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No Protestant-Popery.

A
L E T T E R
O F
A D M O N I T I O N,
T O T H E
Rev. Mr. SAMUEL PIKE.

O C C A S I O N E D

By some very offensive passages in his Assembly's Catechism, analized, explained, &c. which are animadverted upon, and the sole Authority of the Sacred Scriptures defended,

By C A L E B F L E M I N G.
Author of the Scale of Principles, &c.

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Lev. xix. 17.

L O N D O N :

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No Protestant-Popery.

A
L E T T E R
O F
A D M O N I T I O N, &c.

S I R,

HOWEVER others may be inclined to think I have taken too much notice of you, a charge of over-officiouſneſs ſhou'd not lie in your breaſt againſt me, for reaſons too notorious in your Aſſemblies Catechiſm, analyzed, &c. There, you diſcover great need of friendly admonition, and to neglect you, wou'd be cenſured by that divine law. *Lev. xix. 17.* which I have cited at large in my title page.

If you flattered yourſelf, as being more innocent and ſafe, becauſe of the recommendation

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of

of *five* of your reverend Fathers, you will find your self mistaken.---

Before I begin with your Catechism and remarks, I wou'd say a few things on your *title* and *recommendation*.

Your *title* appears to be extremely impertinent, *a form of sound words*. a title copied from St. Paul's description of the Gospel System. 2. *Tim.* i. 13. no way worthy of, or suitable to a System of merely human opinion and interpretation.

The recommendation runs thus, "*We cannot but thankfully acknowledge the good hand of divine providence in preserving to us that valuable summary of scripture doctrine, the assembly's shorter Catechism, which we take to be the most compendious body of divinity we know of in any language: and also in raising up some from time to time to withstand the various oppositions made to it: and we chearfully recommend it, together with these excellent remarks upon it, to the use of all Christian families, and to the blessing of God.*" (Signed)

THOMAS BRADBURY,

JOHN GUISE,

THOMAS HALL,

RICHARD RAWLIN,

WILLIAM KING.

Has

Has not this recommendation the air of being apostolical? and would they not affix, to this Catechism, the idea of a sacred, divine book, a system of infallible truth; or, of pure, unadulterated scripture-doctrine? And do they not know, that, at best, it can be no other than the sense which very fallible men had formed of the scripture doctrine? Is it not then an insult on the one rule of faith, to call this, “*a summary of scripture doctrine?*”

Moreover, to insinuate a special providence concerned in the preservation of this Catechism, is putting it on a level with the holy scriptures; since no higher thing now can appertain to the external of their divine testimony. But the *Racovian* Catechism might as well use such plea in its favour: or the Creed of *pope pious the IV*, that precious summary of popish doctrine. And as properly might either of their advocates harangue, on the *numbers* raised up from time to time in their defence.

These *five* fathers shou’d have considered, that a Calvinistical System, recommended by Calvinists, is not so properly a recommendation to any but Calvinists: and therefore they ought rather to have said, “to all Calvinistical families.” And even to these, it was extremely ill-judged, to call it, “*a valuable summary of scripture doctrine.*” Surely the good old Gentlemen were nodding, under the soporific prejudice; else they

wou'd not have adventured to publish this decisive decree ; or dar'd to recommend the Assembly's Catechism in such sacred style and character.

I now dismiss your title, and recommendation ; that I may take more particular notice of your body of divinity, and your excellent remarks.

On these protestant principles, Sir, I wou'd conduct my examination, and risque the merits, of what I offer upon them ; viz.

Divine truth, -or the known will of God, is the only rule on which man is able to construct and form his religious character ?

Christians, who acknowledge the New Testament to be a complete revelation of the will of God, cannot remove that standard of truth from where it is.

All Christians are equally concerned in that rule. therefore all have sufficient abilities to understand and apply it.

The sense which every individual Christian is able to form of this rule, is all the capacity he has, or can possibly have of its use and importance. So that as none other can naturally see and feel for him ; so none other can spiritually or morally judge and determine for him, the sense and meaning of this rule.

This right of private judgment exercised about the rule, is the only possible CENTER OF UNITY, that can ever subsist among Christians.

Benevolence, or charity is the very spirit of truth, therefore no man has found truth, who has lost charity.

Else

Else the following APOLOGUE may illustrate my principles.——

One day, as I was travelling the road of life, I made a survey of man, in his rising age of enquiry. And in those colonies, very visible to Britons, I saw a variety of humours, tempers, tastes, or spirits, make a very distinct figure or characteristic appearance. Among the rest, I singled out a Christian, of one tribe, with erect posture, and of a very amiable complexion; his name, true PROTESTANT. a book, called the New Testament, lay open before him. Presently an heavenly voice * salutes his ear, and pointing to that sacred volume, informs him, where he may find the darling object of his enquiry. There, says the voice, in that pavillion, sits immovably enthroned, the divine genius of Christianity; her name, is TRUTH. and I will give you some needful instructions, that may assist you in your enquiry.—know then, the following things, and remark them well.—she makes it high treason for any to counterfeit her authority. All her genuine enquirers open their eyes, as they make their approaches to kiss her sceptre. the falsely modest wou'd veil her divinity under an enchanting robe of MYSTERY. She frowns at the dishonours done her; for she wou'd have none afraid to step into her undisguised presence, having no form nor feature of forbidding majesty. To conceal any of her charms, is an injury done to her, who is most pleased with an accurate and close observation.

It

* Right reason.

It is an indispensable term of receiving her favours, that every man pays to her personal homage : for she admits of no services by proxy. Indeed, all her admirers have ever found, the more intimately she is known, the more lovely she is. And it is as certain, that the more her worshippers are known, the more lovely they are. On which account it is, that you see those several ill-favour'd genii, prejudice, prepossession, suspicion, dismay and terror, all withdrawing from before the face of that protestant. He has courage added to his faith ; and knowledge to his virtue. But with what disadvantage do those characters there, in that group, make their appearance, with very strong fetters and chains, so incommodiously hanging about them ? I mean, the implicate seeker, the solifidian, and the mystic Christian. One is content that the man at Rome, called universal Bishop, shall be his proxy. Another chooseth the Church, or something that has got a venerable name, shall negotiate for him with this divinity. A third, you hear, on his knees, pleading natural and moral impotence, original imputed guilt, and huge depravity, which keep him aloof, at an humble distance indeed ! he must darken the glass, that his distemper'd eyes may avoid the splendor of the illustrious object.—Behold now that good natured, generous protestant, says the heavenly voice,—you will see him pitying the implicate, and compassionating the mystic Courtiers. He indeed laughs out at the ridiculous essays made, by the one and the other, to remove the throne of his divine genius !

genius! and he is greatly astonished, at the absurd hopes of the ignorant crowds, obtaining her good graces, by virtue of consecrated water, wafers, fragments of wood, tapers, rags, and rattles! together with a dependance on the intercession of a weak woman *! He cannot but smile at others, for close shutting their eyes, the better to let in the rays of the sun! and disabling all their natural powers, the more effectually to qualify them for the vigorous active services of this divinity †.—But see there, a shocking spectacle! the infallible implicate worshipper, most devoutly drops his humanity; and vows a readiness to cut the throat of that protestant, at the nod of his moloch-holiness!—And what is yet more painful, you may perceive many of those mystics, who do not scruple to deny any man the least ability to pay his homage, unless he will use their smoaked darkened glass, in his approach †.—Surrounded with such company, the protestant turns off his eye, with a noble disdain at the menace, and the prejudice. He composes himself; and takes refreshment in the growing vigour of his own abilities; and is highly entertained with the cheerful freedoms he daily has with this divine genius.—

From

* Popery. † Theron to Aspasia.

† Upon the opening of a new place of worship at *Brentwood in Essex*, I fancy you know, Sir, who it was that had the assurance, “to thank God the Gospel was now preached, in a town, where it had not been heard for forty years before.” An argument, surely, that modesty, is, with some, a pagan virtue; and ought to have no place among the christian graces.

From the instruction of this Survey, I determined to direct all my religious operations. and hope by them to proceed in this disquisition.—

To begin with your first page. “*You are sorry any have appeared of late that have been fond of decrying Creeds, Confessions, Catechisms, and Systems of divinity, as if they were things hurtful in their own nature rather than helpful; who notwithstanding have since been publishing Catechisms of their own compofure. However it is evident that thereby they justify our proceeding, by practically acknowledging to the world, that ’tis a very proper method of instruction.*”—This passage, Sir, compared with the time of your first publication, plainly shews, that you have my *scale of principles* fully in view. Your conclusion is however groundless, except you can shew, that I have presumed to assert, as *scripture doctrine*, any of my own interpretations of Scripture; not till then, Sir, will my *scale of principles* justify your proceeding, or acknowledge yours a proper method of instruction.—The great offence you take at it manifestly, is, “*from its rejecting some of the sweetest and most precious truths of the Gospel. Those very apparent and important defects: not one word concerning the trinity of persons, concerning the divine decrees, concerning the corruption of our nature, concerning the work of the spirit, or concerning effectual calling, justification, adoption, or sanctification by the grace and spirit of God.*” p. 76.—These, you call, very *inexcusable*

cusable deficiencies, and you wou'd alarm the passions of your reader, with saying, "there is reason to fear, that a set of principles which excludes these things out of it must be very erroneous, and such as wou'd leave us short of the saving blessings and comforts of the Gospel." p. 76.

This is the heavy charge you bring against those Catechisms which you condemn. I freely own the *scale* has many of those omissions; and will now put my self upon a defence against your very unchristian accusation.—Recollect, Sir, I told you, the very occasion of drawing up the *scale*, was, *a complaint of mixtures of mystery in most Catechisms, besides inconsistencies.*

But hark you, Mr. Pike, did that ANATHEMA become your pen? p. 78. *whosoever thus diminishes the sacred canon, by setting aside, at his own pleasure, any part of revelation belonging to the standard of truth, is ACCOUNTABLE FOR IT TO GOD, and deserves to be ranked by man among DEISTS and INFIDELS.*

Why this air of impotent authority? what? and who are you? a little insignificant mortal, that wou'd assume the seat of judicial majesty, and denounce definitive Sentence! how cou'd you imagine an ability of directing the thunder of heaven, and pointing the artillery of God!

However, not content with exposing me and others to the vengeance of a provoked Deity;

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you

you ungraciously enough affirm, our demerit to be such, "*that men should rank us among Deists and Infidels.*"

But did you think it, Sir? the Scale and its author now bid you open defiance. You are utterly unable to shew any thing like an attempt to diminish the sacred canon. and your presumption is unpardonable, of hereticating all who form a different sense of the sacred scriptures, to that of your Westminster assembly. one may, however smell the brimstone on the match, with which you wou'd fire your pile of faggots.—A better head; a clearer judgment wou'd have pointed your sentence thus, "damnation to all who dare to diminish the canon of the assembly's catechism." Comparatively an harmless curse, because of the vast difference between that, and the canon of holy scripture.

This distinction you, nevertheless, will not allow; for you say, under the answer to the 5th Q. "*The holy scriptures make it evident, that tho' his essence be one, yet in that essence are three persons equally glorious and powerful.*" You, Sir, shou'd have been so good as more explicitly to have said, to whom such doctrine is made evident.—To you, and to your assembly.—Well, and what then? this is no proof at all that the scriptures make such doctrine evident to me, or to thousands, or ten thousands

fands of other christians.—But how very ridiculous do you make yourself appear, in the support of your proposition? “*This doctrine however mysterious, is yet plainly revealed, and is of the greatest importance, as a foundation of our faith and hope. Neither is it to be wonder’d at, that we cannot comprehend the nature of divine personality, since we are incapable to conceive the divine essence itself.*” p. 7. Such a reason was surely never assigned by any but your excellent self,—“*Since we are incapable to conceive the divine essence itself.*” Who, think you, but Mr. Pike, cou’d have favoured us, with such illumination? who will ever dispute the perspicuity of a doctrine with you, who confess to have no manner of conception about it? But if such be your way of estimating the importance of any doctrine, I will make you a promise, never to ask your opinion in any matter of importance. However, since things utterly incomprehensible and inconceivable are the foundation of your faith and hope, I do earnestly beg a single favour of you; it is no boon, I ask for my own sake, but for the poor, deluded, infatuated *papist*; and that is,—Be so good as never more dispute, revile, or censure, his doctrine of *transubstantiation*; that precious foundation of his faith and hope!—also herein, I consult your reputation; for, I tell you, it

wont sit with a good grace upon you—You say, it is a *delicious* part of your divinity, “*that the father, the son, and the spirit, personally distinct from each other, are each of them truly divine, and possessed of all the perfections of Deity.*” p. 7.

I desire not to take this sweet morsel from you. but you must allow me to think, you are extremely credulous, to believe what you have no ideas concerning. more I have not to do with your fanciful creed. nor will I, on this account, make you accountable to God, nor put you among Deists and Infidels. No; no; make your self quite easy: I can assure you, that you believe too much by half for such company: they wou'd not be able to endure you.

And yet, your definition of prayer, p. 63. alone considered, wou'd have inclin'd one to think, you an unitarian, that had dropped his credulity. “*The object of prayer is God alone.—the matter of prayer things agreeable to God's will, namely, such favours as God has promised.*”—but then p. 59. you unhappily tell us, “*we pay divine worship to each of the persons of the Godhead, distinctly as three persons, and unitedly as one God.*” So that I am here unluckily disabled for reconciling your opinion of prayer with your professed practice.—you think i. e. if you think at all, that inconceivables and incom-

incomprehensibles are the objects of faith. But, Sir, was you ever able to observe, that the sacred scriptures do never make the essence of God; the manner or mode of his existence; the manner or mode of his operations, the objects of faith?—nothing unintelligible and inexplicable can possibly be so.—I indeed profess to believe a God; but then I have evidence of his being. I believe his perfections; but then I have ideas that are clear and distinct, so far as I believe and adore those perfections, &c.—which quite alter the case, and drop the mystical faith.

You deserve to be admonished severely for what you say, p. 59. viz. “*that no person can consistently administer or receive baptism, without a real belief of the fundamental doctrine of the trinity.*” whilst you yourself do expressly own, “*that the divine personality is incomprehensible; and for this reason, since we are incapable to conceive the divine essence itself.*”—“*Consistently administer or receive.*”—you mean, I suppose, consistently with that sense, in which you so much abound. But I tell you, Sir, I do administer baptism, wholly rejecting your sense; and I hope, I baptize very consistently with the unity of God, and with the rational divine sense of the Institution. and wou’d ask, might you not as well oblige me to believe the personality of those three witnesses, whom St. John mentions,

tions, viz. the spirit, the water, and the blood? or, that these are three persons in one essence? If so, why do you then presume to disqualify and unchristianize me, and so great a part of God's church as do disbelieve a personal trinity?—

The *assembly's* answer to the 7th Question I think to be unscriptural, and for this reason,—God cou'd not foreordain sin. he cou'd not purpose and decree the rebellion of any one of his creatures. Cou'd he “*have fore-ordained whatever comes to pass,*” there wou'd not any thing come to pass, but what is right and good; and there cou'd be no sin in the world.

Their answers to Questions 16, 17, 18, 19, I disapprove, from being persuaded,—The first man, was not capable of answering for any but himself; and therefore not capable of covenanting, in any single article of moral obligation, for any one of his descendants. so that I cou'd neither sin in him, nor fall with him in his first transgression.—a mill-stone thus seems to hang on the neck of the assembly's system.—

Their answer to the 21st Question, with your remarks, are of a piece with those on the trinity. And I presume, you will never be able to shew, that the sacred scripture do teach any such doctrine, as that “*of Christ being God and man in two distinct natures, and*
one

one person for ever. The hypostatical union, may remain a popular topic of your declamation, for the amusement of those whom you have persuaded to lay aside their reason, in order to feed and nourish their souls upon faith in mystery. But to men who are persuaded, that the services of religion shou'd all be reasonable; it will be no better than the dry and unwholesome chaff of speculation.

To recommend MYSTERY, from God's infinitude of knowledge and understanding, as some have done, is a shocking absurdity! because these very perfections of God are the best possible security we can have, that he has no *truths* to recommend to our faith, but what are attended with evidence every way suitable to convince and persuade: and concerning which, our ideas must be competent to all their divine obligation upon us. We may therefore be assured, that there is no one article of christian faith, which demands the assent of the mind, but what is intelligible. and we may observe, the notion of Jesus Christ being God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever; called, the hypostatical union, is no scripture proposition; therefore no object of religious faith. or, that there are three distinct persons in one undivided essence, is no scripture proposition; and therefore no object of christian faith.

Your

Your account of *justification*, is altogether as extraordinary, in your remarks on Questions and Answers 32d and 33d.—“*by it we are freely and entirely pardoned, and have a firm title to eternal life, upon the alone account of the sufferings and obedience of Christ in our room and stead.*” I look upon this as greatly derogatory to the immutable, eternal, unmerited and adoreable goodness and love of God! and as representing him in a reverse light, to what the sacred scripture always speaks of him. for he is never there once spoken of, as made propitious, or reconciled to man; but as propitiating, reconciling, and recovering the world to himself by Jesus Christ.

Yet if Mr. *Pike* does insist upon it, that his God is an angry God, unpropitious and inexorable! and who wou'd have damned the whole human race, had it not been for what Christ did and suffered! he may quietly enjoy his opinion. I solace my self in the unoriginated, supreme, immutable and unmerited goodness and love of my God.—

Likewise, *Sir*, at the same time, to me, it is a gross absurdity to suppose, the excellence and merit of any being whatsoever, can be transferred to another. or, that the great God should so far impose on his own infinite knowledge and discernment, as to reckon that piety and virtue, or those acts of un-
swerving

swerving obedience, performed by the man Christ Jesus; to be my piety, my virtue, my obedience!—Other Christians may, nevertheless, make this their final refuge: I have nothing to do to judge them. but do declare, I cannot fix on such opinion, as the foundation of my confidence: because the New Testament has taught me to believe, “that the poor in spirit, the meek, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart only are blessed. And that they only who have done good; or, who by patient continuance in well-doing, have sought glory, honour and immortality, shall obtain eternal life. and that whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”—*personal righteousness.*

Herein you see, I make use of my reason as the ONLY power or ability I have of judging of scripture doctrine. whereas, with you, *reason* may be carnal, and blind, and devilish! I do not pretend to say, what is your corrupt nature; or, what is the bad condition of your rational powers. but if they are useless to you, in judging of scripture doctrine, I am sorry for it.

You may imagine, the personality of the spirit, and the irresistible influence and agency thereof upon the human mind. you seem to do it, pages 24, 25, “*where you talk of the spirit’s working faith in us: and our being actually introduced into a state of grace; when the divine spirit comes and gives us such*

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serious, heart-affecting views of our sinfulness and Christ's grace, of our emptiness and Christ's fullness, of our unworthiness and Christ's righteousness, of our weakness and Christ's strength, of our misery and Christ's salvation, as effectually turns our wills from sin and self to God in Christ."

I know not what you do mean, or can mean, if you intend more, than that of the gospel being the power of God to salvation, to all who will but attend to its instruction. There, confessedly, is an almighty force and energy in the divine argument and motive. And we are, of a truth, sanctified and regenerated by the spirit and power of God, as we are convinced and persuaded, by his Gospel, to quit our vanity and worldliness, to subdue our lusts, and to break off any wrong habits of folly, by a cheerful conformity to the holy commandment. We are thus created in Christ Jesus unto good works: the old man is crucified in us with his deeds, and we are daily renewed, in the likeness and similitude of a creation: for old things pass away with us, and all things become new: Christians are thus *chosen*, from the beginning of the Gospel age, to salvation, in, or thro' sanctification of the Spirit, even a belief of the truth. *2 Thes. ii. 13.* or, we are thus created in righteousness, and holiness of truth. *Eph. iv. 24.*—Moreover, the graces or fruits of the spirit,
are

are all of them rational attainments, or *moral* virtues; such as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance. therefore every man has the spirit of God, whose morality is improved, advanced, and perfected by the Gospel. *Gal. v.* 22, 23.

The *calling* and *election* of the Gospel, is then, from vice to virtue, and from vanity to glory. These are the notions I have of the spirit, and of sanctification, viz. "the Gospel attended to, producing in us reasonable opinion, and right temper and behaviour." In this, man is the agent; and the word, or spirit of God is but the instrument, or the means of his illumination and reformation. And for these divine purposes, I presume, the Gospel altogether sufficient, without any new revelation, or farther inspiration.

As to your charging me with an omission "*of the work of the spirit, effectual calling, adoption, sanctification, &c.*" pray turn to Questions 119, 120, in my scale: and in the answers you'll find, "*that as the word of God contains his mind, his will, his spirit: and as the truth is that, by which all christians are to be sanctified;*" I have not wholly omitted these things.

At p. 35. There's a willingness in you to escape the brand of *antinomianism*. but you wou'd

do well to reconsider what you say, p. 50. "*since the divine law is so spiritual and extensive; what reason have we to humble our selves before the perfectly holy God, on comparing it with our natures, hearts, and lives. how weak, feeble and incapable are we in the present state to perform the righteousness of the law.*" And at p. 52. "*but you are not called upon to save your selves by your own strength, or to justify your selves by your own righteousness, both which are utterly impossible.*" Had it been only for the sake of combating this extravagance, I humbly hope the public will allow there was sufficient reason for this Letter.---

The subject is universally interesting. And as an advocate for God and truth, I now religiously ask you, *Sir*, to what purpose the law, as a rule of life, if our natures are such as render us incapable of observance? does not this plead the cause of the *antinomian* as much as he himself cou'd possibly do? we will enter more closely into the argument.---"*if the law commands you to have no more than one God.--is it not in your power to deny a plurality! if it commands you to abstain from image-worship.---*is your nature so very weak and frail, that you are incapable of observing the precept? Does it forbid, your prophaning the name of God---and cannot you avoid the impiety? what? when you are commanded to
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keep holy a seventh part of your time--cannot you disengage your self, on that day, from secular pursuits; or, have you no power of observance, from a natural depravity and weakness? and if other precepts forbid any insult or injury on the persons, lives, or properties of mankind—will you say, your nature is weak, feeble and incapable of the observance?

So far from it, there is not any thing more reasonable, just, and good, than the obligation and tendency of the divine laws, as a rule of life to mankind. they are strictly adapted to the nature and abilities, of man; and to all his relations, situations and connections. one may add, with the utmost certainty, that his very capacity for happiness must absolutely depend on this his conformity. So the Son of God has taught, when he says, “*if ye love me, keep my commandments: and, ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.* again, *on love of God and our neighbour hang all the law and the prophets.*” To which purpose his apostle assures us, “*that love is the fulfilling of the law.*” and well assured I am, that whenever the Old Testament writings wou’d describe a character, approved of God; they lay an emphasis upon the love and delight had in the law of God. Nor is the book of Psalms, at all intelligible, any more
than

than the books of the prophets, if the piety and virtue of man, be not wholly formed upon an obedience to the divine law.—

“ A sinner, perhaps you will say, cannot be justified by a law which he has violated: and therefore that law cannot be a rule of life.” I know of none that says, a sinner can be justified by the law he has broken. but this I know, that his justification must depend on his repentance of that violation, and on his recovery to a delight in that law, and in an unreserved obedience to the divine statute. so that the moral law is a rule of life to man.

It shou'd seem therefore that you are deplorably misled in your *application*, by the *assembly's* answer to Question 82. and so indeed have thousands besides you, who have been taught to think, *that the commandments of God were only fit for man's observance antecedently to the fall.* whereas there was, in truth, no reason at all then subsisting for several of them. Pray, *Sir*, how wou'd Adam and his wife, alone in the garden, be capable of theft? whose property cou'd he invade or injure? and with whose wife or daughter cou'd he commit adultery? against what neighbour cou'd he bear false witness? and whose house, servant, or cattle cou'd he covet?—Is it not hence exceedingly plain, that the *Westminster assembly*, had very absurd ideas of the commandments when they

they thus spake of them, as out of the reach of human observance ever since the fall? we can with much more certainty affirm, they were out of the reach of man's ability before the fall, and cou'd be no rule of life to him in innocency. They are therefore calculated for the descendants of Adam, and are exactly adapted, as a directory of temper, aim, and action. But yet, in the express declaration of the *assembly*, every man daily thieves in thought, word and deed! he daily commits adultery! he daily murders! he daily steals, calumniates, and covets! Here is then an open and universal charge of all sorts of immorality, vice, and villainy! for "*if no mere man since the fall, is able perfectly to keep the Commandments of God, but does daily break them in thought, word, and deed, all men are completely wicked.*" Such an enormous accusation of all mankind, deserves, and will have the indignation of those who wou'd vindicate the honour both of God and of man.

Do you think, *Sir*, it is the way of *humbling* our selves before the holy God, to make such a comparison of his law with our natures, as your Catechism would teach? or, is it not rather to reproach him with such inequitable statutes, and with such a depravity of our nature? There is no surer way to humility, than by obedience to his comandments. No pride, nor
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uncharitableness, no malice, nor envy will ever be the result, of loving God and our neighbour.—whereas your pluming your self in the righteousness of another, and claiming such superior honours, is more likely to make you vain in your faith, and not humble in your dependence on the divine mercy. your claim of eternal life, is not of grace, but of debt,—for you say, “ *the atonement he made was for us, and the righteousness he performed is imputed to us if we truly believe in him.—and our right to eternal life is founded, not upon our own obedience, but upon the divine righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.*” p. 26. Whether is it a proof of humility before God, to own our ability to observe his laws, as a rule of life, and to depend on his mercy for the benefit of eternal life? or, to deny our ability for this obedience, and to dispute the reasonableness and equity of his laws, as does your Catechism? a Question, which may safely be left to the solution of any impartial unprejudiced mind.

I know well enough, *Sir*, you will squat and shelter under the word, *perfectly*: but I'll endeavour to lay open your cover. for every benevolent, good man, is a perfect man: and does, without reserve, keep the Commandments. he does not daily break any one of them in thought, word, and deed. he loves God and his neighbour, which is the end of the Commandment,

mandments, and is the fulfilling of the law. and I do venture to affirm, that you and your Catechism cou'd not say more vile and reproachful things, on the most impious, vicious and abandon'd of the human race!

Why then, Sir, this systematic cant, "*of not being called upon to save ourselves by our own strength, or to justify ourselves by our own righteousness?*" what Christian did ever talk in this strain? Do not all allow, *it is God that justifieth?* And by what rule do you govern your self, when you call that *our own righteousness*, in opposition to God's, tho' it is the very obedience which he has expressly enjoin'd, and as expressly promised he will accept and reward?—It behoves you to look a little more carefully to it, lest the righteousness which you so zealously recommend to the dependance of others, be not, in very truth, a righteousness of mens own inventing! a fanciful, chimerical righteousness! never taught, never once hinted at in the sacred writings.—Is it not much too daring, to attempt to change the terms of acceptance which are there so universally stipulated?—Whether you wou'd have me to think, the great Lord and Law-giver is tantalizing his creature man with a rule of life, no way suited to his nature and abilities? or whether you wou'd rather choose, I shou'd

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throw contempt on an interpretation of Scripture, so absurd in itself, and so dishonourable to God? is the only alternative that lies before you. However your prejudices may incline you, I am determin'd to think honourably of the divine law, as the rule of life, and as the invariable standard of man's meetness for the divine approbation. Nor do I see how he can ever be *penitent*, because of any disobedience, and thereby qualified for *pardon*; unless he can perceive, that the law verily is a rule of life, and that his transgression was criminal. which cou'd not be, if his natural powers and abilities were not equal to the moral obligation. If I lost my arms and legs in *Adam*, the law can neither oblige me to work, nor to walk. but my inactivity is quite innocent, and blameless.

Give me leave *Sir*, now to conjure you, as a man, a christian, and a protestant, to consider the tendency of your favourite principles.

As a *man*, you ought to avow such opinions as are most conducive to the services of humanity. but there is a natural reverence, esteem and affection due to man; as man. shou'd you dispute this dictate of natural religion, I wou'd refer to 1 *Pet.* ii. 17. "honour all men." a very distinct precept to that of, "*loving the brotherhood.*"---yet, your system of corruption sadly debases, dishonours, and disgraces human nature!

nature! The notion of original sin, deplorably depresses the veneration due to man! And your opinion of an imputed, with your contempt of a personal righteousness, is capitally injurious to the rights of mankind.---how does it enervate or relax the view and sentiment of moral obligation? how does it reconcile to the criminal indulgence, from the plea of frailty, corruption and depravity? The garment of Christ's righteousness, is a cover for injustice, fraud, debauchery, pride, malice and envy; because man has nothing in his nature but what is base, vile, and dishonourable. And since his faith alone, is to justify him; he is taught thereby to despise morality, as having no manner of concern in his justification.

As a *christian*, it is at your peril, *Sir*, to sit in judgment on any man. the penalties are tremendously heavy on every hereticating spirit. "judge not, that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Be not deceived. what if this or that notion be sweet to your palate, and chosen by you as the most delicious food? to the sentiment and relish of another, it may be not only silly and insipid, but even nauseous and offensive. whatever then may be the high conceit you have of your

own orthodoxy, the true TEST of Christian opinions, is, their moral tendency.--so that a system or body of divinity, which will not bear this touch-stone, is not worthy the acceptance or approbation of any man.

You plead, notwithstanding, an attachment to the first principles of *protestantism*. p. 76. Since you say, "*the assembly's Catechism does discover an happy reverence for the whole word of God, as it owns the BIBLE, which is the religion of protestants, for its only standard.*"---How far this report is consistent, we have already seen.--and now I wou'd ask, what if it had not such an happy reverence for the word of God? this cou'd affect none, who considered it, as what it is, *viz.* a system of merely human opinion. And what if it has?---The admirers of the *Albanasian* cursing-creed, tell you, they also reverence the Bible. And the same established article which says, "the church has power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in matters of faith."---immediately adds, "yet, it is not lawful for the church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's word written." Tho' there is nothing more expressly contrary to God's written word, than that the church has authority in matters of faith. So that nothing at all, you see, can be relied on from such declarations, "*of a reverence*"

rence for the word of God, as that of the Bible being the only standard of the religion of protestants."---

Upon the whole, a few objections to the assembly's Catechism, by you analyzed, explained, and recommended, are as follow.

1. It is obscure and unintelligible in its fundamentals. and you own, that you have left it so.

2. It sadly prejudiceth the mind against the rationality, plainness and simplicity of the Gospel doctrine. and perhaps, has made more *infidels* than any other admired system whatsoever among protestants.

3. Its warm advocates do most shamefully place it on a level with the holy scriptures : or rather, wou'd have it understood, as an infallible key to their sense and meaning. In which, *protestants* have adopted the very worst principle of popery.

4. The decay of religion among us, and a contempt of the Bible, probably, is much owing to the misrepresentations therein given of the christian doctrine.

That I have not, in the least, misrepresented the extravagance of your remarks, will be yet more evident, from p. 77. "*We do not intend that the compilers of this Catechism were divinely inspired, tho', we cannot but apprehend they were eminently assisted in this work ;*" ---a very thin and flimsy distinction.

distinction, truly.—*not inspired; but eminently assisted!*—however, you wou'd not remain over squeamish in this matter; and therefore you immediately add, “*and every word we say in praise of the doctrines in it we design as an encomium on the sacred oracles.*”---You thus look upon the Catechism and the sacred oracles, as one and the same divine thing; since in praising its doctrines, you design to praise the sacred oracles.

But as if conscious of a little over-straining the point, “*you beg leave to say, that this recommendation is not designed to impose upon the minds or consciences of others; for you are entirely willing to allow others the same liberty of thought which you yourself take.*” very courteous indeed! and has somewhat of the air of a protestant. Yet, we may not promise ourselves too much from it neither; for, “*the right of private judgment must be fully and freely granted; only let persons be honest and sincere in their profession as well as in their enquiries.*”--turn to p. 76. and there it is said, that if a man happen to reject the notion of a trinity, divine decrees of whatsoever comes to pass, the corruption of nature, &c. he leaves out the *saving* blessings and comforts of the Gospel. So that this very specious protestant will sit as judge on the sincerity and honesty of a man's profession and enquiry; and he will make these opinions the infallible test. if a man omits them, he
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does not believe the revelation, he does not use it as a revelation ; and you, *Sir*, expressly bid him cast off the profession of Christianity and commence Deist ; and then you appoint him his fatal portion.—Thus conspicuous is your care of the rights of private judgment ! and thus shining your moderation !—The catholicism of a popish priest and yours seem to be twin-brothers.—*no salvation out of our church.*---Is there not flagrant inconsistency in the pretence, of such sacred regard had to the rights of conscience, whilst you and the papist can hereticate all who admit not your sense of the scripture !---from such advocates of religious liberty, *good Lord deliver us !*

As a conclusion of this Letter. you will allow me to propose a few momentous things to your consideration.

Whether you are able to determine the *importance* of any tenet or opinion, respecting either yourself or any other man, by any better *test* than its fruits ? I mean, the moral effects it has upon temper and life. if you cannot, I do as properly hold the truth in righteousness as you are able to do, tho' I am an unitarian, and you a trinitarian, if my piety is as raised, sincere and animated as yours ? And altho' I have a different opinion of the mediation, to what you have, yet if I shew, out of a good conversation, that the same spirit dwelleth in me, which dwelt in Christ Jesus my Lord;

Lord; or, if I am influenced to an imitation of him; pray what is your advantage?---Whether you are then doing the least degree of service to Christianity, in adopting and recommending any systematic sense, as the only true interpretation of holy scripture? why, *Sir*, must the Calvinist's be more decisive than the arminian sense? or why the athanasian be more decisive than the arian? Do you plead numbers? so can popery. Do you plead mystery? so will popery. Do you plead charity? so does popery. Whether your pretensions to protestantism have any real foundation? The papist says, *ignorance is the mother of devotion*. what do you else, in taking inconceivables and inexplicables into your creed, and making them essentials? The papist is an enemy to reason in religion; so are you. The priest takes away the BIBLE from the laity; and determines for the people the Catholic faith. you do little better, in determining for them the only saving sense of the divine oracles.

Whether you ought not to allow those who differ from you, in their sense of scripture, to have, at least as clear heads, and as much honesty and sincerity as you have in endeavouring to know the will of God? Is there nothing like arrogance in affirming, that your sense, or the sense of any human system, is of the highest importance in the affair of any other man's salvation?

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Whether in writing your remarks, in order to recommend the peculiar or characteristic opinions of Calvinism, as the true doctrines of the Gospel, is not to set up another Gospel; and to make *the faith of the Christian stand in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God?* wou'd it not therefore be much better for you, to decry creeds, confessions, and systematic Catechisms as hurtful to christianity? since every man is to form his own sense of the divine rule from itself. for no man, or assembly of men, has, or can have an ability of making the Gospel rule more plain and intelligible than it is.

Whether it be not rude and indecent for any, by way of distinction, to call themselves *Gospel-preachers?* whose business is not to judge for any man whatsoever, but to recommend the impartial and diligent study of that Gospel; and to urge, *a walking worthy of it unto all well pleasing.*

It is, Sir, and has been the opinion of some very judicious persons, that our ACADEMIES will never rise in esteem, by the teaching of systematic divinity. that the science of theology should be learnt from the fountain, in its greatest simplicity and purity. and that a knowledge of classical writings, will give an elegance to composition. Your method of forming pupils, I know not. yet am afraid, it is wholly systematical. If so, will not such labours, thus far subserve the cause of ignorance and bigotry?

The above *Queries*, wou'd furnish you with a more edifying theme, in some future CASUISTICAL EXERCISES.

As I have now, I hope, pleaded the protestant cause, in the spirit of truth and soberness, exposed bigotry, and fully paid the debt due to your remarks; you are not to expect to hear any thing more of this kind from my pen. nevertheless, if I shou'd ever be capable of doing you any real service,

You may, with confidence, command,

your well-wisher,

*Hoxton-Square, Aug.
17th. 1756.*

C. F.

ERRATA. p. 8. l. 22. for *it*, r. the *Scale*. p. 18. l. 13. for *reconciled*, r. *reconcilable*.

The E N D.





