your Plain Statement nay, in some articles, more conformable to scripture.

This observation will be corroborated by attending to another deduction which must be made from *your* distinguishing principles.—“The doctrine of Repentance,” you assert, “is peculiar to revelation, but particularly to christianity.” (p. 99.) In adverting to this passage, I might well dispute the propriety of distinguishing the Old Testament from christianity, as if it were not a part of the christian religion, and inquire also in what respects the doctrine of re-

penitance belongs more to the New Testament than to the Old: But I rather proceed to remark, that your doctrine of repentance is *not* peculiar to revelation. I say, *your* doctrine; for, that the scripture doctrine of repentance is essentially different from yours, will be afterwards shewn. That the heathen moralists knew nothing of repentance, as arising from enlightened views of a redeeming God, and including a renovation of the nature, will indeed be granted: But their writings testify that they held a doctrine of repentance remarkably similar to yours. To produce that moral improvement which you denominate *repentance*, was the professed object of their philosophy; and they regarded it as valuable, only in as far as it conduced to that end. Hence we find them appealing to its fruits, in proof of its excellence; and sometimes boasting of its converts, particularly of one Polemo, a profligate youth, who was reclaimed by the lectures of Xenocrates, and became his successor in the Platonic school. Hence Pythagoras is famed for his successful labours in reforming the Crotonians; and it is mentioned to the honour of Socrates, that “he was peculiarly qualified for convincing sinners, and turning them unto virtue and goodness.”* Hence also, the many warm exhortations to repentance, contained in their writings, and their enthusiastic encomiums

* XENOPH. SOCR. Mem. Lib. iv. c. 3.

on philosophy, as the handmaid of virtue. “The correction of our vices and sins,” says Cicero, “is all to be sought from philosophy.—O philosophy, thou guide of life! Thou seeker of virtue, and expeller of vices! What should we be—what would human life be, without thee? Thou hast been the inventor of laws, the mistress of morals and discipline. To thee we have fled for refuge: thine aid we solicit. Much have we sought thee before, but now we devote ourselves wholly to thee. One day well spent according to thy precepts, is better than an eternity of sin. On whom then, can we depend but on thee, who hast granted us tranquillity of life, and banished the fear of death?”*—It is scarcely possible to read this interesting passage, without being struck with the resemblance between Cicero’s philosophy and *your* gospel, in regard to repentance. He does not indeed use the term *repentance*, but he speaks of what you describe under that name,—*the correction of our vices and sins,—the forsaking of vice, and the pursuit of virtue.* Your doctrine on the subject

* Vitiarum peccato unquam ne sciorum omnis a philosophia petenda correctio est.—O vitæ philosophia dux! O virtutis indagatrix, expultrixque vitiarum! Quid non modo nos, sed omnino vitæ hominum sine te esse potuisset?—Tu inventrix legum, tu magistra morum et disciplinæ fuisti: ad te confugimus: a te opem petimus: tibi nos, ut antea magni ex parte, sic nunc penitus totoque tradimus. Est autem unus dies, bene et ex præceptis tuis actus, precantæ immortalitati anteponendus. Cujus igitur potius, opibus utamur, quam malis? quæ et vitæ tranquillitatem largi, a nobis es, et terrorem mortis tollis. Cicero. Tuscul. Disput. Lib. v. c. 2.

is precisely his: "We are to repent and forsake our sins; and endeavour *to root out our sins*,* and press forward towards perfection." (p. 102.) This, according to your gospel, is the way to *procure* the divine favour. "The mercy of God, *on these terms*, is offered to the greatest of sinners." (p. 100.) And did not the heathen philosophers also believe, that if great profligates, like Polemo above-mentioned, repent and forsake their sins, they shall enjoy the divine favour? "As a limb cut off from the body," says Antoninus, "so is he who transgresses: But behold the kindness of God to man! He hath given him power both to avoid being broken off, and, when broken off, to return again, and be reunited, and occupy his former place."† In like manner Cebes says, that "repentance delivers a man from misery, and gives him new views and desires, to conduct him to true learning and happiness."‡ These moralists encouraged even the most hardened sinners to repent and return;§ and though many of them exhorted their disciples to follow virtue for its own sake, yet it was the prevailing sentiment, that repentance is necessary for en-

* The identical phrase of Cicero:—"Extrahit vitia radicitus." Ibid. Lib. ii. c. 5.

† M. ANTON. Lib. viii. 34.

‡ CEBET. Tab.

§ Ne labor quidem magnus est: si modo, ante animum nostrum formare incipimus, et recorrigere, quam indurecat pravitas ejus. Sed nec indurata despero SEN. Epist. 50.

Quare deficimus? Quare desperamus?—Licet reverti in viam; licet in integrum restitui. Ibid. Epist. 98.

joying the divine favour;* and hence there were then, as in the present day, many instances of death-bed repentance.†

It must be owned, however, that the sentiments of the ancient philosophers concerning repentance were somewhat different from yours; for, in truth, their doctrine was more conformable to scripture. They not only inculcated *repentance*, but, for the most part, believed that some *atonement* is necessary, to obtain the pardon of sin. Hence the numerous sacrifices, both public and private, that were offered in every land, to expiate guilt, and avert the wrath of offended Heaven. In the moral writings of the heathens, we find exhortations to repentance accompanied by such advices as the following: “Have recourse to expiations; go a suppliant to the temples of the averting Deities.”‡ Even daily sacrifices were sometimes recommended, to render the gods propitious, and procure the enjoyment of daily blessings.¶—Their views of the *nature* of repentance as well as of its *efficacy*, were more agreeable both to scripture and reason, than yours. Your kind of repentance is attended with *no painful* sensations, but on the

* Of this we have sufficient evidence in some of the passages quoted in the former part of this letter.

† Appropinquante morte, [ΑΠΙΜΟΥΣ] multo est divinior. — eosque qui fecus quam decuit, vixerunt, peccatorum suorum tum maxime pœnitet. CICERO de Divin. Lib. i c. 30.

‡ ARR. ERIC. Disp. Lib. ii. c. 18. || HES. Oper. et Diet. Lib. i. 234-339.

contrary is altogether joyful and pleasant. (p. 103, 107, 108) But they viewed repentance as including in it sorrow for sin, and other painful exercises of mind ; which, as we shall afterwards see, the scripture considers as belonging to true repentance. Almost every thing that is usually represented as forming a part of repentance, is mentioned by one or other of the heathen writers, as belonging to that moral change which it was the object of their philosophy to produce. Such are the following exercises of soul, some of which must be allowed to be *painful*: Conviction and self-reproach :*—sorrow for sin, and even the most pungent grief, producing tears and lamentations :†—shame on account of sin :‡—hatred of sin, determined opposition to it, with resolutions to avoid all temptations, and to

* Et hoc ipsum argumentum est in melius translati animi, quod vitia sua, quæ adhuc ignorabat, videt.--SEN. Ep. 6.

Initium est salutis, notitia peccati.--Ideo quantum potes, teipse coargue: inquire in te; accusatoris primis partibus fungere, deinde judicis.--SEN. Ep. 28.

Somnium narrare, vigilantis est; et vitia sua confiteri, sanitatis indicium est.--SEN. Ep. 53. -Vide etiam--M. ANTON. Lib. viii. 10.--PYTHAG. Aur. Dicta. v. 44.

† Quum se Alcibiades afflicteret, lacrymansque Sociati supplex esset, ut sibi virtutem traderet, turpitudinemque depelleret. -Illud, quod Alcibiades volebat, non ex animi malis vitis que constabat? CIC. Tusc. Lib. iii. c. 32.

Ego fortasse illi lacrymas movebo.--Vitia ejus etiam si non excidero, inhibebo.--SEN. Ep. 29.

Etiam si exclamaveritis, non aliter audiam, quam si ad tactum vitiorum vestrorum ingemiscatis.--SEN. Ep. 52.

‡ Which Aristotle calls a CONDITIONAL VIRTUE.--See Gillies's Aristotle's Ethics, Book iv. c. 9.

mortify every evil desire.*—Such is the repentance which heathen moralists taught ; and if it differs from yours, the difference lies in its being more agreeable to scripture and to the general sense of mankind.

When these and others of your “distinguishing principles,” that were taught in some form by the pagan philosophers, have been deducted, *your* gospel will be comprised within a very narrow compass ; for indeed there will be scarcely any thing remaining, except the doctrine of a resurrection. Christianity, according to our scheme, is a revival and confirmation of natural religion, with the addition of this single doctrine. That this is the gospel of unitarians, is acknowledged by another champion of *rational* christianity, Mr. Belsham ; who, in his *Review of Mr. Wilberforce’s Treatise*, alleges that the principles of the Theophilanthropes, a class of infidels in France, comprehend the essential articles of the christian faith, and admits that if they had received the doctrine of a resurrection, in addition to these principles, their system

* Oderunt peccare boni virtutis amore. HOR. Epist. Lib. i. Ep. 16. v. 52.

———— Scelerum si bene pœnitet,

Eradenda cupidinis

Pravi sunt elementa.--HOR. Carm. Lib. iii. Od. 24. v. 50., 52.

Sed fati dicit cum Bais litigavimus, nunquam fati cum vitis : quæ oro te, mi Lucili, persequere sine modo, sine fine : nam illis quoque nec finis est, nec modus. Projice quæcumque cor tuum lamant : que si aliter extrahi nequeunt, cor ipsum cum illis revellendum est. SEN. Ep. 51.

would have been much the same with his own *pure christianity* !

Here, sir, I would ask you, Is this “the glorious gospel of the blessed God?” Is this that gospel which we are taught in scripture to regard as an inestimable blessing, a most distinguished favour? Was it for this that Christ was so long expected by the ancient church, that so many prophets described in glowing language the wonders of his character, the glories of his reign, and the riches of his salvation, and that so much preparation was made for his appearance? Was it for this that the great Immanuel came into our world, and that he ministered, and suffered, and died, and rose again?—Was the great object of such extraordinary transactions, merely a republication of natural religion, with this one doctrine superadded to it?—Is this the gospel which Christ committed with such solemnity to so many apostles and ministers, which they esteemed as unsearchable riches, which they bore from land to land, at the hazard of their lives, and the loss of all that was dear to them on earth, and which so rapidly changed the face of the world, pouring the light of life on millions who dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, and banishing from many lands the horrors of idolatry and superstition, those absurd and cruel and impious rites, which, in spite of all the lectures of philosophy,

had been for so many ages “a disgrace to human reason?”* If the difference between christianity and the systems of the more enlightened heathens is so trivial, to what can we attribute the enormous difference between their respective effects; especially if, with unitarians, we deny the work of the Holy Spirit? Why were the discourses of Peter and Paul so many thousand times more efficacious than the lectures of Plato and Xenocrates?—Upon no other principle can this well-known fact be accounted for, than by admitting that the primitive ministers of Christ preached a higher gospel than yours; that they taught those sublime mysteries, which, however they may be vilified by men have been found in all ages to be “the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.” They “preached Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks,” as unto modern philosophizing moralists, “foolishness; but unto them which are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” They proclaimed the glad tidings that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;” and in the name of Christ they invited sinners to “be reconciled unto God: who hath made him a suffering for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”†

* Watson's Popular Evidences, p. 377. † 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. 2 Cor. v. 21, 22.

Besides, if their gospel had been the same with yours, whence proceeded that violent persecution which they every where encountered? Why were the disciples of Jesus cruelly abused, not only by a Nero and a Domitian, but even by a Trajan and a Marcus Aurelius? Wherefore did the Stoics and Epicureans unite in hostility to the gospel? There is a wider difference between the system of Epicurus and that of Zeno, than between the latter and your moral gospel; why then did the Stoics not extend unto christians that forbearance which they had shewn towards the Epicureans? Surely it might have been expected, that such men as Seneca and Epictetus would have received with complacency, or at least examined with candour, a system so congenial to their own.

Indeed, it is no less difficult, upon your principles, to give a satisfactory reason for the enmity of modern infidels against the scriptures. You may pretend that they are misled by the misrepresentations of evangelical interpreters; but is it probable, that those who boast of being *free thinkers* would view the Bible only through that medium, and not rather examine it for themselves? And, if *your* gospel be that of the scriptures, understood according to their plain and obvious meaning, as you very frequently assert; their hostility to these sacred oracles is unaccountable. Infidels profess to follow the re-

ligion of nature, nor is it likely that they will object to the doctrine of a resurrection; and if the gospel contains nothing more, what can be the ground of their quarrel with it?—There are few articles in your creed, to which infidels would not subscribe,—few to which Jews or even Mahometans would object: Nay, there is not one of your “general principles” of the gospel, enumerated in page 94, which Jews and Turks do not already hold. This, indeed, you may count the glory of your system, as many of its patrons have done. Socinus made it an argument in favour of his principles: “Why should honest Jews and Turks be frightened from us by the Trinity?” And his *worthy* disciple Mr. Fellowes, in his *Guide to Immortality*, boasts of his scheme, as calculated to reconcile “Jews, Turks, and infidels, of whatever denomination,” to christianity!!! But surely to give the name *christianity* to a system which has little more connection with the religion of Jesus, than with Judaism, Mahometanism, or Infidelity, is a gross misapplication of language.—Upon your principles, the *heresy* of infidels is very trivial, when compared with the *heresies* of evangelical believers, for the latter are removed many degrees further from your *pure* christianity, than the former are. The sentiments and feelings of the disciples of Voltaire and Hume are much more congenial to *your* gospel, than the sentiments

and feelings of those *vile heretics* who receive their designation from the name of Luther or that of Calvin.

You will be ready to object, that infidels deny the truth of the scriptures, which you and your brethren acknowledge, and for which you have powerfully pleaded in your *Popular Evidences*. But if infidels adhere to your gospel, it will, upon your own principles, be a matter of small moment, whether they profess to derive it from the scriptures, or from any other source. If morality is every thing, and opinions are of little importance; if the doctrines and duties of religion are valuable only as they conduce to morality; if the peculiar doctrines of scripture are no way subservient to this end; and if infidels receive all that you reckon valuable in the scriptures; of what consequence is it whether they receive or reject the book itself? Nay rather, is it not more consistent to reject it altogether, than to acknowledge it as the word of God, and yet disown almost all its peculiar doctrines, as useless and unimportant?

But I cannot see that your sentiments differ greatly from those of infidels, even in regard to the inspiration of the scriptures; at least in your views of them as a standard of doctrine, and a rule of duty. You acknowledge the facts recorded in the Bible, and you appeal to its authority in support of your principles; but you

are far from allowing it to be an infallible judge of truth, and an unmerring guide to virtue. You seem to regard it merely as a very useful book, containing many important truths and valuable precepts, but with a mixture of abstruse and useless tenets, of false and dangerous opinions, and of sentiments unworthy of God and repugnant to the spirit of true religion; which, with reason for your guide, you are to deduct and set aside, as forming no part of divine revelation. If this is to believe the divine inspiration of the scriptures, infidels may at once change their name, without renouncing one iota of their principles; for they need only to adopt as much of the Bible as suits their fancy, and throw away the rest. According to this notion of inspiration, I could receive the Koran as divinely inspired, and acknowledge your own *Plain Statement* as an inspired volume.

Now, that such are your views of the divine inspiration of the scriptures, may appear in part from some things already stated, but more especially from some passages in your own book, of which I shall now proceed to take notice.

In more than one place you insinuate that the doctrine of scripture is not always uniform, and of course that some part of it is *false*. “In favour of moral virtue, our Saviour is decided. Paul, *in general*, speaks in perfect conformity

with the sentiments of his divine Master." (p. 132.)* Of course there must be some *particular* instances, in which the doctrine of Paul, in your opinion, varies from that of Christ. That their doctrine is perfectly uniform on the article of justification, discussed in the passage referred to, will be afterwards shewn. On that subject Christ is as much against you as Paul; though both the Master and the disciple assert the necessity of moral virtue to form the christian character. But I would now remark, that if Paul, when he wrote his epistles, was inspired by the Spirit of Christ, it is impossible that his sentiments could vary in the smallest degree from those of his divine Lord. Such a supposition would render any appeal to the apostolical epistles altogether nugatory. Indeed, some of your bolder brethren do not hesitate to reject the authority of Paul, since, with all their arts of distorting, perverting, and new-modelling scripture, they cannot compel him to speak their sentiments. Mr. Fellowes, in his *Guide*, asserts that the writings of this Apostle "have a tincture of cabalistical refinement,—and even occasionally glimmer with a ray of Grecian philosophy;" that they are "filled with the abstruse discussions of rabbinical learning, or relate to questions which are at present of more curiosity than importance;" and in particular, that "the epis-

* See another insinuation of the same kind, p. 127.

tle to the Romans is bewildered with the polemical christianity of the day ”!!! What could infidels say more to vilify the oracles of God? Yet your insinuations respecting Paul, seem to breathe a portion of the same spirit.

But you not only insinuate that there are sentiments in scripture, contrary to the doctrine of Christ, and consequently *false*; but expressly assert that there are some passages in which the sacred penmen betray a temper of mind highly *criminal*, and directly *contrary to the spirit of the gospel*. In your observations on the duty of prayer, you caution your readers against the use of some strong figurative expressions employed in the Psalms; alleging that such language is improper under the gospel. You then proceed to affirm, that not only the *language* but the *sentiments* of the Old Testament scriptures must in some instances be shunned as highly reprehensible and unworthy of a christian: “ But the genius and spirit of the Old Testament dispensation and the New are extremely different in other points of the highest importance: *and which forbid** us to make use of prayers, which we find very common in the book of Psalms. In this book, we meet with many *bitter imprecations*, employed by the Psalmist, against his enemies. The greatest part of the 109th Psalm, is full of these: And many instances of the same

* A small specimen of Mr. Watson's ACCURACY,

kind are met with in several of the other Psalms. —The 137th Psalm, employs towards the conclusion, some *resentful wishes*. As christians we are not permitted to make use of language of this nature. How unlike are these to the precepts, the prayers and example of Him, who has taught us to pardon offences, and to forgive our enemies !” (p. 85.) And how like, Sir, are these unwarrantable reflections on the Old Testament writers, to the blasphemous misrepresentations of infidels! It is true that the expressions to which you allude can scarcely be used either as prayers or as songs, at least when applied to our temporal enemies ; but are they therefore to be denominated *bitter imprecations*, or *resentful wishes* ?—No ; they are important prophecies : —prophecies dictated by God’s Spirit, and fulfilled by his hand. Nor is this a conjectural exposition of these passages :—it is supported by the highest authority,—even that of the apostles of Christ. The 109th Psalm, which you conceive to abound with bitter imprecations, is expressly quoted by Peter, as a prophecy fulfilled in Judas Iscariot ; a prophecy “ which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.”* Surely, if you had attended to this text, you could not have dared to express the blasphemous idea, that the Holy Ghost, by

* Comp. Pf. cix. 8, &c. with Acts i. 16..20.

the mouth of David, uttered bitter imprecations. —Another of these passages, contained in the 69th Psalm, is in like manner explained by an inspired interpreter, to be a prophecy of God's righteous judgments on the unbelieving Jews, who were guilty of rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory :* and it is worthy of remark, that the 21st verse, which immediately precedes that prophecy, contains a clear prediction of a remarkable circumstance attending the crucifixion of Christ, and that he had an eye to the fulfilment of this prediction, when he said in his last moments, " I thirst : " † to which I may add, that both clauses of the 9th verse of that Psalm are quoted in the New Testament, as descriptive of the zeal and the sufferings of Christ. ‡ —From these undeniable instances we may safely infer, that the same rule of interpretation must be extended to all other passages of this description. — They are not the " resentful wishes " of men, but the prophetic words of the Spirit of God, denouncing merited punishments against the workers of iniquity. — We may indeed infer from the mode of expression, that the prophets through whose mouth God delivered these predictions, acquiesced in his just dispensations which they retold, in the same manner as the church tri-

* Comp. Ps. lxi. 22, 23. with Romans xi. 9, 10.

† Comp. Ps. lxi. 21. with John xix. 28, 29. 30.

‡ See John iii. 17. — Romans vi. 2.

triumphant is represented as praising him for his righteous judgments;* but to impute to these holy men, who spake by “the Spirit of Christ which was in them,” † dispositions repugnant to the principles of his gospel, would be at once presumptuous and impious. What? Are the threatenings and awful prophecies which were uttered in the name of the Lord by his faithful servants, to be regarded as the effusions of their own malice and resentment?—They were indeed viewed in that light, by some of those sinners whom they were intended to warn; and the same uncharitable construction is still put on the warnings addressed to perishing sinners by the faithful ministers of Christ: but the prophets under the old dispensation, as well as the ministers of the gospel, could solemnly protest, that they never “desired the woful day,” but often wept for the calamities which they were employed in predicting. ‡—Far be it from us to entertain such a thought as that the devotion and morality of the Old Testament are at variance with those of the New, or that the same amiable dispositions have not in every age, been equally necessary to form the character of a saint. Predictions of the same kind with those which we have considered, may be found in the New Testament; § and the forgiveness of injuries and love to our

* Rev. xix. 1. 3. † 1 Peter i. 11. ‡ Jer. xvii. 16.--iv. 19.--ix. 1.

§ 1 Cor. xvi. 22.--2 Tim. iv. 14.

enemies, are both enjoined and exemplified in the Old,*—exemplified even by David himself, whose name has suffered such unmerited obloquy. †—It requires a considerable stretch of charity, to call that man a christian, who can entertain and publish reflections on the Old Testament scriptures, so inconsistent with a persuasion of their divine origin.

There is another passage in your work, which, if I comprehend its meaning, cannot be reconciled to any proper views of the divine inspiration of the scriptures. It is the following: “If there should be any expressions or sentiments, which appear to favour election and reprobation as they are generally understood, we ought to seek for an interpretation agreeable to the divine perfections; for these must be our standard; and they must be always consistent with themselves.” (p. 43.) I shall have occasion to shew in a future Letter, that in the passage of which these words form the conclusion, you are opposing predestination, not *as it is generally understood* by those who hold it, but *as it is often misrepresented* by those who attack it. At present, I shall confine my remarks to the rule which you have laid down for expounding scripture. If you mean, in this ambiguous sentence, that one part of the scripture must be consistent with a-

* Exod. xxiii. 4, 5.—Prov. xxiv. 17, 18—xxv. 21.—2 Kings vi. 22.

† Pl. xxxv. 12, 14.

nother, and that what is said of God's perfections in one passage must be agreeable to what is spoken of them in other passages; that is precisely the idea which, in opposition to yourself, I have been trying to establish in the foregoing paragraph. But if, (as appears far more probable from what has been said, and from the general tenour of your system,) your meaning is, that our preconceived notions of what the divine perfections *must* be, are a standard by which we are to interpret the word of God, such a sentiment is incompatible with the belief of its being divinely inspired. For, if the scriptures must be made to conform to our opinions, though we may designate these opinions *the dictates of reason*, a title which men often bestow on the offspring of their own vain imaginations; and if, where the scriptures speak a language which, in its natural and obvious meaning, differs from this proposed standard, "we ought to seek," by those arts of perversion in which unitarians excel, "an interpretation agreeable to this standard;—there is an end to the authority of the sacred oracles, and all their decisions become nugatory. Surely, when we have received the scriptures as a revelation from God, the true dictate of reason then is, that our opinions must be regulated by this divine standard, and we must humbly receive all its doctrines, in their plain, unsophisticated meaning. If reason must

determine how much of the scriptures we are to believe, “not only is revelation dishonoured, and its Author insulted, but the end for which it was given is completely defeated. Instead of being admitted as the supreme standard of human opinions and practices in religion, it is degraded into a subordinate rule, and possesses no more authority than the fallible and capricious wisdom of men will allow it to exercise. A revelation, which must be subjected to a discussion of its contents as well as of its evidence, prior to its reception, could not serve any valuable purpose, which might not have been attained without it.”* That reason is an infallible guide, is an idea wholly delusive; for what some men assert to be the dictates of reason, others pronounce to be the revcries of fancy; and even in the same individual, what has appeared at one time to be consonant to reason, is perceived at another to be irrational and absurd.

I have been the more desirous to expose the fallacy of this rule for interpreting scripture, as it seems to be universally adopted by your unitarian brethren. They will receive as much of the divine word as suits their own preconceived opinions, and the rest they will either reject as useless, or try to force into their service by every engine of torture. It is upon this principle that their *Improved Version of the New Testament*

* Dick's Essay on the Inspiration of the Scriptures, p. 29, 30. (2nd Edit.)

has been constructed. The framers of this Socinian Bible have assumed it as an axiom, that their *rational system* must be the true gospel; and consequently, they are determined to make the scriptures appear on their side, and to destroy or put to silence every passage that is hostile to their scheme. With this view the New Testament is invaded, with all the power of sophistry, disingenuousness, perversion, and false learning; which, like Attila and his Huns, make dreadful havoc of the sacred pages: whole Books are cut off as spurious, and others as doubtful; while those which remain are shockingly mutilated and mangled: some chapters are rejected on the authority of the Ebionites or the Marcionites, an authority about as good as that of unitarians themselves; some texts must be expunged or altered, on the testimony of some obscure manuscript; where such aids are wanting, recourse is had to conjectural emendations, or forced and unnatural constructions; and when even these fail, explanatory notes are subjoined, to assure the reader that the inspired penman did not mean what he wrote, or to assert that the passage must be understood figuratively.* By such methods, you might transform the Bible into the Koran, or compel it to utter the language of the Shasters.

I do not mean, however, to charge you with

* See Mr. Nares's Remarks on this IMPROVED VERSION.

the deeds of your brethren, in forming this most extraordinary version : for, though you have adopted, in your public worship, the new unitarian Hymn-book,* you have not yet introduced this unitarian Bible ; and therefore, I am not warranted to presume that it meets your approbation. Yet the passages now quoted from your Plain Statement, have a direct tendency to degrade the sacred volume, and confirm infidels in their hostility to the gospel.

That your scheme, instead of being a *preservative against Infidelity*, has a powerful tendency to promote it, appears, not only from examining its nature, but from the evidence of facts. “It is notorious,” says an eminent author, “and it will require no small degree of hardihood to deny it, that from those who have *professed* unitarianism in England, the largest stock of unbelievers has arisen : nay more, that their principal Academy (at Hackney), the place in which unitarian principles were inculcated in their greatest purity, and with every advantage of zealous ability in the teacher, and of unbiassed docility in the learner, has borne witness to the efficacy of those principles by its dissolution, imperiously demanded by the prevalence of infidel opinions.”†

* Collection of Hymns and Psalms, by Dr. Kippis, &c.—In this new Collection, care has been taken to admit nothing that favours of Evangelical Principles. Several of Watts's Hymns, introduced into it, have been carefully pared and modified to suit the Socinian taste.

† Dr. Magre on Atonement and Sacrifice, vol. II. p. 277. (2d Edit.)

It is very possible that such publications as yours may increase the number of *nominal* christians; for some infidels, finding a system called christianity so nearly allied to their own, will be disposed to assume the name, when it can be done without relinquishing any of their favourite principles. “Men who, having rejected the christian revelation, are yet restrained by a regard to opinion and decorum, from openly abdicating the christian name, may find it not inconvenient to rank themselves of a class, whose latitude of opinion can occasion but little embarrassment to that freedom for which they contend: and thus Mr. Belsham may possibly reckon among the residents of his *mansion*, many who are content to sojourn there, on account of its commodious neighbourhood to that region, which they regard as their true and proper home.”*— But, of what avail is a *preservative* against the *name* of infidelity, if the *spirit* and *substance* of it be retained, and cherished? It must be a matter of trivial moment, whether a man be called a deist, or a unitarian, when the sentiments and temper of the one, so nearly coincide with those of the other. “In both there is the same self-sufficiency, the same pride of understanding, that would erect itself on the ground of human reason, and that disdains to accept the divine favour, on any conditions but its own. In

* Ibid. p. 432.

both, in short, the very characteristic of a christian spirit is wanting—HUMILITY.”*

These just reflections of Dr. Magee suggest another idea which ought not to be overlooked. Your system recommends itself to the infidel, not only by flattering the pride of reason but also by countenancing the boast of merit. It is very common for those who are destitute of true virtue, to glory in every appearance of it and every approach to it, unto which they can lay claim. Infidels boast of their own goodness, as well as their own wisdom and sometimes proclaim the most daring blasphemer eminently virtuous.† They spurn at the thought of taking any thing from God as a *free gift*, fancying themselves possessed of sufficient merit to *purchase* his favour. The same proud, independent spirit, is the very soul of your scheme; as will be obvious when it is examined more particularly: and this circumstance is an additional proof of the monstrous incongruity of proposing such a system as a preservative against infidelity.

But there is yet another feature in your book which cannot fail to procure for it a favourable reception among unbelievers; and with a few remarks upon that, I shall conclude this long Letter. Infidelity does not originate solely in ig-

* Ibid. vol. i. p. 18.

† See Dr. Adam Smith's account of Mr. Hume, prefixed to Hume's History of England.

norance or misinformation, in pride or the love of glory: there are other principles no less powerful in producing it,—the love of sin, and a rooted aversion to the restraints of God's law: and consequently, whatever tends to discredit strict holiness, to throw a veil over the deformity of sin, and to encourage the transgressor in the hopes of impunity, will be cordially welcomed by the infidel. “It may be laid down as an axiom,” says a distinguished author, “that infidelity is in general a disease of the *heart* more than of the *understanding*.”* And that your *Statement*, is more likely to confirm than to cure this disease, it does not require much penetration to perceive. Tell the infidel, that opinions are of little moment, and that morality is every thing (p. 162..165); that piety towards God is but of secondary importance, and that frequent devotions, and a strict observance of the sabbath, are so far from being required, that they are presumptive evidences of hypocrisy, serving to “feed vanity, and to call forth ridicule and disgrace” (p. 87, 88, 143, 144.); insinuate that a close attention to the rules of God's word is “unnecessary austerity” (p. 121), and that fashionable follies are “innocent amusements” (p. vii, 152): inform him that, to procure the pardon of the greatest sins, no other atonement is required, beside repentance; and that this re-

* Wilberforce's Practical view of Christianity, p. 285.—6th Edit.

pénitance is not bitter and painful, but pleasant and easy (p. 107, 108) : and assure him at the same time, that many of our sins are only “ unavoidable imperfections and deficiencies, for which God will make all gracious allowance ” (p. 102) ;—and you have framed a religion just suited to his taste. If you can persuade unbelievers that this is the religion of the Bible, their enmity against it will be dropped, they will quarrel no more with its evidences ; for “ then is the offence of the cross ceased.”* And if this is to reclaim men from infidelity, then it may be granted, that your performance is adapted to promote its professed object.

Upon the whole, it is easy to account for the popularity of such productions among the enemies of the gospel ; but if your book had been named “ A Guide to Infidelity,” this would have been a title far more appropriate than that which you have given it.

I am, &c.

* Gal. v. 22.

LETTER III.

*On Mr. Watson's Treatise as A PRESERVATIVE
AGAINST IMMORALITY.*

SIR,

THE crimes which disgrace our land, the shameful neglect of practical religion apparent among the generality of professed christians, and the prevalence of folly and dissipation, luxury and riot, even in times of calamity and distress, indicate too clearly, that a *Preservative against Immorality* is peculiarly desirable. Had you, therefore, endeavoured to expose the vices of the age, had you tried to awaken the thoughtless to serious consideration, and faithfully warned transgressors of every sort to flee from the wrath to come, had you also exhibited, in their practical tendency, those sublime gospel principles which are most effectual in changing the heart and reforming the conduct; and had you at the same time inculcated the regular and frequent observance of those divine institutions which are the best means of promoting true goodness — your work might have been regarded as a useful and seasonable auxiliary in advancing

the interests of holiness. But far different is the nature of your *Preservative*. You seem to be sorry that the sabbath is so strictly observed (p. 144), to regret that so much time is spent in devotions (p. 87, 88), and to lament the neglect of “innocent amusements” (p. vii, 152), a name that is often bestowed on fashionable follies; and you are alarmed at the progress of those evangelical principles (p. 120), which, though you pronounce them to be pregnant with mischief, experience proves to be most efficacious in counteracting vice. Many of your observations on moral duties are indeed highly important; but, in general, instead of labouring to promote the *practice* of morality, which is the thing most neglected, you appear more zealous to establish the *theory* of morals, which no one is opposing. If, indeed, your representations of the dangers to which the doctrine of morals is exposed, were as true as they are alarming, your plan might be highly laudable and necessary: “In every age, there appears to have been a conspiracy against the moral duties of the gospel; whilst men have laboured to make religion consist of something different from a good life.—Strange substitutes have been invented in room of the plain principles and excellent morals taught by Jesus Christ.—The moral precepts of the Saviour of the world and his perfect example have been objects only of secondary consideration; and these, the

most obvious and excellent parts of religion, have been in all ages so much discountenanced, that but few have had the courage to come forward to advocate their cause. And, whilst the wicked and profligate of every description meet with lenity and forgiveness, those who recommend the divine virtues are held up as the worst of heretics. But this was the very treatment that the Saviour of the world met with from the Pharisees and hypocrites of that age, whilst he was opening the eyes of mankind to the superstition and false principles then in fashion." (p. v, vi, vii.)—"The popular and overwhelming system is to teach any thing, but morals." (p. 88)--

If this be a true statement, the friends of *morality* may well tremble for its perilous situation, and eagerly press forward in its defence. But where, Sir, are the proofs of this heaven-daring conspiracy? What are the evidences of this impious warfare? We see indeed, in many churches, a woful remissness in the *practice* of moral duties, and in administering discipline; and no where is this defect more conspicuous than among unitarians: but, in regard to the *doctrine* of morals, all are nearly agreed. At least I know of no sect who maintain that there can be any genuine religion where there is not a good life;—no sect who welcome into their communion the wicked and the profligate, while they reject the good and virtuous;—no

sect among whom the moral precepts and perfect example of Christ are treated with disrespect.—Perhaps I ought to except those, with whom, as observed in the close of the foregoing Letter, it is customary to speak of fashionable follies as “innocent amusements,” and of sins as only “deficiencies and unavoidable imperfections.”

As a counterpart to the picture now exhibited from your work, I would try to sketch out another, which perhaps will be found more faithfully drawn from the life: “In the present age, there seems to be a conspiracy against the doctrines of grace: Bishops and Barristers,* unitarian Moralists, and deistical Reviewers, have combined to extirpate evangelical religion. Christianity is degraded into a system of ethics; and morality is proposed as a substitute for piety. The gospel, instead of being prized as conveying the glad tidings of redemption to guilty men, is valued only for its morals. The sublime and salutary doctrines of Christ and his apostles are vilified and rejected, as dark and useless; and, while infidels and scoffers are treated with moderation, evangelical believers are held up

* Yet it is hoped, that there are few Bishops who will act so inconsistently as Dr. Tomline, who has published a REFUTATION of some of the doctrines of his own Church; and few Barristers so devoid of candour, and so full of enmity against vital godliness, as the author of HINTS TO THE PUBLIC AND TO THE LEGISLATURE ON the Nature and Effect of Evangelical Preaching.

as the worst of heretics. But such was the treatment which Jesus met with from the Pharisees and self-righteous hypocrites, when he mortified their pride by teaching them that they could not be saved by their own works, but only by faith in him as their Redeemer ; and declaring that all their pretended morality and religion were worthless before God, so long as they were destitute of inward goodness, strangers to humility, faith, and the love of God ; which, as well as justice and mercy, are the weightier matters of the law.”* The shading in this picture is not darker than that of the one which you have delineated ; and I hope that, in the eye of impartial judges, it will appear more correct.

But what is it that has proved the occasion of alarming your fears, and awakening your zeal, for the interests of virtue?—The progress of evangelical preaching.—This is the dreadful evil, which you deplore as ruinous to morality ! (p. 120)—But there are others, whose attachment to virtue is at least as warm as yours, to whom the increase of this mode of preaching gives heart-felt joy : and who are so far from dreading it as the forerunner of vice, that they hail it as the harbinger of increasing reformation. And surely, until it appear that the gospel of Seneca, or of Epictetus, (since the term *gospel*

* Luke xviii 9..14. John iii. 1..18, 36. vi. 27. 66. Math. xxiii. 23. Luke xi. 42.

is applied to a mere system of ethics,) has more efficacy in promoting virtue, than the precious truths of Christ we need not fear that the popularity of evangelical doctrine, and its ascendancy over the dry morality of philosophizing divines, will prove unfavourable to the interests of holiness.

You allege, indeed, (p. 118, 119, 120) that they who preach salvation by grace, “plainly teach and assert, that good works can never be accepted by God,—that they are useless in themselves,—that we need not be in any fear when we neglect them, because our salvation can in nowise be concerned in obeying God’s commands,—that such preachers cast an odium upon moral duties,—neglect and abuse them,—and bring forth railing accusations against the christian virtues!!!”—If these are specimens of evangelical preaching, its progress may well be regarded as alarming: for, “Is not this opening a wide door to every kind of vice, and letting in immorality like a flood?”—But these “pious calumnies” are so completely unfounded, that they scarcely deserve to be noticed. It is well known that none are more zealous than evangelical divines, in inculcating and exemplifying morality,—even the *strictest* morality; in so much that you and others have taken occasion from their strictness in morals, as well as religion, to charge them with prohibiting “inno-

cent amusements," and requiring "unnecessary austerity:" and yet you employ several pages in labouring to convince these ignorant and wicked men of the importance of morality, and and to prove what is never denied,—that good works are necessary to salvation! "How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?" The errors which you refute are the creatures of your own fancy: you "fight as one that beateth the air."

The hackneyed objection against the doctrines of grace, "That they lead to licentiousness," is as old as the days of the apostle Paul, by whom it is satisfactorily answered, in the 6th chapter of Romans. It has been refuted a thousand times; yet every new enemy to these doctrines brings it forward again with an air of triumph, as if it were invincible. The weakness and absurdity of this objection will fall to be noticed more particularly, in reviewing your sentiments on justification; and therefore I shall not now stop to examine it. There is the less need to say much on the subject, as we are furnished with a complete refutation of this charge, in Mr. Fuller's *Comparison of the Calvinistic and Socinian Systems, as to their moral tendency*; in which excellent work it is indisputably proved, that unitarian principles tend to diminish our abhorrence of sin, and weaken the force of our obligations to holiness; and that the doctrines of

grace furnish the most abundant and cogent motives to the practice of every duty.

But there is no occasion for abstract reasoning, to wipe off the foul aspersions, that are so often cast on evangelical principles: An appeal to facts is sufficient. If these principles are hostile to morality, their pernicious effects must appear in the lives of those who profess them, and especially of those who preach them. But will any one dare to say, that such christians, or such ministers, are distinguished from others by their vicious lives? You have the candour to own (p. 121), “that, among those who support these principles, there are many men of excellent characters and exemplary lives;” and I trust, that it will be found, upon a fair comparison, that the proportion of such worthy characters, is by no means smaller among evangelical christians, than among the friends of your system. Does it appear, that the moral virtues are generally expelled from other parts of the religious world, and forced to take their last stand among unitarians? Who are the most distinguished for acts of piety and goodness? Who are the most zealous members of those benevolent societies which do honour to the gospel? Who are the most liberal supporters of those numerous charitable institutions, which reflect so much lustre on the British name? You cannot deny that the greater part of them adhere to

those grand peculiarities of the christian system, which you conceive to be subversive of morality.

It can be no valid objection to evangelical principles, that they are professed by many, whose temper and conduct disgrace their profession. Such hypocrites have existed in every age, and may be found in every department of the christian world. Many of your reflections on such characters must be allowed to be just. Such are the following observations in your Introduction (p. vii): “ We may talk much about religion, we may attend a number of prayers and other external services ; we may affect to believe in a number of speculative opinions, which we cannot understand ; and pretend to internal feelings which we never experienced ; and we may renounce the innocent amusements of life : we may do all these ; and yet be destitute of honesty, integrity, and charity ; we may do all these, and yet be intemperate, proud, ambitious, covetous, worldly-minded, inattentive to our family, to our children, and all the other relative and private duties of life.”—While I protest against calling the sublime truths of Christ, “ speculative opinions, which we cannot understand,” and against the insinuation that those who adhere to these truths condemn *innocent* amusements ; I am ready to acknowledge, that the other sentiments expressed in this passage cannot be disputed. But, does it therefore fol-

low, that the doctrines of grace encourage hypocrisy? Or is there any ground for supposing that the number of *moral* hypocrites is not as great as the number of *evangelical* hypocrites? You have tried to detect the latter; let me endeavour to undeceive the former, by offering for their consideration the following thoughts, which ought to be the less objectionable, as they are presented in the form of an imitation of your own sentence now quoted: "We may talk much about morality; we may deliver or attend discourse on the beauties of virtue and the importance of moral duties; we may affect a veneration for the precepts and example of the Saviour, while in our hearts we reject his salvation, and while in our doctrines we are labouring to degrade him; we may pretend to a zeal for virtue which we never felt—a love for morality, which we never cherished; and we may conduct ourselves in the world with considerable regularity and decorum: we may do all this, and yet be destitute of integrity and goodness, of humility and faith, of love to God and benevolence to man; we may do all this, and yet be the slaves of pride and ambition, of avarice and sensuality, of envy and malice."—This, Sir, is a species of hypocrisy, as common, and as dangerous as that which you have described. Whether your system has not a greater tendency to beget the one, than evangelical doc-

trine has to occasion the other, the candid reader may determine.

Upon the whole, when it is considered, that your *Statement* is far from exhibiting sin in its proper deformity ; that it rejects those principles which are found by experience, to be most efficacious in destroying iniquity and promoting holiness ; that it “ casts an odium ” on some of those divine institutions which are the best means of cherishing every virtuous disposition ; and that it exhibits, in itself, some shameful transgressions of the rules of charity and candour, which are important parts of morality ; it must be pronounced to be as unfit for stemming the torrent of vice, as for checking the progress of infidelity.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

*On the Moral Attributes of God, and the
Depravity of Man.*

SIR,

IN the two preceding Letters, I have taken a general view of your book, as a *preservative against infidelity and immorality*. It professes to be also an antidote to *enthusiasm*; and under that character I shall have occasion to review it in some parts of the following Letters, especially in considering your thoughts on *religious feelings*.—In the mean time, I proceed to examine your sentiments on some particular doctrines of the gospel; beginning with some strictures on your views of the nature of God, and the moral state of man.

The first two chapters of your Statement contain a variety of useful remarks on the nature and providence of God. Even this part of your work, however, is very far from being unexceptionable. In your account of the divine perfections, there is one glaring defect which must strike every intelligent reader. Instead of placing the *holiness* of God at the head of his moral

attributes, you barely name it in the close of your enumeration; among the moral perfections which you consider as “branches of God’s goodness or justice,” or “which do not require to be treated separately.” (p. 43.) Your views would have been much more correct, had you considered his justice and goodness, and other moral excellencies, as branches of his holiness; and illustrated this attribute, as the chief glory of his nature. This is that perfection of God, which angels peculiarly love and adore, and which saints are exhorted to remember with joy and praise. Holiness is the beauty of Jehovah: it sheds a pleasing lustre over all his other excellencies, and makes them transcendently bright and amiable.—The few remarks which you make on this perfection in the third chapter (p. 75, 76), by no means compensate for neglecting to assign it its proper place among the moral attributes of God: especially in a work which professes to advocate the cause, and promote the practice of morality. The conciseness of your plan is no apology for such an omission; for you could easily have made room for a description of this glorious attribute, by abridging your dissertation on the uses of mountains (p. 8..11), or omitting your illustrations of providence by the game of *chess* (p. 67, 68): not to mention the pernicious or useless observations which fill so many pages in the polemical part of your performance.

As your views of the glory of divine holiness appear to be so defective, it is not surprizing that you should entertain very inadequate ideas of the greatness of human depravity. You indeed acknowledge that we are “creatures weak and fallible and liable daily to offend.”—“The best of men,” you admit, “are liable to offend and are daily offending their God. There is no perfection here below. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. There is none righteous, no not one.” (p. 101, 102.) And you virtually own that we are inclined to sin rather than to holiness, when you observe (p. 116, 117), that we are disposed to keep within the standard of holiness proposed to us, and would satisfy ourselves with a less measure of holiness if the standard were lowered: for if the love of holiness were the prevailing principle in our nature, we should be eager to come up to the standard prescribed, and could not be content to fall below it.—But notwithstanding these acknowledgments of the corruption of our nature, there are many expressions in your work of a very different complexion;—expressions inconsistent with the sentiments now quoted, repugnant to the doctrine of scripture, and contradicted by undeniable facts. For, while you own that “there is none righteous,” you with the same breath pronounce many of our sins to be only “infirmities, unavoidable im-

perfections, and deficiencies. for which God will make all gracious allowance." (p. 102.) And, in various passages, you insinuate that if God should refuse to grant this "allowance," he would be treating "us with inexorable severity," acting as "the tyrant of his creatures, &c." In the same manner you assert, that "it is contrary to the conception, of God's being a righteous Judge and Governor, to admit, that he has placed any number, or any individual of his rational offspring, in such a situation as that they cannot attain to eternal happiness by the proper improvement of that knowledge, with which he has been pleased to favour them." (p. 72.)—It is needless to inquire if it would be consistent with God's justice to withhold the means of eternal life from *innocent* men: though it has at least the appearance of presumption to assert that it would *not*: for, upon what ground can we maintain that God has no right to *annihilate* any one of his creatures, if he pleases,—no right to recall to himself that existence which he alone communicated, and which he was under no obligation to bestow? But the subject has no concern with innocent creatures, since you acknowledge that man is in a state of sin: Our present inquiry is, Does justice require that God should give *sinner*s the means of obtaining eternal life? Is he bound by any of his perfections to make a "gracious allowance" for our daily

offences?—Now, one would think, the bare stating of such questions is sufficient to answer them. If “there is none righteous, no not one;” if even “the best of men are daily offending God;” who of mankind can have a right to the means of attaining eternal happiness, to “gracious allowance,” or indeed to any favour whatever? It is a contradiction in terms, to speak of a *gracious* allowance which God is under obligations to make; for what *grace* can there be in bestowing that which it would be unjust or tyrannical to withhold? No less absurd is the idea, that God is bound to give *sinner*s the means of salvation. The words *sin* and *justice* must change their meaning, before it can be allowed that sinners can merit any thing from God, but punishment.—But perhaps you will say, If men are only chargeable with “unavoidable imperfections and deficiencies,” it would be severe in God to make no “allowance” for such “infirmities.” To this I would reply, what are these *infirmities*? If they are only physical weaknesses or defects they need no allowance at all, for there is no more criminality in them than in a weak arm or a tender eye. But if they are sinful, if they have any thing of moral turpitude in them, upon what principle can an holy and just God be bound to overlook them? Now, when you own that “the best of men are daily offending God,” and that “we cannot say that

we have no sin," you grant that these infirmities are *sinful*. If God, then, is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity; if he "hateth *all* workers of iniquity;" if he is bound to maintain the honours of his holy law; every transgression of that law must expose the offender to some punishment, and the holiness and justice of God require that he should not remit the punishment, without some satisfaction for the violation of his righteous law—some expression of his displeasure against the offence committed.—But you seem to think, that the good actions of men will compensate for these smaller sins; and that it would be unreasonable in God to make no allowance for such imperfections, where there are so many virtuous deeds to atone for them. This opinion, however, can only be admitted, on the supposition that these good actions are *works of supererogation*; for unless these good actions possess more goodness than the law requires, how can they impart a portion of goodness to supply the deficiencies in other actions? But surely such works of superabundant merit are not to be expected from creatures, who, by your own acknowledgment, are always inclined "to keep within the measure of the standard" proposed to them, and would still keep below it, even if it were considerably reduced. The very supposition, indeed, involves an absurdity; for it implies that we are

not bound in every instance to serve God to the utmost of our power.

But “ what saith the scripture ” on this subject ? Does it tell us that God is bound to give all men the means of salvation ? Does it speak of small sins which he ought to pass by.—No : —It informs us that ever since the first apostasy of our race, all mankind have been depraved, and obnoxious to his wrath : “ By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.—The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth :—every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.—The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.—We are dead in trespasses and sins—the children of disobedience—and are by nature the children of wrath.”*—It teaches us, that *all sins* expose us to the just displeasure of God, and subject us to the curse of his law : so that, instead of being intitled to the means of obtaining eternal life we are criminals under sentence of death : “ The soul that sinneth it shall die.—The wages of sin is death ; ”—even that *death* which is the opposite of *eternal life*. “ Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all*

* Rom v. 12..21. Gen. viii. 21. vi 5 Jer xvii. 9. Eph. ii 1-3.— See also Rom iii. 9..24 v. 6..10. Ps. li 5 lviii. 3 1 Cor. ii. 14 —All these texts, with many more, are ably vindicated from the misconstructions of Dr. Taylor and others, by Edwards in his Treatise on ORIGINAL SIN ; where this doctrine is established by numerous and incontrovertible proofs.

things which are written in the book of the law to do them.—He that despised Moses' law died without mercy.—Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.—Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one point*, he is guilty of all.—Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one *jot* or one *tittle* shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break *one of these least commandments*, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.*—These passages strike at the very root of your system: and let it be observed, that the last of them is quoted from Christ's sermon on the mount, which some unitarians consider as comprising almost the whole of *their* gospel.—I need scarcely add that these texts, understood in their obvious meaning, exhibit the doctrine of the Reformed Churches on the subject of man's depravity.†

Perhaps you will say, Is God, then, not bound to give those nations from whom he has withheld the gospel, some other adequate means of conducting them to eternal life? To this I reply that since "they are all under sin," they cannot be intitled to this privilege, nor to any other

* Ezek. xviii. 20. Rom. vi. 23. Gal. iii. 10. Heb. x. 28. ii. 2. Jam. ii. 10. Matth. v. 18, 19.

† See the 39 ARTICLES of the Church of England, Art. ix. with the Second of the HOM. LIES, --- CONFESSION OF FAITH of the Church of Scotland, ch. vi.

blessing. God will judge them, not by the light of revelation, but by the law of nature. But they are all transgressors of that law : and hence an inspired apostle maintains that God is righteous in revealing his wrath against them, and even in giving them up to their own wicked imaginations, because they have hated the light afforded them : “ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness : Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them , for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead : so that they are without excuse : Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, &c. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts—gave them up unto vile affections :—and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.”*

This passage suggests an important question, closely connected with the present subject ; Whence is it that any heathen nations exist ? The whole world once enjoyed the blessings of revealed religion, and the acknowledged means of

* ROMANS i. 18. 28.

salvation ;—how then did so many nations lose this inestimable benefit ? At present there are numerous kingdoms and large empires, in which even *natural religion* cannot be found in any tolerable form : for you admit (p. 91), that “ there never was any country, nor any age of the world, where its principles have been generally believed and professed, unless where revelation has published and supported them.”—This fact is sufficient to overthrow your whole system ; for it is a decisive proof of the universal and dreadful depravity of man. To no other principle can we attribute this total apostasy ; especially when we take into the account the great difficulty with which God’s peculiar people were prevented from joining in the general rebellion. To no other principle can we ascribe this universal neglect of natural religion among the heathen nations, and that hostility which the gospel has always to encounter upon its first introduction among pagans.—You may say indeed, that the guilt of apostatizing from revealed religion cannot be charged on the present generation of heathens, but only on their ancestors who first corrupted or abandoned the worship of the true God.—Be it so :—But what will this avail in support of your scheme, while it appears, from the facts now stated, that the present heathen inherit the same depraved dispositions which led their fathers to revolt from God ? Their

aversion to natural religion, and their enmity to the gospel when at any time it is offered to them, sufficiently indicate that if they were placed in the same circumstances as their ancestors were, they would be guilty of the same apostasy. And may not the righteous God, who knows the hearts of all men, impute to them a portion of that guilt which they would be ready to contract, if they had opportunity? Even a heathen could perceive that the man who is disposed to commit a crime, is in so far chargeable with it, though his wicked dispositions have had no opportunity of making their appearance. This sentiment is expressed in the following passage, which we find in an interesting treatise of Seneca: "That man is ungrateful, though he receives no favour, who would not requite a favour, if it were granted him; as that man is a robber, before he stain his hands with blood, who is already armed for murder, and has an inclination to plunder and kill. Wickedness is brought into exercise and discovered, by deeds; but it does not begin with them."* Every one must acknowledge the truth of these observations; and if the heathen be judged by this rule, their guilt, in regard to their apostasy from

* *Licet beneficium non fit quod accipit, ipse tamen ingratus est; quia non fuit redditurus, etiam si accepisset: sic latro est, etiam antequam manus inquinet; quia ad occidendum jam armatus est, et habet spoliandi atque interficiendi voluntatem. Exercetur et appetitur opere nequitia, non incipit.*—
SEN. de Benef. Lib. v. c. 14.

God, will not appear so small as it is often represented.

Now, if such is the moral condition of mankind, your sentiments on this subject must be erroneous: for it is evident, from what has been stated, not only that men have no claim to the means of obtaining eternal life, but that a great part of the human race do not possess these means; and consequently that God is not bound to bestow them. All speculations on such topics must be frivolous, if they are contradicted by stubborn facts. If God ought to give all men the means of attaining everlasting felicity, we must conclude that he has actually conferred these means, and that, being adequate to the end, their effects must be apparent in some degree, in every quarter of the globe. We may expect, then, to find in every land a few, at least, rescued from prevailing depravity, walking in the ways of holiness, and made meet in some measure for the inheritance of the saints in light. For, whatever allowances may be made to the heathen on account of their disadvantageous circumstances, we cannot suppose that God will subvert, for their sakes, the fundamental constitutions of his kingdom, or alter the nature of things. Now, this is one established law, "That the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." According to this law, none can reach the felicity of heaven, but such as have become

holy on earth. This is what you distinctly acknowledge (p. 34); “ We cannot be finally happy in the eternal world without virtue and holiness. Without holiness no man shall see God.” You have also very justly observed (p. 73), that a supreme love to God is the foundation and substance of all genuine religion. It follows, then, that none can be admitted into heaven, but those who delight in holiness, and in whom the love of God is the predominant principle. This is not only agreeable to a divine appointment, but to the very nature of things: for it is impossible that a felicity, consisting chiefly in holiness itself, can be tasted without a holy nature. To speak of a wicked man’s enjoying the celestial bliss, is a contradiction in terms; for that bliss is placed in the performance of duties which he hates, and in the exercise of dispositions of which he is destitute. As well might we suppose the blind to be captivated with the charms of a landscape, or the deaf to be transported with the melody of a concert.

Let us now turn our eyes to the heathen world, and see if it furnishes any heirs of glory,—any who are truly virtuous, who delight in God as the chief good, and are sincerely attached to the ways of piety and holiness. But where shall we look for these pagan saints?—Can we find them among the heathen nations of antiquity?—Alas! their very gods were profligates,

and some of their devotions were acts of lewdness or of murder!—Shall we seek them among their illustrious philosophers?—Some of these, indeed, seem almost christians in their doctrines and precepts; but there was scarcely one of them whose life would not have been a disgrace to the christian name. You have correctly stated in your *Popular Evidences*, (p. 346, 347) that the characters of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, and other philosophers, were extremely defective; so that, “in practice,” they often “appeared to sink from the most sublime speculations to the most infamous vices.” One of themselves asserts, that a truly good man was like a phoenix, appearing but once in 500 years; and that even good men of a secondary kind were so rare, that those might be said to have made considerable progress, who were not among the worst.*—Shall we inquire for the children of God among the modern heathen?—Our search will be equally fruitless. Infidels will indeed tell us, that in some sequestered regions, uncontaminated by the effects of bad example, evil habits, or wrong education, nations or tribes may yet be found, who are living *conformably to nature*, in genuine purity and goodness. St. Pierre, and other writers of the same cast, have amused themselves with painting visionary scenes of this supposed state of inno-

* SEN. Epp. 42, et 75.—De Benef. Lib. v. c. 15.

cence. Various spots have been fixed on as the seat of this terrestrial paradise. For a while it was placed in China, till a more accurate knowledge of the crimes which abound in that populous empire made it necessary to shift it to another quarter. It has frequently been placed among the Hindoos, or some other East Indian tribes; but surely, since the publication of that most interesting work, *Dr. Buchanan's Christian Researches*, all such delusions must have vanished, if any thing was wanting to put an end to them. Perhaps our philosophers may still explore some wilder regions in search of their imaginary paradise. But whither can they go? In what sequestered island, or lonely desert, shall they seek it? It is not to be found among the cannibals of New Zealand or Sumatra, nor among the lewd and savage inhabitants of Otaheite or Tongataboo: the wilds of America utterly disown it: and Africa says, "It is not in me."—The truth is; it exists only in the bewildered fancies of proud men, who are loath to admit the mortifying doctrine of man's total depravity; and who not only shut their eyes against the glaring evidences of this doctrine which they see around them, or which they might discover by an impartial survey of their own hearts, but conjure up arguments against it, in ideal scenes which are placed at a distance.

It cannot be denied that God could reveal his

salvation to pagans, without sending them the gospel ; but this very revelation would be something above the light of nature,—it would be like the preaching of the word from heaven. It was not by the light of nature that the three wise men were brought from the East, to worship the new-born Redeemer. No instances of a similar kind have been met with since their day ; and if any such should occur, they could furnish no proof that the light of nature is sufficient to guide us unto immortality.

Besides, were we even to grant that a few individuals from the heathen world have been conducted to heaven by the light of nature, still your principle could not be maintained, unless you can shew, that that light is as effectual for the purpose as the light of the gospel : for if, in those places where the latter is enjoyed, a greater number of persons are brought to eternal life, than would have been saved by the operation of the former alone ; then it follows, that God imparts the means of salvation to men, not as a matter of *right*, but of *pure grace* ; which he may give or withhold, according to his sovereign pleasure. But surely, after all that you have said, in your *Popular Evidences*, concerning the excellence of the gospel, you will not maintain, that we may get to heaven as easily without it as with it. Look at the description which you have given, in that work (p. 432), of the glori-

ous change produced by the gospel of Christ, and say if the heathen have as much opportunity of entering into life, as those who are favoured with christianit. : “ In heathenish countries or in those countries which, under the name of the gospel, have only adopted a system of superstition, and where the people are totally ignorant of its principles. you find slavery in all its horrors, the minds of men depressed and debased, more like to the grovelling beasts of the forest than the lords of the lower world. Give to these very men the gospel in its genuine simplicity, there would instantly arise a new world of creatures, as if truly born again.” Is it possible, that among these men who are almost degraded to the rank of beasts, there are as many heirs of glory,—as many who have a supreme love to God, and a habitual delight in holiness, as there are among the inhabitants of this new world of light?—The very idea is absurd. You must therefore grant, that there are some, at least, whom the light of nature is insufficient to save, who might have been saved if God had sent them the gospel; and consequently, that the distribution of adequate means for conducting men to eternal life is wholly regulated by the sovereign will of God.

Indeed, upon any other principle, the gospel would be a blessing of trivial importance. It might be viewed as a temporal comfort, contribut-

ing to our happiness on earth ; but, it could not be called “the power of God unto salvation ;” it could not be denominated “the grace of God which bringeth salvation;” it could not be termed “the word of God’s grace, which is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”*—The very word *salvation*, which is employed in scripture, and adopted in your writings, to denote that blessedness which we need, implies that it is a blessedness originating in the free grace of God, and that we have no right, either to this benefit itself, or to the means of attaining it. For, what is salvation? Is it a deliverance from *sin*?—Nothing can be more incongruous than the notion of meriting deliverance from demerit itself.—Is it redemption from *misery*?—The existence of misery implies the existence of sin ; so that the idea of merit is again totally excluded. A just God cannot make the innocent miserable. Both reason and scripture teach us to trace all natural evil unto moral evil, as its proper source ; so that, wherever we see suffering, we naturally infer the existence of sin ; and hence the barbarians, when they saw the viper fastening on the hand of Paul, instantly formed this conclusion, “No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.”† The fact,

* Rom. i. 16. Tit. ii. 11. Acts xxi. 32. xxvi. 18. † Acts xxviii. 4.

that all men are subject to misery, demonstrates that all men deserve misery ; and the universal reign of death points out the extent of the empire of sin. And surely, if men are not intitled to *present* happiness it would be absurd to allege that they have a right to *eternal* happiness, or even to the means by which it is obtained.

Here it is necessary to take notice of a contrary sentiment frequently expressed in your writings ;—a sentiment which naturally results from your imperfect conceptions of man's depravity, but which is incompatible with correct views of the justice of God. You consider the sufferings of good men in this world as *injuries* which God is doing them for the present, but for which he will make ample compensation in a future world ; and intimate, that these severe dispensations can be justified only on the ground of his providing this future recompense. Thus you observe in your *Intimations and Evidences* (p. 118, 119) ; “ Sometimes they (i. e. good men) are called to suffer much for mankind ; sometimes for virtue and the testimony of a good conscience, sometimes for their connections and friends ; but all these would be unnecessary and even *improper and cruel* without a regard to futurity.” Again (p. 120), “ What vast numbers of virtuous men have been condemned to perpetual slavery, &c ! The history of mankind is nothing else but a dreadful relation of human miseries, wars, bloodshed, &c. What a scene of hor-

ror, confusion, and *injustice* does this earth present, if there be not another world! ”—And again (p. 122), “ What then shall we say to all these, if there be no future state, where *injured virtue* and *innocence* may meet with a *recompense for all the cruelty and injustice that they have suffered here* ; and where the honour of the divine administration shall be fully vindicated, and the vigilance and *justice* of providence demonstrated?” You also observe (p. 128), “ Indeed without a reference to a future state, the whole moral world is a scene of *imbecility*, of confusion and *injustice*.”—Similar sentiments occur in your *Plain Statement* (p. 98), “ What can be more severe, and, to us, apparently contrary to the principles of *justice* and *goodness*, than the beginning of the history of Joseph? *but the end justifies all the means*.”—It is plain that, in these passages, you represent the conduct of God towards the righteous as in many instances cruel and unjust, or at least justifiable only when viewed in connexion with the good ends he has in view, and the abundant recompense which he will bestow.—It cannot be denied, that the present enjoyments and sufferings of the good and bad are by no means proportioned to their respective characters, that we may therefore confidently expect a future state where this apparent irregularity will be rectified, that the ungodly are often permitted to oppress the saints, and that the latter are assured of “ a great re-

compense of reward." But, that God is *bound* to give his people this reward as a compensation for his conduct towards them, or that he has done any thing to them which could not be perfectly justified, independent of the consideration of a future state, and of the purposes of his grace respecting them, is an idea altogether inadmissible. Never let us for a moment suppose that God can do any thing unjust in itself—any thing for which he is bound to atone; or that he ever employs improper means for accomplishing his gracious ends, doing evil that good may come. If you had entertained just views of the dreadful malignity of sin, you would not have been tempted to give this degrading representation of the ways of Providence: for you would then have seen, that, as all men are daily transgressing, and as every sin is an act of rebellion against an infinitely great and holy God, the best of men deserve far more calamities than they ever feel. In the dispensations which you mention, there is no act of injustice: there is an act of forbearance towards the wicked, a delay in executing upon them the vengeance due to their crimes; but there is neither injustice nor cruelty towards the righteous, whose sins have deserved more than they suffer; even when their sufferings are inflicted by the instrumentality of the worst of men, instead of proceeding more directly from the hand of God.

Though there should be no future state, no reflections could be cast on the ways of Providence towards the righteous ; the only irregularity would be, his suffering transgressors to escape with impunity. The recompense provided for the saints, is a reward of grace, not of debt. Accordingly we find some of the most holy men that ever lived, confessing, that they had no claim to the smallest of God's favours ; nor any right to complain of the severest of his judgments. "I am not worthy," said Jacob, "of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant."* In like manner Jeremiah says, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.—Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" † The same humble sentiments are expressed by other saints, particularly by Ezra and Daniel. ‡ The most complete proof of this point is furnished by the book of Job. There we have a narrative of the unparalleled sufferings of one who was "perfect and upright," noted for his piety and goodness, chargeable only with such sins as you would call "unavoidable imperfections and deficiencies." But could he, under the pressure of his accumulated trials, charge divine Providence with injustice or cruelty? He indeed dropped a few expressions to that effect, in the

* Gen. xxxii. 10. † Lam. iii. 22, 39. ‡ Ezra ix. 13. Daniel ix. 7, 3, 9, 18.

bitterness of his grief; but for these his friend Elihu justly reproved him, maintaining that the Almighty never, in any instance, “commits iniquity or perverts judgment, nor lays upon man more than what is right:” and at last, when God himself appeared to him in majesty, the good man confessed that he had spoken rashly, being sensible that the least of his sins against a God so glorious deserved more than he had suffered: “Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth—I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”*

It is to no purpose to object, that this doctrine of man’s total depravity presents a gloomy picture of human nature. It is not more gloomy than that which you yourself have delineated, in the passages quoted above from your *Intimations and Evidences*. But we must not inquire, what views of our condition are most pleasing to our fancy, or flattering to our pride; but what are most conformable to truth. Truth must be received, even when she comes in the most disagreeable and mortifying form.—Nor is there any room to allege, that such doctrines exhibit the Divine Being under a forbidding aspect, and tend to detract from the amiableness of his character. They make him appear more terrible to the wicked; but not less lovely in the eyes of his saints, who regard his holiness and justice as

* Job xxxiv. 10, 11, 12, 23. xl. 4. xlii. 6.

a part of his beauty. It would be degrading God, and injuring the interests of holiness, to attempt to form such a character of him as would attract the affections of those who are in love with sin; for such persons can have no more attachment to the true God, than a rebel has to his king, or a malefactor to his judge. It is far better that sinners should see the Holy One in his real character, that they may be alarmed and reclaimed; than that they should view him in an imaginary form, calculated to encourage them in sin, and fill them with delusive hopes of impunity. Men may form in their imaginations a god who is all forbearance, who is neither holy nor just, or who is at least divested of vindictive justice, and will not punish them for their sins; and they may profess to cherish a warm regard for such a being;* but this is not the God of the scriptures,—this is not the God of providence; and their attachment to this idol of their own framing is as widely different from the love of God, as self-love is from benevolence. “Unto the wicked God saith,—These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before

* Some years ago a friend of mine was talking with a universalist. “I think,” said the latter, “that I love God more since I believed that he will not punish the wicked eternally.” To which my friend aptly replied, “I suppose you would like him much better, if you thought that he will not punish them at all.”

thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.”*

If you should still object ; “ Why did God permit human nature to become so depraved ? How did iniquity enter that world of which he is the Creator and Governor ? And why has it been suffered to extend its influence unto all generations of men, like an inheritance conveyed from their first progenitors ? ” — I answer ; These are questions which you have no right to propose, and to which I am not bound to reply ; for such difficulties have no peculiar connexion with the principles which I am defending, nor indeed with revealed religion in any form. They are objections against the *providence* of God, as much as against his *word* ; and therefore, natural religion has as much to do with them, as christianity. Infidels and unitarians have no right to find fault with the doctrine of scripture on this subject, till they can substitute another, attended with fewer difficulties, and better fitted to explain all the phenomena exhibited. But all their attempts to form any such *improved* plan, have hitherto proved abortive. Whatever theory may be proposed, the facts themselves continue the same ; and these facts perfectly correspond with the doctrine of scripture. Our weak understandings may be

*Pl. I. 16., 22.

unable to comprehend, how sin could enter into a spotless creation, under the government of an infinitely good and holy God, who could not be its author ; and how it has been allowed to continue in all ages and nations of the world, while we are sure that it is the object of his abhorrence, and that he could easily extinguish both sin and sinners in a moment : yet, that sin has entered, and that it has descended from one generation to another, neither unitarian nor infidel, mussulman nor pagan, can deny. Pride may suggest, and prejudice may eagerly adopt, a variety of methods for evading the force of these facts : but they remain immovable, supported by experience and observation, by the united testimony of all ages and nations, and by the whole history of mankind, which, as you have observed, is almost “ nothing else but a dreadful relation of human miseries and crimes.” The melancholy truth, that our nature is depraved, presents itself to our notice on every side : It is proclaimed by the conduct of men around us ; our own hearts and lives attest it ; and every child bears witness to it, for no sooner does the infant discover intelligence, than it begins to betray unequivocal symptoms of selfishness and pride, frowardness and anger, jealousy and revenge, with other malevolent dispositions. Even the proudest of the ancient philosophers reluctantly confessed the humbling fact : For while some of them, as

Cicero and Seneca, imputed the corruption of man solely to wrong education or bad example, — a theory which could never account for the first introduction of sin; they were forced to acknowledge, that we discover the greatest facility in learning evil. Thus Cicero admits, that “we seem to have sucked in error almost with our nurse’s milk;”* and Seneca owns, that “we are not only easily seduced unto evil by others, but disposed to make progress in sin of our own accord; because the way to vice is not only prone but headlong;”† in which concession, he seems to forget his own theory, overcome by the force of truth. Other heathen writers give an unqualified assent to this doctrine. Isocrates concludes his excellent advices to Demonicus with this remark, “Even with all this diligence, one will scarcely be able to subdue the depravity of his nature.”‡ Horace observes, that “no man is born without sin.”§ The same sentiments are expressed by Theognis; for he says, “The practice of wickedness is easy among men, but the way of goodness is difficult:”§ and again; “it is easier to beget, and bring up, a human being,

* Ut pene cum lacte nutricis errorem sxisse videamur. Cic. Tusc. Disput. Lib. iii. c. 1.

† Ad deteriora faciles sumus; quia nec dux potest, nec comes desse: et res etiam ipsa sine duce, sine comite procedit: non primum iter est tantum ad vitia, sed præceps. SEN. Ep. 97.—Vide etiam Ep. 94.

‡ ISOCR. Oratio ad DEMON.

§ Nam vitis nemo sine nascitur.—HOR. Sat. Lib. i. Sat. 3. v. 68.

§ THEOGN. SENTEN. 1021. 1027.

than to implant good dispositions in him: no man has yet acquired the art of making fools wise, and the wicked good. If God had taught physicians how to cure the wickedness of men, and their disordered minds, they might have gained the most ample rewards. Now, if wisdom had been produced with, and implanted, in man, the son of a good man would in no instance be wicked, but obedient to his prudent counsels: but you cannot, by instruction, make a bad man virtuous.”*

Upon the whole, since the doctrine of the corruption of our nature rests on such incontrovertible evidences, it would be highly unreasonable to oppose it, because we find ourselves at a loss to give a complete solution of every difficulty relating to the origin and continuance of moral evil; † especially as there are so many things in the nature and works and ways of Jehovah,

* Ibid. 429..438.

Several other passages to the same effect are quoted by Edwards near the conclusion of his Treatise on Original Sin.

† See some very useful observations on this subject in TUCKER on Predestination, Letters xvii..xx. EDWARDS on Original Sin, Part iv. ch. ii.--and EDWARDS on the Will, Part iv. Sect. ix, x.---with Dr. Williams's Notes on these passages, in the Leeds Edition of Edwards's Works.---In some recent Publications of Dr. W. himself, the subject is particularly and ably handled. Yet, with all deference to the well-known abilities of that author, I can scarcely think with him, that by tracing moral evil to what he calls PASSIVE POWER ---or a principle of DEFECTIBILITY in man, he has solved all the difficulties in the question. They seem only to assume a new form. Perhaps, after all that has been written on the subject, it will still remain a mystery, till “that which is perfect shall come, and that which is in part shall be done away.”

which are equally beyond the grasp of our faculties. At present we know only in part ; but the period will arrive, when all such difficulties will vanish, and every mystery of providence be clearly unfolded. Some of your own remarks on providence (p. 98), are peculiarly applicable to the present subject : “ If, in the history of this world, we meet with many things which we may not be able to reconcile with the wisdom, the justice and goodness of the divine administration, we may account for these appearances from the consideration, that the present is only a part, and a dark part, of the grand scheme of providence ; and intimately connected with the future world : and could we see the connexion and dependence, we would [*should*] see that all is wise and good.” — To these observations I shall only add, that whatever difficulty we may find in accounting for the entrance or continuance of moral evil, we can easily perceive that God has made it subservient to the noblest purposes : for, in consequence of the permission of sin, we are furnished with the most illustrious displays of the beauties of his holiness, the glories of his justice and faithfulness, the riches of his mercy, and the wonders of his redeeming love ; while his wisdom and power appear equally admirable, in thus extracting the greatest good from the worst of evils. “ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearch-

able are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !”

I have dwelt thus long on the doctrine of man’s depravity ; because a distinct view of it will greatly facilitate our inquiries into other subjects, with which it is intimately connected ; and because I am of opinion, with the excellent Mr. Wilberforce, “ that it lies at the very root of all true religion, and is eminently the basis and ground-work of christianity.”*

I am, &c.

* WILBERFORCE’S Practical View, p. 26.

LETTER V.

*On Man's Inability, and the Work of
the Spirit.*

SIR,

YOU have frequently *honoured* the friends of evangelical truth with the title of *Pharisees*. Perhaps there would be less injustice, in regarding you and your brethren as related to the *Sadducees*, who held, “that there is neither angel nor spirit :” for it is well known, that unitarians in general deny, on the one hand, the existence of Satan and his temptations, and on the other, the existence and operations of the Holy Spirit, as a divine Person. Such as venerate the authority of the sacred oracles will be shocked to hear, that among modern Socinians, the very idea, that such a being as Satan exists, is usually held up to ridicule. Hence, in their *Improved Version* of the New Testament, they take care in their *useful Notes*, to remind the reader that the *Devil* is no real being, but only *the evil principle personified* ; and that the scripture account of his tempting Christ is merely an alle-

gory : though they might with as much propriety have alleged, that Christ is only *the good principle personified*, and that the whole gospel is an allegory. What your sentiments on this subject are, you have not told us ; but we may partly guess at them, from the circumstance, that in the unitarian Hymn-book lately introduced into your congregation, the name of *Satan* has been carefully expunged from those hymns, selected from the works of evangelical authors, in which that word occurred.

In regard to your views of the Spirit's operations, we are not left to conjecture : for, though you have "studiously avoided" any direct attack on the doctrine of scripture on that head, perhaps, lest you should hurt the "religious prejudices" of some whom it might be inconvenient to offend ; yet your hostility to that doctrine is fully manifested, by your violent assault on the doctrine of man's inability, with which it is necessarily connected.—This assault, however, while it sufficiently indicates your enmity to this article, is not so much directed against the doctrine itself, as against an imaginary heresy, which you have first invented, and then ridiculed. In the whole of your observations on this point (p. 122..126), you betray a total ignorance of the subject, or something much worse than ignorance. You take it for granted, that in asserting "that man of himself can do nothing,"

we maintain that men have no *physical power* for performing spiritual duties, and upon this false assumption the whole of your arguments are founded; so that you spend your strength in combating a doctrine which is held by no man living. We indeed maintain, "that man of himself can do nothing spiritually good;" and we use such expressions, because we find them in the scriptures: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself," says Christ, "except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.—For *without me ye can do nothing.*"—"I live; says Paul, "yet not I but Christ liveth in me.—Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God."*—Before attempting to ridicule such expressions, you ought to have recollected that they are the words of scripture: yet you have not even tried to shew that we have misunderstood them. What right had you to assume, that, in employing such scriptural language on this subject, we maintain that man has not *faculties* adapted for spiritual exercises, nor *physical strength* for performing them? Such an idea is not to be met with, as far as I know, in any of the writings of evangelical divines. Their doctrine is, that this inability of man is not a *physical* but a *moral* inability; that it consists chiefly in the perverseness of the *will*, and the

* John xv. 4 5. Gal ii. 20. 2 Cor. iii. 5.

want of good dispositions. Men *cannot* do good, because they *will not* : even as Jesus says ; “ Ye *will not* come to me, that ye might have life,”* It is in this sense that we assert, that man *cannot* believe and repent of himself. His heart is so alienated from God, that he feels an aversion to all spiritual exercises. It is this which constitutes the guilt of unbelief and impenitence. They are criminal, only as they proceed from depraved inclinations,—from a perverse will. To speak of a man’s being willing to believe, but not able, is an absurdity ; for, in truth, the exercise of faith is principally an act of the will. At the same time it is admitted, that unbelief, as well as faith, is partly seated in the understanding ; and that it is owing in a great measure to the blindness and weakness of their minds when applied to spiritual objects, that sinners cannot believe of themselves : yet, as this blindness and weakness have been wholly superinduced by the influence of sin, which tends to debase all our faculties ; they are so far from extenuating the guilt of unbelief, that they teach us to trace it unto that moral depravity, in which alone they originate.†

Now, after having shewn, in my last Letter, that all men discover a prevailing inclination to

* John v. 40.

† See Edwards on the Will, Part i. Sect. 4. Part iii. Sect. 4, and 5. Edwards on man’s natural Blindness in Religion, Sect. i.

sin; I need not spend much time in proving that, “The condition of man is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God:” and that “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.”* Since it appears, that not long after the deluge, all nations, except the Jews, lost the knowledge of the true religion, and sunk into idolatry and gross wickedness: that the Jews themselves, notwithstanding all the means of holiness employed with them, were ever discovering a strong propensity to fall into the same darkness and depravity; and that not one of the pagan tribes was brought back even to natural religion, till the gospel came to them “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power;” we are warranted to infer, that so long as human nature remains the same as it has been in all ages, man will not of himself turn unto God.—Nor can we believe, that till this inclination to sin be cured, there will be any actions performed that are truly good: for, as you have well observed (p. 73), a supreme love to God is the foundation of all re-

* ARTICLES of the Church of England, Art. x. There are some good illustrations of this doctrine in one of the HOMILIES, viz. the 3rd Part of the Sermon for Rogation week.

ligion, and consequently of all true goodness; and such a love to the Holy One is utterly incompatible with a prevailing inclination to sin. Where the love of God is not the predominant principle in the heart, there may be many things which have a species of goodness, many things which are good for ourselves, good for our relations, good for society; but there can be nothing of that true holiness, which is conformable to the divine law, and well-pleasing to God. Actions that are done under the influence of a supreme regard to God, are completely different, in point of moral worth, from the same actions, when performed *solely* from some inferior principle. Now, if the love of God has the ascendancy in our souls, it will influence and regulate our whole conduct; so that, “whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we shall do all to the glory of God;”* and even our common actions will be acceptable in his eyes: but where this regulating principle is wanting,—as it must be, wherever there is a prevailing inclination to sin, and consequently, wherever men are in their natural state of depravity,—there will be nothing done from a regard to God’s glory, and therefore nothing that can be accepted by him; but even common actions, and actions apparently good, must meet with his displeasure. Accordingly we learn from the word of God, that the sacri-

* 1 Cor. x. 31.

vice of the wicked is an abomination, and that even "the plowing of the wicked is sin."* Nay, we are assured, that while we are in our natural state, nothing that we do is pleasing to God, since our hearts are alienated from him: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." And that by "those that are in the flesh," the apostle means all who are in their natural depravity, and have not been renewed by the divine Spirit, is manifest from the context, particularly from the next verse; "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."†

It appears then, that, whatever our physical powers *might* effect, were we disposed to make the proper use of them, it is certain that, owing to our prevailing inclination to sin, we never *will* turn unto God and unto true holiness, till some preternatural influence produce a change in our dispositions. This change, as the text now quoted intimates, is effected by the Holy Spirit: and there is no truth more fully taught in scripture, than that all genuine holiness is produced by his grace. In almost every page of the sacred volume, true goodness is described as proceeding from God. To him the success of the

* Prov. xxi. 4, 27.

† Rom. viii. 7, 9.

gospel is wholly attributed.* His word abounds with rich promises of sanctifying grace;† with fervent prayers for holiness;‡ with thanksgivings for grace received;|| and with expressions of humble reliance on divine aid, for the exercise of every holy disposition, and the performance of every duty.¶ All spiritual blessings are derived from the fulness of Christ;§ and all gracious affections are the fruits of his Spirit, who dwells in believers as in his temple, to irradiate their minds, purify their hearts, invigorate their faculties, and direct their conduct.** Even the metaphors, employed to express the renovation of our nature, imply its heavenly origin; for it is termed a new birth, a new creation, and a resurrection from the dead:†† and we are assured that this work of grace will be maintained and completed, by the same divine agency through which it was begun.‡‡ Hence the saints are often exhorted to humility, from the consideration, that all their attainments have been derived from God; and that they are distinguished, not by merit but by grace.¶¶

* 1 Cor. iii. 5..7.--2 Cor. ii. 12, 14. iv. 7. Acts xiv. 27. xv. 8, 9. xvi. 14.

† Ha. xlv. 3..5. Jer. xxxi. 31..34. Ezek. xi. 19, 20. xxxvi. 25..33.

‡ Pf. li. 10..12. Eph. iii. 14..19. Col. i. 9..11. 1 Thes. iii. 12, 13. v. 23.

|| Mat. xi. 25. 1 Cor. i. 4..7. 1 Thes. i. 2..5. 2 Thes. i. 3. Philem. 4, 6.

¶ Pf. xxv. 1, 2, 20, 21. xxviii. 7. lxxi. 16. H. xlv. 24, 25.--2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

§ John i. 16. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. Gal. ii. 20. Eph. i. 3. Phil. iv. 13. Col. ii. 9, 10.

** Gal. v. 16, 18, 22..25. Rom. viii. 1..16, 23, 26, 27. 1 Cor. vi. 11, 19.

†† John i. 13. iii. 3..6.--2 Cor. v. 17. Eph. ii. 1..10.

‡‡ 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. Phil. i. 6. 2 Tim. i. 12.--1 Pet. i. 3..5. Jude 24, 25.

¶¶ Rom. xii. 3..6. 1 Cor. iii. 5. iv. 7. xv. 10. Eph. iv. 2..7.

It is not easy to ascertain what are your precise views of this point ; for, by speaking of “ the suggestion of the spirit of God ” (p. 148), and of the duty of praying for “ strength and assistance, virtues and graces ” (p. 82), you seem to assign to divine agency some share in the production of holiness ; but that this allotment is extremely small, bearing no proportion to what you appropriate to human power and human merit, is obvious, not only from your remarks on man’s inability, but from the general spirit of your system, which directly militates against the plan of salvation by grace. We may form some idea of your sentiments on the formation of holy principles in general, from your account of the manner in which we attain unto the love of God, which you justly regard as the foundation of every other religious exercise (p. 73), and “ the first and great duty of the gospel.” Instead of ascribing this primary grace to the operation of the Holy Spirit, agreeably to the doctrine of scripture,* you consider it as arising simply from a view of the divine character as it is described in the gospel: “ The genuine representation given of him by Jesus Christ must immediately lead to love, if we firmly believe in this character. —We are brought to love God in a manner similar to that by which we love men. Place before us a perfect moral character, &c.—we cannot

* 2 Thef. iii. 5. Rom. v. 5. Comp. with 1 John iv. 13, 16, 19. v. 1, 2.

help loving such a character." (p. 110, 111.)—
 Were this all that is requisite for producing love to God, then all who know the gospel, except infidels, must be possessed of this heavenly disposition. But such a sentiment is totally irreconcilable with facts. Alas! there are vast multitudes who are well acquainted with the scriptures, and whom we cannot charge with infidelity, whose temper and conduct prove too clearly, that their hearts are alienated from that God, whose glorious character they have so often contemplated in his word. Nay, when the perfect moral character of God was visibly placed before mankind in the person of his Son Christ Jesus, so far was the sight of it, even in this most attractive form, from engaging the affections of men in general, that it seemed rather to awaken their enmity to God and to holiness: for he who is "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person," and in whose life unspotted purity uniformly shone, was despised and rejected, abused and insulted, crucified and slain.

It is true however, that love to God, with every other holy disposition, is produced by a view of his amiable character, displayed in the gospel; but this view is obtained by divine illumination, and not by the mere exercise of our own minds. The Spirit, conducting his operations in a manner adapted to the nature of our

faculties, changes the heart by enlightening the understanding. He cures that spiritual blindness which has been superinduced by sin and increased by the influence of Satan ; he opens the eyes of the mind to discern the glory of God in Christ, he pours celestial light into the soul, and thus transforms it into the image of that divine beauty which it contemplates : “ 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 which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them :—For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.”—“ We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*—It is thus that the love of God, as a permanent principle of holiness, is generated in the soul : and the whole heart is quickened and renovated. There is no room for asserting, that according to this doctrine, the freedom of the will is destroyed, and sinners are *forced* into God’s service : for here the will, as in other cases, follows the understanding ; the change of the one naturally arising from the illumination of the other. The

* 2 Cor. iv. 3. 6. iii. 18.

soul is not forced, but drawn—"drawn with the cords of a man, with bands of love;" sweetly "constrained by the love of Christ," and the tender "mercies of God,"* which appear to the enlightened mind in a new and lovely form. Accordingly, when Christ says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him;" he presently adds, "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall be all taught of God:' Every man therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."† The heart is drawn unto Jesus by divine instruction, even by the teaching of the Spirit, irradiating the soul.‡

It is almost unnecessary to state, that this doctrine is far from superseding the diligent use of the outward means of holiness. The texts now referred to, import that we must seek an acquaintance with the truths of Christ; for these are what the Spirit recalls to the memory, and impresses on the mind. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth:" but his vivifying power is exerted in making the words of Christ "spirit and life," unto such as read and hear them.‖ He "opens the eyes of sinners, and turns them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," by means of the gospel;¶ and it is

* Hof. xi. 4. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. Rom. xii. 1. † John vi. 44, 45.

‡ John xiv. 16, 17, 26. xvi. 13, 15. 1 Cor. ii. 10, 16. ‖ John vi. 62.

¶ Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

only in attending on the institutions of religion that we are encouraged to expect his influences.

Nor is there the smallest foundation for alleging, that this doctrine leads to indolence and licentiousness, and discourages all efforts towards the attainment of holiness. It does not, as you have ignorantly, or uncandidly asserted (p. 125), make “men suppose themselves released from every obligation to duty, by trusting that they have nothing to do for themselves, for that Christ does all for them; and thus purchase to themselves a license to continue in sin;” but, on the contrary, it holds out the strongest inducement to the diligent pursuit of true goodness, even the hope of divine aid, to render our endeavours effectual. In directing men to rely on the influences of the Spirit, we do not forbid or discountenance the exercise of their own faculties; for it is not supposed, that the work of the Spirit is distinct from the operations of the soul itself; but rather that he operates in and with the exertions of our own mental powers. “In efficacious grace we are not merely passive, nor yet does God do *some*, and we do the *rest*. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all: for that is what he produces, viz. our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain: we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects, wholly passive,

and wholly active.—In the scriptures the same things are represented as from God and from us. God is said to convert, and men are said to convert and turn. God makes a new heart, and we are commanded to make us a new heart. God circumcises the heart, and we are commanded to circumcise our own hearts; not merely because we must use the means in order to the effect, but the effect itself is our own act and duty.* Surely such a doctrine, instead of paralyzing our exertions, must powerfully stimulate them: for what can be more animating than the thought that almighty power is supporting us? Hence, we are called to purify ourselves, because God has promised to dwell in us by his purifying Spirit; and we are exhorted to “work out our own salvation, with fear and trembling; because it is God which, of his good pleasure, worketh in us both to will and to do.”†

To what purpose then are all your remarks on man’s inability, since you have totally misunderstood or misrepresented the point in dispute? How pitiful your triumph over that imaginary heresy, which you have conjured up in the room of this salutary doctrine! You combine this ideal error with another that is equally visionary, and having conquered these creatures of your

* Edward’s Remarks on Important Doctrines, Ch. iv. § 48.—See also Edwards on the Will, Part iv. Sect. 4, 5.

† 2 Cor. vi. 16., 18. vii. 1, Phil. ii. 12, 13.

fancy, you seem to yourself to have gained a signal victory, and exult in the fall of these *supposed* doctrines of grace : (p. 125, 126.) “ What idea must we form of divine grace, from the following statement ; on the principles of this system ? God from all eternity destined a certain number of rational creatures to be called forth into being, in time, and to be placed in such a situation, that very important duties were required of them ; but they can do nothing. By the very condition of their existence, they have it not in their power, and they never had it in their power, to do any thing : and this condition is imposed on them by their Maker. Some of these however, by his sovereign will and pleasure, he raised to everlasting life ; but another part, what portion we are not permitted to say, are left to everlasting misery. And can this statement magnify the sovereign grace of God ! Is this the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, we are taught, is no respecter of persons ? ” — No, Sir ; nor is this the God of evangelical believers, nor of any professed christians whatever. The heresies over which you triumph are the visions of your own brain. No mortal ever maintained that the duties which God requires of us are physical impossibilities. Our inability to perform them is the very thing which constitutes our sin ; for it arises from the depravity of our will, our inclination to evil and

aversion to good.—And as there are none who hold that God will punish men for not doing impossibilities, so there are none who believe that God consigns any to eternal misery but for their sin. We maintain, however, that God distributes his spiritual gifts, as well as his temporal mercies, according to his sovereign pleasure; because no man has a right to the one any more than to the other: and this doctrine does not make God “a respecter of persons,” any more than the well-known fact, that Britain enjoys the gospel with its invaluable blessings, while China and Japan are left in darkness. That text, “God is no respecter of persons,” has no concern with the subject before us. It merely imports, that in his estimation of the characters of men, and in his judicial proceedings towards them, he is never biassed by those partialities or prejudices which are apt to influence our judgments, but always judges and acts in wisdom and equity. But this impartiality of God does not at all interfere with the doctrine of sovereign grace.—On this doctrine I shall not now enlarge, as I mean to examine it particularly, in the following Letter.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

On Predestination.

SIR,

IN the Introduction to your work you profess to have “studiously avoided all dark and mysterious doctrines,” taking notice only of such of them as “stood directly in your way:” yet there are some of these “disputed tenets” which you seem so eager to attack, that you are willing for that purpose to step out of your way. Of this number is the doctrine of *predestination*; which, in the Section on *God's Justice*, you have violently abused, and which you take every opportunity of attacking or alluding to, in other parts of your book. Were this doctrine the same with what you have opposed under that name, it would indeed be highly necessary to refute it; for, in your usual method, you first totally mistake the point in question and then combat the error which you yourself have framed. “There are many opinions,” you say, “which are preserved and cherished as religious principles, by men of great worth and great popularity, which it is impossible to reconcile with the

justice of God.—It is asserted and strenuously maintained, by men of these principles, that God from all eternity selected a number of men to raise them to eternal bliss: and that *without any regard to what should be the life and conduct of such men*. And, on the other hand, it is with equal positiveness insisted upon and taught, that the righteous Governor of the universe, appointed from all eternity another class of men to be doomed to everlasting destruction, and *without any respect to their demerits.*" (p. 40, 41.)—Whence, Sir, did you learn that such opinions are "asserted by men of great worth and popularity," or by any professed christians whatever? Was it from the scurrilous pamphlets of the Barrister? or from the Bishop of Lincoln's misrepresentations of Calvinism? Such burlesqued accounts of predestination may often be met with in the works of its opponents, for it is scarcely ever attacked, without being first misrepresented;* but where can you find such sentiments in the creeds or the writings of those who support it? I am loath to charge you with wilful perversion, in your statement of this doc-

* I am sorry to find the learned Dr. Clark, in his new and valuable Commentary, indulging in these unfair representations of this doctrine; particularly in his remarks on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. The opinions of Calvinists on that subject coincide with his own; or at least, they abhor as much as he does the shocking sentiments which he would impute to them. No where are such misrepresentations more unseemly than in a Commentary on the Holy Scriptures.

trine ; but it is difficult to acquit you on the score of ignorance, as this article forms a part of that Confession of Faith, which you once professed to believe, and promised to maintain. There are no christians in the world, as far as I know, who maintain predestination in any other form, than that in which it appears in the Confession now mentioned, and in the Articles of the English Church.* In these abridgments of evangelical truth, it is indeed asserted, that those who are predestinated unto life have been chosen in Christ, not on account of any foreseen merits, but of God's mere free grace and love ; yet it is maintained no less firmly, that they are chosen to holiness as well as to happiness : so that their conversion, their sanctification, and their good life, are as much ordained as their eternal salvation, and cannot possibly be separated from it. Consequently, according to this doctrine, no man can know that he is elected, but by living in the exercise of faith, and the practice of holiness. On the other hand, while it is affirmed, that the rest of mankind are " passed by," or not included in this election ; it is not maintained, as you most erroneously state, that God appoints them " to be doomed to everlasting destruction, *without any respect to their de-*

* Perhaps I should except a few who are named HIGH CALVINISTS, with whose tenets I am not fully acquainted : but these, whatever may be their opinions, are too inconsiderable to be viewed as the objects of Mr. W's attack.

merits ; ”—such a monstrous sentiment no mortal ever held ;—but it is expressly declared that he “ ordains them to dishonour and wrath *for their sin,*” which he foresaw they would commit.*

This is a doctrine which it is very fashionable to vilify and decry : sometimes it is pictured as horrible in the extreme ; at other times it is described as vastly ridiculous and absurd. But when the false colouring, which its enemies would give it, has been removed, it appears to be nothing more than this, *that every thing which God does is just what he always intended to do ;* or, in other words, *that there is an exact agreement between his purposes and his providence.* Such a sentiment is so far from being absurd and irreconcilable with just views of God’s attributes, that it cannot be denied, without supposing that God changes his designs, or that he cannot fulfil them, or that there are some things which he does, not according to any plan, but from the mere impulse of the moment ; all which ideas are utterly inconsistent with the belief of his infinite perfection.

That the doctrine of predestination amounts simply to what has now been stated,—the exact correspondence of God’s works with his counsels,—it will not be difficult to make out. Predestinarians maintain, that God has chosen a

* See Confession of Faith of the Church of Scotland, Ch. iii.—and the 39 Articles, Art. 17.

certain number of our depraved race, on whom he will infallibly confer his salvation ; while the rest of mankind are left to meet the just punishment of their crimes. Now, is not this what we see taking place in the course of Providence ? We do not perceive all men walking in the way of salvation, but many choosing “ the broad way that leadeth to destruction.” But if some only are actually saved by God, is it a heresy to think that these are the only persons whom he intended to save ? And if some are actually lost, is it wrong to suppose that God intended to permit them to be lost ?—It has been proved in the two foregoing Letters, that, as all men are depraved, they have no right to salvation ; and that, owing to their prevailing inclination to sin, they will never come unto God and unto holiness, and of course will never come unto salvation, till the Spirit of God, by his enlightening and sanctifying grace, change their dispositions. Whoever is saved, then, is saved by God himself, according to his sovereign will ; and is it an erroneous notion, to assert that God has purposed to perform this act of sovereign grace ?—If you should allege, that these points have not been fully established ; if you should even wholly deny the work of the Spirit ; you cannot even then get rid of this doctrine ; for you must still allow, that all who are saved, are saved through the arrangements of a sovereign Providence, and

that all who are lost, are lost by the permission of that Providence.—That it is God who gives the means of salvation, you cannot deny ; and as you allow, that he is perfect in wisdom and knowledge, and in his foresight and appointments (p. 14, 24, 65); it follows, that in every instance where he bestowed the means of salvation, he must have known what effect they would produce. But does not his granting the means of salvation, to those to whom he foresaw they would prove effectual, clearly imply an intention to save them in particular ? Not only the means, but all the opportunities or occasions of salvation, proceed from God ; and the result of such opportunities or occasions must, in every instance, be foreseen by the Omniscient. And does not his giving such opportunities and occasions to some in particular, when he foresaw that they would issue in their salvation, fully indicate a special design of mercy towards such individuals ?—These remarks may be illustrated by a few examples.—Some are brought unto God in their youth, by means of a religious education. Is it not owing to a sovereign Providence, that this invaluable privilege has been conferred on them, while it is denied to multitudes ? Others are reclaimed in advanced years, after a long course of iniquity. Was it not the hand of sovereign Mercy that spared them, and gave them space for repentance ; when they

might have been cut off, like thousands around them, in the midst of their crimes?—One man is converted by a sermon. Was it not by the arrangements of Providence that this sermon was preached, at such a time, and on such a subject, and that this individual was permitted to hear it, instead of being confined to a bed of sickness, or otherwise excluded from this opportunity? Another is brought unto God by some religious book. Did not Providence ordain that such a book should exist, that it should come into his hands, and that he should have ability and leisure to read it?—Here, a thoughtless profligate is awakened to flee from the wrath to come, by the loss of a dear relation. There, a guilty wretch is arrested in his impious career by personal affliction, which brings him to repentance and salvation. From whom proceeded the bereavement of the one, and the sickness of the other, but from “Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will?”—In all these instances, the event might have been ordered otherwise, and the opportunity or occasion of the salvation of such individuals consequently taken away, in a perfect consistency with all his attributes; and no reason can be assigned for its not being ordered otherwise, but his own sovereign pleasure. And who does not see, that since all the means, opportunities, and occasions of salvation, are distributed and ar-

franged by the sovereign will of God, who gives or withholds them as he pleases; and since he cannot in any instance be ignorant of what will be the result of his giving or withholding them; it necessarily follows that the result itself is determined by his sovereign will,—and therefore, that all who are saved, are saved by an act of divine sovereignty? Hence it is obvious, that the doctrine of *election* rests on the firmest basis, being nothing but a belief that God hath purposed to do, what we find him actually doing.

On the other hand you cannot deny, that all who are lost, are lost by his permission. Did ever a sinner perish, whose perdition could not have been prevented by God, if he had so purposed? Take for example the case of Judas. Could not God have saved that traitor, as easily as Saul of Tarsus, the bloody persecutor? Or might he not have determined that no such person as Judas should be brought into existence? But God resolved to permit the crime of Judas, and his consequent perdition, for accomplishing his own wise and glorious ends. To this agree the following remarks in your *Popular Evidences* (p. 453); “ Judas seems to have been selected as a fit instrument to bring to pass the pre-determinate counsel of Providence. Wicked men are employed by Heaven as agents for some useful ends. They bring about those schemes, which it would be improper for the righteous to

execute.”—If so; then the wickedness, and of course the punishment of sinners, must have been included in “the pre-determinate counsels” of God, as things which he intended to permit, for the accomplishment of other purposes. And what is this but the doctrine of *reprobation*, which is often painted in the most frightful forms; but which is nothing more than this, that God, for wise ends, has intended to permit some of mankind to ruin themselves by their own sins? You acknowledge in your Statement (p. 68), that it would be absurd to suppose that any of God’s counsels can be frustrated: “Will his aims be traversed, or any of his creatures break through his appointments?” How then can it be supposed that any crime is committed, which God intended to prevent? Or that any sinner is lost, whose salvation God had resolved to accomplish? He who could annihilate the universe in an instant, cannot be at a loss to execute his purposes, or to prevent any thing from occurring, which would frustrate his plans. He who is the omniscient Creator, could easily have provided, that none should receive existence, but such as he foresaw would be the heirs of salvation. He “declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”* It follows, as an

* *Jsa.*, xlvi. 10.

obvious inference, that there are none who ruin themselves by iniquity, but those whose sin and punishment God intended to permit :—And consequently, it appears, that the doctrine of predestination, as it respects those who perish, as well as those who are saved, is simply the belief of an exact correspondence between God's purposes and his providence.

As it is impossible to avoid this conclusion, so long as the doctrines of the divine omniscience and a particular providence are maintained ; some modern writers have adopted the desperate resolution of rejecting these doctrines, rather than submit to such humbling truths. They allege that the voluntary acts of moral agents are contingent events, which God could not foresee and regulate. Such an opinion is utterly repugnant to the notion of God's being the Supreme Ruler of the universe, the infinitely perfect Jehovah. The prophecies of scripture clearly prove, that such ideas of God are wholly inadmissible ; for there we find him foretelling, in a multitude of instances, both the voluntary acts of men and the secret purposes of their hearts.* It might with as much propriety be thought, that God is ignorant of the present acts of our will, as that he is unacquainted with our future volitions ; for all things, past, present, and future, must be equally before his infinite

* See Edwards on the Will, Part ii. Sect. 11, 12.

mind. The principles upon which this strange opinion is built, are equally contrary to reason and to scripture. Hence they are rejected by writers of the first rank, as highly unphilosophical. "Though we have no conception," says Dr. Reid, "how the future free actions of men may be known by the Deity, this is not a sufficient reason to conclude that they cannot be known. Do we know, or can we conceive, how God knows the secrets of men's hearts? Can we conceive how God made this world, without any pre-existent matter? All the ancient philosophers believed this to be impossible:—and for what reason but this, that they could not conceive how it could be done? Can we give any better reason for believing, that the actions of men cannot be certainly foreseen?"*—The same great philosopher points out the inconsistency of holding the doctrine of contingence along with that of the divine prescience: "That all the actions of a particular man should be distinctly foreseen, and at the same time, that that man should never be brought into existence, seems to me to be a contradiction:—and the same contradiction there is, in supposing any action to be distinctly foreseen, and yet prevented: For if it be foreseen, it shall happen: and if it be prevented, it shall not happen, and therefore could not be foreseen."†—It is most incon-

* Reid's *Essays on the Active Powers*, Essay iv. Ch. x. † *Ibid.*, Essay iv. Ch. xi.

gruous to say, that events are *contingent* or *uncertain*, when they are *certainly foreknown*. If God foresees them, they cannot be contingent to him, whatever they may be to us ; for they must necessarily occur exactly as he has foreseen them. His foreknowledge of all things implies, therefore, that all things are *fixed* in his eternal mind, as unalterably as they could be by the firmest decree. But, is not the doctrine of predestination necessarily involved in this doctrine of God's prescience ? For observe ; this is not the prescience of one who is a mere spectator of the affairs of this world, but of Him who is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, who gives being to all creatures, and arranges the whole course of events. Now, what did he foresee ?—The creatures which he himself would make, with all their actions, and the whole scheme of his providence respecting them ; and this providence, as you have well observed (p. 65), “ embraces every particular of the whole creation.” He foresaw all things which he would bring into being, all things which he would permit to exist, and all his proceedings respecting them : and of course, he foresaw all sinners, all their sins, with all the misery which their sins would produce. But this foreknowledge implies a previous act of the divine mind, viz, his determination to give being to those creatures whose existence he foresaw, to permit those sins

which he perceived would be committed, and to inflict that misery which was foreseen to be the consequence of them. For, although the sins which he foresaw, do not proceed from him, but wholly from sinners; yet these sinners are his creatures, and could not exist for a moment without him; and hence, his resolution to bring them into being and support them in being, while he foresaw all their sins and all the consequences of these sins, implies an intention to permit these sins with all their consequences. It follows, that the eternal state of all who are lost, was fixed in the mind of God, before they were brought into being;—fixed, not only by his certain foreknowledge of it, but by his voluntary determination to permit them to be guilty of those sins by which they are ruined. I need not stop to prove, that the eternal state of all who are saved, must have been equally fixed in the counsels of the Omniscient.—We are sure that nothing can occur to thwart his purposes, and that all those things which do not proceed from his own agency, take place by his voluntary permission; for the whole chain of causes and effects, actions and events, must have been in the beginning before his all-seeing eye, and subject to his control; and we cannot suppose that he would bring into existence, or permit to exist, any thing which he had not purposed to make conducive to his glory.

Upon the whole, the doctrine of predestination necessarily results from the doctrines of God's providence and his omniscience ; so that there is scarcely an objection that can be brought against the former, which will not equally militate against the latter. If the difficulties belonging to the one can be solved, so also may those which appear in the other. Tell me why sin has entered the world, and still abides in it ; and I will tell you, why God intended to permit its entrance, and its continuance. Inform me why so many of mankind are permitted to ruin themselves by their sins ; and I will explain to you why God designed to leave them to choose the road to perdition. Give me a reason why the Lord has provided salvation for fallen men, and not for fallen angels ; and has sent his gospel to Britain, and not to Japan ; and then I will assign the cause, why he has chosen to give eternal life unto some of mankind, and not unto others.—But the subject will be further elucidated, by attending more particularly to some of the objections which you and others have started against this doctrine.

Do you allege, that “ it is impossible to reconcile this doctrine with the justice of God ? ”—The same objection may be made against his providence ; for surely there cannot be more injustice in intending to do an action, than in actually doing it. But where is there any ground

for such a reflection, either in regard to the divine purposes, or the execution of them; since it has been shewn, in Letter iv, that no man is intitled to salvation, nor even to the means of obtaining it; and since it appears, that those who are lost, are not lost by the effect of an arbitrary decree, but by their own sins voluntarily committed? God's intention to permit the wickedness of men, cannot be *the cause* of that wickedness, any more than his actually permitting it. Were this the case, it would be impossible that sin or punishment could exist. But since the sins of men are wholly of themselves, and not of God, it is a righteous thing with God to punish their iniquities, and of course he must be righteous in intending to punish them. And where all are guilty, may not the punishment of some be remitted, without doing the smallest injustice to the rest? A short time ago, several unhappy men, who had enlisted in the service of our enemy, were tried by the laws of their country, found guilty of high treason, and sentenced to death. To all of them, except two, the royal clemency was extended; but was this an act of injustice to the two who suffered the sentence of the law? Shall we then dare to censure the great Jehovah for similar acts of distinguishing mercy? "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, 'Why hast thou made

me thus ?' Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour ? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction ;" —fitted to it by their own sins—"and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory ; even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles ?" *— If you cannot censure the sovereign ways of God in calling these "vessels of mercy," while he passes by "the vessels of wrath;" how can you find fault with his sovereign purposes ? Shall sovereign grace be admitted in the conduct of his providence, and yet be excluded from the counsels of his wisdom ? But, that multitudes have been actually saved by free and sovereign grace, can be questioned by none who allow the evidence of scripture facts.—Examine the case of the christians at Corinth. Before the gospel reached them, they were living in sins which, as Paul expressly asserts, must have excluded them from the kingdom of God. Might not God have denied them the gospel of salvation, as he did for a time to Asia and Bithynia ? Yes : but sovereign mercy had resolved to effect their redemption ; God had "much people in

* Rom. ix. 20., 24.

that city," whom he intended to save ; and therefore he sent them his gospel " in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," and they were washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."*—Remember the abominable Manasseh. Justice demanded the destruction of that infamous prince. The innocent blood which he had shed was crying aloud for vengeance. But sovereign mercy spares him, and sends him affliction, to be the minister of repentance and salvation.†—Consider the case of Zaccheus. Justly might that wicked publican have been left to perish in his sins. But, behold the methods of free grace! Jesus comes near his residence, takes notice of him while he is gratifying his curiosity, and brings salvation to his house.‡—Look at the Philippian Jailor. See the guilty wretch standing on the brink of perdition, with his drawn sword in his hand, which he is ready to plunge into his own bowels. Just as he is going to leap into the pit of woe, sovereign mercy interposes, and he is " plucked as a brand out of the fire."§—View the case of Paul himself. The bloody persecutor is hastening to Damascus; " breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord;" eager to begin his work of violence and cruelty. Suddenly

* 1 Cor. vi. 9..11. ii. 4. Acts xvi. 6, 7. xviii. 1, 9, 10. † 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11..13.

‡ Luke xix. 1..10. § Acts xvi. 27..31, Zech. iii. 2.

a light darts upon him from heaven. Is it avenging lightning to consume the blasphemer?—No: it is a beam of mercy shed on his guilty soul.*—This last instance I am the more disposed to notice, as you yourself have acknowledged it: “Paul was converted suddenly, but his conversion was brought about by a light, and a power irresistible.” (p. 105.) Here then is one sinner saved by sovereign grace. But might not the same “irresistible power” have effected the conversion of Herod and Pilate, of Judas and Caiaphas, if God had so determined? Nay, could not the same almighty power have saved all the sinners that have ever lived, had God thought fit to exert it?—Who does not see, that from this instance, and indeed from all these instances, we obtain indubitable proofs of the doctrine of predestination?

There are some observations in your *Popular Evidences* (p. 398..402), concerning God’s procedure towards the unbelieving Jews, which obviously lead to the same conclusion: “That awful punishment (the destruction of Jerusalem), and the history of the Jews ever since that period, bear strong marks of the hand of Providence visiting them for their sins of rejecting and crucifying this illustrious messenger.”—“Providence has deeply stamped its disapprobation of the horrid deed, by following up their pos-

* Acts ix. 1..6, 15.

terity with a most visible and durable punishment. This punishment bears a strong testimony to the truth of the gospel ; and the day of their deliverance, of their conversion and restoration, may, we trust, prove a full confirmation of the truth of the doctrines and character of our ever-blessed Lord. Their sufferings were predicted by our Lord, and these have been fully accomplished : their restoration also has been foretold by him ; and this, we hope, in the fulness of time, will, with equal truth and faithfulness, be fulfilled.”— Here I may notice by the by, that, with such sentiments, you cannot consistently object to the doctrine of man’s hereditary depravity. But what I would chiefly remark is, that since our Lord has foretold the conversion and restoration of the Jews, and will fulfil this prediction in its appointed season, the fulfilment of it must be an act of sovereign grace. For, what can prevent God from fulfilling it now, if this were agreeable to his purposes ? You will not say, that the present race of Jews are more concerned in the guilt of their ancestors, than their posterity will be in another generation ; or that there is any thing in the constitution of Jewish minds, to hinder their conversion now, which will not exist at a future period. What then will effect their conversion ?—An alteration in the state of the world ?—The state of the world is under God’s control, and he can change it when he pleases.

—Superior light, and clearer evidences of the truth of the gospel?—The Father of lights could make such communications even now.—Some affecting events which will occur to them?—The God of providence could bring about these events at the present time.—Or will the real cause be some “power irresistible,” as in the case of Paul; or a copious effusion of the Spirit, like that which was received on the day of Pentecost?—Then the point is conceded; and the whole is ascribed, as it must necessarily be, to free and sovereign grace.

All the arguments employed in Letter iv, to shew that no man is intitled to the means of salvation, equally prove that none have any claim to salvation itself; and of course, that there is no injustice done to those who are left to perish in their sins. I would again call your attention to the proof afforded by the unequal distribution of the means of salvation. You will grant, that it is owing to God’s sovereign will, that the gospel is sent to some nations, and not to all. Now, whatever your views of the efficacy of the light of nature may be, you surely cannot think that it brings as many to salvation as the gospel. You have stated (p. v.), that the great aim of christianity is “to bring in and support universal righteousness:” and with what propriety can this be said, if it does not add one individual more to the number of the righteous? But, if

one individual more is saved by the gospel, than would have been saved by the light of nature alone ; that individual is saved by the sovereignty of God, according to which the gospel is distributed ; and might have been left to perish, in a perfect consistency with his justice. And if God by an act of sovereignty may leave one sinner to perish, why not more,—why not all sinners ?

From all these considerations, I trust, it will be obvious, that all objections to this doctrine on the ground of its being inconsistent with the justice of God, must be dismissed ; because they either arise from a misconception of the doctrine, or they militate as much against the doctrines of God's omniscience and his providence ; to deny which, would be bordering on atheism.—The same remarks will apply to the very common assertion, that this doctrine exhibits God as partial, and a respecter of persons :—an assertion which, after what has been said, it is scarcely necessary to name.—I proceed therefore to take notice of some other objections.

Is it alleged, that this doctrine represents God as acting a cruel and tyrannical part, making men to damn them, appointing them to eternal misery before he brings them into being ?—I answer ; if this objection has any force, it must operate as strongly against the two doctrines above-mentioned as against this : for if God is omniscient, he could not but foresee the perdi-

tion of every sinner who is lost, before that sinner was brought into existence ; and if he is the God of providence, all who perish, perish by his voluntary permission. For instance, in the case of Judas, you acknowledge that his sin, and consequently his perdition, came within the wise plans of Jehovah, and it must be granted that the Omniscient foresaw his sin and ruin, before he formed him ; yet will any one dare to say that God made Judas to damn him ?—But there is not the least room for such an objection ; for it evidently rests on mistaken notions of the doctrine in question. It proceeds on the supposition that the purpose of God to permit the sin and ruin of those who are lost, is the proper cause of their sin and ruin, and has a positive influence in producing them. But this is a gross mistake. The mere *permission* of sin cannot imply any positive agency in the producing of it ; and how then can such agency be implied in the *intention* to permit it ? And, as God's purpose to permit sin is not the true cause of sin, neither is his determination to leave any to perish in their sins the proper cause of their perdition ; for, as sin originates in the sinner himself, so his own guilt is the true cause of his ruin. All who perish, perish for their own iniquities, and not through the effect of an arbitrary decree.—The objection also proceeds on the false assumption, that God's intention to permit the perdition of sinners im-

plies that he takes pleasure in their perdition : but this can no more be implied in the intention of permitting it, than in the permission itself : in the same manner as his intending to permit sin, cannot prove that he delights in sin, any more than his actually permitting it. The truth is, he has no pleasure either in sin, or in the death of a sinner ; yet he permits, and of course intended to permit, both the one and the other, for ends worthy of himself ; though some of these ends may be such as our weak understandings are wholly incompetent to unfold.

Again, is it urged, that this doctrine is contrary to such texts as declare that “God will have all men to be saved,” and that he is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance ?”—To this also I reply, that these texts are as easily reconciled with predestination, as with providence ; and they are not contrary to the one, unless they are also contrary to the other. If you understand these passages to mean, that God freely offers his salvation to all men ; that he gives sinners every encouragement to receive it ; that there is no obstacle to prevent them from obtaining it but the perverseness of their own wills, with the self-acquired blindness of their minds ; that he is willing to receive them if they were willing to return to him ; and that consequently all gospel-hearers who perish, perish through their own

voluntary unbelief :—all these sentiments are perfectly reconcilable with predestination, and are almost universally adopted by predestinarians. But if you suppose these texts to signify, that God intends actually to bestow his salvation on all men, or even to give all men the means of salvation ; how can you reconcile them with his providence, when you find that, in fact, such intentions are very far from being fulfilled ? It is absurd to allege that the Sovereign of the universe forms any plans which he cannot execute, or has any designs to which he is unable to give effect. If he had intended to bring all men to salvation, all men must infallibly have been saved : for, to use your own words (p. 68), “Will his aims be traversed, or any of his creatures break through his appointments ?”—As a further answer to this objection, I quote the following observations of a most respectable divine. “The Lord certainly taketh no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. These are the true and faithful and gracious sayings of God, and ought to be believed, without doubting, in their true and important sense. But we are not to believe them in a sense which was never meant. They cannot mean, that God ever intended to save all whom it was possible for him to save by the exceeding greatness of his power : for then they would im-

ply that God has brought himself under an obligation by such gracious words, to save all mankind, if not all devils also, without exception. Was it not as easy to save Judas as Peter, if it had been God's good pleasure to save him? Could he not have rescued Caiaphas from destruction as easily as Saul of Tarsus? It is true, Caiaphas appears to have been a much greater sinner: But cannot God pardon the greatest sins? Or if the sins of Caiaphas had been such as it would have been inconsistent with the arrangements of divine wisdom to pardon, he could have prevented them from being ever committed."—"Who will set such limits to the power of the Holy One of Israel, as to allege that it is not in his power to convert a single sinner more, or to convert all who are yet unconverted, without infringing that liberty, which has not been violated in any instance of those conversions that were actually accomplished in the world?"*

If it be asked, How is it consistent with God's sincerity to invite all men to believe, and accept salvation, when he intends to give salvation only to some?—It is answered, that the same objection may be brought against the doctrine of God's prescience: For it may with equal propriety be asked, How can God be sincere in

* Sermon preached before the EDINBURGH Missionary Society by DR. GEO. LAWSON, p. 26..28.

inviting all to receive salvation, when he certainly foreknows that he will only give it to some?—But the difficulty, in either case, is only imaginary; as it proceeds upon the false hypothesis, that God's purpose, or his prescience, interferes with our duty. Nothing, however, can be further from the truth. His designs and his foreknowledge are not the rule of our duty; they do not hinder us from performing it, nor impede our freedom of action. Whatever God may have purposed or foreseen, faith is always our duty, unbelief our sin: and his withholding, or *intending* to withhold, his efficacious grace, is no more the cause of our unbelief, than the sun is the cause of darkness. In requiring men to believe, God is only calling them to what is their duty; and he is perfectly sincere in the general offer of salvation accompanying this call, because he is ready to bestow this salvation on every one who accepts the offer, and there is nothing that prevents any one from complying with the call and receiving the offer, but his own obstinacy.—It is to no purpose to reply, “But why does God call men to believe, when he does not intend to give them grace to comply with the call?” Such a cavil must rest on the absurd supposition, that God is bound to *dispose* us to obey every command which he issues. Already we have physical power to obey him; *inclination* is the only thing wanting; and

it is the want of this which constitutes sin. We are able, if we were willing. Now, what would be the consequence of maintaining, that the Lord is under obligations to give us not only the *power* but the *will* to obey his commands, and comply with his calls? It would lead to this dreadful conclusion, that no such thing as sin exists, or that God is the author of every sin that is committed. For, if the unbeliever may say, "I am not bound to believe, till God dispose me to believe;" the thief may with as much propriety say, "I am not bound to be honest, till God incline me to honesty;" the drunkard may say, "I am not obliged to be sober, till God cure my love of drunkenness;" and the murderer may say, "I did no harm in slaying my neighbour, for God did not check my inclination to kill him!" Surely it is needless to discuss a principle so pregnant with blasphemy.—The case of Pharaoh is sufficient to prove the futility of such objections. When Moses was sent to that proud prince to command him, in God's name, to release the Israelites, the Lord expressly told his servant, that Pharaoh would not obey, till many dreadful plagues were inflicted upon Egypt to compel him; nay, that he himself would harden his heart, that is, he would leave him to his own obduracy, and not exert that powerful influence on his mind, which could easily have insured obedience to the command

when it was first delivered. Yet who will dare to say, that Jehovah acted insincerely with the Egyptian king? God had a right to give the command, it was Pharaoh's duty to obey, and nothing but his own obstinacy kept him from complying.

Do you also allege, that predestination "destroys every principle of religion, and must scatter gloom and melancholy over all who believe it; none of whom can either adore or love their Maker."—I still reply, that the very same thing may, with equal propriety, be urged against the doctrines of the divine omniscience and providence. There is nothing fixed by God's purposes, which is not as unalterably fixed by his foreknowledge; nothing ordained in his decrees, which is not fulfilled in his providence.—But how can melancholy or irreligion arise from any, or from all of these doctrines? The principles which result from the denial of them, are much more likely to have this pernicious effect. Which system is most favourable to sentiments of humble piety and holy joy? That which considers God as ignorant and weak, unable to foresee or prevent the evils which may occur? Or that which describes him as the omniscient and supreme Ruler, who sees at one glance the past, the present, and the future; and who arranges and controls the whole system of the universe?—That which

supposes him to work without a plan, and to leave the most important affairs to be decided by chance or contingency? Or that which views him as ordering all things in infinite wisdom, and comprehending in his plans the whole series of causes and effects, actions and events?—That which represents him as meeting with innumerable disappointments,—his purposes thwarted, his hopes blasted, his best schemes frustrated, through the caprice or perverseness of his creatures? Or that which exhibits him as fulfilling all his unerring counsels, attaining all his ends, and permitting nothing to take place which will not be subservient to his glory?—That which informs us, that he takes no part in the salvation of our souls, but leaves it to ourselves or to accident? Or that which, while it excludes none from the offers of grace and the hopes of immortality, holds out the cheering prospect of that divine aid, which, it tells us, will infallibly accomplish the redemption of millions?—It is indeed a melancholy consideration, that multitudes of the human race perish in their sins: but this doctrine does not at all increase their number. The question is not whether those who are saved are many or few; but whether they are saved according to God's special purpose or not. Whatever opinion is held on the subject, the number of those who are lost will be the very same. Were we bet-

ter acquainted with the works and ways of the Lord, we might be able to see more clearly how he is glorified in the punishment of so many sinners. Who can say, that the fate of our rebellious race may not be conducive to the holiness and felicity of the inhabitants of thousands of worlds, which have not apostatized from God? At any rate, we may rest assured, that in the great and final day it will be manifest to an assembled universe, that not one sinner has been permitted to perish, but for some ends worthy of Him who is infinite in wisdom, holiness, and goodness.

You have yet another objection to predestination, and it seems in your eyes to be the strongest of all;—you fancy that it leads to indolence and vice, “To what purpose is Christ preached to such men; for their everlasting fate is determined? Why urge diligence; for diligence and industry are of no avail? Promises, threatenings, instructions, praying, preaching, and every other religious and moral duty are unnecessary. We must cease every duty, and every hope, and wait in gloomy silence the irrevocable decree of heaven.” (p. 41, 42)—To this objection, as to those formerly noticed, I reply, that it strikes as much at the divine prescience, as at predestination: for our eternal state is rendered as certain by God’s foreknowledge, as by his purpose.—But your reasonings,

however formidable you may think them, cannot shake either the one or the other. They betray a culpable ignorance of the point in dispute. Calvinists never maintain, that God appoints his elect to eternal life, without appointing the means which are required to its attainment; but, that their diligence and watchfulness, their prayers and their attendance on ordinances, their faith and love, their piety and benevolence, are as much fixed as their final salvation. The means are as necessary as the end; and as they are united in God's purpose, they cannot be separated in his providence. This doctrine, then, is so far from superseding our diligence and activity in seeking salvation, that it absolutely requires them; and unless we seriously improve the means which lead to eternal life, we cannot hope to attain it. If a man say, "There is no need of diligence, for if I am elected, I shall be saved without using exertion;" his reasoning is most absurd, for it supposes that God has resolved to save men without means: he might as well talk of living without breath, or walking without feet. If a man persevere in neglecting the means of salvation, he will then make it evident that he has not been elected.—On the other hand, if a person say, "If I have not been elected, I cannot be saved at all; and therefore all my efforts are useless;" he also is arguing most preposterously: for he ought to consider, that sal-

vation has commonly been obtained in the use of appointed means ; that those means are conducive to that end ; that God has promised to bless them for that purpose ; that the offers of divine mercy are full and free ; that Jesus has expressly said, “ Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out ;” that he has no right to presume that he is not elected, but rather the contrary ; and that the very hope that he may be of that chosen number should be a sufficient inducement to him “ to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure.”—These considerations afford the strongest encouragement to all who are seriously inquiring after salvation ; and the thoughts of this doctrine, when accurately viewed, will tend rather to stimulate than relax their exertions.

To ascertain the tendency of this doctrine, in regard to spiritual things, let us take a view of its effect, as to temporal affairs. You grant that these are regulated by the sovereign will of God ; that the man of business cannot be sure of attaining his object by his own efforts, for “ a man’s success in life cannot be calculated from his industry and diligence ” (p. 60) ; and that the husbandman, when he has plowed and sown, “ must look up to the Governor of the seasons for his blessing ” (p. 53). In every instance then, it must be fixed in the mind of God, whether he will give or withhold this blessing, which is necessary to crown men’s labours with success.

But does this consideration tend to unnerve human industry, and produce inactivity and gloom? Does the man of business relax his diligence, because he does not know whether God intends to give him wealth or not? Does the farmer neglect to cultivate his fields, because he cannot tell but that God may have determined to give him no harvest? Does the one say, "If God intends to make me rich, I shall be rich, whether I be industrious or not?" Or does the other say, "If God has purposed to cover my fields with a rich crop, I shall receive it, whether I sow them or not?" Surely then it is most unreasonable to argue, that because, in spiritual things also, we can only "plant and water, and God alone giveth the increase;" our own industry must be wholly superseded: especially as, in both cases, the means are adapted to the end, and usually lead to it; in both, there are promises to encourage the diligent; and in both, the result must, in all instances, be fixed in the mind of the Omniscient, previous to our employing the means. Were mankind as eager in seeking spiritual blessings, as they are in the pursuit of temporal enjoyments, the doctrine of predestination could never be urged as a plea for indolence.

But there are facts which furnish more direct evidence concerning the tendency of such sentiments.—It is well known, that the doctrine of

fate, which formed a conspicuous part of the system of the ancient Stoics, greatly resembles predestination ;* yet it cannot be denied, that no sect could boast of so great a number of men who are celebrated for justice, fortitude, temperance, and other virtues ; while none were more dissolute and worthless than the Epicureans, who held the doctrine of *contingence*.

* The Stoics have been frequently charged with believing in BLIND FATE: but, whatever might be the opinions of some, the most judicious philosophers of that sect were clear from this charge ; for by FATE they understood THE ETERNAL AND WISE PURPOSES OF GOD. Thus Seneca observes, that “ the Creator and Ruler of the universe follows the fates which he himself has appointed ; and always obeys, what he has once ordained.” Ille ipse omnium conditor ac rector scripsit quædam fata, sed sequitur : semper parat, semel iussit.--De Prov. c. v. The same philosopher remarks in another place, that “ God himself may be justly termed fate ; for, as fate is nothing else but the complex series of causes, he is the first cause, on whom all the rest depend.” Hunc eundem et fatum si dixeris, non mentieris : nam cum fatum nihil aliud sit, quam series implexa causarum, ille est prima omnium causa, ex qua ceteræ pendent.--De Benef. Lib. iv. c. 7. Again, he asserts, that “ outward objects do not force the gods, but their own eternal will is a law to them :” and he goes on to observe that their eternal purposes are immutable, because they can never have any cause to repent of their first designs. Non externa cogunt deos, sed sua illis in legem æterna voluntas est : statuerunt, quæ non mutarent. &c. Ibid. Lib. vi. c. 23.

It is worthy of remark, that the very objection here noticed was opposed in ancient times to the doctrine of fate, and we find it satisfactorily answered in the following passage in Cicero’s Book concerning Fate : “ If the decree is, ‘ Ædipus shall be born to Laius ;’ it cannot be said, ‘ Then this will happen, whether Laius shall have been with a woman or not ;’ for the one must be decreed with the other. And if it should be said, ‘ Milo shall wrestle at the Olympic Games ;’ and one should reply, ‘ then he will wrestle, whether he shall have an antagonist or not ;’ he would be mistaken ; for the very term WRESTLE implies that there must be an antagonist. All cavils of that sort, then, are refuted in the same way : Thus the objection, ‘ If it is your fate to recover of this disease, you will recover, whether you apply to the physician or not,’ is frivolous ; for your applying to the physician is as much the object

But there is no need to appeal unto antiquity, in proof of the salutary influence of such principles. Look at the conduct of predestinarians in the christian world at this day. Are they more licentious, or more slothful than others? Are they less diligent in the observance of divine ordinances, or in the practice of moral duties? If candour speak, it will own, that they are “not a whit behind the very chiefest” of their christian brethren, who are of other sentiments. The fact, that Calvinists in general are by no means the most wicked, or the most unhappy of mankind, seems to present an insurmountable difficulty in your way. This difficulty, however, you have got over, by *claritably* concluding, that they are all hypocrites: “If there be any who honestly and unfeignedly believe in such doctrines, they must be the most miserable of men.” (p. 42.) So, it seems, if they are not the most pitiable wretches on earth, they are base hypocrites, who profess a doctrine which they do not believe: and yet, strange to tell!

of fate as your recovery.” Si ita fatum sit, Nascetur Œdipus Laio: non poterit dici, Sive fuerit Laïus cum muliere, sive non fuerit; copulata enim res est, et CONFATALIS; sic enim appellat: quia ita fatum sit, et concubitorium cum uxore Laïum, et ex ea Œdipum procreaturum. Uti esset dictum, Luctabitur Olympiis Milo; et referret aliquis: Ergo, sive habuerit adversarium, sive non habuerit, luctabitur; erraret; est enim copulatum, LUCTABITUR, quia sine adversario nulla luctatio est. Omnes igitur istius generis captiones eodem modo refelluntur: Sive tu adhibueris medicum, sive non adhibueris, convalesces: captiosum: tam enim est fatale medicum adhibere, quam convalescere.—De Fato, c. 13.

these opinions are “cherished by men of great worth.” (p. 41.) But what follows is still more extraordinary; for in the very next sentence, you assert, that these *most miserable men*, who believe in this doctrine, enjoy a great deal of self-complacency: “Only such people take care to work themselves by some principles or other into the number of the elect; and then, with a savage satisfaction, surrender the bulk of mankind to eternal misery.”

There is no passage in your Statement, that deserves more severe reprehension, than the sentence now quoted. It contains sentiments as *il-liberal*—I might almost say as *malicious*—as any reflections on Calvinists that I ever met with.

First. It is intimated, that all who believe this doctrine consider themselves as elected; and it is insinuated, that they are disposed to restrict the elect to their own denomination. But neither this assertion, nor the vile insinuation that accompanies it, is founded in truth. Predestinarians indeed believe, that all may hope that they are elected, as they can have no evidence to the contrary; and that it is the duty of all to “give diligence to make their calling and election sure:” but they never teach that all the children of God have this assurance; much less, that it is enjoyed by all who believe in predestination. Thousands who assent to the doctrine, have nothing more than a hope that they may be

found in the number of the elect.—Equally unfounded is the idea, that Calvinists confine the elect to their own party. “All they that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity” are his elect, by whatever name they may be distinguished. Multitudes, no doubt, are among the elect of God, who are far from having accurate views of the doctrine of election.

Secondly. It is here alleged, that predestinarians flatter themselves into the belief of their own election, by enthusiasm or self-deception: “They work themselves by some principles or other into the number of the elect.” In these words, it is more than insinuated, that “such people” are self-deceivers, who “work themselves” into the notion that they are saints, while they are only deluding themselves, and imposing upon others. Wretched indeed is the character of professed Calvinists, in your estimation: for, not only are those of them who disbelieve their principles hypocrites, but even the rest of them are self-deceivers and impostors:—and yet these are *men of great worth!*—What right have you, Sir, to attempt to fix such a stigma on a body of men, whose general character will bear a comparison with that of any other professed christians in the world? What are the principles upon which they try to ascertain their election?—The very same by which other christians inquire into their spiritual state:

—the very same by which Peter exhorts us to *make our election sure* : “ And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; and to patience godliness ; and to godliness brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness charity : For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure : for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. ”*—Such are the principles upon which predestinarians endeavour to obtain an assurance of their election. They never pretend to be able to look into the book of life, to see if their names are written there : but maintain, that the only way in which our election can be known, is by gracious dispositions and a holy life. If any who profess this doctrine, “ work themselves into the number of the elect ” upon any other principles ; it would be extremely unfair to impute their hypocrisy to the doctrine itself : especially as such self-deceivers are at least as numerous among those who reject it. Yes ; there are people, who “ work themselves into the number ” of the lovers of God ; while they are bitter enemies to his holiness : who “ work them-

* 2 Peter i. 5..10.

selves into the number ” of the patrons of morality ; while true virtue is a stranger to their hearts : who “ work themselves into the number ” of the benevolent ; while their pretended benevolence, if duly analyzed, will be found to be a compound of selfishness and vanity.—But indeed, if Calvinists cherish the dispositions which you ascribe to them, they may justly be denounced as hypocrites : For,

Thirdly, You assert that having wrought themselves into the number of the elect, “ they then, with a savage satisfaction, surrender the bulk of mankind to eternal misery !!! ”—In reading this unfounded allegation I cannot but feel astonished at your effrontery. What ! Are predestinarians then nothing but a set of hard-hearted wretches who triumph in the destruction of mankind—savages who exult in the perdition of their fellow-men ? How, Sir, could you utter this shameful calumny ? Look through the christian world, and see if you can find any proofs to substantiate this invidious charge. Who are the most laborious ministers of Christ ; —most ready to exhaust their strength, and to encounter hardships and dangers, for the instruction and salvation of souls ? Who are they that use the most strenuous exertions, make the noblest sacrifices, and submit to the most painful privations, for diffusing the light of life throughout the dark places of the earth ? And

who are the most zealous and active in promoting every benevolent institution, in shewing compassion to the children of misery, in imparting instruction to the ignorant and relief to the needy, education to the young and comfort to the aged?—A large proportion of them are predestinarians. Yet these are the men whom you have dared to represent as barbarians, who feel a savage satisfaction in the perdition of mankind! Blush, Sir, at the thoughts of having vented so foul a calumny. God is their witness, their own hearts bear them witness, nay, the world will bear witness, that they are not the wretches whom you describe. No, they cherish benevolence upon the noblest principles: the love of Christ constrains them not only to promote his glory but the good of men; and in proportion as they feel the influence of their principles, their hearts will be tender, their goodness active. They can pity the unhappy state of mind even of those who, from prejudice or malice, asperse their characters; while they express an honest indignation at such illiberal abuse.

How you could call these savages *men of great worth*, I shall not stop to inquire. But before I dismiss this passage, I cannot forbear asking, Where is that boasted moderation, to which men of your principles are wont to put in an almost exclusive claim? In canvassing the opinions of infidels, indeed, sufficient modera-

tion is discovered : all is then mildness and candour, and brotherly kindness. But as soon as evangelical *heretics* come under review, charity and forbearance disappear, while illiberality and bigotry, calumny and abuse, nay even hatred and malice, come forward in their room. Such is the spirit of some pretended monopolizers of moderation, and patrons of moral virtue !

Before closing this Letter, it is necessary to advert to your remarks on what the scriptures teach us about predestination. “ In scripture,” you observe, “ there is certainly a reference to some kind of predestination ; but this predestination refers to temporal privileges. This is plain from the case, which is stated, in choosing Jacob, through whom the promises and blessings were to descend, and rejecting Esau. ” (p. 42.) Here you have given us a specimen of your vague manner of writing on theological subjects. You talk as if there were but *one case* of predestination noticed in scripture, and leave it to your readers to divine where and how it is mentioned. The passage which you allude to appears, “ from the case stated,” to be the 9th Chapter of Romans. Something more than your bare assertion was requisite to make it plain, that the case of Jacob and Esau there stated, relates only to an appointment to temporal privileges ; especially as you have not shewn, that “ the promises and blessings ” as-

signed to Jacob were wholly temporal. But, if that *case* were given up to you; what could you make of other *cases stated* in the same Chapter;—the case of Pharaoh; the case of “the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction;” and of “the vessels of mercy prepared unto glory, whom God hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles—called to be his people—to be the children of the living God—a remnant that shall be saved—who have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith?” There is not, in this last case at least, the most distant allusion to temporal blessings. And by what arts of perversion will you be able to bring over to your side the case of the believing remnant spoken of in the 11th Chapter (ver. 5..7): “Even so then at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.”—But it is not in this Epistle alone that the proofs of this doctrine are to be found. They occur in almost every page of the sacred volume. A few passages will suffice to shew, that the predestination of scripture, is not a predestination to outward privi-

leges only, but to spiritual and eternal blessings. The divine word informs us, that the elect of God were “ordained to eternal life;”*—“fore-known and predestinated, to be conformed to the image of his Son,—to be called, justified, and glorified;”† that God hath “blessed them with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus; according as he hath chosen them in him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace;” and that in Christ they “have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will:”‡ that “God hath from the beginning chosen them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:”§ and that “he hath saved them, and called them with an holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began.”§

Some, who are not so ignorant of the scriptures as to allege that they speak only of a predestination to temporal privileges, maintain that the election mentioned in such texts, is not an election of particular persons to salvation, but

* Acts xiii. 48. Titus i. 1, 2. † Rom. viii. 29, 30. ‡ Eph. i. 3, 6, 11, § 2 Thes. ii. 13. § 2 Tim. i. 9. See also 1 Thes. i. 4, 5, 7, 9,—1 Pet. i. 2,

a general election of all who should be found to possess the characters here described. But that such an idea cannot be admitted, is obvious, both from the repeated declarations, that election is not of works but of grace; and from the consideration, that in most of these texts the very things which constitute excellence of character are represented as included in the decree of election: for it would be absurd to say, that God chose believers for those very things which they receive as the fruits of his electing love. Besides, that it is an election not of characters, but of individuals, is evident from this, that particular persons are, in many instances, said to have their names written in heaven—recorded in the book of life; intimating, that God has appointed them to salvation individually, with as much precision as if their names were enrolled in a register.*

* Luke x. 20. Phil. iv. 3. Heb. xii. 23. Rev. xvii. 8.--xx. 15.--xxi. 27.--xiii. 8.--The date in this last quoted text seems to mark the time of the writing of the names in the Lamb's book, and not the time of the slaying of the Lamb himself, as it is usually considered. The parallel text, Ch. xvii. 8, warrants this interpretation. In both these texts, the expressions, in the original, exactly correspond; excepting that the Owner of the book, THE SLAIN LAMB, is named in the former and not in the latter: and it seems unnatural to refer the date in the one to the writing in the Book, and in the other to an epithet of the Owner's name. This verse should therefore be read: "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names were not written from the foundation of the world, in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain."--If this translation be found correct, this text will no longer countenance the strange assertion, "that believers have been justified from eternity;" which is said to be adopted by those who are called High Calvinists.

You have asserted (p. 43), that Christ “ has not a sentiment favourable to predestination, as it is generally understood.” What then did he mean, when he uttered these remarkable words ; “ I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth ; because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes : Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight ?”* Why did he call the disciples his sheep, whom the Father had given him, whom he himself had chosen out of the world, for whom in particular he laid down his life, for whom alone he interceded, and to whom he would infallibly secure eternal bliss.† And wherefore does he declare, that it is impossible to seduce the elect ?‡ It is manifest from these and other texts, that Christ himself, as well as his apostles, taught the doctrine which I have now been vindicating.

Upon the whole, I trust, it has been fully proved, that, however mysterious the doctrine of predestination may be, it is neither absurd nor unscriptural, neither gloomy nor pernicious ; but is supported by the dictates of reason, and by the oracles of God ; and ought to be received and maintained, as precious and salutary.

I am, &c.

It may be of use to inform the reader, that he will find the arguments for Predestination more fully handled in Cooper's Treatise on that doctrine, &c. &c. in Tucker's Letters on the same subject.

* Mat. xi. 25, 26

† John x. 15, 16, 26, 27 - Phil. i. 5, 6, 7, 11.

‡ Mat. xxiii. 34. Mark xiii. 22.

LETTER VII.

On the Deity and Atonement of Christ.

SIR,

THE subjects proposed to be discussed in this Letter are some of those mysterious points which you have “studiously avoided:” but, though you have not directly attacked them, it would be improper for me to say nothing in their defence; for they are necessarily connected with other doctrines which remain to be vindicated, and you have shewn your hostility to them, not only by assaulting these doctrines, but by various dark insinuations noticed in a former Letter.*

It is not uncommon to find unitarians denominating Christ “the ever-blessed Saviour,” and “our divine Lord and Master:” but they give him the epithet *divine* much in the same way as they call Milton “the divine poet,” and as Milton himself speaks of “the human face divine.” They view him as a mere creature; some of them (*viz.* the Arians) allowing him indeed to hold the first rank among the creatures, but another class (the Socinians) who are per-

* Letter ii. p. 10, 11.

haps the most numerous, believing him to be only a man, who had no existence previous to his entrance into our world. From some expressions which occur in your *Intimations* and *Evidences* (p. 152, 153, 157), it appears that when you wrote that work, you had only adopted the sentiments of the former; but recent circumstances induce me to fear, that you have now degenerated into the grosser errors of the latter.

I do not mean to enter at large into the proofs which establish the doctrine of Christ's true divinity,—a doctrine which has been so often and so ably defended:* but merely to give a summary of the principal evidences by which this important article of our religion is supported. These, as the nature of the subject indicates, are to be found only in the holy scriptures.

Now, what do we learn from these oracles of truth, concerning the person of our Redeemer?—They teach us, that while he has a real human nature, he is also the second Person in the glorious Trinity, being truly God, equal with the Father,—dignified with the same names and titles, possessed of the same excellencies, performing the same works, and intitled to the same adoration.

The *names* and *titles* appropriated to the Divine Being are conferred on Jesus. He is

* See in particular DR. OWEN'S *Treatise on the Person of Christ*, but especially DR. JAMESON'S *Vindication of the Deity of Christ*.

called **Jehovah**,* **God**,† **Immanuel** or **God with us**,‡ **the true God**,|| **the great God**,§ **the mighty God and everlasting Father**,¶ **the only wise God**,** **King of Kings and Lord of Lords**.††

Every *divine perfection* is attributed to **Christ**. He is said to be one with the **Father**, to be in the form of **God** and equal with him,‡‡ to be the image of the invisible **God**, the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person :||| and this last designation does not refer to his example only, as you have insinuated (p. 113), for in that passage the apostle is not saying a word about his example, but is discoursing of his glorious person, as the **Creator and Preserver of the world**, the **Redeemer of men and Lord of angels**, and the **eternal God and King**. He is declared to be **eternal**,§§ **immutable**,¶¶ **almighty**,*** **omnipresent**,††† **omniscient**; ‡‡‡

*Exod. xvii. 7. Num. xxi. 6, 7. comp. 1 Cor. x. 9. Pf. cx. 5. Isa. vi. 5, 9, 10. comp. John xii. 40, 41. Isa. xl. 3. comp. Mark i. 3. Luke i. 76. Zech. xi. 12, 13. comp. Mat. xxvii. 9, 10. Mal. iii. 1. Zech. xii. 8, 10. comp. John xix. 37. Isa. xlv. 21..25. comp. Rom. xiv. 10, 11. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. It may be necessary to inform some readers; that in the Old Testament, wherever the name **Lord** is printed in Capitals in our version, the word in the original is **Jehovah**.

† John i. 1. xx. 28. Acts xx. 28. 1 John iii. 16. Rom. ix. 5. Pf. xlv. 6. comp. Heb. i. 8. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

‡ Isa. vii. 14. Mat. i. 23. || 1 John v. 20. § Tit. ii. 13. ¶ Isa. ix. 6.

** Jude 24, 25. †† Rev. xvii. 14. xix. 13..16.

‡‡ John x. 30. v. 18. xiv. 9, 20. Zech. xiii. 7. Phil. ii. 6.

||| Col. i. 15. Heb. i. 3.

§§ Mic. v. 2. Isa. ix. 6. John i. 1, 2. viii. 58. xviii. 5. Rev. i. 8, 11.

¶¶ Heb. i. 12. xiii. 8. *** Rev. i. 8. Phil. iii. 20, 21. Isa. ix. 6.

††† Mat. x. xiii. 20. x. xiii. 20. John iii. 13. ††† John ii. 25. xxi. 17. Rev. ii. 23.

and in short, it is stated, that, “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”*

There are no *works* peculiar to God which are not ascribed unto our great Redeemer. Creation is always viewed as a distinguishing operation of Jehovah: † and Christ is the Creator of all things, whether in heaven or in earth, whether spiritual or material. ‡ None but the true God can uphold and govern the universe: || and this divine employment belongs to Jesus. § It is God alone who quickeneth the dead: ¶ and Christ shall awaken all the inhabitants of the grave; not in the capacity of the Father’s agent, as you insinuate (p. 160), but by his own authority and power. ** God alone is the Judge of the world: †† and this also is an office of the glorious Immanuel. †††

The divine *worship* to which Christ is considered as intitled, is also a decisive proof of his Deity. This is a prerogative of God, to which the most exalted of men or angels dare not aspire. ||| Yet Jesus never reprov’d those who worshipp’d him: §§ nay, he taught, “that all men

* Col. ii. 9. † Rom. i. 19, 20. Isa. xl. 25, 26. xliv. 24.

‡ John i. 3. Col. i. 15, 16. Eph. iii. 9. Heb. i. 2, 10.

|| Neh. ix. 6. Isa. xl. 26. Job. xii. 7..10. Pl. xxxvi. 6, 7.

§ Heb. i. 3. Col. i. 17, 18. ¶ Rom. iv. 17. 2 Cor. i. 9.

** John v. 21, 28, 29. x. 17, 18. †† Pl. l. 1..6

†† John v. 22. 2 Tim. iv. 1, 8. Rom. xiv. 10..12. 2 Cor. v. 10. Rev. xix. 11. ||| Acts x. 26. Col. ii. 18. Rev. xix. 10.

§§ Mat. viii. 2. ix. 18. John ix. 38.

should honour the Son even as they honour the Father;”* he commands his ministers to baptize in the name of the Son and Holy Ghost, as well as of the Father; and they are directed to bless in the name of the same Holy Trinity.† We are encouraged to offer up prayers and praises, not only to the Father, but also to the Son.‡ This adoration is paid him by angels as well as men; and it is remarkable, that in the same passage where the angels are called gods, they are required to worship him:—a clear intimation, that his divinity is not of the same kind with theirs, as they themselves must adore him as their God.

When all these proofs of the Godhead of Christ are duly considered, we may venture to assert, that those understandings must be strangely blinded by prejudice, which cannot discern this doctrine in the sacred scriptures. Some of the texts referred to may seem inconclusive when viewed individually; but the whole taken together furnish a mass of evidence in support of the doctrine, which all the sophistry and perversions of unitarians will never be able to overturn.

The incarnation of Christ will indeed remain an inscrutable mystery to man, in his present

* John v. 23. † Mat. xxviii. 19. 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

‡ Acts vii. 59, 60. 2 Cor. i. 2. Phil. ii. 10. 2 Thes. ii. 16, 17. Rev. i. 5, 6. v. 9, 10. vii. 9, 12.

|| Pl. xcvi. 7. comp. Heb. i. 6.

imperfect state: for who can understand how Deity and Humanity are united in the person of Immanuel? But there are mysteries in our own nature, which are equally unsearchable. Who can trace the connexion between mind and matter, between our soul and body, or explain how the one operates on the other? It would be highly presumptuous, to question the existence of this glorious union between the divine nature and the human, because we cannot comprehend it; when we find even in our own constitution so much to perplex and confound us.

Nor is this sacred mystery a trifling point, that "can be applied to no good practical purpose:" it is the very basis of the plan of redemption—the rock upon which our salvation is built. For upon this mystery rests the grand doctrine of the *atonement*, to which you have shewn yourself equally hostile, and which I shall therefore proceed to vindicate.—To this doctrine you seem to allude (p. 102), when you speak of "disputes about the means which infinite wisdom has devised to give efficacy to repentance:" but it is plain, from your observations in that place and in other passages, that you do not conceive any such *means* to be necessary. Your doctrine, and that of all unitarians, is, that sinners are saved by the merits of their own repentance and their own goodness, and that no other atonement for sin is required. In

opposition to these sentiments, evangelical divines maintain, that a holy and just God cannot, in a consistency with his nature and his wise plans, forgive sin, unless its guilt be fully expiated by the enduring of the punishment which it deserves; and that Christ, having been constituted the Surety of sinners, according to the gracious counsels of Heaven, has by his sufferings and death made an atonement for their iniquities,—an atonement, which being made by a divine Person has infinite merit for removing our guilt, and through which alone the sins of rebellious men can be pardoned.

That there is nothing in this doctrine contrary to reason, has frequently been shewn:* and the history of the world proves it to be agreeable to the common sense of mankind. That an atonement for sin is necessary, is a sentiment which seems to be imprinted on the human mind; till prejudice and pride deface the impression. In every land altars have been reared, and sacrifices have been offered, to propitiate the Deity: nay, in almost every part of the heathen world human victims have been sacrificed, to appease the wrath of offended Heaven.†

In the divine word we not only learn the necessity of an atonement; but our views are di-

* See Edwards's Remarks on Important Doctrines, Ch. vi.

† See this fact fully established by DR. MAGEE in his learned and valuable work ON ATONEMENT and SACRIFICE.

rected to that great expiatory sacrifice which alone can fully satisfy for our sins. To this point, even the institutions of the ancient economy naturally led : for, while it was their uniform language, that “without shedding of blood there is no remission,” they contained in themselves sufficient tokens of their own inefficacy ; and thus they served to guide men unto that real and perfect expiation, which should be offered in the fulness of time. That this was their tendency, is peculiarly evident from the Epistle to the Hebrews. There we are informed, that all the legal sacrifices and rites were types and shadows of good things to come ; that they all pointed to Christ ; that Jesus is the true High Priest, who has made reconciliation for the sins of the people by his own blood, and who is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them ; that whereas the repetition of the legal sacrifices bespoke their insufficiency, his sacrifice was complete and effectual, for he was once offered to bear the sins of many, and by this one offering he obtained eternal redemption for his people, and perfected them for ever ; that the inefficacy of all other oblations was a reason why he voluntarily offered to be our Surety, to obey and suffer in our stead ; and that this is the only atonement by which we can be reconciled unto God, for if we persist in unbelief and sin, instead

of drawing near to God through Christ our High Priest, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.* Indeed this whole Epistle might be fitly termed, a Treatise on the Priesthood and Atonement of Christ.

But it is not this Epistle only that instructs us concerning the atonement of Jesus. "To him give all the prophets witness," as well as all the apostles, "that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins."† Daniel foretold that "Messiah the Prince should be cut off, not for himself, but to finish the transgression, and make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity."‡ Zechariah predicted, that the sword of divine justice would smite the shepherd, the man that is Jehovah's fellow; and that he should be pierced by our sins.¶ Isaiah writes on the subject, as distinctly as Paul himself: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.— He was cut off out of the land of the living: for

* Hebrews ii. 17. vii. 25.. 27. ix. 11..28. x. 1..27. † Acts x. 43.

‡ Dan. ix. 26, 24 ¶ Zech. xiii. 7. xii. 10. comp. Mat. xxvi. 31. John xix. 37.

the transgression of my people was he stricken.

—Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.

—By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many ; for he shall bear their iniquities.”*

—When we look into the New Testament, this doctrine meets us in almost every page. In a multitude of texts it is stated that Christ died for us, suffered for us, gave himself for us, laid down his life for us. He is “ our passover sacrificed for us, the Lamb that was slain and has redeemed us to God by his blood, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world ; we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, fore-ordained to this end before the foundation of the world.”† Unitarians allege, that such phrases merely denote that Christ died for our benefit, to confirm his doctrines, and to edify us by an example of patient suffering. But this notion is irreconcilable with some of the texts already quoted, and with many others which evidently imply, that Christ died not merely *for our benefit*, but *in our stead*. “ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust ; that he might bring us to God. He hath made him to be sin (or a *sin-offering*) for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness

* Isa. liii. 5., 12. † 1 Cor. v. 7. Rev. v. 9. John i. 29. 1 Pet. i. 19, 20.

of God in him. He bare our sins in his own body on the tree. He is the propitiation for our sins. God hath set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins. We are reconciled to God by the death of his Son,—by whom we have received the atonement. We are bought with a price;—purchased with his own blood. He gave his life a ransom for many.”* In the last of these texts, the word *for* in the original, is a term which always denotes substitution or commutation; and in all of them, the vicarious nature of Christ’s sufferings is clearly pointed out.—Had Christ died for us merely in the unitarian sense, it might with equal propriety be said that Stephen died for us, or that Paul died for us. Paul was indeed in an inferior sense offered up for the church;† but he utterly disclaims the idea of being sacrificed for it, in the same sense as Christ was: “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”‡

This doctrine is strongly corroborated by considering that unparalleled anguish which Jesus felt, in the night before his crucifixion. Upon what principle can you account for his agony in the garden, his inexpressible sorrow, his bloody

* Gal. iii. 13. 1 Peter ii. 24. iii. 18. 2 Cor. v. 21. 1 John ii. 2. Rom. iii. 25. v. 10, 11. 1 Cor. vi. 20. Acts xx. 28. Mat. xx. 28.

† Phil. ii. 17. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 13.

sweat, his strong cries and tears? * Was it the mere prospect of death that thus appalled him? —Impossible.—Thousands of those who have died for Christ, did not shrink at the view of death, even when arrayed in its most dreadful forms; and not one of these holy martyrs betrayed half the anguish which Jesus expressed, in the prospect of suffering. Can we then suppose that the disciples of Jesus have more courage and resolution than their divine Master? No: it was not the dread of death that agitated his mind: it was the wrath of God which he bore in our stead; it was the enormous load of our guilt, the weight of which was sufficient to have sunk us to hell.

In speaking of Christ and his salvation, you frequently seem to affect a studied ambiguity; employing orthodox phrases, but using them in a sense totally different from their common acceptance. Such expressions in the mouth of a unitarian always appear most uncouth and unnatural. There is an incongruity even in your application of the terms *salvation* and *redemption*. For if Christ has not atoned for the guilt of sin, nor saves us from its effects, nor sends his Spirit to free us from its power; if he has merely given us important instructions, set us a good example, appointed some useful institutions for teaching us, and confirmed his doctrines by his death;

* Mat. xxvi. 38. Luke xxii. 44. Heb. vi. 7.

with what propriety can he be called a *Saviour* and *Redeemer*? Why are such appellations never bestowed on the prophets and apostles, if his work was so little different from theirs?—It is plain that he is our *Saviour* in a sense in which none else can be so denominated. “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”*

I am, &c.

* Acts iv. 12.

LETTER VIII.

On Justification by Faith.

SIR,

THE doctrine of the *atônement* is intimately connected with that of *justification by grace*, of which indeed it is the foundation. The acknowledged sentiments of the Reformed Churches, on this head, are, that Christ having fulfilled the law in our room by his obedience unto death, it is only through his merits that God pardons our sins and admits us into his favour; and that this privilege, which is called *justification*, is obtained in the exercise of true faith, “by which we receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel:” “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 or deservings.”* This invaluable blessing, being a deliverance from the curse, and consequently from spiritual death, is necessarily attended with holiness; and hence, all who

* Assembly's Shorter Catechism, Quest. 86. Thirty-nine Articles, Art. xi. See also Confession of Faith, Chap. xi.

adhere to this doctrine maintain, that “justifying faith is never alone in man, without true repentance, hope, charity, and the fear of God;” “but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.” *

Such is the article of justification by faith, which you have so strangely misrepresented and abused (p. 118..121); painting it in the blackest colours, as hostile to all moral duties and all christian virtues; describing it as “opening a wide door to every kind of vice, and letting in immorality like a flood,” nay “paving the way to infidelity, by exposing the religion of Christ to contempt and ridicule;” so that, if you did not foresee “that such a phrensy cannot be of long duration,” you might expect it to issue in such horrors as attended the French Revolution!—These calumnious charges have already been noticed and refuted, as preferred against the doctrines of grace in general:† it remains, that I offer some remarks for vindicating this doctrine in particular.

The picture which you have drawn of justification is so frightfully caricatured, that scarcely a feature of the original has been preserved. It is true that, according to this doctrine, we are not justified by moral duties, either in whole or

* Homily iii. Part 2. --Conf. of Faith, Chap. xi. Sect. 2.

† Letter iii. p. 57..59.

in part: but does it therefore follow that they are “useless, and have no concern with our salvation;” or that such doctrine “casts an odium upon them,” or “brings forth railing accusations against them?”—You conceive that if they are not admitted as our justifying righteousness, there is no other scriptural ground upon which they can be enforced: and hence you assert that though the advocates of this doctrine recommend good works, they have no intelligible way of producing the authority of God in support of them, but inculcate them merely by their own authority. “This,” you observe, “is carrying Protestants back to that implicit faith which we blame so much in the Catholic church; and the deliverance from which constitutes one of the greatest blessings of the Reformation. And though the gospel be preached to the poor, yet it requires great learning to understand *this* gospel.” (p. 119.)—It is very common to employ the word *popery* as a kind of bugbear to frighten the weak and ignorant. To me the term *Arian* or *Socinian* sounds much more dreadful than the name *Catholic*. Had the Reformation consisted in exchanging popery for your *rational* christianity, instead of being a blessing to men, it would have been one of the greatest of curses. Far rather would I cast in my lot with catholics, who believe in the Holy Trinity, and acknowledge in some form the

atonement of Christ; than be numbered with those deistical christians by whom the sublime mysteries of the gospel are held up to ridicule. Whether our doctrine or yours, on the head of justification, comes nearest to popery, let those who have read the works of Luther and the first reformers determine.—But what foundation is there for this most contemptible remark? When good works are excluded from having any share in our justification, are there no scriptural principles remaining, upon which the practice of them can be enforced? Since you are so little acquainted with the subject, I shall mention a few of the principles and motives which evangelical divines produce from scripture for enforcing their exhortations to holiness: and then you may judge whether in such cases their hearers need to rely on *their* word and authority or not.—They urge men to the exercise of holy dispositions, and the practice of holy duties, from the consideration of the holiness of God which his children must imitate,* his common goodness which we should thankfully acknowledge,† his redeeming love which demands our warmest gratitude,‡ the price which has been paid for us,§ the example of Jesus and our union with him,§ the inhabita-

* 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.

† Röm. ii. 4. Pf. cxvi. 12.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. 1 John iv. 19.

§ 1 Cor. vi. 20. 1 Pet. i. 17, 19.

§ Phil. ii. 5. 1 Pet. ii. 21, 23. 1 Cor. vi. 15.

tion of the Spirit and his illuminating grace,* the beauty of holiness and the deformity of sin,† the pleasures of true religion and the vanity of the world,‡ the promises of God and the dread of his fatherly displeasure,|| the comfort of having an assurance that we are in a state of grace and the necessity of preparing for a state of glory §—These are some of the principles from which the friends of this doctrine inculcate holiness. Are there any of them dark and perplexing? Whatever they may appear to *rational* christians, they are level to the capacities of the meanest of Christ's humble disciples: and undeniable facts attest, that they are efficacious as well as perspicuous. Besides, will not every candid mind allow, that most of these principles are of a more generous and noble kind, than the desire of *purchasing* salvation? This selfish principle, it seems, is, according to this part of your system, the only one that effectually secures obedience. I will not try to reconcile this idea with your own declaration (p. 73), that “love is the foundation of all the duties which we pay to our Maker.” But I would remark, that if the boasted morality of unitarians consists merely in serving God *for hire*, we will freely resign to them the exclusive posses-

* 1 Cor. vi. 19. 2 Cor. vi. 16. Eph. v. 8. † Pf. cx. 3. Jer. xliv. 4.

‡ Prov. iii. 17, 18. Eccl. xi. 8, 10.

|| 2 Cor. vii. 1. 1 Cor. xi. 30, 32 Pf. lxxv. 18.

§ 2 Cor. i. 12. 2 Pet. i. 4, 12. iii. 11, 14. Heb. xii. 14. Tit. ii. 12, 14.

sion of this *mercenary* virtue. Such as are virtuous only or chiefly on this principle serve God as slaves, not as sons; as hirelings, not as friends: their great object is self, not God; they trade with him, but they do not love him.

It is strange that in the whole of your reasonings on this subject, you completely lose sight of the point in dispute. The question is not whether good works and good dispositions are *necessary to salvation*; for here all are agreed: but it is, whether or not they are *the price of salvation*. Now, instead of investigating the latter question, your whole attention is bestowed on the former; and in establishing the importance of moral duties, you enjoy an easy triumph over heresies which exist only in your own imagination. Who is there that denies that Christ and all his apostles teach the necessity of holiness? You treat evangelical christians with great injustice, in so often alleging that their doctrine on this head is not the same as Christ's.

Equally incorrect and unfair is your account of their views of faith and of the place which it holds in justification. They never teach men to "rest upon belief or faith alone, maintaining that this is every thing." (p. 120.) Nor do they ever "look upon Paul, as the father and founder of that system, which tells us that we are not to rely upon good works, but upon

faith." (p. 131.) If they could find that any part of their doctrine rests on the private authority of Paul, or of any other mortal, they would instantly reject it. But the doctrine here imputed to them is neither theirs nor Paul's. They never direct men to rely upon faith, in opposition to good works, but unanimously affirm, that however eminent the grace of faith is, "yet it putteth us from itself, and remitteth or appointeth us unto Christ, for to have only by him remission of our sins, or justification;" and that God justifies believers, "not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves; it is the gift of God."* According to this doctrine, justifying faith is not, as you insinuate, a mere belief of the truth, like the dead faith of which the apostle James speaks, which is found even in devils; but it is an act of the will, as well as of the understanding; it includes in it a firm assent to the gospel, an acceptance of its offers, a cordial choice of Christ as our Saviour, with a humble reliance on his merits, and on the mercy of a redeeming God manifested in his mediation. This description of faith accords

* *Homily iii, Part 2. Confession of Faith, Ch. xi, Sect. 1.*

with the sacred oracles, where it is said to consist in receiving Christ, in coming to him, in eating his flesh and drinking his blood;* expressions which clearly imply that in this exercise there is a cordial acceptance of Christ and his salvation. Even when it is called believing *on* Christ or believing *in his name*, we are taught that it is chiefly an act of the will, a reliance on Christ as our Redeemer: we are never said to believe *in the name* of Moses, or to believe *on* Paul. Accordingly we find Jesus tracing the unbelief of men to the perverseness and pride of their hearts: “Ye *will not* come to me, that ye might have life.—How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?”†—Now, the idea of *relying* on this faith is excluded by the very definition of it; for it consists in *relying wholly upon Jesus*. It is not a meritorious work, supposed to give us a title to salvation; but has been fitly termed *the hand of the soul, which takes hold of salvation as the free gift of God*. Indeed the notion of merit in the exercise of faith is wholly set aside, by the consideration that both faith and repentance originate in the grace of God, and are produced by his Spirit.‡

* John i. 12. vi. 35, 47. 38.

† John 5. 40, 44.

‡ Luke xvii. 5. Acts v. 31. xi. 17, 18. xiv. 27. xv. 8, 9. xviii. 27. Eph. ii. 8. Phil. i. 29. 2 Thes. i. 11, 12. 2 Tim. ii. 25. 2 Pet. i. 1.

You complain of disputes about the nature of faith; the “waste of learning and torturing of language” (p. 133) on that subject. But these disputes, as far as evangelical divines are concerned in them, are more about words than about the exercise itself. Faith is a grace in which various powers of mind are brought into action at once, the whole soul being then directed towards Christ; and the chief question among them is, whether the whole complex act should be termed *faith*, or whether some parts of it should be distinguished as only the necessary concomitants of faith. Such a discussion is not so likely to bewilder plain christians as you imagine; for it does not affect the nature of the exercise.

Since the subject has been so much perplexed, it might have been expected that you would have done something to clear it up; but instead of that, you involve it in tenfold obscurity: “If in Paul we find some sentiments, differing from the above sentiments, where faith seems to have the preference; we may fairly infer, that the works there mentioned are not the moral virtues, but the works of the law of Moses, on which the Jews, and the Pharisees in particular, laid so much stress: and that by faith we are to understand, sometimes the gospel in general, sometimes the dispositions arising from the gospel, sometimes the firm hold that it has of the under-

standing and heart, as a principle of action, &c. And in all *these senses*, it is undoubtedly superior to the ceremonial law of the Jews.—*This sense* accords with the simplicity of the gospel dispensation, is more consistent with the perfections of the Supreme Being, and is much better adapted to the common understanding of men.” (p. 132.) Here we have a choice specimen of your *plain* gospel. Faith means this, or it means that, or it means any thing the reader pleases, provided he does not understand it in the evangelical sense! The best way, it seems, to explain a thing to *common understandings* is to leave it unexplained, or to cover it with darkness! Which *sense* is it that is so simple? Is it one of the three expressed, or one of those included in your *et cetera*? You cannot justify these vague remarks by saying, that *the word faith* has different significations. When I ask, What is God? The proper answer is not, that the word sometimes means an angel, sometimes a magistrate, sometimes the Supreme Being. And when I ask, What is justifying faith? It is not a sufficient answer to say, that faith sometimes signifies the gospel, sometimes has other meanings: for what I want to know is, What is its precise meaning in those places where it is said to justify us?—If *any sense* can be collected from the passage now quoted, it seems to import, that when Paul says, that we are justified by

faith and not by works, his meaning is, that we are justified by evangelical obedience or the moral virtues, and not by obedience to the ceremonial law. This is a sentiment frequently adopted even by some who are not professed unitarians. Let us inquire how it agrees with Paul's doctrine. According to him, justification by faith is the same thing as justification by grace :* but what grace is there in being justified by moral virtues, more than in being justified by ceremonial rites ? It excludes boasting : † but may we not boast of our morality, as much as of religious observances ? It is the justification of the ungodly : ‡ while yours is only the justification of the meritorious. It is peculiarly connected with the blood of Christ, who was "delivered for our offences," and is "set forth to be a propitiation," through which God is just and yet the justifier of believing sinners : § but how can such things be spoken of your kind of justification ? It is always opposed to works, —to the deeds of the law : but your justification is entirely by works, by the deeds of the law. And of what law does the apostle speak in such passages ?—That law which forbids theft, adultery, and sacrilege ; §—which forbids all unrighteousness, —cursing and bitterness,

* Rom. iii. 24. iv. 4, 16.

† Rom. iii. 27. iv. 2. Eph. ii. 9.

‡ Rom. iv. 5. v. 10, 11.

§ Rom. iii. 24, 26. v. 24, 25. Eph. i. 7.

§ Rom. ii. 21, 22.

bloodshed and every crime ;—that law by which is the knowledge of sin, and in reference to which it is said, that “ all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ;” *—that law which prohibits covetousness and evil desires, and which is “ holy, just, and good ;” †—that law which denounces a curse against all who transgress it ; and what law that is, may be seen by consulting the passage in Deuteronomy to which the apostle refers. ‡ The works to which faith is opposed, are not merely rites and sacrifices, but “ works of righteousness.” §

“ Put the scriptures of the New Testament, then, into the hands of a man of honesty and plain understanding, but ignorant of every system ” (p. 133) ; what will he consider as Paul’s sentiments ? He will indeed see, that Paul teaches the importance of a good life, and of the moral virtues ; and so do all evangelical divines ; but will he ever suppose that when Paul asserts that we are justified by faith, he really means that we are justified by works ; that when he ascribes our justification to the free grace of God, he means to impute it entirely to our own merits ; that, when he excludes from our justification all our works of righteousness, the works of that law by which is the knowledge of sin, he has nothing in his eye but ceremonial rites ; or

* Rom. iii. 9..23.

† Rom. vii. 4..7, 12.

‡ Gal. iii. 10. com: p. Deut. xxvii. 15..26.

§ Tit. iii. 5.

that, while he speaks of our being justified by faith in the blood of Christ as a propitiation for sin, he really intends to inform us, that the blood of Christ has no more concern with our salvation than the blood of Stephen or the blood of James? Would this *plain man* have these views of Paul's doctrine?—No: such ideas can only be admitted into minds that have been perverted by Socinian sophistry.

But is this doctrine of justification by faith peculiar to Paul? Is he its “father and founder?”—By no means. It is the uniform doctrine of scripture. It was known in the days of Abraham, of Moses, and of David;* and it was taught by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk.† Nothing can be more clear on the subject than the words of Christ himself. When the Jews put this question to him, “What shall we do that we might work the works of God?” he replied, “This is the work of God, That ye believe on him whom he hath sent.—This is the will of him that sent me, That every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.”‡ Among the last words which he spake on earth were these; “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”§ This

* Gen. xv. 6. xii. 3. comp. Gal. iii. 6 .9. Pf. lxxviii. 22. comp. Heb. iii. 12, 18, 19. iv. 1, 2. Pf. xxxii. 1, 2. comp. Rom. iv. 5. 8.

† Isa. xlv. 24, 25. liii. 11. Jer. xxxiii. 6 xxxi. 34. Hab. ii. 4. comp. Rom. i. 17. Gal. iii. 11. ‡ John vi. 28, 29, 40. § Mark xvi. 16.

was the doctrine which Christ taught Nicodemus ; and it was taught also by his forerunner John Baptist : “ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him. ”* The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is a striking instance of the doctrine of Christ on this head. The Pharisee is introduced as a self-righteous man, who trusts in his virtue and his piety, who hopes for the divine favour through the merit of his own honesty, integrity, chastity, temperance, and liberality. The Publican is described as a convicted sinner, deeply humbled before God, and betaking himself to redeeming mercy as his only refuge. And what was the issue of their respective approaches to God ?—The former, with all his moral virtues, was rejected ; but the latter was justified by free and sovereign grace.† The same doctrine is taught throughout the Acts of the Apostles.‡ In some instances indeed, repentance is enjoined as the means of receiving salvation ; and such exhortations are used, not only because true repentance is a necessary concomitant of faith, but because the word *repentance* often denotes the whole of that act in which the soul turns unto God, and consequent-

* John iii. 14, 18, 36.

† Luke xvii. 9, 14.

‡ Acts viii. 37. ix. 42. x. 43. xi. 17, 21. xiii. 38, 39. xiv. 1, 23, 27. xvi. 30, 31. xix. 4. xxvi. 18.

ly includes faith ; which is obviously the case in some of the instances alluded to.*—All the Apostles agree with Paul in asserting justification by faith ; † not excepting Peter, nor even James, whom you suppose to be “ entirely on the side of good works.” (p. 132.) It is true, James teaches us that “ faith without works is dead ;” but it is plain that he is not speaking of true faith,—that faith which cordially receives Christ, and which is always productive of good works. He speaks of that bare belief of the truth, which is found in devils, as well as in many wicked men : and he truly asserts that such a faith is dead and cannot justify us. In the passage referred to, he is not addressing true believers, but those who *say* they have faith, while their conduct proves their pretension to be false ; and he reminds them that justifying faith is always operative, and that no man can be approved before God, or acknowledged as a justified person, whose faith does not shew itself to be genuine by its effects. ‡ This sense of the word *justify* is not unexampled in scripture ; § and you will recollect your own remark, “ that the apostles do not write as critics and logicians,—and are to be interpreted, not by verbal criticisms, but by the general spirit and design

* Acts ii. 38. comp. ver. 41, 44. iii. 19. comp. iv. 4.

† 1 Pet. i. 6., 9, 21. ii. 6, 7. 1 John iii. 23. v. 1, 5, 11., 13.

‡ James ii. 14., 26. § Luke vii. 29. Rom. iii. 4. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

of the whole." (p. 133.) Besides, when this apostle speaks of *true* faith, he views it as an important and vital principle in the chosen of God, who are all "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom."*

After what has been said, it is scarcely necessary to take any notice of the plan of salvation by repentance and good works, which you have laid down in your own vague, indefinite way (p. 99..102):—a plan which is not only inconsistent with scripture, but even repugnant to reason; especially as it implies, that our repentance and moral duties are works of *supererogation*.†

You have been very unhappy in the choice of illustrations of your scheme; particularly in the case of Paul which you quote (p. 101) as a standing example of "the extent, the benefit and efficacy of repentance;" whereas in reality, there never was a more striking instance of salvation by free and sovereign grace, being intended by Jesus Christ "for a pattern to them which should afterwards *believe on him to life everlasting.*" ‡

I cannot dismiss this subject, without advert-
ing to your reflections on the reception which
this doctrine and the other doctrines of grace
have obtained in the Reformed Churches:

* James i. 3. 6. ii. 5. † See DR. MACEE ON Atonement, &c. Discourse I.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 12 .16.

“ Ever since the Reformation, doctrines of this kind have entered into the creeds of many professed christians ; but still in those churches, where they have been adopted, they have ever appeared so contrary to every maxim of reason, and to the first principles of religion, that they have been suffered to lie dormant by most of the preachers ; and, if they have occasionally been brought forward, they have endeavoured to explain and guard them in one way or other, from doing the mischief which they are calculated to produce.” (p. 119, 120.) Here are some very strange things said of these *Reformed Churches* :—They have admitted into their creeds tenets that have *ever* appeared absurd, impious, and pernicious: the majority of the ministers in these churches have entered them by basely professing to believe these vile dogmas, and have been so mean and unfaithful as to continue in them without lifting up any testimony against such wicked principles ; nay, they have even preached them, while they were sensible of their pernicious tendency !—Could the Pope himself have given us a blacker picture of these *reformed churches* ?—Had you candidly inquired into well-known facts ; you might have found, that in the early times of these churches, this article was regarded as “ a most wholesome doctrine ; ”* that for a long

* Thirty-nine Articles, Art. xi.

period the discourses delivered from their pulpits exactly corresponded with their creeds, the doctrines of grace being the chief subject of both ; that when men of contrary principles treacherously entered their communion, they at first brought in their heresies *privily*, introducing them so sparingly that they seemed to leave them almost *dormant*, in order to avoid expulsion ; that the leaven of corruption, thus introduced, gradually insinuated itself till it acquired a predominant influence ; that nevertheless, there were found in one of these churches, at a memorable era, *two thousand* ministers, who not only faithfully preached the doctrines of grace, but conscientiously resigned their livings and submitted to cruel persecutions, rather than adopt unscriptural practices attempted to be imposed on them ; that from that period corruption became more open and general ; that, though evangelical preaching has partly revived in the present day, (a revival which you deplore, but at which I rejoice,) there are still in the churches to which you allude, many ministers, by whom the doctrines of grace which they have professed to “subscribe willingly and *ex animo*,” or promised to “assert and defend,”* are not even suffered to lie dormant, but are openly trampled under foot ; and that this degeneracy

* See the 36th CANON of the Church of England ; and the FORMULA of the Church of Scotland.

is still more deplorable in those congregations (called Presbyterian) originally founded by the pious ejected ministers, or their successors and disciples; in all of which, those evangelical truths, which you and your brethren now hold up to ridicule, were formerly preached in their purity and power. You might also have found, that these doctrines were never taught with any other cautions than what are still used in preaching them; and that similar cautions are equally necessary in preaching some of the truths which you retain; being required, not on account of any dangerous tendency in the doctrines themselves, but on account of the corruptions of the human heart, by which the most precious and salutary truths are frequently abused. The *mercy* of God must be viewed in connexion with his *justice*, and the doctrine of *sanctification* must be preached along with *justification by faith*: but it does not follow, that the one is less necessary, or less valuable, than the other.—That the friends of this doctrine assert the necessity of holiness, is clear from their sentiments on *regeneration*, with which it is closely connected.—That doctrine I intend to consider in the subsequent Letter.

I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

On Regeneration, Conversion, or Repentance.

SIR,

YOU might have seen the injustice of alleging that the doctrine of justification by faith leads to licentiousness, had you considered that all who hold this doctrine also maintain that no one is justified without receiving a new nature. They assert that, at the very time when a sinner believes in Christ for justification, he is sanctified by the Spirit; receiving those holy dispositions, which not only produce outward reformation, but quench even the love of iniquity. It has been already shewn,* that all men naturally discover a prevailing inclination to sin, and that this depraved inclination can be cured only by the Spirit of God. Now, this cure is effected at the time when true faith is first exercised; and this grace, which is produced by divine illumination,† and is the first act of the new nature, is itself employed as a powerful principle of holiness; for it purifieth the heart, worketh

* See Letters iv. and v.

† See Let. iv. p. 103.

by love, and overcometh the world.* Justifying faith, then, is always accompanied with a change of dispositions.

This great and important change receives various names, according to the light in which it is viewed. When considered as the work of God on the heart, it is called a new creation, a resurrection from the dead, illumination, renovation of heart, transformation into the divine image, and frequently the new birth, or regeneration :† but when spoken of as the act of our own minds, resulting from this divine operation, it is usually designated repentance or conversion ; which terms, when applied to this change, can scarcely be distinguished, except we should say, that the former respects our forsaking sin with true contrition, and the latter our turning unto God and holiness.

Your observations on this subject are so vague and contradictory, that it is difficult to discover your real sentiments.—You tell us that “conversions ought not to be confounded with repentance” (p. 105) ; and yet you neither point out the difference, nor do you observe any such distinction yourself ; for Paul’s conversion mentioned in that page, you elsewhere call his repen-

* Acts xv. 9. Gal. v. 6. 1 John v. 4.

† 2 Cor. v. 17. Eph. ii. 10. 1 John iii. 14. Eph. ii. 10, 3. Heb. x. 32. 2 Cor. iv. 6. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Col. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 22, 24. John i. 13, iii. 3. James i. 18. 1 Pet. i. 22. 1 John iii. 9. v. 1, 4.

tance (p. 101); and in another place (p. 143), you speak of Christ's "calling sinners to *repentance*," as synonymous with his "*converting* sinners from the evil of their ways."

You seem to allow, that the repentance of great sinners is attended with painful feelings. Nay, the passage last referred to (p. 142, 143) implies an acknowledgment that repentance is always accompanied with such feelings, for you admit that, in order to be brought to repentance, we must see that we are sinners who have need of Christ's assistance; according to the Saviour's words; "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick:—I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." But how can we be made sensible of our sins,—our spiritual sickness, without painful emotions? The sense of guilt must always be painful to an awakened conscience: for, as you have well observed in your *Intimations and Evidences* (p. 72), "This moral principle stamps the strongest disapprobation on guilt. The serious recollection of it is *ever* accompanied with remorse, shame and horror:" and "these *horrors* accompany the most *secret* as well as the most public guilt;—and excite *pain* and *uneasiness* for those very actions, for which human laws provide no punishment."—Yet, strange to tell! you maintain that repentance, which implies a sense of guilt, is attended with *no pain*, but is altogether

joyful! You even assert, in defiance to the express testimony of scripture, that the conversion of Paul, one of the chief of sinners, was accompanied with *no horror*; and that of the Philipian jailor, another great sinner, with *no pain*. (p. 107, 108.) Did Paul then experience no mental distress, when he trembled and was astonished, on finding that he was persecuting the Lord of glory; and when for three days he was without sight, and could neither eat nor drink? * Did the jailor tremble only for fear of the earthquake, or of an ignominious death? Surely you must have been half asleep when you consulted that passage; † else you might have seen, on a bare inspection, that it was not till *after* “his mind was made easy on that account, by the generous assurance of the apostle,” that his trembling began. After Paul had “cried with a loud voice, ‘Do thyself no harm; for we are all here: *Then* he called for a light, and sprang in, and came *trembling*, and *fell down* before Paul and Silas;” thus acknowledging them to be the servants of the God of heaven, and confessing the guilt of his barbarity to them: and while he hastened to make reparation for the injuries done them, his conscience being alarmed at the thoughts of his wickedness towards them and of his attempt to commit suicide, he eagerly asked them, “What must I do to be saved?”

* Acts ix. 6, 9.

† Acts xvi. 27-34.

Such a question would have been absurd, had he felt no apprehension of danger. He perceived that he needed salvation for his guilty soul: nor was it till Paul and Silas had preached Christ to him and his house, and he had “believed on him to the saving of his soul,” that that he began to rejoice.—That true repentance is preceded by convictions, and includes sincere contrition for sin, is an opinion, not founded, as you allege, on the term *regeneration*, but on the nature of things, and on the clearest scripture evidences. It is absurd to speak of turning from sin, where no conviction of sin is felt; and conviction is always painful. It is impossible to hate sin, and yet feel no sorrow—no pain at the remembrance of guilt; but there can be no holiness, and consequently no repentance, where there is not hatred of sin. Now, these convictions which must precede conversion, and this contrition which is included in it, constitute the whole of that *labour and pain* which accompany repentance. Your notion, that this change is attended with *no pain*, is at once inconsistent with some of your own sentiments, contrary to the holy scriptures,* and repugnant to reason and to the general sense of mankind.† To what purpose are all the threatenings employed in scripture, both in the law and under

* Jer. xxxi. 18, 19. Ezek. xxxvi. 31, 32. 2 Cor. vii. 8, 11.

† See Let. ii. p. 30.

the gospel, both by prophets and apostles, both by John Baptist and by Immanuel himself? Are they not intended to awaken transgressors to a sense of their guilt, and excite them to flee from the wrath to come? How then can you dare to charge those ministers with “spreading gloom and melancholy over all, and giving a most forbidding representation of the christian religion, and of its great Author” (p. 108), who are only imitating their divine Master, in trying to produce the same salutary, though painful convictions, by the same important means?

But you are resolved to quarrel at any rate with the friends of this doctrine; even at the expence of consistency: for while you accuse them of making repentance very gloomy, you with the same breath reproach them with ascribing too much joy to it; even the joyful assurance which true converts generally obtain, “that their sins are pardoned, and that they are secured of eternal life.” (p. 109.) You allege (p. 147) that men are “proceeding to the utmost height of extravagance, when they feel assured, that their sins are pardoned, and that their eternal happiness is secure.” Such “high hopes,” you conceive (p. 150), must be attended with “spiritual pride and presumption,” and with “contempt for those whom such persons have left below” them.—But if there is any extravagance, any pride, or presumption, accompanying

such high hopes and exalted joys, what will you say of the ancient saints and primitive christians, who are almost all represented as experiencing these joys and hopes? Why did the Philippian jailor rejoice? It was because he believed in Christ, and was reconciled unto God. What occasioned the joy of the Ethiopian eunuch? A sense of his interest in the salvation of Jesus:—and his joy would be enhanced by the contrition which he must have felt, while Philip was discoursing on the sufferings of Christ for our sins. Why were the primitive disciples in general “filled with all joy and peace in believing?”* It was because, “being justified by faith they had peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and could rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”† Conscious that they had truly believed in Christ, and assured that none could separate them from his love, they “rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”‡ All the apostles speak the language of assurance, not only concerning themselves, but often concerning the christians whom they address. And they enjoin all believers to give diligence to make their calling and election sure, they lay down various marks of true faith to assist us in the duty of self-examination, and speak of the assurance that we are the sons of God as a most comfortable attainment,

* Rom. xv. 13. † Rom. v. 1, 2. ‡ Rom. viii. 14, 13. 31, 39. 1 Pet. i. 8, 9.

—an attainment, not calculated to promote pride and presumption, but holiness and heavenly desires.* Though assurance, then, is not attained by all believers; they are all bound to seek it: and shall they be charged with arrogance and vanity; because they try in this respect, to obey their Lord, and to follow his apostles at a humble distance? It is true that such spiritual attainments may be the occasions of pride; but their natural tendency is to cherish humility. None have more assurance of the divine favour than angels, yet none are more humble.—You conceive the doctrine of regeneration to be an excitement to hypocrisy, as well as pride; since those, who do not feel the contrition or the joys supposed to attend it, will be tempted to feign them. But what view can you give of repentance, that is not liable to the same objections? Will not men be tempted to pretend to your kind of conversion, as well as to this? There are too many *pretended* conversions among evangelical christians; but it does not follow that there is less *pretended* repentance among men of your own principles. We must not reject a salutary doctrine, because it may be abused.

Again, you appear to consider conversion as a change of heart (p. 104): Yet, however astonishing it may be thought, you speak of regeneration as only “ a change of conduct. ”

* Cor. xiii. 5. 2 Pet. i. 4 .11. 1 John iii. 1..3, 14. v. 1..4.

This is the purport of your precious morsel of criticism on the words of Christ to Nicodemus : “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” This metaphorical expression merely signifies, according to you, “that when a sinner *changes his life* and enters upon the religious profession, *a great change* must take place *in his moral conduct* : and this change is strongly characterised by saying, that he must be born again.” (p. 103.) So, it seems, the amount of these words of Christ is, that *when a man changes his life, he changes his life!!* Had Christ uttered such an unmeaning tautology, he could scarcely have been counted “a Teacher come from God.” Since you restrict regeneration to a change of moral *conduct* ; you ought to have explained how this is called being “born of the Spirit,” when, according to your system, the Spirit has nothing to do with our moral conduct ; and how this change can take place without a corresponding change of *heart* ; or how it could consist with the wisdom of Christ to speak of a change of conduct merely, as necessary for entering into his kingdom, while such a change can be acceptable to God, only in as far as it proceeds from holy dispositions. It is evident from a subsequent part of his discourse, that the change which he calls a new birth, includes or produces the exercise of believing on Christ to life everlasting ;* and a

* John iii. 3, 8, 14, 18.

candid view of the whole passage, and of other texts where regeneration is mentioned, may convince us that it consists in the purification of the soul.*—If you restrict regeneration to the outward conduct, it is not surprising that you should fancy, that there are some who have no need of it; even those who have been religiously educated, and have not gone far astray into the paths of vice. (p. 103, 104.) But if such persons have not been regenerated in infancy, of which there are some instances, they also must experience a change of heart; for that prevailing inclination to sin, which we have proved in Letter iv. to be natural to man, requires to be cured. It is not enough to behave decently, from a regard to our relations and friends, our reputation and interest; for, as you yourself have allowed, love to God is the foundation of all true goodness. In these persons, regeneration cannot be attended with such strong emotions of mind, nor followed by so striking a change of conduct, as in notorious sinners; yet, even in them, the transformation of the soul is great, and it will produce an important alteration in their behaviour. Christ does not say, “Except a *great sinner* be born again;” but “except a *man* be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Further, you grant that some conversions have been sudden (p. 104, 105): and yet you

* 1 Pet. i. 22, 23. John i. 12, 13. 1 John iv. 7. v. 1.

hold up to ridicule the idea "that some of the most abandoned of mankind may, in a few days, be perfectly transformed in heart and life." (p. 151.) If by *perfectly transformed* you mean, so transformed as to be without sin, such a sentiment is never held by the friends of this doctrine ; for even those who believe that the saints may be perfectly holy on earth, do not hold that this perfection is attained "in a few days," but after long experience in the ways of God. All who assert the doctrine of regeneration, however, maintain, and glory in maintaining, that when a sinner, especially a notorious sinner, is regenerated, a great and universal change is effected in his heart and life ; and in many instances the change is effected suddenly. How soon were the murderers of Christ transformed into his loving and steadfast disciples, in the day of Pentecost ! How quickly was Paul the persecuter and blasphemer turned into a zealous friend of Christ, and a preacher of the faith which he had destroyed ! In one night the jailor at Philippi, who had incurred the guilt of cruelty and of suicide, became an affectionate and joyful believer. To such effects of the gospel, the primitive ministers of Christ frequently appealed, in proof of its divine origin :* and a multitude of undeniable instances of the same

* 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. 2 Cor. iii. 1.-3. x. 4, 5. Rom. xv. 18, 19. 1 Thef. i. 5.-10.-Vide Orig. contra Celsum, Lib. iii.-Lactant. Lib. iii. c. 25.

kind have occurred in modern times, both in our own land, in other christian countries, and among heathen nations to whom the gospel has been sent.

That all conversions are sudden and striking, is by no means the doctrine of evangelical divines; much less do they hold, that there is a particular *process* by which the change is effected. “Some are shaken by *strong terrors*; some are melted down into *deep sorrow*; others are astonished as it were, and captivated at once, by the discovery of the *love of God in Christ*; and others are led on by such *gentle and gradual impressions*, that they can hardly recollect any remarkable *circumstance* at all, relating to the *manner* in which this blessed work was begun, or conducted in their souls.”* In all the works of God there is a beautiful variety; and as no two faces are exactly alike, perhaps there are not two christians, whose experiences, in conversion, have been precisely the same.—Yet, though *conversion* may be *gradual*, there must be a point of time at which it begins, when the Spirit *first* enlightens the soul, and justifying faith is exercised; and from this point of time, whether known to us or not, regeneration must be dated. If this be not granted, it will follow, that there are many in the world who are neither regenerate nor unregenerate, justified nor un-

* Doddridge on Regeneration, Discourse viii,

justified, children of Satan nor children of God; but in an intermediate state. Now, no such intermediate state is acknowledged in scripture: all men are either sinners, or saints; heirs of glory, or heirs of perdition. This you yourself admit, when you observe (p. 40), that “in the eternal world there will be a final and everlasting separation between the righteous and the wicked.” The same thing you acknowledge in another place, (p. 164, 165.) But how this division can consist with your notions on regeneration as a gradual moral improvement, and your scheme of justification by repentance and good works, I am at a loss to imagine. According to our doctrine, there will be no difficulty in dividing mankind into the sheep and the goats, and placing the one on the right-hand and the other on the left; but how can this be done upon your principles, since there must then be all possible degrees of merit? At what point in the scale of morality shall the division between the heirs of heaven and of hell be fixed? Must not some intermediate state be admitted, for those whose merit is neither above nor below mediocrity? But were this conceded, the same difficulties would still arise, in fixing the limits of this *purgatory* itself.

It is not the received doctrine on this subject, that conversion is *always* attended with violent emotions of mind, or agitations of body; but

that it has sometimes been accompanied with both, is manifest from scripture, and from authentic facts.* Nor is such an opinion unphilosophical: for, if men are so much moved and agitated by the joys or sorrows of the world, is it not natural to expect them to be deeply affected by those sorrows and joys which are infinitely more important?—I will not deny, however, that many professed christians entertain the most extravagant and unscriptural notions concerning conversion; but to dress up their extravagancies in a ridiculous form, and then present them as an argument against the genuine doctrine, is totally inconsistent with candour and justice. Your affected display of wit, in talking of *labour* and *pain*, *gloom* and *melancholy*, the *fiery trial* and *grievous yoke*, is at once unworthy of a scholar and of a christian. So eager have you been to shew your powers on this topic, that after dismissing it, you have formed another Section on “this process,” and awkwardly spliced it to the end of your Chapter on *religious feelings*.—Your sentiments on this last subject, I purpose to examine in my next Letter.

I am, &c.

* See many such instances recorded in the Journal of the Rev. DAVID BRAINERD, a Missionary employed by the HONOURABLE SOCIETY in SCOTLAND for propagating CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

LETTER X.

On Religious Feelings, and Enthusiasm.

SIR,

OF all the inconsistencies in your Plain Statement, there are none more palpable than those which occur on the subject of *religious feelings*. On this topic, you contradict yourself even in the same sentence: "With respect to inward feelings; all these are the operations of darkness: they may in some cases be directed to improvement; but in a much greater number of cases, they may be no more but pretensions, affectation and imposition." (p. viii.) To what *improvement* the operations of *darkness*, with which the children of light should have no fellowship, may be directed, I cannot determine. I am equally at a loss to see how the round assertion, that *all inward feelings are the operations of darkness*, can be reconciled with the following passage: "When we adore the perfections of God, with our understanding and hearts; the very act raises and supports *the best affections*; and such affections when duly cultivated must have a powerful and beneficial in-

fluence on our minds, our tempers and our actions.—The contemplation of God's works begets often *delightful feelings*; how much more must our devout meditations on their great Author!" (p. 79.) No less contradictory or ambiguous are some of your remarks in the Chapter on Religious Feelings, which part of your work seems to be principally designed as a *Preservative against Enthusiasm*. It must be granted, that several of your strictures on this subject are too well founded: and, had you possessed sufficient powers of discrimination, and an adequate knowledge of the doctrines of Christ, to qualify you for the task,; you might have done essential service to religion, by laying down marks for distinguishing those religious feelings which are genuine and heavenly, from those which are wild and extravagant; and that "religious enthusiasm which is pure, sublime and animating," from that which is "of a baser origin."* But many of your reflections rather serve to confound fervent piety with wild enthusiasm, and consequently to confirm the enthusiast in his delusions. Such are the following observations on *vital religion* (p. 146): "It implies something dark and mysterious, beyond the reach of common sense, and the general experience of mankind. Christ, according to

* This has been ably done by EDWARDS in his *Treatise on Religious Affections*.

them, must be formed within ; and their labour must be to work themselves up to some fervour and holy enthusiasm." *Vital religion*, Sir, means *religion in the heart*, as distinguished from that *speculative religion*, which is *only in the head* ; or that *pharisaical religion*, which is merely a *form of godliness*. That this inward, cordial piety is unknown to the generality of mankind, is a melancholy fact : but it is a fact agreeable to the words of an inspired apostle ; " Therefore *the world knoweth us not*, because it knew him not."* This vital religion, the essence of which consists in " faith and love which is in Christ Jesus,"† is sometimes called " Christ formed within ;" and this expression, as it is often used in scripture,‡ no christian should dare to ridicule. With regard to the " labour of working ourselves up to some fervour and holy enthusiasm," if you mean by this phrase, some exercise essentially different from that of " stirring up ourselves to take hold of God," which is recommended by the prophet ;|| we disown it, as having no connexion with vital religion : but, if it consists in striving to withdraw our affections from the world, and to fix them on God ; in trying to awaken our minds out of spiritual languor or sloth ; and in endeavouring

* 1 John iii. 1. † 2 Tim. i. 13. Gal. v. 6.

‡ Gal. iv. 19. Rom. viii. 10. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Eph iii. 17. Col. i. 27.

|| Isa. lxiv. 7.

to excite our souls to the lively exercise of faith, and love, and zeal, and fervent devotion ; —of such “holy enthusiasm” we will not be ashamed. Would to God that it were universal !

You seem to think that all *strong* religious feelings,—all “dreadful horrors” and unutterable joys,” are sure indications of enthusiasm. It has already been shewn, from your own authority, that there are some religious *horrors* which are not enthusiastic :* but the fact rests upon better authority than yours, “*Horror* hath taken hold upon me,” says David, “because of the wicked that forsake thy law.” † “*I abhor* myself, and repent in dust and in ashes,” ‡ was the language of Job. And Isaiah cried out, when he saw the glory of the Lord, “Woe is me ! for *I* am *undone* ; because *I* am a man of unclean lips.” §—Transitions from such horrors to “joys unutterable” have also frequently occurred ; as in the case of the converts on the day of Pentecost, of Paul, and especially of the Philippian jailor. Indeed, it may naturally be expected, that wherever strong convictions are succeeded by lively faith in Christ, the believing soul will “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” §—To allege, that the passions should have no place in religion, is as unphilosophical as it is unscriptural. ¶ Can there be

* Lev. ix. p. 188. † Ps. cxix. 53. ‡ Job. xlii. 6. § Isa. vi. 5. ¶ 1 Pet. i. 8.

¶ See WITBERFORCE'S Practical View, Chap. iii. Sect. ii. iii.

any subjects more calculated to interest the feelings than those which religion sets before us? Shall our hearts be moved by terrestrial objects,—by the trifles of a day,—or by the concerns of a fellow-worm; and yet feel no lively emotions in viewing the glories of God, the beauties of Immanuel, the wonders of redeeming love, and the riches of eternal salvation? Is it merely an intellectual service that God requires of us? No: he demands our affections: he expects us to love and serve him “with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength.” Here lukewarmness is wickedness. Every faculty, every affection must be consecrated to God. He who studies piety only as a science, is “dead in trespasses and sins.”—Look at the worship of the ancient saints, particularly as described in the book of Psalms. They served their redeeming God, not with those languid prayers and praises that seem to freeze on the lips; but with the animating strains of fervent devotion. The same spirit is breathed by New Testament believers; the same fervour warms them. Even in the midst of their argumentative Epistles to the Churches they break forth into expressions of ardent piety and rapturous joy. Of this we have many beautiful instances in the Epistles of Paul; particularly in those passages where he speaks of the love of Jesus. Whenever he touches on this string,

every tender feeling is awakened, and his whole soul is captivated and charmed.—The scripture affords us some specimens of the worship of heaven. No dull mathematical devotion is found there: but all is joy and transport, extasy and rapture. And why are the songs of angels and glorified saints recorded, but that we may learn to imbibe a portion of their spirit, and aspire after their celestial ardour?—Never let it be imagined, that our devotion can be too fervent, our love to Jesus too strong, our desires of heaven too eager, or our joy in a redeeming God too exhilarating. Unitarians may plead for a cold phlegmatic piety—for “religion in the frigid zone:” but, let it ever be the honour of their evangelical neighbours to cherish an ardent devotion, to glory in the cross of Christ, to triumph in the wonders of redeeming love, and to breathe after the enjoyment of God and of the heavenly bliss. If this is enthusiasm, may I ever feel its warmth! If this is to be vile, “I would yet be more vile than thus.”

It is too true, that there are many pretenders to devotion, who fancy that their sins are forgiven, while their conduct proves them to be strangers to justifying faith; and who mistake the workings of their own animal spirits, for the fervours of piety and the joys of the Holy Ghost. But is it any disparagement to religion, any more than to morality, that it is liable to be

counterfeited by the depraved and the worthless? —It is too true, that the hypocrite, or the weak christian, may pretend to supernatural impressions, and extraordinary communications from heaven. But is it fair,—is it candid, to charge their extravagancies on vital religion, and class the fervours of true devotion with the visions of Swedenborg, or the dreams of Joanna Southcott?

From your observations on Mr. Wesley's journals, and other circumstances, it is easy to see, against whom your remarks on conversions, and religious feelings are principally aimed. But, whatever instances of enthusiasm may appear among Mr. Wesley's followers, candour must allow, that their labours have been eminently successful in reforming the lives at least, of many of the most depraved of mankind. I bear them record, that they have a zeal for *morality* as well as for *religion*: nor am I afraid of going too far, when I venture to assert, that their zealous exertions have done more for promoting the one as well as the other within these thirty years, than all that has been effected by the dry lectures of unitarian moralists since the days of Socinus.

I am, &c.

LETTER XI.

On Religious Duties.

SIR,

As you have said so much against *vital* religion, it might be hoped, that you would at least spare the form of godliness, and say nothing to discountenance the observance of religious institutions: yet on this subject also, your hatred of enthusiasm, or some other principle, has betrayed you into expressions, which tend to overturn the foundations of all religion. You have indeed made some useful observations on religious duties, particularly on the exercise of prayer: but, instead of expressing your sorrow for the general neglect of these duties, and inculcating on your readers the importance of employing in such exercises some of those leisure hours which are too often consumed at the card-table or the tavern, the theatre or the ball-room, or in reading plays or novels; and instead of exhorting those who often waste the evening of the Lord's day in amusements or frivolous conversation, to improve these sacred hours in the

devotions of the family and the closet ;—you rather seem to lament that so much time is *mis-pent* in these exercises, which might be better employed in other duties! And though you have justly affirmed (p. 138) that “Religion is the great support of the moral duties ;” yet you allege that when men occupy much time in religious services, they both injure their morals, and expose themselves to ridicule and disgrace! “Such services can yield but little profit to the performers. They beget spiritual pride and self-righteousness, a contracted and bigoted disposition, but neither meekness, nor lowliness of mind, nor charity. Some of the hours that some people spend in these exercises, might be much better filled up, in taking care of their families, or in pursuing the labours of their callings. And those who have time for exercises of this kind, might devote some part of it very profitably in inculcating moral duties, &c.—These exercises would not be so apt to feed vanity, and would call forth no ridicule or disgrace. But this, I am afraid, is not the current of the present fashion ; the popular and overwhelming system is to teach any thing but morals.” (p. 87, 88.) It might be supposed, from these cautions, that the great bulk of mankind in the present day are so eager to attend prayer-meetings and engage in devotions, that by this means they neglect their business, forget

their families, and are inattentive to moral duties in general. Were such the effects of a frequent attendance on prayer-meetings and family devotions, the number of those who attend them is far too small to give any alarm. But is it so, that the few who are disposed to engage in such exercises are the most inattentive to business, and to the duties of life? Do they indeed hurt their morals by sometimes occupying those leisure hours in prayer and praise, which others are spending in levity and folly, in tipping or gaming, in talking of politics, or propagating scandal? Are those the most likely to grow proud, who are most frequently prostrating themselves before the infinite Jehovah? Will malevolence be most cherished among those who are most frequently holding communion together at the throne of grace, and most employed in contemplating the loving-kindness of the Lord? Let candour speak, and it will say, that those who are most attentive to devotional exercises are, in general, the most exemplary for industry, sobriety, honesty, benevolence, and every virtue.—The insinuation, that frequent devotions “call forth ridicule and disgrace,” might be expected from the mouth of a professed infidel: but from a teacher of religion it is truly detestable. What? Is it ridiculous and disgraceful to make religion our business,—to devote a part of our leisure hours to God, or to en-

croach occasionally on the hours of business, that we may attend to our spiritual and eternal interests? Nay rather, are not they acting a mad and disgraceful part, whose hearts are engrossed by the world, who neglect the worship of God, despise his sacred institutions, and expose their souls to everlasting ruin?

It is too true, that there are many who are regular in attending divine worship, who are entire strangers both to piety and virtue; but the same thing might be said of perhaps an equal number of those who perform the outward duties of morality: and if hypocrisy and pride be found in the one, they may exist to the same extent in the other. You indeed affirm (p. 128), that “the duties which men pay to their Maker require but few sacrifices, and may be easily counterfeited;” but I cannot conceive what greater difficulty, or greater self-denial, there is in counterfeiting moral duties. It is generally advantageous to be honest, faithful, temperate, dutiful to relations and neighbours; nay, even to have a character for benevolence and generosity. Is it a mighty sacrifice, then, for a man to assume the appearance of these moral virtues; which, though not congenial to his dispositions, are subservient to his interests? The sacrifices necessary for assuming “a form of godliness” are far from being inferior. There is not merely the sacrifice of time required, but the sacrifice

of amusements and pleasures, and, in general, of property and worldly interest; to which may be added, the sacrifice of reputation; for, by your own account, religious persons expose themselves to ridicule and disgrace, and must bear the reproach of methodism, preciseness, bigotry, and enthusiasm. If these sacrifices are trivial, whence is it, that, as you have acknowledged (p. 77), “great numbers, by their conduct, decide against the duty of worshipping God,” in opposition to “the original dictates of nature?” Their aversion to make these sacrifices cannot well be doubted. To a *good* man, indeed, it is no sacrifice to engage either in the duties of religion or of morality; for he takes a pleasure in both: but I am speaking of the comparative difficulty of *counterfeiting* the one and the other; and it seems rather to preponderate on the side of religion.

You accuse the friends of the doctrines of grace, of “placing religion and morality at variance,” and making the former to supersede the latter: “*Religion*, upon this system, is restricted almost entirely, to the public and private *exercises of religion*.”—This can be no great crime, to *restrict religion to religious exercises*; at least, if exercises of mind be included! But the meaning of this inaccurate expression is obvious from the following words: “And thus a great share of some people’s time is devoted to

praying and to preaching, whilst the duties we owe to our neighbour occupy but a very small portion of esteem, and when introduced, always with the caution, not to set any value upon them." (p. 128.) This is indeed a serious charge ; but happily it is without foundation. Evangelical divines never consider religion as comprising the whole duty of man, but regard morality also as essentially necessary to complete the christian character ; and, while they maintain that we cannot be justified by either, but only by the merits of Jesus ; they are far from saying that moral and religious duties are of no value ; for they know, that when these duties are genuine, they are "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." Where then is the resemblance between them and the ancient Pharisees ? What room is there for this invidious comparison, on which you dwell with so much complacency ? (p. 129, 142..145.)

But it is not surprising that your views of their character are so erroneous, since you have mistaken the character of the Pharisees themselves, which is delineated in scripture. Their wickedness did not consist in making religion a substitute for morality ; but in being equally destitute of both, while they made pretensions to each of them. In the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, we find the former

boasting as much of his moral virtues, as of his religious duties. The Pharisees were strangers to religion, as much as to morality; for the weightier matters of the law, which they neglected, consisted in *faith* and *the love of God*, as well as *judgment* and *mercy*.* Their strict observance of divine institutions would have been highly laudable, had it been accompanied with that inward, *vital* religion, which would have produced a uniform obedience to the whole law: even as Jesus said to them; "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." They were condemned, not for the frequency of their devotions, but for their insincerity and ostentation; not for making long prayers, but for lengthening their prayers by vain repetitions, and for a pretence; not for the strict observance of the divine institution of the sabbath, but for corrupting and misrepresenting this institution by their own traditions. They excluded from this day of God some works of mercy which he never intended to forbid; such as healing the sick, and plucking a few ears of corn for refreshment, in going to the synagogue or the temple or in returning home. But, while Christ corrected these errors, he never taught, that acts of piety are of less value than works of mercy. The text, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more

* Mat. xxiii. 23. Luke xi. 42.

than burnt-offerings,"* was not quoted by him for that purpose, nor has it any such meaning; but it intimates, that devotional exercises must not *exclude* works of mercy, and that true goodness and inward piety are superior to mere *outward* rites. Pretenders to morality, are as much related to the Pharisees, as pretenders to religion: and perhaps they have as many successors of the one class, as of the other.—That a strict regard to instituted ordinances is, of itself, no indication of a pharisaical spirit, is manifest from the example of Jesus himself. No Pharisee was more constant in attending the synagogue or the temple, none more regular in observing the solemn feasts; none made longer prayers than he, or spent more time in devotion, for on some occasions "he continued all night in prayer to God."† Nay, there was none more strict in observing the sabbath, according to the true intent of that institution; and the few cures which he wrought on that sacred day, were so far from interrupting him in preaching, that they were improved as occasions for the most important instructions; for which indeed they seem to have been principally designed.—Could it ever be expected, that He who came "to fulfil all righteousness,"‡ would treat with disrespect that sacred institution, which is no ceremonial rite, but holds a distinguished place

* Hof. vi. 6.

† Luke vi. 12.

‡ Mat. iii. 15.

among the precepts of the moral law ; and was so highly honoured by the prophets ? Let the words which Isaiah spake by “ the Spirit of Christ ” be ever impressed on our minds : “ If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day ; and call the sabbath a Delight, the Holy of the Lord, Honourable ; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words : then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.”* And let us also consider, that Jesus came “ not to destroy the law and the prophets ; but to fulfil them.”†

Here I am called to notice a fundamental error in your system, in regard to religious duties. You exalt morality above religion, and consider *religious* duties as of no moment except as the means of promoting the practice of *moral* duties. These strange notions are expressed in the following passages : “ Our Lord gave the preference to *works of mercy*. The sabbath and every ordinance of religion are instituted for enforcing *these higher duties* ; and, if they keep not these in view, they are of themselves of no value. All ritual observances and the sabbath itself are instituted for the encouragement and support of moral goodness ; and whenever such observances come in competition with them, it is easy to determine which should give way.”—“ On that

* Isa. lviii, 13, 14.

† Mat. v, 17.

great day, his judgment will principally turn on the great duties of Morality, and particularly on the duties of Benevolence. *This is the most excellent and the most amiable part of the duties of man.*" (p. 143, 144, 163.)—If these passages do not mean, that moral duties are superior to religious duties, I know not what to make of them. That such a sentiment is repugnant at once to reason and scripture, it will not be difficult to shew. For : what is *duty* ? Obedience to God, or doing his will. And, in what does this obedience consist ? Not surely in the mere outward act—the *opus operatum* ; but in the conformity of the heart to the divine will, producing that act. Outward acts are acts of obedience, only in as far as they proceed from this inward submission of the soul unto God. Hence it is plain, that neither religious duties, nor moral duties, can consist in mere outward actions ; and that God never enjoins us to engage in the outward actions *alone* ; for where the *heart* is wanting, these actions have nothing of the nature of duties, or works of obedience to God. Outward acts of *worship*, and of *morality*, therefore, are not required *on their own account*, but as means of cherishing and bringing into exercise those inward dispositions which must accompany them. The mere outward acts, then, either of worship or of morality, can bear no comparison with acts of *real* obedience : “ Re-

hold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." But it cannot be said, that outward *moral* performances are better than outward *religious* services ; for there is no real goodness in either, abstractedly considered. It may indeed be urged, that outward moral actions are beneficial to men, whereas outward worship is wholly unprofitable to God : but, let it be considered, that outward devotions may also be profitable to men, by operating as an example, and in various other respects. Besides, the circumstance noticed, makes no difference in the *goodness* of these actions before God ; for he has as little need of our acts of charity, as of our acts of worship : he could supply the poor without our aid, and has no occasion for our assistance to make his creatures happy.—If then, there is any excellence in moral duties above religious duties, it cannot be in the mere outward acts, but only in the inward exercises which produce or attend them. Now, the spiritual exercises which enter into acts of true devotion are admiration, gratitude, holy desires, resignation, confidence, hope ; and in short, all those holy dispositions which are summed up in love to God, which, as you have well observed (p. 73), is " the foundation " of all religion, and which I may call *the essence of piety*. But is there any thing more excellent in those dispositions which belong unto moral duties ?

Is there more goodness in the exercise of our affections towards our fellow-creatures, than in directing them immediately to the great and amiable Creator?—Then the second table of the law should have been placed first, and love to man, which is the sum of morality, should have been called “the first and great commandment!” Then also, since the greatest happiness must consist in exercising the most holy dispositions, it follows, that our supreme felicity, cannot be placed in loving and enjoying God, but in the love and enjoyment of creatures; and, instead of a heaven where all is devotion, we must look for a heaven resembling the Mahometan paradise! If moral performances are the “higher duties,” and religious ordinances have been instituted only for enforcing them, how strangely was the Psalmist deluded, when he counted “a day in God’s courts better than a thousand,” and earnestly longed “to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple!”* How grossly have the saints in every age been mistaken, when they attended the ordinances, *chiefly* to glorify and enjoy their God; and regarded morality, not as the *end* of religion, but as its necessary *ornament*!†

Devotional exercises are so far from being inferior to moral duties, that the latter cannot be

* Pl. lxxxiv. 10. xxvii. 5.

† Tit. ii. 1. 10. Eph. iv. 1, 2.

truly holy and acceptable to God, but when they partake of a portion of religion. Love to man is not morally good, unless it is subordinate to, and regulated by, love to God. Without this supreme love, which is the essence of religion, there can be no true obedience to God; and consequently no holiness. In every genuine saint, this love will be the regulating principle, and will extend its influence to the whole temper and conduct; according to the well-known command; "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."*—Hence, there are many actions which have a certain kind of goodness, and which may be called *negatively good*, in as much as the neglect of them would be criminal, which nevertheless do not partake of the nature of holiness, as they do not proceed, either directly or indirectly, from a sense of duty to God, and a supreme regard for him; but arise *wholly* from other principles. For instance, the affection of a mother to her offspring, if not accompanied and regulated by love to God, has no more of holiness in it, than the attachment of a hen to her chickens, or of a bear to her whelps. In like manner, those acts of compassion which proceed *merely* from instinctive feeling, and those acts of apparent goodness which are *wholly* owing to a good natural temper, have no more

* 1 Cor. x. 31.

holiness in them, than the meekness of the lamb, or the gentleness of the dove. Even when apparently good actions are done from a sense of the natural fitness of things, yet, where a principle of obedience to God does not enter, there is still no real holiness. Accordingly, Christ assures us, that if we only love those who love us, and do good to those who do good to us, this is no evidence that we are holy. Profligates are often kind to profligates; infidels to infidels; and possibly, even devils may be kind to devils. None of those works that are called *moral* have any real holiness in them, but in as far as they are done under the influence of a *religious* principle,—a principle of obedience to God, and supreme love to him.

Yet, while religion must be viewed as, *in itself*, of *primary* importance, and the true *foundation* of morality; the latter is equally indispensable in the christian character: for wherever this love to God exists, it will necessarily lead to a universal obedience to his will. Hence it is, that religious duties are not only of vast moment, in themselves, but are eminently conducive to moral goodness. Hence also, we may see the reason why the reality of religion may be tried by “the test of the moral duties.” (p. 129) It is not because the latter are greater than the former, but because the same principle which produces the one must necessarily lead to the other.

And here a perfect reciprocity takes place: for, as an immoral life cannot consist with real religion; even so a profane life is equally incompatible with *true* morality. Drunkards, liars, and thieves are destitute of piety; but swearers and sabbath-breakers are no less destitute of moral virtue: and the outward appearances of morality in the latter, are as pharisaical as the outward appearances of religion in the former. The idea that there can be “a good life,” where there is not a strict observance of religious duties, is altogether absurd. (p. 144, 145.)

Your repeated assertions (p. 124, 128, 144) that, to suppose that God requires acts of worship as important in themselves, is to represent him as “vainglorious,” and “pleased with courtly flattery,” are presumptuous in the extreme. What! Are the glorious hosts of heaven, who are praising God day and night, nothing but a crowd of flatterers? Are his people on earth, whom he hath formed for himself to “shew forth his praises,” whom he hath redeemed for this express purpose,* engaged in flattering him, if their highest aim, in their acts of devotion, is his glory? Would they not rather be mockers of God, if their chief object in these duties were their own moral improvement, or any thing else in preference to his honour? After all the exhortations which God has given us,

* Isa. xliiii. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 9.

to glorify and praise him by acts of devotion ; shall we dare to say, that his own glory is not the end for which he appointed them ? Away with such blasphemous ideas ! God is “worthy to be praised,” nay, he is “exalted above all blessing and praise ;” so that the highest praises which men or angels can give him are so far from being *flattery*, that they fall infinitely short of the honours which he deserves. It is true, that God has appointed religious duties for our happiness, as well as his glory ; for the worship of heaven is at once the work and the blessedness of its inhabitants. It is true also, that our praises cannot profit him ; but this remark, as well as the former, will also apply to our moral duties : he has no need of the one, any more than of the other. The same considerations which bind us to obey him, equally bind us to praise and adore him.

That your notions on this subject are wholly unscriptural, is manifest, even from the principal passage which you adduce to support them, viz. the account of the proceedings of Christ in the day of judgment, contained in the 25th Chapter of Matthew. For, what does Christ there say of the righteous ? “Ye visited *me*,—ye came unto *me*,—ye have done it unto *me* :” In which words, he clearly intimates, that it is only when our works of benevolence are done unto *him*, from a supreme *love to him*, and a

regard to his glory, that they are proper evidences of a holy nature. Nor can we say that in that place he is speaking of the *highest* duties of the righteous, any more than of the *greatest* sins of the wicked : and be it observed, to the confusion of your system, that he represents the wicked as condemned, not for flagrant crimes, but for *mere* omissions,—for “imperfections and deficiencies!” He intended to teach us, that truly gracious acts, though of an inferior kind, are sufficient evidences of our being in a justified state ; and, on the other hand, that a mere *negative* goodness will be of no avail, and sins of *omission* will be sufficient tokens of enmity to Jesus.

You mention the preference which Paul gives to charity above faith and hope, as a proof that morality is superior to religion. (p. 163.) It is true, that Paul recommends charity as *more abiding* than faith and hope ; but he does not say that faith is less necessary, in our *present* state ; far less does he affirm, that love to man is greater than love to God.

It is to no purpose to say (p. 89), that your strictures on prayer, and other religious duties “are not meant to discourage them.” Whatever they might be meant for, this is their natural tendency. Mankind, you know, are disposed to “keep within the measure of the standard” proposed to them (p. 116) ; and those who

are averse to religious exercises will eagerly catch at such remarks, to excuse their neglect of the sabbath and of the ordinances.—One of your unitarian brethren, Mr. Belsham,* expressly condemns the sabbath as hurtful to morality! He says indeed, that “to the christian every day is a sabbath.” This remark sounds finely, but I never heard it used, except by those who wished only to make *every sabbath a work-day*. That this is Mr. Belsham’s design, he plainly tells us, when he observes, that “a virtuous man is performing his duty to the Supreme Being, as really and as acceptably, when he is pursuing the proper business of life, or even when enjoying its innocent and decent amusements, as when he is offering direct addresses to him in the closet or in the temple.” So, it seems, the sabbath may be as well spent in amusements, as in divine worship!!

It is not surprising that you have said nothing on the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper: for, if your system is true, they are only unmeaning ceremonies. What can be more incongruous, than for a unitarian to baptize “in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?” What more inconsistent, than for persons to use Christ’s words in the institution of the supper, “This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remis-

* See his REVIEW of Mr. WILBERFORCE’s Treatise.

sion of sins ;” when they believe that Christ’s blood has no more connexion with the remission of their sins than the blood of Paul or of Stephen? I wonder that unitarians have not wholly laid aside these institutions. The new unitarian version* could easily have effected this *improvement*: at least, as easily as it has set aside the evangelical doctrines, and got rid of satan, and of hell itself !

It is observable, that in all your performance you never once recommend the reading of the scriptures. Perhaps you are aware that the Bible, as it has been hitherto received, is unfriendly to *your* gospel ; and you may judge it best to defer such recommendations, till you have introduced the unitarian Testament, as a companion to your new unitarian Hymn-book.

I am, &c.

* In speaking of that Version in Letter ii. p. 46, I have used an expression which may be deemed unfair : “ Whole Books are cut off as SPURIOUS, and others as doubtful.” I should have said : “ Whole Books are cut off as DOUBTFUL, IF NOT SPURIOUS :” for the framers of that version only venture to call the rejected Books DOUBTFUL.

Here I may also notice another inaccuracy into which I have inadvertently fallen in the same Letter, p. 11, I have asked, “ Who is there that rejects the doctrine of justification by faith alone, who does not also deny the atonement ?” I should rather have said, “ Who is there that pleads for justification by works alone, as you have done, who does not also deny the atonement ?” For there are some, who hold, however inconsistently, that an atonement is necessary, for the acceptance of our faith and obedience as our justifying righteousnesses.

LETTER XII.

On Religious Principles.

SIR,

AS you wish to exalt MORALITY above religious *duties*, so you also propose this darling idol as a substitute for religious *truths*. You allege, that it is of no moment what opinions we adopt, if our conduct be good; and, that all the points in dispute among professed christians are insignificant: “It is no where said that you are to be judged by your opinions, by your professed principles, but clearly by your works.” (p. 162, 165.) “The disputes, the quarrels, the animosities, the dissensions and hatreds, have *all* sprung up about *things of no value*.” (p. 110.)—To what purpose, then, have you so fiercely attacked the friends of evangelical truth? Why disturb them in the possession of their harmless heresies, and thus kindle the flames of religious discord, when the matters in dispute are so trivial?—But let me contrast with these remarks, what you have elsewhere said of some of these *dark tenets*: “They are fast paving the way to infidelity—letting in immorality like a flood—a deadly poison,” which even “the excellent characters and exemplary lives” of those who profess them, cannot counteract! (p. 120, 118, 121.) How the same things can be of no moment, and

yet so dreadfully pernicious, is a mystery which *rational* christians perhaps may believe: for even they can swallow mysteries. Probably your opinion is, that it is vain to contend *for* these points, but of great importance to dispute *against* them!

That there are matters of inferior moment, about which christians have often disputed keenly, will not be denied: but that the doctrines of grace cannot be numbered among these trivial points, may be seen by the slightest examination. Even their connexion with the temper and conduct of men is of the highest consequence. Is it of no moment, whether we believe, that Jesus is our God, or merely our fellow-creature? That he died to expiate our guilt, or died only as a martyr? That we must receive salvation as a free gift, or purchase it? That the Spirit sanctifies us, or that we sanctify ourselves? That we must serve God *from love*, or serve him *for hire*? It is needless to prove, that these two classes of principles will have a widely different influence on our temper and conduct: so that a transition from the one to the other will alter the whole system of our motives, and views, and exercises of mind. Our opinions, therefore, on such subjects, affect the very vitals of morality; and our eternal interests are deeply concerned in them.

But may not the very adopting of a system of errors be itself a crime, which God will punish in the day of judgment? Whence arise gross

errors? Is it merely from incapacity, or the want of the means of information; and not rather from the depravity of the heart? What is the cause of infidelity? Not any defect in the proofs which support christianity; as even your own "Popular Evidences" testify. Nor can it be ascribed to mere want of intellect. It lies in the corruptions of the heart,—pride, the love of sin, and an aversion to the restraints of God's law. These beget *a wish*, that the gospel were false; and this impious wish is the *root* of infidelity. The influence of the will on the decisions of the understanding is well known. Why is even the most upright and intelligent man not allowed to be a proper judge in his own cause? Not because his mind is weaker when applied to his own affairs, than in other cases; but because self-love is apt to blind the understanding, and bias the judgment. To use a favourite phrase of yours, men "work themselves up" into a belief of what they eagerly desire to be true: and hence, it is easy to see how errors in the head may originate in the heart. Accordingly the scripture speaks of unbelief, error, and even ignorance, not as *infirmities*, but as *crimes*,—crimes which expose men to God's righteous judgments. They are not traced to weakness of intellect, but to a hatred of God, of holiness, and of the truth.*

I am, &c.

* 2 Thes. ii. 10., 12. 2 Pet. ii. 1 iii. 16, 17. John iii. 18., 21. 2 Thes. i. 8., 10.

LETTER XIII.

Concluding Remarks.

SIR,

HAVING endeavoured, in the foregoing Letters, to vindicate the doctrines of grace which are attacked, and expose the leading errors which are maintained, in your Statement; I shall now, in this concluding Letter, offer some general reflections on the spirit and tendency of your system.

It is observable, that all the doctrines which you directly attack, are misrepresented. Instead of candidly stating, and fairly combating the sentiments of your opponents, you, in every instance, impute to them some heresy which they never hold. This surely does not argue a state of mind the most favourable for investigating truth. It seems to betray a rooted enmity against the doctrines attacked, and a fixed resolution to condemn them without a fair hearing. Is this acting like one who "relies on the justice of the cause which he is labouring to support?" (p. viii.)

In the general tenour of your doctrines, there appears a striking contrast between your religion and that of Christ. The religion of Jesus is humbling and mortifying; demanding such a separation from the world, as will generally incur its

enmity.*—But your religion flatters the pride of the understanding; countenances the boast of merit; requires little or no self-denial, not even the sorrows of repentance; seems to recognise the follies of the world as “innocent amusements;” and does not expose men to “ridicule and disgrace,” reproach and persecution. Here the young are encouraged in viewing parental discipline as “unnecessary austerity” (p. 121): the gay and thoughtless, to whom religion is a burden, are gratified by hearing prayer-meetings cried down, and the strict observance of the sabbath discountenanced: nor is any one alarmed by viewing the terrors of the Lord; for the descriptions of the wrath to come are carefully softened (p. 165): polite ears are not offended with the sound of *hell*; and even those whose mouths are familiar with *damnation*, must not hear it denounced against their crimes.

A religion so smooth and easy, so congenial to the dispositions of mankind, is sure to obtain patronage. So long as pride prevails, so long as carnal pleasure is loved, so long as an aversion to serious godliness is felt; such a system will be welcomed. Where weight of argument fails, there is still enough to make the scale preponderate in its favour. The biassed mind “works itself up” into the belief of such principles, and

* Luke ix. 23. xiv. 26, 27. 33. xviii. 14. John xv. 18, 19. 1 John ii. 15. iii. 13. 1 Cor. i. 18, 23. 31.

pronounces all contrary doctrines *absurdity* and *phrensy*.—This gives unitarians a great advantage over their opponents,—an advantage, of which, in attacking evangelical religion, they know well how to avail themselves. Against such arts, the strongest arguments from reason or scripture are but a feeble defence.

Yet, let it not be supposed that the religion of Jesus is inconsistent with true pleasure. It is common to consider those who withdraw from fashionable levities, and spend much time in devotion, as morose and gloomy; strangers to joy themselves, and enemies to it in others. But this is a gross mistake. Gemine piety affords the sweetest pleasures;—pleasures far superior to all the frivolous joys of the world; pleasures that are noble and angelic, solid and durable.

In various passages (p. 83, 90, 108) you complain of those who preach “the terrors of the law, and the threatenings of eternal wrath;” and you seem to impute this kind of preaching to a gloomy or malevolent spirit. As well might you ascribe gloom and malice to the divine word itself, which abounds with threatenings. Some of the most tremendous threatenings may be found in the sermons of Christ. And what malevolence can there be in publishing the “terrors of the Lord,” along with the joys of his salvation? His threatenings, as well as his promises, bespeak his love; for both are intend-

ed to bring us to salvation. Is the preacher who “speaks smooth things,” and lulls men into security, to their eternal ruin, more benevolent, than he who faithfully “warns them to flee from the wrath to come?”

And now, Sir, permit me, in concluding these Letters, solemnly to declare, that, however severe some of my strictures may appear, none of them have proceeded from a spirit of malevolence. Far be it from me to entertain resentment against you : you never did me a personal injury. God is my witness, that I earnestly desire that this Vindication of his truths may be profitable to your soul, as well as to the souls of others. The time draws nigh, when we must stand before the tribunal of that divine Lord of whom we have preached and written. May we then meet at his right hand : no more to dispute or disagree, but to join in adoring a Three-one God, and extolling the wonders of redeeming love !

I am, Sir,

Your sincere well-wisher,

GEORGE YOUNG.

WHITBY,
July 16, 1812.

1

LETTER

TO

THE REV. T. WATSON :

Occasioned by

HIS PAMPHLET, ENTITLED, "EVANGELICAL
PRINCIPLES EXEMPLIFIED."

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BY GEORGE YOUNG.

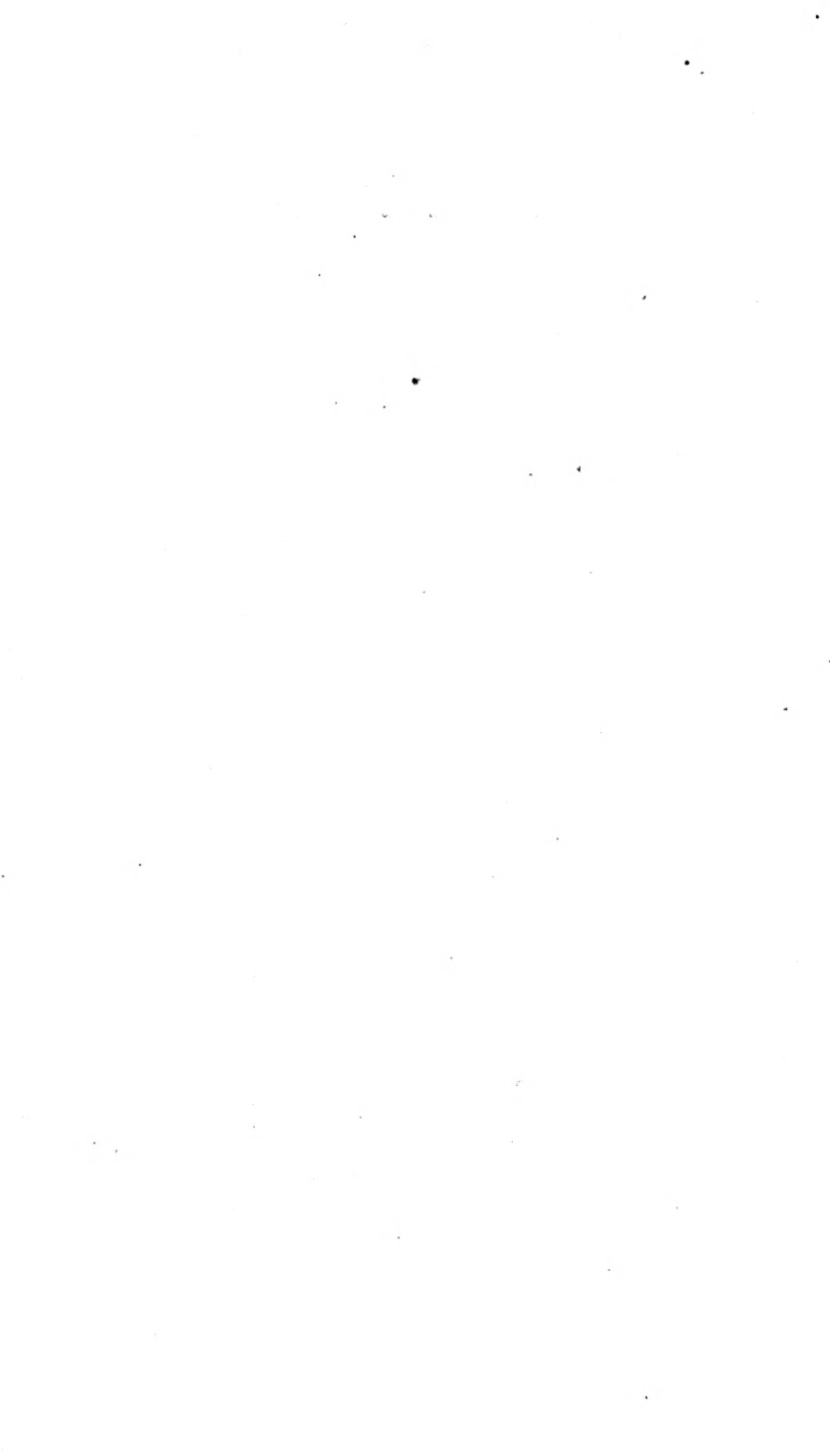
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A LETTER

TO THE REV. T. WATSON, &c.



SIR,

IN the Letters which I published in answer to your Plain Statement, I expressed a wish that my attempt to vindicate the injured truths of scripture might prove beneficial to yourself. This, however, was the language of desire rather than of hope. It was too much to expect, that my publication would be the means of reclaiming you from errors which had been so long and so fondly cherished. Whatever good might be done to others, there was reason to fear, that no salutary effect would be produced on your own mind.

Yet, as I was not conscious of acting dishonourably, either in the design or execution of my work, I had a right to expect honourable treatment. I had indeed animadverted with severity on some parts of your Statement; but in no instance was I sensible of using more severity than the case seemed to require; much less of doing you injustice, or of acting from principles which I could not openly avow.—What then was my surprize, when, upon reading your recent publication, which you have named “Evan-

gical Principles exemplified, " I found my Vindication imputed to the worst of passions and the basest of motives, and myself held up to public detestation, as a wretch who deserves to be hissed out of society? You accuse me of " rudeness and illiberality, — bigotry and intolerance, — hatred and malice, — envy and jealousy, undermining the character and interests of a neighbour, ostentation, vain-boasting, and spiritual pride, — unparalleled presumption and consummate arrogance, — profanity, hypocrisy, — and lying unto God!! " You describe me as a rascal destitute of integrity, on whom honour, moral rectitude and delicacy, will be no check; — from whom an honest answer cannot be expected; — whose chief aim is evidently to excite prejudices against you among those with whom you are connected as a minister of religion, to fix a stain upon your character, to ruin your usefulness and to degrade you in society; — and who, after doing all the injury in his power, stabbing you in your character, and in your dearest interests, presumes, with heaven-daring profanity, to crave the divine blessing on such diabolical labours!!! (p. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, &c.)

Now, were I guilty of even half the crimes detailed in this black libel, I must indeed be regarded as a disgrace, not only to evangelical religion, but to human nature: and it would be vain for me to speak or to write in my own behalf; for who would believe such a villain? But, if it shall appear, on the contrary, that these accusations are wholly unfounded; then, the charges preferred against me must revert upon yourself, the stigma which you would fix on my principles must be fixed on your own, and your pamphlet, instead of retaining its present name, must be called " Unitarian Principles exemplified; " as ex-

hibiting a specimen of the influence of such principles on the temper and conduct.

What then are the grounds of these serious charges? Was there any thing in my general character that seemed to countenance them? On this head I am so well satisfied, as to think, that scarcely any who know me will imagine that I could act a part so base and criminal.— Did my conduct towards you, as an individual, afford any indication of such malignity and wickedness? On the contrary, you allow, that my behaviour to you in private never betrayed any symptoms of enmity, but fully corresponded with those expressions of regard for your best interests, which I have published. This very circumstance, by a strange kind of perverseness, you interpret as a token of the basest hypocrisy: I quote your own *polite* and *dignified* language; “In our accidental meetings he accosted me as usual, by stealing forth the hand of friendship, piping out professions of regard, smiling also with a treacherous countenance, for at the same time, it now appears, that hatred and envy were rankling in his heart!” (p. 3.) How far this “now appears” remains to be considered; but here is an acknowledgment, that no presumptive proofs of my guilt appeared in my private conduct — You have indeed more than hinted a dark suspicion that I have privately interfered with your congregation (p. 4. Note); but I defy you to produce the slightest evidence in support of this insinuation. With some of your hearers I have been in habits of friendship; and if any of them asked my opinion of your Plain Statement, honesty required that, if I answered them at all, I should condemn it. I recollect too, that in one family I expressed my regret at the introduction of the unitarian hymn-book. In no other way have I ever interfered with your

people. If I have tried to entice any individual of them from your ministry, let that individual come forward and bear witness against me.

It appears then, that your accusations must be founded wholly on my answer to your Statement: I therefore proceed to consider what evidences of my wickedness you have produced from my Letters: and it will be proper to begin with the proofs of my malice: for upon this the charges of hypocrisy and treachery, profanity and perjury, entirely depend.

You complain (p. 4) that I have called you by names that tend to excite prejudice; that is, I have called your principles unitarian, and have alleged that you are either an Arian or a Socinian: but if I wronged you by such appellations, why have you confirmed your title to them, by the most shameful misrepresentations of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the Divinity of Christ? (p. 19, 20). I have charged you with believing heresies which you have not avowed, and denying doctrines which you have merely omitted: but, if the accusation was false, why have you not boldly disavowed these heresies, and acknowledged these doctrines? You “never promised to exhibit the whole of your creed:” yet since the articles exhibited are necessarily connected with those which are studiously concealed, was it not my duty not only to expose the errors which you had published, but those also which form a part of the same system, but which you had thought it prudent to withhold. In the passages to which you thus refer as indications of malice, there is indeed sufficient evidence of hostility to your doctrines, but not a vestige of enmity against yourself.

You produce as another proof of malice, my having noticed the favourable reception which your Statement obtained among persons tinc-

tured with infidelity. This, you remark, is an intimation, that all who do not embrace my principles are infidels. (p. 5). By what kind of logic is this inference drawn? If you should say, that my book has been favourably received among baptists, would this be an intimation that all who do not embrace your principles, or who favour my publication, are baptists? To trace the affinity between unitarianism and infidelity, is no evidence of personal enmity. It is done by almost every author who has written against unitarianism; and the severest remarks on the subject, in my Letters, are quoted from the excellent work of Dr. Magee *on Atonement and Sacrifice*. Your display of profane wit on the subject of satan's existence (p. 42), and your remarks on priestcraft, hot-bed christians, crusading among the heathen, &c. will not tend to convince the public, that your principles bear no resemblance to deism.

You exclaim loudly against my taking notice of the introduction of the new collection of psalms and hymns into your congregation, in the room of Dr. Watts's. But as the publication of your Statement was the forerunner of this change, I can see nothing unfair, much less any thing malicious, in mentioning it: for it served to illustrate the tendency of your principles, and to prove that I did you no injustice in calling you a unitarian. You indeed assert that I have misnamed this hymn-book; but this I cannot acknowledge, till you shew me that it is used in any congregation, where the minister believes in the doctrine of the Trinity. It may indeed be called the *universal* hymn-book in the same sense in which the system of unitarians may be called the universal gospel: for a great proportion of the hymns may be used not only by christians

and Jews, but even by Turks and infidels. You may possibly get Cleanthes's hymn to Jupiter inserted in the next edition. Perhaps too, some of the ancient hymns to Mercury or Apollo may be a *useful* accession.

But the charge of malice seems chiefly to rest on my insinuating, that your care to conceal the more obnoxious parts of your system proceeds from a fear of offending some of your friends. (p. 4). Even here, however, it will be difficult to discern any symptoms of malignity. In speaking of your cautious method, I was naturally led to inquire into its causes; and to hazard a conjecture on the subject, could be no indication of enmity. But supposing it to be true, that I meant in these passages to apprise your people of the nature and tendency of your scheme, can such a design be termed malicious? If I believe the doctrines which I have vindicated, it is impossible to divest myself of compassion for your people, as well as for yourself; and to warn them of their danger must be an act of benevolence. Even upon your own principles it could only be considered as mistaken kindness. And if the action itself is good, its connexion with your interests, or with mine, must be out of the question. Had your Popular Evidences ruined the trade of any person, whose support depended on the prevalence of infidelity, could such an one complain that you had maliciously "stabbed him in his character, and in his dearest interests?" The tendency of your Plain Statement is to bring evangelical principles into disgrace, and thus to disperse the congregations of those who preach them; and you seem pleased with the idea that they "thought their craft in danger" (p. 2); yet would it be fair to say, that the chief aim of that performance was to

scatter, the congregations of evangelical ministers, “to fix a stain on their character, to ruin their usefulness, and to degrade them in society?”

But indeed, so far was I from indulging in the thoughts of hurting your interests in this respect, that, in resolving to publish an answer to your Statement, I laid my account with forfeiting the friendship of all your people; and it was not without a considerable sacrifice of feeling, that I could prevail on myself to incur the displeasure of some whom, on various accounts, I have reason to respect.

These are all the passages which you have produced as proofs of my malice. The severity of some of my remarks may also be thought to countenance the charge. But where have I done you any injustice? Where have I attacked your character, except in as far as it is necessarily connected with your writings? Where have I tried to hold you up as an object of hatred? I have viewed your principles with abhorrence, your calumnies with detestation, your reasonings with contempt,—but yourself with compassion. Some instances of severity might well be expected in replying to such a book. You profess indeed (p. 2) to have “preserved the most tender attention and respect for those” whose principles you attacked. But how did this “tender attention and respect” appear?—By telling them that they “take care to work themselves into the number of the elect; and then, with a savage satisfaction, surrender the bulk of mankind to eternal misery,”—by calling them pharisees and hypocrites,—by charging them with “establishing a system of falsehood and deceit, and banishing truth and integrity.”—and by other expressions of regard, equally consistent with truth, and equally *tender and respectful!*

The charge of malice being now, I trust, completely refuted, it will be easy to dispose of the remaining counts in the indictment; for since the charges of hypocrisy and treachery, profanity and perjury, intolerance and bigotry, with several others, all rest upon this, they must fall to the ground along with it. As to envy and jealousy, it is needless to say any thing; for I have yet to learn, that either your celebrity as an author, or your popularity as a preacher, is such as to excite envy. To the charge of "wilful and gross misrepresentation" it is impossible to reply; for you have not quoted a single instance in which I have misrepresented you at all.

The proofs of my rudeness and incivility, seem to be wholly drawn from the circumstance of my addressing the Vindication to yourself: but though this form was adopted for the sake of convenience, why should it preclude me from honestly expressing my sentiments? Had I complimented you on the accuracy of your statements, the extent of your biblical learning, the acuteness of your reasonings, and the candour of your reflections, you might have thought me extremely polite; but I should then have appeared in my own eyes to resemble the unprincipled villain whom you have described. As a noted instance of rudeness you refer more than once to a passage in my fifth Letter, where I have said that, "in the whole of your observations on this point," viz. the doctrine of man's inability, "you betray a total ignorance of the subject, or something much worse than ignorance." Your perversions of that doctrine are so palpable that I could scarcely impute them to ignorance alone: especially as I was not then so well acquainted with your ignorance of divinity as I now am, since the reading of this pamphlet.

You seem to feel peculiar delight in exposing my vanity and pride, my “unparalleled presumption” and “consummate arrogance.” In regard to the passages in the second Letter, where my vanity has been chiefly displayed, you have tried to cure it by leaving me nothing to be proud of, except the honour of having a number of learned friends. For the knowledge of your blunders concerning heathen morality I was indebted to the British Critic, and the “artillery of quotations” brought to attack you on that point, was collected from my friends. (p. 6, 7, 8.) It happens however, unfortunately for my vanity, that I have never read the Review of your Statement in the British Critic; and, though I have nothing to boast of in detecting a mistake so obvious, I was not aware that it had been publicly noticed. With respect to my “artillery of quotations,” I owe nothing to private friendship, except that I borrowed from a friend three volumes of Cicero’s Works, which I happened not to have. For the number of these quotations I have already apologized, (Vindic. p. 24, 25.) Whatever share of vanity I may have in common with many other authors, I trust, my chief aim was of a much nobler kind than either the gratification of my vanity, or the mortification of yours.

That I have spoken with some confidence concerning the truth of the fundamental doctrines of christianity, cannot be denied. God forbid that I should ever hesitate in acknowledging them! That I have, in some places, held up your reasonings to contempt, is equally unquestionable: and I leave it with the public to decide, whether such passages are the offspring of vanity or not. To you it seems, they bespeak “unparalleled presumption” and “con-

summate arrogance." But there is a good old heathenish precept, *Know thyself*, which it may be of use both for you and me to follow more closely. Perhaps there are many whose ideas of your talents as a philosopher, and especially of your learning as a divine, are not higher than my own.

This leads me to notice what appears to be the grand source of all the shameful invectives and foul abuse with which this pamphlet is filled. They may be traced to the workings of bitter mortification and keen resentment. I have presumed to detect your ignorance, to lay open your gross misrepresentations, to expose the weakness of your arguments, and hold up your silly criticisms to ridicule; nay, shocking to tell! I have dared to class you with those ephemeral writers, whose dull productions scarcely outlive themselves.—Aye, here is the dreadful crime that has numbered me with the vilest miscreants! Here is the atrocious deed that has fixed an indelible stigma on my character! This was enough to stir up the wrath even of a cool philosopher, and produce such a mighty effervescence of passion.

And now, Sir, let the public judge, whose principles are most exemplified, and most disgraced by this controversy. If I have said any thing severe, any thing rude, surely you have repaid me an hundred-fold: if you have called my Letters "the blood-hounds of orthodoxy, sent forth to hunt you down" (p. 5), much more may your remarks on them be compared to the efforts of a wounded snake, that is hissing and spitting venom, when it is incapable of reaching its assailant.

But it is not on me only that you seek to wreak your vengeance; your invectives are li-

berally dealt out to all who have the misfortune to come in your way. One might be tempted to suppose it an article in your creed, that none who oppose your principles are capable of acting from any honourable motive: for you are determined to view every thing which they speak or do, in the worst light. Were any alarmed at the appearance of your Statement? They were not influenced by any love for the truths which you had attacked: no, "they thought their craft in danger." (p. 2). The Reviewer in the Methodist Magazine called it "a heathenish book;" for this good reason, that it contains little more of religion than what may be found in the writings of some heathen authors: and his expression is *charitably* interpreted as a "renunciation of every virtue that appears in the heathen moralists!" (p. 12.) Do Arminians and Calvinists agree in condemning your principles? It is an iniquitous league, —Herod and Pilate united to crush the innocent advocate of morality. (p. 21.) Do they commend one another in any thing? It is all flattery;—paying and returning compliments. (p. 20 21.) Are the friends of evangelical truth liberal? It is ostentation. (p. 27.) Are they active in sending the gospel to the unenlightened nations? They are "crusading among the heathen." (p. 41.) Does a missionary find pleasure in reading Edwards's *Sermon on the Justice of God in the damnation of sinners*? He is not pleased at finding an important doctrine of scripture ably vindicated, and vindicated in a manner peculiarly fitted to awaken thoughtless sinners and lead them to eternal life: No, no; it would be too candid to make this supposition: he feels a diabolical satisfaction in viewing the torments of the damned!!! (p. 46.)

“ Judge not, that ye be not judged.” Let us see how you could bear to be examined by your own standard. In various parts of your writings, you have vindicated, with apparent satisfaction, the justice of God in the miseries and death, both of men and of the inferior animals. O strange! How could you rejoice in the woes of mankind, and the tortures and slaughter of brutes? In this pamphlet (p. 30), you have considered death as a great blessing to the human race, as it carries off the superfluous population, to make room for survivors. What precious benefits then are war, famine, and pestilence! They are but weeding the world, that there may be room for us to grow in it. When the Gazette announces the slaughter of thousands, this must be blessed news to such a “ lovely saint.” In your Plain Statement, you have repeatedly spoken, and with seeming pleasure, of the justice of God in excluding sinners from happiness; nay, in making “ a final and everlasting separation between the righteous and the wicked.” (Pl. St. p. 40.) What? Can you also “ enjoy with rapture this delightful picture, which represents the eternal punishment of sinners?” (p. 32.) “ Can there be a rational creature, who can extract pleasure from such subjects?” (p. 46.)

You see, from this specimen, what might be made of your writings, were they to be meted with your own measure.

Having answered your charges against myself, it remains that I take some notice of what you have written in reply to my Letters. Here it is unnecessary to say much; for you have scarcely brought forward any thing that deserves to be noticed, You have repeated misrepresentations already corrected, and objections al-

ready answered : and you have perverted a number of my expressions ; but it will be difficult to find an instance in which you fairly meet my arguments. What indeed can be expected but a display of ignorance, when a man presumes to write on subjects which he has never studied? “ They have appeared to me always so dark and inexplicable, and of so little use to genuine piety and real goodness, that I have ever thought it mispent time to occupy myself with them. ” (p. 18.) Such is your acknowledgment in regard to some of those articles, the whole of which, at your entrance into the ministry, you professed to believe and promised to maintain ! That you have never investigated some of the subjects on which you have written, may indeed be inferred from your professed ignorance of the Works of President Edwards (p. 46) ; a man, whose name will be revered, and whose writings will be admired, in the churches of Christ, long after your Plain Statement, with its scurrilous appendix, shall have sunk into merited oblivion.

It must be owned, however, that along with this ignorance, a considerable share of cunning is discovered. Some of your apologies, perversions, and objections are artfully expressed. You have prudently avoided meeting me on some of those points in which you are most vulnerable, and have chiefly attacked me on those subjects, in which you have the prejudices of a great portion of professed christians on your side. And where you have not encountered my arguments, you have adopted the wisest method of answering them by pronouncing them “ dogmatical assertions, nonsense, contradictions, jargon, ” and what not.

It is curious to read your apology for that passage in your Statement which misrepresents the

heathen morality. It is "an unguarded expression." (p. 6);—a pretty long *expression*, to be sure, occupying a whole page! This *expression*, it seems, would have been sufficiently *guarded*, had you observed, that the ancient philosophers "prescribed the discipline of the thoughts as exercises to their scholars, yet did not believe themselves accountable for their thoughts." Were it worth while, it would be easy to shew, from some of the passages which I have quoted, (Vindic. p. 19..24), and from others of the same kind, the gross inaccuracy of this supposed amendment.

Your blunders about repentance are got over with equal dexterity, by informing the reader, if I understand you, that it was not the doctrine of repentance, but the promise of pardon and acceptance, that you meant to represent as peculiar to the gospel! (p. 8.)

As you think it below you to occupy yourself with the sublime mysteries of scripture, it is no wonder that you should think it mispent time to read my Vindication attentively. This may in part account for the strange perversions of my sentiments, which occur in page 9, and many other places.—I have condemned you for calling any of our sins "frailties and infirmities, for which God is bound to make all gracious allowance;" and hence you infer, that I deny that God, in judging the world, will make any allowance for the unfavourable circumstances in which some men are placed! (p.12) —I have noticed, as an instance of contempt of the authority of scripture, that unitarians deny the existence of satan, and have accordingly omitted his name in their hymn-book; and hence you describe me (p. 42) as lamenting, with much feeling, that satan is neglected!!

I have asserted that "it would be degrading God, and injuring the interests of holiness to attempt to form such a character of him as would attract the affections of those who are in love with sin: ' And from this you take occasion to hold me up to public detestation, as a savage who exults in contemplating the perdition of sinners! (p. 32, 33.) To this idea you often recur, and you seem to dwell on it with peculiar delight; of what sort let the reader judge. You find it even in the Note in page 86 of the Vindication. (p. 46.) But I might, with equal propriety, infer from your remarks on the subject, that you would rejoice if God were stripped of his holiness, and would love him supremely if he would not punish the wicked at all.—I have maintained that man cannot procure the divine favour by his own merits,—that we are justified not by our own works but by the righteousness of Christ, that eternal life is not a debt due to our worth, but is "the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord"; and hence you seem to conclude (p. 37) that, according to my doctrine, the sincere endeavours of God's children to do his will are not pleasing to him, and that he does not encourage them in holiness by promising them gracious rewards!—It is the doctrine of that Church to which you once belonged, and of other Reformed Churches, that those who are *truly* regenerated, shall not totally nor finally apostatize: and this sentiment you have transformed into an opinion which is held by none, that, "after conversion, believers no more offend, that they have no more occasion for repentance.—but pass into a state of absolute security!" (p. 10, 11.) Presuming that these are my sentiments, you wish to catechise me concerning my conversion; and ex-

pect that, "if you could depend upon an honest answer," I must own myself a reprobate. (p. 11.) Now, since you have such a desire to be my Father Confessor, I will acknowledge to you that I have much need for repentance; and that, were I guilty of half the crimes which you have laid to my charge, so far from being a saint, I could not be numbered among honest men. Yet I must feel some further convictions, before I can confess among my deadly sins the grievous crime of answering your Plain Statement

My sentiments on the nature of faith you have strangely metamorphosed, imagining that by *faith* I mean only an assent of the understanding unto the truths of scripture, and particularly a belief of the doctrines which I have vindicated (p. 15, 16, 17): whereas, if you had attended to what I have written on the subject (Vind. p. 95, 96, 173, 174, &c), you might have seen that your remarks have no connexion with my views of saving faith. In that case, however, you would have lost an opportunity of displaying your wit and learning with Galileo, the inquisition, and Procrustes.

To the same wilful ignorance of the sentiments of evangelical divines, may be traced those invidious reflections, in which you so fondly indulge, that they insist on the belief of all their doctrines as necessary to salvation, that, according to them, no man can be a sincere believer who is not a philosopher and a metaphysician, and that they shut out from the everlasting mercy and love of God, all who are not precisely of their sentiments! (p. 8, 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 22). You seem to think (p. 23) that the many mansions in heaven are intended to accommodate the many denominations of professed christians, — the Socinian mansion, the Arian mansion, the

Arminian mansion, &c. and accuse me of leaving but one mansion,—the evangelical mansion. I confess I am not much disposed to cherish the idea that there will be divisions in heaven, but far be it from me to restrict true faith and true piety to any one denomination of christians on earth. This groundless charge is of a piece with the calumnious reflections on the first seceders in Scotland (p. 38), which you have copied from Evans's Sketches, a book more remarkable for its *candour* towards unitarians, than for its accuracy in describing other sects. That these excellent men disapproved of what is called *mixed communion* will readily be granted; but that they affirmed or thought, "that they were exclusively God's people," is a foul calumny which will be believed by those only who are strangers to their eminent piety and worth.

You have called on me and my methodist coadjutor to determine how many doctrines are essentially necessary to salvation, and advised us to expunge all the rest from our respective creeds. (p. 21, 22.) It might be presumptuous in either of us to attempt to fix the precise quantity of knowledge that is necessary to salvation; but though it could be done it will not follow that we should adopt your counsel. If all truths are unimportant, which we cannot affirm to be essentially necessary to salvation; then the whole of the New Testament must be of little use, because true believers were saved without it under the old dispensation.—There are some truths, indeed, which God, for wise purposes, has not revealed so clearly as others, and which we may therefore affirm to be of inferior moment; but, I trust, it has been shewn in the Vindication, particularly in Letter XII. that the doctrines of the Trinity, the deity and

atonement of Christ, justification, adoption, sanctification, and other articles which you reject as dark and useless (p. 9, 10 17 .20), are by no means of that description, since they hold a conspicuous place in the divine word, and are of the highest practical importance.

Some of these doctrines you have brought forward under the name of *mysteries*, while you evidently attempt to hold them up to ridicule as downright *falsehoods*, corresponding with the assertion "that 2 and 3 make exactly 4." (p. 19, 20.) To exhibit them in this light, you have strangely perverted them. In holding the doctrine of the Trinity, we do not assert, as you insinuate, "that three persons make only one" person; but that there are three persons in one Godhead: and in maintaining that Christ is truly God, we do not affirm "that God was born, or that God died, or that God prayed to himself;" for these things are spoken of his *human* nature. The other doctrines misrepresented in that vile paragraph will fall to be noticed afterwards. I cannot see, from any thing which you have advanced, that the divine eternity and omnipresence are not *mysteries*, in the true sense of the word, as much as the subjects to which you would restrict that name. It is as difficult to understand how God exists from eternity to eternity, and how he fills the boundless immensity of space, as to conceive how he subsists in three Persons.

You raise a mighty outcry (p. 16) against fixing a standard of faith, and collecting the truths of scripture into a system. Why then did you presume to construct your Plain Statement? But you have an excuse ready: your system is only a short one, resembling the creeds of primitive christians. (p. 14.) It is true, their creeds

were short : but to what was this brevity owing? Not, as you allege, to any similarity between their doctrines and yours : but to the well-known fact, that the heresies which afterwards troubled the church had not then arisen. Since the art of perverting the scriptures has become more common and more subtile, it behoves the disciples of Christ to be more explicit in asserting the doctrines of the gospel ; that they may not hold communion with those who, retaining the name of christianity, reject the substance.— As a proof of the analogy between your gospel and that which was preached by Peter and Paul, you have traced the doctrine of the resurrection throughout several of their discourses (p. 43, 44) ; but it would be just as easy to shew, that the doctrines of the divinity of Christ his atonement for sin, and justification by faith in his blood, are asserted in their discourses and Epistles, as articles of equal importance.

The manner in which you attempt to defend your reflections on some passages in the Book of Psalms, is truly astonishing. You affirm (p. 25) that “ no man of common understanding can ever conceive them as prophecies ; ” without taking any notice of the instances, which I produced (Vind. p. 40, 41), in which they are quoted by the apostles of Christ, as prophecies “ which the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David ” !! Job’s cursing his birth-day is not at all a parallel case ; for the book of Job is not delivered to us as a book of devotion, to be used in divine worship, like the Psalms ; but, though written by an inspired penman, it records several speeches that were not uttered under the influence of inspiration, and some of the sentiments in these speeches are expressly condemned in the book itself.

Your method of defending your arrangement of the divine attributes, if not so bold, is at least as curious. The passage which you quote from Tillotson (p. 28, 29) exactly corresponds with my views of holiness; and you could not have adduced a stronger proof of the incorrectness of your arrangement: for if "holiness is the beauty of the divine nature—God's highest excellency and perfection," how came you to give it only a subordinate place among his moral attributes?

In regard to my third and fifth Letters, I am quite willing to join issue with you, in leaving it to the religious public to read and compare what we have written on the subjects there discussed. I would only observe, for correcting your remarks on the former, (p. 27) that, when I appealed to the lives of those who profess evangelical principles, to wipe off the reproach of their alleged immoral tendency, the appeal was not made to their public acts of charity alone, but to their moral conduct in general. And I would add, that your reflections on the latter (p. 36), betray the strangest inattention, if not ignorance. I am charged with obscurity, metaphysical jargon, &c; because I have distinguished between *physical* power and *moral* power. But, however the terms may sound, the distinction itself is plain even to a child. When I say, that a man of clear judgment and ordinary candour neither blinded by passion nor biassed by prejudice, *cannot* write such a pamphlet as that which I am now reviewing; and when I say, that an unlettered Indian *cannot* write such a pamphlet; it is obvious that I am not speaking in both cases of the same kind of impossibility. Again, when it is said, that a man of strict integrity *cannot* speak lies, and that a

dumb man *cannot* speak lies ; a similar distinction must be apparent to every one. Now, what obscurity is introduced by calling the one a *moral* impossibility, and the other a *physical* impossibility ? I did not expect, that it would be necessary to explain to you a distinction so well known.

The charge of obscurity, jargon, &c. comes with a very bad grace from you. Were it worth while, I could produce many passages from your works, which, by their *clearness* and *brilliancy*, might astonish the reader. I quote, as a specimen, your definition of *depravity*, on account of its connexion with a subject on which I am presently to enter : “ Depravity implies some original weakness in the moral constitution ; and for which original weakness God will make all gracious allowance.” (p. 28) How to interpret this *bright* sentence I am utterly at a loss. If this “weakness” includes any thing sinful, the definition will not answer our purpose ; and, if it implies nothing sinful, there can be no need for “gracious allowance”—You have spoken of an *evangelical* vocabulary ; but you seem, in many instances, to have used a vocabulary of your own, which, I suppose, to suit your hymn-book and your gospel, must be called the *universal vocabulary*. In this new system of language a whole page of blunders is—“an unguarded *expression*,” abusive epithets are—marks of “the most tender attention and respect,” mystery means *falsehood*, and depravity is *weakness*.

But the doctrines of original sin and predestination form the grand object of your attack. Having the prejudices of a great proportion of professed christians on your side in this part of the controversy, your hostility is more open and

more fierce than usual; and all your skill in perversion is employed, to exhibit these doctrines as horrid and detestable. I do not mean, however, to follow you through all your assertions and reasonings on these topics; especially as they are discussed at some length in my fourth and sixth Letters, where most of your misrepresentations are already corrected. Indeed, it would be difficult to follow you closely through observations that are not only incoherent but contradictory. On both these subjects, you charge me with attempting, like yourself, to conceal the more obnoxious parts of the system; and yet, almost with the same breath, you affirm that I have presented them in a form more horrible than you ever thought of!

In the title of Letter fourth, I did not, as you imagine, employ the word *depravity* as synonymous with *original sin*. Had I adopted the latter term, the title would not have corresponded with the contents; for the principal subject of that Letter is man's *actual* wickedness.—I did not think it necessary to inquire into the *origin* of that wickedness; because the difficulties which occur on that head, are not peculiar to the evangelical system, nor even to revealed religion in any form. You are pleased indeed to assert (p. 29) that, “the origin of evil is totally out of the question;” but to me it appears to be the main question about which there is any difficulty. If you can explain how moral evil began in the minds of our first parents, who were created holy; and how it now springs up in the hearts of their children, while we are sure that an holy God cannot be its author; then, the remaining difficulties will easily be got over.

Your statement of the doctrine of original sin (p. 28), like your account of predestination

(p. 40), is far from being correct : and hence the conclusions which you draw from it, may be expected to be unfair. Witness that passage (p. 34) in which you try to work upon the feelings of parents. It is true, I maintain, and you once maintained, that “ all mankind sinned in Adam, as their representative, and fell with him in his first transgression ” : but it is no part of my principles, to believe that there are any children in hell who have not committed actual sin. The doctrine of original sin does not, as you allege, excite in the breasts of christian parents the most distressing apprehensions for the fate of their infant offspring. They perceive, indeed, in their infants, unequivocal proofs of their relation to the first Adam : but, having devoted them unto God through Christ, they view them as connected with the second Adam ; and are encouraged by these gracious words, “ Of such is the kingdom of God,” and that kind promise, “ I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.”

The views which you have given us of Adam’s fall, and our connexion with it, are drawn with a *masterly* hand. To prove that the words, *In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die*, cannot be a threatening of *eternal* death, it is sufficient to ask, “ Were Adam and Eve sent to hell ? (p. 29, 30.) It did not occur to you, that the question might be retorted, Were Adam and Eve instantly put to death ? This question would go as far to prove th t temporal death is not included in the threatening, as yours does to shew that it does not include eternal death.—In the beginning of this wonderful paragraph you cry out against the injustice of our sharing in the guilt and punishment of Adam ; and yet, in the close of it, you maintain that we are, in fact, as

much punished as he was: "Adam was made subject to natural death for his offence, and we in this share with him:" although with the same breath you assert that, "We are no more answerable for Adam's sin, in justice, than we are for the sins of the fallen angels"!!! The grand difference, then, between our doctrine and yours on this subject, is, that, according to the former, God punishes Adam's posterity, viewing them as guilty; but, according to the latter he punishes them, while he views them as perfectly innocent! The *degree* of the punishment is out of the question: for it is as absurd to suppose that God can do a small act of injustice, as that he can do a greater act of injustice. Nor will it mend your doctrine to say, that God will make compensation in another world for the punishment inflicted (according to you) on Adam's *innocent* posterity in the present; for this would be to admit the blasphemous idea that God is now committing crimes, for which he must hereafter atone! Neither can your sentiment be vindicated by alleging, that "this punishment ends in goodness," since death prevents the world from being overstocked with inhabitants (p. 36); for still it is a punishment, and, in your view a punishment inflicted on the *innocent*: nay, it is more severely felt by us than it was by our guilty progenitor; for his life was prolonged above nine hundred years, but the term allotted to us extends only to three-score and ten. Besides, though the death of one generation should be viewed as a blessing to their posterity, because it leaves room for them in the world, is it therefore a blessing to themselves? Death, indeed, removes good men to a better world; yet still it is a severe and dreadful thing in itself: and we may safely affirm,

that if God had not thought it necessary, as a just punishment on guilty men, he would never have thought it necessary as a blessing to them. Had mankind continued in innocence till the world was sufficiently peopled, if he did not then think fit to prevent their further increase, he could easily have enlarged their habitation, or have translated a portion of them, from time to time, into a better world, as he did Enoch and Elijah; without the intervention of death.

Your remarks on this subject remind me of a curious idea which occurs in your Popular Evidences (p. 181), that “the tears and cries of infants—may be necessary for their health and exercise—necessary for their increase and strength.” What a pity it is that mothers and nurses are ignorant of philosophy! Alas! how often do they injure the health of their tender babes by soothing and stilling them! Instead of being uneasy at their cries and tears, as they foolishly are, they ought to be alarmed at seeing them smile too often, and should now and then pinch them and tease them to make them enjoy the salutary and invigorating exercise of crying and sobbing!

In my fourth Letter, which you represent as a mass of confusion, I have adopted a mode of reasoning not usually regarded as the most abstruse,—reasoning from facts. One of these facts is, that all men actually suffer miseries and death, from which I infer, that God views them as guilty creatures, not entitled to favour, but meriting punishment; since a righteous God cannot be supposed to do his creatures injustice: “The fact that all men are subject to misery; demonstrates that all men deserve misery; and the universal reign of death points out the extent of the empire of sin, &c.” This argument

you are pleased to call "childish;" but perhaps few readers will see any thing childish in the matter, except your own awkward attempt to hold it up to ridicule. (p. 34. 35.)

Another of the facts from which I have reasoned is, that "the whole world once enjoyed the blessings of revealed religion, and the acknowledged means of salvation." This fact you are inclined to dispute. (p. 31.) I would ask you then, What heathen nations were there in the world for many years after the deluge? You must surely acknowledge that there was then a period when all the inhabitants of the globe enjoyed revealed religion; though its doctrines, promises, and precepts were not then committed to writing.

In connexion with this fact, I have observed, that the present generation of heathens, may be as guilty before God, as their ancestors who first apostatized from his worship: for the omniscient God may perceive from their dispositions, that, if they were placed in the same circumstances, they would be chargeable with the same apostasy. That there is nothing in this sentiment liable to be abused by earthly rulers (p. 35), it is needless to shew, unless it were necessary to prove that they are not omniscient: nor will there be any difficulty in demonstrating that it is perfectly consistent with the justice of God. There must be an essential difference between human laws, and the rules of his administration; for, being the Searcher of hearts, he judges not only the works of men, but their dispositions, intentions, and desires. For example; if two persons, who are equally dishonest in their dispositions, are so circumstanced that the one has no opportunity to commit fraud, while the other is strongly tempted to it, and is guilty of some

overt act of dishonesty; human laws can only take cognizance of the latter, yet the former is no less criminal in the sight of the Omniscient. It may often happen, that men who, owing to their external circumstances which keep them from temptations to vice or occasions of indulging in it, do not commit any remarkable crime, are nevertheless much more wicked in their hearts, and consequently more odious to God, than some who are chargeable with daring enormities.

On the article of predestination it is almost unnecessary to say any thing in reply to what you have written. It may suffice to refer to my sixth Letter, where your objections have been anticipated, and your misrepresentations already corrected. Let the candid reader judge if I have there confounded predestination with providence, or have used any trick in connecting the one with the other, or have brought forward on that subject any thing detestable,—any thing dishonouring to God or discouraging to man. There is nothing which I have written on that topic which I feel the smallest inclination to retract. The first specimen of my sentiments on predestination which you have quoted (consisting of scraps of sentences which you have tacked together and called *a sentence*) will be found to contain almost nothing but extracts from the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Articles of the Church of England. (p. 40.) The other passage, which excites your strongest indignation (p. 41), is a conclusion fairly deduced from premises which you have not tried to overturn. Let the judicious reader examine my reasonings in that part of Letter sixth (Vind. p. 118..121), and say if it is not fully proved, “that the eternal state of all who are lost was

fixed in the mind of God before they were brought into being ;—fixed, not only by his certain foreknowledge of it, but by his voluntary determination to permit them to be guilty of those sins by which they are ruined.” I have no doubt that you abhor this humiliating sentiment ; yet, as far as I can see, you cannot deny it, so long as you acknowledge God to be the omniscient Creator and Governor of all things. For, if you believe that God *actually does* permit sinners to ruin themselves by their iniquities, can there be any thing horrible in maintaining that he *intended* to do it ? And, if he is omniscient, this intention cannot be the thought of the moment ; it must have been his *fixed purpose* from the beginning.

The stale objection, that this doctrine “destroys the foundation of every duty ;” (p. 41) was examined in the Vindication, p. 138..142. To obviate that objection more fully, I quote a passage from that Sermon of President Edwards which you have vilified, but never read (p. 46) : the extract may at once serve to gratify your curiosity and answer your cavils : “Let the decrees of God be what they will, that alters not the case as to your *liberty*, any more than if God had only foreknown. And why is God to blame for decreeing things ? Especially since he decrees nothing but *good*. How unbecoming an infinitely wise Being would it have been to have made a world, and let things run at random, without disposing events ; or fore-ordering how they should come to pass ? And what is that to you, how God has foreordered things, so long as your constant experience teaches you, that it does not hinder your doing what you choose to do ? This you know, and your daily practice and behaviour amongst men declares

that you are fully sensible of it, with respect to yourself and others. Still to object because there are some things in God's dispensations above your understanding, is exceedingly unreasonable."

Before you commence any new attack on evangelical principles, I would advise you to make yourself better acquainted with the writings of that truly learned and rational divine whose words I have now quoted; and whom you have brought in for a share of the abuse with which you have loaded me. To prevent such shameful misrepresentations in future, it may also be of considerable service to attend to some judicious observations which you will find in the EDINBURGH ENCYCLOPÆDIA, under the article CALVINISM.

There is no part of your pamphlet which affords more glaring evidence of your inattention to the subjects on which you have written, than your remarks on the success of evangelical preaching in the present day. (p. 43..47.) When I appealed to the success of the discourses preached by the apostles of Christ, as a proof that the must have been vastly different from the lectures of Plato and Xenocrates, and consequently from *your* gospel, I was fully aware that the miracles wrought by the former may in part account for the greatness of their success: but if the difference between the doctrine of the one and that of the other is as trivial as your system would represent it, these miracles cannot account for the enormous difference in the success of their respective labours. To destroy the force of my argument, you triumphantly state that evangelical ministers in the present day 'make few converts;' and that the evangelical missionaries, who are sent,—to *crusade among the*

heathen, make no converts." (p. 44.) Your illiberal reflections on these missionaries, men who have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in general are distinguished for piety and goodness, and some of whom are persons of great learning and worth, — are very far from doing honour either to your heart or your head. The public may judge of the credit due to these reflections, as well as to your accounts of the small success of evangelical preaching in general, by examining your bold and repeated assertion, that these missionaries "make *no* converts." From what sources did you receive this intelligence? It could not be from the journals of the Moravian Brethren, whose missionary labours have produced such glorious fruits, both in the torrid zone, and in the polar regions; and of whose diligence and success among the Hottentots the most honourable mention is made in *Barrow's Travels in Southern Africa*. It could not be from the accounts transmitted by the learned Dr. Carey, and his fellow-labourers in the East, through whose exertions hundreds of Hindoos, and other natives of India, have been brought unto the light of the gospel. It could not be from the journals of the excellent Dr. Vanderkemp, and his colleagues in Africa, whose efforts have been blessed for bringing many hundreds of the rudest of the human race to civilization and religion. It could not be from the journals of Mr Wray, and other zealous missionaries in the West Indies, and on the continent of South America, through whom multitudes of wretched Negroes have been cheered with the joys of salvation. — What then shall we say of this round assertion "they make *no* converts"? The best construction that can be put upon it, is to say, that

you have presumed to enlighten the world, on a subject about which you are wholly in the dark, and into which you have never inquired.

But I am wearied with wading through so much ignorance and sophistry, misrepresentation and abuse; and would now hasten to take my leave of you as an author; having no wish to enter on a minute examination of every assertion in your pamphlet, and no intention to reply to any thing which you may hereafter write on such subjects. You may repeat your misrepresentations, and throw out your bitter invectives, as often as you please: I am not afraid that you will overturn my principles by the one, or hurt my character by the other. Indeed it is contrary to the advice of some of my best friends, that I have taken any notice of a pamphlet that does so little credit to the cause which it was written to support. Had it been likely to do any material injury to my character or principles, it would not have remained so long unanswered.

And now, Sir, in taking my leave of you, I again solemnly protest, though this protestation should be stigmatized as "profanity and hypocrisy," that I bear you no malice, but cherish a sincere regard for your present and future welfare. Earnestly do I wish, that you may re-examine your principles, and be led to the acknowledgment of the truth. You make strong professions of sincerity. (p. 48.) I have no doubt that you are sincere, both in your attachment to your own principles, and your hostility to mine. But it does not follow that your sentiments are not awfully dangerous. Paul imagined that he was engaged in a glorious work, when he was an accomplice in the murder of Stephen; and, that he was honourably employed, when he was furiously persecuting the church of Christ.

Some of the Jews sincerely thought that they were doing God service, when they crucified the Lord of glory. There are many sincere Jews, mussulmen, infidels, and pagans, as well as sincere unitarians. Blessed are all they who are sincerely attached to a redeeming God and to the precious truths of his gospel! "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."

I am, Sir,

Your sincere well-wisher,

GEORGE YOUNG.

WHITRY,
Feb. 9, 1813.

