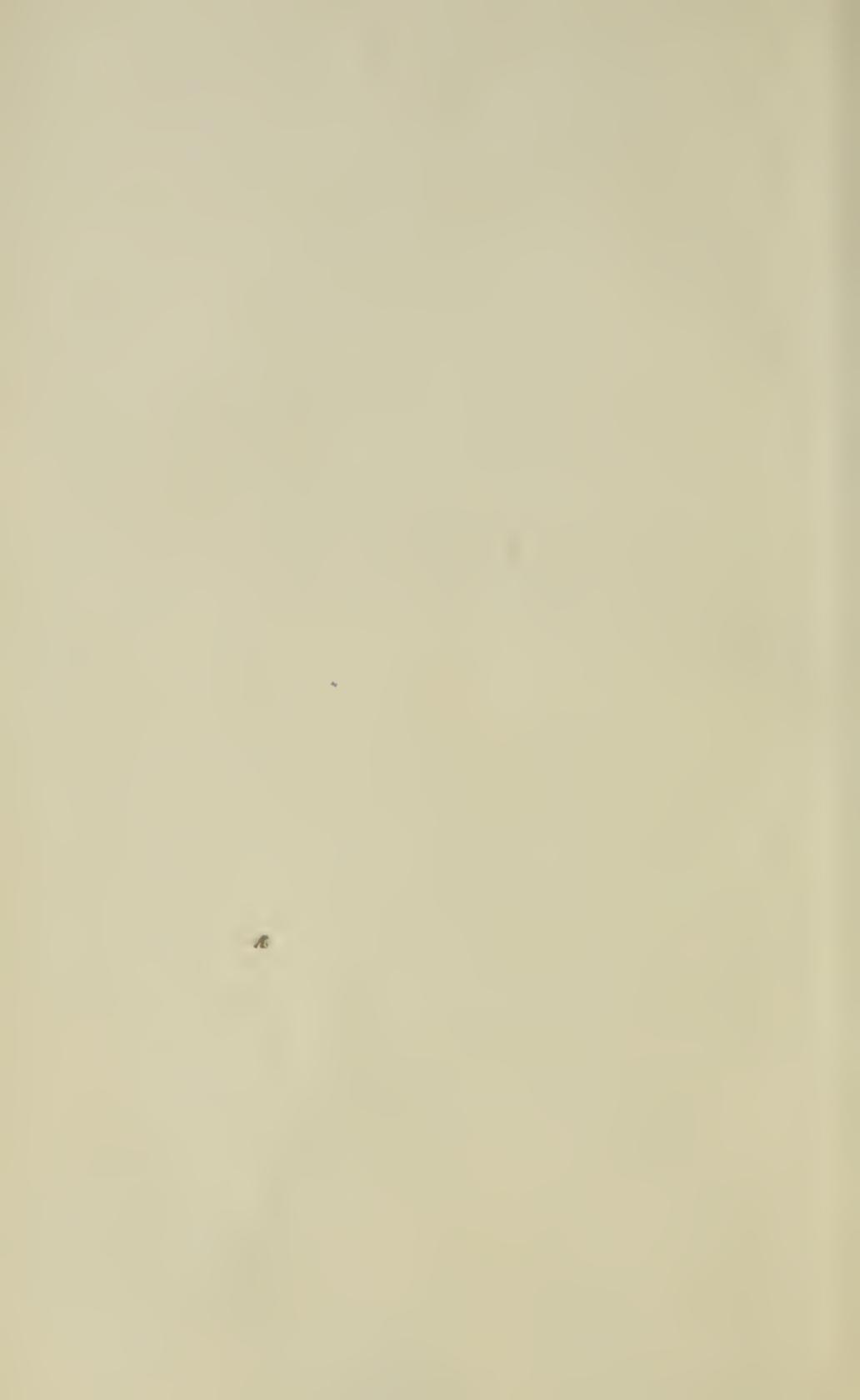




3 1761 03597 3783



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



Rel
-heat

THE
FORCE OF TRUTH;
AN
AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE.

BY THE REV. THOMAS SCOTT, D. D.

WITH A RECOMMENDATORY LETTER

BY THE REV. SAMUEL MILLER D. D.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

EIGHT LETTERS ADDRESSED TO DR. SCOTT,
BY THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

309A
915/80

P R E F A C E .

IF a book do not apologize for itself, it is in vain for the author to attempt it by a preface ; I shall, therefore, only declare the nature and intent of this publication.

Indeed, it contains little more than the history of my heart, that forge of iniquity ; and my conscience, that friendly, but too often neglected monitor. By men in general, this latter is hated, because, as far as informed, it boldly tells the truth : and their grand endeavour seems to be, to lay it asleep, or to render it as insensible as if seared with a hot iron. Through the deceitfulness of the human heart, the allurements of the world, and the artifices of Satan, this, at length, is commonly ac

complished ; and in the meantime, they deafen themselves to its remonstrances, by living in a continual noise and bustle. The conflict in my soul between these two is here related ; and some account given of the artifices which Satan, in confederacy with my heart, made use of to keep my conscience quiet, and silence its remonstrances ; and also of the means which the Lord employed to defeat this conspiracy, to give conscience its due ascendancy, and to incline my before unwilling heart to become obedient to its friendly admonitions ; with the effect thereof upon my religious views and conduct.

As to the effect of this publication respecting my character and worldly interest, myself, and all that is dear to me, I would leave in His hands, who causeth all to work together for good, to them that love him, whom he hath called according to his purpose. And he hath so evinced his care over me,

and goodness to me, in all the concerns of my past life, that it were shameful, if I did not most willingly cast all my care upon him for the future. But, reader, the effect of it respecting thee, I have much at heart; and have had, and shall, I trust, continue to have it much in my prayers.

If thou art a believing servant of God, I hope thou wilt see cause to bless God in me, and wilt be established and comforted thereby; according to the fervent desire of my soul, for all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. If thou art one, whose experience answers in many things to what is related in the former part of this narrative, as face answers to face in the water, may the Lord, the Spirit who convinceth of sin, alarm thy drowsy conscience, and bring thee under a serious concern for thy precious soul, and its eternal interests: may he incline thine heart diligently to use the means here spoken

of, as far as conscience evidences it to be thy duty; and may he bless the means for enlightening thy mind with the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus; and guiding thy wandering feet into the ways of peace. This, be assured, is my hearty prayer for thee; and with this prayer I commend this work unto the Lord, that if it be his blessed will, he may employ it as an instrument for advancing his glory, and the salvation of souls.

THOMAS SCOTT.

Weston-Underwood, Feb. 26, 1779.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

ABOUT ten years have elapsed since the first publication of the ensuing narrative. In that space I have had much opportunity of re-examining the Scriptures, and of making observations, both in the world and in the professing church ; as well as of getting a further measure of self-knowledge. But I bless God, that upon a revisal of *THE FORCE OF TRUTH*, in order to a second edition, I see no cause to retract a single sentence, or to propose any matter differently than before. If any one should bestow the pains to compare this with the former edition, he will indeed find several verbal alterations, in which brevity, perspicuity, and precision alone have been consulted : but he will not meet with a single variation, which in

any measure changes the meaning of the passage. Had I materially altered my sentiments. I would either have refused to concur in publishing a second edition, or have fairly avowed that alteration : but, on the contrary, I deem it incumbent upon me to declare, that I am more than ever established in the belief of all those doctrines that I before proposed, as the leading truths of Christianity.

THOMAS SCOTT.

London, Chapel-street, March 31, 1789.

RECOMMENDATORY LETTER.

To the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board of Publication of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States.

REVEREND AND DEAR BROTHER,

It is extensively known that the pious and eminently useful Dr. Thomas Scott, the Commentator, who, for a number of years occupied so high a place in the confidence and affections of the friends of evangelical truth and of vital piety, entered the sacred office without any practical acquaintance with the religion of which he undertook to be a teacher. For several years after his ordination, and after he had made the solemn subscription to the thirty-nine Articles, &c., required of those who are received into the Ministry of the Church of England, he was, in spirit and in creed, a Unitarian and Pelagian, and deliberately acting upon the most selfish and worldly principles in all his studies and pursuits. From this dream of proud self-

confidence it pleased God to awaken him, by a series of events apparently accidental; to lead him to renounce his errors one after another, and eventually to enable him to repose and rejoice in that precious system of free and sovereign grace, which once he despised.

With the account which he has himself given of this change in his views under the title of "The Force of Truth," you have been long acquainted; and, if I mistake not, more than one edition of this account has, within the last twenty years, been given to the American public. Still the work has not that general circulation which its deeply interesting character renders desirable. I could earnestly wish to see it take a place among the volumes issued by our Board of Publication, and finding its way to every Presbyterian family in the land. I am persuaded it is in your power greatly to extend its circulation; and, in my opinion, it is hardly possible unduly to multiply the copies of a work so eminently adapted to illustrate and magnify the grace of God.

What though the venerable Author of this narrative belonged to a different ecclesiasti-

cal pale from that in which it is our happiness to find ourselves, and to labour? This circumstance does not, with me, form the least deduction from its value. Perhaps it may be said to be one of the chief glories of that system which we adopt, as Presbyterians, that it turns away the minds of men from an undue regard to the external forms of the Gospel, to that simple purity of evangelical truth, which is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;” that it guards us against the miserable worship of heartless rites and genealogies, as a ground of hope towards God, and teaches us to place all our confidence on the atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness of “Him who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” May it ever be so! I regard every man as my brother in Christ, however he may differ from me in other respects, who teaches me to “glory in nothing save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ;” and who represents salvation, in its beginning, its sum, and its completion, as wholly of free, rich, and sovereign grace “abounding, through righteousness, unto

eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord ;” and who, while he unceasingly proclaims, that my title to heaven rests solely on the ground of the atonement and righteousness of the Redeemer as my surety, ceases not to insist that my preparation for heaven can be effected only by the renewal and sanctification of my heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, and inclining me to “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present evil world,” and to walk before God in all the ways of holy obedience.

When, therefore, I open the volumes of such men as Scott, and Newton, and Cecil, I entirely forget the system of Prelacy with which they happened to be connected, and drink in the precious streams of evangelical and experimental truth which they pour forth, without thinking that they belonged to a different fold from myself; or rather feeling that they and I belong, in reality, to the same Church, the same precious body which the Redeemer has purchased with his blood, and sanctified by his blessed Spirit. Let my soul be with the souls of such men, in whatever ecclesiastical connection they may be

found, and by whatever name they may be called ! If the inspired apostle Paul preached the true gospel, these men preached it, for their language and spirit are all as exactly his, as if he spoke by them. The remark made, many years since, in regard to their great predecessor, the celebrated George Whitefield, of the same ecclesiastical connection with them, applies here with equal force. More than seventy years ago, while that "prince of preachers" was daily addressing admiring crowds in the city of Philadelphia, a group of his opposers were seated in the Coffee-house in that city, listening to an animated harangue of Mr P., who sustained an important office, and a high secular character. He was loading the person and the ministry of Mr. Whitefield with abuse, and warning his hearers against his alleged errors and fanaticism. In the midst of this harangue, Dr. Chovet, an eminent physician, but a bold and profane infidel, entered the Coffee-house, and, after listening for a few minutes to the violent language of the speaker, broke out upon him in the following homely but pointed style : " P., I am surprised at you ! You profess to believe the

New Testament. Now I do not ; but you do. I am amazed that you can speak as you are doing against a man who preaches as Whitefield does. I do not undertake to decide who is right and who is wrong, for I consider it all as a fable ; but if the Apostle Paul was right, Whitefield is right, for he preaches as much like him as if Paul had spit him out of his mouth." The verdict of the coarse and blunt infidel was undoubtedly correct. I can never open the pages of Scott, or those of the affectionate friends, contemporary with him, already named, without feeling confident that, if the holy Apostle of the Gentiles were now to rise from the dead, and revisit our earth, he would, without hesitation, recognize them as sincere and enlightened fellow-disciples, and fellow-workers in the cause of their common Master.

It is no doubt true, that the doctrines usually denominated Calvinistic, which Dr. Scott slowly, but firmly embraced, are every where unpopular, and ever will be so as long as human nature remains what it is. All men are by nature proud and self-righteous, and whenever their minds are turned towards the great question concerning the

way of salvation, they are prone to imagine, that they can, in part at least, if not in whole, save themselves. When, therefore, they hear doctrines proclaimed which lay the sinner in the dust before God, and ascribe all the glory of his salvation, from first to last, to the merit and power of Christ; when they hear it maintained, that "by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified," but that we are "justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," they are offended. They cannot consent utterly to renounce their own merit and strength, and to accept of salvation as a mere gift of free and sovereign grace. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Almost every where, then, the popular voice is against the genuine doctrines of the gospel; and if the question whether they are true or not, were put to vote before the mass of society, the decision would probably be two to one, if not three or four to one against them. If the Bible be true, the human heart is on the side of error. We are all, by nature, Pelagians, or semi-Pelagians, until the grace of God teaches us better.

This fact, however, instead of being a solid objection to the doctrines in question, obviously furnishes one out of many proofs that they are of God. For the word of God every where declares that "the truth as it is in Jesus," is distasteful to the carnal heart; that to the children of this world it is every where a "stumbling block and foolishness." Of course, if the doctrines for which we plead were generally acceptable and popular among the unrenewed and worldly, it would show conclusively that they were not such as the apostles preached.

Dr. Scott found this attestation given to his new creed, as soon as his having embraced it was made known. The great majority of his early friends and acquaintances, especially the wealthy, the refined, the honourable, almost with one voice condemned it, and considered him as a sort of degraded man. Only a small number, and those by no means among the world's favourites, felt prepared to approve the change, and to bid him "God speed." So it was in the beginning; so it is now; and so it ever will be, as long as man is by nature an "alien from the commonwealth of

Israel, and a stranger to the covenant of promise.”

It is generally known that the brother in the ministry with whom Mr. Scott corresponded, while his mind was undergoing that conflict which issued in his conversion, was the venerable John Newton, whose works have been so eminently popular and useful among the friends of vital piety. This correspondence undoubtedly had no small influence among the means which were blessed to the benefit of Mr. Scott. In most of the editions of “The Force of Truth” which I have seen, the name of Mr. Newton is not given. I hope, if your committee should concur with me in judging that this work ought to be made one of the standing publications of our Board, that they will introduce that venerated name at full length in its proper place. I can think of no good reason why it should any longer be withheld.

It is an interesting fact in the history of the following “Narrative,” that, in drawing it up, the author consulted William Cowper, the celebrated English Poet, his friend, and, at that time, his neighbour. The eminent talents, the ardent piety, and the deplorable

mental sufferings of that great and good man, from a morbid physical constitution, are well known to every admirer of genius where the English language is spoken. That he gave to this work his friendly supervision ; that he advised in regard to its style and arrangement ; and that he gave to the whole his cordial *imprimatur*, will be regarded with interest by every intelligent reader.

One suggestion more. Allow me to recommend that the eight letters of Mr. Newton, addressed to Mr. Scott, while he was anxious and inquiring, be added at the end of the volume. They are so excellent, both in matter and manner, that they are well worthy of accompanying the narrative with which they were, historically, so closely connected. They may be, in a few cases, in a small degree abridged, if there be a fear of swelling the volume too much. I am persuaded that all its readers will thank you for the addition. Scarcely any religious letter-writer ever exceeded Mr. Newton. Those in question, in particular, have one excellence which renders them a model in this class of writings. Forty-nine fiftieths of all the controversial writings on the subject of religion,

that I have ever met with, in the course of a long life, have been by far too *polemical* in their language and spirit. That is, they too often reminded the reader, however decent, and even polite the style, of "the tug of war." Newton had the rare talent of arguing with an errorist with so much fraternal benignity, as well as force, and of conducting all his controversial arguments with such constant practical appeals to the heart, as entirely to disarm the polemical spirit. This is a happy art; or rather, I should say, a precious gift of grace, which nothing but a large measure of the Spirit of Christ can enable any man with entire success to exhibit. We are never so likely to convince and win an adversary, as when we can so address him as to make him forget that we are arguing against him, and open his whole heart to our affectionate appeals. Newton had this talent in as great a degree as almost any man ever had.

Dr. Scott has given a very satisfactory note in regard to the popular use of the name Methodist, as a term of reproach in England. If our reading population were as familiar with the state of things there as hère, nothing more would be necessary; but as they cannot be

supposed to be, I will take the liberty of adding one word of caution. In this country, the name Methodist is never applied to any other religious denomination than that which was originally founded by the Rev. John Wesley. Whereas, in England, this name is applied, not merely to the Wesleyan body, but also to all ministers and members ever so closely connected with the established church, who hold evangelical sentiments, and contend for the reality and necessity of heart religion. Dr. Scott had no connexion with the Wesleyan Methodists. He was as much opposed to their Arminianism as any Calvinist in the land. Still, in that country, where the name in its popular application, is generic, rather than specific, he was constantly reproached as being a Methodist.

Persuaded that you will concur with me in my general estimate of this work, and hoping that you will be disposed to adopt it as one in your catalogue of publications,

I am, reverend and dear sir,

Your brother in Christ,

SAMUEL MILLER.

PRINCETON, JAN. 12, 1841.

THE FORCE OF TRUTH.



PART I.

Giving an account of the state of the author's mind and conscience, previous to, and at the commencement of that change, whereof he purposes to give the history.

NOTWITHSTANDING that I was not educated in what is commonly considered as ignorance of God and religion; yet, until the sixteenth year of my age, I do not remember that I ever was under any serious conviction of my being a sinner, in danger of wrath, or in need of mercy; nor did I ever, during this part of my life, that I recollect, offer one hearty prayer to God in secret. Being alienated from God, through the ignorance that was in me, I lived without him in the world: and as utterly neglected to pay him any voluntary service, as if I had been an atheist in principle.

But about my sixteenth year I began to see that I was a sinner; a leper in every part, "there being no health in me;" out of many external indications of inward depravity, conscience discovered, and reproached me with one; and I was, for the first time, disquieted

with apprehensions of the wrath of an offended God. My attendance at the Lord's table being expected about the same time, (though I was very ignorant of the meaning and end of that sacred ordinance,) this circumstance, united with the accusations of my conscience, brought an awe upon my spirits and interrupted my before undisturbed course of sin.

Being, however, an utter stranger to the depravity and helplessness of fallen nature, I had no doubt but I could amend my life whenever I pleased. Previous, therefore, to communicating, I set about an unwilling reformation; and procuring a form of prayer, I attempted to pay my secret addresses to the Majesty of Heaven. In this manner having silenced my conscience, I partook of the ordinance, held my resolutions, and continued my devotions, such as they were for a little space: but they were a weariness and a task to me; and temptations soon returning, I relapsed; my prayer book was thrown aside, and no more thought of, till my conscience was again alarmed by the next warning given for the celebration of the Lord's supper. Then the same ground was gone over again, and with the same issue. My goodness was like the morning dew, that passeth away; and loving sin, and disrelishing religious duties as much as ever, I returned, as the sow that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

With little variation, this was my course

of life for nine years; but in that time I had such experience of my own weakness, and the superior force of temptation, that I secretly concluded reformation in my case to be impracticable. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" I was experimentally convinced that I was equally unable, with the feeble barrier of resolutions and endeavours, to stem the torrent of my impetuous inclinations, when swelled by welcome, suitable, and powerful temptations; and being ignorant that God had reserved this to himself as his own work, and had engaged to do it for the poor sinner, who feeling his own insufficiency, is heartily desirous to have it done by him, I stifled my convictions as well as I could, and put off my repentance to a more convenient season.

But being of a reflecting turn, and much alone, my mind was almost constantly employed. Aware of the uncertainty of life, I was disquieted with continual apprehensions, that this more convenient season would never arrive; especially, as through an unconfirmed state of health, I had many warnings, and near prospects of death and eternity. For a long time I entertained no doubt, but that impenitent sinners would be miserable for ever in hell; and at some seasons such amazing reflections upon this awful subject forced themselves into my mind, that I was overpowered with them, and my fears became intolerable. At such times my extem-

pore cries for mercy were so wrestling and persevering, that I was scarcely able to give over, though at other times I lived without prayer of any sort; yet in my darkest hours, though my conscience was awakened to discover more and more sinfulness in my whole behaviour, there remained a hope that I should one day repent and turn unto God. If this hope was from myself, it was a horrid presumption, but the event makes me willing to acknowledge a persuasion that it was from the Lord; for had it not been for this hope, I should probably have given way to temptations, which frequently assaulted me, of putting an end to my own life, in proud discontent with my lot in this world, and mad despair about another.

A hymn of Dr. Watts, in his admirable little book for children, entitled, "The All-seeing God," at this time fell in my way; I was much affected with it, and having committed it to memory, was frequently repeating it, and was thereby continually reminded of my guilt and danger. Parents may from this inconsiderable circumstance be reminded, that it is of great importance to store their children's minds with such useful matter, instead of suffering them to be furnished with such corrupting trash, as is commonly taught them. They know not what use God may make of these early rudiments of instruction in future life. At this period, though I was the slave of sin, yet as my con

science was not pacified, nor my principles greatly corrupted, there seemed some hope concerning me; but at length Satan took a very effectual method of silencing my convictions, that I might sleep securely in my sins: and justly was I given over to a strong delusion to believe a lie, when I held the truth that I did know in unrighteousness. A Socinian comment on the Scriptures came in my way, and I greedily drank the poison because it quieted my fears, and flattered my abominable pride. The whole system coincided exactly with my inclinations, and the state of my mind, and approved itself to me. In reading this exposition, sin seemed to lose its negative ugliness, and appear a very small and tolerable evil; man's imperfect obedience seemed to shine with an almost divine excellency; and God appeared so entirely and necessarily merciful, that he could not make any of his creatures miserable without contradicting his natural propensity. These things influenced my mind so powerfully, that I concluded that notwithstanding a few little blemishes, I was, upon the whole, a very worthy creature. Then further the mysteries of the Gospel being explained away, or brought down to the level of man's comprehension by such proud and corrupt, though specious reasonings; by acceding to these sentiments, I was in my own opinion, in point of understanding and discernment, exalted to a superiority above the general

run of mankind; and amused myself with looking down with contempt upon such as were weak enough to believe the orthodox doctrines. Thus I generally soothed my conscience: and if at any time I was uneasy at the apprehension that I did not thoroughly deserve, and was not entirely fit for heaven, the same book afforded me a soft pillow, on which to lull myself to sleep; it argued, and I thought it proved, that there were no *eternal* torments; and insinuated, that there were no torments except for notorious sinners; and that such as should just fall short of heaven, would sink into their original nothing. With this welcome scheme I silenced all my fears, and told my accusing conscience, that if I fell short of heaven, I should be annihilated, and never be sensible of my loss.

By experience, I am well acquainted with Satan's intention, in employing so many of his servants to invent those pestilent errors, whether in speculation or practice, that have in all ages corrupted and enervated the pure and powerful doctrine of the Gospel; for they lead to forgetfulness of God, and security in sin, and are deadly poison to every soul that imbibes them, unless a miracle of grace prevent. Such, on one hand, are all the superstitious doctrines of popery, purgatory, penances, absolutions, indulgences, merits of good works, and the acceptableness of will-worship, and uncommanded ob-

servances. What are these but engines of the devil, to keep men quiet in their sins? Man, resolved to follow the dictates of his depraved inclination, and not to bound his pursuits and enjoyments within the limits of God's holy law, catches at any thing to soften the horrible thought of eternal misery. This is the awakening reflection, God's sword in the conscience, which it is Satan's business, by all his diabolical artifices, to endeavour to sheath, blunt, or turn aside; knowing, that whilst this alarming apprehension is present to the soul, he can never maintain his possession of it in peace. By such inventions, therefore, as these, he takes care to furnish the sinner with that which he seeks for, and to enable him to walk according to the course of this wicked world, and the desires of depraved nature, without being disturbed by such dreadful thoughts. The same, on the other hand, is the tendency of all those speculations of reasoning men, which set God's attributes at variance with each other; which represent the Supreme Governor as so *weakly* merciful, as neither to regard the demands of his justice, the glory of his holiness, the veracity of his word, nor the peaceable order and subordination of the universe; which explain away all the mysteries of the Gospel; and represent sin, that fruitful root of evil, that enemy of God, that favourite of Satan, as a very little thing, scarcely noticed by the Almighty; and which, contrary to Scripture,

and universal experience and observation, would persuade us, that man is not a depraved creature.

These latter sentiments I acceded to, and maintained as long as I could; and I did it, most assuredly, because they soothed my conscience, freed me from the pressing fears of damnation, and enabled me to think favourably of myself. For these reasons alone I loved, and chose this ground; I fixed myself upon it, and there I fortified myself with all the arguments and reasonings I could meet with. These things I wished to believe; and I had my wish; for at length I did most confidently believe them. Being taken captive in this snare by Satan, I should here have perished with a lie in my right hand, had not that Lord, whom I dishonoured, snatched me as a brand from the burning.

In this state of mind I attempted to obtain admission into holy orders. Wrapped up in the proud notion of the dignity of human nature, I had lost sight of the evil of sin, and thought little of my own sinfulness. I was filled with a self-important opinion of my own worth, and the depth of my understanding; I had adopted a system of religion, accommodated to that foolish pride, having almost wholly discarded mysteries from my creed, and regarding with sovereign contempt those who believed them. As far as I understood those controversies, I was nearly a Socinian, and a Pelagian, and wholly an Ar-

minian ; yet, to my shame be it spoken, I sought to obtain admission into the ministry, in a church whose doctrines are diametrically opposed to all the three ; without once concerning myself about those barriers, which the wisdom of our forefathers have placed about her, purposely to prevent the intrusion of such dangerous heretics as I then was.

Whilst I was preparing for this solemn office, I lived, as before, in known sin, and in utter neglect of prayer : my whole preparation consisting of nothing else but an attention to those studies which were more immediately required, for my reputably passing through the previous examination.

And thus after some difficulty, with a heart full of pride, and all manner of wickedness, my life being polluted with many unrepented, unforsaken sins, without one cry for mercy, one prayer for direction, or assistance in, or a blessing upon what I was about to do ; after having concealed my real sentiments under the mask of general expressions ; after having subscribed articles directly contrary to my then belief ; and after having blasphemously declared in the presence of God and of the congregation, in the most solemn manner, sealing it with the Lord's supper, that I judged myself to be inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take this office upon me, (not knowing or believing that there was a Holy Ghost,) on September the 20th, 1772, I was ordained a deacon. For ever blessed

be the God of all long suffering and mercy, who had patience with such a rebel and blasphemer, such an irreverent trifler with his majesty, and such a presumptuous intruder into his sacred ministry! I never think of this daring wickedness without being filled with amazement that I am out of hell; without adoring that gracious God, who permitted such an atrocious sinner to live, yea, to serve him, and with acceptance, I trust, to call him Father, and as his minister to speak in his name. "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name; Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thy sins, and healeth all thy infirmities; who saveth thy life from destruction, and crowneth me with mercy and loving-kindness." May I love much, and very humbly and devotedly serve that God who has multiplied his mercies, in abundantly pardoning my complicated provocations!

My views in entering into the ministry, as far as I can ascertain them, were these three: 1. A desire of a less laborious and more comfortable way of procuring a livelihood, than otherwise I had a prospect of.—2. The expectation of more leisure to employ in reading, of which I was inordinately fond.—And, 3. A proud conceit of my abilities, and a vain-glorious imagination, that I should some time distinguish and advance myself in the literary world. These were my ruling motives in

taking this bold step : motives as opposite to those which should have influence therein, as pride is opposite to humility; ambition to contentedness in a low estate, and a willingness to be the least of all, and the servant of all ; as opposite as love of self, of the world, of filthy lucre, and slothful ease, is opposite to the love of God, and of souls, and of the laborious work of the ministry. Mine, therefore be the shame of this heinous sin ; and to God be all the glory of overruling it for good, I trust both to unworthy me, and to his dear people, the church, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

My subsequent conduct was suitable to these motives. No sooner was I fixed in a curacy, than with close application I sat down to the study of the learned languages, and such other matters as I considered most needful, in order to lay the foundation of my future advancement. And would I were now as diligent in serving God, as I was then in serving self and ambition ! I spared no pains ; I shunned, as much as I well could, all acquaintance and diversions ; and I retrenched upon my usual hours of sleep, that I might keep more closely to this business. As a minister, I attended just enough to the public duties of my station to support a decent character, which I deemed subservient to my main design : and from the same principle I aimed at morality in my outward deportment, and affected seriousness in my con-

versation. As to the rest, I still lived in the practice of what I knew to be sinful, and in the entire neglect of all secret religion. If ever inclined to pray, conscious guilt stopped my mouth, and I seldom went further than "God be merciful unto me." However, perceiving that my Socinian principles were very disreputable; and being conscious from my own experience, that they were unfavourable to morality, I concealed them, in a great measure, both for my credit's sake, and from a desire I entertained, subservient to my main design, of successfully inculcating the practice of the moral duties upon those to whom I preached. My studies, indeed, lay very little in divinity, but this little all opposed that part of my scheme which respected the punishment of the wicked in the other world; and, therefore, (being now removed at a distance from those authors whence I had imbibed my sentiments, and from whose reasonings I had learned to defend them,) I began gradually to be shaken in my former confidence, and once more to be under some apprehensions of eternal misery. Being also stately employed, and with the appearance of solemnity, in the public worship of God, whilst I neglected and provoked him in secret, my conscience clamorously reproached me with base hypocrisy, and I began to conclude, that if eternal torments were reserved for any sinners, I certainly should be one of the number. And

now again I was filled with anxious fears and terrifying alarms; especially as I was continually meditating upon what might be the awful consequence, should I be called hence by sudden death. Even my close application to study could not soothe my conscience, nor quiet my fears: under the affected air of cheerfulness, I was truly miserable.

This was my state of mind when the change I am about to relate, began to take place. How it commenced, in what manner, and by what steps it proceeded, and how it was completed, will be the subject of the second part of this work. This first part I shall conclude by observing, that though I was staggered in my favourite sentiment before mentioned, and in my views of the person of Christ, was verging towards Arianism; yet in my other opinions I was more confirmed than ever. What those opinions were, I have already in brief declared; and they will occur again, and be more fully explained, as I proceed to relate the manner in which I was constrained to renounce them, one after another, and to accede to those that were directly contrary thereto. Let it suffice to say, that I was brim full of proud self-sufficiency, very positive, and very obstinate: and being situated in the neighbourhood of some of those whom the world calls Methodists,* I

* Methodists, as a stigma of reproach, was first applied to Mr. Wesley, Mr. Whitefield, and their followers; to those who, though professing an attachment to the established

joined in the prevailing sentiment, held them in sovereign contempt, spoke of them in derision, declaimed against them from the pulpit, as persons full of bigotry, enthusiasm and spiritual pride; laid heavy things to their charge, and endeavoured to prove the doctrines which I supposed them to hold, (for I had never read their books,) to be dishonourable to God, and destructive to morality. And though in some companies I chose to conceal some part of my sentiments, and in all affected to speak as a friend to universal toleration; yet scarce any person could be more proudly and violently prejudiced against both their persons and principles.

church, and disclaiming the name of Dissenters, were not conformists in point of parochial order, but had separate seasons, places, and assemblies for worship. The term has since been extended by many to all persons, whether clergy or laity, who preach or profess the doctrines of the Reformation, as expressed in the articles and liturgy of our church. For this fault they must all submit to bear the reproachful name alike, especially the ministers; nor will the most regular and peaceable compliance with the injunctions of the rubric, exempt them from it, if they avow the authorized, but now exploded doctrines to which they have subscribed. My acquaintance hitherto has been only with Methodists of this latter description: and I have them only in view, whenever I use the term.

PART II.

Containing a history of this change: the manner in which, and the means by which it was at length effected.

IN January, 1774, two of my parishioners, a man and his wife, lay at the point of death. I had heard of it, but according to my general custom, not being sent for, I took no notice of it: but one evening, the woman being already dead, and the man dying, I heard that my neighbour, Mr. ——, had been several times to visit them. Immediately my conscience reproached me with being shamefully negligent, in sitting at home within a few doors of dying persons, my general hearers, and never going to visit them. Directly it occurred to me, that whatever contempt I might have for Mr. ——'s doctrines, I must acknowledge his practice to be more consistent with the ministerial character than mine. He must have more zeal and love for souls than I had, or he would not have walked so far to visit and supply my lack of care to those who, as far as I was concerned, might have been left to perish in their sins.

This reflection affected me so much, that earnestly, yea, with tears and without delay,

I besought the Lord to forgive my past neglect ; and resolved thenceforth to be more attentive to this duty : which resolution, though at first formed in ignorant dependence on my own strength, I have by divine grace been enabled hitherto to keep. Immediately I went to visit the survivor ; and the affecting sight of one person already dead, and another expiring in the same chamber, served more deeply to impress my serious convictions ; and from that time I have constantly visited the sick of my parishes, as far as I had opportunity ; and have endeavoured, to the best of my knowledge, to perform that essential part of a parish minister's duty.

Some time after this, a friend recommended to my perusal the conclusion of Bishop Buruet's History of His Own Times, especially that part which respects the clergy. It had the intended effect : I was considerably instructed and impressed thereby ; I was convinced, that my entrance into the ministry had been the result of very wrong motives, was preceded with a very unsuitable preparation, and accompanied with a very improper conduct ; some uneasiness was also excited in my mind, concerning my neglect of the important duties of that high calling.— And though I was too much the slave of sin, devoted to other studies, and in love with this present world, to relinquish my flattering pursuit of reputation and preferment, and

change the course of my life, studies, and employments, yet I experienced, by intervals, desires, and purposes, at some future period of devoting myself wholly to the work of the ministry, in the manner to which he exhorts the clergy.

All these things increased the clamorous remonstrances of my conscience ; and at this time I lived without any secret religion, because, without some reformation in my conduct as a man and a minister, I did not dare to pray. My convictions would no longer be silenced or appeased ; and they became so intolerably troublesome, that I resolved to make one more effort toward amendment. In good earnest, and not totally without seeking the assistance of the Lord by prayer, I attempted to break the chains wherewith Satan had hitherto held my soul in bondage. It pleased the Lord, that I at this time should obtain some advantages ; part of my grosser defilements I was enabled to relinquish, and to enter upon a form of devotion. Formal enough indeed it was ; for I neither knew that Mediator, through whom, nor that Spirit, by whom, prayers are offered with acceptance to God ; and yet, though utterly in the dark as to the true and living way to the throne of grace, I am persuaded, there were even then seasons, when I was enabled to rise above a mere form, and to offer petitions so far *spiritual*, as to be accepted and answered.

I was now somewhat reformed in my outward conduct ; but the renewing in the spirit of my mind, if begun, was scarce discernible. As my life was, in my own judgment, less wicked, my heart grew more proud ;—the idol self was the object of my adoration and obeisance ; my worldly advancement was more eagerly sought than ever ; some flattering prospects seemed to open, and I resolved to improve my advantage to the uttermost. At the same time every thing tended to increase my good opinion of myself. I was treated with kindness and friendship by persons, from whom I had no reason to expect it ; my preaching was well received ; my acquaintance seemed to be courted ; my foolish heart verily believed, that all this, and much more, was due to my superior worth ; whilst conscience, which before, by its mortifying accusations was useful to preserve some sense of unworthiness in my mind, was now silenced, or seemed to authorize that pride, which before it checked. And because I had the disadvantage of conversing in general with such persons, as either favoured my sentiments ; or out of good manners, or because they saw it would be in vain, would not contradict me ; I concluded that my scheme of doctrine was the exact standard of truth, and that by my superior abilities I was capable of confuting or convincing all, who were otherwise minded. In this view of the matter, I felt an eager desire

of entering into a religious controversy, especially with a Calvinist.

It was at this time that my correspondence with Mr.——* commenced. At the visitation, May, 1775, we exchanged a few words in an argumentative way, in the room among the clergy, which I believe drew many eyes upon us. At that time he prudently declined the discourse, but a day or two after sent me a short note, and a little book for my perusal. This was the very thing I wanted, and I gladly embraced the opportunity, which, according to my wishes, seemed now to offer. This I did, God knoweth, with no inconsiderable expectations, that my arguments would prove irresistibly convincing, and that I should have the honour of rescuing a well-meaning person from his enthusiastical delusions.

Indeed at this time I had conceived a very favourable opinion of, and sort of respect for him; because I was acquainted with the character he sustained even among some persons, who expressed a disapprobation of his doctrines; they were forward to commend him as a benevolent, disinterested and inoffensive person, and a laborious minister. On the other hand, I looked upon his religious sentiments as rank fanaticism, and entertained a very contemptuous opinion of his abilities, natural and acquired. Once I had the curiosity to hear him preach, and not understand-

* Rev. John Newton.

ing his sermon, I made a very great jest of it, where I could do it without giving offence. I had also read one of his publications; but for the same reason, I thought the greater part of it to be whimsical, paradoxical and unintelligible.

Concealing, therefore, the true motives of my conduct under the offer of friendship, and a professed desire to know the truth, (which, amidst all my self sufficiency and prejudice, I trust the Lord had even then given me,) with the greatest affectation of candour, and a mind open to conviction, I wrote him a long letter; purposing to draw from him such an avowal, and explanation of his sentiments, as would introduce a controversial discussion of our religious differences.

The event by no means answered my expectation; he returned me a very friendly and long answer to my letter; in which he carefully avoided the mention of those doctrines which he knew would offend me: he declared, that he believed me to be one that feared God, and that was under the teaching of his Holy Spirit; that he gladly accepted my offers of friendship, and was nowise inclined to dictate to me; but leaving me to the guidance of the Lord, would be glad, as occasion served, from time to time, to bear testimony to the truths of the Gospel, and to communicate his sentiments to me, on any subject, with all the confidence of friendship.

In this manner our correspondence began,

and was continued in the interchange of nine or ten letters, until December the same year. Throughout I held my purpose, and he his. I made use of every endeavour to draw him into controversy, and filled my letters with definitions, inquiries, arguments, objections, and consequences, and required explicit answers; he, on the other hand, shunned every thing controversial, as much as possible, and filled his letters with the most useful, and least offensive instructions; except that now and then he dropped hints concerning the necessity, and the true nature and efficacy of faith, and the manner in which it was to be sought and obtained; and concerning some other matters, suited, as he judged, to help me forward in my inquiry after truth. But they much offended my prejudices, afforded me matter of disputation, and at that time were of little use to me.

This, however, is certain, that through the whole of the correspondence, I disputed with every argument I could devise against almost every thing he advanced; was very much nettled at many things he asserted: I read great part of his letters, and some books he sent me, with much indifference and contempt; construed his declining controversy into an acknowledgment of weakness; and triumphed in many companies as having confuted his arguments. . And at the last, when I could not obtain my end, at my instance the correspondence was dropped.

His letters and my answers are now by me ; and on a careful perusal of them, compared with all that I can recollect concerning this matter, I give this as a faithful account of this correspondence, though different from what has been represented. His letters will, I hope, shortly be made public, being such as promise greater usefulness to others, than, through my proud, contentious spirit, I experienced from them. Mine deserve only to be forgotten, except, as they are useful to me to remind me what I was, and to mortify my pride ; as they illustrate my friend's patience and candour, in so long bearing with my ignorance and arrogance ; and notwithstanding my unteachable, quarrelsome temper, continuing his benevolent labours for my good ; and especially as they remind me of the goodness of God, who, though he abominates and resists the proud, yet knows how to bring down the stout heart, not only by the iron rod of his wrath, but by the golden sceptre of his grace.

In this manner our correspondence and acquaintance, for the present, were almost wholly broken off ; for a long time we seldom met, and then only interchanged a few words on general topics of conversation. Yet all along he perseveringly told me, to my no small offence, that I should accede one day to his religious principles ; that he had stood on my ground, and that I should stand on his ; and he constantly informed his friends, that,

though slowly, I was surely feeling my way to the knowledge of the truth. So clearly could he discern the dawnings of grace in my soul, amidst all the darkness of depraved nature, and obstinate rebellion to the will of God.

This expectation was principally grounded on my conduct in the following circumstances: Immediately after the commencement of our correspondence, namely, in May, 1775, whilst my thoughts were much engrossed by some hopes of preferment; one Sunday, during the time of divine service, when the psalm was named, I opened the prayer book to turn to it; but (accidentally shall I say, or providentially?) I opened upon the articles of religion: and the eighth, respecting the authority and warrant of the Athanasian creed, immediately engaged my attention. My disbelief of the doctrine of a trinity, of co-equal persons in the unity of the Godhead, and my pretensions to candour, both combined to excite my hatred to this creed; for which reasons, I had been accustomed to speak of it with contempt, and to neglect reading it officially. No sooner, therefore, did I read the words, "That it was to be thoroughly received and believed; for that it might be proved by most certain warrants of holy scripture;" than my mind was greatly impressed and affected.—The matter of subscription immediately occurred, and from that moment I conceived such scruples about it, that until my view of

the whole system of gospel doctrine was entirely changed, they remained insuperable.

'Tis wisely said by the son of Sirach, "My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation." I had twice before subscribed these articles, with the same religious sentiments I now entertained. But conscience being asleep, and the service of the Lord no part of my concern, I considered subscription as a matter of course, a necessary form, and very little troubled myself about it. But now, though full of pride, of ambition, and of the love of the world, my heart was sincerely toward the Lord, and I dared not to venture on a known sin deliberately, for the sake of temporal interest. Subscription to articles which I did not believe, paid as a price for church preferment, I looked upon as an impious lie, a heinous guilt, that could never truly be repented of without throwing back the wages of iniquity. The more I pondered it, the more strenuously my conscience protested against it. At length, after a violent conflict betwixt interest and conscience, I made known my scruples, and my determination not to subscribe: thus my views of preferment were deliberately given up, and with an increasing family I was left, as far as mere human prudence could discern, with little other prospect than that of poverty and distress. My scruple was, as I now see, a mis-

taken one; much self-sufficiency, undue warmth of temper, and obstinacy, were betrayed in the management of this affair, for which I ought to be humbled. But my adherence to the dictates of my conscience, and holding fast my integrity in such trying circumstances, I never did, nor I trust ever shall, repent of.

No sooner was my determination known, than I was much blamed by many of my friends. They all, I am sensible, did it out of kindness to me, but they used arguments of different kinds. And though I was confirmed in my resolution by the reasonings used to induce me to alter it; yet were they at length made instrumental in bringing me to this important determination: "not to believe what any man said, as to take it upon his authority, but to search the word of God with this single intention, to discover whether the articles of the church of England in general, and this creed in particular, were, or were not agreeable thereto." I had studied the Scriptures in some measure before, for the sake of becoming acquainted with the original languages, and in order to fetch thence detached texts to support my own system; and I had a tolerable acquaintance with the historical and preceptive parts of them: but I had not searched this precious repository of divine knowledge, with the express design of discovering the truth in controverted matters of doctrine. I had very rarely been troubled with suspi-

cions that I was or might be mistaken; and now rather thought of becoming better qualified upon scriptural grounds to defend my determination, than of being led to any change of sentiments.

However, I set about the inquiry; and the first passage, as I remember, which made me suspect that I might be wrong, was James i. 5. "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." On considering these words with some attention, I became conscious, that though I had thought myself wise, yet certainly I had obtained none of my wisdom in this manner; for I had never offered one prayer to that effect in my life: and I also perceived this text contained a suitable direction, and an encouraging promise in my present inquiry: and from this time, in my poor manner, I began to ask God to give me this promised wisdom.

Shortly after I meditated upon, and preached from John vii. 16, 17. "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me; if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." I was surprised that I had not before attended to such remarkable words. I discovered that they contained a direction and a promise calculated to serve as a clue in extricating the sincere inquirer after truth from that labyrinth of controversy

wherein, at his first setting out, he is likely to be bewildered. And though my mind was too much leavened with the pride of reasoning, as yet to reap that benefit from this precious text, which it is capable of affording to the soul that is humbly willing to be taught of God; yet, being conscious that I was willing to risk every thing in doing what I thought his will; I was encouraged with the assurance, that if I was under a mistake, I should some time discover it.

I was further led to suspect that I might possibly be wrong, because I had not hitherto sought the truth in the proper manner, by attending to Proverbs iii. 5, 6. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding: in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Evidently I had not hitherto trusted in the Lord with all my heart, nor acknowledged him in all my ways, nor depended on his directions in all my paths; but in my religious speculations, had leaned wholly to my own understanding.

But though these passages, and some others, made for the present a great impression upon me, and influenced me to make it a part of my daily prayers, that I might be directed to a right understanding of the word of God; yet my pride and addictedness to controversy had, as some desperate disease, infected my whole soul, and I was not to be cured all at once. I was far from being like

a little child, sitting humbly and simply at the Lord's feet, to learn from him the very first rudiments of divine knowledge. I had yet no abiding suspicion, that all which I had heretofore accounted wisdom was foolishness, and must be unlearned, and counted loss, before I could attain to the excellency of the true knowledge of Jesus Christ: for though I began to allow it probable, that in some few matters I might have been in an error, yet in the main I still was confident my scheme of doctrine was true. When I was pressed with objections and arguments against any of my sentiments, and when doubts began to arise in my mind, to put off the uneasiness thereby occasioned, my constant practice was to recollect, as far as I could, all the reasonings and interpretations of Scripture, on the other side of the question; and when this failed of affording satisfaction, I had recourse to controversial writings.— This drew me aside from the pure word of God, occasioned my being more remiss and formal in prayer, and furnished me with defensive armour against my convictions, with fuel for my passions, and food for my pride and self sufficiency.

At this time, "Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity," together with his "vindications of it," became my favourite piece of divinity. I studied this, and many other of Mr. Locke's works with great attention, and a sort of bigoted fondness taking him almost

implicitly for my master, adopting almost all his conclusions, borrowing many of his arguments, and being scarcely able to endure such as would not agree with me in my partiality for him. This was of great disservice to me,* as, instead of getting forward in my inquiry after truth, I was thereby furnished with more ingenious and specious arguments wherewith to defend my mistakes.

But I read one book at this time, because mentioned with approbation by Mr. Locke, that was of singular use, namely, "Bishop Burnet's Pastoral Care." Therein I found but little that offended my prejudices, and many things, which came home to my conscience, respecting my ministerial obligations. A few short extracts I shall lay before the reader, that were most affecting to my own mind. Page 111, having mentioned the question proposed to those who are about to be ordained deacons: "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office, to serve God, for promoting his glory, and the edifying of his

* After having spoken so freely of Mr. Locke's divinity, which I once so highly esteemed, it seems a piece of justice to acknowledge the very great obligations, which the whole religious world is under to this great man, for his Treatise on Toleration, and his answers to those who wrote against it. The grounds of religious liberty, and the reasons why every one should be left to his own choice, to worship God according to his conscience, were perhaps never generally understood since the foundation of the world, until by these publications, Mr. Locke unanswerably made them manifest.

people?" He adds, "Certainly the answer that is made to this, ought to be well considered; for if any one says, 'I trust so,' that yet knows nothing of any such motion, and can give no account of it, he lies to the Holy Ghost, and makes his first approach to the altar with a lie in his mouth, and that not to men, but to God." And again, p. 112, "Shall not he (God) reckon with those, who dare to run without his mission, pretending that they trust they have it, when perhaps they understand not the importance of it; nay, and perhaps some laugh at it, as an enthusiastical question, who yet will go through with the office! They come to Christ for the loaves; they hope to live by the altar and the gospel, how little soever they serve at the one, or preach at the other; therefore they will say any thing that is necessary for qualifying them to this, whether true or false."

Again, page 122, having interwoven a great part of the excellent office of the ordination of priests, into his argument concerning the importance of the work and weight of the ministry; he adds, "Upon the whole matter, either this is all a piece of gross and impudent pageantry, dressed up in grave and lofty expressions, to strike upon the weaker part of mankind, and to furnish the rest with matter to their profane and impious scorn; or it must be confessed that priests come un-

der the most formal and express engagements to constant and diligent labour, that can be possibly contrived, or set forth in words." He concludes this subject of the ordination offices, with exhorting all candidates for orders, to read them frequently and attentively, during their season of preparation; that they may be aware beforehand of the obligations they are about so solemnly to enter into; and to peruse them at least four times in a year, ever after their ordination, to keep in their minds a continual remembrance of their important engagements. How necessary this counsel is, every minister, or candidate for the ministry, must determine for himself: for my part, I had never read the office over once, when I was ordained, and was in great measure a stranger to the obligations I was about to enter into, until the very season; nor did I ever afterward attend thereto, till this advice put me upon it. The shameful negligence, and extreme absurdity of my conduct in this respect, are too glaring not to be understood, and applied by every one who hath been guilty of a similar omission. I would therefore only just mention, that hearty, earnest prayer to God, for his guidance, help, and blessing, may be suitably recommended as a proper attendant on such perusal of our obligation.

Again, p. 147, he thus speaks of a wicked clergyman: "His whole life has been a course of hypocrisy in the strictest sense of the word,

which is the acting of a part, and the counterfeiting another person. His sins have in them all possible aggravations; they are against knowledge and against vows, and contrary to his character: they carry in them a deliberate contempt of all the truths and obligations of religion; and if he perishes, he doth not perish alone, but carries a shoal down with him, either of those who have perished in ignorance through his neglect, or of those who have been hardened in their sins through his ill example." Again, p. 183, having copiously discoursed of the studies befitting ministers, especially the study of the Scriptures, he adds, "But to give all these their full effect, a priest that is much in his study, ought to employ a great part of his time in secret and fervent prayer, for the direction and blessing of God in his labours, for the constant assistance of his Holy Spirit, and for a lively sense of divine matters; that so he may feel the impressions of them grow deep and strong upon his thoughts; this, and this only, will make him go on with his work without wearying, and be always rejoicing in it."

But the chief benefit that accrued to me from the perusal of this book was this: I was excited by it to an attentive consideration of those Scriptures which speak of the obligations and duties of a minister, and which hitherto I had not observed, or very loosely attended to. In particular, it is yet

fresh in my memory, that I was much affected with considering the charge of precious souls committed to me, and the awful account one day to be rendered of them; as this subject occurred to me in meditating on Ezekiel xxxiii. 7—9. “So thou, O son of man! I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.—When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way, to turn from it: if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.” I was fully convinced with Bishop Burnet, that every minister is as much concerned in this solemn warning, as the prophet himself. Acts xx. 17—35, was another portion of Scripture, which, by means of this book was brought home to my conscience; especially ver 26, 27, 28, which serve as an illustration of the foregoing Scripture: “wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God,

which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

In short, at his instance I was put upon the attentive and repeated perusal of the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, as containing the sum of a minister's duty in all ages. I searched out, and carefully considered every text I could find in the whole Scripture, which referred to this argument. I was greatly impressed by 1 Cor. ix. 16. “For necessity is laid upon me : yea, woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel.” Nor was I less struck with Colossians, iv. 17. “Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfil it.” This was brought to my conscience with power, as if the Apostle had in person spoken these words to me. But especially I was both instructed and encouraged by meditating upon 1 Peter v. 2—4. “Feed the flock of God that is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly ; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind, neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock : and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away.”

I hope the reader will excuse my prolixity in speaking on this subject, because in itself it is very important ; and though I got no new views of gospel truth from this book,

yet I received such a deep conviction of the difficulty and importance of that work, in which I had thoughtlessly engaged, and of the imminent danger my soul was exposed to, if I neglected to devote myself wholly thereto; that therein was laid the foundation of all my subsequent conduct, and change of sentiment. Indeed, I was guilty of very criminal procrastination, after I had been thus convinced; and being engaged more than I ought in other matters, I postponed and neglected, for a time, complying with the dictates of my conscience. But I never lost sight of the instruction I had received, nor ever had any comfortable reflection, until having broken off all other engagements, I had given myself up to those studies and duties which pertain to the work of the ministry. And I have cause to bless God, that this book ever came in my way.

Still, however, my self-confidence was very little abated, and my advance in the knowledge of the truth very small. I next read Tillotson's sermons, and Jortin's works; and my time being otherwise engaged, I gave in to the indolent custom of transcribing their discourses with some alterations, to preach to my people. This precluded free meditation on the word of God, and led me for a time to take up my opinions upon trust. My preaching was in general that smooth palatable mixture of law and gospel, which corrupts both; which, flattering pride and

prejudice, and soothing the conscience, pleases the careless sinner, and self-righteous formalist, but does real good to none ; and is in fact a specious and unsuspected kind of Antinomianism.

About this time I foolishly engaged in a course of diversion and visiting, more than I had done since my ordination : this unfitted me for secret prayer and close meditation, and rendered the Scriptures, and other religious studies, insipid and irksome to me, (a never-failing consequence of every vain compliance with the world.) For a season, therefore, my ardour was damped, my anxiety banished, and my inquiries retarded. I was not, however, permitted entirely to drop my religious pursuits : generally I made it a rule to read something in the Scriptures every day, and to perform a task of daily devotion ; but in both I was very formal and lifeless.

Yet not long after, I was engaged in earnest meditation on our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, (John iii.) I felt an anxious desire to understand this interesting portion of Scripture ; especially to know what it was to be "born again," or "born of the Spirit ;" which in five verses our Saviour hath three times declared absolutely necessary to salvation. I was convinced that it was absurd to suppose that such strong expressions implied no more than baptism with water. Tillotson's controversial sermons on this subject, afforded me no satisfaction. Some great and total

change I supposed to be intended, not only in the behaviour, but also in the heart. But not having clearly experienced that change, I could not understand in what it consisted. However, having offered some poor prayers for divine teaching, I undertook to preach upon it; but I talked very darkly, employed a considerable part of my time in declaiming against visionaries and enthusiasts, and reaped very little benefit from it. Yet I was so well satisfied with my performance, that in the course of my correspondence with Mr. —, I sent him these sermons for his perusal; and he, in return, sent me some of his own upon the same subject. But, though sincerely desirous to understand our Lord's meaning in this important point, I was too proud to be taught by *him*: I cast my eye, therefore, carelessly, over some of them, and returned the manuscript without closely attending to any thing contained in it.

Nothing material occurred after this, until the next spring, 1776; when I was induced, by what I had learned from Bishop Burnet, to establish a lecture once a week in one of my parishes, for expounding the Scriptures. This brought many passages, which I had not before observed, under my attentive consideration, and afforded my reflecting mind abundance of employment, in attempting to reconcile them with each other, and with my scheme of doctrine.

Little progress, however, had been made when, in May, 1776, I heard a dignified clergyman, in a visitation sermon, recommend Mr. Soame Jenyns's "View of the internal evidence of the Christian Religion." In consequence of this recommendation, I perused it, and not without profit. The truth and importance of the gospel revelation appeared with convincing evidence to my understanding, and came with efficacy to my heart, by reading this book: I received from it more distinct and heart-affecting views of the design of God in this revelation of himself than I had before; and I was put upon much serious reflection, and earnest prayer, to be led to, or established in the truth, concerning the nature and reality of the atonement by the death of Christ, for hitherto I had been, in this respect, a Socinian, or very little better.

But to counterbalance this advantage, Dr. Clarke's "Scripture doctrine of the Trinity," and the controversy which ensued upon its publication, became a favourite part of my study. The Arian scheme is so inconsistent with reason, that when reflecting men, in order to avoid those mysterious, and, as they imagine, unreasonable conclusions, which, according to the true meaning of words, the Scriptures contain, have become Arians, it is wonderful they do not, for the same cause, embrace the Socinian system. This is the natural progress of unhumbled reason; from Arianism to Socinianism; from Socinianism

to Deism ; and thence to Atheism. Many and awful have been the examples of reasoning and learned men, who, under the name of philosophers, arrogating to themselves the prerogative of superior discernment, have manifested the propriety with which they claimed this pre-eminence, by treading this down hill road, almost, if not quite, to the very bottom.

But when a man has fallen so low as Socinianism, not merely for want of information, or by blindly and implicitly adopting the sentiments of other men, but by leaning to his own understanding, and preferring the conclusions of his own reason, to the infallible dictates of the Holy Ghost ; it is not common for him to return gradually by the retrograde path, first to Arianism, and then to the received doctrine of the Trinity. Yet this was my case. Dr. Clarke appeared to me so undeniably to establish his argument, by express Scriptural evidences, and so plausibly to defend his system on both sides, and to back his cause with so many seeming authorities, that I found myself unable any longer to maintain my Socinian principles, and was constrained to relinquish them as untenable ; at the same time, I was not aware of the flaw in his reasoning, and the unavoidable consequence of his middle doctrine ; namely, “that the Son, and Holy Ghost, however exalted, or dignified with names and titles, must either be *mere creatures*, or that otherwise there must be three

Gods." Not perceiving this, and my newly acquired reverence for Scripture, and my old self-confidence and fondness for reasoning, being, by this conciliating scheme, both humoured, I cordially acceded to his sentiments, and for a long time could not endure any other doctrine.

Nothing further, of any consequence, occurred till about December, 1776, when carelessly taking up Mr. Law's "Serious Call," a book I had hitherto treated with contempt, I had no sooner opened it, than I was struck with the originality of the work, and the spirit and force of argument with which it is written, I mean merely as to his management of the subjects he treats of; for there are many things in it, that I am very far from approving; and it certainly contains as little gospel, as any religious work I am acquainted with. But though a very uncomfortable book to a person who is brought under a serious concern for his soul, and deep convictions of sin; it is very useful to prepare the way, to show the need we have of a Saviour, and to enforce the practice of that holy diligence in the use of means, which the important interests of eternity reasonably demand. This was its use to me. By the perusal of it, I was convinced that I was guilty of great remissness and negligence; that the duties of secret devotion called for far more of my time and attention than had been hitherto allotted to them; and that, if I hoped to save my own soul,

and the souls of those that heard me, I must in this respect greatly alter my conduct, and increase my diligence in seeking and serving the Lord. From that time I began to study in what manner my devotions might be rendered more fervent and pertinent; I transcribed and committed to memory, Scripture petitions; I employed some time in reading manuals of devotion, made attempts to compose prayers myself, and became more frequent and earnest, and I trust more spiritual than heretofore, in my secret addresses to the Majesty of Heaven.

About this time, after many delays, I complied with the admonitions of my conscience, and disengaged myself from all other employments, with a solemn resolution to leave all my temporal concerns in the hands of the Lord, and entirely to devote myself to the work of the ministry. Being thus become master of all my time, I dropped every other study, and turned the whole current of my reflections, and inquiries, into another channel, and for several years I scarcely opened a book, which treated of any thing beside religion.

The first step I took after this disengagement, was to keep common-place books; one I had for noting down remarkable passages out of other authors; and another for collecting into one view every text I could meet with in Scripture, respecting the most important and controverted doctrines of the gospel.— Though I held this but a short time, (for

when my engagements multiplied, I dropped it;) yet I found it very useful, in bringing me acquainted with many passages of the word of God, to which I had not hitherto much attended; and it prepared the way for penning my sermons on doctrinal subjects, with the scriptural testimonies concerning the point in hand, in one view before me.

In January, 1777, I met with a very high commendation of Mr. Hooker's writings in which the honourable appellation of *judicious* was bestowed upon him. This excited my curiosity to read his work; which accordingly I did, with great profit. In his "discourse of justification," (edit. 1682, page 496,) I met with the following remarkable passage, which, as well for its excellency, as for the effect it had upon my religious views, I shall, though rather long, transcribe. "If our hands did never offer violence to our brethren, a bloody thought doth prove us murderers before him [God.] If we had never opened our mouth to utter any scandalous, offensive, or hurtful word, the cry of our secret cogitations is heard in the ears of God. If we did not commit the sins, which daily and hourly, in deed, word, or thoughts, we do commit; yet in the good things which we do, how many defects are there intermingled! God, in that which is done, respecteth the mind and intention of the doer. Cut off then all those things, wherein we have regarded our own glory, those things

which men do to please men, and to satisfy our own liking; those things which we do by any respect, not sincerely, and purely for the love of God; and a small score will serve for the number of our righteous deeds. Let the holiest and best things we do, be considered: we are never better affected unto God, than when we pray; yet when we pray, how are our affections many times distracted! how little reverence do we show unto the grand Majesty of God, unto whom we speak! how little remorse of our own miseries! how little taste of the sweet influence of his tender mercies do we feel! Are we not as unwilling many times to begin, and as glad to make an end, as if in saying, 'Call upon me,' he had set us a very burdensome task? It may seem somewhat extreme, which I will speak; therefore let every one judge of it, even as his own heart shall tell him, and no otherwise. I will but only make a demand: if God should yield unto us, not as unto Abraham—if fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, yea, or if ten good persons could be found in a city, for their sakes, the city should not be destroyed—but, and if he should make us an offer thus large—Search all the generations of men since the fall of our father Adam; find one man, that hath done one action, which hath passed from him pure without any stain or blemish at all; and for that one only man's action, neither men nor angels shall feel the torments

which are prepared for both;—do you think that this ransom to deliver men and angels could be found to be among the sons of men? The best things which we do, have somewhat in them to be pardoned; how then can we do any thing meritorious, or worthy to be rewarded? Indeed, God doth liberally promise whatsoever appertaineth to a blessed life to as many as sincerely keep his law, though they be not exactly able to keep it. Wherefore we acknowledge a dutiful necessity of doing well, but the meritorious dignity of doing well we utterly renounce. We see how far we are from the perfect righteousness of the law; the little fruit, which we have in holiness, it is, God knoweth, corrupt and unsound; we put no confidence at all in it; we challenge nothing in the world for it; we dare not call God to reckoning, as if we had him in our debt books. Our continual suit to him is, and must be, to bear with our infirmities, and pardon our offences.”

I had no sooner read this passage, than I acquired such an insight into the strictness and spirituality of the divine law, and the perfection which a just and holy God, according to that law, cannot but require in all the services of his reasonable creatures; that I clearly perceived my very best duties on which my main dependence had hitherto been placed, to be merely specious sins; and my whole life appeared to be one continued series of transgression. I now understood

the apostle's meaning, when he affirms, that "by the works of the law can no flesh be justified before God." All my difficulties in this matter vanished; all my distinctions and reasonings about the meaning of the words law and justification, with all my borrowed criticisms upon them, failed me at once. I could no longer be thus amused; for I was convinced, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that all men were so notoriously transgressors of every law of God, that no man could possibly be justified in his sight, by his obedience to any of the divine commandments. I was sensible that if God should call me into judgment before him, according to the strictness of his perfect law, for the best duty I ever performed, and for nothing else, I must be condemned as a transgressor; for when weighed in these exact balances, it would be found wanting. Thus I was effectually convinced, that if ever I were saved, it must be in some way of unmerited mercy and grace, though I did not clearly understand in what way, till long after. Immediately, therefore, I took for my text, Galatians iii. 22. "But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise, by faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe;" and I preached from it according to Hooker's doctrine; expressing, as strongly as I could, the defilements of our best actions, and our need of mercy in every thing we do; in order the more evidently to show

that "salvation is of grace, through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast."

I had not, however, as yet attained to a knowledge of the foulness of that fountain whence all these polluted streams flow forth so plentifully into our lives and conversation. Neither was I then able to receive the following nervous passage concerning justification, (Hooker, p. 495.) "The righteousness, wherein we must be found, if we will be justified, is not our own; therefore we cannot be justified by any inherent quality. Christ hath merited righteousness for as many as are found in him. In him God findeth us if we be faithful; for by faith we are incorporated into Christ. Then, although in ourselves we be altogether sinful and unrighteous, yet even the man which is impious in himself, full of iniquity, full of sin; him, being found in Christ through faith, and having his sin remitted through repentance; him God upholdeth with a gracious eye, putteth away his sin by not imputing it; taketh quite away the punishment due thereunto by pardoning it; and accepteth him in Jesus Christ as perfectly righteous, as if he had fulfilled all that was commanded him in the law. Shall I say more perfectly righteous, than if himself had fulfilled the whole law? I must take heed what I say; but the apostle saith, '*God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*' Such we are in

the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God himself. Let it be counted folly, or frenzy, or fury, whatsoever, it is our comfort and our wisdom; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned, and God hath suffered; that God hath made himself the Son of man, and that men are made the righteousness of God."

Equally determinate and expressive are these words, p. 500, "As for such as hold with the church of Rome, that we cannot be saved by Christ alone without works, they do, not only by a circle of consequences, but directly, deny the foundation of faith; they hold it not, no, not so much as by a thread." If the *judicious* Mr. Hooker's judgment may, in this important concern, be depended upon, and I suppose it will not easily be proved erroneous, I fear the foundation of faith is held by only a small part of that church which has honoured her champion with this distinction.

Pages 508 and 509, he thus defends his doctrine against the objections of the Papists, (for at that time none but the Papists openly objected to it,) "It is a childish cavil, wherewith, in the matter of justification, our adversaries do so greatly please themselves, exclaiming that we tread all Christian virtues under our feet, and require nothing of Christians but faith; because we teach that faith alone justifieth. Whereas, by this speech we never meant to exclude either hope or charity

from being always joined as inseparable mates with faith, in the man that is justified ; or works from being added as necessary duties required at the hands of every justified man ; but to show that faith is the only hand which putteth on Christ unto justification ; and Christ the only garment, which, being so put on, covereth the shame of our defiled natures—hideth the imperfections of our works—preserveth us blameless in the sight of God ; before whom otherwise, the weakness of our faith were cause sufficient to make us culpable, yea, to shut us from the kingdom of heaven, where nothing that is not absolute can enter.”

Had I at this time met with such passages in the writings of the Dissenters, or in any of those modern publications, which, under the brand of methodistical, are condemned without reading, or perused with invincible prejudice, I should not have thought them worth regard, but should have rejected them as wild enthusiasm. But I knew that Hooker was deemed perfectly orthodox, and a standard writer, by the prelates of the church in his own days. I learned from his dispute with Mr. Travers, that he was put upon his defence, for making concessions in this matter to the church of Rome, which the zealous Protestants did not think warrantable ; and that he was judged by the more rigid, too lax in his doctrines ; by none too rigid. I had never heard it insinuated, that he was tinctured with enthusiasm ; and the so-

lidity of his judgment, and the acuteness of his reasoning faculties, need no voucher to the attentive reader. His opinion therefore carried great weight with it; made me suspect the truth of my former sentiments, and put me upon serious inquiries and deep meditation upon this subject, accompanied with earnest prayers for the teaching and direction of the Lord in this important point. The result was, that after many objections, and doubts, and much examination of the word of God, in a few months I began to accede to Mr. Hooker's sentiments. And at the present my opinion in this respect, as far as I know, coincides with these passages of this eminent author, and is supported and vindicated by the same arguments; he, therefore, who would prove our doctrine of justification by faith alone to be an error, will do well to answer in the first place these quotations from Mr. Hooker.

Indeed, as far as I can understand him, there is scarcely any doctrine, which, with no inconsiderable offence, I now preach, that is not as evidently contained in his writings, as in my sermons. Witness particularly his "Sermon of the certainty, and perpetuity of faith in the elect," in which the doctrine of the final perseverance of true believers, is expressly taught and scripturally maintained: and he closes it with this noble triumph of full assurance, as resulting from that comfortable doctrine in the hearts of confirmed and ex-

perienced Christians: "I know in whom I have believed;" I am not ignorant whose precious blood has been shed for me: I have a shepherd full of kindness, full of care, and full of power; unto him I commit myself. His own finger hath engraven this sentence in the tables of my heart: '*Satan hath desired to winnow thee as wheat, but I have prayed that thy faith fail not;*' therefore, the assurance of my hope I will labour to keep as a jewel unto the end, and by labour through the gracious mediation of his prayer, I shall keep it," (page 532.) With such words in my mouth, and such assurance in my heart, I wish to live, and hope to die.

The insertion of these quotations from this old author, will, I hope, need no apology; many have not his works, and these extracts are worthy of their perusal; others, from these specimens, may be prevailed with to read, what perhaps hath hitherto been an unnoticed book in their studies. Especially I recommend it to those who admire him as the champion of the external order and discipline of the church, and who willingly allow him the honour of being distinguished by the epithet *judicious*; that they would attentively read, and impartially consider his doctrine. This would put an effectual stop to those declamations, that either ignorantly or maliciously are made against the very doctrines as novel inventions, which have just now been explained and defended, in Mr. Hook

er's own words. For my part, though I acknowledge that he advances many things I should be unwilling to subscribe, yet I heartily bless God, that at this time I read him; the first material alteration that took place in my views of the Gospel, being in consequence of it.

One more quotation I shall make, and so take my leave of him. Addressing himself (in his 2d "Sermon on part of Jude's Epistle,") to the pastors, who are appointed to feed the chosen in Israel, he says, (page 552,) "If there be any feeling of Christ, any drop of heavenly dew, or any spark of God's good Spirit within you, stir it up: be careful to build and edify, first yourselves, and then your flocks, in this most holy faith. I say, first yourselves; for he, which will set the hearts of other men on fire with the love of Christ, must himself burn with love. It is want of faith in ourselves, my brethren, which makes us retchless, (careless,) in building others. We forsake the Lord's inheritance, and feel it not. What is the reason of this? Our own desires are settled where they should not be. We ourselves are like those women, which have a longing to eat coals, and lime, and filth; we are fed, some with honour, some with ease, some with wealth. The Gospel waxeth loathsome and unpleasant in our taste. How should we then have a care to feed others with that which we cannot fancy ourselves? If faith wax

cold and slender in the heart of the prophet, it will soon perish from the ears of the people." It is not needful to add any reflections upon this passage; every one will readily make them for himself; we are, however, reminded of Solomon's words, (Eccl. i. 9, 10.) "There is no new thing under the sun; is there any thing whereof it may be said, see this is new? It hath been already of old time which was before us." (Eccl. iii. 15.) "That which hath been, is now, and that which is to be, hath already been."

To my shame be it spoken, though I had twice subscribed the articles which allow the book of Homilies to be sound and wholesome doctrine, I had never yet seen them, and understood not what that doctrine was. But, being at length engaged in a serious inquiry after truth, and Hooker's works having given me a more favourable opinion of these old authors, I was inclined to examine them; and I read part of the book with some degree of attention. And though many things seemed hard sayings, that I could not receive; yet others were made very useful to me, especially concerning justification. In short, I perceived that the very doctrine which I had hitherto despised as methodistical, was indisputably the standard doctrine of the established church, when the homilies were composed; and, consequently, that it is so still: for they have lost none of their authority (however fallen into disrepute,) with those

who subscribe the thirty-nine articles. This weakened my prejudice, though it did not prove the doctrine true.

About this time a new and unexpected effect was produced by my preaching. I had hitherto been satisfied to see people regularly frequent the church, listen attentively to what was discoursed, and lead moral, decent lives. The way in which I had been led was so smooth, and the progress I had made so gradual; I had lately experienced so little distressing concern for my own soul, and had so little acquaintance with persons conversant in these matters, that while I declared the strictness, spirituality, and sanction of the law of God in an alarming manner, it never occurred to me that my hearers might not proceed in the same easy gradual way. But I had scarcely begun this new method of preaching, when application was made to me by persons in great distress about their souls; for, their consciences being awakened to a sense of their lost condition by nature and practice, they were anxious in inquiring, what they must do to be saved. I knew not well what to say to them, my views being greatly clouded, and my sentiments concerning justification very much perplexed: but, being willing to give them the best counsel I could, I exhorted them, in a general way, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, though I was incapable of instructing them either concerning the true nature of faith, or in what manner they

were to seek it. However, I better understood my own meaning, when I advised them to the study of the Scriptures, accompanied with prayer to God, to be enabled rightly to understand them; and when I inculcated amendment of life. In this manner the Lord slowly brought them forward: and though, for want of a better instructor, they were a considerable time before they arrived at establishment in the faith, yet some of them, having their minds less leavened with prejudice and the pride of reasoning, were more apt scholars in the school of Christ than I was, and got the start of me in the knowledge both of doctrine and duty; and in their turns became, without intending it, in some respects monitors to me, and I derived important advantage from them. This singular circumstance of being an instrument in bringing others earnestly and successfully to inquire after salvation, while I so little understood the true gospel of Jesus Christ, very much increased my perplexity. I became doubly earnest to know the truth, lest I should mislead those, who confided their precious souls to me as their spiritual instructor. This added to my diligence in reading and meditating on the word of God; and made me more fervent in prayer to be guided to the knowledge of the truth. And under every difficulty, I constantly had recourse unto the Lord, to preserve me from ignorance and error, and to enable me to distinguish be-

tween the doctrines of his word, and the inventions and traditions of men.

About this time I established a weekly lecture for expounding the Scriptures in my other parish, by which I obtained further acquaintance with the various parts of the word of God. It was my general practice in penning these lectures, to search out all the texts referred to in the margin, of the Bible, with such as I could recollect upon the subject, and to make use of them in explaining each other. This method enabled me to store my memory with the language of Scripture, and made way for a greater exactness in discussing doctrinal subjects, than I had hitherto been acquainted with.

In the course of the winter, 1777, I was engaged in deep meditation upon Luke xi. 9—13; concerning the Holy Spirit being given in answer to prayer. And, at length, having made a collection of all the Scriptures I could meet with which related to that important doctrine, diligently comparing them together, and meditating upon them, and earnestly beseeching the Lord to fulfil the promise to my soul, I wrote two sermons upon the subject; one from Luke xi. 13.—“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” The other from James i. 16, 17; “Do not err, my beloved brethren, every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.”

Thus my views of a christian's privileges and duties in this respect were much enlarged, and my requests were made known unto the Lord in a more full, exact, and believing manner than before. Though I still remained very ignorant in many important matters respecting the person, offices, and work, of the Holy Ghost; yet I had discovered more of what was promised concerning him, and therefore knew better what to ask.

My obligations to Bishop Beveridge must here be acknowledged.—When I first began to peruse his sermons, I conceived a mean opinion of him; and it was some time before I could prevail with myself to examine any further into his writings: but being now more advanced in my inquiry after truth, those singularities which at first offended me became tolerable, and I began to relish the simplicity, spirituality, love of Christ, and affection for souls, which eminently shine forth in many parts of his works. Indeed, I received considerable instruction from him; but especially his sermon on the real satisfaction made by the death of Christ for the sins of believers, was the blessed means of clearing up my views, and confirming my faith, respecting that fundamental doctrine of Christianity. On Good Friday, 1777, I preached a sermon upon that subject, from Isaiah liii. 6. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid [hath caused to meet]

on him the iniquities of us all." I endeavoured to prove, (what has ever since been the sole foundation of all my hopes,) that Christ indeed bare the sins of all who should ever truly believe, in all their guilt, condemnation, and deserved punishment, in his own body on the tree. I explicitly avowed my belief, that Christ, as our Surety and Bondsman, stood in our law-place, to answer all our obligations, and to satisfy divine justice and the demands of the law for our offences: and I publicly renounced as erroneous, and grievous perversions of Scripture, all my former explanations and interpretations of these subjects.

This was the first doctrine in which I was clearly and fully brought to acknowledge the truth; though I had with no little earnestness for two years been inquiring about it; to so astonishing a degree was my blinded understanding filled with prejudice against the doctrines of the word of God! Hitherto they had been foolishness to me; but now under the divine teaching I began, though *very dimly*, to discern the wisdom of God in them.

I say *dimly*; for I was still under many and great mistakes, and very ignorant in many important points.—I knew sin to be the transgression of the divine law; but I did not perceive its odious deformity, as deliberate rebellion against God's sovereign authority, and an express contradiction to his holy na-

ture; as charging God foolishly, with the want of either wisdom or goodness, in laying such restraints upon the inclinations of his creatures; and as tending to overturn all subordination in the universe, and to introduce anarchy, confusion, and misery into the whole creation. I had discovered that my best *actions* were defiled; but I understood not that this was the effect of a depraved nature, and a polluted heart. The doctrine of original sin, as the fruitful root of these multiplied evils, was as yet no part of my creed. Inconsistently I was an Arian or a Clarkist, in my sentiments concerning the person of Christ, and the divinity of the Holy Ghost. Some faint conceptions I had formed of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the soul; the beginnings of it I little understood: and I continued to entertain an implacable enmity to the doctrine of election, and the truths more intimately connected with it. But my faith was now fixed upon a crucified Saviour, (though I dishonoured his person, and denied his Deity,) and I had a sincere desire of being devoted to the Lord. He therefore in mercy accepted his own work in my heart, and pardoned all that was mine; and at length extricated me from that labyrinth of perplexities and inconsistencies in which I was entangled.

About this time in the course of my lectures, our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus came again under my consideration. Not-

withstanding much meditation and many prayers, I could not satisfy my mind about it. I was convinced some internal change must be implied in the expressions, "born again," and "born of the Spirit:" and, according to what I had experienced, I endeavoured to explain it; but I was still very confused in my views of that important subject, and had many doubts whether I was right or wrong in what I advanced.

Hitherto, excepting Leland "On the Deistical Writers," I had not read any book written by a Dissenter, with the least degree of candour and attention; but at this crisis I met with the first volume of Dr. Evans's sermons, entitled "The Christian Temper." I was induced to read it by the recommendation of a friend; but (such was my proud foolish heart) I opened it with great prejudice because I understood that the author was a Dissenter. However, this book came with a blessing; for by perusing it I at length perceived that fallen man, both body and soul, is indeed carnal and sold under sin; that by nature in every man living the reasonable and immortal part is destitute of spirituality, immersed in matter, and, by a dishonourable and miserable prostitution, given up "to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;" and, that man must be renewed in the spirit of his mind, new created unto good works, born of the Spirit of God, made partaker of a new and divine nature, before he

can possibly be made meet for, or admitted into, the kingdom of God. In a very little time all my difficulties about this matter vanished, and the truth became so exceedingly plain and evident, that, until I had made the experiment, I could scarcely be persuaded but that every person, who heard it rightly explained, must assent to it.—This doctrine I have ever since invariably preached, with good effect, I trust, in opening the eyes of sinners, and “turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Acts xxiv. 28.

When I had made this little progress in seeking the truth, my acquaintance with Mr. [Newton] was resumed. From the conclusion of our correspondence in December 1775, till April, 1777, it had been almost wholly dropped. To speak plainly, I did not care for his company; I did not mean to make any use of him as an instructor; and I was unwilling the world should think us in any way connected. But under discouraging circumstances, I had occasion to call upon him: and his discourse so comforted and edified me, that my heart, being by his means relieved from its burden, became susceptible of affection for him. From that time I was inwardly pleased to have him for my friend; though not as now rejoiced to *call* him so. I had, however, even at that time, no thoughts of learning doctrinal truths from him, and was ashamed to be detected in his company: but

I sometimes stole away to spend an hour with him. About the same period, I once heard him preach; but still it was foolishness to me, his sermon being principally upon the believer's experience, in some particulars with which I was unacquainted; so that though I loved and valued him, I considered him as a person misled by enthusiastical notions; and strenuously insisted that we should never think alike till we met in heaven.

All along in the progress of this inquiry, I grew more and more concerned about my character. I saw myself continually verging nearer and nearer to that scheme of doctrine, which the world calls Methodism; nor could I help it without doing violence to my convictions. I had indeed set out with the *avowed*, and I trust *sincere*, resolution of seeking the truth as impartially as possible; and of embracing it wherever I might find it, without respect to interest, reputation, or any worldly consideration whatever. I had taken patiently, and sustained comfortably, the loss of my opening prospect of preferment, I trust chiefly from the supports of grace, and the consciousness of having acted with integrity; but I am not sure but my deceitful heart might also derive some support, from a vain imagination that my character would be no loser. Ambitious thirst after the praise of men was much more my peculiar corruption than covetousness: and I had been in no or

dinary degree proud of my natural understanding. I had been accustomed to hear the people called Methodists mentioned with contempt, as ignorant and deluded, as fools, and sometimes as madmen: and with no small degree of complacency and self-preference, I too had despised them as weak enthusiasts. But I now began to be apprehensive, that the tables were about to be turned upon me. If I professed and taught these doctrines, I must no longer be considered as a man of sober understanding: but as one of those persons, whose heads, being naturally weak, had been turned by religious studies; and who, having fallen under the power of enthusiasm, had become no better than fools or madmen.

This was the sharpest trial I passed through; for I had not yet learned, that "when we are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are we." Nor did I remember, with due consideration of the reasons assignable for so extraordinary a circumstance, that the apostles were "fools for Christ's sake;" were deemed "beside themselves;" and "went through evil report and good report, as deceivers, and yet true;" that they were "every where spoken against," as the "men that turned the world upside down;" were treated as "vain babblers," and "accounted the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things." I did not consider that Jesus himself, "the brightness of

the Father's glory." "the Word and Wisdom of God," who "went about doing good," and "spake as never man spake," was not only rejected, but despised as not worth hearing, as "one that had a devil," as in league with the devil, as "a blasphemer," "a Samaritan," "a madman," yea, "a devil."

I read indeed, but my understanding was not yet opened to understand, such plain Scriptures as these, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you: The servant is not greater than his Lord; if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (John xv. 19, 20.) "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of the household?" (Matt. x. 24, 25.) "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." (Matt. v. 11, 12.) Not being aware of these consequences when my resolution was first formed, I was as one who has begun to build without counting the cost, and was greatly disturbed when I saw the favourite idol of

my proud heart, my character, in such imminent danger.

It must be supposed that this apprehension would make me cautious what doctrines I admitted into my creed; and unwilling to be convinced that those things were true and important, the profession of which was sure to bring infamy on my character: and that even after the fullest conviction, I should thus be rendered very careful in what manner I preached them. In general, however, though the conflict was sharp, I was enabled to be faithful. The words "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel," were commonly upon my mind when I wrote my sermon, and when I entered the pulpit: and though, when a bold declaration of what I believed to be the truth, with an offensive application of it to the consciences of my hearers, drew opposition and calumny upon me, I have secretly resolved to be more circumspect the next time; yet, when that time came, my heart and conscience being both engaged, I dared not to conceal one tittle of what appeared to me to be true, and to promise usefulness. But while, with perturbation of mind, and with many disquieting apprehensions, I declared the message with which I supposed myself to be entrusted; to screen myself from the charge of Methodism and to soften the offence, I was frequently throwing out slighting expressions, and bringing the charge of

enthusiasm, against those who preached such doctrines as I was not yet convinced of. On the other hand, my concern about my character quickened me very much in prayer, and increased my diligence in searching the Scriptures, that I might be sure I was not, at this expense, preaching “cunningly devised fables,” instead of feeding the souls committed to my care with the unadulterated milk of evangelical truth.

In this state of mind, which is more easily understood by experience than description, I met with Mr. Venn’s Essay on the Prophecy of Zacharias, (Luke i. 67—69.) I was no stranger to the character he bore in the world, and did not begin to read his book with great alacrity or expectation: however, the interesting subjects treated of engaged my attention, and I read it with great seriousness, and some degree of impartiality. I disapproved indeed of many things: but the truth and importance of others brought conviction both to my understanding and my conscience; especially I found a word in season, respecting my foolish and wicked shame and attention to character, in inquiring after divine truth, and in the performance of the important duties of a Christian minister. These solemn words in particular came home to my heart. “If the spirit of the world, pride, carelessness respecting the soul, and neglect of Christ, be not hateful to God and destructive to men, the gospel^l (with re-

verence I speak it) is an imposition. Do you abhor that thought as blasphemy? Abhor as much a fawning upon Christ from year to year in your closet, calling him there your Lord and God, and then coming out to consult the world, how far they will allow you to obey his plain commands, without saying you are a Methodist. Cease rather to profess any allegiance to Christ, than treat him, under professions of duty, with such contempt. 'I would,' saith he to the church of Laodicea, 'thou wert cold or hot; so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.'" (Page 85.)

I should as easily be convinced that there was no Holy Ghost, as that he was not present with my soul when I read this passage, and the whole of what Mr. Venn has written upon the subject. It came to my heart with such evidence, conviction, and demonstration, that it lifted me up above the world, and produced that victory which faith alone can give, and that liberty which uniformly attends the presence of the Spirit of the Lord. I became at once ashamed of my base ingratitude and foolish fears, and was filled with such consolation and rejoicing, even in the prospect of sacrificing my character, and running the risk of infamy and contempt, as made me entirely satisfied on that head; and, some few seasons of unbelief excepted, I have never since been much

troubled about being called an Enthusiast or a Methodist.

But while I was thus delivered from the dread of unmerited reproaches, I continued as much as ever afraid of real enthusiasm; nay, I became continually more and more averse to every thing which can justly bear that name: so that the nearer I verged to what I had ignorantly supposed to be enthusiastical, the more apprehensive I was, lest my earnestness in such interesting inquiries, and the warmth of my natural spirit thus occasionally increased, should put me off my guard, and betray me into delusions and mistakes. From this danger I could however obtain no security, but by keeping close to the study of the word of God; and by being earnest and particular in praying to be preserved from error, and to be enabled to distinguish between the pure revelations of the Holy Spirit contained in Scripture, and the inventions of men, the imaginations of my own heart, or the delusions of the spirit of lies.

The doctrine of a Trinity of coequal persons in the Unity of the Godhead had been hitherto no part of my creed. I had long been accustomed to despise this great mystery of godliness. I had first quarrelled with the articles of the established Church about this doctrine; I had been very decided and open in my declarations against it; and my unhumbled reason still retained many objections

to it. But about June, 1777, I began to be troubled with doubts about my own sentiments, and to suspect the truth of Dr. Clarke's hypothesis. I had just read Mr. Lindsey's Apology and Sequel. Before I saw these tracts, I had even ridiculed those who thought of confuting him on the orthodox scheme, and was not without thoughts of maintaining Dr. Clarke's system against him. But when I understood that he claimed Dr. Clarke as a Socinian, I was extremely surprised, and in consequence, was led again to a most serious and anxious consideration of the subject. Yet the more I studied, the more I was dissatisfied. Many things now first occurred to me as strong objections against my own sentiments ; and being thus perplexed, and unable to form a scheme for myself, I easily perceived that I was not qualified to dispute with another person. My pride and my convictions struggled hard for the victory : I was very unwilling to become a Trinitarian in the strict sense of the word, though in my own sense I had for some time pretended to be one ; and yet the more I considered it the more I was dissatisfied with all other systems. My esteem for Mr. [Newton] was also now very much increased ; and though I had hitherto concealed this part of my sentiments from him, yet I knew his to be very different. I was not, indeed, willing to be taught by him in other matters : yet in this respect, finding his opinion the same which

in all former ages of the Church had been accounted orthodox, while that which I held had always been branded as heretical; my fears of a mistake were thus exceedingly increased. In this perplexity I applied to the Lord, and frequently besought him to lead me to a settled conclusion what was the truth in this important subject. After much meditation, together with a careful examination of all the Scriptures, which I then understood to relate to it, accompanied with earnest prayer for divine teaching, I was at length constrained to renounce, as utterly indefensible, all my former sentiments, and to accede to that doctrine which I had so long despised. I saw, and I could no longer help seeing, that the offices and works attributed in Scripture to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, are such as none but the infinite God could perform: that it is a contradiction to believe the *real*, and consequently *infinite*, satisfaction to divine justice made by the death of Christ, without believing him to be "very God of very God:" nor could the Holy Ghost give spiritual life, and dwell in the hearts of all believers at the same time, to adapt his work of convincing, enlightening, teaching, strengthening, sanctifying, and comforting, to the several cases of every individual, were he not the omniscient, omnipresent, infinite God. Being likewise certain, from reason as well as from Scripture, that there is not, and

cannot be, more Gods than one ; I was driven from my reasonings, and constrained to submit my understanding to divine revelation ; and, allowing that the incomprehensible God alone can fully know the unsearchable mysteries of his own divine nature, and the manner of his own existence, to adopt the doctrine of a "Trinity in Unity," among other reasons of still greater moment, in order to preserve consistency in my own scheme. It was, however, a considerable time before I was disentangled from my embarrassments on this subject.

Hitherto my prejudices against Mr. Hervey, as a writer upon doctrinal subjects, had been very strong. I thought him a very pious man, and I had read with pleasure some parts of his *Meditations* ; yet looking on him as an enthusiast, I had no curiosity to see any other of his writings. But about July, 1777, I providentially met with his *Theron and Aspasio* ; and, opening the book, I was much pleased with the first passage on which I cast my eye. This engaged me to read the whole with uncommon attention : nor did I, in twice perusing it, meet with any thing contrary to my own sentiments, without immediately beseeching God to guide me to the truth. I trust the Lord heard and answered these prayers ; for, though I could not but dissent from him (as I still do) in some few things, yet I was both instructed and convinced by his arguments and illustra

tions in every thing relative to our fallen, guilty, lost, and helplessly miserable state by nature; and the way and manner in which the believer is accounted, and accepted, as righteous, in the presence of a just, holy, and heart-searching, a faithful and unchangeable God: especially his animated description and application of the stag-chase cleared up this important matter to my mind, more than any thing I had hitherto met with upon the subject.

I had now acceded to most of the doctrines which at present I believe and preach; except the doctrine of personal election, and those tenets which immediately depend on it and are connected with it. These were still foolishness to me; and so late as August, 1777, I told my friend Mr. [Newton] that I was sure I never should be of his sentiments on that head. To this he answered, that if I never mentioned this subject, he never should, as we were now agreed in all he judged absolutely needful; but that he had not the least doubt of my very shortly becoming a Calvinist, as I should presently discover my system of doctrine to be otherwise incomplete, and inconsistent with itself. Indeed I had by this time, so repeatedly discovered myself to be mistaken where I had been very confident, that I began to suspect myself in every thing, in which I entertained sentiments, different from those with whom I conversed. This, however, did not influence me to take their

opinions upon trust : but it disposed me more particularly and attentively to consider them ; and in every perplexity to have recourse to the Lord, to be preserved from error, and guided to the truth.

About the same time also, I began to have more frequent applications made to me by persons under deep concern for their souls. My heart was much interested in this new employment ; as I was greatly concerned to see their pressing anxieties, and to hear their doubts, difficulties, and objections against themselves : and being sincerely desirous to give them good instruction, and to lead them on to establishment and comfort, I felt my deficiency, and seemed to have no ground to go on, nor any counsel to give them, but what, instead of relieving them, led them into greater perplexity. In this case, I earnestly besought the Lord to teach me what word in season to speak to them.

While I was thus circumstanced, I read Witsius's *Economy of the Covenants*, and observed what use he made of the doctrine of election for this very purpose. This convinced me that the doctrine, if true, would afford that ground of encouragement which the people wanted. They had been awakened from ignorant formality, open ungodliness and vice, or entire carelessness about religion, to an earnest and anxious inquiry after salvation ; they appeared truly penitent, and real believers, and heartily desirous of

cleaving unto the Lord; and they wanted some security that they should not, through the deceitfulness of their hearts, their weakness, the entanglements of the world, and the temptations of Satan, fall back again into their former course of sin. This, if genuine, was the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit: and if wrought in consequence of the determinate purpose and foreknowledge of God respecting them, it would follow, from the entire and unreserved freeness of this first gift bestowed on them, when neither desiring nor seeking it, but while in a state of enmity and rebellion against God, and neglect of his service, and from his unchangeableness in his purpose, and faithfulness to his promises, that he would assuredly carry on and complete the good work of his grace, and keep them by his power, as in a castle, through faith unto salvation.

Having now discovered one use of this doctrine, which before I objected to as useless and pernicious, I was led to consider how the other objections, which I had been accustomed to urge against it, might be answered. It is true, I now began to consider it as a mystery, not to be comprehended, nor yet too curiously to be searched into by man's natural reason, but humbly received by faith just as far as it is plainly revealed in God's unerring word. I was therefore constrained to leave many objections unanswered, or to

resolve them into the incomprehensible nature of God, whose judgments and counsels are as the great deep, unfathomable ; and into the sovereignty of God, who doeth what he will with his own, and gives no account of any of his matters, let who will presume to find fault ; and into his declarations, that his thoughts and ways are as far above our thoughts and ways, as the heavens are above the earth. Here I left the matter, conscious, at length, that such knowledge was too high for me : and that, if God had said it, it was not my place to cavil against it.—I acknowledge this way of proceeding is not very satisfactory to man's proud curiosity, who would be as God, and know all that God knows, and who even dares to dispute with him ; and there are times when I can hardly acquiesce in such a solution. But surely it is highly becoming the dependent state and limited understanding of the creature, to submit the decision of all such high points implicitly to the award of the infinitely wise Creator. Indeed the Christian religion expressly requires it of us ; for our Lord declares, that "except we receive the kingdom of God," (not as disputing philosophers, but) 'as a little child, we shall in no wise enter therein.'" The day is coming when we shall be able to answer all objections. Here "we walk by faith," "and see in part, through a glass, darkly ;" hereafter "we shall see

face to face, and know even as we are known."*

* The doctrine of *personal election to eternal life*, when properly stated, lies open to no objection, which may not likewise with equal plausibility be urged against the conduct of God, in placing one nation in a more favourable condition than another, especially as to religious advantages; without the previous good or bad behaviour of either of them, or any *discernible reason for the preference*. In both cases we may say, *unmerited favour* to one person, or people, is no *injustice to others*; and the infinitely wise God hath many reasons for his determinations, which we cannot discern, and which he deigns not to make known to us.

If sinners *deserve* the punishment inflicted on them, it cannot be *unjust* in the great Governor of the world to *pre-determine* their condemnation to it. The contrariety to justice and goodness, if there be any, must certainly be found in the Lord's *actual dealings with his creatures*, and not in his *pre-determination thus to deal with them*. It could not be inconsistent with any of the divine attributes, for the Lord from all eternity to decree to act consistently with all of them. The clamours excited against *predestination*, if carefully scrutinized, are generally found to be against the *thing decreed*, and not against the circumstance of its *having been decreed from eternity*. The sovereignty of God, when duly considered, appears to be nothing more than infinite perfection determining and accomplishing every thing in the very best manner possible; and infallibly performing the counsels of everlasting knowledge and wisdom, justice, truth, and love, notwithstanding all the plans and designs of innumerable voluntary rational agents, which might seem incompatible with them: nay, performing those counsels even by means of these voluntary agents, in perfect consistency with their free agency and accountableness; but in a manner which we are utterly incapable of comprehending!

We should scarcely object to this infinitely wise and holy sovereignty of God, however absolute, did we not, from consciousness of guilt and carnal enmity of heart, suspect that it might probably be found at variance with our happiness: and I apprehend, should any man be fully persuaded that God had decreed his eternal happiness, however groundless that persuasion might be, he would find his aversion to the doctrine of election exceedingly abated by it. I have often observed, that some persons, who declaim most vehemently against the Calvinistical doctrine of the divine decrees, seem perfectly reconciled to predestination, when persuaded that God hath *eternally*

Leaving, therefore, all difficulties of a metaphysical nature to be cleared up in that world of light and knowledge, I began to consider the abuses of this doctrine, which I had always looked upon as a very formidable objection against it. But I soon discovered, that though ungodly men, who make profession of religion, will turn the grace of

decreed the salvation of all men! On the other hand, no consciously impenitent sinner is cordially reconciled to the general declarations of Scripture, concerning the everlasting misery of all impenitent sinners, whatever he may think about personal election.

In fact the grand difficulty in the whole of the divine conduct equally embarrasses every system of Christianity, and every scheme of Deism. except men deny that God is the Creator and Governor of the world. For wickedness and misery actually exist and abound: the fact is undeniable: the almighty God could have prevented this; and we should have thought that infinite love would have preserved the creation from all evils of every description. Yet infinite Wisdom saw good to permit them to enter, and amazingly to prevail! Till this difficulty be completely solved, let none object to truths, plainly revealed in Scripture, on account of similar difficulties. But let us remember, that our narrow capacities and scanty information do not qualify us to judge, concerning what it becomes the infinite God to determine and to do: and let us adopt the language of the apostle on this subject: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor! Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For *of him*, and *through him*, and *to him* are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen!" (Rom. xi. 33—36.)

As for the objections made to these doctrines, as inconsistent with free agency, accountableness, commands, invitations, calls to repentance, faith and holiness, and diligence in the use of means; they *universally* and *altogether* arise from *misrepresentation* and *misapprehension* of the subject. (See the Author's Sermon on Election and Final Perseverance, &c. 5th ed.)

God into licentiousness; yet we might so explain and guard these doctrines, that none could thus abuse them, without being conscious of it, and so detecting their own hypocrisy. It still, indeed, appeared probable to me, that the preaching of them might at first occasion some trouble of mind to a few well disposed persons: but I considered, that by a cautious declaration, and contrasting them with the general promises of the gospel to all who believe, this might in great measure be prevented; at the worst, a little personal conversation with such persons, would seldom, if ever, fail to satisfy them, and enable them in general to derive encouragement from them: while the unsettling of the minds of such persons, as are carelessly living in an unconverted state, is the great end of all our preaching to them; and therefore we need not fear any bad effect of this doctrine in that respect. The great question therefore was, Are these doctrines in the Bible or not? Hitherto I had wilfully passed over and neglected, or endeavoured to put some other construction upon, all those parts of Scripture which directly speak of them: but now I began to consider, meditate, and pray over them: and I soon found that I could not support my former interpretations. They *would* teach predestination, election, and final perseverance, in spite of all my twisting and expounding. It also occurred to me, that these doctrines, though now in

disgrace, were universally believed and maintained by our venerable reformers ; that they were admitted, at the beginning of the reformation, into the creeds, catechisms, or articles of every one of the Protestant churches ; that our articles and homilies expressly maintained them ; and, consequently, that a vast number of wise and sober minded men, who in their days were burning and shining lights, had, upon mature deliberation, agreed, not only that they were true, but that they ought to be admitted as useful, or even as necessary articles of faith, by every one who deemed himself called to take upon him the office of a Christian minister.

In the course of this inquiry I perceived that my system was incomplete without them. I believed, that men, by nature born in sin, the children of wrath, and by wicked works the enemies of God, being in themselves ungodly and without strength, were saved of free mercy and grace, without having done any thing, more or less, to deserve it, through the Redeemer's righteousness and atonement, received by faith, the gift and operation of God ; as born again, born of God, or new created unto good works and to the divine image, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It now, therefore, occurred to me to inquire, from what source these precious blessings, thus freely flowing through the channel of redemption, to poor worthless sinners, could originally spring ; and thus

my mind was carried back from the consideration of the effects to that of the cause ; and from the promises made to fallen man, to the counsels and purposes of God which induced him to give those promises. I was engaged in frequent meditations on the divine omniscience, unchangeableness, and eternity ; and the end which the all-sufficient God had in view in all his works, even the manifestation of the glory of his own perfections ; and I perceived, that redemption, itself, as planned by God, to whom were “known all his works from the beginning of the world,” must be the result of his eternal purpose of displaying the glory of his mercy and grace, in harmonious consistency with his most awful justice and holiness ; and thus manifesting the inexhaustible resources of his manifold wisdom, in glorifying at once all these attributes, which, considered as perfect, seem to created understandings irreconcilable to each other. I considered, that, until the fall of man and his redemption had manifested the attribute of mercy to sinners, it had, as far as we can learn, been unexercised and undisplayed, and consequently unknown to any but God himself, from all eternity ; nor could he have the glory of it, but must have been considered as so perfect in justice and holiness as to be incapable of mercy, had he not chosen some objects on whom to exercise it, and devised some method of displaying it in consistency with his other perfections.

Thus I perceived redemption to be the effect of a settled design, formed in God's eternal counsels, of manifesting himself to his reasonable creatures, complete and full orb'd in all conceivable perfections. But as all have transgressed the divine law, and as none are disposed of themselves to embrace this humbling and holy salvation, or even to inquire after it, so I was convinced that the merciful and gracious nature of God, the Fountain of goodness, alone moved him to choose any of them as objects of his favourable regard : that his unconstrained will and pleasure are the only assignable causes of his choosing one rather than another : and that in fact the whole work was his own ; his wisdom having devised the means ; his love and all-sufficiency having in the person, offices and work of Christ made all things ready ; his providence directing absolutely to whom the word of invitation shall be sent ; and his Holy Spirit alone inclining and enabling the soul to embrace it by faith. Hence I concluded that God, who knoweth the end from the beginning, and is a sovereign, and, when none have deserved any thing, may do as he will with his own, actually "chose us" (even every individual believer,) "in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love ; having predestinated us 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, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Eph. i. 4—6.)

In short, though my objections were many, my anxiety great, and my resistance long; yet, by the evidence, which, both from the word of God and from my own meditation, crowded upon my mind, I was at length constrained to submit; and, God knoweth, with fear and trembling, to allow these formerly despised doctrines a place in my creed. Accordingly, about Christmas, 1777, I began cautiously to establish the truth of them, and to make use of them for the consolation of poor distressed and fearful believers. This was the only use I then knew of them, though I now see their influence on every part of evangelical truth.

However, I would observe that, though I assuredly believe these doctrines as far as here expressed; (for I am not willing to trace them any higher, by reasonings or consequences, into the unrevealed things of God;) and though I exceedingly need them in my view of religion, both for my own consolation, and security against the consequences of a deceitful heart, an ensnaring world, and a subtle tempter, as also for the due exercise of my pastoral office: yet I would not be understood to place the acknowledgment of them upon a level with the belief of the doctrines before spoken of. I can readily conceive the character of an humble, pious,

spiritual Christian, who is either an utter stranger to the doctrines in question, or who, through misapprehension or fear of consequences, cannot receive them. But I own I find a difficulty in conceiving of an humble, pious, spiritual Christian, who is a stranger to his own utterly lost condition, to the deceitfulness and depravity of his heart, to the natural alienation of his affections from God, and to the defilements of his best duties; who trusts, either in whole or in part, allowedly to any thing for pardon and justification, except the blood and righteousness of a crucified Saviour, God manifested in the flesh; or who expects to be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, in any other way than by being born again, created anew, converted, and sanctified by the divine power of the Holy Ghost.

Some time in November, 1777, I was, by a then unknown friend, furnished with a considerable number of books, written in general by the old divines, both of the Church of England, and of the Dissenters. And, to my no small surprise, I found that those doctrines, which are now deemed novel inventions, and are called Methodistical, are in these books every where discoursed of as known and allowed truths; and that system which, despising to be taught by men, and unacquainted with such authors, I had for near three years together been hammering out for myself with no small labour and

anxiety, was to be found ready made to my hands in every book I opened.

I do not wonder that the members of the Church of England are generally prejudiced against the writings of Dissenters; for I have been so myself to an excessive degree. We imbibe this prejudice with the first rudiments of instruction, and are taught by our whole education, to consider it as meritorious: though no doubt it is a prejudice, of which every sincere inquirer after truth ought to be afraid, and every pretended inquirer ashamed; for how can we determine on which side truth lies, if we will not examine both sides? Indeed, it is well known to all those who are acquainted with the church histories of those times, that till the reign of James I., there were no controversies between the established Church and the Puritans, concerning doctrine; both parties being in all matters of importance of the same sentiments: they only contended about discipline and ceremonies; till the introduction of Arminianism gave occasion to the Calvinists being denominated Doctrinal Puritans. To this period all our church writers were Calvinistical in doctrine: and even after that time many might be mentioned, who were allowed friends to the Church of England, that opposed those innovations, and agreed in doctrine with every thing above stated. Let it suffice, out of many, to recommend the works of Bishop Hall,

especially his Contemplations on the Life of Jesus, a book not easily to be prized too highly ; and Dr. Reynold's works. To these no true friend to the Church of England can reasonably object : and in general, I believe and teach nothing but what they plainly taught before me.

The outlines of my scheme of doctrine were now completed : but I had been so taken up with doctrinal inquiries, that I was still in great measure a stranger to my own heart, and had little experience of the power of the truths I had embraced. The pride of reasoning and the conceit of superior discernment, had all along accompanied me ; and, though somewhat broken, had yet considerable influence. Hitherto, therefore, I had not thought of hearing any person preach ; because I did not think any one in the circle of my acquaintance, capable of giving me such information as I wanted. But being at length convinced that Mr. [Newton] had been right, and that I had been mistaken, in the several particulars in which we had differed ; it occurred to me, that having preached these doctrines so long, he must understand many things concerning them to which I was a stranger. Now, therefore, though not without much remaining prejudice, and not less in the character of a judge than of a scholar, I condescended to be his hearer, and occasionally to attend his preaching, and that of some other min-

isters:—and I soon perceived the benefit; for from time to time the secrets of my heart were discovered to me, far beyond what I had hitherto noticed; and I seldom returned from hearing a sermon, without having conceived a meaner opinion of myself; without having attained to a further acquaintance with my deficiencies, weakness, corruptions and wants; or without being supplied with fresh matter for prayer, and directed to greater watchfulness. I likewise learned the use of experience in preaching; and was convinced, that the readiest way to reach the hearts and consciences of others, was to speak from my own. In short, I gradually saw more and more my need of instruction, and was at length brought to consider myself as a very novice in religious matters. Thus I began experimentally to perceive our Lord's meaning, when he says, "Except ye receive the kingdom of God as a little child, ye shall in no wise enter therein." For, though my proud heart is continually rebelling, and would fain build up again the former Babel of self-conceit; yet I trust I have from this time, in my settled judgment, aimed, and prayed to be enabled, to consider myself as a little child, who ought simply to sit at the master's feet, to hear his words with profound submission, and wait his teaching with earnest desire and patient attention. From this time I have been enabled to consider those persons, in whom

knowledge has been ripened by years, experience and observation, as fathers and instructors; to take pleasure in their company, to value their counsels, and with pleasure to attend their ministry.

Thus I trust the old building I had purposed to repair, was pulled down to the ground, and the foundation of the new building of God laid aright; "Old things passed away, behold all things were become new,"—"What things were gain to me, those I have counted loss for Christ." My boasted reason I have discovered to be a blind guide, until humbled, enlightened, and sanctified, by the Spirit of God; my former wisdom foolishness; and that when I thought I knew much, I knew nothing as I ought to know. Since this period, every thing I have experienced, heard, or read; and every thing I observe around me, confirms and establishes me in the assured belief of those truths which I have received; nor do I in general any more doubt whether they be from God, than I doubt whether the sun shines when I see its light, and am warmed with its refreshing beams. I see the powerful effects of them continually among those to whom I preach, I experience the power of them daily in my own soul; and, while by meditating on, and "glorying in, the cross of Christ, I find the world crucified unto me, and me unto the world," by preaching Jesus Christ and him crucified, I see notoriously immoral persons,

“taught by the saving grace of God to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;” being examples to such as before they were a scandal to.

And now by this change, the consequences of which I so much dreaded, what have I lost even in respect of this present world?—Indeed, I have lost some degree of favour, and I escape not pity, censure, scorn and opposition: but the Lord is introducing me to a new and far more desirable acquaintance; even to that of those whom the Holy Ghost hath denominated the excellent of the earth; nay, the Lord, the Spirit condescends to be my Comforter. In general I enjoy an established peace of conscience, through the blood of sprinkling, and continual application to the heavenly Advocate; with a sweet content, and, “that peace of God which passeth all understanding,” in “casting all my cares upon him who careth for me:” and I am not left utterly without experience of that “joy which is unspeakable and full of glory.” These the world could not give me, were I in favour with it; of these it cannot deprive me by its frowns. My desire henceforth, God knoweth, is to live to his glory, and by my whole conduct and conversation “to adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour,” and “to show forth his praises who hath called me out of darkness into his marvellous light;” to be in some way or other useful to

his believing people ; and to invite poor sinners, who “ are walking in a vain shadow, and disquieting themselves in vain,” to taste and see how gracious the Lord is, and how blessed they are who put their trust in him.”

“ Now would I tell to sinners round,
 What a dear Saviour I have found ;
 Would point to his redeeming blood,
 And cry, Behold the Way to God !”

Thus hath the Lord led me, a poor blind sinner, in a way that I knew not ;—he hath made darkness light before me, crooked things straight, and hard things easy, and hath brought me to a place of which I little thought when I set out : and having done these things for me, I believe, yea, I am undoubtedly sure, he will never leave me nor forsake me. To him be the glory of his undeserved and long-resisted grace : to me be the shame, not only of all my other sins, but also of my proud and perverse opposition to his purposes of love towards me. But all this was permitted that my high spirit and stout heart being at length humbled and subdued, “ I might remember, and be confounded, and never open my mouth any more, because of my shame, now that the Lord is pacified to me for all that I have done.”

And now, as in the presence of the heart-searching Judge, I have given, without one wilful misrepresentation, addition, or material omission, a history of the great things God

nath done for my soul ; or, if that suit not the reader's view of it, a history of that change which hath recently taken place in my religious sentiments and conduct, to the surprise of some, and perhaps the displeasure of others, among my former friends. The doctrines I have embraced are indeed charged with being destructive of moral practice, and tending to licentiousness : but though I know that my best "righteousnesses are as filthy rags," yet I trust I may return thanks to God, that by his grace he hath so upheld me, since this change took place, that I have not been permitted to disgrace the cause in which I have embarked by any immoral conduct : "My rejoicing," in this respect, "is this, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God I have my conversation in the world." I can confidently avow, that the belief of these doctrines hath a quite contrary effect upon me. I most earnestly desire, aim, endeavour, and pray to be enabled to love God and keep his commandments "without partiality, and without hypocrisy ;" and so to demean myself as "by well doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." That I fall so very short in every thing, is not the effect of my new doctrines, but of my old depraved nature and deceitful heart.—"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me !"

PART III.

Observations on the preceding narrative.

MY design in writing this account of myself, and my religious inquiries and change of sentiments, was this: I considered myself as a singular instance of a very unlikely person, in an uncommon manner, being led on from one thing to another, to embrace a system of doctrine which he once heartily despised. As I assuredly believe that this change hath been effected under the guidance and teaching of the holy Spirit: so I hoped that a circumstantial relation of it might be an encouragement and comfort to those who know and love the Lord, and from them levy a tribute of gratitude and praise to our gracious God: and that it also might be instrumental, by the convincing Spirit, to awaken others to a serious review of their religious sentiments; to put them upon the same earnest inquiry after the truth as it is in Jesus; and to influence them to the diligent use of the same blessed means, in which the Lord directed me to be found. I would therefore now offer a few observations on the preceding narrative: and may the Lord guide both the writer and every reader of these pages to the

saving knowledge of the truth, and into the ways of peace and righteousness !

I. It must be evident to every unprejudiced reader of this narrative, that at the time this change commenced, I was, humanly speaking, a most unlikely person to embrace the system of doctrine above stated. — This will appear from the following considerations.

1. My religious opinions had been for many years directly contrary to it. Being always of a reflecting turn of mind, I entertained exceedingly high notions of the powers of human reason ; and I had, upon reasoning principles, embraced a system of religion, which both soothed my conscience, and flattered my self-conceit. After some trivial alterations, I seemed to myself, upon mature deliberation, to have come to a settled determination ; and had bestowed considerable pains in making myself acquainted with those arguments and interpretations of Scripture, by which that system is usually defended : and I had raked together many of those plausible objections and high charges, which are commonly brought by reasoning men against the doctrines and characters of the Calvinists. But I was in great measure a stranger to what the Calvinists could say for themselves ; because I thought the matter too plain to bear an argument, and therefore did not count their answers worth reading. In short, very few have been re-

covered from that abyss of error, (for so I must call it,) into which I had been permitted to sink. Full of confidence in my cause, and in the arguments with which I was prepared to support it, I was eager to engage in controversy with the Calvinists, and entertained the most sanguine hopes of victory. In this confidence I frequently harangued against them from the pulpit, and spared not to charge upon them consequences both absurd and shocking. Yet after much, very much, anxious diligent inquiry, I have embraced, as the sacred truths of God's unerring word, every doctrine of this despised system!

2. My natural spirit and temper were very unfavourable to such a change. Few persons have ever been more self-sufficient, and positive in their opinions, than I was. Fond to excess of entering into argument, I never failed on these occasions to betray this peculiarity of my character. I seldom acknowledged or suspected myself mistaken; and scarcely ever dropped an argument, till either my reasonings or obstinacy had silenced my opponent. A certain person once said of me, that I was like a stone rolling down a hill, which could neither be stopped nor turned: this witness was true; but those things, which are impossible with man, are easy with God. I am evidently both stopped and turned: man I am persuaded could not have done it; but this hath God wrought, and I

am not more a wonder to others than to myself. Indeed I carried the same obstinate positive temper into my religious inquiries; for I never gave up one tittle of my sentiments till I could defend it no longer; nor ever submitted to conviction till I could no longer resist. The strong man, armed with my natural pride and obstinacy, with my vain imaginations, and reasonings, and high thoughts, had built himself many strongholds, and kept his castle in my heart; and when One stronger than he came against him, he stood a long siege: till, being by superior force driven from one to another, and all his armour in which he trusted being at length taken from him, he was constrained to recede. So that the Lord having made me willing in the day of his power, I was forced to confess: "O Lord, thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed."

3. My situation in life rendered such a change improbable. I had an increasing family, no private fortune, a narrow precarious income, and no expectations, except from such friends as my conduct might procure or continue to me. I had unexpectedly contracted an acquaintance with some of those, whose favour goes a great way towards a man's advancement in life; nor was I insensible to the advantages to be hoped for, from cultivating by a compliant behaviour their kind and friendly regard to me. At the same time, I was no stranger to the

opinion, which the world entertains of those who preach the disreputable doctrines above mentioned; and could not but conclude, that embracing them would probably deprive me of these prospects of preferment. But, as the result of diligent inquiry, I was assuredly convinced that it was my indispensable duty to profess and preach them, and that by so doing alone, I could insure to myself the favour of a better Friend than any here below: and thus, while fully aware all along how unfavourable, according to human probability, it would prove to my worldly interests, I at length deliberately embraced them.

4. My regard to character was no trifling security against such a change of sentiment. I was ambitiously and excessively fond of that honour which cometh from man; and considered the desire of praise as allowable, nay, laudable. By this motive was I urged on to a very diligent prosecution of my studies, even beyond what natural inclination led me to; and my whole conduct was influenced by, my whole conversation was tinged with, this vain-glorious aim. On the other hand, with approbation and self-complacency, I had been accustomed to hear the most contemptuous and opprobrious epithets liberally bestowed on those persons to whom I now joined myself: and all along, as I verged nearer and nearer to Methodism, I was painfully sensible that I was drawing upon myself the same mortifying distinctions.

I have been a vain-glorious candidate for human applause; but I renounce such pretensions, and willingly submit to be considered by the world, under the mortifying character of a half-witted, crack-brained enthusiast. These epithets I am sensible are now bestowed upon me behind my back, nay, very often to my face: I bless God, however, this doth not move me; but I can heartily thank him, that I am counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake. When, however, I saw the trial approaching, it appeared very formidable; and I can truly affirm, that nothing but the fullest conviction that the cause in which I was embarking was the cause of God; nothing, but not daring to act contrary to the plain dictates of my conscience, could have influenced me to make this sacrifice of my character, and bring upon myself so much scorn and contempt.

5. To reason with our despisers upon their own principles: If I am now fallen into enthusiasm, mistake, and strong delusion, I certainly was, when I first set out in this inquiry, a very unlikely person so to do. My leading resolve was to search for the truth diligently, and to embrace it wherever I found it, and whatever it might cost. No sooner had I begun the inquiry, than I was called upon to give proof of the sincerity of this resolution; and, from a principle of conscience, though a mistaken one, I renounced my prospect of an immediate

preferment. Since that time I have also deliberately sacrificed my character, and hazarded the loss of all my former friends. Giving these proofs of integrity, in dependence on those plain promises which I have mentioned, I have sought this desired knowledge of the truth chiefly in reading the holy Scriptures, and by prayer for the promised teaching of the Holy Ghost, in the manner which has been related; and I am now led to conclusions diametrically opposite to what I expected!—Now lay all these things together, and attentively consider them; and then let your own consciences determine how far it is probable, that a person, in this manner seeking for the truth, should be given over to a strong delusion to believe a pernicious lie. “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” Can any man suppose, that after such repeated and continued pleadings of the express promises of the Lord to this effect, in earnest prayer, according to his appointment, I should be delivered up to the teaching of the father of lies? Can any one make this conclusion without an evident

insinuation that God hath broken his promise? In short, you may make a jest of the narrative; you may throw by the book without giving any attention to an argument of this kind; you may say, what you never can prove, that it is all a contrived story; or you may argue, that these promises, though contained in the Bible, are not to be depended on by us, which is to give up the Scriptures to be scoffed at by Infidels and Atheists, and to render them useless to the humble anxious inquirer after truth and salvation: but by no other means, I am assured, can you account for this single circumstance, without allowing, that the substance of those doctrines which I have now embraced, is indeed contained in the word of God; that they comprise the truth as it is in Jesus, and are not corrupted with any such delusion as can hazard the salvation of my soul, or the souls of those who by my ministry receive them. On this supposition all difficulties vanish. The Lord had given me a sincere desire to know the saving doctrine of the gospel; and, though I was exceedingly ignorant, obstinate, and prejudicèd, yet this desire having, according to his directions, led me to the word of God, and influenced me to seek his teaching by prayer, he was faithful to his own promises, and it was an example of his own words, "Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth." My evident sincerity in seeking the truth was sufficient to convince any

person, conversant and experienced in the things of God, that, as my friend foretold, thither would all my inquiries lead me, in that would they all finally centre. And could I be assured, beloved reader, whoever thou art, that thou wast as sincerely desirous to know the truth as I then was, and as heartily resolved to embrace it wherever thou mightest find it, and whatever it should cost thee; had I also assurance, that in a believing dependence on these promises, thou wast diligently, and from day to day, in the study of the word of God and prayer, seeking the accomplishment of them: I would as confidently foretell, that, as to those things which I now regard as essential to salvation, and, if thou hast the souls of others committed to thee, as to what is needful for thy usefulness in the ministry, thou wouldst be brought in time to these same conclusions, whatever thy present religious sentiments may be. May the Lord give thee true sincerity, and incline thine heart to try the experiment!

I am aware that many will object to what I have argued on this head, as being too confident; and as what is urged by men of contrary religious sentiments, each in behalf of his own system: and, as I would not leave any material and plausible objection in force against what I have advanced, I hope the reader will excuse my obviating this beforehand. I would therefore entreat those, who object to the confidence with which this ar-

gument is brought forward, impartially and carefully to consider the limitations with which on every hand it is guarded: and then to inquire whether in any other way, than that which has been mentioned, they can account for the fact. That is, supposing this narrative true, (for which the appeal is to the heart-searching God;) and supposing the promises mentioned to be proposed to us, that we might embrace them, depend on them, and plead them in prayer; considering the glory of the divine veracity as concerned in their accomplishment to every believer; let them try whether they can possibly evade one of these conclusions:—either God hath failed of his promise;—or he hath in the main, and as far as is expressed, led the author by his Holy Spirit to the knowledge and belief of the truth. As to the confidence of men of opposite sentiments, I observe, that many who speak in high terms concerning sincerity and candour, will without hesitation condemn, as enthusiastical, such a reliance on the promises, and this way of searching for truth: and they cannot be supposed to seek truth in that manner which they condemn in others. Many, perhaps, slightly mention these matters, but will not endure to be closely questioned: for, being conscious that they have not sought the truth in this manner, they evade such discourse as personal.—Again, the writings of many professed inquirers after truth, evidently show that they

expect to find it, not by "trusting the Lord with all their heart," or seeking it from the Scriptures and by earnest prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit ; but by "leaning to their own understanding," resting the argument on philosophical reasonings, and the authority of this or that renowned name ; and supporting their conclusions by bold and perplexing criticisms and interpretations of Scripture. Hence so many daring appeals from revelation to reason and philosophy ! Hence such and so many objections brought against doctrines plainly revealed in God's word, if language have any determinate meaning ; and so many consequences charged upon these doctrines, with a design to invalidate their divine authority ; as if being made, by every disingenuous art, to have the show of unreasonableness, were sufficient to prove the plainest revelation of the Holy Spirit a falsehood ! Hence such liberty in interpretation and criticism on the word of God, as the learned would never endure in interpreting or criticising Virgil or Horace ! These things prove that such persons are strangers to that earnest, hearty, sincere desire to know the truth, which brings the inquirer to an humble willingness to be taught of God, and in submission of understanding to seek wisdom from his word and Spirit. It is, indeed, most evident, that many, who profess to be influenced by this sincere desire to know the truth, are not troubled with suspicions that

they are or can be wrong. They have made up their minds before they begin the inquiry, and you will not find them willing to make the least concession ; but, in the management of the controversy, resolved to vindicate and contend for every tittle ; and, where arguments fail, to make use of the other arts of controversy, with which skill in the management of their weapons, and anger against their opponents, can supply them. Where a cause is thus maintained, we may easily know that there is none of that earnest desire of learning the truth, that anxious fear of mistaking it, that self-diffidence, and those doubts concerning the sentiments held at present, which constitute the godly sincerity that leads the inquirer to the word and Spirit of God for direction and teaching. These things taken together, will on scriptural grounds cut off many confident pretenders to sincerity from their claims, as entirely, as they exclude Annas and Caiaphas, and the chief priests, Scribes and Pharisees, from being sincere inquirers into the truth of the Old Testament ; when, in support of their authority and reputation, and influenced by pride and anger, they, under colour of their law, put to death Him “ of whom Moses and the prophets did write, even Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God.” And as to men of another spirit, who appear sincere, humble, and willing to be taught of God in their inquiry after truth, but do not entirely agree

with what has been laid down ; I would only wish them to observe the distinction established between some and others of these doctrines. Such persons do not, I dare say, materially dissent from those which have been mentioned as necessary to salvation : as, therefore, I allow them to have been in the main taught of God, so I only require the same allowance for myself. Let it be supposed that the same God, who according to his promise hath led both, as far as is needful to salvation, in the same way, has in other things left us to differ, for the mutual exercise of candour and forbearance, till that time when we shall know even as we are known.

II. I would observe, that this change in my sentiments took place very gradually.

When any person suddenly changes his religious opinions for others very different from them, it is no inconsiderable evidence of a changeable and fickle disposition. It gives cause to suspect that he was not well established in his former sentiments ; and that he had taken them upon trust, and was a stranger to the arguments by which they might be defended, and to the objections which might be urged against them. If worldly interest, reputation, or conveniency seem to favour the change, there is room for a presumption that these had an undue influence upon him : if not, it may be insinuated that he was deluded with specious

appearances ; that he did not allow himself time to weigh the arguments on each side ; and that he had only changed one set of notions for another, without having duly considered either of them. Such objections may reasonably be made, and the consequences of precipitate changes too often justify them. But though I was always, and still am, of a headlong impetuous spirit in other things ; and when once I have purposed, can have no rest from incessant agitation of mind, till I have accomplished my design ; yet in this particular I acted in direct opposition to my natural temper. Indeed, at first I did in some instances too much betray my impetuosity : but at that time I acted not in the character of an inquirer, but in the full confidence that I was pleading the cause of truth, and had no more thought of becoming what the world calls a Methodist, than of turning Mahometan. But after that first hurry was over, though commonly in earnest, and sometimes in considerable perturbation of mind, I was outwardly calm and satisfied ; being generally enabled to believe that, if I were in any thing at present mistaken, I should some time be guided to the truth. My determination to set about this inquiry proceeded not so much from anxious fears about my own soul, as from a deep sense, impressed upon my heart, of the importance of my ministry, the worth of the souls committed to my charge, and the awful

account to be given of them ; and as I along bestowed some pains in instructing my people in what I believed to be the truth, I was preserved from any discomposing fears, or undue disquietude of mind. I sat down very coolly to search for the truth, I proceeded very gradually, and with extreme caution ; I took no one opinion upon trust ; I gave up none of my sentiments until the arguments by which I had learned to defend them were satisfactorily answered ; nor did I admit any new articles into my creed, till either every objection was obviated, or I was pressed with such as were still more unanswerable. Much, very much, prayer and meditation preceded every change of sentiment ; and I was nearly three years, from the beginning of my inquiry, before I came to a determination what was the truth. So long, deliberately, and step by step, I examined the premises, before I finally proceeded to draw my conclusion. I perceive much cause to be ashamed of my unteachable temper : for with such opportunities as were afforded me, if I had improved them, I might have attained to the knowledge and belief of the same truths in a much shorter time. But the Lord, I trust, led me in this way, and left me thus far to my own natural pride of heart ; that it might more evidently appear, I received not my doctrines from man, but that indeed, in the first instance, I learned them from the word and Spirit of God.

III. I would observe, that I changed my religious views, without any teaching from the persons to whose sentiments I have now acceded. For a considerable time after the commencement of my inquiries, I would not so much as read what they had to urge in their own behalf. I entered, indeed, into a correspondence with Mr. [Newton]: my intention, however, was not to learn from him, but to dispute with him; and when he waved controversy, I dropped the correspondence, and utterly neglected his letters. From that time I avoided his company, and all the while I declined hearing him preach. I would not be understood to insinuate, that Mr. [Newton] has not been useful to me: he has been, and continues to be, eminently so; and I continually see great cause to bless God for giving me such a friend, to be so near at hand on all occasions. But this I assuredly believe, that had I never seen him, at least from the time that his example had put me upon considering my conduct, I should have arrived at the same views of evangelical truth which I now have. His usefulness to me, has all along been in those matters in which we were in some measure agreed, not in those wherein we differed; for as to these my proud heart scorned to have him for a teacher.

At the same time, though I had the offer of several books written by Dissenters and Methodists, I declined it; and did not, for

nearly two years, peruse any of them with sufficient attention to recollect any thing of consequence which they contained. I say not this, as slighting these books; for justice requires me to acknowledge, that many, which then I ignorantly despised, contain as solid, judicious, and excellent divinity, as hath been written since the days of the apostles. But I did not get my system from them; for that was nearly completed before I was prevailed upon to read them. My studies, besides the Bible, were chiefly confined to authors of allowed reputation in the Church of England, several of which I have mentioned. When they differed from each other, (as certainly Tillotson and Hooker, Jortin and Beveridge, Bull and Hall do differ very much indeed,) I endeavoured to judge for myself, comparing all of them with the word of God, and with the articles, homilies, and liturgy of the Church of England: and from such authors thus compared, as far as the writings of uninspired men have been instrumental to this change, I have received the greatest part of my present opinions.

But let it be observed, that the further these streams are traced upwards towards the fountain of the Reformation, the purer they flow, according to my present judgment: and it may easily and undeniably be proved, that there is nothing material preached by many regular clergymen of the establishment, under the scandal of Methodistical,

which was not expressly taught by those excellent persons, who, having laid the foundation of our church, gave their bodies to be burned in confirmation of their doctrine. It is greatly to be wished that their lives and discourses, living and dying, and their remaining writings were more generally known among us; and did not remain locked up from the world, in large folios, in the learned languages, and in books out of print, or exceedingly scarce. In consequence of this the members of our national church are in general utterly ignorant of its standard doctrines, and ignorantly brand those as Methodists and Enthusiasts, who preach zealously the very doctrines of the first Reformers.

IV. I would observe the great influence which the study of the Scriptures had in producing this change.

We are all too apt, without careful examination, to take things for granted, especially in respect of religion. We often collect our scheme of divinity from other authors, or from our own reasonings and imaginations: and only seek for a few detached texts which appear to countenance our preconceived opinions; neglecting, or very slightly considering, such parts of the word of God as seem incapable of being made use of to our purpose. We are likewise too prone, in availing ourselves of the labours of critics and expositors, to resign up ourselves implicitly to their guidance, and to imagine that we have proof enough

of our doctrines, if we can produce the sanction of some great name that has espoused and maintained them, without carefully examining whether they be right or wrong : but this is to pay that deference to the human interpretation, which is only due to the divine book commented on. We ministers especially, though at ordination we solemnly promise to turn all our studies, as much as may be, into this channel, are very apt to suffer our time and thoughts to be engrossed with such studies and employments, as are foreign to our profession, and interfere with it, and which leave at most but a secondary attention for the study of the word of God. And who can deny, that many do not bestow so much pains in meditating upon the Bible, and in comparing spiritual things with spiritual, or one part of Scripture with another, and every part with what they experience in their own hearts, and what they hear and see in the world around them, as they do about matters of far less consequence? So that probably should they at any time sit down to a diligent examination of the whole word of God, they would find it a very different book than they expected. Thus at least it has been with me, and possibly it may be so with many others.

The word of God informs us that true wisdom, the saving, practical, and experimental knowledge of divine things, is not to be acquired without earnest and diligent seeking :

“ My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee ; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding ; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures ; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” (Prov. ii. 1—6.) If, then, our wisdom has been acquired without any of that eagerness and painful diligence, with which the covetous man desires and seeks for his riches ; it is a shrewd conjecture, that it is not of the genuine sort. Once I had in my own esteem a sort of wisdom, which seemed to offer itself to me spontaneously, and to be found with little seeking. But now I am persuaded it was a mere counterfeit, a fair-seeming pernicious foolishness.

That which I now esteem to be true wisdom, if I could but attain unto it, is not to be acquired in so easy a manner. When I first began to desire and seek this wisdom, I set out with the assurance, that it was to be found in the Holy Scriptures, and nowhere else ; they alone being able to make us wise unto salvation. I therefore considered myself engaged to make them my study : and as the whole was given by inspiration from God, and was all declared to be profitable, according to the various ends which the Holy Spirit designed in it ; I made the whole

my study. Thus I learned to look upon the Bible as my book of instructions, given me along with the ministerial office by my Lord and Master ; that from thence I might deduce all my doctrines, counsels and admonitions, warnings, examples, encouragements, rules of duty, and motives to duty : and I also considered it to be the believer's charter of privileges, containing exceedingly great and gracious promises, and the whole of that which God saw fit to reveal concerning those unspeakable and inconceivable good things, which he hath of his infinite mercy prepared for them that love him. In order, therefore, faithfully to declare my message from the Lord Almighty to the souls of men, I found it indispensably-needful to be well acquainted with every part, and to take the word of God myself, as well as propose it to others, as "the lantern of my feet, and the light of my paths : " not only attending to the letter, but also to the true meaning, the mind of the Spirit of God in it. This I found to be a work that required much time, great diligence, mature consideration, and an unbiassed, unprejudiced mind.

With this view of the matter in part obtained, and continually more and more unfolding itself, I studied the word of God ; and have now for nearly four years thus employed a very considerable part of my time, neither rejecting, nor yet greatly depending on, the assistance of interpreters. I sincerely desired

to know the truth, and for that end I read the Scriptures, "not as the word of man, but as the word of God." And though there have been seasons of remissness, when other employments and studies too much interfered with this main business; and though at first I was very far from an unbiassed mind, being blindly and obstinately prejudiced against those doctrines, which I now believe to be the true gospel of Jesus Christ: yet in that space I have read the Bible many times over, in every part, with the strictest attention of which I was capable. There are very few passages, which relate to doctrine, that I have not repeatedly and diligently examined, comparing one with another, with all the care and consideration I could; and I seldom ever ceased meditating on any portion of Scripture, until I had attained to some satisfying conclusion concerning its true meaning, and its agreement with other Scriptures. I may truly say I have filled reams of paper with religious discussions, with sermons, expositions, and letters; in all which I ransacked the Bible, to bring as much scriptural evidence for my direction as possible. For these last two years I have scarcely opened a book except upon religious subjects, and from morning till night, nearly every day, during this period, my thoughts incessantly have been employed in meditation upon the great truths of the gospel. Every difficulty and objection, (and difficulties and objections

both from my own meditations, and in the course of my reading, continually crowded upon my mind,) sent me to the word of God, and increased my care and attention in examining and weighing every text of Scripture, respecting the point in question, before I exchanged my old opinion for a new one.

Thus I may truly say, I have sought in the word of God, (that field in which alone this precious treasure lies hid,) "for wisdom," for the saving knowledge of divine things, "as for silver, and searched for her as for hid treasures." And though I am sensible that my knowledge is still comparatively superficial, the knowledge of a child, of a novice in the school of Christ; yet I trust that, as far as relates to the leading truths of the gospel, according to the promise, I am "brought to understand the fear of the Lord, and have found the knowledge of God."

Permit me now, beloved reader, to put thee in remembrance, that until thou hast, with some good measure of this diligence, studied the whole word of God, thou runnest very great hazards in passing judgment upon men and doctrines. Be cautious what thou doest; let these men quite alone, until thou hast imitated the conduct of the noble Bereans, and thoroughly, and with unbiassed mind, examined and meditated upon the whole word of God, to see whether the things they believe and teach be so or not: lest otherwise it should come to pass, (as

probably it will,) that in opposing and condemning them, thou shouldst be found to fight against God. Oh, that the Lord would hear and grant my request, and by his Holy Spirit powerfully incline the hearts of all who read these sheets, according to their leisure, station in life, obligations, and opportunities, thus attentively to read their Bibles; not as the word of men, but as the word of God himself, speaking from heaven unto them, and concerning the everlasting interests of their precious and immortal souls. Be the adviser what he may, despised and deserving to be despised, the advice is undoubtedly good: advice he shall have no occasion to repent having thus given, at the solemn hour of death, and the awful day of judgment; advice, which, at those approaching seasons, none will repent having followed; though it should divert them from more amusing, and at this day, more reputable studies, or engross that time which they have been accustomed to devote to more pleasurable and fashionable employments; but which, neglected, will be an additional sting in the conscience through all the countless ages of eternity.

And oh, that they, to whom the chief Shepherd hath committed the care of precious souls, and at whose hands he will assuredly require every one that perishes through their default, would take in good part this expression of the very affectionate desire of my soul, both in behalf of them and of their

flocks, in dropping these hints concerning their peculiar obligations, to devote much of their time to the attentive unbiassed study of the word of God, that infinitely best, but often least studied, of all books! What avails it, that the ministers of the everlasting gospel should be learned classical scholars, profound philosophers, metaphysicians and mathematicians, expert logicians, or adorned with the knowledge of the politer sciences; if they are unacquainted, or but superficially acquainted, with the sacred Scriptures? These branches of literature may amuse and entertain them, may procure them preferment, reputation, respect, and favour; but the knowledge of the Bible alone can enable them in such a manner to "take heed to themselves and to the doctrine," as shall issue in the everlasting salvation of their own souls and the souls committed to their care. Far be it from me to presume to lay down my opinions as the standard of doctrine, or a rule for the faith and preaching of my brethren in the sacred ministry! But the more obscure I am, the less objection can there reasonably be against my hinting to them, that if any one should find this subject manifest itself to his conscience, and make him sensible that verily he hath been faulty in attending to other employments, and studying other books more than the word of God; then possibly he may be mistaken in his sentiments concerning the doctrine of the gospel, and being mistaken

himself, may be misleading others, to the endangering of their immortal souls: for he cannot be certain but that, should he employ some years in this single study, (which its importance well deserves,) he may find the Bible a very different book from what he expected.

V. I would observe the influence which prayer appears to have had in effecting this change.

I am aware that the world, though called Christian, is come to such a pass, that the very mention of this subject in many companies is accounted ill manners, or even received with ridicule; and that being known to maintain constant communion with God, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, is alone sufficient to denominate any person a Methodist. It is, however, most certain, that the word of God is full of precepts, instructions, exhortations, invitations, promises, and examples to this effect. He never read his Bible who knows not this, nor can any man, under any pretence whatever, make a jest of this great duty and privilege of a believer, without pouring contempt upon the Holy Scriptures, and insulting the brightest characters, there proposed to us as examples, not excepting the Lord Jesus himself. Let men therefore, under the profession of Christianity, be as irreligious and profane as they please, I shall not be ashamed to speak upon so unfashionable a

topic: for if the word of God be true, he never knew any thing as he ought to know, never believed, never repented, never performed one duty aright in his life, who hath not sought all his wisdom, knowledge, faith, repentance, and sufficiency for obedience, from God, by fervent, instant, persevering prayer. Time was, even since I had souls committed to my care, that I lived in the neglect of this duty, and so, without God in the world; but since, through his forbearance and mercy, I have been in earnest about the salvation of my own soul, and the souls of other men—my conduct, in this respect, has been very different.

“If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” and “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” As he is the Spirit of truth, it is his office to lead us into all truth, and to teach us all things, for he searches and reveals the deep things of God. It is expressly promised to the true church, that “all her children shall be taught of the Lord.” (Isa. liv. 13.) Referring to this, Christ hath declared that “none can come unto him, except he be drawn of the Father,” and “taught of God.” (John vi. 44, 45.) And Paul declares, that “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because

they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. ii. 14.) The natural man (*psuchikos*) is explained in Jude, by not having the Spirit; which is evidently the Apostle’s meaning in this passage: for in the preceding verse he declares that he “preached the gospel, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” On these grounds I concluded that man’s natural understanding could not spiritually or profitably receive the knowledge of revealed mysteries, unless it were enlightened by the Holy Spirit. I learned also, that our eyes may be blinded by Satan, the god and prince of this world; that our understandings may be closed, and a veil be upon our hearts, when we read the word of God; in which case the letter of the Scriptures, without the spirit, only killeth. Hence the need of the “understanding being opened to understand the Scriptures;” for the want of which, the plainest discourses of our Lord to his disciples, concerning his sufferings, death, and resurrection, were hidden from them, and they understood them not. The veil also must be taken from the heart, for want of which the Jews, in reading the Old Testament, cannot understand the plainest declarations of Moses and the prophets, concerning their promised Saviour.

The Scriptures also every where declare that true wisdom is the gift of God, and must

be asked of him by every one who would be wise unto salvation ; “ that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him ; ” and that those “ who receive not the love of the truth, that they may be saved, are given over to a strong delusion to believe a lie ; that they might all be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. ” (2 Thess. ii. 10—12.)

On these grounds, and depending upon the promises and invitations so plentifully interspersed throughout the Scriptures ; when I began to inquire after the truth, I was led also in some measure to cry unto the Lord for his guidance and teaching ; and as my mind grew more engaged, and my difficulties, in extricating myself from the labyrinths of controversy, increased, I became more and more earnest, constant, and particular, in making my requests known unto God. My constant prayer to the Lord was, to be delivered from pride and prejudice, blindness of heart, contempt of the truth, obstinacy, enthusiasm, ignorance, and error : and that the Lord would give me wisdom and knowledge, guide me to the truth as it is in Jesus, open my understanding, take away the veil from my heart, and make known unto me the way of salvation which is revealed to sinners in his holy word. Thus waiting upon the Lord according to his own appointment, depending on him, and pleading his promises from day to day, I was led from one thing to

another, until my view of religious truth was totally changed.—This I most firmly believe to have been by the promised teaching of the Spirit of truth, powerfully enlightening my mind, opening the Scriptures, and, by dispelling the clouds of error and prejudice, enabling me to receive the truth in faith and love. I am conscious that I have no intention, in speaking thus publicly on such a subject, out to advance the glory of God in the salvation of souls. But, as in his presence, I must declare that I have prayed over many of the most interesting passages of scripture, chapter by chapter, and often verse by verse, with the most anxious dread of rejecting or mistaking the truth, or embracing a falsehood; and with the most earnest desire of knowing what that doctrine was which Jesus and his apostles taught.—In the sight of God I am sensible, I have abundant cause to be humbled, and ashamed of my frequent remissness and the continual defilements of my prayers: but as surely as I believe his promises to be faithful, as surely as I believe him to be a God that heareth prayer, so surely do I believe that flesh and blood hath not revealed to me the doctrines I now preach, but God himself by his Holy Spirit.

Reader, whoever thou art, if thy conscience testify that thou hast hitherto lived in the neglect of this important duty, or in the formal, lifeless, unmeaning performance of it with thy lips, while thy heart hath been dis

engaged, and thy thoughts allowedly wandering to the ends of the earth; if thou hast not been accustomed by fervent prayer to seek wisdom from God by his teaching Spirit; if thou knowest not what it is to exercise faith upon the promises pointed out to thee, nor to plead them in prayer to a promise-keeping God; if all thy knowledge of divine things hath been acquired by leaning to thy own understanding; if in reading the Scriptures, thou hast looked more to learned critics, commentators, and expositors, than to the illuminating Spirit of God: then be as sure, as the word of God is true, and as we are concerned in it, that the light which is in thee is darkness, and that thou knowest nothing yet as thou oughtest to know.—May the Lord effectually incline thine heart to take a contrary course, and to seek wisdom where alone it can be found, even from the Lord, “the Father of lights, and the Giver of every good and perfect gift,” who hath invited and commanded thee to ask, that it may be given thee!

VI. I would observe that there is nothing in this narrative, which can *reasonably* be condemned as *enthusiasm*.

It is allowed that *enthusiasm*, properly so called, frequently accompanies religious zeal; that in some of its operations it is a grievous evil, and in all attended with many inconveniences; and that it ought very carefully to be guarded against by every religious pro-

fessor and zealous preacher. It would also be in vain to pretend that the late revivals of religion, which have been indiscriminately stigmatized with the name of *Methodism*, have been, in opinion and practice, entirely free from this enthusiasm. For, what revivals of religion ever were free from scandals? Where the Lord sows his good seed, there the enemy will be sure to scatter his tares.— It must be confessed that some of the most eminent instruments in this work, whose names, when prejudice shall vanish, will be handed down with honour, as burning and shining lights, to the latest periods of the church, have, by the greatness of their zeal, through human frailty, been betrayed into sentiments, expressions, and deportment, in some instances, justly to be censured as enthusiastical; of which their enemies have not failed sufficiently to avail themselves.—But, whatever indiscretions and mistakes particular persons who have preached these doctrines may have fallen into, this doth not, in the judgment of candid and impartial persons, in the least affect the general cause, or prove the doctrines erroneous. We would not contend for the credit of individuals, or the interests of a party, but for the doctrines of God's word, and of the established Church of England. These will continue true and important, though many of those, who have zealously and successfully preached them, may have justly incurred the charge of en-

thusiasm : and I would confidently insist on it, that a man may be led to the belief of these doctrines, in a way of sober rational inquiry, and zealously preach them, without being an enthusiast.

It would be very well, if some of those, who so readily accuse whole bodies, of apparently religious persons, of enthusiasm, would favour us with their determinate definition of an enthusiast. In its original meaning the word has a very favourable sense, and implies, that, by a divine influence upon the soul, a man is filled with an ardour and warmth of zeal in the cause he is engaged in.—Now, “it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing :” and, if our ardour of soul be from the Spirit of God, according to the revealed will of God, and for the glory of God, it is the noblest, most desirable, most heavenly, and most beneficial exertion of the human mind.—In every thing but religion, an ardour, described by the term enthusiasm, is allowed and commended : a poetical, a military, or a patriotic enthusiasm, even when it carries men beyond the strict bounds of cold reasonings and exact prudence, fails not to meet with admirers. Our zeal may be fervent in every thing without censure, unless we be zealous for the glory of God, and the salvation of immortal souls ! But there is an enthusiasm of this sort which forms the highest elevation, and the noblest effort of the human mind. Such

an enthusiasm animated the apostle Paul in all his self-denying labours and sufferings, and filled his writings, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, with the most ardent zeal for the honour of his dear Saviour, and affection for the souls of men. Such an enthusiasm he expresses, when he says, (2 Cor. v. 13, 14.) "Whether we be beside ourselves it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause; for the love of Christ constraineth us." Of this enthusiasm I wish I were far more guilty.—But on the other hand, there is danger of a counterfeit pernicious enthusiasm; and about that we are at present inquiring. Now, I apprehend, that in order to constitute this culpable enthusiasm, some one or more of the following things must appear. Either the ardour of soul excited proceeds from a heated imagination, or from a delusion of Satan, instead of being produced by a divine influence; or the cause in which this ardour is employed is the cause of error and wickedness, instead of the cause of God and truth; or it exerts itself in unjustifiable measures and practices. For if our ardour be warranted by the word of God, if it do not tend to the dishonour of God, and if it be confined in its exercise to the rules and precepts of the word of God;—how intense soever it may be, I can see no cause to censure it; unless men can be too zealous for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls.

But whatever be the distinguishing criterion of enthusiasm, I suppose it will be difficult to fix a charge of it upon any thing for which I plead in this narrative. I never was taught by impulses, impressions, visions, dreams, or revelations; except so far as the work of the Spirit, in enlightening the understanding for the reception of the truths contained in the Holy Scriptures, is sometimes styled revelation. Other revelation I never expected. Not but that the Lord is sovereign, and may do what he will with his own: and if he pleases, may, and I suppose sometimes does, go out of the ordinary course, for the conversion of a sinner, or the guidance of a perplexed, or the comfort of a distressed, soul; but I never took one step in dependence on any such extraordinary interpositions, nor ever encouraged any person so to do. And surely it will not be called enthusiasm, by any but avowed infidels, to believe God's word to be the standard of truth, and his promises to be faithful, and in this belief to seek for the knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel, in the manner above related. In this way I have been taught no new truths; but, as I believe, have been shown the meaning, use, tendency, consistency, harmony, wisdom, and glory of those truths, which are contained in the sacred volume; but which before, through pride and ignorance, I perverted, neglected, reviled, and counted foolishness.—Nor do I make any pretences to infallibility.

God hath not, I trust, left me so unstable, as to float about in the uncertain stream of opinion, and to be tossed “to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”—As to the grand doctrines of the gospel, which I have marked out as necessary to salvation, they are neither so uncertain nor so difficult, as men would persuade us: their uncertainty and difficulty arise wholly from our pride, prejudice, love of sin, and inattentive ignorance of our own hearts. There is really much difficulty in bringing vain man to cease from leaning to his own understanding; and in prevailing with him to trust in the Lord with all his heart, and to be willing, in the humble posture of a little child, to be taught of God. Nothing but a deep conviction of guilt, a fear of wrath, and a sense of our lost condition by nature and practice, can bring our minds into this submissive frame: but, this being effected, the difficulty is over, and the way of salvation is so plain, that “the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.” As to the other doctrines which I myself believe, though they seem plain enough to me, I desire not to proselyte others to them, but am willing to leave them as matters in which fallible men may differ without danger. And, as to my sufficiency for the faithful discharge of my ministry, to God’s glory, and the salvation of souls, he will not, I trust, deceive

my expectations, which are grounded on his promises.—For the rest, I mistake daily, and find myself in continual danger of mixing my own imaginations with his divine truth, and of following my own spirit instead of his. Whatever I preach truly or do wisely, to God be the glory ; for I am not sufficient of myself to think a good thought : whatever I speak falsely, or do foolishly, to me be the shame ; for it is the natural fruit of my own deceitful heart. If this be enthusiasm, it is an enthusiasm warranted, not only by the word of God, as I have endeavoured to prove, but by the whole liturgy of our Church. We all at ordination profess to be “ moved by the Holy Ghost,” to take the ministerial office upon us, and assuredly we cannot be moved by the Holy Ghost, if we neither have the Holy Ghost, nor may expect his help and guidance ! We agree to pray, “ that the Lord would lead into the way of truth all such as have erred and are deceived ; that he would illuminate all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, with true knowledge and understanding of his holy word ;” that he would “ cleanse our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit ;” that “ he would grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit ;” with much more to this effect : and I am persuaded, that such a confidence as I have expressed, cannot be censured as enthusiasm, without including our Church-establishment and continual public worship in the same charge.

VII. Lastly, I would observe that our opposers and despisers will seldom give us the hearing. With all their pretensions to candour, reasoning, and free inquiry, they accuse and condemn us without so much as knowing, with any tolerable degree of accuracy, what our sentiments are; although furnished with such plentiful means of information, in those numerous publications which are now extant upon these subjects.

Having imbibed strong prejudices against us, they frame so contemptible an opinion of our understandings and writings, that they will not bestow so much pains, or afford us so much regard, as to peruse our books: and to call an author a Methodist, is with many people a sufficient reason why they should not read his works.—Hence it comes to pass, that for want of information our doctrines are grievously misrepresented: and in general the attacks made upon us, though calculated to make our persons odious and despised, do not in the least affect the argument in debate. Our adversaries in general know little of our opinions, except what they have picked up by hearsay, in which neither the connexion, consistency, tendency, nor application of those opinions is preserved: no wonder therefore that we are vilified, and reproached with things to which we are utter strangers, or which we abominate and protest against from sabbath to sabbath, and against which we neglect not to fill our wri-

tings with reasonings, warnings, and cautions.

For my own part I freely acknowledge, that my strongest objections against this scheme of doctrine arose wholly from misapprehension and mistake. Not having read their books, my notions of the doctrines of the Methodists were received from vulgar report, and from their enemies; while my creative imagination put its own construction on them, and drew terrible consequences from them; so that when I preached against them, I was as one fighting with his own shadow; and in speaking evil of those things that I knew not, I only betrayed my own ignorance and pride.—No better founded are the lamentable outcries, which at this day are made against our principles, as if they tended to banish reason, argument, sober mindedness, and morality out of the world; and in their stead to substitute a set of whimsical vagaries, which are without foundation in reason or Scripture, and have no influence, or rather a pernicious influence, on our conduct and conversation. — When such a declamation is ended, (for one would not interrupt it,) ask the declaimer what a Methodist is? he can scarcely give you an answer:—inquire about the doctrines of the Methodists,—he does not understand them;—or their writings,—he has never read them!

Reader, if thou desire to know what our opinions are, and what foundation there is

for these heavy charges, read our books : but read them with attention, and aim at impartiality ; compare them with the word of God, and with the liturgy, articles, and homilies of the church of England ; and, if thou have leisure and opportunity, with the works of our first reformers. Nor do we desire thee to renounce thy reason, but only to make this reasonable concession ;—that where thy reason is ready to determine one way, but God hath expressly determined another way, thou wouldst allow him to understand his own mysteries better than thou dost ; and that therefore thou oughtest, by faith exercised upon the veracity of God, to receive implicitly and without reasoning, those doctrines which God hath expressly revealed, and which thy reason feels to be far above out of its reach, and therefore doubtless out of its province. Wherever, on such inquiry, thou discoverest us to be mistaken, there dissent from us, yea, blame us as far as meekness and candour will permit : but do not condemn us in the gross ; do not assert our whole scheme of doctrine to be enthusiastical and groundless, though some of our writers should be found to have advanced questionable opinions. This were the way to drive all truth and certainty out of the world ; for what book can be mentioned, the Bible excepted, in which there is nothing advanced, either erroneous or questionable ?

And be assured, that to read only one side

of the question, and then clamorously to adopt every childish cavil, every vague report, every scandalous falsehood ; and industriously to propagate them, as if these afforded a sufficient confutation of all the arguments, authorities, and scriptural testimonies, with which we support our sentiments ; is no evidence of a candid liberal mind, or of a sincere desire to know the truth. Let it also be observed, that though some professors have been proved enthusiasts, and others detected to be hypocrites, this does not prove that we are all enthusiasts and hypocrites. Such rash judgments are most hurtful to those who pass them.

For myself, I here publicly profess, that I will, to the end of my days, acknowledge it as the greatest obligation that any person can confer on me, if, in the spirit of meekness, he will point out to me any error, or enthusiastical delusion into which I have fallen, and by sufficient arguments convince me of it. I trust, that my earnest desire to discover "the truth as it is in Jesus," has not abated in its influence ; and that I still retain the same disinterested resolution to embrace and adhere to it, with which I set out. Still am I solicitously fearful of being betrayed by warmth of spirit, and by the deceitfulness of my heart, into erroneous opinions. But clamour and reproach, objections and arguments brought against sentiments I detest, or conse-

quences I cannot see to be fairly deducible from our doctrines ; or such reasonings as set one divine attribute at variance with another, make one part of the Bible contradict another, or exalt the human understanding upon the tribunal, and arraign and condemn revealed mysteries at her presumptuous bar ; will have no weight at all with me, or with any who ever knew the grace of God in truth.

And now, my dear reader, let me conclude, with leaving it upon thy conscience to search for the truth of the gospel in the study of God's word, accompanied by prayer, as thou wouldst search for hid treasure. I give thee this counsel, expecting to meet thee at the day of judgment, that our meeting may be with joy, and not with grief ; may the Lord incline thee to follow it, with that solemn season full in view !—Time how short ! eternity how long ! life how precarious, and vanishing ! death how certain ! the pursuits and employments of this present life how vain, unsatisfying, trifling, and vexatious ! God's favour and eternal life how unspeakably precious ! His wrath, the never quenched fire, the never dying worm, how dreadful ! O, trifle not away the span of life, in heaping up riches, which shortly must be left for ever, and which profit not in the day of wrath ; in such pleasures and amusements as will issue in eternal torments ; or in seeking that glory,

which shall be swallowed up in everlasting infamy. Agree but with me in this,—that it is good to redeem precious time, to “labour for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life;” and to attend principally to the “one thing needful;”—take but thy measure of truth as well as duty from the word of God, be willing to be taught of God, meditate on his word day and night; let it be “the light of thy feet,” and the “lantern of thy paths;” and, in studying it, “lean not to thy own understanding,” trust not implicitly to expositors and commentators, but ask wisdom and teaching of God. Be not a Felix, saying to thy serious apprehensions about thy soul,—“Go your way at this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for you;” lest death and judgment come before that season:—and be not an Agrippa, almost persuaded to be a Christian; but seek to be altogether such as the primitive Christians were. I say, agree with me in these reasonable requests, and we shall at length agree in all things; in many, in this world; in all, when we hear the Son of God address us in these rejoicing words,—“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

APPENDIX.

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO THE REV. DR. SCOTT,
BY THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

LETTER I.

JUNE 23, 1775.

DEAR SIR:—I have met with interruptions till now, or you would have heard from me sooner. My thoughts have run much upon the subject of your last, because I perceive it has a near connection with your peace. Your integrity greatly pleases me; far be it from me to shake the principle of your conduct; yet, in the application, I think there is a possibility of carrying your exceptions too far.

From the account you give me of your sentiments, I cannot but wonder you find it so difficult to accede to the Athanasian Creed, when it seems to me you believe and avow what that creed chiefly sets forth. The doctrine of the Trinity, some explication of the terms being subjoined, is the Catholic Faith; without the belief of which a man cannot be saved. This damnatory clause seems to me proved by Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth shall be saved," &c. The object of faith must be truth. The doctrine of the deity of

Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, in union with the Father, so that they are not three Gods, but one God, is not merely a proposition expressed in words, to which our assent is required, but is absolutely necessary to be known; since without it no one truth respecting salvation can be rightly understood, no one promise duly believed, no one duty spiritually performed. I take it for granted, that this doctrine must appear irrational and absurd in the eye of reason, if by reason we mean the reason of man in his fallen state, before it is corrected and enlightened by a heavenly teacher. No man can say Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. I believe with you, that a man may be saved who never heard of the creed, who never read any book but the New Testament, or perhaps a single Evangelist; but he must be taught of God the things that accompany salvation, or I do not think he can be saved. The mercies of God in Christ will not save any, (as I apprehend,) but according to the method revealed in his word, that is, those who are truly partakers of faith and holiness. For as the religion of the New Testament ascribes all power to God, and considers all goodness in us as the effect of his communication, we being by nature destitute of spiritual life or light; so those whom God himself is pleased to teach, will infallibly attain the knowledge of all that they are concerned to know. This teaching you are waiting for, and it shall be given you; yea, the

Lord, I trust, has begun to teach you already: but if you consider yourself as a learner, and that it is possible, under the Spirit's increasing illumination, you may hereafter adopt some things which at present you cannot approve, I should think it too early as yet to prescribe to yourself rules and determinations for the government of your future life. Should the will of God appoint you a new path for service, he may, sooner than you are aware, quiet your mind, and enable you to subscribe with as full a persuasion of mind as you now object to subscription.

When I think of an inclosure, some hedge, wall, bank, ditch, &c. is of course included in my idea; for who can conceive of an inclosure without a boundary? So, in a church, there must be, I apprehend, something marked out, the approbation or refusal of which will determine who do or do not belong to it: And for this purpose articles of some kind seem not improper. You think it would be better to have these articles in scriptural expressions. But if it be lawful to endeavour to exclude from our pulpits men who hold sentiments the most repugnant to the truth, I wish you to consider, whether this can be in any measure secured by articles in which the Scripture-doctrines are not explained and stated, as well as expressed. This proposal is strenuously pleaded for by many in our day, upon views very different from yours. The Socinians, for instance, would readily sub-

scribe a scriptural declaration of the high priesthood, atonement, and intercession of Christ, (while they are allowed to put their own sense upon the terms :) though the sense they maintain be utterly inconsistent with what those who are enlightened by the Holy Spirit learn from the same expressions.

I acknowledge, indeed, that the end is not answered by the present method ; since there are too many, like the person you mention, who would easily subscribe nine hundred articles, rather than baulk his preferment : yet the profligacy of some seems to be no just reason why the church, why any church, should not be at liberty to define the terms upon which they will accept members, or teachers, or why conscientious persons should object to these terms, (if they think them agreeable to the truth,) merely because they are not expressed in the precise words of Scripture. If allowance may be made for human infirmity in the Liturgy, I see not why the Articles may not be entitled to the same privilege. For it seems requisite that we should be as well satisfied with the expressions we use with our lips, in frequent solemn prayer to God, as in what we subscribe with our hands. I am persuaded that the leaders of the Association at the Feathers Tavern, some of them at least, though they begin with the affair of subscription, would not (if they might have their wish) stop there, but would go on with their projected reform, till they

had overturned the Liturgy also, or at least weeded it from every expression that bears testimony to the deity of the Saviour, and the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit. I bless God that you are far otherwise minded.

I hope, however, though you should not think yourself at liberty to repeat your subscription, the Lord will make you comfortable and useful in your present rank as a curate. Preferment is not necessary, either to our peace or usefulness. We may live and die contentedly, without the honours and emoluments which aspiring men thirst after, if he be pleased to honour us with a dispensation to preach his Gospel, and to crown our endeavours with a blessing. He that winneth souls is wise; wise in the choice of the highest end he can propose to himself in this life; wise in the improvement of the only means by which this desirable end can be attained. Wherever we cast our eyes, the bulk of the people are ignorant, immoral, careless. They live without God in the world; they are neither awed by his authority, nor affected by his goodness, nor enabled to trust to his promises, nor disposed to aim at his glory. If, perhaps, they have a serious interval, or some comparative sobriety of character, they ground their hopes upon their own doings, endeavours, or purposes; and treat the inexpressible love of God revealed in Christ, and the Gospel method of salvation by faith in his name, with neglect, often with contempt.

They have preachers, whom perhaps they hear with some pleasure because they neither alarm their consciences by insisting on the spirituality and sanction of the divine law, nor offend their pride by publishing the humiliating doctrines of that Gospel, which is the power of God through faith unto salvation. Therefore what they do speak, they speak in vain; the world grows worse and worse under their instructions; infidelity and profligacy abound more and more; for God will own no other doctrine but what the apostle calls the truth as it is in Jesus; that doctrine which drives the sinner from all his vain pleas, and points out the Lord Jesus Christ as the only ground of hope, the supreme object of desire, as appointed of God to be wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, to all who believe in his name.—When ministers themselves are convinced of sin, and feel the necessity of an Almighty Saviour, they presently account their former gain but loss, and determine, with the apostle, to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. In proportion as they do this, they are sure to be wondered at, laughed at, and railed at, if the providence of God and the constitution of their country, secure them from severer treatment. But they have this invaluable compensation, that they no longer speak without effect. In a greater or less degree a change takes place in their auditories; the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the lepers are

cleansed ;—sinners are turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God ;—sinful practices are forsaken ; and a new course of life in the converts, evidences that they have not followed cunningly-devised fables, nor taken up with uncertain notions ; but that God has indeed quickened them by his Spirit, and given them an understanding to know him that is true. The preachers, likewise, while they attempt to teach others, are taught themselves : a blessing descends upon their studies and labours, upon their perusal of the Scriptures, upon their attention to what passes within them and around them. The events of every day contribute to throw light upon the word of God : their views of divine truth grow more enlarged, connected, and comprehensive ; many difficulties which perplexed them at their first setting out, trouble them no more ; the God whom they serve, and on whom they wait, reveals to them those great things, which, though plainly expressed in the letter of Scripture, cannot be understood and realized without divine teaching, 1 Cor. ii. 9 to 15. Thus they go on from strength to strength ; hard things become easy, and a divine light shines upon their paths. Opposition from men perhaps may increase ; they may expect to be represented, as those who turn the world upside down ; the cry, Great is Diana, will be raised against them, the gates of the temple of preferment will be seldom open to them ; but they will

have the unspeakable consolation of applying to themselves those lively words of the apostle, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

It is the strain of evident sincerity which runs through your letters that gives me a pleasing confidence the Lord is with you. A disinterested desire of knowing the truth, with a willingness to follow it through all disadvantages, is a preparation of the heart which only God can give. He has directed you to the right method, searching the Scriptures, with prayer. Go on, and may his blessing attend you. You may see, from what I have written above, what is the desire of my heart for you. But I am not impatient. Follow your heavenly Leader, and in his own time and manner he will make your way plain. I have travelled the path before you. I see what you yet want; I cannot impart it to you, but he can, and I trust, he will. It will rejoice my soul to be any way assistant to you; but I am afraid I should not afford you much, either profit or satisfaction, by entering upon a dry defence of creeds and articles.

The truths of Scripture are not like mathematical theorems, which present exactly the same ideas to every person who understands the terms. The word of God is compared to a mirror, 2 Cor. iii. 18: but it is a mirror in which the longer we look the more we see;

the view will be still growing upon us; and still we shall see but in part while on this side eternity. When our Lord pronounced Peter blessed, declaring he had learnt that which flesh and blood could not have taught him, yet Peter was at that time much in the dark. The sufferings and death of Jesus, though the only and necessary means of his salvation, were an offence to him. But he lived to glory in what he once could not bear to hear of. Peter had received grace to love the Lord Jesus, to follow him, to venture all, and to forsake all for him: these first good dispositions were of God, and they led to further advances. So it is still. By nature, self rules in the heart: when this idol is brought low, and we are truly willing to be the Lord's, and to apply to him for strength and direction, that we may serve him, the good work is begun; for it is a truth that holds universally and without exception, a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. The Lord first finds us when we are thinking of something else, Isaiah lxx. 1; and then we begin to seek him in good earnest, and he has promised to be found of us. People may, by industry and natural abilities, make themselves masters of the external evidences of Christianity, and have much to say for and against different schemes and systems of sentiments; but all this while the heart remains untouched. True religion is not a science of the head, so

much as an inward and heartfelt perception, which casts down imaginations, and every thought that exalteth itself in the mind, and brings every thought into a sweet and willing subjection to Christ by faith. Here the learned have no real advantage above the ignorant; both see when the eyes of the understanding are enlightened: till then both are equally blind. And the first lesson in the school of Christ is to become a little child, sitting simply at his feet, that we may be made wise unto salvation.

I was not only prevented beginning my letter so soon as I wished, but have been unusually interrupted since I began it. Often, as soon as I could well take the pen in hand, I have been called away to attend company and intervening business. Though I persuade myself, after what I have formerly said, you will put a favourable construction upon my delay, yet it has given me some pain. I set a great value upon your offer of friendship, which, I trust, will not be interrupted on either side by the freedom with which we mutually express our difference of sentiments, when we are constrained to differ. You please me with entrusting me with the first rough draught of your thoughts; and you may easily perceive by my manner of writing, that I place equal confidence in your candour. I shall be glad to exchange letters as often as it suits us, without constraint, ceremony, or apology; and may he

who is always present with our hearts make our correspondence useful. I pray God to be your sun and shield, your light and strength, to guide you with his eye, to comfort you with his gracious presence in your own soul, and to make you a happy instrument of comforting many.—I am, &c.

LETTER II.

JULY 14, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I gladly adopt your address, and can assure you that the interchange of every letter unites my heart more closely to you. I am glad to find that your views of articles and creeds are not likely to hinder you from going forward in your present situation; and if, without contracting your usefulness, they only prove a bar to your preferment, I am sure it will be no grief of mind to you at the hour of death, or the day of judgment, that you were enabled to follow the dictates of conscience, in opposition to all the pleas of custom or interest. Since, therefore, I have no desire of shaking your resolves, may we not drop this subject entirely? The propriety of our national establishment, or of any other, is what I have not much to do with; I found it as it is, nor have I influence to alter it were I willing. The question in which I was concerned was simply, Whether

I, things being as they were, could submit to it, so as conscientiously to take a designation to the ministry under it? I thought I could; I accordingly did, and I am thankful that I never have seen cause to repent it.

You seem gently to charge me with a want of candour in what I observed or apprehended concerning the gentlemen of the Feathers tavern. If I mistake not, (for I retain no copies of my letters,) I expressed myself with a double restriction, by first saying the *leaders* of that society, and then adding, or *some of them at least*. I apprehend your candour will hardly lead you to suppose, that there are *none* amongst them who would pull down the whole fabric, (that is, I mean so far as it crosses the Socinian scheme,) if it was left to their choice. I apprehend I may, without the least breach of candour, suppose that the exceptions which Mr. Lindsay has made to the Liturgy, are not peculiar to himself. It seems plain in his case, and from his own writings, that the mere removal of subscriptions, which is the immediate and ostensible object of the clerical petition, could not have satisfied him; and it is past a doubt with me, that there are others of the clergy like-minded with him. Indeed, I could wish to be thought candid by you; though I confess, I am not a friend to that lukewarmness and indifference for truth, which bears the name of candour among many in the present day. I desire to maintain a spirit of candour and

benevolence to all men, to wish them well, to do them every good office in my power, and to commend what appears to me commendable in a Socinian, as readily as in a Calvinist. But with some people I can only go *usque ad aras*. I must judge of principles by the word of God, and of the tree by its fruit. I meddle with no man's final state; because I know that he who is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins, can do it whenever, and to whomsoever he is pleased: Yet I firmly believe, and I make no scruple of proclaiming it, that swearers, drunkards, adulterers, continuing such, cannot inherit the kingdom of God: and I look with no less compassion upon some persons, whose characters in common life may be respectable, when I see them unhappily blinded by their own wisdom; and while they account themselves and are accounted by many others, master-builders in Zion, rejecting the only foundation upon which a sinner's hope can be safely built.

I am far from thinking the Socinians all hypocrites, but I think they are all in a most dangerous error; nor do their principles exhibit to my view a whit more of the genuine fruits of Christianity than Deism itself. You say, "If they be sincere, and fail not for want of diligence in searching, I cannot help thinking, that God will not condemn them for an inevitable defect in their understandings." Indeed, my friend, I have such a low opinion

of man in his depraved state, that I believe no one has real sincerity in religious matters till God bestows it; and when he makes a person sincere in his desires after truth, he will assuredly guide him to the possession of it in due time, as our Lord speaks, John vi. 44, 45. To suppose that any persons can sincerely seek the way of salvation, and yet miss it through an inevitable defect of their understandings, would contradict the plain promises of the gospel, such as Matt. vii. 7, 8; John vii. 16, 17; but to suppose that nothing is necessary to be known, which some persons who profess sincerity cannot receive, would be in effect to make the Scripture a nose of wax, and open a wide door for scepticism. I am not a judge of the heart; but I may be sure, that whoever makes the foundation-stone a rock of offence, cannot be sincere in his inquiries. He may study the Scripture accurately, but he brings his own preconceived sentiments with him, and instead of submitting them to the touchstone of truth, he makes them a rule by which he interprets. That they who lean to their own understandings should stumble and miscarry, I cannot wonder; for the same God who has promised to fill the hungry with good things, has threatened to send the rich empty away. So Matt. xi. 25. It is not through defect of understanding, but a want of simplicity and humility, that so many stumble like the blind at noon-day, and can see nothing of those

great truths which are written in the gospel as with a sunbeam.

You wish me to explain myself concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. I will try, yet I know I cannot, any further than as he who taught me shall be pleased to bear witness in your heart to what I say. My first principle in religion is what the Scripture teaches me of the utter depravity of human nature, in connection with the spirituality and sanction of the law of God. I believe we are by nature sinners, by practice universally transgressors; that we are dead in trespasses and sins; and that the bent of our natural spirit is enmity against the holiness, government, and grace of God. Upon this ground, I see, feel, and acknowledge the necessity of such a salvation as the gospel proposes, which, at the same time that it precludes boasting, and stains the pride of all human glory, affords encouragement to those who may be thought, or who may think themselves, the weakest or the vilest of mankind. I believe, that whatever notions a person may take up from education or system, no one ever did, or ever will, feel himself and own himself to be such a lost, miserable, hateful sinner, unless he be powerfully and supernaturally convinced by the Spirit of God. There is, when God pleases, a certain light thrown into the soul, which differs not merely in degree, but in kind, *toto genere*, from any thing that can be effected or produced by moral suasion

or argument. But (to take in another of your queries) the Holy Spirit teaches or reveals no new truths, either of doctrine or precept, but only enables us to understand what is already revealed in the Scripture. Here a change takes place, the person that was spiritually blind, begins to see. The sinner's character, as described in the word of God, he finds to be a description of himself; that he is afar off, a stranger, a rebel; that he has hitherto lived in vain. Now he begins to see the necessity of an atonement, an advocate, a shepherd, a comforter: he can no more trust to his own wisdom, strength, and goodness; but, accounting all his former gain but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, he renounces every other refuge, and ventures his all upon the person, work, and promise of the Redeemer. In this way, I say, he will find the doctrine of the Trinity not only a proposition, but a principle; that is, from his own wants and situation he will have an abiding conviction, that the Son and Holy Spirit are God, and must be possessed of the attributes and powers of Deity, to support the offices the Scriptures assign them, and to deserve the confidence and worship the Scriptures require to be placed in them, and paid to them. Without this awakened state of mind, a divine, reputed orthodox, will blunder wretchedly, even in defending his own opinions. I have seen laboured defences of the Trinity, which have given me

not much more satisfaction than I should probably receive from a dissertation upon the rainbow composed by a man blind from his birth. In effect, the knowledge of God cannot be attained by studious discussion on our parts; it must be by a revelation on his part, Matt. xi. 27, and xvi. 17; a revelation, not objectively of new truth, but subjectively of new light in us. Then he that runs may read. Perhaps you may not quite understand my meaning, or not accede to my sentiment at present; I have little doubt, however, but the time is coming when you will. I believe the Lord God has given *you* that sincerity, which he never disappoints

Far be it from me to arrogate infallibility to myself, or to any writer or preacher; yet, blessed be God, I am not left to float up and down the uncertain tide of opinion, in those points wherein the peace of my soul is nearly concerned. I know, yea I infallibly know whom I have believed. I am under no more doubt about the way of salvation than of the way to London. I cannot be deceived, because the word of God cannot deceive me. It is impossible, however, for me to give you or any person full satisfaction concerning my evidence, because it is of an experimental nature. Rev. ii. 17. In general, it arises from the views I have received of the power, compassion, and grace of Jesus, and a consciousness, that I, from a conviction of my sin and misery, have fled to him for refuge, en-

trusted and devoted myself and my all to him. Since my mind has been enlightened, every thing within me, and every thing around me, confirms and explains to me what I read in Scripture; and though I have reason enough to distrust my own judgment every hour, yet I have no reason to question the great essentials, which the Lord himself hath taught me.

Besides a long letter, I send you a great book. A part of it (for I do not ask you to read the whole) may perhaps explain my meaning better than I have leisure to do myself. I set a high value upon this book of Mr. Halyburton's; so that unless I could replace it with another, I know not if I would part with it for its weight in gold. The first and longest treatise, is, in my judgment, a master-piece; but I would chiefly wish you to peruse the Essay concerning faith, towards the close of the book. I need not beg you to read it carefully, and to read it all. The importance of the subject, its immediate connection with your inquiries, and the accuracy of the reasoning, will render the motive of my request unnecessary. I cannot style him a very elegant writer; and being a Scotsman, he abounds with the Scottish idiom.— But you will prefer truth to ornament. I long to hear your opinion of it. It seems to me so adapted to some things that have passed between us as if written on purpose.

The Inquiry concerning Regeneration and

Justification, which stands last in the book, I do not desire or even wish you to read ; but if you should, and then think that you have read a speculation more curious than useful, I shall not contradict you. I think it must appear to you in that light ; but it was bound up with the rest, and therefore could not stay behind : but I hope the Essay on Faith will please you.

I take great pleasure in your correspondence, still more in the thought of your friendship, which I hope to cultivate to the utmost, and to approve myself sincerely and affectionately yours.

LETTER III.

AUGUST 11, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND:—Next week I go to London, where I propose, if nothing unforeseen prevent, to stay a month. Many things which must necessarily be attended to before my departure, abridge me of that leisure which I could wish to employ in answering your last. However, I will spare you what I can. I thank you for yours — Your objections neither displease nor weary me. While truth is the object of your inquiry, the more freedom you use with me the better. Nor do they surprise me ; for I have formerly made the like objections my-

self. I have stood upon your ground, and I continue to hope you will one day stand upon mine. As I have told you more than once, I do not mean to dictate to you, or to wish you to receive any thing upon my *ipse dixit*; but, in the simplicity of friendship, I will give you my thoughts from time to time upon the points you propose, and leave the event to the divine blessing.

I am glad you do not account the Socinians master-builders. However, they esteem themselves so, and are so esteemed, not only by a few, (as you think,) but by many. I fear Socinianism spreads rapidly amongst us, and bids fair to be the prevailing scheme in this land, especially with those who profess to be the thinking part. The term Arminian, as at present applied, is very indiscriminate, and takes in a great variety of persons and sentiments, amongst whom, I believe, there are many who hold the fundamental truths of the Gospel, and live a life of faith in the Son of God. I am far from supposing that God will guide every sincere person exactly to adopt all my sentiments.— But there are some sentiments which I believe essential to the very state and character of a true Christian. And these make him a Christian, not merely by being his acknowledged sentiments, but by a certain peculiar manner in which he possesses them. There is a certain important change takes place in the heart, by the operation of the

Spirit of God, before the soundest and most orthodox sentiments can have their proper influence upon us. This work, or change, the Scripture describes by various names, each of which is designed to teach us, the marvellous effects it produces, and the almighty power by which it is produced. It is sometimes called a new birth, John iii. 3; sometimes a new creature, or a new creation, as 2 Cor. v. 17; sometimes the causing light to shine out of darkness, 2 Cor. iv. 6; sometimes the opening the eyes of the blind, Acts xxvi. 18; sometimes the raising the dead to life, Ephes. ii. 5. Till a person has experienced this change, he will be at a loss to form a right conception of it: but it means, not being proselyted to an opinion, but receiving a principle of divine life and light in the soul. And till this is received, the things of God, the truths of the Gospel cannot be rightly discerned or understood by the utmost powers of fallen man, who, with all his wisdom, reason, and talents, is still but what the apostle calls the natural man, till the power of God visits his heart, 1 Cor. ii. 14. This work is sometimes wrought suddenly, as in the case of Lydia, Acts xvi. 14; at other times very gradually. A person who before was a stranger even to the form of godliness, or at best, content with a mere form, finds new thoughts arising in his mind, feels some concern about his sins, some desire to please God, some suspicions that all is not right.—

He examines his views of religion, hopes the best of them, and yet cannot rest satisfied in them. To-day perhaps, he thinks himself fixed; to-morrow he will be all uncertainty. He inquires of others; weighs, measures, considers, meets with sentiments which he had not attended to; thinks them plausible; but is presently shocked with objections or supposed consequences, which he finds himself unable to remove. As he goes on in his inquiry, his difficulties increase. New doubts arise in his mind; even the Scriptures perplex him, and appear to assert contrary things. He would sound the depths of truth by the plummet of his reason; but he finds his line is too short. Yet even now the man is under a guidance, which will at length lead him right. The importance of the subject takes up his thoughts, and takes off the relish he once had for the things of the world. He reads, he prays, he strives, he resolves; sometimes inward embarrassments and outward temptations bring him to his wit's end. He almost wishes to stand where he is, and inquire no more; but he cannot stop. At length he begins to feel the inward depravity, which he had before owned as an opinion; a sense of sin and guilt cut him out new work. Here reasoning will stand him in no stead. This is a painful change of mind; but it prepares the way for a blessing. It silences some objections better than a thousand arguments, it cuts the comb of his own

wisdom and attainments: it makes him weary of working for life, and teaches him in God's due time the meaning of that text, "To him that worketh not, but believeth in him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Then he learns that Scriptural faith is a very different thing from a rational assent to the Gospel,—that it is the immediate gift of God; (Ephes. ii. 8;) the operation of God; (Col. ii. 12;) that Christ is not only the object, but the author and finisher of faith, (Heb. xii. 2;) and that faith is not so properly a part of that obedience we owe to God, as an inestimable benefit we receive from him, for Christ's sake, (Phil. i. 29,) which is the medium of our justification, (Rom. v. 1,) and the principle by which we are united to Christ, as the branch to the vine, (John xvii. 21.) I am well aware of the pains taken to put a different sense upon these and other seemingly mysterious passages of Scripture; but thus far we speak that which we know, and testify that which we have seen. I have described a path in which I have known many led, and in which I have walked myself.

The gospel, my dear sir, is a salvation appointed for those who are ready to perish, and is not designed to put them in a way to save themselves by their own works. It speaks to us as condemned already, and calls upon us to believe in a crucified Saviour, that we may receive redemption through his

blood, even the forgiveness of our sins. And the Spirit of God, by the Gospel, first convinces us of unbelief, sin, and misery; and then, by revealing the things of Jesus to our minds, enables us, as helpless sinners, to come to Christ, to receive him, to behold him, or in other words, to believe in him, and expect pardon, life, and grace from him; renouncing every hope and aim in which we once rested, and accounting all things loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, John vi. 35; Isa. xlv. 22, with John vi. 40; Col. ii. 6. In some of Omicron's letters you will find my thoughts more at large upon these subjects than I have now time to write them. For a further illustration, I refer you to the MSS. sent herewith. The first part, written in short hand, does not so immediately concern our present point as the second, which you may read without a key. It relates to a matter of indisputable fact, concerning a person with whom, as you will perceive, I was well acquainted. You may depend upon the truth of every tittle. I entrust it to you in the confidence of friendship, and beg that it may not go out of your hands, and that, when you have perused it, you would return it, sealed up, by a safe conveyance, to my house. You will see in it, the sentiments of a man of great learning, sound reasoning, an amiable and irreproachable character, and how little he accounted

of all these advantages, when the Lord was pleased to enlighten his mind.

Though we have not exactly the same view of human depravity, yet as we both agree to take our measure of it from the word of God, I trust we shall not always differ about it. Adam was created in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, Ephes. iv. 24. This moral image, I believe, was totally lost by sin. In that sense he died the day, the moment, he ate the forbidden fruit. God was no longer his joy and delight: he was averse from the thoughts of his presence, and would, if possible, have hid himself from him. His natural powers, though doubtless impaired, were not destroyed. Man, by nature, is still capable of great things. His understanding, reason, memory, imagination, &c., sufficiently proclaim that the hand that made him is divine. He is, as Milton says of Beelzebub, majestic, though in ruins. He can reason, invent, and, by application, attain a considerable knowledge in natural things. The exertions of human genius, as specified in the characters of some philosophers, poets, orators, &c., are wonderful. But man cannot know, love, trust, or serve his Maker, unless he be renewed in the spirit of his mind. God has preserved in him likewise some feelings of benevolence, pity, some sense of natural justice and truth, &c., without which there could be no society: but these, I apprehend, are little more than

instincts, by which the world is kept in some small degree of order; but, being under the direction of pride and self, do not deserve the name of virtue and goodness; because the exercise of them does not spring from a principle of love to God, nor is directed to his glory, or regulated by the rule of his word, till a principle of grace is superadded. You think I will not say, "that God judicially, in punishment of one man's sin, added these corruptions to all his posterity." Let us suppose, that the punishment annexed to eating the forbidden fruit had been the loss of Adam's rational powers, and that he should be degraded to the state and capacity of a brute. In this condition, had he begotten children, after his fall, in his own likeness, his nature being previously changed, they must have been of course brutes like himself; for he could not convey to them those original powers which he had lost. Will this illustrate my meaning? Sin did not deprive him of rationality, but of spirituality. His nature became earthly, sensual, yea devilish; and this fallen nature, this carnal mind, which is enmity against God, which is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be, (Rom. viii. 7,) we universally derive from him. Look upon children: they presently show themselves averse from good, but exceedingly propense to evil. This they can learn even without a master; but ten thousand instructors and instructions cannot in-

still good into them, so as to teach them to love their Creator, unless a divine power co-operates. Just as it is with the earth, which produces weeds spontaneously; but if you see a cabbage, or an apple tree, you are sure it was planted or sown there, and did not spring from the soil. I know many hard questions may be started upon this subject; but the Lord, in due time, will clear his own cause, and vindicate his own ways. I leave all difficulties with him. It is sufficient for me that Scripture asserts, and experience proves, that it is thus in fact, Rom. iii. 9—21; Job xiv. 4. Thus we have not only forfeited our happiness by transgression, but are, by our depravity, incapable of it, and have no more desire or taste for such a state as the Scriptures describe Heaven to be, than a man born deaf can have for a concert of music. And therefore our Lord declares, that except a man be born again, he not only shall not, but cannot, see the kingdom of God. Hence a twofold necessity of a Saviour—his blood for the pardon of our sins, and his life, spirit, and grace, to quicken our souls, and form us anew for himself, that we may feel his love, and show forth his praise.

St. Paul, before his conversion, was not sincere, in the sense I hope you to be. He thought himself in the right, without doubt, as many have done when they killed God's servants, John xvi. 2. He was blindly and obstinately zealous. I think he did not enter

into the merits of the cause, or inquire into facts with that attention which sincerity would have put him upon. You think that his sincerity and zeal were the very things that made him a chosen instrument; he himself speaks of them as the very things that made him peculiarly unworthy of that honour, (1 Cor. xv. 9;) and he tells us, that he was set forth as a pattern of the Lord's long-suffering and mercy, that the very chief of sinners might be encouraged, 1 Tim. i. 15, 16. Had he been sincerely desirous to know whether Jesus was the Messiah, there was enough in his character, doctrines, miracles, and the prophecies concerning him, to have cleared up the point; but he took it for granted he was right in his opinion, and hurried blindly on, and was, as he said himself, exceedingly mad against them. Such a kind of sincerity is common enough. People believe themselves right, and therefore, treat others with scorn or rage, appeal to the Scriptures, but first lay down their own preconceived sentiments for truths, and then examine what Scriptures they can find to countenance them. Surely a person's thinking himself right, will not give a sanction to all that he does under that persuasion.

Ignorance and obstinacy are in themselves sinful, and no plea of sincerity will exempt from the danger of being under their influence, Isa. xxvii. 11, Luke vi. 39. It appears to me, that, though you will not follow

any man implicitly, you are desirous of discovering your mistakes, supposing you are mistaken in any point of importance. You read and examine the word of God, not to find arms wherewith to defend your sentiments at all events, but to know whether they are defensible or not. You pray for God's light and teaching, and in this search you are willing to risk what men are commonly much afraid of hazarding—character, interest, preferment, favour, &c. A sincerity of this kind I too seldom meet with; when I do, I account it a token for good, and am ready to say, “No man can do this, except God be with him.” However, sincerity is not conversion; but I believe it is always a forerunner of it.

I would not be uncharitable and censorious, hasty and peremptory in judging my fellow-creatures. But if I acknowledge the word of God, I cannot avoid forming my judgment upon it. It is true, I cannot look into people's hearts; but hearts and principles are delineated to my hand in the Scriptures. I read, that no murderer has eternal life in him: I read likewise, “if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema;” and therefore, I conclude, that there are speculative errors, as heinous in their guilt, as destructive in their effects, as murder; and that the most moral, regular man, as to social life, if he loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, is, in the sight of God, the judge

LETTER IV.

SEPTEMBER 6, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I begin to fear I shall fall under a suspicion of unkindness and forgetfulness towards you,—and therefore, I am willing to write a line by way of prevention, though I have not leisure to attempt any thing like an answer to the letter you put into my hand the evening before I left O—; I must therefore, content myself with a tender of affection and respect, and an inquiry after your welfare.

Your letter will give me an opportunity of saying something further when time shall admit; but an endeavour to answer all the objections that may be started between us, in a way of reasoning, would require a volume, and would likewise interfere with the leading principle upon which my hope of giving you satisfaction in due time is grounded. You seem to expect that *I* should remove your difficulties; but it is my part only to throw in a word occasionally, as a witness of what the Lord has been pleased to teach me from the Scriptures, and to wait for the rest, till He (who alone is able) shall be pleased to communicate the same views to you:—For till we see and judge by the same medium, and are agreed in the fundamental point, that faith is not the effect of reasoning, but a special gift of God, which he bestows

when and to whom he pleases, it will not be possible for me to convince you by dint of argument I believe, as I have observed before, that he has already given you a desire to know his will; and therefore, I trust he will not disappoint your search. At present I think you want one thing, which it is not in my power to impart; I mean such a sense of the depravity of human nature, and the state of all mankind considered as sinners, as may make you feel the utter impossibility of attaining to the peace and hope of the Gospel in any other way, than by renouncing all hope of succeeding by any endeavours of your own, further than by humbly waiting at the throne of grace, for power to cast yourself, without terms and conditions, upon him who is able to save to the uttermost. We must feel ourselves sick, before we can duly prize the great Physician, and feel a sentence of death in ourselves, before we can effectually trust in God who raiseth the dead.

I have not brought your sermons with me; for I thought I should not have time to read them attentively, while in this hurrying place. I purpose to consider them with care, and to give you my thoughts with frankness, when I return. However, if they are upon the plan intimated in your letter, I will venture to say one thing beforehand, that they will not answer your desired end. I am persuaded you wish to be useful—to reclaim sinners

from their evil ways, to inspire them with a love to God, and a sincere aim to walk in obedience to his will. May I not venture to appeal to yourself, that you meet with little success; that the people to whom you preach, though they perhaps give you a patient hearing, yet remain as they were, unchanged and unholy? It must be so; there is but one sort of preaching which God blesses to these purposes—that which makes all the world guilty before God, and sets forth Jesus Christ, (as the brazen serpent was proposed by Moses,) that guilty and condemned sinners, by looking to him, and believing on his name, may be healed and saved. The most pressing exhortations to repentance and amendment of life, unless they are enforced in a certain way, which only God can teach, will leave our hearers much as they find them. When we meet, or when I have leisure to write from home, I will trouble you with my thoughts more at large. Till then, permit me to assure you of my sincere regard and best wishes, and that I am, &c.

LETTER V.

OCTOBER 21, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—The calls and engagements which I told you engrossed and anticipated my time when I wrote last, have

continued without any intermission hitherto, and I am still far behindhand with my business. I am willing to hope, that the case has been much the same with you, and that want of leisure has been the only cause of my not having been pleased with so much as a note from you since my return from London.

I am loath, for my own sake, to charge your silence to any unwillingness of continuing that intercourse which I have been, and still find myself, desirous to improve on my part. For though we are not agreed in our views, yet, while our preliminary agreement to allow mutual freedom, and to exercise mutual candour, in expressing our sentiments, subsists, we may, and I hope shall be glad to hear from each other. It may seem to intimate I have a better opinion of myself than of you, that while I seem confident your freedom will not offend me, I feel now and then a fear, lest mine should prove displeasing to you. But friendship is a little suspicious when exercised with long silence, and a plain declaration of my sentiments has more than once put amiable and respectable persons to the full trial of their patience.

I now return your sermons: I thank you for the perusal: I see much in them that I approve, and nothing in them but what I formerly espoused. But in a course of years, a considerable alteration has taken place in my judgment and experience. I hope, yea, I

may boldly say, I am sure, not for the worse. Then I was seeking, and now through mercy I have found, the pearl of great price. It is both the prayer and the hope of my heart, that a day is coming when you shall make the same acknowledgment. From your letters and sermons, I am encouraged to address you in our Lord's words, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." I am persuaded the views you have received, will not suffer you to remain where you are.—But fidelity obliges me to add, "Yet one thing thou lackest." That "one thing" I trust the Lord will both show you, and bestow upon you, in his due time. You speak somewhere of "atoning for disobedience by repentance." Ah! my dear sir, when we are brought to estimate our disobedience, by comparing it with such a sense of the majesty, holiness, and authority of God, and the spirituality, extent, and sanction of his holy law, as he, and he only, can impress upon the heart of a sinner, we shall be convinced that nothing but the blood of the Son of God can atone for the smallest instance of disobedience.

I intimated in my letter from London, one defect of your scheme, which will probably be the first to engage your notice. I am sure you have a desire to be useful to the souls of men, to be an instrument of reclaiming them from that course of open wickedness, or lifeless formality, in which you see them en-

slaved : and, in a word, to prevail with them to live soberly, righteously, and godly, according to the just and comprehensive sense you have given of those words in your sermon on Tit. ii. 11, 12. Now, inward experience, and a pretty extensive observation of what passes abroad, have so perfectly convinced me there is but one mode of preaching which the Holy Spirit owns to the producing of these effects, that I am not afraid to pronounce confidently, you will not have the desires of your heart gratified upon your present plan : the people will give you a hearing, and remain just as they are, till the Lord leads you to speak to them as criminals condemned already, and whose first essential step it is, to seek forgiveness by the blood of Jesus, and a change of heart and state by his grace, before they can bring forth any fruit acceptable to God.

As I have little time for writing, and little hope of succeeding in a way of argumentation, I have substituted, instead of a long letter, the heads of some sermons I preached nine or ten years ago, on our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus. However, when I have heard that you are well, and that you are still disposed to correspond with me, I shall be ready to give a more particular answer to the subjects you pointed out to me in the letter you favoured me with the day before I left London. I pray God to bless you

in all your ways, and beg you to believe, that I am, with sincerity, &c.



LETTER VI.

OCTOBER 28.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—It never entered my pericranium, that you expected I should fully and directly answer your letter while I was in London; and yet you reasonably might, as you knew nothing of my engagements: but indeed it was impracticable; I could only send you a hasty line, as a token that I remembered you. I informed you, when I returned, that I was just going out again. Since I came home the second time, I have been engrossed by things that would admit of no delay; and, at length, not having so much as a note from you, I thought I would wait till I heard further. But, from first to last it was my intention, and I think, my promise, to answer in the manner you proposed as soon as I could. And even now I must beg a little longer time. Believe me, that as the wise and good providence of God brought us together, without any expectation of mine, I will do all in my power to preserve the connexion, and particularly by giving my thoughts on such questions as you propose. And though to consider your questions in the manner you wish, and to

point out the agreement of detached texts (as they occur) with my views, seems, in prospect, to require a volume rather than a sheet, yet I am not discouraged; only I beg you to make allowance for other things, and to be assured, that before I had the pleasure of corresponding with you, I had very little spare time. Expect then the best satisfaction I am able to give you, as soon as possible. To prepare the way, I will try hard for a little leisure, to give you a few thoughts upon yours, which came last night.

You complain that I have hitherto disappointed your expectations. If you have preserved my first papers, I believe you will find, that I apprized you this might probably be the event, and certainly must, unless it should please God to make what I should write a means of giving you the same views with myself. I only proposed, as a witness, to bear a simple testimony to what I have seen and known. So far as you believe me sincere and unwilling to impose upon you, I thought you might admit, there was perhaps some weight in what I advanced, though for the present, you could not see things in the same light. And if you allowed a possibility, that my changing the sentiments which I once held in common with yourself, might be upon sufficient grounds, you would, as I trust you do, wait upon the great Teacher for his instruction; otherwise, I did not expect to convince you, nor do I yet, only I am

in all your ways, and beg you to believe, that I am, with sincerity, &c.

LETTER VI.

OCTOBER 28.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—It never entered my pericranium, that you expected I should fully and directly answer your letter while I was in London; and yet you reasonably might, as you knew nothing of my engagements: but indeed it was impracticable; I could only send you a hasty line, as a token that I remembered you. I informed you, when I returned, that I was just going out again. Since I came home the second time, I have been engrossed by things that would admit of no delay; and, at length, not having so much as a note from you, I thought I would wait till I heard further. But, from first to last it was my intention, and I think, my promise, to answer in the manner you proposed as soon as I could. And even now I must beg a little longer time. Believe me, that as the wise and good providence of God brought us together, without any expectation of mine, I will do all in my power to preserve the connexion, and particularly by giving my thoughts on such questions as you propose. And though to consider your questions in the manner you wish, and to

point out the agreement of detached texts (as they occur) with my views, seems, in prospect, to require a volume rather than a sheet, yet I am not discouraged; only I beg you to make allowance for other things, and to be assured, that before I had the pleasure of corresponding with you, I had very little spare time. Expect then the best satisfaction I am able to give you, as soon as possible. To prepare the way, I will try hard for a little leisure, to give you a few thoughts upon yours, which came last night.

You complain that I have hitherto disappointed your expectations. If you have preserved my first papers, I believe you will find, that I apprized you this might probably be the event, and certainly must, unless it should please God to make what I should write a means of giving you the same views with myself. I only proposed, as a witness, to bear a simple testimony to what I have seen and known. So far as you believe me sincere and unwilling to impose upon you, I thought you might admit, there was perhaps some weight in what I advanced, though for the present, you could not see things in the same light. And if you allowed a possibility, that my changing the sentiments which I once held in common with yourself, might be upon sufficient grounds, you would, as I trust you do, wait upon the great Teacher for his instruction; otherwise, I did not expect to convince you, nor do I yet, only I am

glad to put myself in his hands as an instrument.

You quite misunderstood what I spoke of the light and influence of the Spirit of God. He reveals to me no new truths, but has only shown me the meaning of his own written word; nor is this light a particular revelation; it is common to all who are born again. And thus, though you and I cannot fully agree about it, yet I almost daily meet with persons from the east, west, north, and south, and, though I never saw them before, I find we understand each other at once. This (as you bid me be explicit) is the one thing which I think you at present lack. And I limited my expression to one thing, because it is our Lord's expression, and because that one thing includes many. As I said before, I cannot give it you; but the Lord can: and from the desire he has raised in your heart, I have a warm hope that he will. You place the whole stress of your inquiries upon reason: I am far from discarding reason, when it is enlightened and sanctified; but spiritual things must be spiritually discerned, and can be received and discerned no other way; for to our natural reason they are foolishness. 1 Cor. ii. 14. 15; Matt. xi. 25. This certain something I can no more describe to those who have not experienced it, than I could describe the taste of a pine apple to a person who had never seen one. But Scriptural proofs

might be adduced in abundance, yet not so as to give a solid conviction of it, till we actually experience it. Thus it was with my friend, whose case I sent you. When God gave him the key, as he expressed it, then the Scriptures were unlocked. His wishing himself a deist sometime before, was not from any libertine exceptions he made to the precepts of the Gospel, but from the perplexing embarrassments he had found, by endeavouring to understand the doctrines by dint of reason, though reason in him was as strong and penetrating as in most men I ever met with. Upon your present plan, how can I hope to satisfy you, though even Paul asserts it, that the carnal mind is enmity against God? You will readily agree with me to the proposition as it stands in Paul's words; but I think you will not so readily assent to what I have no more doubt than of my own existence, is the sense of it: That the heart of man, of any man, every man, however apparently amiable in his outward conduct, however benevolent to his fellow-creatures, however abundant and zealous in his devotions, is by nature enmity against God; not, indeed, against the idea he himself forms of God, but against the character which God has revealed of himself in the Scriptures. Man is an enemy to the justice, sovereignty, and law of God, and to the alone method of salvation he has appointed in the Gospel by faith only: by such a faith, as it is no more

in his power to contribute to the production of in himself, than he can contribute to raising the dead, or making a world. Whatever is of the flesh is flesh, and can rise no higher than its principles; but the Lord could convince you of this by a glance of thought.

But I must break off, for want both of room and time. Let me remind you of our agreement, to use and to allow the greatest freedom, and not to be offended with what is meant well on either side. Something in your last letter made me apprehensive you were a little displeas'd with me. He that knows my heart knows that I wish you well as my own soul.

The expression, of atoning for disobedience by repentance, was in one of your sermons. I considered it as unguarded; but on my view of things, it were in a manner impossible that I could use that expression, though, perhaps, too often unguarded myself. I am, &c.



LETTER VII.

NOVEMBER 17, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND:—At length I take up your favour of August 14, with design to give it a more explicit answer. My delaying hitherto has been unavoidable; I am

sorry to have your patience put to so long a trial, and should be more sorry, but that I consider, that in my former papers, sermons, Omicron's letters, &c., you already possess the whole (in substance) of what I have to offer. My present part is but *actum agere*, to repeat what I have elsewhere expressed, only with some variety and enlargement. You yourself well state the situation of our debate, when you say, "Nor in truth do you offer any arguments to convince me, nor does it seem very consistent on your grounds so to do. And if this important change is to be brought about by the intervention of some extraordinary impulse of the Holy Spirit, and cannot be brought about without it, I do not see any thing further that I have to do, than to keep my mind as much unbiassed as I can, and to wait and pray for it." I think my letter from London was to the purport of these your own words, though you seemed dissatisfied with it. While we see through a different medium, it will be easy for you to answer every text I might adduce in support of my sentiments, as you have those I have already brought, "that you understand them otherwise." In order to support my sense of one text, I should perhaps quote and argue from twenty more, and still "you would understand them otherwise." The life of man, yea, of Methuselah, would hardly suffice to prove, object, and defend, all that might be alleged on both sides in this way;

and at last we should leave off as we began, more fully confirmed in our own opinions, unless the Lord, by his Holy Spirit, should be pleased to show the person who maintained the wrong side of the argument where his mistake lay. However, I mean to take some notice of your queries as they offer themselves.

The first which occurs is complicated. The substance I think is, whether such belief and aims as you possess, will stand you in no stead unless you likewise believe grace irresistible, predestination absolute, faith in supernatural impulses, &c.? You may have observed, I have several times waived speaking about predestination or election, not that I am ashamed of the doctrine; because, if it be indeed absurd, shocking, and unjust, the blame will not deservedly fall upon me, for I did not invent it, but upon the Scriptures, where I am sure it is laid down in as plain terms, as that God created the heavens and the earth. I own I cannot but wonder, that persons professing any reverence for the Bible, should so openly and strongly declare their abhorrence of what the Bible so expressly teaches; namely, that there is a discrimination of persons by the grace and good pleasure of God, where by nature there is no difference; and that all things respecting the salvation of these persons is infallibly secured by a divine predestination.

I do not offer this as a rational doctrine,

though it be highly so to me ; but it is Scriptural, or else the Scriptures are a mere nose of wax, and without a determinate meaning. What ingenuity is needful to interpret many passages in a sense more favourable to our natural prejudices against God's sovereignty ! Matt. xi. 25, 26, and xiii. 10—17 ; Mark xiii. 20, 22 ; John xvii. *passim* ; John x. 26 ; Rom. viii. 28—30, and ix. 13—24, and xi. 7 ; Eph. i. 4, 5 ; 1 Pet. i. 2. Were I fond of disputing, as I am not, I think I could put a close reasoner hard to it, to maintain the truth of Scripture prophecies, or the belief of a particular providence, unless he would admit a divine predestination of causes and events as the grounds of his arguments. However, as I said, I have chosen to waive the point ; because, however true and necessary in itself, the knowledge and comprehension of it is not necessary to the being of a true Christian, though I can hardly conceive he can be an established consistent believer without it. This doctrine is not the turning point between you and me ; the nature of justification, and the method of a sinner's acceptance with God, are of much more immediate importance ; and therefore, if I am to speak plainly, I must say, that I look upon your present sentiments, attainments, and advances, as you describe them, to constitute that kind of gain the apostle speaks of, and concerning which I hope you will one day be of his mind, and be glad to account it all

loss, that you may win Christ, and be found in him, "not having your own righteousness, which is of the law. but the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 4, 7—10. For, as you tell me, you never remember a time when you were not conscious before God of great unworthiness, and intervals of earnest endeavours to serve him, though not with the same success, yet something in the same way, as at present; this is but saying, in other words, you never remember a time when old things passed away, and all things became new; and yet the apostle insists much upon this, 2 Cor. iv. 6, and v. 17. The convictions of natural conscience, and those which are wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, are different, not only in degree, but in kind; the light of a glow-worm and of the sun do not more essentially differ. The former are partial and superficial, leave us in possession of a supposed power of our own, are pacified by some appearances of an outward change, and make us no further sensible of the necessity of a Saviour, than to make our doings and duties (if I may so express myself) full weight, which perhaps might otherwise be a little deficient when brought to the balance of the sanctuary. But truly spiritual convictions give us far other views of sin; they lead us to a deep and awful consideration of the root of our total absolute depravity, and our utter apostasy from God by which we are as incapable

of doing good, as a dead man is of performing the functions of life. They lead us to the rule and standard, the strict, holy, inflexible law of God, which reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart; requires perfect, universal, persevering obedience; denounces a curse upon every failure, (Gal. iii. 10,) and affords neither place nor strength for repentance. Thus they sweep away every hope and refuge we had before, and fix upon us a sense of guilt and condemnation, from which there is no relief, till we can look to Jesus, as the wounded Israelites did to the brazen serpent; which was not to give efficacy to medicines and plasters of their own application, but to heal them completely of itself by looking at it. John iii. 14, 15, and vi. 40; Isaiah xliii. 22.

You wish me to explain my distinction between faith and rational assent; and though I know no two things in the world more clearly distinct in themselves, or more expressly distinguished in Scripture, yet I fear I may not easily make it appear to you. You allow faith, in your sense, to be the gift of God; but in my sense, it is likewise wrought by the operation of God, Col. ii. 12, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Ephes. i. 19, "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe according to the working of his

mighty power;" the same energy of the power of his strength, by which the dead body of Jesus was raised from the dead. Can these strong expressions intend no more than a rational assent, such as we give to a proposition in Euclid? I believe fallen reason is, of itself, utterly incapable even of assenting to the great truths of revelation; it may assent to the terms in which they are proposed, but it must put its own interpretation upon them, or it would despise them. The natural man can neither receive nor discern the things of God; and if any one would be wise, the apostle's first advice to him is, Let him become a fool, that he may be wise; for the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God.

Indeed, when the heart is changed, and the mind enlightened, then reason is sanctified, and, if I may so say, baptized, renounces its curious disquisitions, and is content humbly to tread in the path of revelation. This is one difference; assent may be the act of our natural reason; faith is the effect of immediate almighty power. Another difference is, faith is always efficacious, "it worketh by love;" whereas, assent is often given where it has little or no influence upon the conduct. Thus, for instance, every one will assent to this truth, All men are mortal. Yet the greatest part of mankind, though they readily assent to the proposition, and it would be highly irrational to do otherwise, live as they

might do if the reverse were true. But they who have divine faith feel, as well as say, they are pilgrims and sojourners upon earth. Again, faith gives peace of conscience, access to God, and a sure evidence and subsistence of things not seen, (Rom. v. 1, 2; Heb. xi. 1;) whereas, a calm dispassionate reasoner may be compelled to assent to the external arguments in favour of Christianity, and yet remain a total stranger to that communion with God, that spirit of adoption, that foretaste of glory, which is the privilege and portion of believers. So, likewise, faith overcomes the world, which rational assent will not do. Witness the lives and tempers of thousands, who yet would be affronted, if their assent to the Gospel should be questioned. To sum up all in a word, "He that believes shall be saved." But surely many who give a rational assent to the Gospel live and die in those sins which exclude from the kingdom of God, Gal. v. 19—21. Faith is the effect of a principle of new life implanted in the soul, that was before dead in trespasses and sins; and it qualifies not only for obeying the Saviour's precepts, but chiefly and primarily for receiving from and rejoicing in his fulness, admiring his love, his work, his person, his glory, his advocacy. It makes Christ precious, enthrones him in the heart, presents him as the most delightful object to our meditations; as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and strength; our root, head, life,

shepherd, and husband. These are all Scriptural expressions and images, setting forth, so far as words can declare, what Jesus is in himself and to his believing people. But how cold is the comment, which rational assent puts upon very many passages wherein the apostle Paul endeavours, but in vain, to express the fulness of his heart upon this subject. A most valued friend of mine, a clergyman, now living, had, for many years, given a rational assent to the Gospel. He laboured with much earnestness upon your plan, was very exemplary in his whole conduct, preached almost incessantly (two or three times every day in the week for years,) having a parish in the remote parts of Yorkshire, of great extent, and containing five or six different hamlets at some distance from each other. He succeeded likewise with his people, so far as to break them off from outward irregularities; and was mentioned in a letter to the Society for Propagating the Gospel, which I have seen in print, as the most perfect example of a parish priest which this nation, or perhaps, this age, has produced. Thus he went on for many years teaching his people what he knew, for he could teach them no more. He lived in such retirement and recess, that he was unacquainted with the persons and principles of any who are now branded as enthusiasts and Methodists. One day reading Ephes. iii., in his Greek Testament, his thoughts were stopped by the

word *ανεξιχνιαστον*, “unsearchable,” in verse 8 He was struck, and led to think with himself, to this purpose:—“The apostle, when speaking of the love and riches of Christ, uses remarkable expressions; he speaks of heights, depths, and lengths, and breadths, and unsearchables, where I seem to find every thing plain, easy, and rational. He finds mysteries where I can perceive none. Surely, though I use the words gospel, faith, and grace with him, my ideas of them must be different from his.” This led him to a close examination of all his epistles, and, by the blessing of God, brought on a total change in his views and preaching. He no longer set his people to keep a law of faith, to trust in their sincerity and endeavours, upon some general hope that Christ would help them out where they came short; but he preached Christ himself, as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. He felt himself, and laboured to convince others, that there is no hope for a sinner, but merely in the blood of Jesus, and no possibility of his doing any works acceptable to God, till he himself be first made accepted in the Beloved. Nor did he labour in vain. Now his preaching effected not only an outward reformation, but a real change of heart, in very many of his hearers. The word was received, as Paul expresses it, not with a rational assent only, but with demonstration and power in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;

and their endeavours to observe the gospel precepts were abundantly more extensive, uniform, and successful, when they were brought to say, with the apostle, "I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God."

Such a change of views and sentiments, I pray God, my friend may experience. These things may appear uncouth to you at present, as they have done to many, who now bless God for showing them what their reason could never have taught them. My divinity is unfashionable enough at present, but it was not so always ; you will find few books written from the era of the Reformation till a little before Laud's time, that set forth any other. There were few pulpits till after the Restoration from which any other was heard. A lamentable change has indeed since taken place ; but God has not left himself without witnesses. You think, though I disclaim infallibility, I arrogate too much, in speaking with so much certainty. I am fallible, indeed ; but I am sure of the main points of doctrine I hold. I am not in the least doubt, whether salvation be of faith or of works ; whether faith be of our own power, or of God's operation ; whether Christ's obedience or our own be the just ground of our hope ; whether a man can truly call Jesus Lord, but by the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

I have no more hesitation about these points, than I should have, were I asked, whether it was God or man that created the heavens and the earth? Besides, as I have more than once observed, your sentiments were once my own; so that I, who have travelled both roads, may have, perhaps, some stronger reason to determine me which is the right, than you can have, who have only travelled one.

Your two sheets may lead me to write as many quires, if I do not check myself. I now come to the two queries you propose, the solution of which, you think, will clearly mark the difference of our sentiments. The substance of them is, 1st, whether I think any sinner ever perished in his sins, (to whom the Gospel has been preached,) because God refused to supply him with such a proportion of his assistance as was absolutely necessary to his believing and repenting, or without his having previously rejected the incitements of his Holy Spirit? A full answer to this would require a sheet. But briefly, I believe, that all mankind being corrupt and guilty before God, he might, without impeachment to his justice, have left them all to perish, as we are assured he did the fallen angels. But he was pleased to show mercy, and mercy must be free. If the sinner has any claim to it, so far it is justice not mercy. He who is to be our Judge assures us, that few find the gate that leadeth to life, while many throng the road to destruction. Your question seems to imply,

that you think God either did make salvation equally open to all, or that it would have been more becoming his goodness to have done so.

But he is the potter, we are the clay ; his ways and thoughts are above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth. The Judge of all the earth will do right. He has appointed a day, when he will manifest, to the conviction of all, that he has done right. Till then, I hold it best to take things upon his word, and not too rashly determine what it becomes Jehovah to do. Instead of saying what I think, let it suffice to remind you of what Paul thought, Rom. ix. 15—21. But further, I say, that unless mercy were afforded to those who are saved, in a way peculiar to themselves, and which is not afforded to those who perish, I believe no one soul could be saved. For I believe, fallen man, universally considered as such, is as incapable of doing the least thing towards his salvation till prevented by the grace of God (as our Article speaks,) as a dead body is of restoring itself to life. Whatever difference takes place between men in this respect, is of grace, that is, of God, undeserved. Yea, his first approaches to our hearts are undesired too ; for till he seeks us, we cannot, we will not, seek him, Psalm cx. 3. It is in the day of his power, and not before, his people are made willing. But I believe, where the gospel is preached, they who do perish, do wil-

fully resist the light, and choose and cleave to darkness, and stifle the convictions which the truths of God, when his true gospel is indeed preached, will, in one degree or other, force upon their minds. The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, the love of other things, the violence of sinful appetites, their prejudices, pride, and self-righteousness, either prevent the reception, or choke the growth, of the good seed: thus their own sin and obstinacy is the proper cause of their destruction; they will not come to Christ, that they may have life. At the same time, it is true that they cannot, unless they are supernaturally drawn of God, John v. 40, vi. 44. They will not, and they cannot come. Both are equally true, and they are consistent. For a man's *cannot* is not a natural, but a moral inability: not an impossibility in the nature of things, as it is for me to walk upon the water, or to fly in the air; but such an inability as, instead of extenuating, does exceedingly enhance and aggravate his guilt. He is so blinded by Satan, so alienated from God by nature and wicked works, so given up to sin, so averse from that way of salvation, which is contrary to his pride and natural wisdom, that he will not embrace it, or seek after it; and therefore, he cannot, till the grace of God powerfully enlightens his mind, and overcomes his obstacles. But this brings me to your second query:

2. Do I think that God, in the ordinary course of his providence, grants this assistance in an irresistible manner, or effects faith and conversion, with the sinner's own hearty consent and concurrence? I rather choose to term grace invincible than irresistible: for it is too often resisted even by those who believe; but because it is invincible, it triumphs over all resistance when He is pleased to bestow it. For the rest, I believe no sinner is converted without his own hearty will and concurrence. But he is not willing till he is made so. Why does he at all refuse? Because he is insensible of his state; because he knows not the evil of sin, the strictness of the law, the majesty of God whom he has offended, nor the total apostasy of his heart; because he is blind to eternity, and ignorant of the excellency of Christ; because he is comparatively whole, and sees not his need of this great physician; because he relies upon his own wisdom, power, and supposed righteousness. Now, in this state of things, when God comes with a purpose of mercy, he begins by convincing the person of sin, judgment, and righteousness, causes him to feel and know that he is a lost, condemned, helpless creature, and then discovers to him the necessity, sufficiency, and willingness, of Christ to save them that are ready to perish, without money or price, without doing or deservings. Then he sees faith to be very different from a

rational assent, finds that nothing but the power of God can produce a well-grounded hope in the heart of a convinced sinner; therefore, looks to Jesus, who is the author and finisher of faith, to enable him to believe. For this he waits in what we call the means of grace; he prays, he reads the word, he thirsts for God, as the hart pants for the water brooks; and though, perhaps, for a while he is distressed with many doubts and fears, he is encouraged to wait on, because Jesus has said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." The obstinacy of the will remains while the understanding is dark, and ceases when that is enlightened. Suppose a man walking in the dark, where there are pits and precipices of which he is not aware. You are sensible of his danger, and call after him: but he thinks he knows better than you, refuses your advice, and is perhaps angry with you for your importunity. He sees no danger, therefore will not be persuaded there is any; but if you go with a light, get before him, and show him plainly that if he takes another step he falls beyond the power of recovery; then he will stop of his own accord, blame himself for not minding you before, and be ready to comply with your further directions. In either case man's will acts with equal freedom; the difference of his conduct arises from conviction. Something like this is the case of our spiritual concerns. Sinners are called and warned by

the word; but they are wise in their own eyes, and take but little notice till the Lord gives them light, which he is not bound to give to any, and therefore, cannot be bound to give to all. They who have it have reason to be thankful, and subscribe to the apostle's words, "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

I have not yet half done with the first sheet: I shall consider the rest at leisure, but send this as a specimen of my willingness to clear my sentiments to you as far as I can. Unless it should please God to make what I offer satisfactory, I well know before hand what objections and answers will occur to you, for these points have been often debated; and, after a course of twenty-seven years, in which religion has been the chief object of my thoughts and inquiries, I am not entirely a stranger to what can be offered on either side. What I write, I write simply and in love, beseeching Him who alone can set a seal to his own truth to guide you and bless you. This letter has been more than a week in hand: I have been called from it, I suppose, ten times, frequently in the middle of a period or a line. My leisure, which before was small, is now reduced almost to a nothing. But I am desirous to keep up my correspondence with you, because I feel an affectionate interest in you, and because it pleased God to put it into your heart to ap-

ply to me. You cannot think how your first letter struck me : it was so unexpected, and seemed so improbable that you should open your mind to me, I immediately conceived a hope it would prove for good. Nor am I yet discouraged.

When you have leisure and inclination, write ; I shall always be glad to hear from you, and I will proceed in answering what I have already by me as fast as I can. But I have many letters now waiting for answers, which must be attended to.

I recommend you to the blessing and care of the great Shepherd, and remain, &c.



LETTER VIII.

DECEMBER 8, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Are you willing I should still call you so, or are you quite weary of me? Your silence makes me suspect the latter. However, it is my part to fulfil my promise, and then leave the event to God. As I have but an imperfect remembrance of what I have already written, I may be liable to some repetitions. I cannot stay to comment upon every line in your letter, but I proceed to notice such passages as seem most to affect the subject in debate. When you speak of the Scriptures maintaining one consistent sense, which, if the word of God, it

certainly must do, you say you read and understand it in this one consistent sense ; nay, you cannot remember the time when you did not. It is otherwise with me and with multitudes ; we remember when it was a sealed book, and we are sure it would have been so still, had not the Holy Spirit opened our understandings. But when you add, ‘ though I pretend not to understand the whole, yet what I do understand appears perfectly consistent,’ I know not how far this exception may extend, for perhaps the reason why you allow you do not understand some parts, is because you cannot make them consistent with the sense you put upon other parts. You quote my words, “ That when we are conscious of our depravity, reasoning stands us in no stead.” Undoubtedly reason always will stand rational creatures in some stead ; but my meaning is, that when we are deeply convinced of sin, all our former reasonings upon the ways of God, while we made our conceptions the standard by which we judge what is befitting him to do, as if he were altogether such an one as ourselves, — all these cobweb reasonings are swept away, and we submit to his *αυτος εφη* without reasoning, though not without reason.* For we have the strongest reason imaginable to acknowledge ourselves vile and lost, without righteousness and strength, when we actually feel ourselves to be so. You speak of the gospel terms of justification. This term

is faith. Mark xvi. 16, Acts xiii. 39. The gospel propounds, admits no other term. But this faith, as I endeavoured to show in my former letter, is very different from rational assent. You speak likewise, of the law of faith, by which, if you mean what some call the remedial law, which we are to obey as well as we can, and such obedience, together with our faith, will entitle us to acceptance with God, I am persuaded the Scriptures speak of no such thing. Grace and works of any kind, in the point of acceptance with God, are mentioned by the apostle not only as opposites or contraries, but as absolutely contradictory to each other, like fire and water, light and darkness; so that the affirmation of one is the denial of the other. Rom. iv. 5, and xi. 6. God justifies freely, justifies the ungodly, and him that worketh not. Though justifying faith be, indeed, an active principle, it worketh by love, yet not for acceptance. Those whom the apostle exhorts "to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling," he considers as justified already; for he considers them as believers, in whom he supposed God had already begun a good work; and if so, was confident he would accomplish it, Phil. i. 6. To them, the consideration that God, who dwells in the heart of believers, wrought in them to will and to do, was a powerful motive and encouragement to them to work, that is, to give all diligence in his appointed

means, as a right sense of the sin that dwelleth in us, and the snares and temptations around us, will teach us still to work with fear and trembling. You suppose a difference between Christians (so called) who are devoted to God in baptism, and those who in the first ages were converted from abominable superstitions and idolatrous vices. It is true in Christian countries we do not worship heathen divinities by that name, and this is the principal difference I can find. Neither reason nor observation will allow me to think, that human nature is a whit better now than it was in the apostle's time. I know no kinds or degrees of wickedness which prevailed among heathens which are not prevalent among nominal Christians, who have perhaps been baptized in their infancy; and therefore, as the streams in the life are equally worldly, sensual, devilish, I doubt not but the fountain of the heart is equally polluted and poisonous; and that it is as true, as in the days of Christ and his apostles, that unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. You sent me a sermon upon the new birth, or regeneration, and you have several of mine on the same subject. I wish you to compare them with each other, and with Scripture; and I pray God to show you wherein the difference consists, and on which side the truth lies.

When you desire me to reconcile God's being the author of sin with his justice, you

show that you misunderstood the whole train of my sentiments ; for I am persuaded you would not misrepresent them. It is easy to charge harsh consequences, which I neither allow, nor indeed do they follow from my sentiments. God cannot be the author of sin in that sense you would fix upon me ; but is it possible that upon your plan you find no difficulty in what the Scriptures teach us upon this subject ? I conceive that those who were concerned in the death of Christ were very great sinners, and that in nailing him to the cross they committed atrocious wickedness ; yet, if the apostle may be believed, all this was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, Acts ii. 23 ; and they did no more than what his hand and purpose had determined should be done, chap. iv. 28. And you will observe that this wicked act, (wicked with respect to the perpetrators) was not only permitted, but foreordained in the strongest and most absolute sense of the word. The glory of God and the salvation of men depended upon its being done, and just in that manner, and, with all those circumstances which actually took place, and yet Judas and the rest acted freely, and their wickedness was properly their own. Now, my friend, the arguments which satisfy you that the Scriptures do not represent God as the author of this sin in this appointment, will plead for me at the same time ; and when you think you easily

overcome me by asking, "Can God be the author of sin?" your imputation falls as directly upon the word of God himself. God is no more the author of sin than the sun is the cause of ice; but it is in the nature of water to congeal into ice when the sun's influence is suspended to a certain degree. So there is sin enough in the hearts of men to make the earth the very image of hell, and to prove that men are no better than incarnate devils, were he to suspend his influence and restraint. Sometimes, and in some instances, he is pleased to suspend it considerably, and so far as he does, human nature quickly appears in its true colours. Objections of this kind have been repeated and refuted before either you or I were born; and the apostle evidently supposes they would be urged against the doctrine, when he obviates the question, "Why doth he yet find fault? who hath resisted his will?" To which he gives no other answer than by referring it to God's sovereignty, and the power which a potter has over the clay. I think I have in a former letter made some reply to the charge of positiveness in my own opinion. I acknowledge that I am fallible, yet I must again lay claim to a certainty about the way of salvation. I am as sure of some things as of my own existence: I should be so if there was no human creature upon earth but myself. However, my sentiments are confirmed by the suffrages of thousands who have lived

before me, of many with whom I have personally conversed in different places and circumstances, unknown to each other; yet all have received the same views, because taught by the same Spirit. And I have likewise been greatly confirmed by the testimony of many with whom I have conversed in their dying hours. I have seen them rejoicing in the prospect of death, free from fears, breathing the air of immortality; heartily disclaiming their duties and performances; acknowledging that their best actions were attended with evil sufficient to condemn them; renouncing every shadow of hope, but what they derived from the blood of Christ, as the sole cause of their acceptance; yet triumphing in him over every enemy and fear, and as sure of heaven as if they were already there. And such were the apostle's hopes, wholly founded on knowing whom he had believed, and his persuasion of *his* ability to deep that which he had committed unto Him. This is faith, a renouncing of every thing we are apt to call our own, and relying wholly upon the blood, righteousness, and intercession of Jesus. However, I cannot communicate this my certainty to you; I only tell you there is such a thing, in hopes, if you do not think I wilfully lie both to God and man, you will be earnest to seek it from him who bestowed it on me, and who will bestow it upon all who will sin

cerely apply to him, and patiently wait upon him for it.

I cannot but wonder, that while you profess to believe the depravity of human nature, you should speak of good qualities inherent in it. The word of God describes it as evil, only evil, and that continually. That there are such qualities as Stoics and infidels call virtue, I allow. God has not left man destitute of such dispositions as are necessary to the peace of society; but I deny there is any moral goodness in them, unless they are founded in a supreme love to God, have his glory for their aim, and are produced by faith in Jesus Christ. A man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned, in zeal for the truth, and yet be a mere nothing, a tinkling cymbal, in the sight of him who seeth not as man seeth, but judgeth the heart. Many infidels and avowed enemies to the grace and Gospel of Christ, have made a fair show of what the world call virtue; but Christian virtue is grace, the effect of a new nature and new life; and works thus wrought in God, are as different from the faint, partial imitations of them, which fallen nature is capable of producing, as a living man is from a statue. A statue may express the features and lineaments of the person whom it represents, but there is no life.

Your comment on the seventh to the Romans, latter part, contradicts my feelings.

You are either of a different make and nature from me, or else you are not rightly apprized of your own state, if you do not find the apostle's complaint very suitable to yourself. I believe it applicable to the most holy Christian upon earth. But controversies of this kind are worn thread-bare. When you speak of the spiritual part of a natural man, it sounds to me like the living part of a dead man, or the seeing part of a blind man. Paul tells me, that the natural man, whatever his spiritual part may be, can neither receive nor discern the things of God. What the apostle speaks of himself (Rom. vii.) is no more, when rightly understood, than what he affirms of all who are partakers of a spiritual life, or who are true believers, Gal. v. 17. The carnal natural mind is enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. When you subjoin, "Till it be set at liberty from the law of sin," you do not comment upon the text, but make an addition of your own, which the text will by no means bear. The carnal mind is enmity. An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity itself is incurable. This carnal mind, natural man, old man, flesh (for the expressions are all equivalent, and denote and include the heart of man as he is by nature,) may be crucified, must be mortified, but cannot be sanctified. All that is good and gracious, is the effect of a new creation, a supernatural principle, wrought in the heart by the gospel

of Christ, and the agency of his Spirit; and, till that is effected, the highest attainment, the finest qualifications in man, however they may exalt him in his own eyes, or recommend him to the notice of his fellow-worms, are but abomination in thy sight of God, Luke xvi. 15. The gospel is calculated and designed to stain the pride of human glory. It is provided, not for the wise and the righteous, for those who think they have good dispositions and good works to plead, but for the guilty, the helpless, the wretched, for those who are ready to perish; it fills the hungry with good things, but it sends the rich empty away. See Rev. iii. 17, 18.

You ask, If man can do nothing without an extraordinary impulse from on high, is he to sit still and careless? By no means—I am far from saying man can do nothing, though I believe he cannot open his own eyes, or give himself faith. I wish every man to abstain carefully from sinful company, and sinful actions, to read the Bible, to pray to God for his heavenly teaching. For this waiting upon God he has a moral ability; and if he persevere thus in seeking, the promise is sure, that he shall not seek in vain. But I would not have him mistake the means for the end; think himself good because he is preserved from gross vices and follies, or trust to his religious course of duties for acceptance, nor be satisfied till Christ be re-

vealed in him, formed within him, dwell in his heart by faith, and till he can say upon good grounds, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." I need not tell you, these are Scriptural expressions; I am persuaded, if they were not, they would be exploded by many as unintelligible jargon. True faith, my dear sir, unites the soul to Christ, and thereby gives access to God, and fills it with a peace passing understanding, a hope, a joy unspeakable and full of glory; teaches us that we are weak in ourselves, but enables us to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. To those who thus believe, Christ is precious, their beloved; they hear and know his voice: the very sound of his name gladdens their hearts, and he manifests himself to them as he does not to the world. Thus the Scriptures speak, thus the first Christians experienced; and this is precisely the language, which, in our days, is despised as enthusiasm and folly. For it is now as it was then, though these things are revealed to babes, and they are as sure of them as that they see the noon-day sun, they are hidden from the wise and prudent, till the Lord makes them willing to renounce their own wisdom, and to become fools, that they may be truly wise, 1 Cor. i. 18, 19; iii. 8; viii. 2. Attention to the education of children is an undoubted duty; and it is a mercy when it so far succeeds as to preserve

them from gross wickedness: but it will not change the heart. They who receive Christ are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, John i. 13.

If a man profess to love the Lord Jesus, I am willing to believe him, if he does not give me proof to the contrary; but I am sure, at the same time, no one can love him in the Scriptural sense, who does not know the need and the worth of a Saviour; in other words, who is not brought, as a ruined, helpless sinner, to live upon him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. They who love him thus will speak highly of him, and acknowledge that he is their all in all. And they who thus love him, and speak of him, will get little thanks for their pains in such a world as this: "All that live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution;" the world that hated him, will hate them. And though it is possible, by his grace to put to silence, in some measure, the ignorance of foolish men; and though his providence can protect his people, so that not a hair of their heads can be hurt without his permission, yet the world will show their teeth, if they are not suffered to bite. The apostles were accounted babblers, *ως περικαθαρματα του κοσμου και παντων περιψημα*. I need not point out to you the force of these expressions. We are no better than the apostles; nor have we reason to expect much better treatment, so far

as we walk in their steps. On the other hand, there is a sober, decent way of speaking of God, and goodness, and benevolence, and sobriety, which the world will bear well enough ; nay, we may say a little about Jesus Christ, as ready to make up the deficiencies of our honest and good endeavours, and this will not displease them. But if we preach him as the only foundation, lay open the horrid evils of the human heart, tell our hearers that they are dead in trespasses and sins, and have no better ground of hope in themselves than the vilest malefactors, in order to exalt the glory of Jesus, as saving those who are saved wholly and freely for his own name's sake ; if we tell the virtuous and decent, as well as the profligate, that unless they are born again, and made partakers of living faith, and count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, they cannot be saved, this the world cannot bear. We shall be called knaves or fools, uncharitable bigots, and twenty hard names. If you have met with nothing like this, I wish it may lead you to suspect whether you have yet received the right key to the doctrines of Christ : for depend upon it, the offence of the cross is not ceased.

I am grieved and surprised that you seem to take little notice of any thing in the account of my deceased friend, but his wishing himself to be a deist, and his having play-books about him in his illness. Your remark

on the other point shows that you are not much acquainted with the exercises of the human mind under certain circumstances. I believe I observed formerly, that it was not a libertine wish. Had you known him, you would have known one of the most amiable and unblemished characters. Few were more beloved and admired for an uniform course of integrity, moderation, and benevolence; but he was discouraged. He studied the Bible, believed it in general to be the word of God; but his wisdom, his strong turn for reasoning, stood so in his way, that he could get no solid comfort from it. He felt the vanity of the schemes proposed by many men admired in the world as teachers of divinity; and he felt the vanity likewise of his own. He was also a minister, and had a sincere design of doing good. He wished to reform the profligate, and comfort the afflicted by his preaching; but as he was not acquainted with that one kind of preaching which God owns to the edification of the hearers, he found he could do neither. A sense of disappointments of this kind distressed him. Finding in himself none of that peace which the Scriptures speak of, and none of the influence he hoped for attending his ministry, he was led sometimes to question the truth of the Scriptures. We have a spiritual enemy always near, to press upon a mind in this desponding situation: nor am I surprised that he should then wish himself a

deist; since, if there were any hope for a sinner but by faith in the blood of Jesus, he had as much of his own goodness to depend upon as most I have known. As for the rest, if you could see nothing admirable and wonderful in the clearness, the dignity, the spirituality of his expressions, after the Lord revealed the gospel to him, I can only say, I am sorry for it. This I know, that some persons of sense, taste, learning, and reason, and far enough from my sentiments, have been greatly struck with them. You say, a death-bed repentance is what you would be sorry to give any hope of. My dear friend, it is well for poor sinners that God's thoughts and ways are as much above men's, as the heavens are higher than the earth. We agreed to communicate our sentiments freely, and promised not to be offended with each other's freedom, if we could help it. I am afraid of offending you by a thought just now upon my mind, and yet I dare not in conscience suppress it. I must therefore venture to say, that I hope they who depend upon such a repentance as your scheme points out, will repent of their repentance itself upon their death bed at least, if not sooner. You and I perhaps, should have encouraged the fair-spoken young man who said he had kept all the commandments from his youth, and rather have left the thief upon the cross to perish like a villain as he lived. But Jesus thought

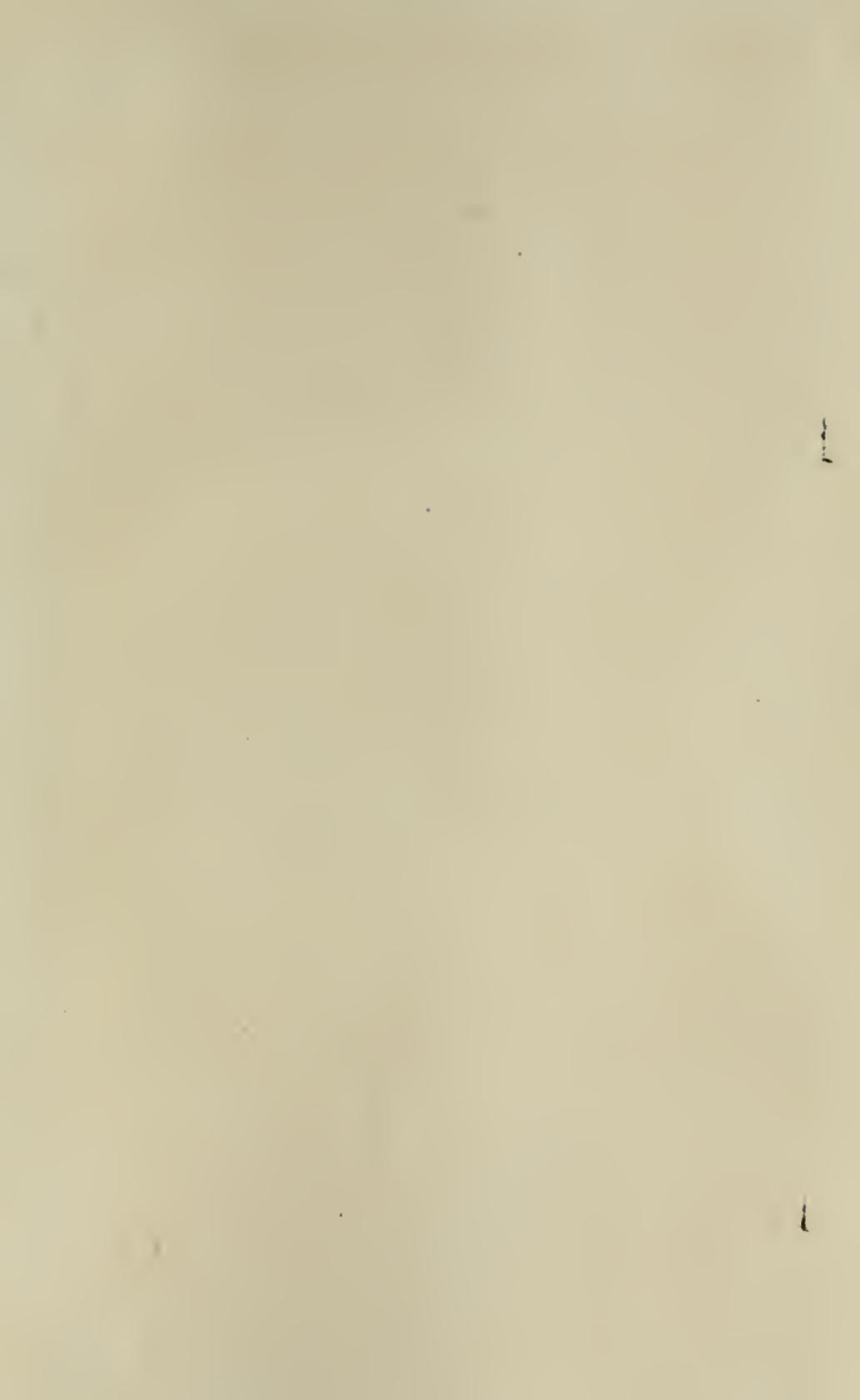
differently. I do not encourage sinners to defer their repentance to their death-beds. I press the necessity of a repentance this moment. But then I take care to tell them, that repentance is the gift of God; that Jesus is exalted to bestow it; and that all their endeavours that way, unless they seek to him for grace, will be vain as washing a blackamoor, and transient as washing a sow which will soon return to the mire again. I know the evil heart will abuse the grace of God; the apostle knew this likewise, Rom. iii. 8, and vi. 3. But this did not tempt him to suppress the glorious grace of the gospel, the power of Jesus to save to the uttermost, and his merciful promise, that whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. The repentance of a natural heart proceeding wholly from fear, like that of some malefactors, who are sorry, not that they have committed robbery or murder, but that they must be hanged for it; this undoubtedly is nothing worth, whether in time of health, or in a dying hour. But that *μετανοια*, that gracious change of heart, views, and dispositions, which always takes place when Jesus is made known to the soul as having died, that the sinner might live, and been wounded, that he might be healed; this, at whatever period God is pleased to afford and effect it by his Spirit, brings a sure and everlasting salvation with it.

Still I find I have not done: you ask my

exposition of the parables of the talents and pounds; but at present I can write no more. I have only just time to tell you, that when I begged your acceptance of Omicron, nothing was further from my expectation than a correspondence with you. The frank and kind manner in which you wrote presently won upon my heart. In the course of our letters upon subscription, I observed an integrity and disinterestedness in you, which endeared you to me still more. Since that, our debates have taken a much more interesting turn; I have considered it as a call, and an opportunity put in my hand, by the special providence of him who ruleth over all. I have embraced the occasion, to lay before you simply, and rather in a way of testimony than argumentation, what, in the main, I am sure is truth. I have done enough to discharge my conscience, but shall never think I do enough to answer the affection I bear you. I have done enough likewise to make you weary of my correspondence, unless it should please God to fix the subject deeply upon your mind, and make you attentive to the possibility and vast importance of a mistake in matters of everlasting concernment. I pray that the good Spirit of God may guide you into all truths. He only is the effectual teacher. I still retain a cheerful hope, that some things you cannot at present receive, will hereafter be the joy and comfort of your heart: but I know it

cannot be till the Lord's own time. I cannot promise to give such long answers as your letters require, to clear up every text that may be proposed, and to answer every objection that may be started; yet I shall be glad to change a letter now and then. At present, it remains with you whether our correspondence continues or not, as this is the third letter I have written since I heard from you, and therefore must be the last till I do. I should think what remains might be better settled *viva voce*; for which purpose I shall be glad to see you, or ready to wait on you when leisure will permit, and when I know it will be agreeable: but if (as life and all its affairs are precarious) we should never meet in this world, I pray God we may meet at the right hand of Jesus, in the great day when he shall come to gather up his jewels and to judge the world. There is an endless diversity of opinions in matters of religion; which of them are right and safe, and will lead to eternal glory, that day will show. I am still in a manner lost amidst more engagements than I have time to comply with, but I feel and know that I am, &c.

THE END.





3099

Scott, Thomas
Force of truth, ...

Relig
Theol
S

University of Toronto
Library

DO NOT
REMOVE
THE
CARD
FROM
THIS
POCKET

Acme Library Card Pocket
Under Pat. "Ref. Index File"
Made by LIBRARY BUREAU

