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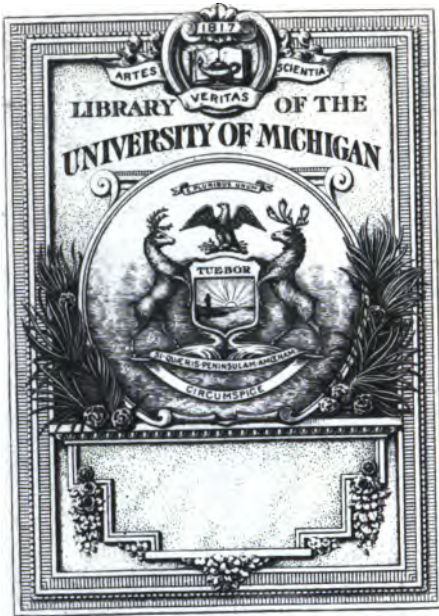
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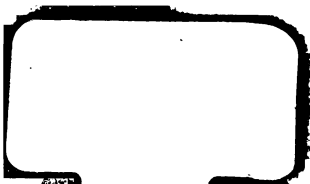
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POSTHUMOUS WORKS

OF THE

LATE REV. JOHN NEWTON;

RECTOR

OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF ST. MARY WOOL-
NOTH, AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH
HAW, LONDON.



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TWENTY-ONE LETTERS

TO

MISS *****

LETTER I.

Olney, September 8, 1779.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I WAS glad of your letter, for we were just thinking of you, as it seems you were of us, that it was a long time since we heard from you. When you want a letter from me you must write : if I send you one for one, I think it will be pretty well.

R——— died about a fortnight ago, and I buried him and three others within a week. All four were rather young people, that is, about thirty years of age. Last Sunday evening I preached a funeral sermon for Richard ; the text was Gen. xlix. 19.— That short verse contained his history ; and I hope it contains yours likewise. The first part is sure to you if you live ; you will meet with many troops, sins, fears, cares, and troubles, which will fight against you, and seem at times almost to overcome you : yea, overcome you they certainly would, if you were to fight them in your own strength. If you should not seek and love the Lord Jesus, you would be destroyed by them. But I cannot bear to entertain such a thought ; surely you must, you will love him. You hear a great deal of his beauty and goodness ; believe it, for it is true ; and that a

great deal is but a little of what ought to be said of him. But pray him to show himself and his own love to your heart; then you will love him indeed: all the world would love him, did they but rightly know him. Well, if you love the Lord Jesus, you will certainly overcome at last; and then you shall have the crown of life, and all the happiness which is contained in the promises made to them who overcome, in the second and third chapter of Revelations. My dear child, pray to him, and never be content or satisfied till you feel your desire and love fixed upon him. Nothing less will content me for you. If you should behave to me and your mamma with the greatest tenderness, affection, and attention as you grow up (as I hope you will, and you yourself are sensible you ought), still I should weep over you, if I saw you negligent and ungrateful towards the Lord. We love you, and would do much to show it; but we could not, we dare not, be crucified for you. This was such love as only he could show; judge what a return it calls for from you. Not to love the Lord, is a disposition of the height of wickedness and the depth of misery.

Believe me to be yours.

LETTER II.

Old Jewry, October 22, 1779.

MY DEAR CHILD,

You may well expect to hear from me; but you will hardly expect a long letter, if you remember what little leisure I have in London. Almost every day loads me with debt, and brings me letters

which I am not able to answer; but my dear Betsy must not be forgotten. We have been here a fortnight and upwards; the Lord gave us a pleasant and safe journey. Your mamma has been, upon the whole, comfortably well; and as you know we are at Dr. ———'s, I need not tell you that we are situated as much to our minds as can be, in the midst of so much noise and smoke. But here I can have no garden; no pretty walks amongst trees and fields; no birds but such as are prisoners in iron cages, so that I pity them, for all their singing.

But the same sun that shines at N———, is often to be seen at London; and the Lord Jesus, like the sun, is in all places at once. Go where we will, we are not far from him, if we have but eyes to see him, and hearts to perceive him. My dear child, when you look at the sun, I wish it may lead your thoughts to him who made it, and who placed it in the firmament, not only to give us light, but to be the brightest, noblest emblem of himself: there is but one sun, and there needs not another; so there is but one Saviour; but he is complete and all-sufficient, the sun of righteousness, the fountain of life and comfort; his beams, wherever they reach, bring healing, strength, peace, and joy to the soul. Pray to him, my dear, to shine forth, and reveal himself to you. O, how different is he from all that you have ever seen with your bodily eyes! he is the sun of the soul, and he can make you as sensible of his presence as you are of the sunshine at noon-day; and when once you obtain a clear sight of him, a thousand little things, which have hitherto engaged your attention, will in a manner disappear.

As by the light of op'ning day,
The stars are all conceal'd;
So earthly beauties fade away
When Jesus is reveal'd.

I entreat, I charge you to ask him every day to show himself to you. Think of him as being always with you ; about your path by day, about your bed by night, nearer to you than any object you can see, though you see him not ; whether you are sitting or walking, in company or alone. People often consider God as if he saw them from a great distance : but this is wrong ; for though he be in heaven, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him ; he is as much with us as with the angels ; in him we live, and move, and have our being ; as we live in the air which surrounds us, and is within us, so that it cannot be separated from us a moment. And whatever thoughts you can obtain of God from the Scripture, as great, holy, wise, and good, endeavour to apply them all to Jesus Christ, who once died upon the cross, for he is the true God and eternal life, with whom you have to do, and though he be the King of kings and Lord of lords, and rules over all ; he is so condescending and compassionate, that he will hear and answer the prayer of a child. Seek him, and you shall find him ; whatever else you seek, you may be disappointed, but he is never sought in vain.

Your very affectionate.

LETTER III.

Charles Square, Hoxton, April 8, 1780.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I HAVE heard of you several times since I received your letter, which I wished to answer before. I would be thankful that you are well, and I hope you

are happy, that is, in the common sense of the word; for, strictly speaking, happiness is not to be found here. I hope, however, you are cheerful, thankful, and, in some degree, satisfied with your lot; and, in order to this, I would wish you to look round you, and see how many children are sick, while you are well; poor and destitute, while you are provided, not only with the necessaries, but the comforts of life. How many, again, are exposed to hard and unkind treatment, whereas you are noticed and caressed, and have kind friends abroad and at home. Once more considered how many are brought up in ignorance and wickedness, have nothing but evil examples, and it is to be feared will go from bad to worse as they grow up; while you have the advantage of good education and good examples, and are placed where you can hear the precious Gospel, by which the Lord gives faith and salvation to them that seek him. Then ask yourself how is it, or why you are better off than they? And I hope there is something within you that will tell you, whatever the reason may be, it is not because you are better in yourself, or deserve better things than others. Your heart is no better; you likewise are a sinner; you were born with a sinful disposition, and, though you are a child, you have sinned against the Lord; so that had he been strict to mark what is amiss, he might justly have cut you off long ago. The reason why you are so favoured, must be the Lord's mercy and goodness. He pitied you when you did not know how to pity yourself; and in his providence he removed you from a place where you would probably have remained ignorant of Him, and he placed you under our care, and made you dear to us, that we might feel a pleasure in doing every thing in our power to promote your welfare. And I hope that you and we shall have reason to thank him that you came

to us. The days are growing long, the summer is coming, and among the many pleasant days of summer, there is one which I hope will bring you home. I believe you will be glad to come, and we shall be glad to see you: I hope you will like the house. There are green trees in front, and a green field backwards, with cows feeding in it; so that it has some little resemblance of the country.

Your mamma desired Miss ——— to send you a cake, which I hope you received; and if you did, I suppose it is all gone by this time: for they say, you cannot eat your cake and have it. It is a true saying, and full of meaning. Look at all that appears good and pleasant in this world; could you call it all your own, it would last but a little while, and when you go into another world, the remembrance of what you had in this, will be but like remembering you once had a cake, but it is gone, quite eaten up. But it is not so, my dear child, with respect to that feast which Jesus prepares for poor sinners. The pleasures which he gives are repeated from time to time, and are pleasing even when we reflect on them. And in the other world, when earthly pleasures will be quite ended, they that love him shall have pleasure without interruption and without end, rivers of pleasure at his right hand for evermore. The Lord bless you, and keep you. It is one of my pleasures while here to think of you, to feel for you, and to write to you as

Your affectionate-

LETTER IV.

August 3, 1780.

MY DEAR CHILD,

YOU may be sure your mamma and I were very glad to hear that the Lord preserved you from harm, and that you were safe and well at N——. I wish you to have a deep impression on your mind, that your safety, whether abroad or at home, or the continuance of your health from one hour to another, is not a matter of course, but the effect of the care and goodness of Him who knows we are helpless as sheep, and condescends to act the part of a shepherd towards us. May you learn to acknowledge him in all your ways, to pray to him for his blessing, and to praise him daily for his mercies; and then you will do well. This is the great privilege which distinguishes us from the beasts of the field; they likewise owe their preservation to his providence; but then they are not capable of knowing him or thanking him. There are many young people who are contented to live without God in the world; but this is not only their sin, but their shame likewise. They thereby renounce the chief honour they are capable of, and degrade themselves to a level with the beasts. But let it not be so with you. Pray to the Lord to teach you to love him, and when you think of him, fix your thoughts upon Jesus Christ; upon him who conversed on earth as a man. The great God has manifested himself in a way suited to us, as weak creatures and poor sinners. God is every where present, but only those who look to him in Christ can attain to love, trust, or serve him aright. When you read our Saviour's discourses, recorded by the evangelists, attend as if you saw him with your own eyes standing before you; and when you try to

pray, assure yourself before you begin, that he is actually in the room with you, and that his ear is open to every word you say. This will make you serious, and it will likewise encourage you, when you consider that you are not speaking into the air, or to one who is a great way off; but to One who is very near you, to your best friend, who is both able and willing to give you every thing that is good for you.

Though you have not been gone from us a fortnight, we seem to long to see you again. August is come already; and December, which we hope will bring you here again, will be here before long. I shall be glad if you make the most of your time, and return so much improved, that we may be able to keep you at home; for it is no pleasure to us to have you at such a distance from us. But there is no suitable day-school in this neighbourhood, and if you must be at boarding-school, I believe you must be at N——; for, after you have been so long there, we should not be willing to take you from Mrs. ——'s school to put you to another; it would seem a slight to her: though our motive would be only to have you nearer to us, people would think we had other reasons.

My advice to you will be chiefly with respect to your religious concerns and your moral conduct. But there are other things belonging to you mamma's province. She wishes, as you grow up, you may not appear to a disadvantage when compared with other young women; and, indeed, if you should be every thing she wishes you to be, you will do honour to the school you come from.

* * * * *

I think you are in general willing to oblige her, and I am persuaded a little care and resolution on

you part, would soon make it easy and familiar to you to follow the example she sets you, as well as the advice she gives you. I hope therefore, for her sake, for mine, for the sake of your governess, and especially for your own sake, you will endeavour to be notable. It was a grief to me that my time was so unavoidably taken up, that I could spare but little to converse with you; but we agreed, you know, to make it up by letters. It is now your turn to write, and I shall be glad of a long letter from you soon, in which I wish you to open your mind, to tell me what you think, feel, hope, fear, or desire, with the same freedom as if you were writing to one of your school-fellows.

The Lord bless you, my dear child, and give you to increase in wisdom and grace, as you increase in years. Always think of me as

Your very affectionate father.

LETTER V.

November 1, 1780.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I CONGRATULATE you that you are now within a month of December, when you will begin to count the days, and to see the vacation peeping over the head of a short interval. I may congratulate your mamma, and myself likewise (provided you come to us improved as we wish you), for we long to see you, and have done so every day since you left us.

Your mamma is often indisposed, but seldom very ill, at least not long together; but both she and I have many feelings with which we were not ac-

quainted when we were young like you. The advantages of youth and health are seldom rightly known at the right time. It is indeed a mercy if, when we are growing old, we have some proper sense of the folly and vanity we indulged in early life, and can be ashamed as we ought, to think how many opportunities we neglected; how many talents we misimproved. Yet repentance cannot recall the day that is past. It is my frequent prayer that you may be wiser than I was at your time of life; that you may have grace to remember your Creator and Redeemer while you are yet young. Depend upon it, my dear, whenever you really know the Lord, you will be sorry you did not know him sooner; whenever you experience that pleasure which is only to be found in loving and serving him, you will wish you had loved and served him (if possible) from your very cradle.

I have no news to tell you; but one thing I can assure you, which though you have often heard, I hope the repetition will be always pleasing to you, I mean, that I am your very affectionate friend, and feel for you as if I was really and truly your father.

LETTER VI.

January 10, 1781.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I TELL many of my friends abroad, that my time is so much taken up, they must not expect me to write to them; and yet I have offered to begin a new correspondence with you, though you are in the same house with me. I would have you take

notice, and I believe you will, of this, among many other circumstances by which, as occasions offer, I take a pleasure in showing you that I dearly love you, and long to contribute every thing in my power to your improvement and to your satisfaction; and I persuade myself the hope I form of a suitable return of love and attention from you, will not be disappointed. The Lord, in his good providence, gave you to me, as a gift, and committed you to me as a trust; at the same time, he gave me a great love for you: and whatever we do for those we love, we do with pleasure.

I thank you for your letter of yesterday. It encourages me to hope that the gracious Saviour is knocking at the door of your heart. I doubt not but you write what you think and feel, yet there is more meaning in your expressions, than either you or I can fully comprehend. You are, as you say, a sinner; a young sinner, and yet a great sinner. It is not your case alone, we are all born in sin; but to be sensible that you are a sinner, is a mercy afforded but to few children at your age. May the Lord keep the persuasion alive your heart. But the word sinner includes so much, that a whole long life will hardly suffice to give you a full sense of it.— Thus much I hope you know already, that a sinner needs a Saviour; and that Jesus is the Saviour of all sinners that seek him. I commend you to him; if he has taught you a little, he will teach you more. Put yourself simply into his hand, and wait patiently his time; he works powerfully, but for the most part gently and gradually. You know the sun does not break out upon us all at once in the dark night; there is first a glimmering dawn in the sky, which gives us notice that he is coming, and prepares us for his appearance. By degrees that faint light grows brighter; we see clearer and far-

ther ; it becomes broad day, and after that the sun rises.

Your part is to pray to him, to hear his word, and to listen with attention when you hear it preached. I trust you will find your light increase, and your difficulties abate : I wish you to be as cheerful and easy as possible. Cheerfulness is no sin, nor is there any grace in a solemn cast of countenance.— On the other hand, I would not have you light or giddy with levity ; it will hurt your own spirit, and hinder you from the pursuit of what in your serious moments you most desire. I know your natural spirits are changeable ; sometimes they are highly volatile : I would have you correct them by thinking you are a sinner. Sometimes you are grave enough ; but if you feel uneasy, then try to think what a Saviour you read of. Be sure you do not indulge a hard thought of him, as though he were severe, and stern, and ready to take advantage of you. Form your ideas of him from the accounts the evangelists give you, that he was meek and lowly when upon earth, full of compassion and gentleness, ready to pity, to heal, to help, and to teach all who come to him ; and they will tell you that he had in particular a great love for children. He tells you so himself. You read how he took them in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them. When you think of this, shake off gloomy thoughts, speak to him in your heart, and say, Lord bless me too.

One of the best methods of keeping free from uneasy, troublesome thoughts, at least of lessening them, is to be always employed ; strive and pray against indolence, look upon it as a hurtful, yea, a sinful thing. Read in English and French, write and work. Your mamma and I will be both willing you should diversify these employments as may be

most agreeable to your own inclination ; but we wish not to see you idle. Now is the time of life for you to acquire useful knowledge, that you may make yourself agreeable, and that you may be useful and qualified to fill up that station in the world which the Lord may allot you. I will gladly assist you as much as I can, in what falls under my department ; but you know I have but little time.— God has given you a good capacity, and therefore the less assistance will be necessary, if you are not wanting to yourself. You may depend on our doing what we can to make you happy. If we seem to cross your wishes sometimes, or not to comply with your desire, you may be sure we have some reason for it. You shall go out with us, as often as we think it will be proper and right ; and we shall not leave you at home for our own pleasure, but because it would not be good for you to be too much abroad. We expect and hope you will be ruled by a hint or a word ; and then you will find us studious in contriving how to make every thing as agreeable as possible to you. Because you desired a letter soon, I have written thus much, although I had other things to do, and it is preaching morning. I shall hope for a letter from you very much ! The Lord bless you.

I am, my dear child,

Your affectionate father.

LETTER VII.

October 17, 1781.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I SEND you the first letter ; in future you must not expect me to write but in answer to yours. We wish to hear soon that you are well, and that

you like your situation. I do not wish you to like any place so well as home : upon one account you ought not ; for it is impossible any persons should ever love you so well as your mamma and I do ; and therefore you are bound to love us dearly, and that will make you love home ; and the more you love home, the more diligent you will be in the improvement of your time at school. For your return to us must in a great measure depend upon yourself ; it is no pleasure to us to send you abroad. I thought for a day or two the house looked awkward without you, and I miss you a little every day still ; but we are forced to part with you for your own good. I cannot bear the thoughts of your growing up like a tall weed ; I want you to appear like a pretty flower ; and it is observable that the best of flowers in a garden would in time degenerate into tawdry weeds if they were not cultivated : such is the importance of education to children. The Lord has been good to you ; he has given you good understanding and natural abilities—and much that is engaging in your disposition. It would be a great pity that, with all these advantages, you should prove only a weed. To prevent it, I was obliged to transplant you from London to H——, where I hope you will thrive and flourish, increasing in wisdom and favour as you increase in stature.

I have written you many letters in a religious strain, which I hope you have preserved, and will now and then read them over, the more willingly perhaps because your papa wrote them. I would not overdo you upon this subject ; though the truth is, this is my chief desire for you, that you may know the Lord and love him ; if not, though you were accomplished and admired beyond any of your age, and though you could live in all the splendour of a queen, I should weep over you ; I should lament your birth, and the

day when you first came under my care. But I know that I cannot make you truly religious, nor can you make yourself so. It is the Lord's work, and I am daily praying him to bless you indeed. But he has a time; till then, I hope you will wait upon him according to your light, in the use of his appointed means, that you will make conscience of praying to him, and reading his word, and hearing when you have opportunity. I hope he will enable you to behave obediently and affectionately to your governess, and in an obliging manner to all around you, so as to gain their love and esteem. I hope you will likewise carefully abstain from whatever you know to be wrong. Thus far I may hope you can go at present; but I do not wish you to affect more of religion in your appearance, than you are really conscious of. There is some danger of this in a family where a religious profession is befriended. Young people are apt to imitate those about them, and sometimes (which is abominable) to put on a show of religion in order to please, though their hearts have no concern in it. I have a good hope that the Lord will teach you, and guide you, and that the many prayers and praises I have offered on your behalf will not be lost.

When I began my letter, I did not mean to write half so gravely, I rather thought to find something to divert you; but you are very near my heart, and this makes me serious. I long to come and see you; but it cannot be yet, nor can I say when: but I shall bounce in upon you some day when perhaps you are not thinking of me.

I am, my dear,

Your very affectionate,

LETTER VIII.

November 10, 1781.

MY DEAR CHILD,

WHEN your mamma and I come to see you, it must be on a Monday, for more reasons than one; which it is not necessary for you to know: and as there is but one Monday in a week, something or other may prevent oftener than I wish. However I promise to think of you when I cannot see you, and sometimes we talk of you. "Christmas will soon be here; then we shall have her at home, and then who knows but she will be so improved, and behave so nicely, that we shall be sorry to part with her again." When we talk thus, I hope you will make good what we say.

Lately, for about a week, I was attacked by a company of pains. Some seized my face and teeth, some took possession of my back, and some got into my sides; but they are all gone now, and they did me no harm. You know little about pains and cares yet. You are now at the time of life when you are especially called upon to remember your Creator and Redeemer, and have the greatest advantages for doing it. But, if your life is spared, to you likewise the days will come when you will say, "I have no pleasure in them." But I hope long before they come, you will have some experience of pleasures which do not at all depend upon youth or health, or any thing that this world can either give or take away. Seek the Lord, and you shall live; and you have not far to seek for him: he is very near you; he is all around you; about your bed by night, and your path by day. He sees, he notices all you say and do. But I do not wish you to

conceive of him so as to make the thought of him uneasy to you. Think of him according to the account the evangelists give of him when he was upon earth ; how gracious, compassionate, and kind he was. If he were upon earth now, would you not wish that I should lead you to him, that he might lay his hands upon you and bless you, as he did the children which were brought to him ? If he were here, and I could go with you and say, " Lord, bless my child likewise ! " I am sure he would not frown at you, 'and say, " Take her away, I will have nothing to do with her ! " No, my dear child, he has promised, them that come to him he will in no wise cast out. Go to him yourself ; though you cannot see him, it is sufficient that he sees and hears you. Tell him, that you hear and believe he is a Saviour to many, and beg him to be your Saviour too. Tell him it was not your own choice, but his providence that removed you from C——, and put you under my care, which gave you an opportunity of knowing more of his goodness, than you would otherwise have done ; and beg of him to give you his grace, that the advantages you have had may not aggravate your sins, but lead you to his salvation ; and do not let a day pass without thinking on his sufferings in Gethsemane and on Mount Golgotha. Surely his love to poor sinners, in bleeding and dying for them, will constrain you to love him again ; and if once you love him, then every thing will be easy, and you will account it your greatest pleasure to please him.

I thank you for your letter. I conceive a hope from it, that you will improve in your writing. I wish you not only to write a good hand, but a good letter ; and the whole art is to write with freedom and ease. When you take your pen in hand, pop things down just as they come to your mind ; just as you would

Speak of them without study. Tell me something about the fowls in the yard, or the trees in the garden, or what you please; only write freely. The Lord bless you, I love you dearly, and wish you to believe me to be

Your affectionate.

LETTER IX.

MY DEAR CHILD,

MRS. ——— died on the Fast-day, and was buried yesterday. I had often visited her during her illness, and was at her funeral. She was well a few months ago, but a consumption soon brought her down to the grave. But, though she was young, she was not sorry to leave such a poor world as this. I always found her happy and cheerful, though her illness was very painful. She suffered much by cold sweats; but she said, a few days before her death, that it would be worth lying a thousand years in a cold sweat, for one hour's such happiness as she then felt. "O!" she said, "if this be dying, what a pleasant thing dying is." I think my dear child has told me, that you are often terrified at the thoughts of death: now if you seek the Lord, as Mrs. ——— did, while you are young, then whenever you come to die, you will find that death has nothing terrible in it to them that love the Lord Jesus Christ. He has disarmed death, and taken away its sting; and he has promised to meet his people and receive them to himself, when they are about to leave this world, and every thing they loved in it, behind them. You have the same advantages that Mrs. ——— had; like her

you are placed under the care of those who wish well to your soul ; the Scriptures, which made her wise to salvation, are put into your hand likewise, and you also have the opportunity of hearing the Gospel. She was exhorted and encouraged from a child to pray to the Lord for his grace ; and so are you. I hope you will do as she did ; and the Lord, who was gracious to her, will be gracious to you : for he has promised that none who seek him, shall seek him in vain. Your conscience tells you that you are a sinner, and that makes you afraid ; but when the Lord gives you faith, you will see and understand, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin, then you will love him ; and when you love him, you will find it easy and pleasant to serve him ; and then you will long to see him who died for you : and as it is impossible to see him in this world, you will be glad that you are not to stay here always ; you will be willing to die that you may be with him where he is. In the mean time, I hope you will pray to him, and wait for his time to reveal himself to you ; endeavouring to avoid whatever you know to be wrong and displeasing to him ; and sometimes, I hope, you will feel your heart soft and tender, and serious thoughts and desires rising in your mind ; when you do, then think, “ Now is the Lord calling me ! ” and say as Samuel did, “ Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. He does not call with an audible voice, but he speaks to the heart in a way not to be described by words. When we are grieved and ashamed for our sins : when we are affected with what we read and hear of him, of his love, his sufferings, and his death ; when we see and feel that nothing but his favour can make us happy ; then we may be sure the Lord is near.

I believe you have too much sense and honesty to make a profession of religion, further than your

heart is really engaged, in order to please your fellow-creatures. But, on the other hand, I would not have you backward to open your mind to me on religious subjects. I know you are not without convictions, and though all convictions are not right, yet true religion always begins with convictions.— We must know we are sick, before we can prize a physician. If I live to see you a partaker of the grace of God, one of the chief desires of my heart will be gratified ; this would please me more than to have your weight in gold, and therefore you may be sure I often pray for you.

I am your affectionate.

LETTER X.

August 1, 1782.

MY DEAR CHILD,

DO not think we forgot you ; our love would reach you were you a hundred times further from us than Highgate is ; but we are very much taken up. Monday your mamma was ill in bed all day ; she is pretty well now, but P—— is very bad indeed—worse I believe than ever you saw her, and we can hardly attend to any thing but her. Then again poor Mr. B—— was hurt by a mad ox, about ten days since ; his life has been in great danger, but we now hope he will recover. I visit him every day, and that takes up a good deal of my time.

I would be thankful that the Lord preserves you in health and safety. I hope you are thankful too. When you see any body sick, or hurt, or lame, I

would have you think it is of the Lord's goodness their case is not yours. Sin has filled the world with sorrow ; all the calamities you read or hear of, or see with your eyes, are the fruits of sin ; and as you are a sinner, you might suffer what others do, and it is only the Lord's mercy that preserves you, and provides you good things which many others have not. You know many children are brought up in poverty, meet with ill treatment, have no parents or kind friends to take care of them. But though the Lord removed your parents before you were old enough to miss them, he took care to provide you a place with us ; he inclined us not only to receive you, but to love you ; and now your wants are all supplied ; and, besides this, you have been, and are instructed and prayed for every day. You have great reason to be thankful indeed, and I hope you will pray to the Lord to give you a thankful heart ; for you cannot have it except he gives it you. That hymn in Dr. Watts' little book—

When'er I take my walks abroad, &c.

though it is written principally for children, will deserve your notice when you grow up and become a woman ; I hope you will say from your heart—

Not more than others I deserve,
Yet God has given me more.

Oh, it is a great blessing to be sensible we deserve nothing from God but misery, and that all the good we receive is mercy, and then to know that all this mercy we owe to the Lord Jesus, who died for us that we might live and be happy.

There's ne'er a gift his hand bestows,
But cost his heart a groan.

When you understand this, you will love him, and then you will be happy indeed ; then it will be your pleasure to please him, and then putting your trust in him, you will be preserved from anxiety and evil.

Your affectionate.

LETTER XI.

August 10, 1783.

MY DEAR CHILD,

“VANITY of vanities !” saith the preacher. —“How vain are all things here below !” saith Dr. Watts ;—and you and I and your mamma, may say so likewise ; for we all counted upon meeting last Sunday : we listened at the door, and peeped out of the window, but no Betsy came. . When we heard by Miss ——— that you were well, we were satisfied. Now we will venture to expect you next Sunday. Indeed, it is not amiss that you should now and then meet with a balk, that you may learn, if possible, not to count too much on what to-morrow may do for you ; and that you may begin to feel the impossibility of being happy any further than your will is brought into submission to the will of God. In order to this, you must have your own will frequently crossed ; and things do and will turn out, almost daily in one way or other, contrary to our wishes and expectations. Then some people fret and fume, are angry and impatient ; but others who are in the Lord’s school, and desirous of being taught by him, get good by these things, and sometimes find more pleasure in yielding to his appointment, though contrary to their own wills, than they

would have done if all had happened just to their wish.

I wish my dear child to think much of the Lord's governing providence. It extends to the minutest concerns. He rules and manages all things; but in so secret a way, that most people think he does nothing, when, in reality, he does all. He appointed the time of your coming into the world; and the day and hour of your coming from Highgate to us, depends upon him likewise: nor can you come in safety one step of the road without his protection and care over you. It may now seem a small matter to you and to me, whether you came home last Sunday, or are to come home next Sunday; but we know not what different consequences may depend upon the day: we know not what hidden danger you might escape by staying at Highgate last Sunday. The Lord knows all things; he foresees every possible consequence, and often what we call disappointments, are mercies from him to save us from harm.

If I could teach you a lesson which as yet I have but poorly learned myself, I would put you in a way that you should never be disappointed. This would be the case if you could always form a right judgment of this world and all things in it. If you go to a blackberry-bush to look for grapes you must be disappointed; but then you must thank yourself, for you are big enough to know that grapes never grow upon brambles. So if you expect much pleasure here, you will not find it; but you ought not to say you are disappointed, because the Scripture warned you beforehand to look for crosses, trials, and barks every day. If you expect such things, you will not be disappointed when they happen.

I am your very affectionate.

LETTER XII.

October 15, 1782.

MY DEAR CHILD,

IT is rather to your disadvantage that I have lately corrected a mistake I had made. I thought you were but twelve years old last birthday; but I read in a blank leaf of the great Bible, that my child was born June 22, 1769; consequently, you are now in your fourteenth year. Therefore to keep pace with my ideas and wishes, you ought to be a whole year more advanced in improvements of every kind than you are, a whole year wiser. Some things which I might think very tolerable in my child, supposing she was but twelve years old, will seem but rather so so, when I know she is thirteen; and some things of another sort will be quite unsuitable at the age of thirteen, which might be more excusable if you were but twelve. You see, my dear child, you must stir your stumps, and use double diligence to fetch up this year, which we have somehow lost out of the account. You have a year less for improvement, and a year nearer to the time in which you will begin to appear like a young woman than I expected. I know not but I should have been pleased to find that I had made a mistake on the other side, and that you were a year younger than I had supposed you. As it is, I shall hope the best; I do not complain of you. As I love you dearly, so I have much comfort in you: and I trust you will pray to the Lord for yourself, as I do for you, that he may give you his grace and wisdom and blessing; then I know you will do well. But sometimes when I consider what a world you are growing up into, and what snares and dangers young people are exposed to, with

little experience to help them, I have some painful feelings for you. The other day I was at Deptford, and saw a ship launched : she slipped easily into the water : the people on board shouted ; the ship looked clean and gay, she was fresh painted, and her colours flying. But I looked at her with a sort of pity :— “ Poor ship,” I thought, “ you are now in port and “ and in safety ; but ere long you must go to sea. “ Who can tell what storms you may meet with here- “ after, and to what hazards you may be exposed ; “ how weather-beaten you may be before you return “ to port again, or whether you may return at all ! ” Then my thoughts turned from the ship to my child. It seemed an emblem of your present state : you are now, as it were, in a safe harbour ; but by and by you must launch out into the world, which may well be compared to a tempestuous sea. I could even now almost weep at the resemblance ; but I take courage ; my hopes are greater than my fears. I know there is an infallible Pilot, who has the winds and the waves at his command. There is hardly a day passes in which I do not entreat him to take charge of you. Under his care I know you will be safe ; he can guide you unhurt amidst the storms, and rocks and dangers, by which you might otherwise suffer, and bring you at last to the haven of eternal rest. I hope you will seek him while you are young, and I am sure he will be the friend of them that seek him sincerely ; then you will be happy, and I shall rejoice. Nothing will satisfy me but this ; though I should live to see you settled to the greatest advantage in temporal matters, except you love him, and live in his fear and favour, you would appear to me quite miserable. I think it would go near to break my heart ; for, next to your mamma, there is nothing so dear to me in this world as you. But the Lord gave you to me, and I have

given you to him again, many and many a time upon my knees, and therefore I hope you must, and will, and shall, be his.

I hardly know any accomplishment I more wish you to attain, than a talent of writing free and easy letters : and I am ready to think, if you could freely open your mind to me, you might inform me of something I should be glad to know, or you might propose to me some things which now and then trouble your thoughts, and thereby give me an opportunity of attempting to relieve, encourage, or direct you. For these reasons I have requested of your governess to permit you now and then to seal up your letters to me or your mamma without showing them to her. I have asked this liberty for you, only when you write to us ; nor even then always, but at such times as you find yourself disposed to write more freely than you could do if your letters were to be seen before you send them. I have likewise told her, that I would desire you to be as careful in writing as if she was to see your letters; and not send us pot-hooks and hangers, as they say, because you know she will not inspect your writing. Under these restrictions she has promised to oblige me ; and I take it as a favour, for I am well aware that, in general, it is by no means proper that young people at school should write letters from thence without the knowledge of their governess. But yours has so good an opinion of you and of me, that she is willing to trust us, and I hope we shall neither of us make an improper use of her indulgence.

I am, with great tenderness,

My dear child,

Your very affectionate father.

LETTER XIII.

January 27, 1783.

MY DEAR CHILD,

WANT of leisure, and not want of inclination, prevented my writing before you left home ; and I now take the first opportunity that has offered since you went from us. If I had no more correspondents than you have, you would hear from me very often ; nor can I expect to hear from you so often as I wish, because I consider you likewise have your engagements ; and though, perhaps, I am not willing to allow that your business is so important as some of mine, it must, and ought, for the present, to take up a good deal of your time. You have not only reading, and writing and arithmetic to mind, but you work sprigs and flowers, and maps, and cut bits of paper to pieces, and learn a strange language, so that you are very busy to be sure ; for idleness and sauntering are very great evils, and doors by which a thousand temptations and mischiefs may enter. Your mamma and I are well pleased with you, on the whole ; your affection is not lost upon us ; we think we can perceive an improvement in you, and we believe the things in which you yet fail, proceed rather from inattention than from the want of a desire to please ; and we have a good hope that, as you grow older, you will outgrow that heedlessness which you sometimes discover. You are not yet a woman, but neither are you a child ; you are almost fourteen, and at that age a certain degree of thought and forecast may be hoped for, which it would have been unreasonable to expect from you some few years ago. It has pleased God to give you a capacity for improvement ; and, as you see we are

so situated, that neither your mamma nor I can bestow that time and attention upon you, when you are at home, which we would wish, I hope you will make the best use you possibly can of the opportunities you have at school. It is no pleasure to us that you should live so much from us, for we love you dearly, and love your company; but it is what we submit to for your advantage.

You desired me to send you news, when I should write; but I have little to tell you. The public news you will hear, I suppose, from twenty people; it is very important. The Lord is about to give us the blessing of peace. Neither you nor I can tell the value of this blessing, because we have not known the want of it. It is true, we have heard much talk of war, and we have heard of the calamities which war has occasioned; but we have heard of them as things which have happened at a distance: had we lived in America, we should probably have seen and felt them. We should have seen towns, villages, and houses in flames; have heard the groans of widows and orphans around us; have had every thing we call our own torn from us, and perhaps have been glad to hide ourselves in the woods, to save ourselves. Such has been the lot of thousands in the course of the war. If you remember the hurry, confusion, and terror which prevailed at the time of the riots, it may give you some apprehension of the case of those who live in a country which is the seat of war. Our apprehensions were over in a few days; but they live in such alarms, or greater, from the beginning to the end of the year. I hope, therefore, you will be thankful to God, if he is pleased to sheath the sword of war, and to put a stop to the devastations and the slaughters which have so long prevailed. Though you yourself have not been a sufferer, I wish you to cultivate a feeling and benevolent spirit, a disposition to com-

passionate, if you cannot relieve, the distresses of others. This, next to the grace of God, is the brightest ornament of human nature ; or rather, when genuine, it is one of the best effects and proofs of grace. It was the mind of Jesus the Saviour ; they who love him, will in a degree resemble him, and they only. A hard-hearted, unfeeling, selfish Christian, is a contradiction.

When you think what multitudes of mankind are suffering by war, famine, sickness, storms, earthquakes, and other calamities, let it lead your thoughts to the evil of sin, which brought all other evils into the world. But what is sin ? I endeavoured to tell you last Sunday, from Jer. ii. 11. Sin is presuming to do our own will in opposition to the will of God, who is our Creator, Lawgiver, and Benefactor. By sin we affect independence of our Creator, affront the authority of our righteous Lawgiver, and are guilty of base and horrid ingratitude against our greatest and kindest Benefactor. If you could form a little creature and make it live, if it hated you and opposed you, slighted your kindness, and took a pleasure in displeasing you, would you not soon be weary of it, and, instead of feeding and taking care of it, be provoked to tread it under your feet ? But, O the patience of God ! though he could destroy rebellious men much more easily than you can kill a spider or a beetle, yet he waits to be gracious, and has so loved them as to send his own Son to die that they may live. Sin has not only filled the world with woe, but it was the cause of all the woe that Jesus endured. He groaned and wept and sweat blood, and died upon the cross, only because we had sinned. May I live to see you duly affected with the evil of sin, and the love of Jesus ; and what more can I ask for you ?

I am, dear child,

Your most affectionate father.

LETTER XIV.

March 8, 1783.

MY DEAR CHILD,

IT would please me if I could either visit you or write to you, or both, every week. But it cannot be; I am behindhand with every body. Yet I think I send you six letters for one. You stare at that; but if you please to count the lines in one of your epistles, and the letters in every line, and then compare it with one of mine, you will find that you receive many more words and *letters* than you return.

You sometimes intimate that you are afraid of death; and I wonder not at it. For you are a sinner, but I hope to see you a believer, and then you will not greatly fear it, while it is at a distance; and whenever it comes very near, you will not fear it at all. Mr. ——— is gone, and so is Mr. ———, and neither of them was more afraid of death than you would be afraid of a coach that should stop at the gate to take you home to us. Jesus died to make death safe and comfortable to us. Balaam was not a good man, but he spoke well when he said, "Let me die the death of the righteous." Make that prayer for yourself; it is a good one, though short. Entreat the Lord to number you amongst the righteous, that you may live their life; then your death will be like theirs. The Scripture in many places speaks of the righteous and the wicked, as two characters which divide and comprehend all mankind; and yet it tells us that there is none righteous, no not one—that is, there are none righteous by nature: sinners are made righteous by the grace of God. The grace of God teaches them to understand what they read of a Saviour,

and of their own need of a Saviour. When they put their trust in him, their sins are forgiven them for his sake; and when they rightly consider his love to them, his dying for their sakes, they learn to love him, and they who love him, must and will hate what is evil; they learn to resemble him, and study to please him; and thus they are not only accepted as righteous in the Beloved, but they are really made so; the love of righteousness is implanted in their hearts; they believe what the Lord says, they heartily strive to obey his commands, to avoid what he forbids; they place their happiness in his favour, and in doing his will. They cannot but speak of their Saviour, and what he has done for them; they love to hear others speak of them, and they love to hear those ministers who preach concerning him; but their religion does not all consist in talking and hearing; they are upright, gentle, and loving; they imitate Him who went about doing good. The evil tempers of self-will, impatience, pride, envy, anger and malice, are put away; they cannot allow themselves in such things; if they feel the rising of such things in their hearts, they are grieved and ashamed, and are glad to fly to the throne of grace for mercy and help against them. On the other hand, they no longer seek pleasure in the vanities and follies of the world; they have better things to mind. These trifles they lay aside; as we forsake, when we grow up, the play-things which pleased us while we were children.

But you must not expect all this at once. Look at a great tree; an oak, for instance. How tall it is! how wide its branches spread! and if you were to dig, you would find it has deep and wide-spreading roots in proportion! Yet this great tree sprang from a little acorn; but not like a mushroom in a single night: it has been years in growing, and had

you watched it every day, you would hardly have perceived that it grew at all. May I not hope that there is at least a little seed of a gracious desire already put in your heart? If so, may the Lord, who alone could plant it, water it with his blessing; and cause it to increase; if not, it is my daily prayer, that it may be so; and I hope it is your prayer for yourself. I pray that you may live and die with the righteous: it is said of them, They have hope in their death; and that when they see him approach, they shall say, "O death, where is thy sting!"

Your mamma and I love you dearly, and hope we shall always have reason to love you more and more.

I am your affectionate.

LETTER XV.

May 12, 1783.

I HAVE just now received my child's short and sweet letter; and, having nothing to prevent me, I begin my answer to it immediately.

The snow does not often cover the ground in the neighbourhood of London so late as the 8th of May; but it has been so sometimes. One reason you were surprised at the sight is, because you are young, and this is the first instance, perhaps, in the few years you have been able to take notice. You will meet with many other things, as you grow up, which will surprise you for the like reason: for want of experience, you will not expect them. We expect flowers on the ground in May, and not snow; so those pleasures the prospects of which

present themselves to your mind and appear at a distance as beautiful as we usually conceive a May morning to be, when we talk of it in winter will not always answer expectation. When the time comes, something which you do not think of, unseasonable as snow in May, will come with it, and you will be surprised and disappointed; especially at first, and till you are used to these changes. By the time you are as old as I am now, you will not wonder so much; and I hope, long before that, the Lord will teach you to profit by such things. It is necessary we should find all to be uncertain and unsatisfying in the present world, or we should be contented with it, and not think of a better. One reason why young people are but seldom serious is, because the world appears so pleasing and so promising. They expect roses without thorns, and May without snow. The Lord make you wise by times, that you may remember and seek him *now* in the days of your youth, before the evil days come (for come they will), when you will find no pleasure in them.

Such days are come very early to Miss B———. I wish, if it were practicable, that all the misses in all the schools in London could see her. What are the pleasure and gaiety which the most are thinking of, now to her! shut up as she is, in the bloom of life, unable to move herself, and with pain her constant companion day and night! I have been much affected with looking at her; but I believe I shall not see her long. Within these three days she has been much worse. I was with her twice yesterday; and I have been with her again this morning. The doctors think she cannot live many days; and she thinks so too. I am glad to find that she is not unwilling to die. If her affliction has been sanctified to lead her heart to the Lord, then, instead

of greatly pitying her, we shall rejoice in her behalf. It is better to be sick or lame, or full of pain, and seeking after him, than to live what is commonly deemed a happy life without God in the world.

Cannot you contrive to put your lines a little closer together? Your paper looks like a half-furnished room. I want a good long letter; I care not what it is about, so that you write easily. You read sometimes; cannot you find something in your books to tell me of? You walk sometimes, and without doubt look about you. Take notice of any thing that strikes your eye; make some reflection or observation upon it, and then put up your thoughts very safely in a corner of your memory, that you may send them to me the next time you write. I love a long letter, especially from you, because I love you a great deal.

Adieu, the Lord bless you, is the prayer of

Your affectionate.

LETTER XVI.

May 19, 1783.

MY DEAR CHILD,

IF your sensibility drops a tear or two when you are informed that your aunt C—— is removed from this world of sin and sorrow, I have no objection; but I do not wish you to shed many, nor is there just cause for it. If we could see her now, she would surely say,—"Weep not for me, I am happy!" Yes, she knew and loved the Lord; she lived in his faith and fear, and died in his peace and favour; and now

she is before the throne. She had her share of trials in this life, but they are all over now: she fought the good fight, and the Lord made her more than conqueror. Now she has received the conqueror's crown, and is singing the conqueror's song. Methinks, dearly as I love you, I could bear to part with you likewise, if I was sure that the Lord had set his seal of love upon your heart, and thereby marked you for his own. If he has not done this already, I hope he will. If he has not yet taken full possession of your heart, I hope you are sensible that he is standing, as it were, at the door, and knocking, waiting to be gracious to you. The door of the heart is not easily opened. The love of sin, of self, and the world, are so many bolts, which are too strong for us to remove by our own power; yet he can open it easily (because all things are easy to him), and, by a sweet constraint of love, force himself an entrance. I hope you are willing that he should do this; and that you are not willing to do any thing on your part that may grieve him, and cause him to withdraw and leave you to yourself. You cannot do much: you can, indeed, do nothing spiritually of yourself. Yet there is something for you to do; you are to wait, and pray, and long for his blessing; you are to read his word, and to endeavour to make it the rule of your conduct, so far as you understand it; you are to attend to his voice in your conscience, and not wilfully allow yourself in what you know to be wrong. This is the path in which my heart's desire and prayer is that you may walk at present; and then in due time the promise shall be fulfilled to you which says, "Then shall you know, if you follow on to know the Lord: Hosea vi. 3.

You may believe we had some weeping at home upon this occasion. But the Lord is very good.—

Your mamma has been supported, and is pretty well.

I long to see you, and especially now, that we may read Mr. Gray's Elogy together. I hope we shall be permitted to be with you on the famous exhibition day, and I please myself with the thought, that you will appear to advantage. I wish, for your own sake, you could get the better of that trepidation and hurry which discomposes you when the eyes of company are upon you ; but it is a fault on the right side, and much better than a bold, pert, self-confident carriage, which is very disgusting in some young people ; but there is a medium which I wish you to aim at.

I am your affectionate.

LETTER XVII.

June 11, 1783.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I THANK you for your last letter, which pleased me and your mamma very much. We thought it well written, and well expressed. Take as much care as you please how you write, and use as little study as you please, what to write. When you are surrounded with the beauties of nature, you need not puzzle yourself with thinking what to say first ; but set down first what first occurs to your mind : when you have written that, something else will offer. Try to write just what you think, and write as often and as largely as your many important businesses will allow ; for nothing but practice will give you a habit of writing easily : and practice will do it. We could fill up as large a sheet as you, with repeating how much we

love you ; I hope and believe there is no love lost on either side. Love will make you desirous to please and oblige us, and love will prompt us to do every thing in our power to oblige and please you ; and so I hope we shall go on loving and pleasing as long as we live.

We often think of Monday se'nnight, when we hope to come and see your exhibition. I promise myself that your part will do you credit, and give us satisfaction. I could like to come over and read the *Elegy* with you once more ; but I know I shall not be able, and I believe it will not be necessary. I doubt not but you will do it very well, especially if you can get the better of your diffidence and trepidation. But I had much rather see you a little timid, than see you assuming and affected, as some young people are. I could wish you to have just so much feeling when you begin, as might intimate a respect for the company ; and then that you should enter into the spirit of the poem, so as in a manner to forget every body present, till you have done. There is a great beauty in the cadence and melody of the verse, if you can hit it off without overdoing it. If you understand and can feel the subject, you will express it properly.

I hope the *Elegy* will likewise lead you to some profitable reflections for your own use, and which may excite your thankfulness to the Lord. To him you owe your capacity, and to him likewise you are indebted for the advantages you have of cultivation. It is possible, that among the children we meet half naked in the streets, there may be some who might have been amiable and admired in life, if they had been favoured with the helps which the good providence of God has afforded you. But they grew up, poor things, in ignorance and wickedness, after the example of those among whom they live. And though you would not have been like these, yet it is

probable you would not have been, as you now may, and I hope will be, if the Lord had not sent you to us. Though you were deprived of your own parents when you were very young, perhaps no child, in such a case, has had less cause to feel the loss; because the Lord not only made us willing to take care of you, but gave us immediately on our receiving you, a tender affection for you, as if you had been our own; and from that time your welfare has been a very principal object with us. You have been guarded against the follies and vanities which might otherwise have taken an early possession of your mind; and you have been acquainted with the means of grace, and the blessed Gospel. I trust the Lord has a gracious design to lead you to himself, by all these favourable circumstances in which he has placed you; for, without this, every thing you can learn or attain, would be but of little worth. I wish, indeed, to see you possessed of every accomplishment you can acquire at school; but nothing will satisfy me for you but the grace of God.

I am your very affectionate.

LETTER XVIII.

July 29, 1783.

MY DEAR GREAT GIRL,

YOU seem to take it for granted, that I must always write first; and you see I very readily submit, in hopes that when your great and many important businesses will permit, you will at least oblige me with an answer: for it will give your mamma and me, and your cousin, pleasure to know that you are well.

While you were a little girl, we used, when you came home from N——, to place you with your back against the wall, by the fire-place in the parlour, and compare you with your former marks, that we might notice how much taller you grew from one half year to another. According to present appearances, you are likely to be sufficiently tall, and to shoot up apace. I need not measure, for I can perceive by a glance of the eye, that you are growing every time you return to us. But I am watching your growth in another sense with more attention—I wish I could say with more satisfaction. I wish to see you outgrow a certain childishness, which once looked very pretty in you, but is by no means so pleasing in a person of your years, and of your size; I think I may add, of your sense too, for I know the Lord has given you a good measure of understanding and natural abilities; so that with a proper degree of attention and application, you are very capable of every attainment suitable to your sex and your situation in life. I love to call you my dear child, and shall probably call you so as long as I live, because there is something to me in the sound of the word *child*, expressive of the tenderness and affection I feel for you; but I would not always have you a child in the common sense of the word. I hope you will not think I am angry with you, and I hope you will not be angry with me, for giving you this hint. I love to see you cheerful, and a little occasional volatility in a young person favoured with health and full of spirits, is very tolerable; but then I would have you remember, that it is high time that a measure of thought, and steadiness, and attention, should begin to mark your general deportment. Your dear mamma, at your age, was capable of superintending the affairs of the family, and was actually called to it; and you

'are now old enough, if you will do yourself justice, to take a great deal of care off from her hands when you are at home ; you have it in your own power to shorten the term of your living away from us. I am glad that though you like your school very well, yet you like home better ; and I am sure we shall be glad when we can think it no longer necessary to keep you abroad, for we love your company, and it is principally for your own sake that we are constrained to part with you. But they say, a word to the wise is enough, and therefore I shall add no more in this strain.

You heard several of my sermons on Mary and Martha. Last Sunday night, I finished the subject by speaking on "One thing is needful"—a sentence which I pray the Lord to write upon your heart. Many things are necessary in their places ; but one thing is absolutely needful. It is right that you should be diligent at school, obedient and obliging to your governess and teachers, and endeavour, by a kind and gentle behaviour, to gain the esteem of your school-fellows and of the whole family : a regard to the one thing needful is very consistent with all this. But though you were beloved by every body that knows you, you cannot be happy except you know and love the Lord. The one thing needful, therefore, is to seek him, and his favour, which is better than life ; and if you seek him, he will be found of you. You are a sinner, and need forgiveness ; you have many wants, which he only can supply ; you are growing up in a world which is full of sins, snares, troubles, and dangers. Will you not cry to him then, "My Father, thou art the "guide of my youth !" You have encouragement to seek him, for he himself both invites and commands you to do it ; and if obligations and gratitude can prevail, there is no friend like him, whose mercies

are new every morning, and who died upon the cross to redeem us from misery. I commend you to his blessing.

Your cousin is much as she was; she sends her love to you. I believe she loves you dearly, and I believe you love her. I hope you will both love each other as long as you live upon this earth; and that afterwards you will meet in the kingdom of love, and be happy together in heaven for ever. Mamma sends her best love. Believe me to be often thinking of you, and praying for you, and always desirous to show my love in deed and in truth.

Your affectionate.

LETTER XIX.

October 16, 1783.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I HOPE you will now be able to rest yourself; for you have had a sad hurrying time since Midsummer. So much visiting and running about has, I hope, given you a right relish for the retirement and regularity of school. What a pretty place you are in, and what a pretty time of life it is with you, if you can but think so, before trouble and care have received commission to disturb you.

I could wish that all my letters might afford you both pleasure and profit: I would make you smile sometimes, and always endeavour to do you good. At present I must write a little upon the subject of temper. I do not think your temper a bad one. Your mamma and I are always ready to give you a good character, and it pleases us that we can say you are,

in the main, affectionate and obliging. But we sometimes observe that in you, which we could wish nobody took notice of but ourselves; or rather, that you would strive to get quite the better of it, that we, who love you so dearly, might be no more grieved. It is a certain self-willed impatience, which disposes you, when your inclinations are overruled, or when any thing is desired of you which does not exactly please you, to pout, frown, and alter your countenance, so that you often appear to a disadvantage in company. You do not seem to find, or to think of finding, a pleasure in giving up a thing to please you mamma, but had rather have your own way. Now if you sit down and consider how much we love you, and study to oblige and please you, I hope you will strive against this humoursome temper. I call it so, because I do not believe it is owing to a want of affection and gratitude on your part, but rather the effect of a something in your natural temper, which, if you strive against, I hope you will be enabled to overcome.

Besides what you owe to our love and tenderness, I can give you a further reason why you should attend to this point. I have told you repeatedly, and I tell you again, that your cousin's coming to live with us, will not make the slightest alteration in our love for you. You are still, and will be, our own dear child; we have love enough for you both. But in the outward expression of our love, something must, of course, depend upon behaviour. We are sometimes obliged, though with reluctance, to reprove and contradict you; now we cannot reprove her, because she never gives us an opportunity. In the seven months she has been with us, I never once knew her to debate with us, nor have I once seen a cloud upon her brow for a single moment. She watches our looks, and if she perceives the slightest

hint that any thing she proposes is not quite agreeable to us, she has done with it in a moment, and gives it up with a smile; which shows that it costs her nothing, but that she really prefers pleasing us to the pleasing herself. Now you must allow, my dear, that this behaviour is very engaging. I wish you to be equally engaging, and not to seem to come short of her in any thing.

Have you heard of your good friend Mrs. ——'s illness? They have no expectation of her recovery; nay, perhaps she is dead before this time. How well she seemed when we dined there but lately! So uncertain is life—even young people have no assurance of continuing here; but I hope you will pray as David did, Psal. xxxix. 4, and that the Lord will hear your prayer. When you come to know him as your Lord and Saviour, you may sing Simeon's song. And we cannot enjoy life with true comfort, till we are delivered from the fear of death.

I am your very affectionate.

LETTER XX.

October 23, 1783.

MY DEAR CHILD,

When I showed my last letter to your mamma, I thought she looked as if she was almost unwilling I should send it; but she did not say so, and therefore it went. She is unwilling to give you pain, and so am I. But I persuaded myself you would take it (as I meant it) as a proof of my love. Now and then I must gently give you a word of advice, but it will always be much more pleasing to me to commend than to find fault. Your welfare is very

near my heart, and I feel a warm desire that your behaviour, in every respect, should be such as to engage the esteem and affection of all who know you. I remember when you were a little girl at Northampton school, I once told you, in a letter, that when the Lord in his providence, sent you to my care, I received you as his gift; and in the pleasing hope of being an instrument in his hand of doing you good, I found such affection for you, that I would not part with you for your weight in gold. And though you are much heavier now than you were then, I can say the same still.

Mrs. W——— had been ill some days before I heard of it, and then I was told she was at the point of death. This information, with some hindrances and difficulties in the way, prevented my going to ———; so that I did not see her. She was an old and kind acquaintance, and though of late years I was not often in her company, I feel that I have lost a friend whom I loved. Such is the state of this world. If we live long in it, we must expect to see our friends drop off one after another, as the leaves at this season of the year fall from the trees. But the pain which Christians feel at parting with their Christian friends, is alleviated by two considerations: first, that now they are gone, they are much more happy than they could be here; and secondly, we hope ere long to be with them again, and to share in their songs and joys before the throne of God. This, my dear child, is the desire of my soul for you, that while you live, and when you die, you may be the Lord's. Nothing but this will satisfy me. And for this I often pray. My thoughts and prayers are often employed for you, when perhaps you are asleep. I cannot make many very particular requests for you, because I know not what is best for you; but when I pray that

you may have wisdom and grace to seek and know the Lord, and that he shall be graciously pleased to be your Saviour and Shepherd, and the guide of your youth, I am sure I do not ask amiss. I have a cheerful hope that he will put you among his children, guide you through this wilderness world by his counsel, and afterwards receive you to his glory; and that he sent you to me, that you might have the benefit of those means of grace and instructions, which by his blessing will be effectual to make you wise unto salvation.

Though he alone can work in you to will, and to do according to his good pleasure, yet there is something incumbent on you. He has said, "They who seek me, shall find me." You must therefore seek him; and he is not far from you. He is about your bed, and about your path. Yea, he is still nearer. I hope there are seasons when you can perceive him knocking, as it were, at the door of your heart. Do not you at times perceive something within you bearing witness to the truths of his word: warning you of the evil of sin, reminding you of death and eternity, and stirring up your desires towards himself? At such times you may be sure the Lord is near. He made the heart, and he knows how to affect it. Such warnings and calls from his good Spirit, I can recollect when I was a child younger than you; I can remember getting into corners by myself, and praying with some earnestness, before I was eight years old. Afterwards, alas! I proved rebellious. I cast off his fear, and would have my own way; and thereby I plunged myself into abundance of sin and misery. But I hope you will be more obedient. Think of him as you can; make a point of praying to him in secret, remembering that when you are most alone, he is still with you. When you pray; endeavour simply

to express your wants and feelings just as if you were speaking to me. Fine words and phrases, some people abound in; but true prayer is the genuine language of the heart, which the Lord understands and accepts, however brokenly expressed. The woman of Canaan only said, "Lord help me!" The publican's prayer was almost as short, "God be merciful to me a sinner:" and both were heard.

The Bible, or the New Testament, is frequently used at school, as a school-book; and children often think no more of it than just to read their appointed lesson. But I hope you will consider it as God's book, and when you take it in hand, open it with reverence, and read with attention, as you think you would if you expected to hear him speak to you with an audible voice from heaven. The plainest and most affecting part of the Bible, is the history of our Saviour in the evangelists; read it often, that you may be well acquainted with it. I pray him to enable you to understand what you read. Surely when you read who he is, what he did, what he suffered, and what he has promised to poor sinners, you will, you must, love him! And if you once love him, you will study to please him. The Lord bless you. Give our love to your governess, and all friends.

Believe me to be your very affectionate.

LETTER XXI.

October 30, 1783.

MY DEAR CHILD,

THOUGH I lately sent you a long letter by the post, which I hope you received on Tuesday, I must write again; and I take a new pen and a sheet

of gilt paper, that I may, in the best manner I can, make you a return for your letter which I received yesterday. I would not delay long to let you know how much your mamma and I were pleased with it. It is a great happiness to us that we are well assured of your desire and intention to oblige us; and we hope not to be behind-hand with you.

We are very far from thinking your temper is bad; the manner of your answer is a proof of the contrary. You may sometimes need a word of advice or admonition; I believe even this will not be often necessary; and when there is occasion, my affection will prompt me to offer it with so much tenderness, that it shall look as little like reproof as possible: and I hope and expect to find many more occasions for commending than for reproving you.

Should it please the Lord to spare your cousin, a time will come when you will live together, and, I believe, love each other dearly. I would certainly wish you to imitate her in any thing that you see is commendable; and there will be other things, I trust, in which you may be a pattern to her. Thus you may be mutually useful to each other; and we will love you both, and rejoice in you both. We shall not love you a hair's breadth the less than we should have done if we had never seen her.

Indeed, I cannot be sufficiently thankful to the Lord, that when he was pleased in his providence to put two children under my care, they should be both of such an amiable, affectionate disposition, as would win my love if they had been strangers, and not so nearly related as you and your cousin are to us. And though I consider you both now as my own children, yet you are still my eldest, and my having a second, will be no prejudice to your birthright.

I have not a bit of news that I can think of to send

you. Your mamma is pretty well, and your cousin likewise ; but she is much confined, for if the weather is either wet or cold, we cannot venture her abroad. She does not seem to want to go out, except to church. When we are going thither, it is some trial to her to be left behind ; but she is satisfied, because she thinks her aunt is the most proper judge whether she can go with safety or not.

You, my dear, are favoured with health, and I hope you will be thankful for it. Your cousin, and twenty other young people I could name, know the value of health by the want of it. The Lord can make sickness a blessing when he is pleased to send it ; but still a good state of health is a great privilege. If your life should be prolonged, it may be a good while before increase of years makes a sensible change in your constitution, but you will feel it at last. When you see an old woman tottering about with a stick, consider that she was once as young as you are now, and probably her spirits as lively, and her limbs as agile as yours. Suppose it may be fifty years before you are like her, such a space, which seems long beforehand, will seem very short when it is past, and there is hardly one in fifty of your age, that will be alive fifty years hence.

Dangers stand thick through all the ground,
 To push us to our tomb ;
 And fierce diseases wait around,
 To hurry mortals home.

How just, therefore, and important is that advice,
 “ Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth,
 “ before the evil days come !”

And whom should we remember if we forget him ?
 Our Creator is our Redeemer ; Isa. liv. 5 ; the Sa-
 viour, the Lover of souls, who assumed our nature,
 that he might be capable of dying for us. Shall we

not remember him who endured agonies, and sweat blood, and hung upon the cross, that we might escape the misery we have deserved, and be made the children of God! I wish the poet's words may express the very feeling of your heart and mine :—

Remember thee !—

Yes, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial, fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there;
And thy commandment/all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matter.

I commend you to his love, and pray him to write his name upon your heart. We all join in love to you.

Believe me to be your affectionate.

FIVE LETTERS

TO

MR. AND MISS M**** B****.

LETTER I.

TO MR. B****.

May 1, 1780.

MY DEAR SIR,

I BLAME myself, and ask your pardon, for not writing sooner. My confinement occasioned me so many visits from kind friends, that it added little to my usual time of leisure. Your first letter, enclosing Mr. C——'s, came safe; as did the second, but that was posterior to mine to Miss P——, and therefore I could not then acknowledge it. I now thank you for them both, and for that dated the 27th of April. As the news of your illness and your amendment came together, my sympathy was concern mixed with pleasure; and having as much that seemed to require immediate attention as I could well find time for, I believe the hope of seeing you soon in town, made me the more easy to let your letter lie by unanswered.

My arm, I believe, is nearly, if not quite well, excepting a stiffness in it, from being so long confined in one position. I have it now as much out of the sling as in it. I have been able to wear my coat for a week past; the surgeon, however, thinks it prudent, though not necessary, to keep on my bandage

for a few days longer. I believe the arm has advanced as happily, as speedily, and with as little pain, as possible.

My spirit has been peaceful; it is a small thing to say resigned, for I have seen it a dispensation full of mercy, and have not been permitted to feel a wish that it had been otherwise. Especially as, through the Lord's mercy, Mrs. N—— felt no abiding ill effect from the great terror she was at first seized with, and which I feared might have brought a return of all her nervous complaints. But he is very gracious to us, and she is remarkably well.

I think you must have suffered more than I have done of late; but our faithful and good Shepherd affords to us both, strength according to our day. He knows our frame, and will lay no more on us than he will enable us to bear; yea, I trust, no more than he will cause to work for our good; he delighteth in our prosperity; our comforts of every kind come free and undeserved. But when we are afflicted, it is because there is a need-be for it. He does it not willingly. Our trials are either salutary medicines, or honourable appointments, to put us in such circumstances as may best qualify us to show forth his praise. Usually he has both these ends in view; we always stand in need of correction; and when he enables us to suffer with patience, we are then happy witnesses to others of the truth of his promises, and the power of his grace in us. For nothing but the influence of God's good Spirit can keep us, at such times, either from despondence or impatience. If left to ourselves in trouble, we shall either sink down in a sullen grief, or toss and rebel like a wild bull in a net.

Our different posts are, as you observe, by the Lord's wise appointment; and therefore must be best for us respectively. Mine is full of trials and

difficulties ; indeed, I should soon make sad work of it without his continual help, and should have reason to tremble every moment, if he did not maintain in me a humble confidence, that he will help me to the end. He bid me, "Fear not ;" and at the same time he says, "Happy is the man that feareth always." How to fear, and not to fear, at the same time, is I believe, one branch of that secret of the Lord which none can understand but by the teaching of his Spirit. When I think of my heart, of the world, of the powers of darkness, what cause of continual fear, I am on an enemy's ground, and cannot move a step but some snare is spread for my feet. But when I think of the person, grace, power, care, and faithfulness of my Saviour, why may I not say, I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. I wish to be delivered from anxious and unbelieving fear, which weakens the hands, and disquiets the heart. I wish to increase in a humble jealousy and distrust of myself, and of every thing about me ; I am imperfect in both respects, but I hope my desire is to Him who has promised to do all things for me.

Your desire for the mortification of self, in every view and form, is, I hope, mine likewise. Yet I would regulate it by the word of God, so as not to expect more than is promised. I cannot properly expect a perfect exemption from conflict, because I believe it is the will of God I should have something to conflict with while I am here. To be sensible of the motions of sin in me, watchful against them, humbled for them, this I desire ; and I believe the more I advance in grace, the more feelingly I shall say, "Behold, I am vile." But desirable and precious as sanctification is, it is not, I trust it will never be, the ground of my hope. Now were I as sinless as an angel in glory, could I have a better

ground of hope than I have at present. For acceptance, I rely (oh that I indeed did,) simply, wholly, and solely, upon the obedience unto death of my surety. Jesus is my righteousness, my life, and my salvation. I am still a sinner; but he who knew no sin was made sin for me, that I might be the righteousness of God in him. This right to eternal life, by believing in the Son of God, is, in my view, equal in all who do so believe, and as perfect and sure when they first believe, as at the last moment of life; as perfect and sure in the thief on the cross, as in an apostle or martyr. An infant is as truly alive as a grown person, though all his members and faculties are in a state of weakness. Therefore with respect to my acceptance, I would put my graces as much out of the question as my actual sins. That word suited me at first, and will suit me to the end—"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justified the ungodly."

This morning (May-day) I preached for Mr. R—— a sermon to young people; it reminded me a little of my annual new-year's sermon at ——; but though I had some liberty, I feel a difference between speaking to one's own children, and those of another. They were my own proper charge, and the concern of their souls was laid upon me with a peculiar weight.

I am, dear sir, &c.

LETTER II.

Dec, 3, 1780.

MY DEAR SIR,

THE Lord is risen indeed. This is his day, when we are called to meet in his house, and (we in this branch of his family) to rejoice at his table.

I meant to write yesterday, but could not. I trust it is not unsuitable to the design and privilege of this day, to give you a morning salutation in his name; and to say, Come magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. If I am not mistaken, I have met you this morning already. Were you not at Gethsemane? have you not been at Golgotha? did I not see you at the tomb? This is our usual circuit, yours and mine, on these mornings, indeed every morning; for what other places are worth visiting? what other objects are worth seeing? Oh this wonderful love! this blood of sovereign efficacy! the infallible antidote which kills sin, cures the sinner, gives sight to the blind, and life to the dead. How often have I known it turn sorrow into joy.

O thou Saviour and Sun of the soul, shine forth this morning, and cheer and gladden all our hearts. Shine upon me and mine, upon all whom I love, and on all who love thee! Shine powerfully on my dear friends at ——, and let us know that, though we are absent from each other, thou art equally near to us all.

I must to breakfast, then dress, and away to court. Oh for a sight of the King! and oh to hear him speak! for his voice is music, and his person is beauty. When he says, Remember me, and the heart hears, what a train of incidents is at once revived!—from the manger to the cross, what he said, what he did, how he lived, how he loved, how he died; all is marvellous, affecting, humbling, transporting! I think I know what I would be, and what I would do too if I could. How near would I get, how low would I fall, how would I weep and sing in a breath; and with what solemn earnestness would I recommend him to my fellow sinners. But, alas! when I would do good, evil is present with me.

Pray for me, and help me likewise to praise the Lord, for his mercies are new every morning and every moment.

I am your affectionate.

LETTER III.

January 8, 1781.

MY DEAR SIR,

IN my peregrinations to-day, I saw Mr. L——, Mr. R——, and Mrs. G——; Mr. G—— called here while I was abroad, so that I missed hearing your letter to him, but he read it to my dear; and I have seen a copy of your son's letter.

I understand your views and feelings so well, that my letter will not have such an air of condolence as some people might expect on a like occasion. The first thing that strikes me respecting your personal concern in the late awful calamity, calls rather for congratulation. I see your beloved son preserved in the midst of general ruin; in his preservation I see the immediate, the wonderful hand of the Lord stretched out; I consider it as answer to your prayers; I humbly hope it is a token of further good respecting him, and that the restraining word, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it, is applicable to his case. I find, likewise, that but one life was lost on your estate, which, to a mind like yours, I am sure is an alleviating circumstance. For the rest, I am sure you have lost nothing but what He, if he sees it good, can restore with a large increase; nothing that is directly necessary to your peace and comfort, even in the present life; nothing that is

worth naming when compared to that which you love above all. You may still, and I trust you will, find the Lord as near, as gracious, and the light of his countenance as sweet, as cheering as ever. And you have an estate in a kingdom which cannot be shaken, out of the reach of earthquakes, hurricanes, and enemies. Indeed you do not think you have lost any thing in strictness of speech, because you have been taught of God not to consider any thing you possess as properly your own. You feel yourself the Lord's servant and steward, and whether he is pleased to enlarge or abridge the talents he has entrusted to your care, your chief solicitude in either case, is to be faithful to every intimation of his will. I believe that if the whole produce of Jamaica centred in your warehouses, the Lord would not permit you to forget that you are a stranger and pilgrim upon earth; and I believe if you were not to receive a pepper-corn from it in future, he would still make you happy in himself.

I judge thus for what he has done for you already; he has given you a taste and a desire which nothing but himself can satisfy; he has shown you the secret of his holy religion; and by leading you to fix your dependence upon him, has raised you to a noble state of independence with regard to creatures and contingencies, which are all in his hand, and can do us neither good nor harm but of his bidding.

Barbadoes and Martinico, it seems, have suffered still more. It is observable, that during the whole summer, while we and the French had large fleets in those seas, the Lord would not permit them to do any considerable harm on either side. He was pleased to take the business into his own hands, and has shown us how easily he can strike such a blow as shall constrain even enemies to commiserate each other,

Mr. P—— told me this morning, that it is supposed Jersey is taken. Thus the cloud grows darker. The flames of war are still spreading wider, and difficulties seem increasing on every side. The Lord's hand is lifted up ; men will not see : thus far the prophecy is fulfilled. I tremble at what may further concern us in the following clause, " But they shall see ! " If he undertakes to make this insensible nation know that he is the Lord, he will certainly accomplish his purpose. What it may cost us before we learn the lesson, who can say ? but he will be mindful of those that fear him. That word, " It shall be well with the righteous," cannot be broken. Hitherto the nation is in a deep sleep and professors, I am afraid, are sadly slumbering. I can hardly find any where around me (alas ! that I cannot find in myself), a spirit of humiliation and prayer, in any degree answerable to the state of the times.—Oh that the Lord would graciously revive us ! We have, indeed, abundance of preaching and abundance of hearers ; there are, doubtless, many individuals alive and in earnest, but the bulk of those who avow an attachment to the Gospel, are too little affected either for themselves or others.

Mrs. —— is pretty well, she has had but little complaint since P —— has been ill, who likewise is now getting better. The child scalded her foot on new-year's day, through mercy but slightly : it was a gentle memorial to us how entirely dependent we are on his protection for safety in our smoothest hours. We are frail and feeble creatures, it is not needful to raise a hurricane to destroy us ; were he only to withdraw his arm for a moment, some unthought of evil would presently overwhelm us. It did not prevent her hearing my sermon to young people that night, but she has been confined to the house since. My

health continues firm, and I am enabled to preach with apparent liberty, with what effect God only knows, but I am sometimes afraid there is more sound than power. I am well attended, and encouraged to hope that I do not labour wholly in vain.

May the grace of our good Shepherd be with us all. Let us praise him for what is past, and cheerfully trust him for what is to come. He knows where and what we are, and numbers the very hairs of our heads.

I am, most affectionately,
your much obliged, &c.

LETTER IV.

March 13, 1781.

MY DEAR MISS M——,

IF wishes and purposes were always effectual, I should not have been so long three letters in debt to you house: I would answer all if I could, but perhaps it will take the leisure of two or three mornings to answer one, and the first must be to you, because it is so seldom I have one from you to answer.

I saw Mr. —— yesterday, he informed me of Mr. ——'s death! though I knew him not, I felt it as an event in which my dear Mr. B—— is concerned; and indeed the suddenness of it struck me. The uncertainty of life has been a theme for declamation in all ages, but by how few is it practically laid to heart! Happy they who know whom they have believed, and are waiting with desire his recall home to himself, that they may see him as he is! I am bound to pray that this bereaving stroke may be sanctified to his family. But Mr. —— told me something that af-

fects me still more nearly. He says that Mrs. B—— has been worse this fortnight past. I believe I am foolish and inconsistent, but I cannot help it. When the Lord has taken her to himself, I hope I shall say,—“Thy will be done.” I hope I shall follow her with my thoughts, and feel some satisfaction in thinking—Now she is out of the reach of pain and sorrow for ever; now she sees her Saviour’s face without a veil, and sings his praise without the interruption of a single sigh; now she is a pillar of the heavenly temple, and shall go no more out. But at present, and while she is continued with us, I feel an anxiety and a desire, which I fear are wrong; I feel unwilling to lose such a friend; and I am sure I feel for those who are more nearly interested in her than myself.

Tell her, dear Miss M. that Mrs. N. and I are not willing to think any but her own children can exceed us in love and sympathy; that we shall be thinking of her, speaking of her, and (I hope) praying for her daily, and for you all. Well, let the flesh say what it will, we know that all is well. We cannot love her so well as He that bought her with his blood. And, ah! how faint is our tenderness compared with his. He will not let his children feel one pain too many, or too sharp. He will enable them to glorify him even in the fire, and he will soon wipe away every tear.

I am glad to find that the Lord leads you farther and deeper into the mysteries of his salvation. As a theory it may be expressed in a few words, but to live a life of faith on the Son of God as our wisdom, righteousness, and strength, considered as a matter of experience, is what we usually attain to by slow degrees, and at best but imperfectly. We are always capable of further advances, and are frequently obliged to learn over again that which we thought we had

learned already. My sentiments on this point seem tolerably clear, but in practice I fall sadly short, and feel that the principles of self and unbelief, are still deeply rooted in me. However, I trust I am in the school of the great Teacher, and I humbly hope he will carry on the work he has begun. What I want, what I pray for, is a simple dependent spirit, to be willing to put myself entirely into his hands, to follow him without asking questions, to believe him without making objections, and to receive and expect every thing in his own time, and in his way. This is the course we take when we consult an earthly physician; we consult him, but we do not pretend to direct him. Thus would I give myself up to my heavenly infallible Physician; but this is one branch of the good which when I would do, I find evil is present with me. But it is likewise one part of the sickness I groan under, and which He has in mercy undertaken to cure; and therefore, though I am very sick indeed, I trust I shall not die, but live and declare his wonderful works.

I long aimed to be something. I now wish I was more heartily willing to be nothing. A cipher, a round O is by itself a thing of no value, and a million of them set in a row amount to no more than a single one; but place a significant figure before the row, and you may soon express a larger number than you can well conceive. Thus my wisdom is O, my righteousness is O, my strength is O. But put the wisdom, power, and grace of Jesus before them, let me be united to him, let his power rest upon my weakness, and be magnified in it, in this way I shall be something. Not in and of myself, but in and from Him. Thus the apostle speaks of being *filled with all the fulness of God*. What an amazing expression! Thus, so far as we die to self, Christ liveth in us. He is the light by which we see; He is the life by which

we live ; He is the strength by which we walk, and by his immediate virtue and influence, all our works and fruits are produced. We have no sufficiency in ourselves, but we have all sufficiency in Him, and at one and the same time we feel a conviction that we can do nothing, and ability to do all things that fall within the line of our calling. When I am weak, then I am strong.

I am, dear Miss M——,

Your very affectionate and obliged servant.

LETTER V.

April 12, 1781.

MY DEAR MISS M ——,

ACCEPT my sincere, though rather tardy thanks for your favour of the 11th February ; I beg you likewise to accept my assurance, that if leisure and opportunity were with me in any proportion to my inclination, your letters would be very speedily answered.

I knew you would be a favourable reader of Cardiphonia. Your kind partiality to the writer would dispose you to put the best construction on what you read ; and your attachment to the design and principal subject of the letters, would make them welcome to you. We can put up with smaller faults when a person is disposed to praise them whom we dearly love. I trust my pen is chiefly devoted to the praise of Jesus your beloved, and so far as I succeed, I am sure what I write will be acceptable to you. How can I but wish to praise him, when he has snatched me as a brand from the burning and quenched.

ed the fire of my sins in his own blood ! How can I but praise him if he has given me a glance of his excellency ! If any do not love him, it is surely because they do not know him. To see him but once with the eye of the soul, is to be convinced that He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. His person is glory, his name is love, his work from first to last is grace. The moment the sinner is enabled to behold him, he is seized with greater admiration than the queen of Sheba felt when brought into the presence of Solomon, and is convinced that they only are happy who, as children and servants in his family, stand continually before him, to wait upon him, admire him, and hear his wisdom. But, ah ! how faint are my conceptions ! how little do I know of him ! and how little of that little which I deem my knowledge, is realized to my heart ! What trifles are sufficient to hide him from my view, and to make me almost forget that he is nearer to me than any object that strikes my sense ! Is it so with you ? Let us at least rejoice in prospect of the promised hour, when veils, and clouds, and walls shall be removed, and we shall see him as he is ; so see him, as to have all our desires satisfied in him, and fixed upon him, and to be completely transformed into his image.

My mind frequently anticipates the pleasure I propose in a visit to B———, but it is not likely to take place so soon as I wished. I had hoped to leave London soon after Easter, but circumstances are likely to forbid it. My times are in the Lord's hand, and if he sees it best for me to be gratified, he will make it practicable, and his providence will likewise determine the fittest season. I wish not to be impatient, but to refer myself to him. This is certain, when he opens the door, and says, Go, I shall set off with alacrity, for I long to walk upon

that lawn, and to sit in that tub, and to converse with those dear friends who have deservedly so much of my heart.

Thank Miss M—— for her letter. We rejoice to hear that your dear mamma is better. I believe I think of her daily, and often in the day; and this not only for the love I bear her, but for my own relief. Mrs. N—— is often ill, sufficiently so to awaken my feelings for her. But when I reflect how the power, grace, and faithfulness of our Lord and Saviour support under much severer trials, it disposes me in some measure to submission, thankfulness, and confidence. *Our* trials are light, ourselves being judges; but I see that he can make those that appear to be heaviest, tolerable. I shall certainly write before I come, when I can fix the time, and then, except something extraordinary interferes to require it, I shall not easily alter my plan, for if we cannot be with convenience in the same house, it will be worth something to be in the same town, and just to look at Mrs. B—— a few minutes occasionally, if she can bear to receive us, and if she can bear no more. For I believe another interview with her, before the Lord sends his chariot and angels to remove her from this land of sorrow, will be the principal and most interesting object of our journey. Our other friends, if we are spared, we may hope to see at some future time. I consider her as in the situation of the apostle when he wrote 2 Tim. iv. 6.

I am preparing materials for two more volumes of *Cardiphonia*. My present thought is, to have them ready for publication at a time when my pen will no longer be able to move. Whether any circumstances may send them abroad sooner I know not; but, at my time of life, I ought to consider that period as not likely to be at a very great distance. I do not wish

to be impatient for its arrival ; but I do wish my willingness to live longer here, was more simply and solely from a desire of promoting my Lord's service, and the edification of his children : I hope this is not out of my mind, but I am afraid it is shamefully debased by an undue attachment to earthly things, and a want of spirituality.

I am yours, &c.

A LETTER

TO

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June 8, 1780.

MY DEAR MADAM,

THOUGH I write to both when I write to one, it seems time to drop a word expressly to you, that I may keep you in my debt, and maintain a hope of hearing from you again.

I sympathize with my friends at ———, under the afflictive dispensations with which the Lord has been pleased to visit the town. He has a merciful design even when he inflicts, and I hope the rod will be sanctified to those who were too negligent under the public means of grace. I am not sorry for Mrs. H———'s death, as you say she died in the Lord, for she had but little prospect of temporal comfort. The death of Mrs. ——— affected me more on account of her husband and family, to whom I hoped she would have been a comfort and a blessing. But we are sure the Lord does all things wisely and well. The moment in which he calls his people home, is precisely the best and fittest season. Let us pray (and we shall not pray in vain) for strength proportioned to our day, then we have only to wait with patience, our time likewise will shortly come. The bright, important hour of dismissal from this state of trial is already upon the wing towards us, and every pulse brings it nearer. Then every wound will be healed, and every desirable desire be satisfied.

I believe you must now take the will for the deed, and give me credit for what I would have said or written if I could. Mrs. ——— came in and engrossed the time I had allotted for your letter. I knew not how to grudge it her; she had wished to spend an hour with me; her conversation I think was from the heart, and I believe the interruption was right. If it should abridge the pleasure I proposed in writing to you, I must make myself amends some other time.

Mrs. N——— has some degree of the head-ache to-day. But her complaints of that kind are neither so frequent, nor so violent as when at ———. His mercies to us are great, and renewed every morning.

I have still a quarter of an hour for you; but now, when opportunity presents, a subject is not at hand, and I have no time to ruminate. I will tell you a piece of old news. The Lord God is a sun and shield, and both in one. His light is a defence; his protection is cheering; a shield so long, and so broad, as to intercept and receive every arrow with which the quiver of divine justice was stored; and which would have otherwise transfixed your heart and mine; a shield so strong that nothing now can pierce it, and so appositely placed that no evil can reach us, except it first makes its way through our shield. And what a sun is this shield! when it breaks forth it changes winter into summer, and midnight into day, in an instant; a sun whose beams can not only scatter clouds, but the walls which sin and Satan are aiming to build in order to hide it from our view.

Public affairs begin to look more pleasing just when they were most desperate. Affairs in America are in a more favourable train. A peace with Spain supposed upon the *tapis*. I should hope for some halcyon days after the storm but for the awful insensibility which

reigns at home. But if the Lord revives his people, we may hope he will hear their prayers.

Mr. ——— bids fair to be as unpopular in the course of another month as any of his opponents have been. This is a changeable world. The ins and the outs, being fastened upon the same rolling wheel, have each their turn to be uppermost. Really, one is tempted to smile and constrained to weep in the same breath. The Lord bless you and keep you.

I am, for self and partner,

Most affectionately yours.

THREE LETTERS

TO

MISS G****.

LETTER I.

July 11, 1783.

MADAM,

I HAVE been much affected with your present situation, and with the case which you did me the honour to propose me for my judgment. I hope it is from some real sense of my own weakness, that I usually undertake the office of a casuist with fear and trembling. How unhappy should I be to mislead you in a point of such importance! How cruel, to wish you to be determined by my decision, except I am sure it is warranted by the word of God! Indeed, you have been hardly out of my thoughts since I saw you in the garden. I have considered again and again, the advice I ventured to give you, and I am the more confirmed in the propriety of it; and in a persuasion that if the Lord (for what are our resolves without him?) enables you to act the part which you seemed to be satisfied was right, you will never have just cause to blame either yourself or me. I think the Lord highly honours you, by permitting you to be brought to such a trial, and thereby putting it in your power of giving both to the church and to the world (so far as you are known) such a singular and striking proof of the sincerity of

your heart towards him. Surely I shall not cease to pray, that he who has wrought in you to will, may strengthen you with his power to act accordingly; and that you may do it with cheerfulness. You have good reason for it, madam. He for whose sake you are about to reject what many would eagerly receive, deserves it well at your hands. He gave up much more for you; he became very poor that you might be rich. And though he was once poor for us, he is now rich again; rich enough to make you ample amends for all you give up. Be not afraid. His own kind providence will take charge of you, and surely do you good. Were your conduct generally known, you would be blamed or pitied, by those who know of nothing better than gold, and such toys as gold can purchase. But they will neither blame nor pity you in the great day of your Lord's appearance. When I see so much interested and formal profession, I should be almost discouraged, were it not that the Lord has given me to know a happy and favoured few, whose conduct exemplifies and adorns the glorious Gospel they profess. In them I see a simplicity, a spirituality, a disinterestedness, a submission, and a ready obedience becoming the servants of such a Master. They have made the choice of Moses; they endure as seeing him who is invisible, and prefer even the reproach of Christ to all the treasures of Egypt. The sight of one such person in the house of God, animates and comforts a minister more than a croud of common hearers. I bless the Lord that I have the honour of preaching to more than one of this description. Go on, madam; may the Lord be with you. I feel for you, I pray for you, and I rejoice in the hope, that I shall soon have to congratulate you that the Lord has given you a complete deliverance, a victory, and filled your heart and mouth with his praise. Think of the

rewards promised to them that overcome, Rev. ii. and iii. What can the world propose worthy to be put in competition with these?

I am, Madam,

Your sincerely affectionate servant.

LETTER II.

July 14, 1783.

DEAR MADAM,

I WAS much affected and comforted by your obliging answer to my letter yesterday. I believe, as you say, there was something providential in my writing, and, indeed, in the timing of my late agreeable visit, where I had the unexpected pleasure of meeting with you. On Saturday, when I had a quite different business in hand, a thought struck me, which made me lay aside what I was engaged in, to prepare a letter which I thought I could get conveyed to you from church; not thinking I should see you there, and have an opportunity of putting it into your own hand. As you say it proved a means of confirming your mind, I have reason to praise the Lord (to whom I would ascribe every good and useful motion) for putting it into my heart to write. I rejoice in your determination; persuaded that the principle upon which you act will bear you through, and that the Lord, whom you desire to serve, will, either in kind or in kindness, afford you a testimony that he approves of your conduct. We are short-sighted as to consequences, but he knows what he is about to do. You have in his promises, upon which he has enabled you to trust; a greater treasure by far than the Bank of England; and therefore you can be no loser by declin-

ing an offer which he only permitted to be made for the trial of your faith and integrity. I have been likewise, in my time, called to make sacrifices, and to give up seeming advantages for conscience' sake, though certainly mine were trifles compared with yours, as you are now situated; and my own experience, as well as my frequent observation of others, convinces me, that though we may appear to lose something for the Lord, we shall not, eventually lose by him. But what I recollect of such things in my own case, and of the manner in which I was led through them, makes me take the liberty of offering a further word of advice upon the subject. In the first place, I would not have you wonder if, when your determination is fixed, and the affair quite at an end, you should find, instead of your path being made smoother immediately, fresh difficulties and exigences arise. I hope it will not be so; but it was so with me. I met with pinches that at times almost staggered me, and strongly tempted me to repent that I had been (as the thought in a dark hour obtruded upon me) too scrupulous, and had brought inconveniences upon myself by a punctilio. Still, however, my better judgment spoke a different language, and assured me, it was not a punctilio, but evidently connected with duty and peace of conscience. I could not, I durst not, deliberately repent that I had acted right; but, as I said, I was tempted to it. The Lord kept me steadfast, as far as outward conduct was concerned: but he alone knows the evil workings of my heart at some seasons. I was, however, supported; and in due time light broke through the darkness, difficulties were removed, he made me great amends, even in a temporal way, for what I had given up: besides, the opportunity it afforded of commending my profession and character, even to the people of the world, who had before af-

fect to despise me as an enthusiast. They seemed to think, many of them to allow, that my religion was better than theirs, because it had enabled me to part with that which they felt they could not have parted with in similar circumstances. If you should be tried something in the like way, tarry the Lord's leisure, wait patiently upon and for him, and you shall one day see he has not forgotten you, though he should permit you a while to be tried whether you will hold fast your integrity. Perhaps, when the Lord has enabled us to act honourably in very difficult, ensnaring circumstances, the greatest danger we are liable to, is lest we should be insensibly drawn into a too good opinion of our own resolution and constancy, and indulge a secret self-complacence, instead, of giving the whole praise to the Lord. I cannot forget that I felt this evil, nor how much I suffered by it; for the Lord, who mercifully watched over me for good, to prevent my being exalted above measure, was pleased, at the same time that he enabled me to conquer in a greater trial, to leave me to my own weakness in much smaller; so that I was left to hesitate, stumble, and fall, in some things so seemingly trivial, that I should have been ashamed of mentioning them to my most intimate friend. Excuse my mentioning this. I trust the caution will to you be unnecessary, after the noble stand the Lord has enabled you to make. I have nothing to wish or pray for you, but that he may preserve you humble and thankful. Mrs. ——— unites with me in love to you. Need I say, that we shall be very glad to see you whenever it suits you to call upon us?

Believe me to be,

Very affectionately and sincerely, yours.

LETTER III.

August 19, 1783.

DEAR MADAM,

METHINKS I well understand the apostle, when he speaks of being present with his friends in spirit, while absent from them in the body. How often have I been at London, and at N——, since I came here? Besides this, I usually convey myself once a day in the shape of a letter; and this morning I mean to make you a visit. May I arrive in a good hour; and may the Lord put some good and seasonable word in my way, that your heart may be comforted. The good hand of the Lord brought us hither in peace and safety; and we are hitherto favoured with a preservation from illness, though many are ill around us, and many are falling every day. I do not remember so many people being ill with fevers at one time, during the eighteen years I lived here. I am now very busy amongst a people whom I have long loved, and who are glad to see me, and though I am going from house to house almost all day, and every day, I shall hardly be able to see them all while I stay. Health, when rightly valued, and duly improved, is a great mercy. I hope you have it, and find it so. The mind not only suffers by what the body feels when ill, but is for the most part indisposed by it for the enjoyments of its best privileges. An aching head, or a sick stomach, take off our chariot wheels, engage our attention to our infirmities, preclude us from public ordinances, or unfit us for hearing if abroad, and for any spiritual exercises when at home. At such a time we can do little more than simply cast ourselves upon the Lord's care, and wait his will.

Indeed it is well if we can do so much ; for to exercise faith and patience at such a time is a great thing. If health and spirits are good, we are so far prepared to meet and support the daily trials of life. I hope you are thus armed, yea, much better ; that you are favoured with a peaceful frame of mind, a sense of the Lord's presence, and a persuasion that his arm will support you and surely do you good. Be of good courage ; trust in the Lord with all your heart ; take up your daily cross, whatever it may be ; he is your shepherd and guide, to whom you have committed yourself, and you may be assured that he will lead you the right way. I can easily conceive that many things in your present situation must be unpleasant to you, but while they are so, they will not be hurtful ; and the Lord, who has assigned you your present post, is at hand to support you in it, and I trust will honour you with some usefulness while he continues you. Live with him to-day, and leave to-morrow in his hands. Do not let your spirits be burdened as though you were bound to perform impossibilities ; but make the best you can of things as they lie before you. You are placed where you are to be a witness for him ; perhaps he designs to make you an instrument of good to some who are around you ; your example and conduct may have an influence in this way far beyond what you expect, even when you do not see it proper to speak a word ; but sometimes probably a word will be put into your mouth, and you will not speak in vain. If he had not enabled you to make the choice of Moses, you would have avoided the trials you find at N—— ; you would probably before this time have entered a very different path of life. The world would have either congratulated or envied you ; but I should have pitied you. You would soon have felt (what the Lord enabled you

to consider without making the experiment) how little the fine things of this world can contribute to happiness. Every day would have shown you more of their vanity, and every day would have discovered to you new instances of the solid and real evils and troubles which are connected with them. You would either have been carried away with the stream, to the wounding of your conscience and the loss of your spiritual discernment; or, if enabled to stand your ground, you would have found a thorn in every step you took.

Blessed be the Lord who inspired you with wisdom and strength to resist the golden temptation! I said then, and I say still, you will never have just cause to repent it. Continue humbly to commit your way to him; he will take care of you, and he can give you, even in temporals, what, upon the whole, shall be much more valuable and comfortable than all that you give up. However that may be, his loving kindness, and the light of his countenance, are better than life itself. I warned you, though you knew it before, that the enemy would try, as far as permitted, to distress and worry you, but regard him not. Resist him, and he will flee from you. You are in the path of duty; what you cannot alter, bear patiently, and the Lord, in his own time, will make the crooked straight. You are in a peculiar sense the charge of his providence, and he will not leave you nor forsake you. We hope to be at home on the evening of the 5th. I have great reason to be pleased with my excursion; and, blessed be the Lord, the thought of returning to London is very pleasant to me likewise. There (with respect to this world) my treasure is, and there is my heart also. The opportunities of preaching his word, and of intercourse with his dear people, the many kind and

valuable friends he has given me, are more to me than all the mines of Peru.

Let us love and sing and wonder,
Let us praise the Saviour's name.

Let the world take the world; for you and for me the Lord has provided better things.—Oh for grace to be humble, thankful, circumspect, and exemplary, that our light may shine to his praise! I commend you to his gracious protection, and am,

Dear Madam,

Yours most sincerely.

THREE LETTERS

TO

MRS. C*****

LETTER I.

May 29, 1784.

MY DEAR MADAM,

WE have heard that you have been sick, and I write in hopes of obtaining an answer, to inform me that you have experienced the help and power of the great Physician, and that you are now better. I know indeed beforehand, that, whether sick or well, you are just as you should be, and that what the Lord chooses for you is always the best. But the Gospel, though calculated to form us (rebellious as we are by nature) to a cheerful acquiescence in his will, and to regulate our sensibility, is not designed to suppress it. The same love which rejoices in the comforts of others; will likewise sympathize with them in affliction. We are directed to pray for one another in this view, that, if it be the Lord's pleasure to prolong life and to restore health; our sense of the mercy may be heightened by the consideration that it is bestowed in answer to prayer. You do not properly need my prayers and wishes, you are safe in the hands of infinite wisdom and love; and if you were in a wilderness remote from all society, you could not be sick or afflicted an hour longer than the Lord saw necessary to answer some gracious purpose in your favour. But this is

his institution, that as members of the same body, we should maintain a fellowship and sympathy, helping together by prayer, that so for the gift bestowed by means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our account. It pleases me to think that, though I am much and often surrounded with noise, smoke, and dust, my friend Mrs. C—— enjoys the beautiful scenes of rural life. O how I long sometimes to spend a day or two among woods, and lawns, and brooks, and hedgerows, to hear the birds sing in the bushes, and to wander among the sheep and lambs, or to stand under the shadow of an old oak, upon a hill top! This I lived at Olney; how different is London! But, hush! Olney was the place once, London is the place now. Hither the Lord brought me, and here he is pleased to support me, and in some measure (I trust) to own me. I am satisfied. Come, I hope I can make a good shift without your woods, and bushes, and pastures. What is the prospect from the finest hill in Essex, compared with the prospect I have from St. Mary's pulpit? What is the singing of birds, compared with the singing our hymn after sermon on a Sunday evening? What the bleating of lambs, compared with the lisping of inquiring souls, who are seeking after Jesus? No, welcome noise, and dust, and smoke, so that we may but be favoured with his gracious presence in our hearts, houses, and ordinances. This will make all situations nearly alike, if we see the Lord's hand placing us in it, are enabled to do his will, and to set him before us, as our Lord and our Beloved. You will please to present my good wishes to Mrs. B——, and likewise Miss D—— if she is with her. He in whose presence is life, whose loving kindness is better than life, be with you all. Though we do not see each other, we are not far asunder. The throne of grace is a centre, where

thousands daily meet in spirit, and have real though secret communion with each other. They eat of one bread, walk by one rule; they have one Father and one home. There they will shortly meet to part no more. They will shine each one like the sun. They will form a glorious constellation, millions of suns shining together in their Lord's kingdom. How pleased is Satan when he can prevail to set those at variance, who are in so many respects united! but such is his subtlety and such their weakness, which he practices upon, that he has often prevailed thus.—Sometimes he shuts them up so close within the paper walls of a denomination, that they cannot see an inch beyond the bounds of their own party. Sometimes he holds his magical glass before their eyes, and when they thus view each other through the medium of prejudice, they seem so mutually and so strangely metamorphosed, that perhaps both leaders and people are shocked, disgusted, and terrified at the sight of those who are as near the Lord as themselves. Here and there one escapes the general delusion; these wonder at the bustle around them, and endeavour to persuade the rest to peace and love as becometh brethren, and perhaps are requited with the reproaches of both sides, as neutrals, time-servers, and cowards. But these peace-makers are blessed, approved of God, and beloved by all men who are in possession of their spiritual senses. Through mercy, my dear madam, neither you nor I are to be scared by such words as Methodist or Calvinist. We see there is both wheat and chaff among all parties, and that they who love the Lord Jesus Christ, are a people scattered abroad at this time, as they were in the apostles' days, 1 Pet. i. 1. We are much as usual. Accept our cordial love. Shall I beg you to pray for me and mine? I know you will.

Believe me to be,

Your affectionate and obliged.

LETTER II.

November 27, 1784.

MY DEAR MADAM,

WHAT shall I say to the intelligence which Mr. C—— (judging rightly of our affection for you) was so kind as to bring me this morning? May I not say, without sinning, that I am sorry, very sorry? If I said otherwise I should be a hypocrite. If Mrs. —— or I could have prevented it, you should not have fallen. Our gracious Lord, who condescended to take our nature upon him, took it with all the feelings belonging to it which are not sinful. He was truly a man, and sympathized like a man with the afflictions of his friends. Instead of sharply rebuking Mary and Martha for their tears when their brother died, he kindly wept with them, though he had determined to raise him again from the dead. I allow myself, therefore, to be sorry for your fall and hurt, and to feel a solicitude till I hear farther of you. Perhaps Mrs. B—— may favour me with a line of information, if, as I apprehend, you may not be able to write yourself. But now, to use the apostle's expression, "I have spoken as a man," let me look at you in another point of view. The Lord, who by his grace has enabled you to devote and intrust yourself to him, has engaged by his promise, to take care of you, and to keep you in all your ways. Under his protection you have been safe a number of years; and did he fail you at last? Far from it: his eye was as directly upon you, his arm as certainly with you when you fell, as at any other moment of your life. And you would no more have fallen than the planets can fall from their orbits, without his permission and appointment. This event must work for your good, because he has

promised that all things shall. If I could assign no other reason for those dispensations to his children, which upon the first impression are apt to startle us, this ought to be a sufficient reason, not only to silence but to satisfy us, that, It is the Lord. For can infinite wisdom mistake, or infinite goodness do any thing that is unkind? But I see other reasons why, in the present state of things, all things should appear as happening alike to all; and that his own people, who are freed from guilt and condemnation, and to whom he manifests himself as he does not unto the world, should not be therefore exempted from a share in any of the outward afflictions to which sin has rendered mankind liable. I can see many inconveniences which would follow, if they who loved the Lord, were distinguished from the world around them by a visible mark in their foreheads. But if his providence universally preserved them from the calamities which others feel, so that it should be notorious and generally known that their persons were always safe, and that no true believer ever suffered by falls, fires, broken bones, and the like; such an exemption, in this calamitous state, would distinguish and point them out, almost as plainly as if they were surrounded with a glory, as the apostles are sometimes represented in popish pictures. Besides, how should it be known that the Lord whom they serve can make them cheerful and comfortable, under those trials and sufferings which the flesh naturally shrinks at, unless they were now and then put into such circumstances. I trust, madam, you are of the same mind with a good woman I heard of about thirty years ago. She was very aged and very poor. One day, in attempting to cross the way in Whitechapel, a cart threw her down, and she broke her thigh. She was taken into a house, and many people were soon about her, ex-

pressing their concern ; but she said, “ I thank you for your pity ; but all is very well, and I hope I have not one bone in my body but is willing to be broken, if such be the Lord’s will.” What may be the issue of this fall as to yourself, I know not. It is a greater thing to heal a broken heart than a broken bone. So long as I hear that you are alive, I shall probably feel a wish that you may live a little longer. I shall therefore commend you to him to whom belong the issues from death, being assured that you are immortal till the appointed number of your sufferings and services shall be completed ; but if your fall should prove a means of hastening your removal to the church triumphant, then, however I and your many friends may regret our own loss, we ought to rejoice in your gain. As this may possibly be the event, though I am willing to hope otherwise, I take a sort of leave of you, begging that while you do remain on this side Jordan, you will pray for me and mine, that we may have grace to follow you while we live, and to follow you when we die, to that heavenly home, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. Oh, madam, what a prospect awaits you !

Oh what has Jesus bought for me,
 Before my ravish’d eyes
 Rivers of life divine I see,
 And trees of Paradise !
 I see a world of spirits bright,
 Who taste the pleasures there !
 They all are rob’d in spotless white,
 And conqu’ring palms they bear.

Ah, that robe, that crown, those songs ! surely it is unspeakably better to depart and to be with Jesus. If he calls you, I must and will consent to let you go ; but I shall miss you. If he is pleased to raise

you up, I shall rejoice to see you again. Mrs. N joins me in best love, and in our respects to Mrs. B.

I am, dear Madam,
Your very affectionate and obliged servant.

LETTER III.

February 25, 1785.

MY DEAR MADAM,

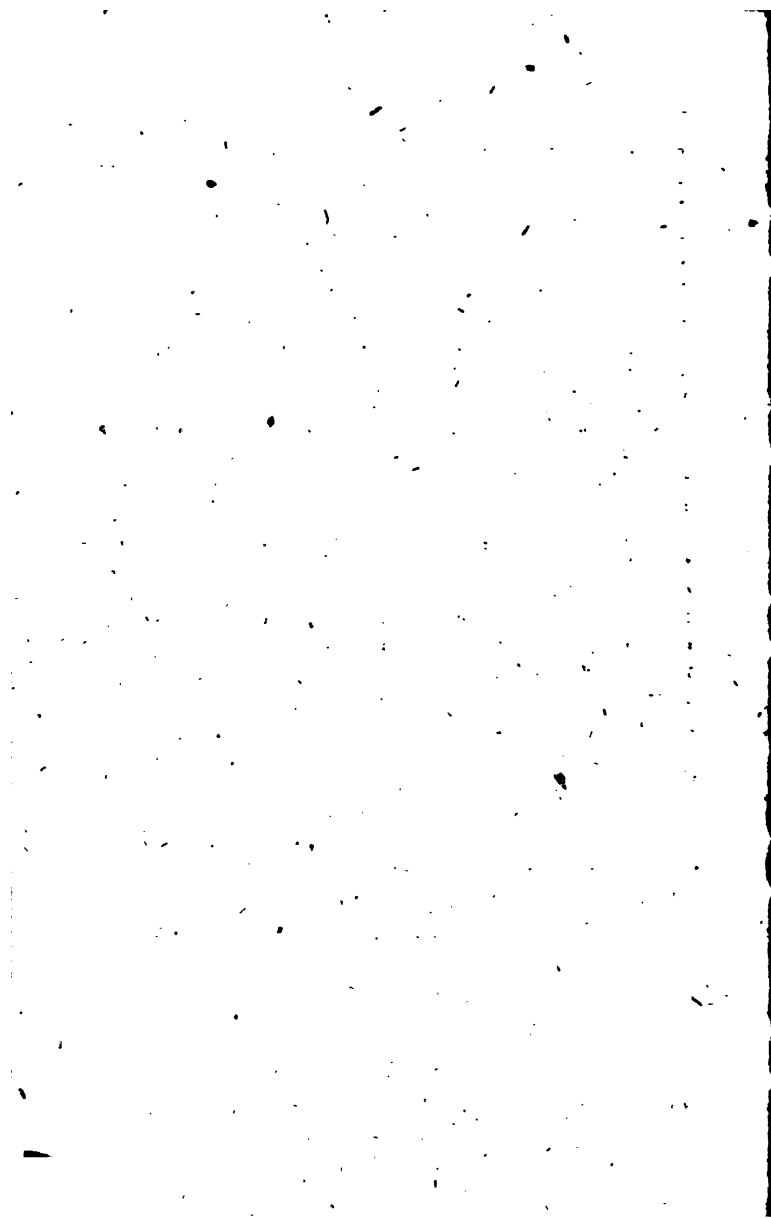
ACCORDING to strict propriety, I should address myself to Mrs. B, having an obliging letter of hers to acknowledge. But the account Mr. C lately gave me of your health, determines me to beg her excuse, and to write to you, not knowing how long you may be within the reach of the post. I cannot flatter myself that you will continue a great while in this poor world, or that I can reasonably expect to see you again. The comfort is, that though Christian friendship be very pleasing, and Christian conference be very profitable when rightly managed, yet we are not necessary to each other. We are absolutely dependent upon the Lord, but not necessarily dependent upon any creatures. They smile upon us when he bids them, they do us good when he sends them, but they cannot benefit us without *him*; and, on the other hand, he can well supply their absence or inability, and do every thing for us without *them*. Though I seldom saw you when you were in London, yet it gave me pleasure to think I might expect to see you now and then. When you are gone to heaven this pleasure will fail,—I shall see you no more here; I shall miss you; but in a little while I hope we shall meet again

there. But where is heaven? Is it at an immense distance beyond the fixed stars? Have our ideas of space any thing to do with it? Is not heaven often upon earth in proportion as the presence of God is felt? Was not the apostle caught up thither, though he knew not whether he was in the body or not, and consequently was not sure that he had changed his place? Is there not joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth? Perhaps the redeemed of the Lord, as well as his angels, are nearer to us than we are aware. Perhaps they see us though we see not them. Perhaps nothing but this veil of flesh and blood prevents us from seeing them likewise. However, on our part the barrier is impenetrable! O the wonders that will break in upon our mind, when death shall open this barrier to us! What shall we then see? It is sufficient for us at present to know that we shall see Jesus. We shall see him as he is, and we shall be like him. The circumstances of the heavenly state, if I may so speak, are hidden from us; but this which constitutes the essence of it, we can form some faint apprehension of, from our present experience. All that deserves the name of happiness here, consists of such conceptions of Jesus, and such measures of conformity to him, as are attainable while in a mortal and defiled nature. But we see him only as in a glass, darkly and in part, but when that which is perfect arrives, that which is in part shall be done away. We shall be all eye, all ear, all activity, in the communications of his love, and the celebration of his praise. Here we are almost upon a level with worms; there we shall rise to an equality with angels. In some respects our privilege will be superior to theirs. Angels cannot sing the song of the redeemed, nor claim so near a relation to Him that sitteth upon the throne. Are not these things worth dying for? I congratu-

late you, madam ; you have almost finished your course ; and he who has enabled you to keep the faith, and to fight the good fight, will shortly give you the conqueror's crown, prepared for you, and for all who love his appearing. They are many crowns, and yet one. The blessings of the other world are not like the wealth of this world, which is diminished in proportion to the numbers among whom it is divided. There each one shall possess the whole ; as here we enjoy the light of the sun, though millions enjoy it with us, as fully as we could if there were none upon earth but ourselves to see it. You will likewise soon be removed from all evil. You are going where pain, and sickness, and sorrow, and temptation, and sin, have no place. Where your eyes and your heart will be no more grieved with the wickedness of the world, where no one will ask you with a taunt, What is thy beloved more than another beloved ? In a word, where death shall be swallowed up in life, and where the miserable effects of our fall from God, shall be no more perceived, than we can perceive a stone that is sunk in the midst of the mighty ocean. I do not ask nor expect you to write an answer. I see you too weak, to wish to impose such a task upon you. I only beg that while you stay below, you will remember me and mine in prayer. Mrs. N—— sends her affectionate remembrance with mine.

Believe me to be,

Your sincere friend, and obliged servant.

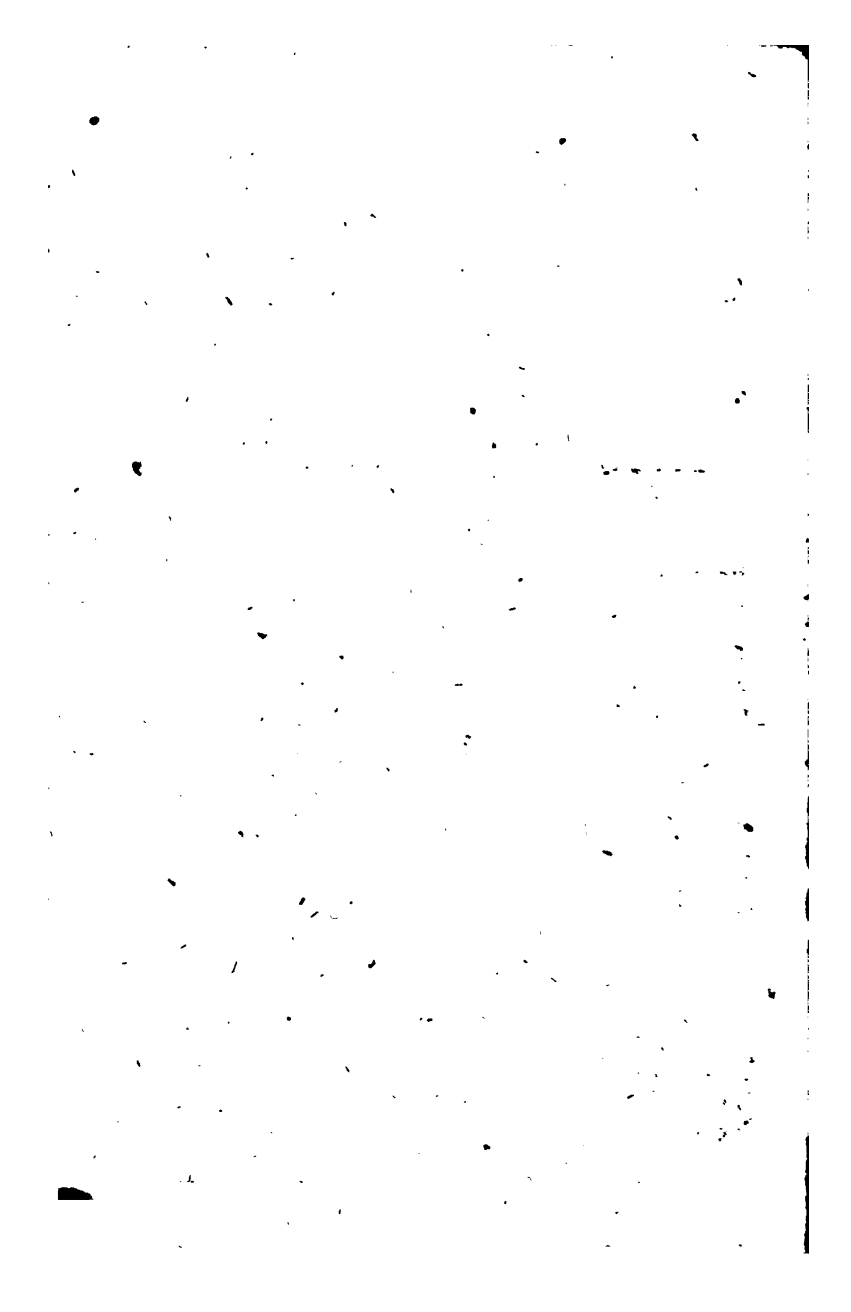


MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS,

EXTRACTS FROM

PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS.

H 2



FROM THE

THEOLOGICAL MISCELLANY.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND IN TROUBLE.

MY DEAR MADAM,

THE letter we received yesterday from Mr. _____ has given us some painful feelings for you both. He says, you are lower in your spirits than usual. By this time, I hope, the Lord hath raised your spirits again: I wonder not that they sometimes droop. Your part is trying and solitary, affording many handles, which the enemy, if permitted, knows how to take hold of. The pressure of your troubles is farther aggravated by their long continuance. It is one thing to stand tolerably in a skirmish, when it is but a brush and away; like a hasty shower in a summer's day, which presently leaves us in full possession of the sun again: it is quite a different thing to endure patiently, when a trial lasts, not for days or months, but from year to year, when expectation seems to fail, and all our scouts return to tell us, there is no perceptible abatement of the waters.

But is this the way to raise your spirits? Instead of giving you sal-volatile as I designed, I had almost mistaken the vial. Let us cry again. Ay, this is it. Read the inscription, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." No wonder that we are often sorrowing in such a world.

as this ; but to be always rejoicing, though in the midst of tribulation, this may seem strange, but it is no more strange than true. When I want witness to this truth in open court, I may confidently subpoena you to confirm it.

They who would always rejoice, must derive their joy from a source which is invariably the same ; in other words, from Jesus. Oh that name ! what a person, what an office, what a love, what a life ; what a death, does it recal to our minds ! Come, madam, let us leave *our* troubles to themselves for a while, and let us walk to Golgotha, and there take a view of *his*. We stop, as we are going, at Gethsemane, for it is not a step out of the road. There he lies, bleeding though not wounded, or if wounded, it is by an invisible, an almighty hand. Now I begin to see what sin has done. Now let me bring my sorrows, and compare, measure, and weigh them, against the sorrows of my Saviour ! Foolish attempt ! to weigh a mote against a mountain, against the universe ! Thus far we have attained already, and aim to say,

Now let our pains be all forgot,
Our hearts no more repine !
Our suff'rings are not worth a thought,
When, Lord, compar'd with thine.

We are still more confirmed at our next station. Now we are at the foot of the cross. Behold the Man ! attend to his groans ; contemplate his wounds. Now let us sit down here a while and weep for our crosses, if we can. For our crosses ! Nay, rather let us weep for our sins, which brought the Son of God into such distress. Agreed. I feel that we, not He, deserved to be crucified, and to be utterly forsaken. But this is not all : his death not only shows our desert, but seals our pardon. For a fuller proof, let us take another station. Now we are at his tomb. But the stone is

rolled away. He is not here. He is risen. The debt is paid, and the surety discharged. Not here! where then is He? Look up! Methinks the clouds part, and glory breaks through—Behold a throne! What a transition! He who hung upon the cross, is seated upon the throne! Hark! he speaks! May every word sink deep into your heart and mine! He says, “I know your sorrows, yea I appoint them; they are tokens of my love; it is thus I call you to the honour of following me. See a place prepared for you near to myself! Fear none of these things: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” It is enough, Lord. Now then let us compute, let us calculate again. These scales are the balances of the sanctuary. Let us put in our trials and griefs on one side. What an alteration! I thought them lately very heavy; now I find them light, the scale hardly turns with them. But how shall we manage to put in the weight on the other side? It is heavy indeed: an exceeding, eternal weight of glory. It is beyond my grasp and power. No matter. Comparison is needless. I see with the glance of an eye, there is no proportion. I am content. I am satisfied. I am ashamed. Have I been so long mourning, and is this all the cause? Well, if the flesh will grieve, it shall grieve by itself. The Spirit, the Lord enabling me, shall rejoice, yea it does. From this moment I wipe away my tears, and forbid them to flow; or, if I must weep, they shall be tears of gratitude, love, and joy! The bitter is sweet; the medicine is food. But the cloud closes. I can no longer see what I lately saw. However, *I have seen it*. I know it is there. He ever liveth full of compassion and care, to plead for me above, to manage for me below. He is mine, and I am his: therefore all is well.

I hope this little walk will do us both good. We

have seen wonderful things to-day ! Wonderful in themselves, and wonderful in their efficacy to compose our spirits, and to make us willing to suffer on. Blessed be God for his unspeakable gift !

Having written thus far, I made a digression to the Jews' synagogue. Though born and bred in London, I was never there before. On my return I may say, Blessed be God, not only for the gift of his Son, but for the gift of his Spirit ! What a gross darkness overwhelms that unhappy people ! With the holy Scriptures in their hands, how utterly are they ignorant of their true meaning ! And what multitudes of professed Christians, who can pity or smile at their superstitions, are equally though differently mistaken ! Hence we have another argument for thankful submission. Supposing our life could have passed without a single trial, yet if we had lived and died ignorant of God and of ourselves, our happiness, preferable to that of the most afflicted, would have been but like the poor marks of distinction paid to a state-criminal of rank who is attended to the place of execution with a parade not allowed to the vulgar, but must undergo the same punishment when he comes thither. How trivial is such a pre-eminence ! What do all past pleasures and advantages now avail the worldling who died this morning ? What is the believer, who died this morning, the worse now for the trials which he met with in his path to glory ? Quite the reverse : he now sees that they were directed and adjusted to promote and secure his progress, and to shield him from still greater evils, to which he was otherwise exposed. Let us abide by the conclusion, which our judgment assures us he now makes. It will appear as plain and self-evident to us likewise, when we shall be called to take possession of our lot in the inheritance of the saints in light.

If you have lately been in conflict with the enemy, I

hope this will find you praising the Lord for a new victory.—If under bodily indisposition, I hope his gracious hands have already brought you health and cure, accompanied with a farther discovery of the abundance of peace and truth.

I am, Madam,

Your affectionate,

OMICRON.

Thoughts on the Government of the Tongue.

THERE is, perhaps, no one test or proof of the reality of a work of grace upon the heart, more simple, clear, and infallible, than the general tenor of our language and conversation; for our Lord's aphorism is of certain and universal application, that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." To the same purpose the apostle James proposes to all, who make profession of the Gospel, a searching criterion of their sincerity, when he says, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." This passage should not be thought a hard saying, for it stands in the Bible; but, because it stands in the Bible, and forms a part of the rule by which the characters and states of all men will be finally determined, there is reason to fear that it will be found a hard saying at last, by too many who name the name of Christ. A few thoughts upon this important subject can never be unseasonable.

It is not the restraint of the heart, the apostle requires. He knew, that though it be our duty to watch against the first rising motions of evil within, and to be

humbled for them, it is not in our power wholly to prevent them ; but he supposes that the grace of God in a true believer will check the evils of the heart, and prevent them from breaking out by the tongue.

Nor is the restraint of the tongue to be taken so strictly, as if a believer was never liable to speak unadvisedly. Job and Jeremiah cursed the day of their birth ; and Peter not only denied his Lord, but denied him with oaths and execrations. I allow it possible that the best of men, in an unguarded hour, and through the pressure of some sudden and violent temptation or provocation, may occasionally act or speak unsuitably to their habitual character. But I think the apostle must mean thus much at least, that when grace is in the heart, it will so regulate and controul the tongue, that it shall not customarily offend ; and that without some evidence of such a regulation, we are not bound to acknowledge any man to be a Christian, however splendid his profession may be in other respects. Nay, I think we may farther say of this test, what the magicians of Egypt acknowledged upon another occasion, " this is the finger of God ! " This is, perhaps, the only outward mark of a believer, which the hypocrite cannot imitate. In many things he may seem to be religious ; in some, perhaps, he may appear to go beyond the real Christian ; but because his heart is naught, he cannot bridle his tongue.

The man who seems, and who desires to be thought religious, may have many qualifications to support his claim, which may be valuable and commendable in themselves, and yet are of no avail to the possessor if he bridleth not his tongue. He may have much religious knowledge, I mean of such knowledge as may be acquired in the use of ordinary means. He may have a warm zeal, and may contend earnestly (in his way) for the faith once delivered to the saints. He

may be able to talk well on spiritual subjects; to pray with freedom and fervency; yea, he may be a preacher, and acquit himself to the satisfaction of sincere Christians: or, he may be a fair trader, a good neighbour, a kind master, an affectionate husband or parent, be free from gross vices, and attend constantly upon the ordinances. Will not such a man seem to himself, and probably be esteemed by others, to be religious? yet if, with all these good properties, he does not bridle his tongue, he may be said to want the one thing needful. He deceiveth his own heart; his religion is vain.

But what are we to understand by bridling the tongue? The expression, I think, will be sufficiently explained by considering how the grace of God will necessarily influence and govern the tongues of those who partake of it, in what they say when they are led to speak of God, of themselves, and of or to their fellow-creature. Having seen a glimpse of the holiness and majesty, the glory and the grace, of the great God with whom they have to do, their hearts are impressed with reverence, and therefore there is a sobriety and decorum in their language. They cannot speak lightly of him, or of his ways. One would suppose that no person, who even but seems to be religious, can directly and expressly profane his name. But there is a careless manner of speaking of the great God which is very disgusting and very suspicious. So likewise the hearts of believers teach their mouths to speak honorably of God under all their afflictions and crosses, acknowledging the wisdom and the mercy of his dispensations; and if an impatient word escapes them, it grieves and humbles them, as quite unbecoming their situation as his creatures, and especially as sinful creatures, who have always reason to acknowledge, that it is of the Lord's mercy they are not wholly consumed.

When they speak of themselves, their tongues are bridled, and restrained from boasting. They speak as becomes poor unworthy creatures, because they feel themselves to be such. In what they say, either of their comforts or of their sorrows, sincerity dictates a simplicity which cannot be easily counterfeited; while they, whose tongues are not thus bridled, often betray themselves by an affectation and want of savour, even when they are lamenting their sinfulness, and the vileness of their hearts.

In what they say of or to others, the tongues of believers are bridled by a heart-felt regard to truth, love, and purity. It is grievous to see how nearly and readily some professors of religion will venture upon the borders of a lie; either to defend their own conduct, to avoid some inconvenience, to procure a supposed advantage, or sometimes merely to embellish a story. Admitting the possibility of a sincere person being surprised into the declaration of an untruth, yet where instances of this kind are frequent, I hardly know a fouler blot in profession, or which can give a more just warrant to fear that such professors know nothing aright either of God or themselves. The Lord is a God of truth; and he teaches his servants to hate and abhor lying, and to speak the truth from their hearts. I may add likewise, with regard to promises and bargains, that though the law of the land requires, on many occasions, oaths and bonds to secure their performance, that person, whose word may not be safely depended upon without either bond or oath, scarcely deserves the name of a Christian.

Where grace is in the heart, the tongue will be likewise bridled by the law of love. If we love our neighbour, can we lightly report evil of him, magnify his failings, or use provoking or insulting language? Love thinketh no evil, but beareth, hopeth, and en-

dureth ; and acts by the golden rule, to do unto others as we would they should do unto us. They who are under this influence will be gentle and compassionate, disposed to make the most favourable allowances, and of course their tongues will be restrained from the language of malevolence, harsh censure, and slander, though it be familiar to us as our mother tongue, till we are made partakers of the grace of God.

The tongue is also bridled by a regard to purity. Agreeably to the precepts, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth ; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient," Eph. iv. 26, v. 4. Grace has taught believers to hate these things ; how then can their tongues speak of them ? There are professors, indeed, who can suit their language to the company. When with the people of God, they can talk very seriously ; and, at other times, be well pleased to join in vain, frothy, and evil conversation. But this doublemindedness is of itself sufficient to discredit all their pretences to a religious character.

Upon the whole, though perfection is not to be expected, though true believers may, on some occasions, speak rashly, and have great cause for humiliation, watchfulness, and prayer, with respect to the government of their tongues ; yet I think the Scripture, and particularly the apostle James in the passage I have mentioned, authorizes this conclusion. That if the tongue is frequently without a bridle ; if it may be observed, that a person often speaks lightly of God and of divine things, proudly of himself, harshly of his fellow-creatures ; if it can be affirmed with truth, that he is a liar, a tale-bearer, a railer, a flatterer, or a jester ;—then, whatever other good qualities he may seem to possess, his speech bewrayeth him : he deceiveth himself, his religion

is vain. Let us think of these things, and entreat the Lord to cast the salt of his grace into the fountain of our hearts, that the streams of our conversation may be wholesome !

OMICRON.

Pliny to the Emperor Trajan.

IT is a rule, Sir, which I inviolably observe, to refer myself to you in all my doubts ; for who is more capable of removing my scruples, or informing my ignorance ? Having never been present at any trials concerning those who profess Christianity, I am unacquainted not only with the nature of their crimes, or the measure of their punishment, but how far it is proper to enter into an examination concerning them. Whether, therefore, any difference is usually made with respect to the ages of the guilty, or no distinction is to be observed between the young and the adult ; a later repentance entitles them to a pardon ; or, if a man has been once a Christian, it avails nothing to desist from his error ; whether the profession of Christianity, unattended with any criminal act, or only the crimes themselves, inherent in the profession, are punishable : in all these points I am greatly doubtful. In the meanwhile, the method I have observed towards those who have been brought before me as Christians, is this ; I interrogated them whether they were Christians ? if they confessed, I repeated the question twice again, adding threats at the same time ; when if they still persevered, I ordered them to be immediately punished ; for I was persuaded, whatever the nature of their opinions might be, a contumacious and inflexible obstinacy certainly deserved cor-

rection. There were others also brought before me, possessed with the same infatuation; but, being citizens of Rome, I directed them to be carried thither. But this crime spreading (as is usually the case) while it was actually under prosecution, several instances of the same nature occurred. An information was presented to me, without any name subscribed, containing a charge against several persons, who, upon examination, denied they were Christians, or had ever been so. They repeated after me an invocation to the gods; and offered religious rites, with wine and frankincense, before your statue (which for the purpose I had ordered to be brought, together with those of the gods), and even reviled the name of Christ; whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are REALLY Christians, into a compliance with any of these articles. I thought proper, therefore, to discharge them. Some among those who were accused by a witness in person, at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately after denied it; whilst the rest owned indeed that they had been of that number formerly, but had now (some above three, others more, and a few above twenty years ago) forsaken the error. They all worshipped your statue, and the images of gods, throwing out imprecations at the same time against the name of Christ. They affirmed, the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they met on a certain stated day, before it was light, and addressed themselves in a form of prayer to Christ, as to some God; binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purposes of any wicked design, but, never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery; never to falsify their word, or deny a trust, when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which, it was their custom to separate, and then re-assemble, to eat in common a harmless meal. From this custom,

however, they desisted, after the publication of my edict, by which, according to your orders, I forbade the meeting of any assemblies. After receiving this account, I judged it so much the more necessary to endeavour to extort the real truth, by putting two female slaves to the torture, who were said to administer in their religious functions; but I could discover nothing more than an absurd and excessive superstition. I thought proper, therefore, to adjourn all further proceedings in this affair, in order to consult with you: for it appears to be a matter highly deserving your consideration; more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, this inquiry having already extended, and being still likely to extend, to persons of all ranks and ages, and even of both sexes. For this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread its infection among the country villages: nevertheless, it still seems possible to remedy this evil, and restrain its progress. The temples, at least, which were almost deserted, begin now to be frequented; and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are again revived: while there is a general demand for the victims, which for some time past have met with but few purchasers. From hence it is easy to imagine, what numbers might be reclaimed from this error, if a pardon were granted to those who shall repent.

REMARKS.

Several remarks easily offer from a perusal of this valuable monument of ecclesiastical antiquity, which I consider as affording us one of the most authentic testimonials of the natural tendency of genuine Christianity, and likewise a striking display of the

unreasonableness and malignancy of the spirit by which it was then opposed, and by which it always will be opposed (so far as the providence of God, and the circumstances of the times will permit it to act), while the state of the world and of human nature continue as they are.

I. It appears, that the number of those who professed the Christian name, when Pliny was proconsul of Pontus and Bithynia, and particularly within the extent of his government, was very great; so great, that the heathen temples had been almost left desolate, and their sacrifices sunk into neglect. Pliny thought that such a general defection from the old religion rendered severities justifiable, and even necessary: yet, on the other hand, being a person of humanity, he was shocked and grieved when he reflected on the multitudes who were affected by such prosecutions, without distinction of rank, or age, or sex. Considering the many disadvantages to which the Christians had been exposed, especially under the reigns of Nero and Domitian, their great increase at the time of Pliny's writing (which, at the latest, could be but a few years after the commencement of the second century) evidently proved, that the propagation and maintenance of the Gospel is no way dependent upon the rank, titles, or acquired abilities of those who profess it: for, numerous as the Christians were, they were of so little note and esteem in the world, that Pliny, who was a scholar, a philosopher, and a gentleman, a curious inquirer into every thing that was thought worthy of being known, was wholly unacquainted with the Christians, till his office obliged him to procure some information concerning them. He had an extensive acquaintance in Rome, having been many years in public life, and the Christians were very numerous there; but he appears only to have known that there was

such a people; and that they were a deluded and contemptible people, who deserved all that they suffered, for their obstinacy. The very name of Christian was then odious and reproachful; and when, in succeeding ages it became general and fashionable, other disgraceful epithets were substituted to stigmatize the faithful servants of God, and to point them out to the scorn or rage of the world.

II. Multitudes, who had been willing to be thought Christians in a time of peace, renounced their profession when they could no longer maintain it without the hazard of their lives. The terms of safety were, to invoke the gods, to offer wine and incense to the statue of the emperor, and to blaspheme Christ, which Pliny was rightly informed, no true Christian could be prevailed on to comply with: yet, in fact, when the persecution was sharp, so many yielded, that the cause seemed visibly to decline. The temples, which had been almost forsaken, were again frequented, the solemnities revived, and the demand for victims greatly increased. It is plain, therefore, that there were, even in those primitive times, many superficial Christians, destitute of that faith and love which are necessary to perseverance in the face of dangers and death. Of course it is no new thing for men to desert the profession of the truth, to which they have formerly appeared to be attached; through the fear of man, or the love of the world. These are the stony-ground hearers; and our Lord has assured us, that such would be found, wherever his Gospel should be preached. But there were others, who, having experienced this Gospel to be the power of God unto salvation, were faithful witnesses, and could neither be intimidated nor flattered into a compliance with evil. It is the same at this day: for though we are mercifully exempted from the terror of penal laws, yet the temptations arising from

worldly interest, and the prevalence and force of evil customs, will sooner or later be too hard for all professors who have not received that faith which is of the operation of God, which, by communicating a sense of the constraining love of Christ, is alone able to purify the heart from selfish and sinful principles, and to overcome the world with all its allurements and threatenings.

III. We have, in this epistle, an honorable testimony to the conduct and practice of the Christians in Pliny's time. Though the information of enemies and apostates was admitted, and even sought for, and those who were inclined to speak in their favour were put to the torture, we see, that in the declaration of a heathen, nothing is laid to their charge which was in any degree deserving of just blame. Though their meetings were accounted an offence against the state, they are acquitted of any criminal transactions. On the contrary, it is said, that they bound themselves by the strictest obligations against the commission of immorality, and to the faithful discharge of relative duties. An engagement of this kind, amongst any other people, Pliny would have approved and admired. But the nature of their religious worship, which he censures as a dangerous and immoderate superstition, he thought sufficiently criminal in itself, notwithstanding its influence upon their conduct was confessedly commendable. To such inconsistencies are the wisest men reduced, who discover the least degree of candour in their opposition to the people of Christ. While they ignorantly condemn their principles, they are compelled to bear witness in favour of their general deportment which is formed upon those principles, and which, experience shows, no other principles can uniformly produce. It is true, the Christians were often indiscriminately charged with the greatest immoralities, but not

by persons of reputation and judgment like Pliny, who were careful to inquire into the truth of what they related. At present; we who know what foul aspersions are propagated against the despised professors of the Gospel, do not think it necessary to attempt a formal refutation of them; because as we fear the authors of such slanders are incorrigible, so we are persuaded with regard to others, that there are very few persons (however they may mistake our sentiments) so ignorant or credulous, as seriously to think them worthy of credit.

IV. The object of divine worship, in their assemblies, was the Lord Jesus Christ. On a stated day, that is, on the day which upon this account has, from the apostle's time, been styled the Lord's day, they met early in the morning to sing hymns to his praise; not in commemoration of a mortal benefactor or law-giver, but as to God; acknowledging, by this practice, their firm persuasion of that great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, and that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. That they met before it was light, was most probably to avoid the notice and fury of their persecutors. The enemies of Christ may put those who know and love him to many difficulties and inconveniences; but they cannot wholly prevent them from assembling in his name, unless they confine them in prisons or chains. The reason is, they honor him as God, and are assured that he is present where two or three are met in his name, at all times and in all places. Their dependence for support, direction, and deliverance, is entirely upon him; and when they worship him according to his will, he manifests himself unto them as he does not unto the world. This they believe, experience, and profess; and the hardships they will submit to, rather than be deprived of such opportunities, is a proof that they are

not disappointed in their expectations from him ; especially if it be considered, that there have been few been in which a succession of his people have not ages pressed with the like trials for adhering to him. But no power of policy could ever effectually prevent associations to honor and serve him, amongst those who were fully persuaded that he is their God and their Saviour. Bishop Bonner (in queen Mary's reign), who was better versed in the arts of persecution than in the history of the church, mistook these Christians, whom Pliny describes, for heretics, and charged Philpot with being altogether like them ; a charge which the good man received as a great, though an undesigned honor.

V. The severity with which the persecution was carried on under Trajan, appears from the doubt proposed by Pliny, whether he was at liberty to make any allowance in particular cases, or must punish all alike who were guilty of bearing the Christian name, without paying the least regard to sex, age, rank, or circumstance. Though desirous to show lenity, he did not think himself authorized to reject the most invidious or private accusations ; nor even to accept of a recantation, without the emperor's express warrant. It is plain that he considered the mitigations he proposed, as a diviation from the ordinary course of proceeding against them. History scarcely affords an instance of such undistinguishing rage exerted against any people, upon any occasion, except against those who have been punished for righteousness' sake, though they indeed have often been exposed to similar treatment both from heathens and professed Christians. In cases of sedition, or even rebellion against civil government, though many perhaps suffer, the greater number usually obtain mercy. The devouring sword of war seldom preys upon the defenceless, upon tender youth, or hoary age,

or women. Some bounds are set by the feelings of humanity to the carnage of a field of battle: but when the native enmity of the heart, against those of whom the world is not worthy, is permitted to act without restraint, it acknowledges no distinctions, it feels no compassion, but, like the insatiable fire, consumes whatever it can reach. If there be some exceptions, a few persons of gentle natural dispositions, who are unwilling to shed blood, and rather express their dislike by a contemptuous pity,—this is chiefly to be ascribed to the power of God over the heart of man; and he sometimes makes use of these to check the violence of the others. Such a one was Pliny; he had no esteem for the Christians, he despised them as deluded enthusiasts; and he was angry with them for what he deemed their obstinacy: yet the greatness of their sufferings, and the number of the sufferers, gave him some concern, and made him interpose in their favour, so far as to prevent them from being industriously sought out, or punished without witnesses or proof.

VI. The chief or only crime of the Christians, in the judgment of Pliny, was, their steadiness in maintaining a cause which the emperor did not approve, and continuing their assemblies after they had been prohibited by his edict: for this audacity and presumption he supposed them deserving of the heaviest punishment; however blameless in other respects. It must be allowed, that, as the edicts of the Roman emperors had at that time the force of law, the profession of Christianity, when forbidden by those edicts, was illegal, and if the penalties they suffered were prescribed by the edict, and they were tried and condemned under the same forms as were usually observed in other criminal processes, they suffered according to law. Thus it appeared to Pliny; and though, in his private capacity;

he might pity the offenders, yet, as a governor and a judge, he thought it his duty to give sentence according to the rule prescribed to him. At this distance of time, and while we keep in view that the persecutors were heathens, we can readily plead in behalf of the Christians. The obstinacy they were charged with, was no other than a commendable regard to the superior authority of God. In all things not inconsistent with their duty to their supreme Lord, they were peaceable and obedient subjects to the emperor; but, to countenance the worship of idols, to burn incense to the statue of a man, to abjure the name of Jesus who had redeemed them from hell, or wilfully to neglect his institutions; these things they could not do without sin; and therefore they chose to suffer. We approve their determination, and admire their constancy. But a question naturally arises upon this subject, namely, Whether God be the Lord of the conscience under a heathen government only? or, whether any man, or set of men, who own the Christian name, can have a better right than Trajan had, to compel men to act contrary to the light of their minds, or to punish them for a refusal? As true Christians have always, by the influence of his grace, extorted from the more sober part of their adversaries, a confession in favour of their moral and peaceable conduct, they have been usually proceeded against upon the principle which influenced Pliny: not so much for the singularity of their religious tenets and usages, which are pretended to be so weak and absurd as to excite contempt rather than anger; but for their pertinacity in persisting to maintain them, contrary to the laws and injunctions which have been contrived for their suppression. There have been men, in most ages of the church, whose ambition and thirst of power have been gratified by thus tyrannizing over the consciences of their fellow-creatures, or

(if they could not prevail over conscience) over their liberty, fortunes, and lives; and they have, by flattery or misrepresentation, had but too much success in engaging the authority of princes to support their designs. How many instances might we quote, from the history of kings and rulers, who in other respects have sought the welfare of their people, who yet being misled to esteem it a branch of their prerogative to dictate in what manner God shall be worshipped, and what points shall be received as articles of faith, have crowded the annals of their reigns with misery, and have often themselves largely shared in the calamities which their ill-judged measures have brought upon their subjects! A uniformity of modes in religion has been enforced, as though it were the most desirable object of government; though it may be proved, that to prescribe, under the severest penalties, a uniformity of complexion or stature, would hardly be more unreasonable in itself, or more injurious to the peace and rights of society. Sometimes the servants of God have been traduced as persons disaffected to government, because they cannot adopt or approve such institutions as are directly subversive of the faith and obedience they owe to their Lord: thus the prophet was charged by Amaziah, the high priest of Bethel, Amos vii. 10. At other times, new laws have been enacted, purposely to ensnare or distress them. Thus when the enemies of Daniel were convinced that they could find no occasion against him, except concerning the law of his God, by flattering the pride of Darius they obtained a decree, which, according to their expectation, gave him up into their power as a criminal against the state: May we be duly thankful to God, and to the government under which we live, for the valuable privilege of religious liberty, and that we can worship him according to the light of our consciences, and assemble

together in his name where and when we please,
none being permitted to make us afraid!

OMICRON.

LETTER TO A YOUNG MINISTER,

On Preaching the Gospel with the Power and Demonstration of the Spirit.

DEAR SIR,

I CONGRATULATE you on your ordination. The Lord has now, by his providence, opened to you a door into his vineyard, and has called you to a scene of service, in which I hope the abilities he has given you will be faithfully employed, and your desire of usefulness will be abundantly gratified. You now bear the high and honourable title of a minister of the Gospel: I call it high and honourable, because I am sure they who truly deserve it, will find it to be so at last; though at present perhaps they may meet with much opposition and contempt, for the sake of him whose they are, and whom they serve.

I wish you, upon your entrance into the ministry, to have a formed and determinate idea, what the phrase *preaching the Gospel* properly signifies. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation; and this Gospel is preached when it is accompanied with some due degree of that demonstration and power from on high, which is necessary to bring it home to the hearts and consciences of the hearers. Thus the apostle Peter informs us, "that it was preached in the beginning with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven;" and Paul reminds the Thessalonians, "that they had received it, not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in

much assurance." From these passages, I think we may warrantably conclude, that merely to *declare* the truths of the Gospel, is not to *preach* it. The knowledge of it as a system may be acquired, and of course recited by those who have no portion or tincture of that inward conviction of its important certainty, which is necessary to impress a correspondent conviction upon others. Though the Lord himself be the only effectual teacher, and that change of disposition which is frequently produced by the preaching of the Gospel, must be ascribed wholly to his agency; yet in the means he has instituted, and by which he has ordinarily pleased to work, we may observe a suitableness to the nature of man, considered as a rational intelligent creature, whose inward feelings are excited by external causes, in a manner agreeable to the general laws of his constitution in the present state. I may particularly notice on this subject, the wonderful and well known effects of what we call *sympathy*, by which we often see the emotions of anger, pity, terror, and the like, with which one person is affected, when strongly expressed by his words or actions, suddenly and almost irresistibly awaken similar sensations in those who observe him. Many of the great truths of the Scripture may be represented by a man of a warm and lively imagination, in such a manner as considerably to affect the imaginations and natural passions of an audience, even though he should not himself believe a word of the subject. This would be an effect of no higher kind, than is produced upon the stage. The exertions of a skilful actor first drawn forth by the sight of the spectators and a desire to please them, act upon them reciprocally, and give him an ascendancy over their feelings. When his attention seems to be fixed, when he appears to enter into the distresses of the character which he represents, he

fixes their attention likewise, they also are distressed; and while he weeps or trembles, they weep or tremble with him, and though at the same time both he and they are very sensible that the whole representation is a fiction, and consequently when the play is finished, the emotions cease. This is all very natural, and may easily be accounted for. It is not so easy to account for the presumption of those preachers, who expect (if they can indeed expect it) merely by declaiming on Gospel subjects, to raise in their hearers those spiritual perceptions of humiliation, desire, love, joy, and peace, of which they have no impression on their own hearts. I premise, therefore, that there is one species of popularity which I hope will rather be the object of your dread, than of your ambition. It is a poor affair to be a stage-player in divinity, to be able to hold a congregation by the ears, by furnishing them with an hour's amusement, if this be all. But the man who is what he professes to be, who knows what he speaks of, in whom the truth dwells and lives, who has not received the Gospel from books, or by hearers only, but in the school of the great Teacher, acquires a discernment, a taste, a tenderness, and a humility, which secure to him the approbation of the judicious, qualify him for the consolation of the distressed, and even so far open his way to the hearts of the prejudiced, that if they refuse to be persuaded, they are often convicted in their own consciences, and forced to feel that God is with the preacher. When Philip preached, the Eunuch rejoiced; when Paul preached, Felix trembled. The power of the truth was equally evident in both cases, though the effects were different. One criterion of the Gospel ministry, when rightly dispensed, is, that it enters the recesses of the heart. The hearer is amazed to find that the preacher, who per-

haps never saw him before, describes him to himself, as though he had lived long in the same house with him, and was acquainted with his conduct, his conversation, and even with his secret thoughts, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. Thus a single sentence frequently awakens a long train of recollection, removes scruples, satisfies doubts, and leads to the happiest consequences, and what we read of Nathanael and the woman of Samaria, is still exemplified in the conversion of many; while others, who wilfully resist the evidence and turn from the light, which forces itself upon their minds, are left without excuse. If, therefore, you wish to preach the Gospel with power, pray for a simple, humble spirit, that you may have no allowed end in view, but to proclaim the glory of the Lord whom you profess to serve, to do his will, and for his sake to be useful to the souls of men. Study the word of God, and the workings of your own heart, and avoid all those connexions, communications, and pursuits, which, experience will tell you, have a tendency to damp the energy, or to blunt the sensibility of your spirit. Thus you shall come forth as a scribe, well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, approved of God, acceptable to men, rightly dividing the word of truth. Thus your trumpet shall not give an uncertain sound, nor shall you appear like a cloud without water, to raise and disappoint the expectations of your hearers. A just confidence of the truths you speak, a sense of the importance of your message, a love to precious souls, and a perception of the divine presence, will give your discourses a solidity, a seriousness, a weight, which will impress a sympathetic feeling upon your hearers, and they will attend, as to one who speaks with spirit, demonstration, and power.

Allow me, before I conclude, to caution you

against some too prevalent mistakes upon this subject. There are methods sometimes used to fix the attention of an audience, it is hoped, with a design to their benefit, which are very different from preaching with power, and seldom produce any lasting effect upon a sensible hearer, but an unfavourable idea of the preacher.

Beware of affecting the orator. I do not advise you to pay no regard to a just and proper elocution; it deserves your attention, and many a good sermon loses much of the effect it might otherwise produce, by an awkward and uncouth delivery. But let your elocution be natural. Despise the little arts by which men of little minds endeavour to set themselves off; they will blast your success, and expose you to contempt. The grand principle of Gospel oratory is simplicity. Affectation is displeasing in all persons, but in none is it so highly disgusting as in a preacher. A studied attitude, a measured motion, a nice attention to cadences and pauses, a mimicry of theatrical action, may be passable in the recital of a school declamation, but is hateful in the pulpit. Men never do, never can, speak thus, when they speak from the emotion of their hearts. How is it possible then for a man who professes to speak for God, who addresses himself to immortal souls, who discourses upon the most important subjects, the love of Christ, the joys of heaven, or the terrors of the Lord; how is it possible for this man to find leisure or disposition for such pompous trifling, if he really understands and believes what he says? The truly pious will weep for his ill-timed vanity. And if any seem pleased, it is chiefly because this manner of preaching seldom disturbs the conscience, for it cannot be expected that God will vouchsafe the testimony of his Spirit, even to his own truths, when the poor worm who delivers them, is visibly

more solicitous for the character of an eloquent speaker, than for the success of his message.

Sometimes *vociferation* seems to be considered as a mark of powerful preaching. But I believe a sermon that is loud and noisy from beginning to end, seldom produces much good effect. Here again, my friend, if you are happily possessed of simplicity, it will be a good guide. It will help you to adjust your voice to the size of the place or congregation, and then to the variations of your subject. When the explanation of the text and the application of the sermon are both in the same boisterous tone, I am led to consider it rather as a proof of the want of power than otherwise. It seems impossible for a preacher to be equally affected in every part of his discourse, and therefore, if he appears to be so, his exertion, in some parts at least, must be constrained and artificial, and this thought will often bring a suspicion upon the whole. Especially if his voice be as vehement in prayer as in preaching. We doubt not but if he were with the king, a certain composure and modesty of air, would indicate that he considered whom he was speaking to, and they who speak to God, would certainly give tokens of an awe upon their spirits, if they really felt it; very loud speaking is far from being a token of such a frame. At the best, very loud preaching is the effect of a bad habit; and, though it may be practised by good men and good preachers, I am persuaded it is neither sign nor cause of the word being received with power by the hearers. People are seldom, if ever, stunned into the love of the truth.

There is another strain of preaching which, though it wears the garb of zeal, is seldom a proof of any power but the power of self. I mean angry and scolding preaching. The Gospel is a benevolent scheme, and whoever speaks in the power of it, will assuredly

speak in love; In the most faithful rebukes of sin, in the most solemn declarations of God's displeasure against it, a preacher may give evidence of a disposition of good-will and compassion to sinners, and assuredly will, if he speaks under the influence of the power of truth. If we can indulge invective and bitterness in the pulpit, we know not what spirit we are of; we are but gratifying our own evil tempers, under the pretence of a concern for the cause of God and truth. A preacher of this character, instead of resembling a priest bearing in his censer hallowed fire taken from God's altar, may be compared to the madman described in the Proverbs, who scattereth at random firebrands and arrows and death, and saith, Am not I in sport? Such persons may applaud their own faithfulness and courage, and think it a great attainment that they can so easily and constantly set their congregation at defiance; but they must not expect to be useful, so long as it remains a truth, that the wrath of man worketh not the righteous of God.

But the limits of a letter constrain me to stop here, only adding my prayers and best wishes for your comfort and success.

I am your sincere friend,

OMICRON.

QUESTION :

What are the most obvious Causes, Symptoms, and Effects of a Decline in the Spiritual Life?

BELIEVERS are, by nature, dead in trespasses and sins, even as others; but, by faith in the Son of God, they are made partakers of a new and endless life. They derive it from him; and he has said " be-

“cause I live ye shall live also.” But the life of this life, if I may so speak, its manifestation and exercise, is subject to great changes. A sick man is still alive, but he has lost the cheerfulness, activity, and vigour which he possessed while he was in health. There are many persons, who, if they be, as we would hope, really alive to God, are at least sick, languid, and in a declining state. May the great Physician restore them! It is sometimes said, that the knowledge of a disease amounts to half a remedy; which will hold thus far in the present case, that unless we are sensible of our disorder and our danger, we shall not be heartily solicitous for a recovery.

The causes and symptoms or effects of such a decline are very numerous, nor is it always easy to distinguish them, for they have reciprocal influence to strengthen each other. What may be assigned as the cause, in many cases, is likewise a proof that the plague is already begun; and the effects may be considered as so many causes, which render the malady more confirmed, and more dangerous.

Among the many general causes, we may assign a principal place to error. I do not include every mistake or erroneous sentiment, which may be adopted or retained; but there are some errors which, for the suddenness and violence of their operation, may be compared to poison. Thus the Galatians, by listening to false teachers, were seduced from the simplicity of the Gospel; the consequence was, that they quickly lost the blessedness they had once spoken of. Poison is seldom taken in the gross: but, if mingled with food, the mischief is not suspected until it is discovered by the effect. Thus they who are unhappily employed in poisoning souls, generally make use of some important and salutary truth, as a vehicle by which they convey their malignant drug into the minds of the

wayward. Perhaps they speak well of the person and atonement of Christ, or they exalt the riches and freedom of divine grace, while under the veil of these fair pretences, they insinuate prejudices against the nature or necessity of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Others speak strongly in general terms in favour of personal holiness, but their aim is to withdraw the heart from a dependence upon the Saviour's blood, and the influences of his holy Spirit, without which the most studied exactness of conduct, differs no less from the holiness of the Gospel, than a picture or a statue, or a dead carcass, differs from a living man. Whoever is thus prevailed upon, in the great and essential points of Scriptural doctrine, to separate, in his judgment and experience, those things which God has joined together, is already infected with a disease in its own nature mortal, and his religion, unless the Lord mercifully interposes, will degenerate into either licentiousness or formality. We live in a day when too many are tossed to and fro, like ships without helm or pilot, by various winds of doctrine; and therefore they who wish well to their own souls, cannot be too much upon their guard against that spirit of curiosity and adventure, which the apostle describes by the metaphor of having itching ears; a desire of hearing every novel and singular teacher, lest they imbibe errors before they are aware; and become a prey to the slight and craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive.

Spiritual pride and self-complacency will likewise infallibly cause a declension in the divine life, though the mind may be preserved from the infection of doctrinal errors, and though the power of Gospel truth may for a time have been really experienced. If our attainments in knowledge and gifts, and even in grace, seduce us into a good opinion of ourselves, as if we

were wise and good, we are already ensnared, in danger of falling every step we take, of mistaking the right path, and proceeding from bad to worse, without a power of correcting or even of discovering our deviations, unless and until the Lord mercifully interposes, by restoring us to a spirit of humility and dependence. For God, who giveth more grace to the humble, resisteth the proud; he beholds them with abhorrence, in proportion to the degree in which they admire themselves. It is the invariable law of his kingdom, that every one who exalteth himself shall be abased. True Christians, through the remaining evil of their hearts, and the subtle temptations of their enemy, are liable, not only to the workings of that pride which is common to our fallen nature, but to a certain kind of pride, which, though the most absurd and intolerable of any, can only be found among those who make profession of the Gospel. We have nothing but what we have received, and therefore to be proud of titles, wealth, or any temporal advantages, by which the providence of God has distinguished us, is sinful; but for those who confess themselves to be sinners, and therefore deserving of nothing but misery and wrath, to be proud of those peculiar blessings which are derived from the Gospel of his grace, is a wickedness of which even the fallen angels are not capable. The apostle Paul was so aware of his danger of being exalted above measure, through the abundant revelations and peculiar favours which the Lord had afforded him, that he says, "*There was given me a messenger of Satan to buffet me.*" He speaks of this sharp dispensation as an additional mercy, because he saw it was necessary, and designed to keep him humble and attentive to his own weakness. Ministers who are honoured with singular abilities and success, have great need of watchfulness and prayer on this account. The Lord seeth not as man seeth. Sim-

ple-bearted hearers are apt to admire their favourite preacher, and almost to consider him as something more than man in the pulpit, taking it for granted that he is deeply affected himself with the truths which, with so much apparent liberty and power, he proposes to them; while, perhaps, the poor worm is secretly indulging self-applause, and pleasing himself with the numbers and attention of those who hang upon his words. Perhaps such thoughts will occasionally rise in the minds of the best ministers; but if they are allowed, if they become habitual, and enter strongly into the idea he forms of his own character; and if, while he professes to preach Christ Jesus the Lord, he is preaching himself, and seeking his own glory, he is guilty of high treason against the majesty of him in whose name he speaks. And sooner or later, the effects of his presumption will be visible and noticed. Errors in judgment, gross misconduct, an abatement of zeal, of gifts, of influence, are evils always to be dreaded, when spiritual pride has gained an ascendancy, whether in public or in private life.

An inordinate desire and attachment to the things of the present world, may be assigned as a third prevailing cause of a religious declension. Unless this evil principle be mortified in its root, by the doctrine of the cross, it will in time prevail over the most splendid profession. That love of the world, which is inconsistent with the true love of God, manifests itself in two different ways, as men by temper and habit are differently disposed. The first is, covetousness or greediness of gain. This was the ruin of Judas and probably the cause of the defection of Demas. By the honourable mention made of him in some of St. Paul's epistles, he seems to have had much of his confidence and esteem for a season. Yet at length his ruling passion prevailed, and the last account we have

of him from the apostle, is, " Demas hath forsaken us, " having loved this present world." Again, there are persons not chargeable with the love of money for its own sake, for they rather squander than hoard it, who are equally under the power of a worldly spirit, and equally discover it, by an expensive taste in the articles of dress, furniture, and feasting, often unsuitable to their circumstances and always to their profession. It is not easy exactly to mark out the line of conduct in these respects, which becomes the different situations in which the providence of God has placed us: nor is it necessary, to those who are upright in heart. A simple desire of pleasing God, and adorning the Gospel, will preclude many cases of minute casuistry, which occupy little and trifling minds. Inclination will always direct and regulate our voluntary expenses. They who love the Lord, and whose spirits are lively in his service, will avoid both parsimony and profusion; but they will rather lean to the frugal side in what concerns themselves, that they may be better able to promote his cause, and to relieve the necessitous for his sake. Others, who can be content with a name to live, with the form of religion, will lay up all they can save to gratify their avarice, or lay out all they can spare to gratify their vanity or their appetites. The miser laments that, in this declining day, many professors of the Gospel can hardly be distinguished, either at home or abroad, from the people of the world. The luxurious professor is concerned to see some persons, who would be deemed Christians, so penurious that, though known to be rich, they live below their rank, and can scarcely allow themselves the decent conveniencies of life. And so far they are both right; but it would be better for both if each could be sensible of his own mistake. It is not easy to determine which of these evils is the greatest. Perhaps of the

two, the wiser is least accessible to conviction, and consequently the most difficult to be reclaimed ; but a turn for parade and indulgence, if persisted in, will gradually lead to such compliances with the spirit and maxims of the world, as will certainly weaken, if not wholly suppress, the exercise of vital religion. In whatever degree the love of the world prevails, the health of the soul will proportionably decline.

Many other causes might be enumerated, but most of them may be reduced to the heads I have already mentioned. The practice of a single sin, or the omission of a single duty, if allowed against the light of conscience, and if habitual, will be sufficient to keep the soul weak, unfruitful, and uncomfortable, and lay it open to the impression of every surrounding temptation. Sometimes unfaithfulness to light already received, perverts the judgment, and then errors which seem to afford some countenance or plea for a sin which the heart will not give up, are readily embraced, to evade the remonstrances of conscience. At other times, errors, incautiously admitted, imperceptibly weaken the sense of duty, and by degrees spread their influences over the whole conduct. Faith and a good conscience are frequently mentioned together by the apostle, for they are inseparable ; to part with one is to part with both. They who hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, shall be preserved in a thriving frame of spirit, they shall grow in grace, go on from strength to strength, shall walk honourably and comfortably. But so far as the doctrines or the rules of the Gospel are neglected, a wasting sickness will prey upon the vitals of religion, a sickness, in its nature mortal, and from which none recover, but those on whom God mercifully bestows the grace of repentance unto life.

The symptoms of such a sickness are very numerous and diversified, as tempers and situations vary. A few of those which are more generally apparent, and sure indications of a decline in religion are the following.

Bodily sickness is usually attended with loss of appetite, inactivity, and restlessness; so the sickness of the soul deprives it of rest and peace, causes a dulness and indolence in the service of God, and an indisposition to the means of grace, to secret waiting upon God, and to the public ordinances. These appointments, so necessary to preserve spiritual health, are either gradually neglected and given up, or the attendance upon them dwindles into a mere formal round, without relish and without benefit. To the healthy man, plain food is savoury, but the palate, when vitiated by sickness, becomes nice and fastidious, and hankers after varieties and delicacies; when the sincere milk of the Gospel, plain truth delivered in plain words, is no longer pleasing, but a person requires curious speculations, or the frothy eloquence of man's wisdom, to engage his attention, it is a bad sign. For these are suited to nourish, not the constitution, but the disease.

From slighting or trifling with those means which God has provided to satisfy the soul, the next step usually is, to seek relief from a compliance with the spirit, customs, and amusements of the world. And these compliances, when once allowed, will soon be defended; and they who cannot approve or imitate such conformity, will be represented as under the influence of a narrow, legal, or pharisaical spirit. The sick professor is in a delirium, which prevents him from feeling his disease, and he rather supposes the alteration in his conduct is owing to an increase of wisdom, light, and liberty. He considers the time when he was more strict and circumspect

as a time of ignorance, will smile at the recollection of what he now deems his childish scruples, and congratulates himself that he has happily outgrown them, and now finds that the services of God and the world are not so incompatible as he once thought them to be.

Yet while he thus relaxes the rule of his own conduct, he is a critically severe observer of the behaviour of others. He sharply censures the miscarriages and even the mistakes of ministers and professors, if an occasion offers, and speaks of these things, not weeping as the apostle did, but with pleasure, and labours to persuade himself, that the strictness so much talked of, is either a cloak of hypocrisy, or the fruit of superstition, and that because some do deviate from this acknowledged rule of duty, therefore at the bottom, and if they could be detected, they would be found to be nearly all alike. True Christians seldom meet with more uncandid misconstruction, or undeserved reproach, than from those who having once been their companions, afterwards desert them.

When the disorder is at this height, it is truly dangerous, and indeed, as to any human help, desperate. But power belongeth to God. May it please him to remember in mercy those who are near unto death, to restore them to their right minds, and to recover them to himself. Otherwise, "it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

OMICRON.

ON DREAMING.

DEAR MADAM,

I THANK you for your obliging letter, and would be thankful to the Lord, that you and all your family are well.

Surely never dog dreamed so opportunely and a propos as your Chloe. I should be half angry with her, if I believed she knew your intentions of writing upon the subject, and wilfully drop asleep in the very nick of time, out of mere spite to my hypothesis, and purposely to furnish you with the most plausible objection against it. I admit the probability of Chloe dreaming; nay, I allow it to be possible she might dream of pursuing a hare; for though I suppose such an amusement never entered into the head of a dog of her breed when awake, yet as I find my own powers and capacities, when sleeping, much more enlarged and diversified than at other times (so that I can then fill up the characters of a prime minister, or a general, or twenty other great offices, with no small propriety; for which, except when dreaming, I am more unfit than Chloe is to catch a hare), her faculties may perhaps be equally heightened in her way, by foreign assistance, as I conceive my own to be. But you beg the question, if you determine that Chloe's dreams are produced by mere animal nature. Perhaps you think it impossible that invisible agents should stoop so low as to influence the imagination of a dog. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the laws and ranks of being, in that world, fully to remove the difficulty. But allow it possible for a moment, that there are several such agents, and then suppose that one of them, to gratify a king of Prussia's ambition, causes him

to dream that he has overrun Bohemia, desolated Austria, and laid Vienna in ashes; and that another should, on the same night, condescend to treat Chloe with the chase, and a hare at the end of it, do not you think the latter would be as well, and as honourably, employed as the former?

But as I have not time to write a long letter, I send you a book, in which you will find a scheme, not very unlike my own, illustrated and defended with much learning and ingenuity. I hope the Greek and Latin quotations will not discourage you from *reading* it. Your brother will tell you the meaning of them if you have not made those languages a part of your acquisitions. I have some hope of making you a convert to my sentiments; for though I own they are liable to objection, yet I think you must have surmounted greater difficulties, before you thought so favourably of the sympathetic attraction between the spirits of distant friends. Perhaps distance may be necessary to give scope to the force of the attraction; and therefore to object that this sympathy is not perceived between friends in the same house, or the same room, may be nothing to the purpose.

I seldom fill up so much of a letter in a ludicrous way. I cannot call it a ludicrous subject, for to me it appears very striking and solemn. The agency of spirits is real, though mysterious; and were our eyes open to perceive it, I believe we should hardly be able to attend to any thing else, but it is wisely and mercifully hidden from us. This we know, that they are all under the direction and control of him who was crucified for us; his name is a strong tower, and under the shadow of his wings we have nothing to fear. I hope in those hours when you find most liberty with him, you sometimes think of me and mine.

I am, &c.

OMICRON.

ON READING THE BIBLE.

DEAR MADAM,

I AM farther to thank you for your letter of the 23d of last month. The subject of my former, to which it principally relates, needs no further prosecution, as you express yourself satisfied with what I offered in answer to your question. I would therefore now offer something a little different. But the points of experimental religion are so nearly related, and so readily run into each other, that I cannot promise, at this distance of time, to avoid all repetition. Indeed, the truths essential to the peace of our souls are so simple, and may be reduced to so few heads; that while each of them singly may furnish a volume drawn out at length, they may all be comprised in a small compass. Books and letters written in a proper spirit, may, if the Lord is pleased to smile upon them, have their use; but an awakened mind that thirsts after the Saviour, and seeks wisdom by reading and praying over the Scripture, has little occasion for a library of human writings. The Bible is the fountain from whence every stream that deserves our notice is drawn; and though we may occasionally pay some attention to the streams, we have personally an equal right with others to apply immediately to the fountain-head, and draw the water of life for ourselves. The purest streams are not wholly freed from the *gout de terroir*—a *twang of the soil* through which they run; a mixture of human infirmity is inseparable from the best human composition; but in the fountain the truth is unmixed.

Again, men teach us by many words; and if they would give us their full views of a subject, require us to read a whole volume, the life and substance of

which is perhaps expressed with greater force and greater advantage in the Scripture by a single sentence, which is rather diluted than explained by our feeble expositions. A volume may be easily written upon the grace of humility, and to show the evil and folly of a self-seeking spirit. But if the author should introduce his subject with our Saviour's words, "Even the Son of man came not into the world to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many;" whoever was duly impressed with that short introduction, would have no great occasion to read the rest of the book.

The preaching of the Gospel being an instituted means of grace, ought to be thankfully and frequently improved. And books that have a savour and unction may likewise be helpful, provided we read them with caution, compare them with the Scripture, and do not give ourselves implicitly to the rules or decisions of any man or set of men, but remember that one is our Master and infallible Teacher, even Christ. But the chief and grand means of edification, without which all other helps will disappoint us, and prove like clouds without water, are the Bible and prayer, the word of grace and the throne of grace. A frequent perusal of the Bible will give us an enlarged and comprehensive view of the whole of religion, its origin, nature, genius, and tendency, and preserve us from an over-attachment to any system of man's compilation. The fault of the several systems, under which, as under so many banners, the different denominations of Christians are ranged, is that there is usually something left out which ought to have been taken in, and something admitted, of supposed advantage, not authorized by the Scriptural standard. A Bible-christian, therefore, will see much to approve in a variety of forms and parties; the providence of God may lead or fix him in a more imme-

diate connexion with some one of them, but his spirit and affection will not be confined within these narrow enclosures. He insensibly borrows and unites that which is excellent in each, perhaps without knowing how far he agrees with them, because he finds all in the written word.

I know not a better rule of reading the Scripture, than to read it through from beginning to end; and when we have finished it once to begin it again. We shall meet with many passages which we can make little improvement of, but not so many in the second reading as in the first, and fewer in the third than in the second: provided we pray to him who has the keys to open our understandings, and to anoint our eyes with his spiritual ointment. The course of reading to-day will prepare some lights for what we shall read to-morrow, and throw a farther light upon what we read yesterday. Experience only can prove the advantage of this method, if steadily persevered in. To make a few efforts and then give over, is like making a few steps and then standing still, which would do little towards completing a long journey. But though a person walked slowly and but a little way in a day, if he walked every day, and with his face always in the same direction, year after year, he might in time encompass the globe. By thus travelling patiently and steadily through the Scripture, and repeating our progress, we should increase in knowledge to the end of life. The Old and New Testament, the doctrines, precepts, and promises, the history, the examples, admonitions, and warnings, &c. would mutually illustrate and strengthen each other, and nothing that is written for our instruction would be overlooked. Happy should I be, could I fully follow the advice I am now offering to you! I wish you may profit by my experience. Alas! how much time have I lost and

wasted, which, had I been wise, I should have devoted to reading and studying the Bible! but my evil heart obstructs the dictates of my judgment. . I often feel a reluctance to read this book of books, and a disposition to hew out broken cisterns which afford me no water, while the fountain of living waters are close within my reach.

I am, Madam, yours, &c.

OMICRON.

PLAIN TESTS OF TRUE DOCTRINE.

DEAR SIR,

I DO not wonder that your mind is unsettled and uneasy. When you had derived peace and composure from the knowledge of the truth, it was not worth your while to consult the writers you mention, to know what they could offer in support of opinions which you were beforehand, upon solid grounds, convinced must be erroneous. Unless we have a clear and proper call to examine such books, I think it best to let them alone. A man, who, relying on the strength of his constitution, should tamper with poison, may be hurt before he is aware. There are some errors which, for the subtlety and malignity of their operation, may be compared to poison. And if we presume so far upon our judgment being fully formed and established, as to suppose we may indulge a needless curiosity of knowing the mistakes of others, and how they attempt to defend them, without the least danger of being entangled or perplexed ourselves; we may have cause to repent of our rashness. You have made the experiment, and suffered by it. You have found there

is something in your heart which you did not expect to find there, and which, if God were to leave you to yourself, would render you, notwithstanding all your former apparent stability, capable of believing a lie.

The advocates for that false candour which is so much in vogue at present, will recommend to you a liberal and impartial examination of every sentiment on religion, which may come in your way; and that you should not reject any one, however it may shock you upon the first proposal, until you have heard and considered all that can be suggested in its favour. They will probably remind you, that to prove all things, in order to hold fast that which is good, is the direction of an apostle. But you had already proved, if not all things, yet many, enough at least, to give you a warrant for holding that fast which had evidenced itself to you by its effects to be good. May I not ask you, as Paul asked the Galatians, Where is the blessedness you once spoke of? Nay, I need not ask you; I well know, and I appeal to your own conscience, that in proportion as the principles which formerly made you happy, have been shaken by the suggestions of your new teachers, the blessedness you then spoke of has abated likewise. I long for the honour and comfort of being instrumental to your recovery, and with this view I take up my pen. There are some truths so evident, that they are scarcely capable of additional proof, nor should we think it worthwhile to waste a moment in confuting the person who should deny them. I am sure beyond a doubt, that two and two are equal to four. And if the title page of a large book informed me that the design of the author was to prove that two and two are equal to seven; whatever reason I might have to think highly of the author's abilities, or to be diffident of my own judgment, I need not toil through a folio, and care-

fully weigh every thing his learning and ingenuity could suggest in support of an absurdity, before I could, warrantably, contradict it.

I think an evidence, little less intuitive than that by which we perceive the whole to be greater than a part, may be obtained, with respect both to the truth of the leading doctrines of the Gospel, and their true sense, provided the understanding be duly enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and the heart be humbly and honestly willing to be determined by the testimony of Scripture. Universal experience and observation so perfectly correspond with what the Bible teaches us concerning the heart of man, his present state, his weakness and wants, his anxieties and miseries, with their proper causes, and their only remedy; that he who runs may read, if his judgment be not perverted by prejudices and pride. Indeed, if he idolizes what he calls his reason, and resolves to believe nothing but what he can fully comprehend; if, while he admits a Divine Revelation, he neither expects nor will allow it to inform him of any thing but what he supposes he already knows; the more he reasons, the more he is likely to be bewildered in the labyrinths of scepticism. Yet reason has its use and place in religious concerns, and the religion of the New Testament is a reasonable service. But the reasoning of many persons reputed wise, is like the reasoning of madmen. Their inferences may be rightly drawn, and therefore, if their premises were true, their conclusions would be just. But if the premises be false, the conclusion must be so likewise. The man who thinks he is made of glass, and is therefore afraid of moving or being touched, lest he should be broken to pieces, may be said, so far, to reason justly, for if he really was made of glass, his fear would be well founded; but if he insists upon it, in defiance of all argument and persuasion, that he is really a glass man,

we no longer deem him rational; but pronounce him to be mad. Thus if a reasoner, in contradiction to the common sense of mankind, will assume the dignity, the wisdom, the integrity, and the goodness of man in his present state, as so many incontrovertible first principles; if he reasons consistently from such principles, he must of course, first undervalue, and finally discard, the revelation which he proposes to examine. For madness is in his heart, and unless it pleases God to bring him to his right mind, he is no more competent to judge of truth, than a man born blind to judge of colours.

Is it not highly reasonable to affirm, that God knows us better than we know ourselves? That what he says deserves our attention? That what he promises must be worth our while to seek in the way which He has appointed? Let reason work fairly upon these plain data, and it will confirm all that the Scripture declares concerning the guilt and depravity of man, and of the method of his recovery by faith in the blood of Jesus. That fallen man needs a Saviour; that his salvation is a work too great for a creature to accomplish; that he cannot be saved without a proper atonement made for his sin; nor unless his mind be enlightened, and renewed, by the powerful agency of the Holy Spirit. These points, reason, though unable to discover, or fully to comprehend, can so far demonstrate, as to prove the impossibility of salvation upon any grounds, if the Scriptural representation of the character of God and the heart of man, be admitted as a true one.

Yet these points are not only disputed but denied, and by some persons in the most unqualified terms. The epithets, irrational, absurd, and enthusiastic, are freely applied both to the doctrines and to those who hold them; and the magisterial and decisive tone, in

which these charges are made, has supplied the want of solid argument in their support. I do not wonder, that sentiments so favourable to the pride of man, and which lay but little restraint upon his inclinations, should be readily adopted by many, who are content to let others think for them. But I marvel that you are so soon removed from the truth you professed, to another Gospel. Yet I hope you are not removed, though for the present unsettled; and that the Lord will so humble and instruct you by your fall, as to make it the occasion of establishing you more firmly than ever. I waive argumentation, and appeal to facts; and I shall confine myself to the consideration of a single point, because it is the central point, which has an influence upon every other religious sentiment. You once believed that Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, possesses all the attributes and perfections of Deity, that he ever was, and ever will be, the proper object of divine worship; but now you hesitate: your attention has been drawn to what is commended to you, as a more rational scheme. But they who are agreed to deny the eternal power and Godhead of the Lord Jesus, cannot agree among themselves who, or what He is. Some peremptorily affirm that he is a mere man, like one of us; others suppose him to be of the angelic order, perhaps of the highest rank, possibly superior to them all, but yet a creature, consequently no more worthy of divine honour (and in my view no more competent to the work of redemption) than a worm. If you read on both sides, you will find that the Arian and Socinian writers, abundantly prove that the sentiments which they gently oppose in each other, cannot be reconciled either with Scripture, or with plain common sense. But their opposition is so very gentle, their reciprocal candour and esteem so great, and their mutual dislike of our principles so very sin-

cere and strong, that it seems, upon their plans, to be of little importance, what or how we think of Christ, provided we do not think of him too highly; but let us judge from what we see and feel, and decide accordingly.

1. The truth or falsehood of our religious principles, may not be easily discernible, by their effects, in a time of prosperity. The house built upon a sand, may seem to stand as firm as that which is built upon the rock, till the floods and storms come to try them. But man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards. Admitting that the schemes which represent Christ as a creature, whose knowledge and power must of course be limited, may seem to suit and satisfy those who are at ease; they afford little consolation to a wounded conscience, or even to a person suffering under the various calamities to which every state of human life is liable, under the pressures of poverty, severe pain, and long illness; or when the desire of our eyes is taken away by a sudden stroke; in cases where the help of man is found to be utterly in vain, there is a need of stronger arguments than the topics of what some call rational religion can suggest, to inspire peace, maintain hope, and influence the mind to a cheerful and willing submission to the will of God. Natural fortitude, and cold reasonings, more conformable to the philosophy of the heathens, than to the spirit of the Gospel, may stifle complaints; but to rejoice in tribulation, and in every thing to give thanks, are privileges peculiar to those, who can joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they have obtained reconciliation. A cordial belief that he suffered for our sins, that we were accepted in him, that he is our shepherd, full of care, compassion, and power; who knows the very thoughts and feelings of the heart, and who, having been tempted for us, is

able and ready to succour us in all our temptations : a persuasion that his wisdom and love preside over all our dispensations ; a liberty of applying to him for strength according to our day, confirmed by a thousand past proofs, that when we have called upon him, he has heard, supported, and delivered us : a humble confidence, which only he can give, that the heaviest afflictions are light, and the longest momentary, compared with that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, to which he is leading us by them ; and that sense of the demerit of our sins, only fully to be estimated by the value of the necessary atonement, which will always constrain us to acknowledge that our greatest sufferings are less than our iniquities deserve. Considerations of this kind come home to our bosoms, are fully adequate to our wants, communicate a peace passing understanding, and enable those who feel their influence, to say " It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good ;" and often they can add, to the astonishment of those who know not the power of their principles, As the sufferings of Christ (those which we endure for his sake or from his hand) abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

2. This reminds me of another important point. If there be an hereafter ; if every one of us must give an account of himself to God and be unalterably fixed in a state of happiness, or misery, according to his righteous award, a thinking person, who professes to believe that he must appear at the tribunal of the great, impartial, omniscient Judge, can hardly have any true enjoyment of his situation here, but in proportion as he is favoured with a well-grounded hope (for a false and ill grounded hope, where such vast consequences are depending, must be an awful delusion indeed) that it will be well with him when he shall go hence and be no more seen. Certainty

upon this head, or the nearest possible approaches to certainty, must surely be highly desirable. Let us inquire which scheme bids fairest to afford this satisfaction. If well grounded, it must be built upon truth, and consequently it cannot be stronger than the conviction we have, that the principles are true upon which we build.

An ingenious writer* of the present day, though he thinks the Socinian doctrine "not only renders the "Scripture UNINTELLIGIBLE, but Christianity "itself INCREDIBLE," is pleased, notwithstanding, to give it a marked preference to what he styles the Athanasian or Calvinistic scheme, which he says, "I reject with strong conviction." But in the same page, in the very next preceding period, he frankly acknowledges, "I can, in this instance as in most "others, with much more confidence say what is "NOT, than what is the truth." It may perhaps be justly questioned, whether a man who declares himself uncertain what is the truth, can be competently qualified to decide with confidence, what is not the truth. He elsewhere says to the same purpose, "Indeed I seldom feel much of that satisfaction "which some derive from being sure they have "found out truth." In another publication, he gives the following account of his studies, and the result of his inquiries: "In early life, I was struck with "Bishop Butler's Analogy of Religion, natural and "revealed, to the constitution and course of nature. "I reckoned it happy for me, that this book was one "of the first that fell into my hands; it taught me "the proper mode of reasoning on moral and religious subjects, and particularly the importance of "paying a due regard to the imperfection of human "knowledge. His sermons also, I thought, and do

* Dr. Price.

† Sermons lately printed, p. 158, 159.

"still think excellent. Next to his works, I have
 "always been an admirer of the works of Dr. Clark.
 "And I cannot help adding, though it may seem
 "strange, that I likewise owe much to the philoso-
 "phical writings of Mr. Hume, which I likewise
 "studied early in life. Though an enemy to his
 "scepticism, I have profited by it. By attacking,
 "with great ability, every principle of truth and
 "reason, he taught me to examine the ground on
 "which I stood, and not hastily to take any thing
 "for granted. And now in the evening of a life de-
 "voted to inquiries, and spent in endeavours (weak
 "and feeble indeed) to serve the best interests, pre-
 "sent and future, of mankind; I am waiting for
 "the great Teacher, convinced that the order of
 "Nature is perfect, that infinite wisdom and good-
 "ness governs all things, and that Christianity
 "comes from God; but at the same time, puzzled
 "by many difficulties, anxious for more light, and
 "resting with full and constant assurance only on
 "this one truth, That the practice of virtue is the
 "duty and dignity of man, and, in all events, his
 "wisest and safest course*."

I admire the ingeniousness of these confessions; and I compassionate a state of mind, which, though seldom acknowledged with the same honesty, I believe to be far from uncommon. It is indeed lamentable, if persons of respectable characters and abilities, should devote no small part of their time and attention to the study of the Scriptures, the professed design of which is to make us wise unto salvation, and yet have no hope of being satisfied in the most fundamental points of religion till death shall remove them to a state which will exclude all possibility of doubt. For though death be a great teacher

* *Mary's Review* for December, 1784, page 487.

indeed, it must be uncomfortable to remain in suspense, and under a possibility of being mistaken in matters essential to our peace, till the discovery of our mistake (if it should prove so) will come too late to admit of redress. Oh that we may be persuaded in time, earnestly to implore the assistance of that still greater Teacher, who has promised his gracious help to all who humbly seek it! But if we set him aside, and rashly prefer the guidance of our own boasted reason, in points beyond the line of its comprehension, the most laborious researches will issue in uncertainty. Surely in the beginning it was not so. Our Lord's promise to his disciples was, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." And these promises were abundantly fulfilled to the first Christians. Not to insist on the strong testimony of Peter; "We believe and are sure, that Thou art the Christ; the Son of the living God." The apostles frequently declare, that their aim and intention, both in preaching and writing, was to make others equally sure with themselves; "These things we write unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe in the name of the Son of God." It was not the exclusive privilege of Paul, as an apostle, to know whom he had believed, and to be persuaded that he was able to keep that which he had committed to him. The Gospel came to others likewise, not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, they had joy and peace in believing, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory; they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance; for after they believed, they were sealed

with the Holy Spirit of promise, and because they were sons, God had "sent forth the spirit of his Son into their hearts, whereby they could call him "Abba, Father." These are Scriptural expressions, and but a very small part of what might be adduced to confirm, were it needful, the assertion of St. John, "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself." How different is this strain from that of the writer I have quoted above! Shall we say, then, that the everlasting Gospel has lost its evidence, or its efficacy, in the course of seventeen hundred years? That it could once inspire those who embraced it with a full assurance of hope; but, at this distance of time it leaves inquirers puzzled with difficulties, and still more anxious for light? Rather we must maintain, that the same Gospel still produces the same effects. If Christ died, rose from the dead and entered into glory, only to assure us "that the practice of virtue is the duty and dignity of man, and at all events his safest and wisest course," I may venture to say, that he died and rose in vain. Surely, his gracious interposition does not make it more evident to us, than it was to the heathens, that nothing but the practice of virtue is necessary for a sinner. And I am quite at a loss to know what the writer means by virtue, when I find a bold attempt to set aside the authority of Moses and Paul, complimented by him as "a magnanimous openness.*" Methinks a magnanimity of this kind, can be no branch of that virtue which is the duty and dignity of man.

Ask death-beds, my friends, they will speak; I know, indeed, that many persons die as they lived, careless and insensible, no more impressed by the thoughts of an eternal state, than the beasts of the

* Appendix to the Sermons, p. 394.

field ; and I know that others, lest by-standers should suspect them of fear, or question the validity of their infidel principles to support them, have affected to jest in their last hours, and to meet death with a facetiousness utterly unbecoming a wise man. For it is a serious thing to die ; and the dignified composure of a true Christian, differs so much from the levity of a buffoon, as the sober conduct of a man differs from the mimicry and grimace of a monkey. I have known persons, not in the lowest class for that wisdom and virtue which is taught in the schools of scepticism, tremble, like the boughs of a tree in a storm, when the approach of death has excited an awful sensibility in their conscience, recalled to their remembrance a view of their past lives ; and opened to their mind a prospect (till then unregarded) of what was before them. I have had the comfort of seeing many others very differently affected in dying circumstances. I have seen enough to convince me, if the testimony of the word of God needed any confirmation, that the true wisdom of man is most conspicuous (if he retains his senses) when he is about to leave this world ; and that his duty, dignity, and happiness, are displayed to the highest advantage, when, like Stephen, he is enabled to commit his departing spirit into the hands of Jesus, and to venture his Eternal All, upon his faithfulness and ability to save, to the uttermost, those who, renouncing every other ground of hope ; confide entirely in his mediation. I have seen them in this situation, in the exercise of a good conscience, possessed of a solid, unshaken peace, and at a loss for words to express their joys, yet humbly sensible of their unworthiness, and the defects and defilements of their best services. I have heard them regret, that their regard to him, and their dependence upon him, had been so faint and so feeble ;

but I never heard one regret, that he had honoured him too highly, or placed too much confidence in his authority and power.

3. Another test of the truth and goodness of doctrines, which will approve itself, to a careful and candid observer, without the assistance of critical learning, or laboured arguments, is their comparative efficacy or insufficiency, to reclaim men from wickedness, to inspire them with the fear and love of God, and to produce a habit of integrity and benevolence towards our fellow-creatures. If I hear that a minister, who preaches Christ as the wisdom and power of God to salvation, and who is animated with that zeal for the glory of God, and the good of souls, of which they who truly believe in the eternal power and Godhead of the Saviour, and the value of his atonement, cannot be wholly destitute. I say, if I hear that such a one is about to be fixed in a place where ignorance and immorality generally prevail, I always take it for granted, that the effects of his ministry will soon be more or less visible: that the Lord's day will be better observed, the place of worship more frequented, that there will be some instances, at least, of profligates becoming sober, of careless sinners excited to a concern for their souls, and that some persons who had long lived without God in the world, will begin to worship him in their families. I know that in such cases their will be pretenders found, like tares among the wheat; but I always expect there will likewise be such instances of real reformation, both as to religion and to moral conduct, as shall put gainsayers to shame and to silence, and satisfy candid and attentive inquirers, that a change so beneficial to individuals, to families, and to the community, was the effect of the doctrines delivered to them, and with which they were before unacquainted. The very different effects of that preaching which re-

presents Christ as a creature, and sets aside the necessity of his atonement, I have often had the occasion of observing, when introduced amongst a people, who have before been favoured with what I deem, and assuredly know, to be the true Gospel. In proportion as it has been received, a regular attendance upon public ordinances, a care to maintain family worship, a spiritual frame of conversation and conduct, have gradually declined. Where moral essays are substituted for the truth as it is in Jesus, where men are taught to seek their resources in their own powers, and to consider themselves as already wise and good, the preacher may, perhaps, please the ear, but he will seldom affect or mend the heart. In our days it may be truly said, "*Virtus laudator et alget.*" Fine encomiums upon the beauty of virtue abound; but Christian virtue, the love of God, and of man for his sake, is only to be attained by faith in the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his testimony.

Since, therefore, the principles you once embraced, are best suited to comfort you under affliction, to give you a solid ground of hope in life and in death, and evidently found, to be the most efficacious to promote the fear of God, and the good of society; I hope you will in future beware of the sophistry of those teachers who would deprive you of your gold, and can only give you counters in exchange. I commend you to that good Shepherd, who can pity and restore his wandering sheep;

And remain affectionately yours,

OMICRON.

TO MISS **** **, ON HER BIRTHDAY.

I.

WITH sweet song the lark and thrush,
 On the day when you were born,
 From the dew-bespangled bush,
 Welcom'd in the happy morn.
 Still with each returning Spring,
 As the day returns they sing.

II.

What a cheering soft perfume,
 Wafted on the air, proceeds
 From the hedges drest in bloom,
 And the gay enamell'd meads!
 While the sun, with pencil'd beams,
 Gilds the hills, the trees, the streams!

III.

Yet before another year
 (Pleasures are short-liv'd below)
 Frowning Winter will be here,
 Rob'd in clouds, and storms, and snow:
 All these beauties then will fade,
 All look blasted, cold, and dead.

IV.

Spring an emblem is of youth;
 Hasting on to with'ring age;
 Oh that this important truth
 Might each youthful heart engage!
 Ev'ry pulse, and ev'ry breath,
 Nearer brings our winter, Death.

V.

You, I trust, delight to think
 On the change which many dread;
 Here you taste, but there shall drink
 Pleasures at the fountain head.
 Has not JESUS, by his love,
 Taught your heart to soar above!

VI.

Endless spring will there prevail,
 There, the flow'rs unfading grow;
 Solid joys that never fail,
 How unlike to all below!
 Grief and sin will then be o'er,
 And our sun go down no more.

VII.

You may well record your birth,
 Born to such a glorious bliss;
 All the kingdoms of the earth
 Are but toys compar'd with this.
 'Tis not worth the while to live
 For such joys as earth can give.

VIII.

SAVIOUR! till her life shall end
 Guide her steps, and cheer her heart;
 Be her shepherd, husband, friend,
 Daily grace and peace impart:
 May her bright example show
 What A SAVIOUR'S LOVE CAN DO.

OMICRON.

EXTRACTED FROM THE

EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE.

THOUGHTS ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

I BELIEVE that there are beings superior to us, at least in our present state, whom we call Angels. But what I can collect from the Scriptures concerning their nature and powers is very indistinct. I never saw an angel, and therefore am at a loss how to conceive of him. How poor, then, must be my conceptions of the great God! The revelation he has given of himself in his Word, is undoubtedly fully adequate to the state and wants of mankind; but it can be rightly understood, so far only as it is accompanied by the farther revelation of his Holy Spirit. And as the knowledge of believers is progressive like the light, which advances from dawn to day, I hardly expect that any human form of words can equally and exactly express the apprehensions, even of all who are truly taught of God. A child may repeat such a form no less accurately than a man, but he will seldom annex the same ideas to what he says. There are likewise children, yea, babes in grace. All may be equally orthodox, but I think they cannot all be equally enlightened.

For myself, though I trust the views I have received exempt me from the charge of worshipping I know not what; I am sensible I have not "already attained." My conceptions are weak and faint; and such as they are, I know not how to express them to others to my own satisfaction. I dare not indulge speculations upon this high subject; and when I speak of it, I wish to speak with reverence and caution, lest I should darken counsel by words without knowledge.

The principal effects attributed to faith are, that it purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world. I think that no other cause can produce these effects. Therefore, when I perceive these signs of faith, I am ready to take it for granted, that the principles of the persons who exhibit them are right; though they may, and I suppose they do perceive them more or less explicitly, according to the will of Him who worketh all in all, or to the different stages of their standing or experience in the divine life. To judge otherwise, appears to me as unreasonable, as to expect that several persons viewing the same tower from different distances, should all perceive it precisely under the same angle.

I believe there is a God. That God is *one*, I am assured not only by Scripture, but even by reason. I see enough around me, to be convinced that he is the Creator, Preserver; and Governor of all things. I see the traces and impressions of his wisdom, power, and goodness, wherever I turn my eyes. But the solitary idea of God, absolutely considered, would bring no comfort to my heart. Too long, while I said there was a God, I lived without him in the world; and I should have always lived so, had not my eyes been in some degree opened, to see him by the light of his Scripture. *There*, besides strong

declarations of the unity of the Godhead, and repeated warnings against idolatry, I meet with the terms, Father, Son, or Word (of God) and Holy Spirit. Whether men style *these*, persons, subsistences, or by any other name, I find ascribed to each those attributes which I judge incommunicable to creatures, as much so to those of the highest order, as to worms or oysters: such as omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. Therefore, whether I attempt to think of Father, or Son, or Holy Spirit, I think of God, and yet I am sure there can be but one God.

I read in the gospel of St. John, that the Word was God, that all things were made, or created by him in the beginning. This, therefore, is a fundamental article of my faith. I am told by the same authority, that the word was *with* God. I conceive that this clause, likewise, has its determinate meaning. It teaches me to attend to the above distinction; but I think it does not require me either to comprehend or to explain it. I observe a distribution pointed out in the economy of redemption; that the *purpose* is more peculiarly ascribed to the Father, the *accomplishment* to the Son, and the *application* to the Holy Spirit. But as these offices and engagements can only be sustained or fulfilled by the perfections of Deity; and as God is essentially and immutably *one*, I hope that whether I bow my knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whether I pray to the Saviour himself, or implore the Holy Spirit for his gracious light and influence, I still worship the same one God.

I sometimes hear of Sabellians, but I know not well who they are. I have been told the Moravians or United Brethren are Sabellians; what they once were I cannot say; I judge of them at present by their late publication, entitled in Latin, *Idea Fidei*,

in English, *an Exposition of Doctrine*. If the word Sabellian imports any thing unscriptural or dangerous, I hope, for my own sake (according to this book), they do not deserve to be branded with it. For I am free to confess, that of all the systems of divinity I am acquainted with, none seems in the main to accord more with my sentiments, and particularly in what relates to the Trinity, than the Brethren's Exposition of Doctrine.

But I apprehend that some good men, though not in their judgment and experience, yet in their more general manner of expression, seem to border upon another extreme; for though they profess to believe, and I doubt not, cordially do believe, the deity of the Saviour, they do not seem to speak of him with that freedom, frequency, and fervency, of which the apostle Paul has given us such a pattern in his writings. I have heard excellent sermons, evidently upon Gospel principles, and well adapted to general edification, in which I could perceive but one defect (and I must think it a defect), that the name of Jesus Christ the Lord has hardly been mentioned, but only the word *God*, which has, perhaps, been so often repeated, as to sound in my ears almost like an expletive. On the other hand, I have known some ministers suspected of Sabellianism, for often addressing their prayers, directly and immediately, to the Lord Jesus.

For my own part, if the one be three, and the three one, as I believe, I am not afraid that there is a jealousy in the Godhead, lest one person should be over-rated or too much admired and adored to the disadvantage of the others. Rather I read it is the will of the Father that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. I endeavour to honour the Father by prayer, by praise, by intrusting and surrendering my all to him, by obedience,

and proclaiming the glory of his character. The same honour I owe, and endeavour to pay, to the Son, and, by parity of reason, to the Holy Spirit.

If the Lord Jesus be verily and indeed God over all, blessed for ever, how can I possibly think or speak of him too highly; or pray to him, or praise him too often? The question, how far, and when, we may warrantably pray to him, seems to me the same as to ask, how far, and when, we may warrantably pray to God?

I think the glory and grace of God, can only be duly perceived, at least by us sinners, in the person of Jesus Christ. His mediation, though it derives its efficacy from his divine nature, is performed in the human. With regard to this office, I consider him as the way to God, the mercy seat, the throne of grace. But I consider his human nature, likewise, as the temple in which the fulness of God substantially dwells. In prayer, as I am differently led, I come to God by Christ, or I come to God in Christ. In both I think I have scriptural precepts, promises, and precedents for my warrant.

Bishop Bonner ignorantly charged Philpot, that he was like the ancient heretics mentioned by Pliny. These heretics were the primitive Christians; and Pliny tells us, that they assembled together, to worship Christ as God. May such heresy ever be my privilege and my glory!

I have observed, that in revivals of religion, the word *Lord* has generally become more in use and repute than at other times. I admire this word. We have none that can better answer the Hebrew word *Jehovah*, and it is likewise the peculiar name by which the apostles speak of the Redeemer. He is Lord of all. Yet the Father and the Holy Spirit are frequently spoken of by the same title.

Dr. Owen in his *Christiologia* states, that the more general object of prayers in the New Testa-

ment is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he afterwards points out some especial seasons in a believer's experience, in which, he thinks it may be helpful to faith to address prayer more immediately and directly to the Saviour. Perhaps many of the Lord's people feel themselves always in one or other of those situations, which the Doctor deems peculiar and occasional. But he has omitted one case, which I think well worthy of mention. I think the Lord Christ is he with whom we, who have the honour to be ministers of the Gospel, more especially have to do. Is he not the head of the church? Do we not hope that we have received our designation from him? Is it not *his* flock we are engaged to feed? To whom should we, like the apostle, report our discouragements or success, what we have taught, and what have we done? On whom are we to depend that his grace may be sufficient for us, to enable us for service, or to support us under temptations? What is the grand, the inexhaustible subject of our ministry? Whom are we to preach? Christ and him crucified! Christ Jesus the Lord! from whom, as the great and righteous Judge, we hope to receive the crown of life, which he has promised to all who love his appearance.

I grieve to think, how often I have amused myself and my hearers (I fear it has been little more) with making grave remarks upon sin or holiness, which though, I hope, true in themselves, and important in their proper places, have, by the length of my proofs, reasonings, and illustrations, tended to hide the Saviour from our view. I have since compared this mistake to that of a painter, who in a historical piece should omit the principal figure. I have thought it like an attempt to point out the most striking parts of an extensive prospect at

midnight. In future, I wish when I preach (if I may so speak) to keep the sun in view above the horizon. Then I may hope that He will be seen by his own light, and will likewise diffuse a light upon every part of my subject.

That there is an injudicious, improper way of preaching Christ, and dwelling and chiming upon the name of Jesus, as though the sound of it could work like a charm, I readily admit. But I believe the most judicious preacher, if faithful, if warmly conscious of the Saviour's just right to appear glorious in every eye, and precious to every heart, will not escape censure, from fastidious, superficial, and incompetent hearers. They will allow us to speak of God in general terms, but they will not be pleased with hearing too much of Christ. His name is of small value with the careless, and those who are at ease; it is designed for the relief of the weak, the wounded, the helpless, and the miserable; and they who truly know him, and have experienced his saving power, will be ready to speak of his name (if they could speak Latin) in the words of Austin, that it is "Mel in ore, melos in aure, medicina in corde."

To draw to a close:—If the Lord shall be pleased to give me clearer and deeper views of this point than I have as yet attained, I believe it must be not by investigation on my part, but by a manifestation on his part. I cannot, by searching, find out God. Nor am I ambitious of that moon-light knowledge, which chiefly qualifies for framing distinctions, and weighing words and phrases. The only knowledge I think worth praying for, is that which, while it enlightens, exhilarates, animates, and sanctifies the heart: such as the good woman had, who told her persecutors, when they would have disputed with her,—“I cannot *talk* for Christ, “but I can *burn* for him.”

I conclude with my sincere and earnest prayers for myself and my readers, in the words of the apostle, "That Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith ; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with the fulness of God !"

OMICRON.

A LETTER TO A YOUNG WOMAN.

MY DEAR MISS —,

I THANK you for your letter, and for your kind sympathy with me ; but I am not much to be pitied. My trial, if I may call it one, has been very light, and sweetened with innumerable comforts and mercies. I fell in the street, not down stairs ; but I strained my instep a good deal, and was confined to the sofa for near a fortnight. Last Sunday I was enabled to mount the pulpit, and I am now returning into my old track ; but I cannot yet walk in the street, because I cannot wear my own shoe. I trust, in the Lord's good time, I shall recover my former liberty : and till his time comes, which is always the best, I hope I shall not desire it. I felt little pain, except for about half an hour after my fall. Perhaps my confinement may have kept me from some greater harm.

The text of my first sermon on my return to church was suggested by my own case : John v. 14. Methinks it is applicable to you likewise. You have been sick, nigh unto death, but the Lord has raised you

up: may be enable you to consider sin, as the source and cause of every sorrow; and that the afflictions the Lord sends, however trying to the flesh, are light, compared with what sin deserves; and designed, if rightly improved, to prevent still worse things which may come upon us, if we despise the chastening of the Lord. It is my heart's desire for you, that you may not only say with gratitude, He hath healed all my sicknesses, but be able to add, He has pardoned all my sin.

An accomplished and well-behaved young woman is an amiable object in the sight of her fellow-creatures. She may be sensible and obliging; she may dress and dance genteelly; she may play well upon the harpsicord: she may have much finer work to show, than the coats and garments which Dorcas made; and, by her vivacity and good humour, she may become the idol of all her acquaintance: but if she does not know her state as a sinner; if she admires herself, and is pleased with the admiration of others, while her heart is cold to the love and glory of God our Saviour; if she has no taste for prayer or praise; if her mind is engrossed by the pleasures and prospects of this poor world; she is dead while she liveth. In the sight of God her Maker, she is insensible and ungrateful, she is poor, blind, and miserable.

When you were a child, I could observe in you, not only the sprightliness common to children, but indications of sense and mental powers above the common standard. Could I see you now, I think I should see you greatly improved. Your person, I suppose, is formed, your education finished, and your powers expanded. Happy you, if with these advantages you should be led to devote yourself to the Lord in early life. Then he will guide and bless you, and make you

a blessing in all your connections. You will live honourably and usefully, and die, whether sooner or later, comfortably. You will have a double relish for every temporal comfort, because you will see his hand providing and bestowing it; and in times of trouble, which you will surely meet with, you will have a refuge, a hiding-place, a present and effectual helper, when the help of man would be utterly in vain.

But unless you enter the narrow way by the straight gate, all your talents and accomplishments will be snares to your feet, and thorns in your eyes. Though the world, at first, may appear like a beautiful palace, or a pleasant garden, it is enchanted ground, it is all illusion; and when, at last, the charm is broken, you will find yourself in a desolate wilderness. May the Lord preserve you from those awful disappointments, and bitter reflections, which are the inevitable consequences of living without God in the world!

Shall I advise you to change your own heart, to make yourself (what you must be if ever you are a Christian indeed) a new creature? This would be no less vain, than if I advised you to fly in the air, or to touch the stars with your finger. Yet there is something within the reach of your ability, and which if you neglect, the fault will be properly *your own*.— This is, the use of what we call the means of grace. The promise of God has connected the appointed means and the promised end; so certainly that no one, who carefully attends to the former, can possibly fail of attaining the latter: and no one, to whom the Lord's word of salvation is sent, shall finally miss of happiness, unless the appointed means of attaining it are wilfully neglected. You can read, the Bible is in your hands; read it therefore attentively; by it God speaks to you, and he deserves to be heard. Your heart tells you that he ought to be worshipped. Let

this conviction engage you to pray, and especially pray for the teaching of his Holy Spirit, to enlighten your mind to see and understand the great things of his Word. Reverence his sabbaths, and public worship. Where two or three are met in his name, he has said, I am in the midst of them. Prize the preaching of the Gospel when you can have it, for ordinarily faith cometh by hearing. If you persevere in this way, you shall find that he is able and willing to do that for you which you cannot possibly do for yourself.

I commend you to the care and blessing of the Lord. I hope you will always believe me to be.

Your affectionate friend,

J. NEWTON.

MEMORABLE CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE LIFE OF THE LATE MR. RICCALTOUN.

To the Editor of the Evangelical Magazine.

SIR,

SOME months ago I met with the works of Robert Riccalton, late minister of Hobkirk, in Scotland. I am not in the habit of recommending books. Some sentiments of this author appeared to me rather singular; but his originality, genius, and force as a writer, engaged my attention. And though I do not think myself bound to plead for every thing he has advanced, I readily acknowledge myself a debtor to him, as an instrument, for a more enlarged view of some truths, which have been long dear to my heart.

I found, upon inquiry, that it was a posthumous publication, and, though printed long since (the last vo-

lume in the year 1772), there were few persons within the circle of my acquaintance who had either seen it or heard of it. A considerable part of the edition remained unsold, and almost forgotten; and I was told that the editor, the Rev. John Riccaltoun, the author's son, and his successor in the charge of the parish of Hobkirk, was a considerable loser by the impression.

A friend of mine in Edinburg wrote to Mr. Riccaltoun, at my instance, requesting some information concerning his father, who, I judged from his writings, must have been a very considerable man. My friend transcribed a copy of the letter he received from Mr. Riccaltoun. If you think proper to insert the annexed abstract of the most interesting particulars of this account, in your Magazine, it is at your service. Perhaps it may not be unacceptable to some of your readers.

Mr. Robert Riccaltoun was born (I am not told where) in the year 1691. Some indications of the genius which he afterwards displayed, appeared in early life. He could read the Bible distinctly before he was five years of age. His father, who was a substantial tenant, probably had a design of educating this his only son, with a view to the ministry. He was placed in the grammar school at Jedburgh, where he made a rapid progress in learning. He could write and speak in Latin, with the same ease and readiness as in English. From thence he was removed to Edinburgh, attended the university, and became a proficient in all the various branches of literature. About the time he had finished his course in the college, his father died, and left him in the possession of a very good farm. He then seemed resolved to follow the farming business, and therefore did not attend the Divinity Hall. However, he studied the Holy Scriptures with great diligence, before he attained the age of twenty, and

formed to himself a system of what he called Bible Divinity, from which he never departed through life, though he doubtless acquired clearer and more distinct views, as he advanced in years : and he became so possessed of his system of biblical knowledge, that he could without difficulty preach a lecture upon any portion of scripture, without premeditation, when he was afterwards called to it in the course of divine Providence.

The Presbytery of Kelso, in whose bounds he resided, had such a high opinion of his abilities, and of his knowledge in divinity, that they in a manner forced him upon trials. They wrote his circular letters without his consent, and at length prevailed on him to comply with their wishes. In a year or two after he became a preacher (when about the age of twenty four) he published what he called *The Sober Enquiry*, which had the good effect of putting an end to a dispute, warmly carried on for a considerable time, between two parties of the most eminent men in the church of Scotland.

He was much esteemed by many of his contemporary ministers. My information particularly mentions four by name, as his intimates : the late Alexander Calder, of Oxman ; Thomas Boston, of Etterich ; Henry Davidson, of Galtashiels ; and Gabriel Wilson, of Maxton.

In the life of Mr. Thomson (author of the Seasons) there is an acknowledgment of his obligations to Mr. Riccaltoun, who was himself likewise a poet. And his son's letter informs me, that some of his father's poems were published under Mr. Thomson's name. He mentions one piece of his in particular, entitled, *The Description of a Winter Blast*, upon which Mr. Thomson founded his *Winter*.

Mr. Riccaltoun met with one great trial, which

brought him into very straightened circumstances through the remainder of his days. But he did not regret it. His son has often heard him say, that it was the very best dispensation that could have befallen him; as he thought, that if he had not been so bore down, his spirit might have been very haughty and overbearing.

A Mr. H——, a preacher, and a farmer, who married Mr. Riccaltoun's wife's sister, had borrowed large sums of money from different persons, and persuaded Mr. Riccaltoun he had sufficient funds to pay off all his debts, provided he could get in his own money; and assigned some plausible reasons why he could not call it in for some time. It is not difficult to deceive a young man, unpractised in the world, and who possesses an upright mind, and a warm benevolent heart. Thus he was drawn in to bind himself for a large sum, expecting, as he was promised, to be soon released. But not long after Mr. H. obtained a church in Shetland, and then it appeared he had no money to call in. Of course, the creditors came upon Mr. Riccaltoun, and at once tore from him every penny that his father had left him, to the amount of above £800, nor did that suffice to clear him. He was some years assistant to Mr. Deans, of Bowden, before he was settled at Hobkirk, and still harassed with the payment of Mr. H.'s debts. After living 15 or 16 years at Hobkirk, he was involved in new distress, by opposing the settlement of a minister, patronized and presented by a nobleman, contrary to the inclinations of the parish. He thought the people's cause a just one; and therefore saw it his duty to support them with all the strength of argument he was able. But he suffered severely for it. Mr. H. had been the nobleman's tenant, and one of the sums for which Mr. Riccaltoun was bound, was for the arrears of his rent:

This bond was brought against him, for principal and interest, to the amount of £300, and he would certainly have been thrown into prison, if a friend had not advanced the money; for the payment of which he assigned one half of his stipend, yearly. But he was obliged to contract debts for the support of his family.

I sympathize with his son, while I transcribe the period which concludes this relation:—"At my father's death, as I was bound with him to many of his creditors, I became liable to his debts, which has kept me under water ever since. But the cause was good, and I have struggled cheerfully. But now I almost despair of being clear (though it is brought within £100), as I have seven children to maintain and educate, which, with the most frugal management, will exhaust the whole of my stipend."

Perhaps this little history may engage the notice of some persons, able and willing to assist him. I shall be sorry if a deserving son of such a father does not obtain relief in his exigency.

They who are competent judges of the late Mr. Riccaltoun's writings, will perhaps wonder, as I do, that a man so circumstanced for a course of many years, should be able to write with that apparent composure, and peculiar energy of thought and manner, which seem to require a state of mind and situation perfectly at ease. But the paper before me affirms, that none of his most intimate friends ever heard him repine. The whole of his conduct manifested a serenity of spirit, and an habitual cheerful resignation to the will of God:—a striking proof of the faithfulness of Him, who has said, As thy day is, so shall thy strength be!

He was a very studious man, and when thinking closely upon any subject, or even if writing, the various conversation of others in the same room gave him no

disturbance. Yet he was a very cheerful, agreeable companion, and always happy in company, where the conversation was instructive and sensible. He was especially pleased with the company of young people; and they who had access to know him, were so warmly attached to him, that even reproof, when necessary, was thankfully received, when it came from him. And few men made greater allowances for the foibles of youth, than he. He was an affectionate husband and parent, a warm and sincere friend.

He was taken suddenly ill, during divine service, in the forenoon of a Lord's day, and desired a young man, who was frequently with him, to preach for him in the afternoon. His complaint terminated in a total suppression of urine. He continued in exquisite pain, till about the middle of the week; from that time he seemed to be quite at ease: but as he never spoke after, the cause of the transition from so much pain to sudden ease remained unknown. He breathed strong and full through his nose, for the last three days of his life, without once opening his lips. But his countenance discovered an animated serenity, which was much noticed by those who saw him. He breathed his last, without the smallest convulsive motions, on the evening of the following Lord's day, in the later end of September, 1769, in the 78th year of his age.

The controversy, which, it seems, subsided when his *Sober Enquiry* appeared, was occasioned by the publication of a book, entitled, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. I have not seen his *Sober Enquiry*; but I have in my possession his answers to Mr. Sandiman, who had animadverted upon Mr. Hervey's *Theron and Aspasio*, in two volumes 12mo. under the signature of Palemon.

My paper contradicts a report, that the late Rev. Mr. Walker, of Edinburgh, had made many alterations.

in the third volume of Mr. Riccaltoun's Works (containing Notes and Observations on the Epistle to the Galatians), and declares that Mr. Walker neither made nor proposed any alterations; but only corrected the proof sheets.

I am, Sir, your's,

OMICRON.

Jan. 31, 1795.

ON FEMALE DRESS.

WOMEN who profess godliness, and who have the care of young persons of their own sex, are perhaps in no point more blameable, than in the example which some of them set, and the liberty which perhaps a greater number allow, of undue conformity to the world in the article of dress. Few ministers touch upon this subject in their public discourses; and indeed it is not very easy to treat it with propriety from the pulpit. Yet whatever is unsuitable to the Christian profession, an inlet to temptation and productive of evil consequences, should in some way or other be noticed, by those who have the honor of the Gospel, and the welfare of their fellow-creatures at heart. I make no farther apology, for offering a few hints, which I hope will not give offence, and which I pray, so far as they are agreeable to the Holy Scripture, and confirmed by experience and observation, may be attended to.

I doubt not but many parents who desire to see their children brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, give them many excellent lessons in the nursery. They endeavor to impress their tender minds with a sense of their sinful state by nature,

of the evil of pride, and of the vanity of the world. But when their children begin to appear in public view, for want of due reflection, or resolution, or both, they either encourage, or at least permit them, to form habits, which have a direct tendency to counteract all the benefits which might otherwise be hoped for from the instruction of their early years.

I am certainly no connoisseur in the article of dress; but I know how I am affected by what I see: and I can hear what other people say. The *simplex munditiis* of Horace, which may be translated, an *unaffected neatness*, according to different situations in life, seems a tolerable definition of a becoming dress.

But *Christian* women should aim to comply with the apostle's advice, to adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety. When he adds, "Not with gold, or pearls, or costly array," I do not think it necessary to take this restriction so rigidly, as to affirm, that such ornaments are, universally and without exception, unlawful. I think this is one of the many expressions in Scripture, which are to be understood in a comparative sense. Thus when our Lord declares, "That unless a man hate parents, wife, children, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple;" we are sure he does not contradict, what by his authority is expressly enjoined in many other passages, that we should pay a due regard to our relations, and take a proper care of ourselves. He only teaches us, that whenever our dearest temporal concerns stand in competition with what we owe to Him, they must be given up and renounced.

The providence of God has made an evident distinction of rank and subordination in civil life. There is a long gradation from the highest state of those whom we call the rich, to the lowest state of

the honest and industrious poor. It is to be hoped, that some of his own dear people may be found in all these different conditions. And I see no impropriety in paying some regard to them in dress. At present, however, through the dissipation and extravagance of the times, the proper distinction is almost wholly lost, and it is often not easy to distinguish (except perhaps in the article of jewels) between a countess and a milliner.

If clothes are considered merely as a covering for the body, and a defence from the cold, it will be difficult to draw the line, and to determine exactly between what is necessary and what is superfluous. I think some women may as lawfully wear sattins and pearls, as others may wear stuffs and glass beads; and it is more for the honour of the Gospel, that a woman professing godliness should be distinguished from others, by modesty, sobriety, and good works, than by the shape of her cap, or the colour of her garment.

Yet even to ladies of the greatest affluence, who love and fear the Lord, I will venture to suggest a word of caution. To you I say nothing of the expense; you can, as the phrase is, very well afford it. And if in other respects you are generous and bountiful, ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, the cost of what you choose to wear is of no great consideration. But a nice attention to dress will cost you much of what is more valuable than money—your precious time. It will too much occupy your thoughts, and that at the seasons when you would wish to have them otherwise engaged. And it certainly administers fuel to that latent fire of pride and vanity, which is inseparable from our fallen nature, and is easily blown up into a blaze. I hope you will not be among the first of those, who are eager to catch at, and give sanction to every

new mode; nor is it necessary, if the mode be decent and general, that you should be the very last to adopt it. But something there should be in your exterior, to indicate, that though you do not affect a needless and scornful singularity (which is often the source of censoriousness and envy), yet your heart is not set upon these little things. If a woman, when going to public worship, looks in the glass, and contemplates, with a secret self-complacence, the figure which it reflects to her view, I am afraid she is not in the frame of spirit most suitable for one, who is about to cry for mercy as a miserable sinner.

There are likewise women, who, we would hope, are pious, and therefore, of course, benevolent. But an attachment to dress, and a desire to approach, as near as they can, to the standard of those who are their superiors in fortune, blunt their compassionate feelings, and deprive them of the usefulness, comfort, and honour they might otherwise attain. The expense of their dress is so great, compared with the smallness of their income, that when they have decorated themselves to their mind, they have little or nothing to spare for the relief of the poor. I doubt not, but they take it for granted, that, upon the supposition that our Lord and Saviour was again upon earth in a state of poverty and humiliation, as when he walked in the streets of Jerusalem, and they knew that he wanted a garment, when they were about to spend their spare money in some useless piece of finery, they would gladly forego their purpose for the honour of assisting him. But the heart is deceitful. If we live in the neglect of present duty, we have no right to suppose we should act better in different circumstances. He has said, "Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." And if we are inattentive to the wants of those, whom he appoints to be his representatives,

we cannot be sure that we should be properly attentive to himself, if he was with us in person, and in a low obscure condition.

But I am not so much hurt by observing the materials, as by the manner of female dress; by what we call the fashion, and the eagerness with which every changing fashion, however improper, is adopted, by persons whose religious profession might lead us to hope they had no leisure to attend to such trifles. If some allowance is to be made for youth on this head, it is painful to see mothers, and possibly sometimes grandmothers, who seem, by the gaudiness and levity of their attire, very unwilling to be sensible that they are growing older.

It may be a sufficient censure of some fashions, to say they are ridiculous. Their chief effect is to disfigure the female form. And perhaps the inventors of them had no worse design, than to make a trial, how far they could lead the passive unthinking many in the path of absurdity. Some fashions, which seem to have been at first designed to hide a personal deformity, have obtained a general prevalence with those who had no such deformity to hide. We are informed, that Alexander had a wry neck, and therefore his courtiers carried their heads on one side, that they might appear to be in the king's fashion. We smile at this servility, in people who lived in Macedonia twenty centuries before we were born; yet it is little less general among ourselves in the present day.

5. Other fashions were doubtless contrived by persons, who, having not yet attained to glory in their shame, were desirous of concealing it as much and as long, as possible. Yet these, likewise, are no less eagerly adopted. If I did not consider the tyranny of fashion, my compassionate feelings would often be excited for women who I should suppose

were married, if I did not observe the wedding-finger destitute of a ring. These improprieties are not simply ridiculous. They are serious evils, in a religious view; and, to speak of them in the gentlest terms, they are signs of a careless, inconsiderate spirit, very unsuitable to a professed regard to the Gospel. We are required to attend to the things that are lovely and of a good report.— Every wilful deviation from this rule is sinful. Why should a godly woman, or one who wishes to be thought so, make herself ridiculous, or hazard a suspicion of her character, to please and imitate an ungodly world?

But the worst of all the fashions are those, which are evidently calculated to allure the eyes, and to draw the attention of our sex. Is it not strange that modest and even pious women, should be seduced into a compliance even with these? Yet I have sometimes been in company with ladies of whose modesty I have no doubt, and of whose piety I entertain a good hope; when I have been embarrassed and at a loss which way to look. They are indeed noticed by the men, but not to their honour nor advantage. The manner of their dress gives encouragement to vile and insidious men, and exposes them to dangerous temptations. This inconsiderate levity has often proved the first step into that road that leads to misery and ruin. They are pleased with the flattery of the worthless, and go on without thought, “as a bird hastens to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for its life.”— But honest and sensible men regard their exterior, as a warning signal, not to choose a companion for life, from among persons of this light and volatile turn of mind.

How far does the richest dress which studious vanity can procure from the spoils of birds, beasts,

and insects, fall short of the delicate texture and elegance, and the beautiful tints, which we admire in a flower or a butterfly! "Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these!" The resemblance is chiefly in the frailty of the wearer. Soon, and perhaps suddenly, the body, now adorned with so much nicety and care, must be deposited in the vault or grave, and be food for worms.

An attention to ornament and dress is peculiarly unreasonable at present. The dark aspect of the times rather requires a spirit of humiliation and abasement: The judgments of God are abroad, his hand is lifted up. We know not what is before us, but we have reason to fear awful tokens of his displeasure for our national sins. Perhaps the day is coming when the words of the prophet, "Tremble ye women that are at ease, be afflicted ye careless ones," may be no less applicable to us, than they were to the Israelites of old. I earnestly request my fair readers carefully to peruse the latter part of the third chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, from the sixteenth verse to the end.

OMICRON.

ON RELIGIOUS FEASTING.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Cor. x. 31.

A SINNER, considered as such, is not only destitute and incapable of spiritual blessings, but has forfeited all right to the comforts, and even the necessities, of the present life. It is of mere mercy that he is permitted to breathe the air, or walk upon the

ground. But Jesus the Saviour has not only brought life and immortality to light, and opened the kingdom of Heaven to all who believe in his name ; but he has removed, in their favour, the curse which sin had entailed upon the lower creation. And now, to them, every creature of God is Good, and nothing to be refused, if received with thankfulness and moderation ; for all is sanctified to their use by the word of God, and prayer. But these, which, in distinction from the communications of his grace, we call common mercies, are equally derived from his bounty, and the effects of his mediation.

“ He sunk beneath our heavy woes,
 “ To raise us to a throne ;
 “ There’s not a gift his hand bestows,
 “ But cost his heart a groan.”

We are therefore bound by gratitude, as well in the ordinary actions of life, as in those of the most importance, whether we eat or drink, to do all with a regard to his love, and with a view to his glory.

It is to be feared, that this apostolic rule is too much disregarded by many professors of the Gospel. However they may seem to differ from the world, by a stated and orderly attendance upon the ordinances, they are not easily distinguished upon many other occasions ; particularly at their meals. The people of the world can scarcely exceed them in the cost, care, profusion, and variety with which their tables are covered. I am willing to allow some regard to a person’s situation in life ; but perhaps the excess is more frequently observeable among people in trade, or, as we say, in middling circumstances, than at the tables of the opulent. A friend of mine, since deceased, told me, that, when he was a young man, he once dined with the late Dr. Butler, at that time bishop of Darham ; and though

the guest was a man of fortune, and the interview by appointment, the provision was no more than a joint of meat and a pudding. The bishop apologized for his plain fare, by saying, "that it was his way of living; that he had been long disgusted with the fashionable expense of time and money in entertainments, and was determined that it should receive no countenance from his example." The œconomy of this truly venerable prelate was not the effect of parsimony; for I have been assured, that though he was some time possessed of the princely revenue of Durham, he might be said to die poor, leaving little more money than was necessary to discharge his debts, and pay for his funeral. But we may accommodate to him, what the apostles said of themselves on another occasion, "He did not think it meet to leave the word of God, and to serve tables." And at the tables of some gentlemen of very respectable characters and affluent fortunes, who do me the honour to notice me, I have often seen little more than I should have thought it right to have had at my own, if they had favoured me with their company. It is at least certain, that the waste and parade of which I complain, are by no means confined to those, who, according to the common phrase, can best afford it.

When ministers of the Gospel are invited, they may sometimes have reason to suppose, that some part of the apparatus they meet with, may be intended as a mark of regard and attention to them; and it has the appearance of ingratitude to blame our friends for their kindness: but some of us would be better pleased to be treated less sumptuously, and in a way more conformable to the simplicity of our Christian profession. We would not wish to be considered as avowed epicures, who cannot dine well without a variety of delicacies: and if we

could suppose that such cost and variety were designed to remind us how much better we fare abroad than at home, we might rather think it an insult than a compliment. I have known, in families where there is no professed house keeper, the mistress of the house has been, like Martha, too much encumbered with cares and anxieties in making preparation for her friends. They could not see her so soon as they have wished, and when she appeared, she could not wholly conceal the discomposure she has felt from some unexpected incident, which has more or less disconcerted the projected arrangement of her feast. Such things may be common among those who live without God in the world; but they should be carefully avoided by those who make a profession, that whether they eat or drink, they do all for his glory. Often we cannot avoid the thought—"this dish, unnecessary in itself, or unnecessarily expensive, might have been well spared, and the money given to the poor;" for there is not a day, in which some of the dear people of God do not find a difficulty in providing bread for their children.

Perhaps there is no one circumstance in the history of our Saviour so little laid to heart, so generally overlooked, by those who acknowledge him as their Master and their Lord, as that state of poverty to which he submitted while upon earth. He had no home, he had not a piece of silver to pay the tribute-money: He was hungry when he went to the fig-tree: and when he sat, like a weary, obscure traveller, by the well-side, he was thirsty; he asked for a little water, and seemed upon the point of being refused. He wrought no miracle solely for his own relief; but he felt for the necessitous, and miraculously fed them by thousands; not with dainties, which would have been equally easy to him, but finding a few loaves and fishes

amongst them, he satisfied their wants without changing their diet. Yea, after his resurrection, when he had taken possession of all power and authority both in heaven and in earth, he condescended to dine with his disciples upon broiled fish and bread, which he likewise provided for them. Alas ! the rich followers of this poor Saviour have more reason to be ashamed of their gorgeous apparel, their fine houses, their elegant furniture, and their splendid entertainments, than to value themselves upon such trifles ! They are unavoidable appendages to persons in some situations ; but, I believe, they who have drank deeply into our Lord's spirit, account them rather burdens than benefits.

I know several persons, whose ability to do much more in this way, if they pleased, than they do, is not disputed ; and whose acknowledged benevolence and bounty secure them from the suspicion of being restrained by covetousness. I have often wished that a number of these would form themselves into a society, for the express and avowed purpose of discountenancing, by their example and influence, that sinful, shameful conformity to the world, which spreads like a gangrene, is the reproach of the Gospel, and threatens the utter extinction of vital religion in multitudes who profess it.

But this religious feasting is peculiarly scandalous and abominable, when it is celebrated on the Lord's day. Some professors are not ashamed to say, they are so taken up with business through the course of the week, that they have no other day in which they can see their friends. But, my dear reader, if you are a man of business, and fear the Lord, I hope you speak very different language. I hope you can say, " I am indeed necessarily and closely engaged in business for the six days : but I bless God for the gracious ap-

“pointment of a day of rest, which sets me free for
 “one day; at least, from the snares and cares of the
 “world, gives me an opportunity of recruiting my
 “spiritual strength by private and public attendance
 “upon the Lord, and affords me a little time to at-
 “tend to the state of my children and servants. I
 “love my friends; but if my business will not permit
 “me to see them at other times, it is better for me
 “not to see them at all, than to be interrupted in the
 “improvement of my privileges on the Lord’s day.”

But they who then choose to meet in troops, and feed themselves without fear, will still have something to plead. They are all professors, they do not visit the people of the world, nor receive visits from them—They manage so as to hear two good Gospel sermons in the day, and perhaps have a hymn and a prayer after dinner into the bargain—though they go well filled to the evening worship, they are far from being intoxicated. Will they say, Is there any harm in this? Ask their servants, for whom they are responsible, and who have as good a right as themselves to worship the Lord on his own day. But the poor servants are perhaps more harassed and fatigued on the Lord’s day than on any other day of the week. If they still say, “What harm? let me only appeal to your own consciences: Is this “to eat and drink to the glory of God?” If you can persuade yourselves to think so, I pity you, but know not what answer to return.

OMICRON.

April 11, 1795.

THOUGHTS ON FAITH, AND THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

WE may easily conceive of a tree without fruit, but the idea of fruit is naturally connected with that of some tree or shrub which produces it. In this sense, assurance is of the essence of faith; that is, it springs from true faith, and can grow upon no other root. Faith likewise is the *measure* of assurance. While faith is weak (our Lord compares it in its first principle, to a grain of mustard seed), assurance cannot be strong.

Jesus Christ the Lord is a complete all-sufficient Saviour. His invitation to the weary and heavy laden is general, without exception, condition, or limitation. He has said, Him that cometh unto me, I will *in no wise* cast out. God not only permits, but commands us to believe in the Son of his love. The apostle affirms that he is able to save to the *uttermost*, all that come unto God by him. When Moses raised the brazen serpent in the wilderness, the direction to the wounded Israelites was very short and simple;—it was only, Look, and live. Thus the Gospel addresses the sinner, Only believe, and thou shalt be saved.

Why then does not every sinner who is awakened to a sense of his guilt, danger, and helplessness, and whose desires are drawn towards the Saviour, believe with full confidence, even upon his first application for mercy? Is not the remedy fully adequate to the malady? Is not the blood of Jesus able to cleanse from all sin? Is not the word of the God of truth worthy of entire credit? Yet with such a Saviour exhibited before the eyes of his mind, and with such promises sounding in his ears, he continues

to hesitate and fluctuate between hope and fear. Could he rely as firmly on the word of God, as he can on the word of a man, who, he thinks, means what he says, and is able to make good his promises, he would immediately be filled with joy and peace in believing. But experience and observation may convince us, that, however rational and easy this assurance may seem in theory, it is ordinarily unattainable in practice, without passing through a train of previous exercises and conflicts.

It is true, young converts are often favored with comfortable impressions, which lead them to hope that their doubts and difficulties are already ended, when perhaps they are but just entering upon their warfare. They are brought, as it were, into a new world; a strong and lively sense of divine things engrosses their attention; the world sinks into nothing in their esteem; the evil propensities which discourage them are overpowered for a season, and they hope they are quite subdued, and will trouble them no more. Their love, gratitude, praise, and admiration, are in vigorous exercise. An aged, experienced Christian may recollect, with a pleasing regret, many sweet sensations of this kind, in the early stages of his profession, which he cannot recall. But he now knows that the strong confidence he felt in these golden hours was not the assurance of faith;—it was temporary and transient;—it was founded upon what we call a good frame. Though his comforts were strong, his faith was weak; for when the good frame subsided, his fears returned, his hope declined, and he was at his wit's end. Then, perhaps, he wondered at his own presumption, for daring to hope that such a creature as himself could have any right to the privileges of a believer. And if, in the warmth of his heart, he had spoken to others of what God had done for

his soul, he afterwards charged himself with being a hypocrite, and a false witness both to God and man. Thus, when the Israelites saw the Egyptians (who had pursued and terrified them) cast up dead upon the shore of the Red Sea, they praised the Lord, and believed. They were little aware of the wilderness they had to pass through, and the trials they were to meet with, before they could enter the promised land.

But strong faith, and the effect of it, an abiding persuasion of our acceptance in the Beloved, and of our final perseverance in grace, are not necessarily connected with sensible comfort.—A strong faith can trust God in the dark, and say with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Yet it is not to be maintained without a diligent use of the instituted means of grace, and a conscientious attention to the precepts of the Gospel. For notions of truth, destitute of power, will not keep the heart in peace. But this power depends upon the influence of the Holy Spirit; and if He is grieved by the wilful commission of sin, or the wilful neglect of the precepts, he hides his face, suspends his influence, and then confidence must proportionably decline, till he is pleased to return and revive it. There are likewise bodily disorders, which, by depressing the animal spirits, darken and discolour the medium of our perceptions. If the enemy is permitted to take advantage of these seasons, he can pour in a flood of temptations, sufficient to fill the most assured believer with terror and dismay. But, ordinarily, they who endeavor to walk closely and conscientiously with God, attain, in due time, an assurance of hope to the end, which is not easily nor often shaken, though it is not absolutely perfect, nor can be, while so much sin and imperfection remain in us.

If it be inquired why we cannot attain to this state of composure at first, since the object of faith and the promises of God are always the same?— several reasons may be assigned.

Unbelief is the primary cause of all our inquietude, from the moment that our hearts are drawn to seek salvation by Jesus. This inability to take God at his word, should not be merely lamented as an infirmity, but watched, and prayed, and fought against as a great sin. A great sin indeed it is; the very root of our apostacy, from which every other sin proceeds. It often deceives us under the guise of humility, as though it would be presumption, in such sinners as we are, to believe the declarations of the God of truth. Many serious people, who are burdened with a sense of other sins, leave this radical evil out of the list. They rather indulge it, and think they ought not to believe, till they can find a warrant from marks and evidences within themselves. But this is an affront to the wisdom and goodness of God, who points out to us the Son of his love, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, without any regard to what we have been, or to what we are, excepting that broken and contrite spirit which only himself can create in us. And this broken spirit, though unbelief perverts it to our discouragement, is the very temper in which the Lord delights, and a surer evidence of true grace than those which we are apt to contrive for ourselves. It is written, He that believeth not the record which God hath given of his Son, maketh him a liar. Why do we not start with horror at the workings of unbelief, as we should do at a suggestion to commit murder, or the grossest outward enormity?

Again, our natural *pride* is a great hindrance to believing. If we acknowledge ourselves to be sinners, and are sensible of our need of mercy, we are

not easily brought to see that we are so totally depraved, so exceedingly vile, so utterly destitute of all good, as the word of God describes us to be. A secret dependence upon prayers, tears, resolutions, repentance and endeavours, prevents us from looking solely and simply to the Saviour, so as to ground our whole hope for acceptance upon his obedience unto death, and his whole mediation. A true believer will doubtless repent and pray, and forsake his former evil ways, but he is not accepted upon the account of what he does or feels, but because Jesus lived and died, and rose and reigns on the behalf of sinners, and because he is enabled by grace to trust in him for salvation. Further, pride leads us into that spirit of vain reasoning, which is contrary to the simplicity of faith. Till this is renounced, till we become in some measure like little children, and receive the doctrines of Scripture *implicitly*, because they are from God, requiring no farther proof of any point than a *Thus saith the Lord*; we cannot be established in our hope. Naaman was very desirous to be healed of his leprosy; but if the Lord had not mercifully over-ruled his prejudices, he would have returned a leper as he came. Before he went to Elisha, he had considered in his own mind, how the prophet *ought* to treat him; and not having the immediate attention paid to him that he expected, he was upon the point of going away; for his reason told him, that, if washing could effect his cure, the waters of Syria were as good as those of Jordan. "It seems," to use the words of a late ingenious writer, "that the Gospel is too good to be believed, and too plain to be understood, till our pride is abased."

It is difficult to determine, by the eye, the precise moment of day-break: but the light advances from early dawn, and the sun arises at the appointed hour.

Such is the progress of divine light in the mind : the first streaks of the dawn are seldom perceived ; but, by degrees, objects, till then unthought of, are disclosed. The evil of sin, the danger of the soul, the reality and importance of eternal things, are apprehended, and a hope of mercy through a Saviour is discovered, which prevents the sinner from sinking into absolute despair.—But for a time all is indistinct and confused. In this state of mind, many things are anxiously sought for as pre-requisites to believing, but they are sought in vain, for it is only by believing that they can be obtained. But the light increases, the sun arises, the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ shines in upon the soul. As the sun can only be seen by its own light, and diffuses that light by which other objects are clearly perceived ; so Christ crucified is the sun in the system of revealed truth ; and the right knowledge of the doctrine of his cross satisfies the inquiring mind, proves itself to be the one thing needful, and the only thing necessary to silence the objections of unbelief and pride, and to afford a sure ground for solid and abiding hope.

Once more : we cannot be safely trusted with assurance till we have that knowledge of the evil and deceitfulness of our hearts, which can be acquired only by painful, repeated experience. The young convert, in his brighter hours, when his heart is full of joys, and he thinks his mountain stands too strong to be removed, may be compared to a ship with much sail spread, and but little ballast. She goes on well while the weather is fair, but is not prepared for a storm. When Peter said, "Thou hast the words of eternal life, we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ," and when he protested, "Though all men should forsake thee, yet will not I," he undoubtedly spoke honestly ; but the event

showed that he did not know himself. His resolution was soon and sorely shaken in the hall of the high-priest, so that he denied his Lord with oaths and imprecations. He was left to fall, that he might learn he did not stand by his own strength. The parable of the prodigal may be accommodated for an illustration of this point. The Scripture says; "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the "Lord." But we often want to know at first, and at once; and suppose,—If I was but sure that I am right, and accepted in the Beloved, I could go on with more spirit and success. Many rejoice greatly when they seem to obtain this desire, but their joy is short-lived. They soon resemble the prodigal; they become vain, rash, and careless; they forsake their father's house; their attention to the means of grace is slackened; they venture upon smaller deviations from the prescribed rule, which, in time, lead them to greater. Thus their stock of grace and comfort is quickly exhausted. They begin to be in want; and, after having been feasted with the bread of life, are reduced to feed upon such husks as the world can afford them. Happy, if at length they are brought to their right minds! But, oh! with what pungent shame and humiliation do they come back to their Father! He, indeed, is always ready to receive and forgive backsliders; but surely they cannot easily forgive themselves for their ingratitude and folly. When he has healed their broken bones, and restored peace to their souls, it may be expected that they will walk softly and humbly to the end of their days, and not open their mouths any more, either to boast, or to censure, or to complain.

For, a man who possesses a Scriptural and well-grounded assurance in himself, will evidence it to others by suitable fruits. He will be meek, unas-

suming, and gentle in his conduct before men, because he is humbled and abased before God, because he lives upon much forgiveness, he will be ready to forgive. The prospect of that blessed hope assuredly laid up for him in heaven, will make him patient under all his appointed trials in the present life, wean him from an attachment to the world, and preserve him from being much affected either by the smiles or the frowns of mortals. To hear persons talk much of their assurance, and that they are freed from all doubts and fears, while they habitually indulge proud, angry, resentful, discontented tempers, or while they are eagerly grasping after the world, like those who seek their whole portion in it, is painful and disgusting to a serious mind. Let us pity them, and pray for them; for we have great reason to fear that they do not understand what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

July 11, 1795.

OMICRON.

ON COVETOUSNESS.

WHAT is Covetousness? It is an easy besetting sin, from which few persons are entirely free; and it is eminently deceitful. It is decried and condemned in others, by multitudes who live in the habit of it themselves. It is very difficult to fix a conviction of this sin upon those who are guilty of it. Whether drunkards or profligates regard the warnings of the preacher or not, when he declares that they who persist in those evil practices shall not inherit the kingdom of God; they know at least their own characters, and are sensible that they are the persons intended. But if he adds, Nor the covetous man, who is an idolator

—the covetous man usually sits unmoved, and is more ready to apply the threatening to his neighbour than to himself. If he is willing to entertain the ministers or friends of the Gospel sometimes at his table, if he now and then gives a few shillings to the poor, and a guinea or two to a charitable subscription, he cannot suspect that he is liable to the charge of covetousness.

There are two words in the Greek Testament, which are rendered *covetousness* in our version. The one literally signifies, *The love of money*: the other, *A desire of more*. The senses are indeed coincident: for no man would desire more of that which he does not love; and as he that loveth silver, cannot be satisfied with the silver that he already possesses, he will of course desire more. Money is generally loved and valued at first, as a mean of procuring other things which appear desirable; but many who begin thus, are brought at length to love money for its own sake. Such persons are called misers. We meet with those who, so far from being benevolent to others, are cruel to themselves, and, though abounding in wealth, can hardly afford themselves the necessaries of life. But a man may be very covetous, though not being yet given up to this judicial infatuation, he may congratulate himself, and thank God, that he is not a miser.

I consider covetousness as the most generally prevailing and ensnaring sin, by which professors of the Gospel in our commercial city, are hindered in their spiritual progress. A disposition deeply rooted in our fallen nature, strengthened by the habits of business, the immense circulation of cash, the power of custom, and the fascinating charm of a balance sheet, is not easily counteracted.

If we are, indeed, believers in Christ, and partakers of the power of his resurrection, we are bound by obligation, and required by our rule, to set our affec-

tions on the things that are above, not on the things on the earth. He has called us out of the world, and cautioned us against conformity to its spirit. While we are in the world, it is our duty, privilege, and honour, to manifest that grace which has delivered us from the love of it. Christians must indeed eat and drink, and may buy and sell as other people do ; but the principles, motives, and ends of their conduct are entirely different. They are to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, and to do all for his glory. By his wisdom and providence, he places them in different situations, that the power and sufficiency of his grace may appear under a great variety of outward circumstances. He gives them talents, to some more, to others less ; but all to be improved for him.— Whether they are rich or poor, bond or free, they are so by his appointment ; with which, if they cheerfully comply, they shall in due time, be sensible that he chooses better for them, than they could have chosen for themselves. The language of faith, when in exercise, will not be, “ What is most conducive to my temporal ease and prosperity ? ” but, “ What will give me the fairest opportunity of glorifying him, who has bought me with his blood, and called me out of darkness into his marvellous light ? Too much of my time has already been wasted : how shall I improve the little uncertain remainder for his service ? I am too short-sighted to judge for myself, but he has thus far determined it. I am where he has placed me : and the calling in which his mercy found me (if it be a lawful one) is that in which, for the present, I am to abide, as the best for me. When it ceases to be so, I may depend upon him to appoint me another. But till then, I desire to be contented with such things as I have, and to be thankful for them. He knows my frame, my feel-

“ings, my wants, and my trials; he permits, yea,
 “invites me to cast all my cares upon him; he as-
 “sures me that he careth for me, and therefore I
 “only wish to do or to suffer according to his will to-
 “day, and to leave the concerns of to-morrow in his
 “hands. While I live, may I live for him, and when
 “I die, may I go to him! May his grace be sufficient
 “for me, and all shall be well.”

The Christian knows, or should know, that it is not necessary to be rich, or to be admired or envied by an unthinking world; but it is absolutely necessary for him to maintain peace of conscience, communion with God, and a cheerful activity of spirit in his service. And as his gracious Lord accepts him, not according to what he actually does, but according to what he would do if he could, so that he who can only give a cup of cold water to a prophet, in the name of a prophet, should receive a prophet's reward; in this respect all his people, however differently situated, are exactly upon a par. Luke xxi. 3, 4.

But, alas! how many who profess to know and value the Gospel are far otherwise minded! the chief mark of their profession, is their attendance upon the ordinances of worship. At other times, and in other respects, they are not easily distinguished from the world. If their houses, furniture, tables, and other appendages, secure them from the suspicion of being misers, the manner in which they follow their business, sufficiently proves them to be covetous. If when they can find leisure to speak of religion, they complain that their frames are low, and that they have but little comfort in the ways of God, this is the most favourable token we can find to encourage our hope, that in the midst of all their hurry, there may be a latent sincerity at the bottom. For how can it be otherwise, if they had a spark of life and grace in their hearts.

while they attempt to look too ways at once, and to reconcile the incompatible claims of God and mammon? The love of money, and the desire of more, are always in exercise. As to these, their frames seldom vary, from the beginning to the end of the year. They rise early, take late rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, that they may be able to vie with the world in their outward appearance, and to lay up snares, and thorns, and encumbrances for their children. Often, when already possessed of a lawful business, which affords a competence for a comfortable support, if opportunity offers, they eagerly catch at some other prospect of gain, though they hereby double their anxieties, and encroach still more upon that time (too little before) which they could afford to allot to the concerns of their souls. Such opportunities they call providential openings, and perhaps say they are thankful for them; not considering that such openings of Providence are frequently temptations or tests, which the Lord permits a man to meet with, to prove what is in his heart, and to try him, whether he will hold fast his integrity or not, and whether his affections be indeed set on the things above, or still cleave to the earth.

It is sometimes the pleasure of the Lord to give a servant of his what the world calls prosperity. He places him in a line of life suited to his turn and ability; prepares a plain path before him, and, by a blessing upon his industry and oeconomy, the man, perhaps, from small beginnings, increases in wealth, almost imperceptibly, with little other solicitude on his own part, than a faithful attention to the duties of his calling from day to day. Such a person is a public benefit. The Lord, who gives him riches, teaches him likewise how to use them. He chiefly values the increase of his property and influence, as they enlarge his sphere

of usefulness. He is ready and active to promote the cause of God in the world, and to relieve the wants and miseries of his fellow-creatures. He is eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; the friend of the fatherless and the widow. Persons of this character are to be found amongst us; but compared with the bulk of professors, we may apply to them what the poet says of the fleet of Æneas after the storm:

Apparent rari, nantes in gurgite vasto.

A few still swim upon the waves, which have swallowed up many. For those who, as the apostle expresses it, "will be rich," who will strain every nerve to load themselves with thick clay, and to be found in the list of those who gain much money, or transact much business, may, and often do obtain the poor reward they seek. As in the case of Israel, when, not satisfied with bread from heaven, they importunately clamoured for flesh likewise; God gives them their desire, but sends leanness withal into their souls. They expose themselves to temptations and snares, to foolish passions and pursuits; and thus too many, who promised fair at the first setting out, are drowned in destruction and perdition. For it is written in the Scripture, that no covetous man, who is an idolator, shall inherit the kingdom of God; and the Scriptures cannot be broken:

At the best, if they do not finally perish, they are in great danger of erring from the faith, and certainly pierce themselves through with many sorrows: for the love of money is the root of all evil. We may err from the faith, without changing the form of our creed, or imbibing doctrinal errors. Faith is an active, powerful principle; it realizes things unseen, it leads to the throne of grace, it feeds upon the word of life, it desires and obtains communion with God, and power

from the Spirit of grace, by which it purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world. These are the sure effects of faith; and he who does not in some measure experience them in himself, may have an opinion, a notion of the truths of the Gospel, and may be right in theory; but he is either an utter stranger to the faith of God's people, or has greatly erred from it.

Who can enumerate the many sorrows with which the covetous and worldly-minded professor is pierced! Especially if it be the Lord's pleasure to be gracious to him, and he purposes to bring him at last out of the snares in which he is entangled. Then, sooner, or later, his schemes are broken; losses, crosses, disappointments, and anxieties, wear down his spirit.—Improper connexions which he would form, because, he would be rich, become thorns in his sides and in his eyes. He trusted in men, and men deceive him: he leaned upon a weak reed, which breaks, and he falls. Thus he finds that the way of transgressors and backsliders is hard. His distresses are aggravated by the voice of conscience, which will speak and will be heard —“Hast thou not procured these things to thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?”

Covetousness, or the love of the world, is one great cause of the many trials we meet with in life. The principle of this evil is so strong in us, and so powerfully nourished by almost every thing around us, that it is seldom suppressed but by a course of sharp discipline. Many persons have now reason to be thankful for those dispensations of Providence which once seemed most severe. If the Lord had not seasonably defeated their plans of life, withered their gourds, broken their cisterns, and wounded them where they were most keenly sensible, they might, yea, they would

have gone on from bad to worse. But losses are gains, and the heaviest trials are mercies, when sanctified to bring us to our right minds, and to guide our feet into the paths of peace.

If therefore, my dear reader, you wish to avoid trouble, and to pass through life as smooth as possible, take heed and beware of covetousness. If the Lord loves you, he will not lose you; and therefore he will beat you, as it were, in a mortar, if necessary, rather than permit that to remain in you which his soul abhors, and which, if it were to remain, would exclude you from his kingdom. He has said, and daily experience and observation confirm his aphorism, "A man's life (the real comforts of it) consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Gold cannot communicate peace of mind, nor compensate for the want of it. Surely they who are satisfied with a little of this world's goods, must be more happy than they who are not satisfied with a great deal. Remember likewise, that where much is given, much will be required; and seriously consider, what will it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul!

OMICRON.

October 2, 1795.

ON THE COMFORTS AND SNARES OF SOCIAL AND RELATIVE AFFECTIONS.

ALAS! how difficult do we find it to observe a due medium between overvaluing and undervaluing our creature comforts; especially those of social and relative life. The mutual affection which does, or should subsist, between husband and wife, parents

and children, and proportionably between other family connections, or our intimate and tried friends, constitute our chief temporal pleasures. These are almost the only pleasures this earth can afford, which are very interesting to an intelligent and serious mind. For these the voluptuary has little relish; sensuality has blunted his feelings, and his gratifications are scarcely superior to those of the brutes.

Such persons are not at present concerned in the subject of this paper, nor can they well understand it. I write for those who possess and value the comforts of domestic life, acknowledge the goodness of the Lord in bestowing and preserving them, who wish to make them additional motives for gratitude and praise, but are often apprehensive that their attachments to his gifts withdraw their thoughts from the great Giver, and encroach upon that supreme regard which is only due to himself.

A disposition to love the creature more than the Creator, is undoubtedly a part and a proof of our natural depravity. This evil principle, described by the apostle under the names of the Flesh, the Old Man, and Indwelling Sin, however weakened and mortified in a true believer, is not extirpated. The opposition between nature and grace, flesh and spirit, renders the Christian life a state of constant warfare. They are opposite, contrary, contradictory one to the other; no peace or truce can subsist between them. The effects of this conflict extend to every faculty: when grace is in exercise, the motions of sin are noticed, checked, and lamented; but they are always sufficiently strong to render our best intentions and best actions defective and polluted; and particularly to depreciate and adulterate the finest feelings of humanity, and to turn our glory into shame. Thus our comforts often become our snares, and that which should be for our health proves an occasion of falling.

We cannot be too watchful against this propensity: it should prompt us to daily humiliation and much prayer. But the Lord is not a hard master; he gives us all things richly to enjoy; not to raise, and then disappoint our expectations, but, within the limits his wisdom prescribes, to gratify them. Ignorance and superstition misrepresent him. Under their influence multitudes think to please him by self-invented austerities and mortifications, and, suppose they shall be acceptable to him, in proportion as they make themselves miserable. But, on the contrary, we are assured that he delights in our prosperity, so far as it is consistent with our safety; and that he does not willingly afflict the children of men, and especially his own children, who love and serve him. He has placed us in a world, in which (considered as his world) every thing is beautiful in its season, proper use, and due subordination, to our chief good; though, considered as *man's* world, our apostacy has filled it with confusion and misery.

Contemplate his goodness in a rural situation. Light, colours, and prospects, are suited to please the eye. The singing of birds, the lowing of the cattle, the bleating of the sheep, and, in general, the inarticulate tones of all the animal tribes, are soothing and grateful to the ear. During a great part of the year, the scent of blossoms and flowers perfumes the air, and regales the sense of smelling. Food is a necessary mean for the preservation of life, and would be so if it were no less unpalatable than the most nauseous drugs. But we are furnished with a profusion and variety of articles, which, while they satisfy our hunger, and recruit our strength, are likewise grateful to the palate, and accommodated to the different tastes of different persons: nay, he has not only given us food but fruits. These are certainly not needful for the support of life, nor are they interdicted

like the fruit of the tree of knowledge, but are freely presented for our use. Things might have been so constituted, that all our sensations from external objects would have been disagreeable and painful. But God is good. We should live in the midst of continual enjoyments if we obeyed his precepts, and observed his regulations; which, however contrary to the evil dispositions of our fallen nature, amount to no more than the kind admonition, *Do thyself no harm*; for there is not a single restriction enjoined by the Scripture, with which it would not be our interest to comply, if the authority of God was wholly out of the question. But sin, where it prevails, dishonours God, abuses his gifts, and throws all into confusion. Intemperance, riot, and disorderly passions, have filled the earth with woe.

Thus, as we are creatures formed for society, and cannot live, either with safety or comfort, in a solitary state, it has pleased God of his goodness to make us susceptible of social affections, which sweeten our intercourse with each other, and combine duty with pleasure. Parents are certainly bound by the law of nature to take care of their own children, and to provide for them; especially in the helpless state of infancy, when they are utterly unable to take care of themselves. This would often be an irksome task, if they did not feel an instinctive tenderness for their infant offspring at first sight, which makes that delightful which might otherwise be troublesome.

It is likewise the appointment of God, that the successive generations of mankind should be perpetuated by marriage. As this is the nearest of all natural relations, so when the union is properly formed and conducted, it is the most interesting and endeared. This union, by the will of God, is in itself indissoluble till death makes a separation, ex-

cepting in the single case of unfaithfulness. But the marriage state, when entered into without a regard to God, to the rules of his word, and a dependence upon his blessing, is seldom productive of an abiding union of hearts: and if this be wanting, the case of either party may be compared to that of a dislocated limb, which is indeed still united to the body, but, not being in its proper place and connexion, is useless and painful itself, and the cause of pain and uneasiness to the whole body. Even the marriages of those who come together, and live together, in the fear of the Lord, are subject to heavy taxes: doubled in wedlock, and frequently multiplied in children, they have a larger share of cares, duties, and anxieties, than those who live single; yet they are comparatively happy. And I think, all things considered, they have the most favoured lot. They love the Lord, they seek his presence and blessing, and they do not seek in vain. They love each other, they have one faith, one aim, one hope. Their mutual affection, intimacy, and perfect confidence, greatly enhance the value and relish of the comforts in which they participate, and alleviate the weight of their burthens and trials. Love sweetens labour, and blunts the sting of sorrow. The vicissitudes of life give energy to prayer; and repeated supports and deliverances, in answer to prayer, afford new motives and causes for praise and thanksgiving.

But still they are jealous of themselves, lest those affectionate feelings, which greatly assist them in discharging their social and relative duties with attention and cheerfulness, should become excessive and idolatrous. And, as I have already observed, they have reason to be always upon their guard, lest that which is lawful and right in itself, should, by being indulged in an immoderate degree, become

ensnaring and hurtful. A true believer is, for the most part, rather shocked than seduced by temptations to gross evils : his heart recoils at the proposal. He thinks, with Joseph, " How can I do this wickedness, and sin against God ?" *Perimus in licitis*—His chief danger lies in the abuse of lawful things. The relation we stand in to God, as his intelligent creatures, from whom we derive all that we have or are, and on whom we depend for every breath we draw, makes it our indispensable duty to love him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. And as we have broken this law of our creation, he has in mercy been pleased to claim us for his own by a new and more endearing title. He has redeemed us to himself by his blood. He has bought us with a price, and paid his life as a ransom for our souls. When a sinner is enabled to feel the force of this argument, he needs no more : the love of Christ constrains him. From that moment he is made willing to devote himself, and his all, to him who died for him. But the flesh striveth against the Spirit : he is still a poor creature. He cannot do the things that he would, nor as he would : otherwise every thought of his heart should be in absolute subjection to his Lord and Saviour.

The Lord, who knows our frame, and whereof we are made, is unspeakably merciful to our infirmities, but he will not admit a rival. The believer knows and acknowledges, that whatever he possesses, which is not held and improved in subordination and subserviency to the will and glory of him from whom he received it, is so far an idol ; and the consciousness of his proneness to afford these intruders an undue share in his affections, often makes him confess to the Lord with Job, " Behold, I am vile," though his outward conduct in the sight of men may be unblameable and exemplary.

Yet perhaps some persons may be overburdened with this apprehension. The Gospel is not designed to make us stoics: it allows full room for those social feelings which are so necessary and beneficial in our present state, though it teaches and enjoins their due regulations. It is the duty, no less than the privilege of husbands, to love their wives, even as their own selves, yea, even as Christ loved the Church, who gave himself for it. These expressions are very strong; they imply great love, tenderness, and sympathy. When the Lord said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest," he did not reprove him for loving his child; and Abraham's prompt obedience, when commanded to offer up his beloved son, was a proof that though his love to Isaac was strong, it was not inordinate. And the apostle declares, "that if any man provide not for those of his own house (his kindred, his more distant relatives by blood or affinity), he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." He is to provide for them, if in his power, in preference to others, which plainly intimates that they are preferably entitled to his love. Friendship, likewise, between those who are joint partakers of grace, is very consistent with true religion. Such was the friendship between David and Jonathan. And though our Lord loved all his disciples, one of them is honoured with a peculiar distinction, as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

God formed us originally for himself, and endued the human mind with a capacity which he alone can fill. But when he dwells in the heart, there is still room for innumerable objects of complacency, in their proper subordinate order. When a woman marries, she may continue to love her own parents and relatives as formerly; she may extend her

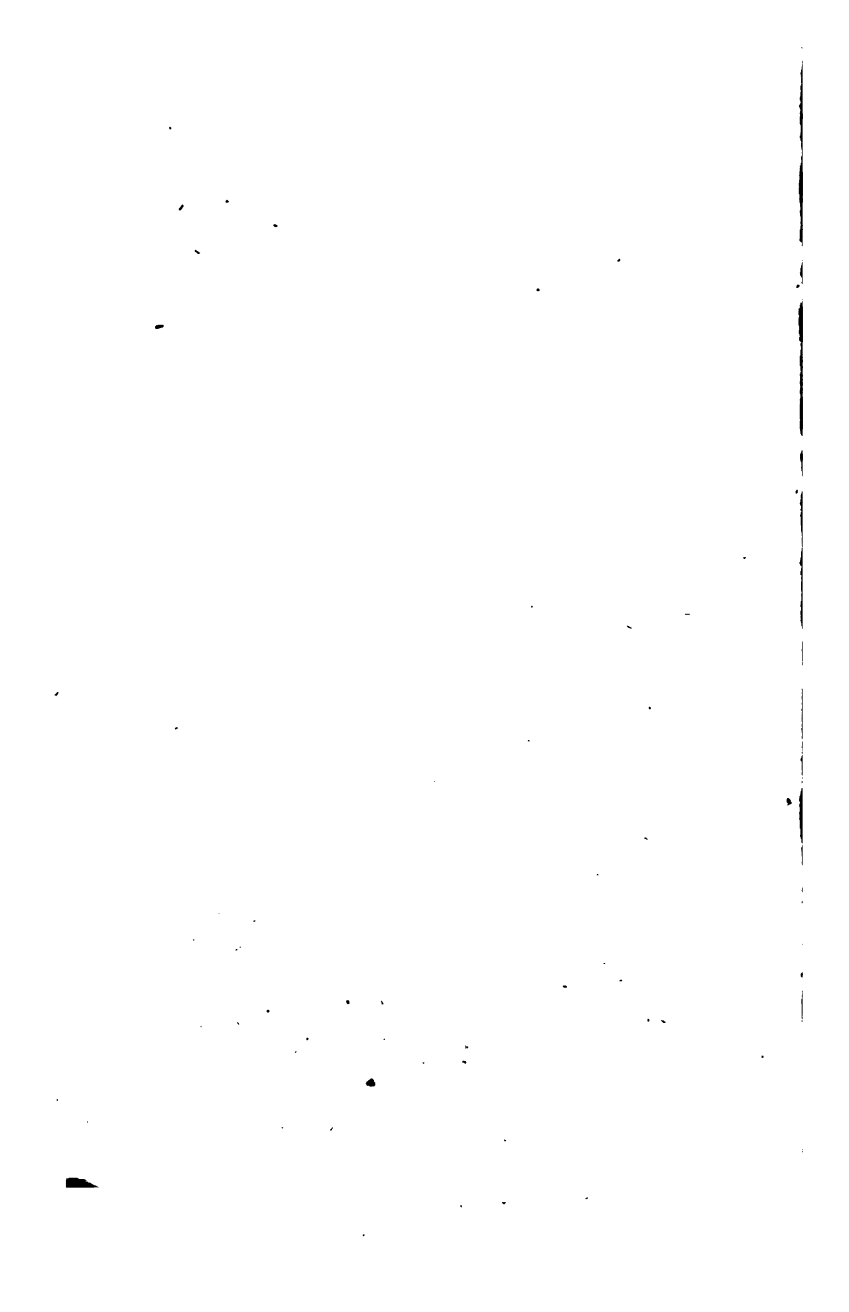
affection and regard to the parents and friends of her husband: in a course of years the number of those whom she loves and values may be greatly increased, without interfering with each other, or with what she owes to her husband; but there is a different and special regard due to him, which if she should transfer to another person, she would be criminal. Thus we may love, and we ought to love, our husbands, wives, children, parents, and friends; and if we consider them as the Lord's gifts—if we seek his blessing in them and upon them—if we hold them at his disposal—if we employ all our influence with them to engage them to seek and love him supremely—if, when they are removed from us, we are disposed to yield a cheerful submission to his holy will—and if, when things are brought into competition, we rather choose to venture displeasing our dearest friends, than to sin against the Lord—with these restrictions we cannot easily love them too much.

But who can come up to this standard? I suppose no person can completely. But we may aim at it; we may lament our deficiency; we may pray for more grace; and by grace we may approximate more and more to it. It is not necessary to distress ourselves with what may happen; as, how should I behave, if the Lord were to take the desire of my eyes from me suddenly? We are to live to-day, and to leave to-morrow with him. If we presume that we could support such a stroke, we should probably find it too heavy for us. But this we *may* say, The Lord is all-sufficient, and he is faithful. He has promised strength according to the day. He permits me to call upon him in the time of trouble: and I trust, when the time of trouble shall come, he will enable me to pray for that help from him, without which I know I must sink; for in myself I am weak-

er than a bruised reed. In the mean time I endeavor to cast all my care upon him who careth for me.

For the rest, we are in the Lord's school—the school of the cross. His daily providential dispensations are suited to wean our attachment from every thing here, and to convince us that this cannot be our rest—it is polluted. Our roses grow on thorns, our honey wears a sting. Frequently our sharpest trials spring from our choicest comforts. Perhaps, while we are admiring our gourd, a worm is secretly preying upon its root. As every bitter thing is sweetened to a believer, so there is some bitter thing mingled with the sweet. This is wisely and mercifully ordered. It is necessary. And if things were not so bad with us, as in the language of sense they sometimes are, they would probably be soon much worse. With such hearts as we have, and in such a world as we live in, much discipline is needful to keep us from sleeping upon the enchanted ground. But the time is short. It will not be thus always. We hope soon to be out of the reach of sin and temptation. Happy hour, when sorrow and mourning, hitherto our inseparable companions, shall flee away, to return no more! when joy and gladness shall come forth to meet us, and conduct us home! Then those who have loved each other in the Lord upon earth, shall rejoice together before him, shall drink of the rivers of pleasure that are at his right hand, and their happiness shall be unspeakable, uninterrupted, without abatement, and without end.

OMICRON.



THE
CONSTRAINING INFLUENCE

OF THE

LOVE OF CHRIST:

A SERMON,

PREACHED

IN THE CHURCH OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF
ST. MARY WOOLNOTH & ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH-
HAW, LOMBARD-STREET, LONDON,

BEFORE THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

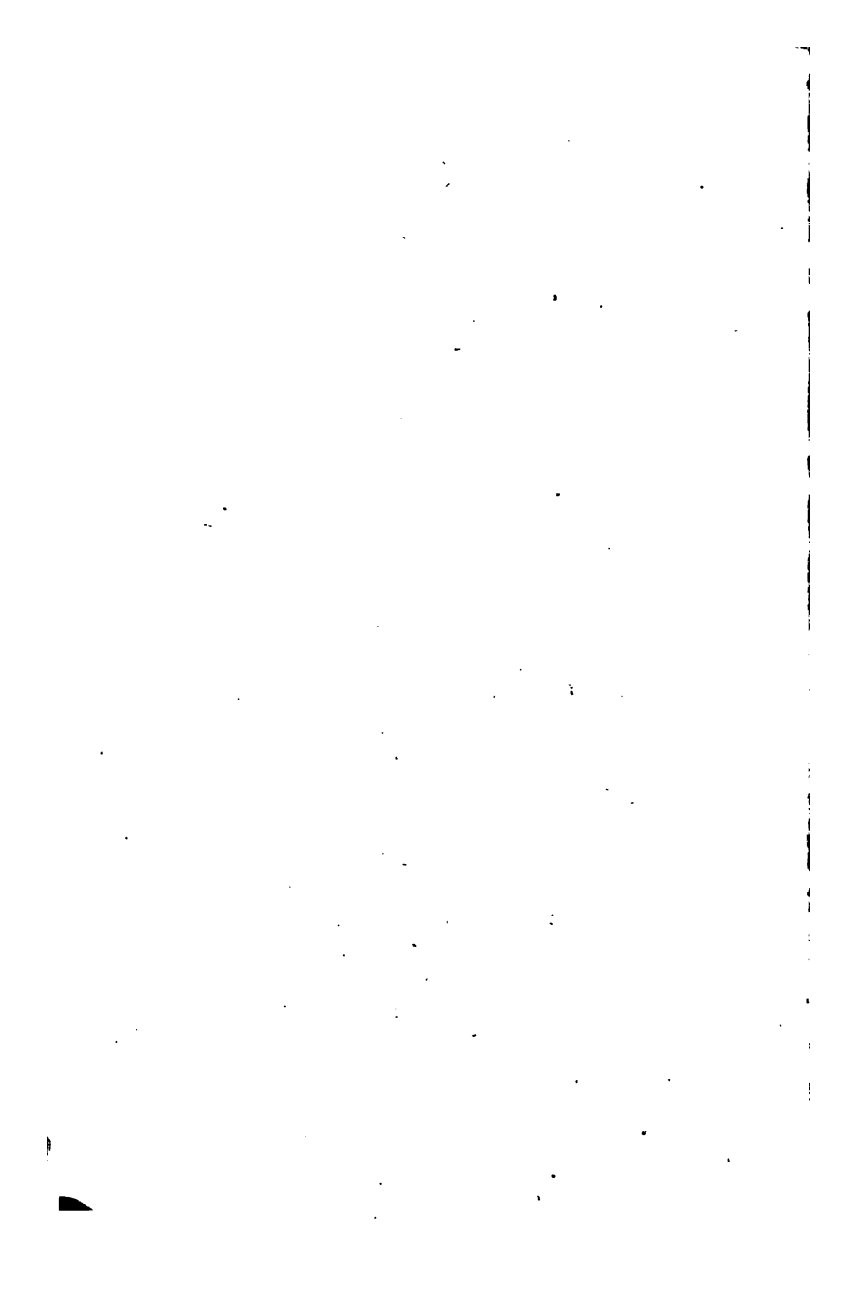
THE LORD MAYOR, ALDERMEN, AND SHERIFFS,

On the 30th day of March, 1800,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF

LANGBOURN-WARD CHARITY SCHOOL:

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your
good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.—
MATT. V. 16.



TO THE
TREASURER, THE TRUSTEES, AND COMMITTEE
OF THE
CHARITY SCHOOL OF LANGBOURN-WARD,

THIS SERMON,

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED AND PRESENTED

BY THEIR OBEDIENT SERVANT,

JOHN NEWTON.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE preacher cannot publish this Sermon as an exact copy of what he delivered from the pulpit. Some interval passed before he was desired to print it. His recollection is much impaired by age ; and he had no notes to assist it : but the plan is the same. He hopes and believes that none of the leading sentiments are omitted, and that the additions, if any, are but few. As it is, he commends the perusal to the candour of the reader, and the blessing of Almighty God.

THE CONSTRAINING INFLUENCE OF THE LOVE OF
CHRIST.

2 CORINTHIANS, v. 13—15.

For, 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, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.

THE apostles, and first preachers of the Gospel among the heathens, exhibited to them a phenomenon perfectly new. The Greeks and Romans had known persons, among themselves, who had strenuously exerted their talents and activity in the pursuit of fame, power, or wealth; but they now saw men no less indefatigable and persevering in prosecuting a design which, far from procuring them either honour or profit, exposed them, wherever they went, to contempt, stripes, imprisonment, and death. Their professed aim was to make others as happy as themselves in the possession of an unseen Good. For the attainment of this end, they willingly gave up all prospect of worldly advantage, though they were generally treated with scorn and cruelty by the most of those whose best interests they wished to serve. This was a disinterested benevolence of which the philosophers, the pretended friends of wisdom and virtue, had no idea; nor were the means they employed better understood. They

preached Jesus Christ, and him crucified * ! For endeavouring to persuade their hearers to place their whole hope and dependence upon one whom they had never seen, but who had been publicly executed as a malefactor ; and to affirm that this Jesus, who died upon the cross, was yet alive † ; that he, who could not save himself from an ignominious death, was the author of eternal salvation to those who believed on him ; for these strange assertions, they were pitied or despised as visionaries, by those who did not revile them as hypocrites. Thus Festus, who seemed to have a favourable opinion of St. Paul's integrity, when he heard him relate the manner of his conversion, thought that no man in his sober senses, could talk so ; and therefore he said, with a loud voice, " Paul, thou art beside thyself ‡ ."

But his Lord and master was treated thus before him, and upon similar grounds. His zeal for the honour of his heavenly Father, and his compassion for the souls of men carried him so far, that we read, his friends, that is, his relations according to the flesh, and who really wished him well, sought to lay hold of him, and restrain him ; for, they said, he is beside himself § .

The apostle Paul was not mad ; he spoke the words of truth and soberness ; he knew whom he had believed ; he knew the worth of immortal souls, and the importance of eternity. He had once fiercely opposed the Gospel, breathed out threatenings || and slaughter against the disciples, and, not content with the mischief he had done in Jerusalem, was hastening to Damascus to vex and wrong the believers there ; but he was arrested in his journey by a light and a voice from heaven ;

* 1 Cor. ii. 2.
§ Mark iii. 24.

† Mark xv. 31.
|| Acts ix.

‡ Acts xxvi. 24.

he found himself in the power of that Jesus whom he had persecuted, and who is pleased to consider all that is done, either for or against his people, as done to himself. The furious Paul of Tarsus, was humbled, pardoned, and, in a few days, commissioned to preach that faith which he had so pertinaciously laboured to destroy. From that hour renouncing all connexion with his former friends, the chief priests and council, and all expectations from them, renouncing likewise that righteousness of the law in which he before had boasted, he devoted himself to the service of his Lord and Saviour, and of the cause which he had opposed. His ardour was astonishing and exemplary. Unwearied by labour, undismayed by danger, unaffected by hardship and suffering, but supported and cheered by the presence of him whom he served, he preached the Gospel in season and out of season, publicly and from house to house, in Judea, in Asia, in Greece, in Italy, and many other parts of the Roman empire. For this zeal in seeking to promote the good of others, of strangers, of enemies, at the expense of all that was dear to himself as a man, he found, as he expected, in almost every place which he visited, open oppositions, and secret conspiracies against his life : he was scourged by the Jews, beaten with rods by the Romans, and confined in prisons and chains. He was likewise the marked object of general contempt ; the wise men of the times despised him as a babbler ; he was regarded by many as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things ; many said, “ Away with such a fellow from the earth, it is not fit that he should live !” Acts xxii. 22. But when, in defiance of all discouragements, he still pressed forward, as if he had done nothing while any thing more remained to be done, accounted the disgrace he met with his honour, and gloried in his chains, Acts xxviii. 20. we cannot

wonder if the more moderate of his observers, who knew not his principles, thought that he was surely beside himself.

The only apology he saw fit to make is expressed in my text. The bulk of mankind in Christendom, by whatever name they are distinguished, pay little more regard to the Gospel than the Jews or heathens did in the apostle's days. The heart of man, in its natural state, is the same in all ages, devoid of either taste or inclination for the things of God till visited by power from on high. Faithful ministers are still liable to be thought beside themselves; by some, for the subject-matter of their discourses; by others, for the impertinency and freedom of their addresses to the consciences of their hearers. We are, however, encouraged by St. Paul's example, and we adopt his apology: If we are beside ourselves, it is to God.—We speak in his name, and the message we deliver, so far as agreeable to the Scripture, is from him, and to him we are responsible. If we are sober, if we expostulate and reason with you in familiar language upon the uncertainty of life, the certainty of death, and a future judgment, and other truths, which none but infidels will venture to deny, it is for your sakes.

The word *enthusiasm* is often used, by the same person, in two very different senses. It is a term of commendation when applied to orators, poets, painters, or sculptors, and expresses the energy of genius. No one is expected to excel in the fine arts without a portion of enthusiasm, and it is supposed essential to military prowess. But it has quite another acceptance in religious concerns. If a minister of the Gospel is warm and earnest, he is frequently stigmatized as an enthusiast, that is, as the imposers of the name would have it understood, a person of a weak mind and disordered judgment, if he be really sincere; for, many

are willing to suppose that his enthusiasm is no more than a mask or veil, assumed to cover the artful views of a designing hypocrite.

For myself, it is a small thing for me to be judged by man's judgment, 1 Cor. iv. 3. At my time of life, nearly the close of my seventy-fifth year, it behoves me to think it very possible, yea, not improbable, that every time I appear in the pulpit may be my last; and when I look round upon this respectable congregation, I doubtless see some persons before me who will never hear me again. Perhaps we shall meet no more in this world; but we shall certainly meet before the tribunal of the Great Judge, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden. Then *I* must give an account of my ministry, and *you* must give an account of yourselves to God. Surely, if I believe what the Scripture teaches of the evil of sin, the glory of the Saviour, the worth of the soul, and the importance of eternity, you will allow me to speak with the same degree of emotion. As this may be my last opportunity, if there were but one person amongst us, who has not yet attended duly to these great subjects, I must not let him depart as he came; I must warn him by the terrors of the Lord; I must beseech him by his tender mercies: 2 Cor. v. 11.; Rom. xii. i. I am desirous to save both my own soul and the souls of those that hear me, 1 Tim. iv. 16. Whether I be beside myself, or sober, it is for the cause of God and for your sakes. The love of Christ constraineth me.

We may observe from this passage,

I. The grand leading motive of the apostle's conduct, "The love of Christ constrains us."

II. Two doctrines which virtually comprehend the whole subjects of the Gospel-ministry: 1. The provision which the mercy of God made for the recovery

of fallen man, "One died for all;" whence he infers, 2. "Then were all dead."

III. The end he had in view, and which he hoped and expected to obtain, by insisting on these truths wherever he went: That they which live should not, "henceforth live to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again."

I. The love of Christ was the apostle's chief motive; it constrained him, *ἐκ τῆς ἀγάπης*; bore him along like a torrent, in defiance of labour, hardship, and opposition. Many of us know the force of love in social life, and feel a readiness to do, bear, or forbear much for those whom we greatly love. But there is no love to be compared with the love of Christ. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, Heb. i. 3. 1 Tim. iii. 16; the express image of his person, God manifest in the flesh; all things were created by him, and for him; for this high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, Isaiah lvii. 15. in the fulness of time, assumed our nature into personal union with himself, was born of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those that were under the law, that sinners, believing in his name, might not only escape deserved condemnation, but might receive the adoption of sons, Gal. iv. 4, 5. For this great purpose he emptied himself: and though in the form of God, he appeared upon earth in the form of a servant; submitted to a state of poverty, reproach, and opposition, was despised and rejected of men, lived a suffering life, and terminated his sufferings by a cruel and ignominious death; for, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Phil. ii. 8. Therefore, God highly exalted his human nature, and has given him a name above every name. The Lamb once upon the cross, is now the Lamb upon the throne, possessing and exercising all power in heaven and on earth. Yet he is still mild.

ful of those for whom he suffered ; his heart is made of tenderness ; his bowels melt with love ; he appears in the presence of God for them, Heb. ix. 24. as their great high priest, advocate, and intercessor. By his holy word he invites, and by the power of his Holy Spirit he draws, and encourages, and enables the weary and heavy laden to come unto him for rest. He declares, that they who apply to him, he will *in no wise* cast out ; and he promises to save them *to the uttermost* ; John vi. 37. Heb. vii. 25. to support and guide them safely through all their conflicts, temptations, and trials, while they are here ; to lead them safely through the dark valley of the shadow of death ; and then to receive them to himself, that that they may be ever with him to behold his glory, John xvii. 24.

Such is the love of Christ ;—or rather we may be ashamed of the faintness of our conceptions of this love. When we attempt to consider the glory of his divine person, the depth of his humiliation, the unknown sorrows and agonies which wrung his heart in Gethsemane and on Mount Golgotha, and that he endured all this for his enemies, even for those whose hearts were, both by nature and habit, alienated from him, the power he exerts in reconciling them to himself, the blessings he bestows upon them in this life, when they are renewed by his grace, and the eternal happiness he has prepared for them in a future state,—I say, when we attempt to conceive of this love, in its origin, progress, and effects, we are soon overwhelmed, our thoughts are swallowed up, and we can only wonder and adore in silence. This love of Christ to sinners is inexpressible, unsearchable, and passing knowledge ; it is an ocean without either bottom or shore.

They who have obtained mercy, who know and

love and trust him, have likewise their peculiar and appropriate reasons for admiring his love. They often reflect on what they were doing, and whither they were going, when he first touched their hearts and made them willing to receive him as their prophet, priest, and king. They are sensible that, if they had died in their ignorance, they must have been lost for ever; and, while they see many of their fellow-creatures, so worse by nature than themselves, who live in the world, without God, and without Christ, and who die, it is to be feared, without any solid ground of hope, they rejoice, with trembling, for that undeserved and unsought mercy, which preserved them from going down into the pit of destruction, when their sins were unpardoned, and their hearts unhumbled. They confess that they were barren trees in God's vineyard; and, though he had a right to expect fruit from them, and waited year after year, he found none. Why then were they not cut down as camberers of the ground? It was owing to the gracious interposition of the Great Mediator whom they had long disregarded. Thus, we have observed, it was with our apostle. The pride of his heart, and the prejudices of his education, had fired him with rage against the cause and the people of the Lord. He seems to have been no less active and furious in opposing them than Herod. But Herod was suddenly cut off, and devoured by worms; whereas Paul of Tarsus, who had done much mischief, while meditating more, was suddenly convinced, humbled, and pardoned. We cannot wonder that the love of Christ was the constraining motive of his conduct from that time to the end of his life.

Oh, that we all knew the need and the worth of this Saviour! Then we should all love him! This will be the deciding point at last. St. Paul, writ-

ing by inspiration of God, says in one place, "Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Ephes. vi. 24. In another place, under the same influence, he denounces an awful sentence against those who love him not: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." 1 Cor. xvi. 22. This was by no means the apostle's wish; he would willingly have been made an anathema himself after the manner of Christ, Rom. ix. 3. if he could thereby procure the salvation of his enemies who sought his life in every place. But he declared the will of God, that if any man, who hears, or might hear, the record that God has given of his Son, refuses to love and serve him, and lives and dies a stranger to his love, he must, he will, be accursed! for,

II. He is the One; the mighty One, who died for all. The sacrifices, which were types of his appearance in the fulness of time to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, were appropriated for the instruction and consolation of the people of Israel. But now the partition-wall is broken down. The distinction between Jew and Gentile is removed. Jesus died, that all, of every age and nation, whether high or low, rich or poor, bond or free, who, to the ends of the earth, and to the end of time, should believe in his name, might live through him. As the sun, his great visible emblem, fills every eye with his light, and would do so, were they as numerous as the leaves upon the trees or the blades of grass in the fields, without the least diminution of his effulgence; so this Lord God, our Saviour, the sun of the intellectual world, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Wherever the word of his Gospel is known, he makes it his power to the salvation of all who believe on him. The value and efficacy of his atonement and righte-

ousness are inexhaustible. It is true, the blind are in darkness at noon-day ; but this Sun of Righteousness not only affords light to those who can see, but gives sight to the blind. He invites all to come to him for relief : but many refuse to apply. They prefer darkness to light, because their deeds are evil. But all who seek him, and wait for him, in the way of his appointment, are graciously accepted ; they receive their sight, they look to him, and are saved. He has declared, Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out, whatever their former characters or conduct may have been, but they who, though repeatedly wooed and warned, will not come, if they persist in their obstinacy, must perish in unbelief ; for he is sovereign in the dispensation of his grace.

If One, if *this* One, the only-beloved Son of God, died thus for all ; if the Lord of Glory humbled himself to assume our nature, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ; it surely must be for some very important design, worthy of himself, and which he alone was able to accomplish. The apostle briefly states the necessity and urgency of the case, by way of inference : If one died for all, then were all dead. The Scripture abundantly declares the state of fallen man, of all mankind, to be a state of death. We are all, by nature, dead in a twofold sense ; dead in *law*, and dead in *sin*.

When a criminal has been tried, convicted, and condemned to death in a court of justice, we speak of him as a dead man, though the sentence be not yet executed, and the king has the prerogative of pardoning him, if he is pleased to exercise mercy. We indeed compare great things with small, when we attempt to illustrate the proceedings of God with men, by the usages which obtain among ourselves ; yet, in some respects, they are often apposite, and the Scripture teaches us by them.

As we are rational creatures, capable of knowing our Maker, and our dependence upon him for life, and breath, and all things; we are bound to love God with all our hearts, to devote our strength, power, and faculties to his service, to obey his commands, to avoid whatever is contrary to his known will, to believe his promises, and to seek our happiness in his favour. This is the law of our nature, it is indeed the law of all created intelligences, whether angels or men. When God created man upright, in his own image, this obedience and submission, and a disposition to seek his supreme delight in his Maker, were as natural to him as it is for a fish to swim or a bird to fly. But this law we have broken. We are now depraved, and fallen from our original righteousness. We are now in a state of rebellion against God. We renounce his authority, violate his commands, are governed by our own will, and seek our own pleasure and glory, distinct from, and in opposition to, the will and glory of our Creator! The law which we have broken is holy, just, and good; Rom. vii. 12. and, therefore, the sentence of condemnation denounced against the transgressors is righteous. We come into the world devoid of all real goodness, and with a propensity to every evil. The carnal mind is enmity against God. The heart of man, of all mankind universally, is deceitful and desperately wicked; the thoughts of men, when compared with the holy law, are evil, only evil, and that continually, Rom. viii. 7. Jer. xvii. 9. Gen. vi. 5. Thus we are in a state of condemnation; by nature, children of wrath. But we, through the mercy and long-suffering of God, are favoured with a respite. The just sentence is not yet executed; and the Gospel points out a way of escape and deliverance. For this purpose God sent forth his Son, that whosoever believe th in

him might be saved ; but he that believeth not is condemned already, John iii. 18.

We are likewise dead in sin. We partake with the brute-creation in the animal life, but are highly distinguished from them by the rational life. There is likewise a spiritual life, of which our first parent was originally possessed, but he soon lost it. In this sense, when he sinned against God, he died instantly. What the poet ascribes to Beelzebub is true of man ; he still retains some marks of his pristine greatness ; he is majestic, though in ruins ; he is alive as to the concerns of this world, and his attempts and success give indication of his native dignity : the sciences and the fine arts exhibit proofs of his genius and ability : he undertakes to measure the earth, to weigh the air, and almost to number and marshal the stars. What discoveries have been made in geometry, natural history, and chemistry ! What powers are displayed in architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry, and music ! But, with respect to the concerns of his immortal soul, and the great realities of the unseen world, man, by nature, is dead as a stone. The dead body of Lazarus was not more incapable of performing the functions of common life, than we, by nature, are of performing one spiritual act, or even of feeling one spiritual desire ; till He, who, by his commanding word, raised Lazarus from the grave, John xi. 43. is pleased, by the power of his Holy Spirit, to raise us from the death of sin unto a new life of righteousness. He who, we profess to believe, will one day come to be our judge, has assured us that, except a man be born again, he cannot even see the kingdom of God ; John iii. 3. He has no faculty suited to the perception of what belongs either to the kingdom of grace upon earth, or what is revealed of the kingdom of glory in heaven. The result of his closest reasonings and shrewdest conjectures

upon these subjects leave him in utter ignorance and darkness. As no description can communicate an idea of sun-shine or the colours of a rainbow to a man born blind, so the natural man cannot discern the things of God, for, they can only be spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. ii. 14.

But Jesus died and rose again. As our surety, he sustained the curse of the law to deliver us from condemnation; and, when he ascended on high to appear in the presence of God for us, he received gifts for rebellious man, eminently the gift of the Holy Spirit, that the Lord God might dwell among them, Psal. lxxviii. 18. Thus the promise the Lord made by the prophet Ezekiel is fulfilled, "I will put my Spirit within you;" Ezek. xxxvi. 27. and then they who before were dead, begin to live.

A load of guilt and depravity lies unfelt upon the dead sinner; but, when he receives the principle of a new life, he groans, being burdened. The eyes of his understanding are opened. New and, till then, unthought-of objects press upon his notice. The views he now has of God, of himself, and of eternity, would overwhelm him, if he was not warranted and enabled to look to Jesus, Isa. xlv. 22. as an all-sufficient and gracious Saviour. From that hour he lives indeed! his sins are pardoned, his fears dispelled, his heart beats with love and gratitude. Old things are passed away, and all things are become new. He now lives no more to himself, but to Him who died for him and rose again.

III. This was what the apostle aimed at, and expected, as the result and reward of his labours, that the love of Him who died for all might constrain those who live to live no more to themselves, but to Him.

When the sinner, who was too long governed by the mean and narrow principle of self, is enabled to believe in Jesus for salvation, he feels the force of

the apostle's words, *Ye are bought with a price, ye are no longer your own; therefore glorify God with your body and your spirit which are his*, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. This thought expands his mind and elevates his aims. So far as his faith is in exercise, he is constrained by love, inspired by gratitude, and animated by confidence and hope, to live no more to himself, but to Him who loved him, and gave himself for him. He is now the devoted servant of his Lord, is governed by his precepts and example, and employs his time, talents, and influence, to promote the welfare of his fellow-creatures for the Lord's sake.

His new principles have this effect upon him in whatever situation the providence of God places him. If he be poor, they teach him contentment, frugality, and industry; if rich, he is moderate, condescending, and bountiful, and ready for every good work, either to promote the knowledge of the Gospel, or to relieve the necessitous. The golden, plain, and comprehensive rule, of doing to others as he could reasonably wish others, in similar cases, would do unto him, is inwrought into the very temper and habit of his mind. In a word, the true Christian, whether in public or in private life, whether a husband or a wife, a parent or a child, a master or a servant, whether possessed of rank and wealth, or appointed by the providence of God to sweep the street for his subsistence, in all stations and circumstances, is ambitious to let his light shine before men, for the honour of God, and to be filled with those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to his praise and glory.

Should these effects of the constraining love of Christ be disputed by persons of any candour, we could, degenerate as the present times are, refer them to living instances. We can point out to them

persons, who once were a burden to themselves, a terror to their families, a nuisance in their connexions, who, by receiving the truths of the Gospel, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and by feeling the constraining love of Christ, are, in all these respects, become new creatures. And I little doubt that there are those now before me, to whom I may say, Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Cor. vi. 11.

What shall we, then, say of the attempts of modern philosophers, so called, who, if they could prevail by spreading the gloomy sophisms of infidelity, would deprive mankind of that light and comfort of which the holy Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is the only source. But, as the raging waves of the sea, in a storm, make no impression upon the rock against which they successively dash themselves into foam, and die away at its foot, so their most subtle, laboured, and malignant efforts to suppress the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, 1 Tim. i. 11. will only issue in their own confusion. *Magna est veritas, et prevalebit.* Truth will triumph over all opposition. The church of God, composed of all the living members of that body of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the living head, is founded upon a rock, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. There will always be a people, who, animated by a sense of the constraining love of Christ, will bear testimony to the power of his grace, and give evidence, by the general tenour of their conduct in life, their patience and peace in affliction, their love to their fellow-creatures, and their joyful hopes of immortality when flesh and heart are fainting, that they have neither followed cun-

ningly devised fables, nor amused themselves with empty notions of truth.

It is upon this ground that I am encouraged to solicit your liberal assistance to the school of Langbourn-Ward. I seldom say much upon these occasions, having had repeated proofs of the generosity of my stated auditory, and no reason to doubt the good will and concurrence of the rest of my hearers. Let the sight of the children before you plead in their behalf. The institution I am now about to recommend will, I hope, preserve these children, and many more in succession, from those habits of idleness, intemperance, and profligacy, which too frequently mark the character of those who were destitute of instruction and education in their early years. By the benefit of our public charity-schools, and particularly of this, many boys have been trained up to honesty, sobriety, and usefulness, who might otherwise have been nuisances to society; and some have not only obtained a good character as apprentices and servants, but, by their integrity and industry, have reputably risen to affluence and influence. Could all the children of the poor be thus cared for, be taught the first principles of religion, and habituated to respect the Lord's Day, and to attend on public worship, it is probable that the number of depredators who infest our streets and roads, or break into houses, and end their unhappy lives on the gallows, would be much diminished.

The awful times in which we live, render these institutions peculiarly worthy of attention and encouragement. I cannot speak positively from my own knowledge, but I have reason to believe that the abettors of the French principles of infidelity and anarchy have seminaries where children, of all descriptions, find ready and welcome admission. It

is even said that they are paid for their attendance. It is, however, certain, that a spirit of insubordination, and a defiance of all laws, human and divine, have rapidly spread, and are still rapidly spreading among the lower classes of our people. The liberty and equality inculcated in these schools is not like that which, under our mild and equitable laws, gives every person an equal advantage for rising in life, by the proper and diligent improvement of his talents; but is adapted to confound all order and distinction, and to reduce us to the common level of a savage and barbarous state. It is therefore the common interest of all, and especially of persons of property, to exert themselves in their places to counteract this baneful design.

But I have a higher consideration to propose to you, who know the worth of souls, and have felt the power of the constraining love of Christ.

When a child is born that is heir to a title or a great fortune, it usually causes much joy to the family, and much congratulation from their friends. The birth of poor children is less noticed; but the birth of any child, whether of a prince or a pauper, is an event of great, yea, of equal importance, if we form our judgment by the standard of the unerring word of God: when a child is born, a new existence begins which will never end. The present life of the children before you is precarious, but their souls are, by God's constitution and appointment, immortal. Perhaps you may see them no more upon earth, but you will surely meet them again at the great day, when you, and I, and they, must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Though education alone cannot convert them, it is in the number of those means which God has enjoined us to use, and which he has promised to bless for that purpose. Happy are they who are instrumental in saving a

soul from death! Happy and honoured will you be, if, from a sense of his love, who, when he was rich, made himself poor for your sakes, 2 Cor. viii. 9. you, according to your abilities, imitate his example, in promoting the welfare of your fellow-creatures. You may do much in this way, by contributing to the instruction of poor children, and thereby shielding them from the snares and temptations to which ignorant and neglected youth are exposed. You know not but, in the day of final award, some of these children may stand with you on the right hand of our Saviour and Judge, and you may hear him say, Inasmuch as you did it to the least of these, ye did it unto me! Matt. xxv. 40.

Thus much in behalf of the school. But my heart is too much impressed by the sight of this numerous and respectable auditory, and by my sincere regard for the true happiness of every individual before me, to permit me to conclude till I have addressed you on a subject of more general concern. I am not preaching to Jews or Mahometans, but to professed Christians. I am willing to take it for granted, that we all agree in acknowledging that the Scripture, the whole Scripture, is a revelation of the will of God. I hope there is not a person here, however immersed in the business, or drawn aside by the amusements and pleasures, of the world, who, if he were desired to throw the Bible, with deliberation and contempt, into the fire, would not be shocked at the proposal. I think he would say, If I have not paid that attention to the Bible which it deserves, yet surely I am not so wicked and presumptuous as to burn it. But permit me to ask you in love, If it be indeed the word of God, why have you not paid that attention to it which it deserves? The same reasons, which would deter you from wilfully throwing it into the fire, should induce you

to study it carefully, to make it the foundation of your hope and the rule of your life; for, if it be indeed the word of God, it is the rule by which your characters will be decided, and your everlasting state fixed, according to the tenour of the Gospel, which proclaims salvation to all who have repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and to those only.

It is painful to a serious mind to observe how much the Bible is neglected. I have known some *great houses* in which this book could not be found. In others, if it has a place in the library, it is seldom removed from the shelf. Perhaps there is no book so little read, understood, or regarded, as the book of God, by multitudes who are not unwilling to be called Christians. What an affront is this to the Almighty! A message from the king, or an act of parliament, engages the attention of those who are interested in the subject-matter, while the revealed will of God, our Creator, compared with whom all the kings, nations, and inhabitants of the earth, are but as a drop of water to the sea, or the small dust upon a balance, is treated with indifference; though every person who can have access to it, is deeply and equally interested in its contents. Should there be but few of my hearers, who, through their engagements and pursuits in life, have hitherto been remiss and negligent in acquainting themselves with the principal facts and truths recorded in the Bible, neither my conscience nor my compassion will permit me to close my discourse till I have briefly expostulated with them; as it is possible I may never have another opportunity, and perhaps the providence of God has brought them hither this morning for their good.

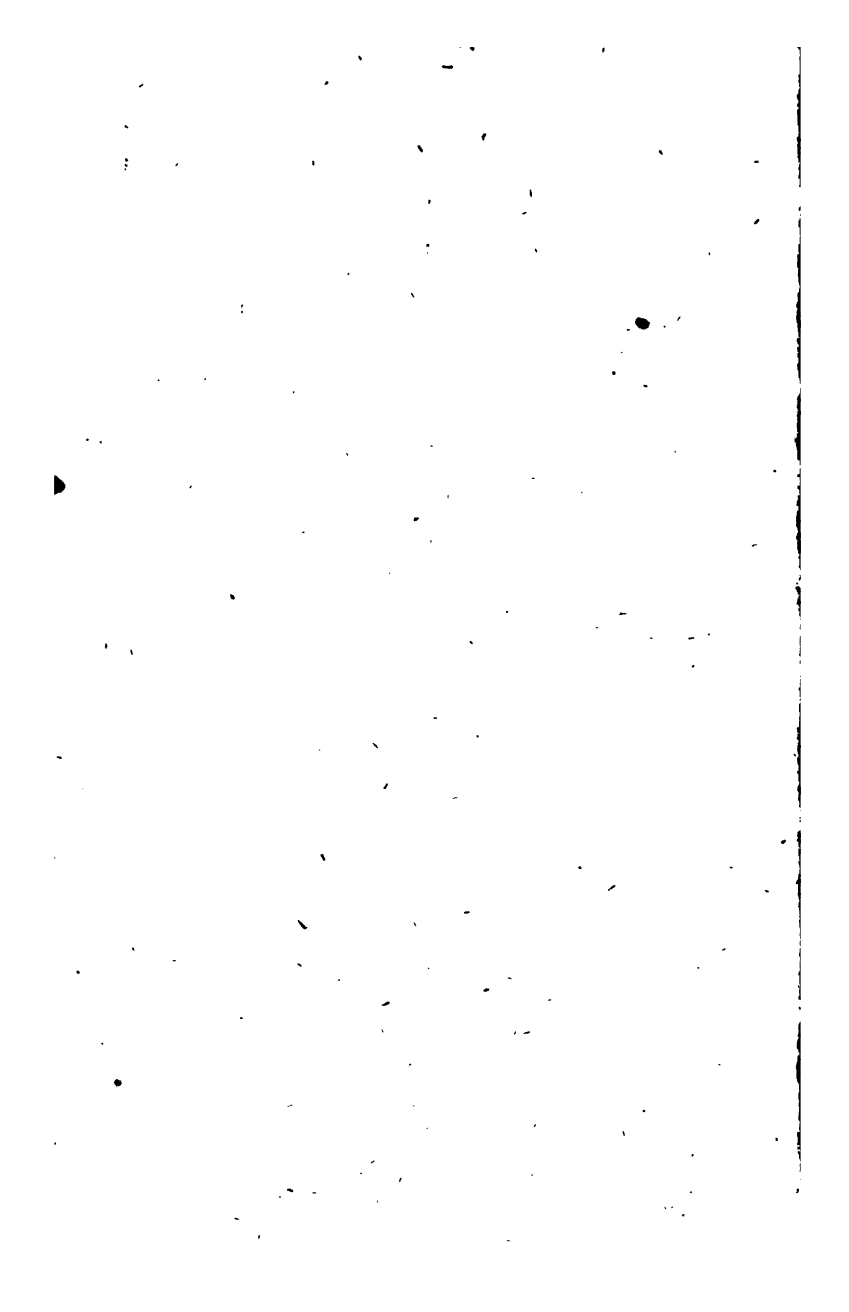
Whatever difference of opinion there may be amongst us in other respects, we are universally

agreed as to the certainty of death and the uncertainty of life. We are sure that all must die; and, after death, if the Scriptures be true, we must appear before God in judgment. Nor have we any warrant to assure ourselves that we shall live to the end of the present year, or even week. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Prov. xxvii. 1. We often read or hear of sudden deaths, and sometimes of those, who, after a lingering illness, die as suddenly, to their own apprehensions of the event, as if they had died by a flash of lightning. It is no less a proof than a fruit of that depravity, which the Scripture charges upon the whole human race, that men, who are so active and solicitous in managing the temporal, transient affairs of time, to promote what they conceive most to their advantage, should be totally indifferent to what may be their allotment in a state unchangeable and eternal!

Permit me briefly to remind you, that the Scripture concludes us all under sin, and exposed to the just displeasure of our Great Creator, Proprietor, Lawgiver, and Benefactor. He formed us for himself, and gave a thirst and capacity for happiness which only himself can satisfy. Our relation to Him, as intelligent creatures, who live, move, and have our being in Him, and cannot subsist a moment without Him, binds us to love Him supremely, to devote all our powers and faculties to his service. This is the law of our nature. This law we have broken; we all of us have lived too long, and some of us are still living, without God in the world. We have made our own will and our own gratification the rule and end of our conduct, instead of his will and glory. We have incurred the penalty annexed to the breach of this law. We are sinners, the wages of sin is death, and the extent of that sentence is

everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. How shall we escape? What shall we do to be saved?

To those who are sensible of their desert and danger, the Gospel points out relief and a refuge. Jesus invites the weary and burdened sinner, and says, "Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out." You have heard something of his glorious person, power, authority, and love. He is able, he is willing, he has promised, to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him. Oh that to-day you may hear his voice, and comply with his invitation! If you cordially receive the record which God has, by his own voice from heaven, given, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased!" He will, for his sake, be well pleased with you, if you approve of this way of salvation, in which justice and mercy harmonize, which ascribes all the glory to God, teaches us to hate sin, and inspires the love of holiness, as essential to happiness, then this Saviour, and all the fulness of his salvation, will assuredly be yours. You will then renounce every other hope, you will no longer trust or boast in yourselves, but you will have a good warrant to boast and glory in your Saviour, and to say, In the Lord I have righteousness and strength. The Lord is my shepherd, therefore I shall not want, I need not fear; he will support me by his arm, cheer me with his presence, protect me by his power, guide me by his counsels, and afterwards receive me to glory!



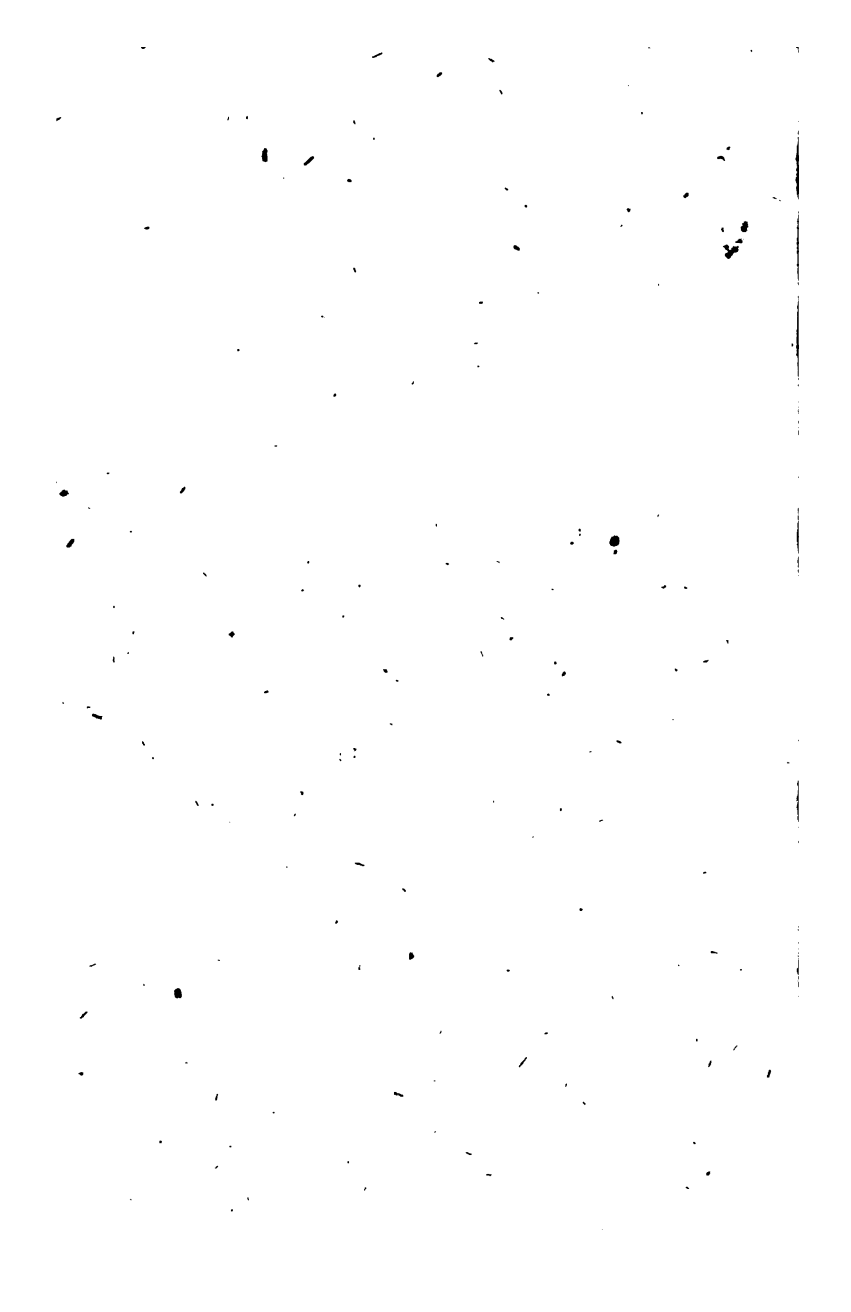
THOUGHTS
UPON THE
AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE.



MATTHEW vii. 12.

All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

HOMO SUM—



THOUGHTS
UPON THE
AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE.

THE nature and effects of that unhappy and disgraceful branch of commerce, which has long been maintained on the coast of Africa, with the sole and professed design of purchasing our fellow creatures, in order to supply our West India islands and the American colonies, when they were ours, with slaves, is now generally understood. So much light has been thrown upon the subject by many able pens, and so many respectable persons have already engaged to use their utmost influence for the suppression of a traffic which contradicts the feelings of humanity, that it is hoped this stain of our national character will be soon wiped out.

If I attempt, after what has been done to throw my mite into the public stock of information, it is less from an apprehension that my interference is necessary, than from a conviction that silence, at such a time and on such an occasion, would, in me, be criminal. If my testimony should not be necessary or serviceable, yet, perhaps, I am bound in conscience to take shame to myself by a public confession, which, however sincere, comes too late to prevent or repair the misery and mischief to which I have, formerly, been accessory.

I hope it will always be a subject of humiliating reflection to me, that I was once an active instrument in a business at which my heart now shudders. My headstrong passions and follies plunged me, in early life, into a succession of difficulties and hardships, which at length, reduced me to seek a refuge among the natives of Africa. There, for about the space of eighteen months, I was in effect, though without the name, a captive, and slave myself; and was depressed to the lowest degree of human wretchedness. Possibly I should not have been so completely miserable, had I lived among the natives only, but it was my lot to reside with white men; for at that time several persons of my own colour and language were settled upon that part of the Windward coast which lies between Sierra Leon and Cape Mount; for the purpose of purchasing and collecting slaves, to sell to the vessels that arrived from Europe.

This is a bourn from which few travellers return, who have once determined to venture upon a temporary residence there; but the good providence of God, without my expectation, and almost against my will, delivered me from those scenes of wickedness and woe; and I arrived at Liverpool, in May 1748. I soon revisited the place of my captivity, as mate of a ship, and, in the year 1750, I was appointed commander; in which capacity I made three voyages to the Windward coast for slaves.

I first saw the coast of Guinea, in the year 1745, and took my last leave of it in 1754. It was not, intentionally, a farewell; but, through the mercy of God, it proved so. I fitted out for a fourth voyage, and was upon the point of sailing, when I was arrested by a sudden illness, and I resigned the ship to another captain.

Thus I was unexpectedly freed from this disagree-

able service. Disagreeable I had long found it; but I think I should have quitted it sooner, had I considered it as I now do, to be unlawful and wrong. But I never had a scruple upon this head at the time; nor was such a thought once suggested to me by any friend. What I did I did ignorantly; considering it as the line of life which Divine Providence had allotted me, and having no concern, in point of conscience, but to treat the slaves, while under my care, with as much humanity as a regard to my own safety would admit.

The experience and observation of nine years, would qualify me for being a competent witness upon this subject, could I safely trust to the report of memory, after an interval of more than thirty-three years. But, in the course of so long a period, the ideas of past scenes and transactions grow indistinct; and I am aware, that what I have seen, and what I have only heard related, may, by this time, have become so insensibly blended together, that, in some cases, it may be difficult for me, if not impossible, to distinguish them with absolute certainty. It is, however, my earnest desire, and will, therefore, engage my utmost care, that I may offer nothing in writing, as from my own knowledge, which I could not cheerfully, if requisite, confirm upon oath.

That part of the African shore, which lies between the river Sierra Leon, lat. 8° 30' N. and Cape Palmas, is usually known by the name of the Windward, or Grain Coast. The extent (if my recollection does not fail me) is about one hundred and fifty leagues. There is a fort upon Benee Island, in Sierra Leon, which formerly belonged to the old African company: they also had a fort on an island in the river Sherbro; but the former was in private hands, and of the latter, scarcely the foundations were visible, when I first went to Africa. There is

no fort or factory upon this coast, under the sanction of our government; but there were, as I have said, and probably still are, private traders resident at Bence Island, at the Bananoes, and at the Plantanes. The former of these is about twelve, and the latter twenty leagues, from Sierra Leon to the southeast.

By these persons, the trade is carried on, in boats and shallops, thirty or forty leagues to the northward, in several rivers lying within the shoals of Rio Grande. But the most northerly place for shipping is Sierra Leon, and the business there, and in that neighbourhood, is chiefly transacted with the white men: but from Sherbro to Cape Palmas, directly with the natives. Though I have been on the Gold Coast, and beyond it as far as Cape Lopex, in the latitude of one or two degrees south, I profess no knowledge of the African trade but as it was conducted on the Windward Coast when I was concerned in it.

I am not qualified, and if I were, I should think it rather unsuitable to my present character as a minister of the Gospel, to consider the African slave trade merely in a political light. This disquisition more properly belongs to persons in civil life. Only thus far my character as a minister will allow, and perhaps require me to observe, that the best human policy is that which is connected with a reverential regard to Almighty God, the supreme governor of the earth. Every plan, which aims at the welfare of a nation, in defiance of his authority and laws, however apparently wise, will prove to be essentially defective, and, if persisted in, ruinous. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and he has engaged to plead the cause and vindicate the wrongs of the oppressed. It is righteousness that exalteth a nation; and wickedness is the present reproach, and will, sooner or later, unless repentance intervene, prove the ruin of any people.

Perhaps what I have said of myself may be applicable to the nation at large. The slave trade was always unjustifiable; but inattention and interest prevented, for a time, the evil from being perceived. It is otherwise at present; the mischiefs and evils connected with it have been, of late years, represented with such undeniable evidence, and are now so generally known, that I suppose there is hardly an objection can be made to the wish of thousands, perhaps of millions, for the suppression of this trade, but upon the ground of political expedience.

Though I were even sure that a principal branch of the public revenue depended upon the African trade (which I apprehend is far from being the case), if I had access and influence, I should think myself bound to say to Government, to Parliament, and to the nation, "It is not lawful to put it into the treasury, because it is the price of blood," Matt. xxvii. 6.

I account an intelligent farmer to be a good politician in this sense; that if he has a large heap of good corn, he will not put a small quantity, that is damaged, to the rest, for the sake of increasing the heap. He knows that such an addition would spoil the whole. God forbid that any supposed profit or advantage which we can derive from the groans, and agonies, and blood of the poor Africans, should draw down his heavy curse upon all that we might, otherwise, honourably and comfortably possess.

For the sake of method, I could wish to consider the African trade,—first, with regard to the effect it has upon our own people; and secondly, as it concerns the blacks, or, as they are more contemptuously styled, the negro slaves, whom we purchase upon the coast. But these two topics are so interwoven together, that it will not be easy to keep them exactly separate.

1. The first point I shall mention is surely of political importance, if the lives of our fellow-subjects be so ; and if a rapid loss of seamen deserves the attention of a maritime people. This loss, in the African trade, is truly alarming. I admit, that many of them are cut off in their first voyage, and consequently, before they can properly rank as seamen ; though they would have been seamen if they had lived. But the neighbourhood of our sea-ports is continually drained of men and boys to supply the places of those who die abroad ; and if they are not all seamen, they are all our brethren and countrymen, subjects of the British government.

The people who remain on ship-board, upon the open coast, if not accustomed to the climate, are liable to the attack of an inflammatory fever, which is not often fatal, unless the occurrence of unfavorable circumstances makes it so. When this danger is over, I think they might probably be as healthy as in most other voyages, provided they could be kept from sleeping in the dews, from being much exposed to the rain, from the intemperate use of spirits, and especially from women.

But considering the general disposition of our sailors, and the nature of the slave trade, these provisions are of little more significance than if I should say upon another occasion, that Great Britain would be a happy country, *provided* all the inhabitants were wise and good. The sailors *must be* much exposed to the weather ; especially on the Windward coast, where a great part of the cargo is procured by boats, which are often sent to the distance of thirty or forty leagues, and are sometimes a month before they return. Many vessels arrive upon the coast before the rainy season, which continues from about May to October, is over ; and if trade be scarce, the ships which arrive in the fair or dry season, often

remain till the rains return, before they can complete their purchase. A proper shelter from the weather, in an open boat, when the rain is incessant, night and day, for weeks and months, is impracticable.

I have, myself, in such a boat, been, five or six days together, without, as we say, a dry thread about me, sleeping or waking. And, during the fair season, tornadoes, or violent storms of wind, thunder, and heavy rain, are very frequent, though they seldom last long. In fact, the boats seldom return, without bringing some of the people ill of dangerous fevers or fluxes, occasioned either by the weather, or by unwholsome diet, such as the crude fruits and palm wine, with which they are plentifully supplied by the natives.

Strong liquors, such as brandy, rum, or English spirits, the sailors cannot often procure, in such quantities as to hurt them; but they will if they can; and opportunities sometimes offer, especially to those who are in the boats: for strong liquor being an article much in demand, so that without it scarcely a single slave can be purchased, it is always at hand. And if what is taken from the casks or bottles that are for sale, be supplied with water, they are as full as they were before. The blacks who buy the liquor, are the losers by the adulteration; but often the people who cheat them are the greatest sufferers.

The article of women, likewise, contributes largely to the loss of our seamen. When they are on shore, they often, from their known thoughtless imprudence, involve themselves, on this account, in quarrels with the natives, and, if not killed upon the spot, are frequently poisoned. On ship-board they may be restrained, and in some ships they are; but such restraint is far from being general. It depends much upon the disposition and attention of the captain. When I was in the trade I knew several

commanders of African ships who were prudent, respectable men, and who maintained a proper discipline and regularity in their vessels; but there were too many of a different character. - In some ships, perhaps in the most, the licence allowed in this particular, was almost unlimited. Moral turpitude was seldom considered, but they who took care to do the ship's business, might, in other respects, do what they pleased. These excesses, if they do not induce fevers, at least render the constitution less able to support them; and lewdness, too frequently, terminates in death.

The risk of insurrections is to be added. These, I believe, are always meditated; for the men slaves are not easily reconciled to their confinement and treatment; and, if attempted, they are seldom suppressed without considerable loss; and sometimes they succeed, to the destruction of a whole ship's company at once. Seldom a year passes, but we hear of one or more such catastrophes; and we likewise hear, sometimes of Whites and Blacks involved, in one moment, in one common ruin, by the gunpowder taking fire, and blowing up the ship.

How far the several causes I have enumerated, may respectively operate, I cannot say; the fact, however, is sure, that a great number of our seamen perish in the slave trade. Few ships, comparatively, are either blown up, or totally cut off; but some are. Of the rest, I have known some that have lost half their people, and some a larger proportion. I am far from saying, that it is always, or even often, thus; but, I believe I shall state the matter sufficiently low, if I suppose, that at least one-fifth part of those who go from England to the coast of Africa, in ships which trade for slaves, never return from thence. I dare not depend too much upon my memory, as to the number of ships and men employed in the slave trade more than thirty years ago; nor

do I know what has been the state of the trade since ; therefore I shall not attempt to make calculations. But, as I cannot but form some opinion upon the subject, I judge it probable, that the collective sum of seamen, who go from all our ports to Africa within the course of a year (taking Guinea into the extensive sense, from Goree or Gambia, and including the coast of Angola), cannot be less than eight thousand ; and if, upon an average of ships and seasons, a fifth part of these die, the annual loss is fifteen hundred. I believe those who have taken pains to make more exact inquiries, will deem my supposition to be very moderate.

Thus much concerning the first evil, the loss of seamen and subjects, which the nation sustains by the African slave trade.

2. There is a second, which either is, or ought to be, deemed of importance, considered in a political light : I mean, the dreadful effects of this trade upon the minds of those who are engaged in it. There are, doubtless, exceptions ; and I would willingly except myself. But in general, I know of no method of getting money, not even that of robbing for it upon the highway, which has so direct a tendency to efface the moral sense, to rob the heart of every gentle and humane disposition, and to harden it, like steel, against all impressions of sensibility.

Usually, about two-thirds of a cargo of slaves are males. When a hundred and fifty or two hundred stout men, torn from their native land, many of whom never saw the sea, much less a ship, till a short space before they had embarked ; who have, probably, the same natural prejudice against a white man, as we have against a black ; and who often bring with them an apprehension they are bought to be eaten : I say, when thus circumstanced, it is not to be expected that they will tamely resign them-

selves to their situation. It is always taken for granted, that they will attempt to gain their liberty if possible. Accordingly, as we dare not trust them, we receive them on board, from the first as enemies ; and, before their number exceeds, perhaps, ten or fifteen, they are all put in irons ; in most ships, two and two together. And frequently, they are not thus confined, as they might most conveniently stand or move, the right hand and foot of one to the left of the other, but across ; that is, the hand and foot of each on the same side, whether right or left, are fettered together : so that they cannot move either hand or foot, but with great caution, and with perfect consent. Thus they must sit, walk, and lie, for many months (sometimes for nine or ten), without any mitigation or relief, unless they are sick.

In the night, they are confined below ; in the daytime (if the weather be fine) they are upon deck ; and as they are brought by pairs, a chain is put through a ring upon their irons, and this likewise locked down to the ring-bolts, which are fastened, at certain intervals, upon the deck. These, and other precautions, are no more than necessary ; especially, as while the number of slaves increases, that of the people who are to guard them, is diminished, by sickness, or death, or by being absent in the boats : so that, sometimes, not ten men can be mustered, to watch, night and day, over two hundred, besides having all the other business of the ship to attend.

That these precautions are so often effectual, is much more to be wondered at, than that they sometimes fail. One unguarded hour, or minute, is sufficient to give the slaves the opportunity they are always waiting for. An attempt to rise upon the ship's company, brings on instantaneous and horrid war : for, when they are once in motion, they are despe-

rate ; and where they do not conquer, they are seldom quelled without much mischief and bloodshed on both sides.

Sometimes, when the slaves are ripe for an insurrection, one of them will impeach the affair ; and then necessity, and the state policy, of these small but most absolute governments, enforce maxims directly contrary to the nature of things. The traitor to the cause of liberty is caressed, rewarded, and deemed an honest fellow. The patriots, who formed and animated the plan, if they can be found out, must be treated as villains, and punished, to intimidate the rest. These punishments, in their nature and degree, depend upon the sovereign will of the captain. Some are content with inflicting such moderate punishment as may suffice for an example. But unlimited power, instigated by revenge, and where the heart, by a long familiarity with the sufferings of slaves, is become callous, and insensible to the pleadings of humanity, is terrible !

I have seen them sentenced to unmerciful whippings, continued till the poor creatures have not had power to groan under their misery, and hardly a sign of life has remained. I have seen them agonizing for hours, I believe for days together, under the torture of the thumbscrews ; a dreadful engine, which, if the screw be turned by an unrelenting hand, can give intolerable anguish. There have been instances in which cruelty has proceeded still further ; but, as I hope they are few, and I can mention but one from my own knowledge, I shall but mention it.

I have often heard a captain, who has been long since been dead, boast of his conduct in a former voyage, when his slaves attempted to rise upon him. After he had suppressed the insurrection, he sat in judgment upon the insurgents ; and not only, in cold blood, adjudged several of them, I know not how

many, to die, but studied, with no small attention, how to make death as excruciating as possible. For my reader's sake, I suppress the recital of particulars.

Surely, it must be allowed, that they who are long conversant with such scenes as these, are liable to imbibe a spirit of ferociousness, and savage insensibility, of which human nature, depraved as it is, is not, ordinarily, capable. If these things be true, the reader will admit the possibility of a fact that was in current report when I was upon the coast, and the truth of which, though I cannot now authenticate it, I have no reason to doubt.

A mate of a ship in a long-boat, purchased a young woman, with a fine child, of about a year old, in her arms. In the night, the child cried much, and disturbed his sleep. He rose up in great anger, and swore, that if the child did not cease making such a noise, he would presently silence it. The child continued to cry. At length he rose up a second time, tore the child from the mother, and threw it into the sea. The child was soon silenced indeed, but it was not so easy to pacify the woman: she was too valuable to be thrown overboard, and he was obliged to bear the sound of her lamentations, till he could put her on board his ship.

I am persuaded that every tender mother, who feasts her eyes and her mind when she contemplates the infant in her arms, will commiserate the poor Africans. But why do I speak of one child, when we have heard and read a melancholy story, too notoriously true to admit of contradiction, of more than a hundred grown slaves, thrown into the sea, at one time, from on board a ship, when fresh water was scarce; to fix the loss upon the underwriters, which otherwise, had they died on board, must have fallen upon the owners of

the vessel. These instances are specimens of the spirit produced, by the African trade, in men, who, once, were no more destitute of the milk of human kindness than ourselves.

Hitherto; I have considered the condition of the men slaves only. From the women, there is no danger of insurrection, and they are carefully kept from the men; I mean from the black men. But in what I have to offer, on this head, I am far from including every ship. I speak not of what is universally, but of what is too commonly, and I am afraid, too generally, prevalent.

I have already observed, that the captain of an African ship, while upon the coast, is absolute in his command; and if he be humane, vigilant, and determined, he has it in his power to protect the miserable; for scarcely any thing can be done on board the ship, without his permission or connivance. But this power is too seldom exerted in favour of the poor women slaves.

When we hear of a town taken by storm, and given up to the ravages of an enraged and licentious army, of wild and unprincipled Cossacks, perhaps no part of the distress affects a feeling mind more, than the treatment to which the women are exposed. But the enormities frequently committed in an African ship, though equally flagrant, are little known *here*, and are considered *there*, only as matters of course. When the women and girls are taken on board a ship, naked, trembling, terrified, perhaps almost exhausted with cold, fatigue, and hunger, they are often exposed to the wanton rudeness of white savages. The poor creatures cannot understand the language they hear, but the looks and manner of the speakers are sufficiently intelligible. In imagination, the prey is divided, upon the spot, and only reserved till opportunity offers.

Where resistance or refusal, would be utterly in vain; even the solicitation of consent is seldom thought of. But I forbear,—This is not a subject for declamation. Facts like these, so certain and so numerous, speak for themselves. Surely, if the advocates for the Slave Trade attempt to plead for it, before the wives and daughters of our happy land, or before those who have wives or daughters of their own, they must lose their cause.

Perhaps some hard-hearted pleader may suggest, that such treatment would indeed be cruel, in Europe: but the African women are negroes, savages, who have no idea of the nicer sensations which obtain among civilized people. I dare contradict them in the strongest terms. I have lived long, and conversed much, amongst these supposed savages. I have often slept in their towns, in a house filled with goods for trade, with no person in the house but myself, and with no other door than a mat; in that security, which no man in his senses would expect in this civilized nation, especially in this metropolis, without the precaution of having strong doors, strongly locked and bolted. And with regard to the women, in Sherbro, where I was most acquainted, I have seen many instances of modesty, and even delicacy, which would not disgrace an English woman. Yet, such is the treatment which I have known permitted, if not encouraged, in many of our ships—they have been abandoned, without restraint, to the lawless will of the first comer.

Accustomed thus to despise, insult, and injure the slaves on board, it may be expected that the conduct of many of our people to the natives, with whom they trade, is, as far as circumstances admit, very similar; and it is so. They are considered as a people to be robbed and spoiled with impunity. Every art is em-

ployed to deceive and wrong them. And he who has most address in this way, has most to boast of.

Not an article that is capable of diminution or adulteration, is delivered genuine, or entire. The spirits are lowered by water. False heads are put into the kegs that contain the gunpowder; so that, though the keg appears large, there is no more powder in it, than in a much smaller. The linen and cotton cloths are opened, and two or three yards, according to the length of the piece, cut off, not from the end, but out of the middle, where it is not so readily noticed.

The natives are cheated, in the number, weight, measure, or quality of what they purchase, in every possible way: and, by habit and emulation, a marvellous dexterity is acquired in these practices. And thus the natives in their turn, in proportion to their commerce with the Europeans, and (I am sorry to add) particularly with the English, become jealous, insidious, and revengeful.

They know with whom they deal, and are accordingly prepared;—though they can trust some ships and boats, which have treated them with punctuality, and may be trusted by them. A quarrel, sometimes, furnishes pretext for detaining, and carrying away, one or more of the natives, which is retaliated, if practicable, upon the next boat that comes to the place, from the same port. For so far their vindictive temper is restrained by their ideas of justice, that they will not, often, revenge an injury received from a Liverpool ship, upon one belonging to Bristol or London.

They will usually wait with patience the arrival of one, which, they suppose, by her sailing from the same place, has some connection with that which used them ill; and they are so quick at distinguishing our little local differences of language and customs in a ship, that before they have been in a ship five minutes, and

often before they come on board, they know, with certainty, whether she be from Bristol, Liverpool, or London.

Retaliation on their parts, furnishes a plea for reprisal on ours. Thus, in one place or another, trade is often suspended, all intercourse cut off, and things are in a state of war; till necessity, either on the ship's part or on theirs, produces overtures of peace, and dictates the price, which the offending party must pay for it. But it is a warlike peace. We trade under arms; and they are furnished with long knives.

For, with a few exceptions, the English and the Africans, reciprocally, consider each other as consummate villains, who are always watching opportunities to do mischief. In short, we have, I fear too deservedly, a very unfavourable character upon the coast. When I have charged a black with unfairness and dishonesty, he has answered, if able to clear himself, with an air of disdain, "What! do you think I am a white man?"

Such is the nature, such are the concomitants, of the slave trade; and such is the school in which many thousands of our seamen are brought up. Can we, then wonder at that impatience of subordination, and that disposition to mutiny, amongst them, which has been of late, so loudly complained of, and so severely felt? Will not sound policy suggest the necessity of some expedient here? Or can sound policy suggest any effectual expedient, but the total suppression of a trade, which, like a poisonous root, diffuses its malignity into every branch?

The effects which our trade has upon the blacks, those especially who come under our power, may be considered under three heads,—How they are acquired? The mortality they are subject to! and, How those who survive are disposed of?

I confine my remarks on the first head to the Wind-

ward coast, and can speak most confidently of the trade in Sherbro, where I lived. I own, however, that I question, if any part of the Windward coast is equal to Sherbro, in point of regularity and government. They have no men of great power or property among them ; as I am told there are upon the Gold coast, at Whida and Benin. The Sherbro people live much in the patriarchal way. An old man usually presides in each town, whose authority depends more on his years, than on his possessions : and he, who is called the king, is not easily distinguished, either by state or wealth, from the rest. But the different districts, which seem to be, in many respects, independent of each other, are incorporated, and united, by means of an institution which pervades them all, and is called the Purrow. The persons of this order, who are very numerous, seem, very much, to resemble the Druids, who once presided in our island.

The Purrow has both the legislative and executive authority, and, under their sanction, there is a police exercised, which is by no means contemptible. Every thing belonging to the Purrow is mysterious and severe, but, upon the whole, it has very good effects ; and as any man, whether bond or free, who will submit to be initiated into their mysteries, may be admitted of the order, it is a kind of commonwealth. And, perhaps, few people enjoy more, simple, political freedom, than the inhabitants of Sherbro, belonging to the Purrow (who are not slaves), further than they are bound by their own institutions. Private property is tolerably well secured, and violence is much suppressed.

The state of slavery, among these wild barbarous people, as we esteem them, is much milder than in our colonies. For as, on the one hand, they have no land in high cultivation, like our West India plantations, and therefore no call for that excessive, unintermitted

labour, which exhausts our slaves ; so, on the other hand, no man is permitted to draw blood even from a slave. If he does, he is liable to a strict inquisition ; for the Purrow laws will not allow a private individual to shed blood. A man may sell his slave, if he pleases ; but he may not wantonly abuse him. The laws, likewise, punish some species of theft with slavery ; and in cases of adultery, which are very common, as polygamy is the custom of the country, both the woman, and the man who offends with her, are liable to be sold for slaves, unless they can satisfy the husband, or unless they are redeemed by their friends.

Among these unenlightened blacks, it is a general maxim, that if a man steals, or breaks a moveable, as a musket, for instance, the offence may be nearly compensated by putting another musket in its place ; but offences, which cannot be repaired in kind, as adultery, admit of no satisfaction, till the injured person declares that he is satisfied. So that, if a rich man seduces the wife of a poor man, he has it in his power to change places with him ; for he may send for every article in his house, one by one, till he says, " I have enough." The only alternative, is personal slavery.

I suppose, bribery and influence may have their effects in Guinea, as they have in some other countries ; but their laws in the main are wise and good, and, upon the whole, they have considerable operation ; and therefore, I believe many of the slaves purchased in Sherbro, and probably upon the whole Windward coast, are convicts, who have forfeited their liberty, by breaking the laws of their country.

But I apprehend, that the neighbourhood of our ships, and the desire of our goods, are motives which often push the rigour of the laws to an extreme, which would not be exacted, if they were left to themselves.

But slaves are the staple article of the traffic ; and though a considerable number may have been born near

the sea, I believe the bulk of them are brought from far. I have reason to think that some travel more than a thousand miles, before they reach the sea-coast. Whether there may be convicts amongst these likewise, or what proportion they may bear to those who are taken prisoners in war, it is impossible to know.

I judge, the principal source of the slave trade, is, the wars which prevail among the natives. Sometimes, these wars break out between those who live near the sea. The English, and other Europeans, have been charged with fomenting them; I believe (so far as concerns the Windward coast) unjustly. That some would do it, if they could, I doubt not; but I do not think they can have opportunity. Nor is it needful they should interfere. Thousands, in our own country, wish for war, because they fatten upon its spoils.

Human nature is much the same in every place, and few people will be willing to allow, that the negroes in Africa are better than themselves. Supposing, therefore, they wish for European goods, may not they wish to purchase them from a ship just arrived? Of course, they must wish for slaves to go to market with; and if they have not slaves, and think themselves strong enough to invade their neighbours, they will probably wish for war.—And if once they wish for it, how easy it is to find, or to make, pretexts for breaking an inconvenient peace; or (after the example of greater heroes, of Christian name) to make depredations, without condescending to assign any reasons.

I verily believe, that the far greater part of the wars, in Africa, would cease, if the Europeans would cease to tempt them, by offering goods for slaves. And though they do not bring legions into the field, their wars are bloody. I believe, the captives reserved for sale are fewer than the slain.

I have not sufficient data to warrant calculation,

but; I suppose, not less than one hundred thousand slaves are exported, annually, from all parts of Africa, and that more than one-half of these are exported in English bottoms.

If but an equal number are killed in war, and if many of these wars are kindled by the incentive of selling their prisoners; what an annual accumulation of blood must there be, crying against the nations of Europe concerned in this trade, and particularly against our own!

I have often been gravely told, as a proof that the Africans, however hardly treated, deserve but little compassion, that they are a people so destitute of natural affection, that it is common among them for parents to sell their children, and children their parents. And, I think, a charge of this kind is brought against them by the respectable author of *Spectacle de la Nature*. But he must have been misinformed. I never heard of one instance of either, while I used the Coast.

One article more upon this head, is kidnapping, or stealing free people. Some people suppose, that the ship trade is rather the stealing, than the buying of slaves. But there is enough to lay to the charge of the ships, without accusing them falsely. The slaves, in general, are bought, and paid for. Sometimes, when goods are lent, or trusted on shore, the trader voluntarily leaves a free person, perhaps his own son, as a hostage, or pawn, for the payment; and, in case of default, the hostage is carried off, and sold; which, however hard upon him, being in consequence of a free stipulation, cannot be deemed unfair. There have been instances of unprincipled captains, who, at the close of what they supposed their last voyage, and when they had no intention of revisiting the coast, have detained, and carried away, free people with them; and left the next ship,

that should come from the same port to risk the consequences. But these actions, I hope and believe, are not common.

With regard to the natives, to steal a free man or woman, and to sell them on board a ship, would, I think, be a more difficult and more dangerous attempt in Sherbro, than in London. But I have no doubt, that the traders who come, from the interior parts of Africa, at a great distance, find opportunity, in the course of their journey, to pick up stragglers, whom they may meet in their way. This branch of oppression and robbery would likewise fail, if the temptation to it were removed.

I have, to the best of my knowledge, pointed out the principal sources of that immense supply of slaves which furnishes so large an exportation every year. If all that are taken on board the ships were to survive the voyage, and be landed in good order, possibly the English, French, and Dutch islands and colonies would be soon overstocked, and fewer ships would sail to the coast. But a large abatement must be made for mortality.—After what I have already said of their treatment, I shall now, that I am again to consider them on board the ships, confine myself to this point.

In the Portuguese ships, which trade from Brazil to the Gold coast and Angola, I believe, a heavy mortality is not frequent. The slaves have room, they are not put in irons (I speak from information only), and are humanely treated.

With our ships, the great object is, to be full. When the ship is there, it is thought desirable she should take as many as possible. The cargo of a vessel of a hundred tons, or little more, is calculated to purchase from two hundred and twenty to two hundred and fifty slaves. Their lodging-rooms below the deck, which are three (for the men, the boys, and the women), besides a place for the sick, are

sometimes more than five feet high, and sometimes less; and this height is divided towards the middle, for the slaves lie in two rows, one above the other, on each side of the ship, close to each other, like books upon a shelf. I have known them so close, that the shelf would not, easily, contain one more. And I have known a white man sent down, among the men, to lay them in these rows to the greatest advantage, so that as little space as possible might be lost.

Let it be observed, that the poor creatures, thus cramped for want of room, are likewise in irons, for the most part both hands and feet, and two together, which makes it difficult for them to turn or move, to attempt either to rise or to lie down, without hurting themselves, or each other. Nor is the motion of the ship, especially her heeling, or stoop on one side, when under sail, to be omitted; for this, as they lie athwart, or cross the ship, adds to the uncomfortableness of their lodging, especially to those who lie on the leeward or leaning side of the vessel.

Dire is the tossing, deep the groans.—

The heat and smell of these rooms, when the weather will not admit of the slaves being brought upon deck, and of having their rooms cleaned every day, would be almost insupportable to a person not accustomed to them. If the slaves and their rooms an be constantly aired, and they are not detained too long on board, perhaps there are not many die; but the contrary is often their lot. They are kept down, by the weather, to breathe a hot and corrupted air, sometimes for a week: this, added to the galling of their irons, and the despondency which seizes their spirits when thus confined, soon becomes fatal. And every morning, perhaps, more instances than one are found, of the living and the dead, like the captives of Mezentius, fastened together.

Epidemical fevers and fluxes, which fill the ship with noisome and noxious effluvia, often break out, and infect the seamen likewise, and thus the oppressors, and the oppressed, fall by the same stroke. I believe, nearly one-half of the slaves on board, have, sometimes, died; and that the loss of a third part, in these circumstances, is not unusual. The ship, in which I was mate, left the coast with two hundred and eighteen slaves on board; and though we were not much affected by epidemical disorders, I find by my journal of that voyage (now before me), that we buried sixty-two on our passage to South Carolina, exclusive of those which died before we left the coast, of which I have no account.

I believe, upon an average between the more healthy, and the more sickly voyages, and including all contingencies, one fourth of the whole purchase may be allotted to the article of mortality: that is, if the English ships purchase *sixty thousand slaves* annually, upon the whole extent of the coast, the annual loss of lives cannot be much less than *fifteen thousand*.

I am now to speak of the survivors.—When the ships make the land (usually the West India islands), and have their port in view, after having been four, five, six weeks, or a longer time, at sea (which depends much upon the time that passes before they can get into the permanent trade-winds, which blow from the north-east and east across the Atlantic), then, and not before, they venture to release the men slaves from their irons: and then, the sight of the land, and their freedom from long and painful confinement, usually excite in them a degree of alacrity, and a transient feeling of joy—

The prisoner leaps to lose his chains.

But this joy is short-lived indeed. The condition of

the unhappy slaves is in a continual progress from bad to worse. Their case is truly pitiable, from the moment they are in a state of slavery in their own country ; but it may be deemed a state of ease and liberty, compared with their situation on board our ships.

Yet, perhaps, they would wish to spend the remainder of their days on ship-board, could they know, beforehand, the nature of the servitude which awaits them on shore ; and that the dreadful hardships and sufferings they have already endured, would, to the most of them, only terminate in excessive toil, hunger, and the excruciating tortures of the cart-whip, inflicted at the caprice of an unfeeling overseer, proud of the power allowed him of punishing whom, and when, and how he pleases.

I hope the slaves, in our islands, are better treated now, than they were at the time when I was in the trade. And, even then, I know there were slaves, who, under the care and protection of humane masters, were, comparatively, happy. But I saw and heard enough to satisfy me, that their condition, in general, was wretched to the extreme. However, my stay in Antigua and St. Christopher's (the only islands I visited) was too short, to qualify me for saying much, from my own certain knowledge, upon this painful subject. Nor is it needful:—enough has been offered by several respectable writers, who have had opportunity of collecting surer and fuller information.

One thing I cannot omit, which was told me by the gentleman to whom my ship was consigned, at Antigua, in the year 1751, and who was himself a planter. He said, that calculations had been made, with all possible exactness, to determine which was the preferable, that is, the more saving method of managing slaves :

“Whether, to appoint them moderate work,
 “ plenty of provision, and such treatment as
 “ might enable them to protract their lives to
 “ old age?” Or,

“ By rigorously straining their strength to the
 “ utmost, with little relaxation, hard fare, and
 “ hard usage, to wear them out before they
 “ became useless, and unable to do service ;
 “ and then, to buy new ones, to fill up their
 “ places?”

He farther said, that these skilful calculators had determined in favour of the latter mode, as much the cheaper ; and that he could mention several estates, in the island of Antigua, on which it was seldom known that a slave had lived above nine years.—*Ex pede Herculem !*

When the slaves are landed for sale (for in the Leeward Islands they are usually sold on shore), it may happen, that after a long separation in different parts of the ship, when they are brought together in one place, some who are nearly related may recognize each other. If, upon such a meeting, pleasure should be felt, it can be but momentary. The sale disperses them wide, to different parts of the island, or to different islands. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, must suddenly part again, probably to meet no more.

After a careful perusal of what I have written, weighing every paragraph distinctly, I can find nothing to retract. As it is not easy to write altogether with coolness upon this business, and especially not easy to me, who have formerly been so deeply engaged in it ; I have been jealous, lest the warmth of imagination might have insensibly seduced me, to aggravate and overcharge some of the horrid features, which I have attempted to delineate, of the African trade. But, upon a strict review, I am satisfied.

I have apprised the readers, that I write from memory, after an interval of more than thirty years. But at the same time, I believe, many things which I saw, heard, and felt, upon the coast of Africa, are so deeply engraven in my memory, that I can hardly forget, or greatly mistake them, while I am capable of remembering any thing. I am certainly not guilty of wilful misrepresentation. And, upon the whole, I dare appeal to the Great Searcher of hearts, in whose presence I write, and before whom I, and my readers, must all shortly appear, that (with the restrictions and exceptions I have made) I have advanced nothing, but what, to the best of my judgment and conscience, is true.

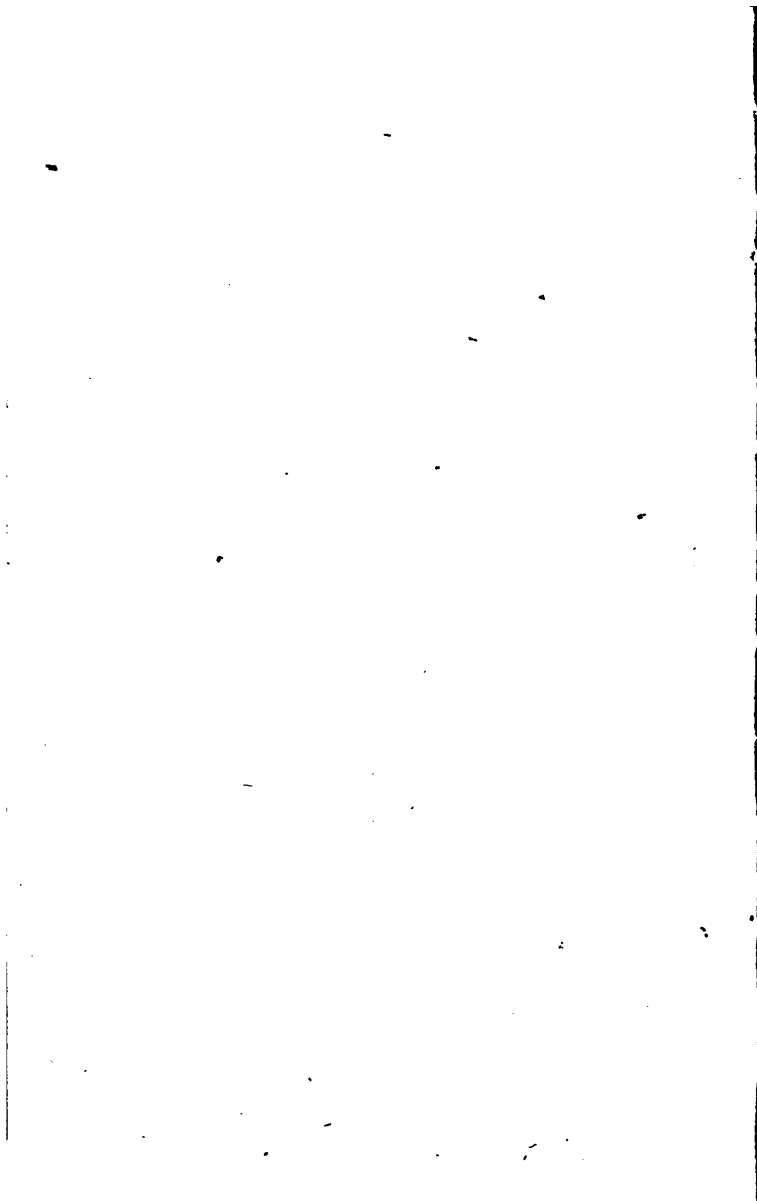
I have likewise written without solicitation, and simply from the motive I have already assigned; a conviction, that the share I have formerly had in the trade, binds me, in conscience, to throw what light I am able upon the subject, now it is likely to become a point of parliamentary investigation.

No one can have less interest in it than I have at present, further than as I am interested by the feelings of humanity, and a regard for the honour and welfare of my country.

Though unwilling to give offence to a single person, in such a cause, I ought not to be afraid of offending many, by declaring the truth. If, indeed, there can be many, whom even interest can prevail upon to contradict the common sense of mankind, by pleading for a commerce so iniquitous, so cruel, so oppressive, so destructive, as the African Slave Trade!

AN
ADDRESS
TO THE
INHABITANTS OF OLNEY.

Printed in the Year 1768.



AN ADDRESS
TO THE
INHABITANTS OF OLNEY.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

EVERY person in the parish has a place in my heart and prayers, but I cannot speak to each of you singly. Yet I am desirous to give full proof that I watch for the welfare of your souls ; and likewise (if it be possible) to have a witness in every conscience, that none may plead ignorance of those things which it highly concerns them to know. I hope you will receive this paper in good part, as a token of my love, and read it with attention.

The great God, who appoints to all " the children of men the bounds of their habitation," Acts xvii. 26. has been pleased to fix yours in a place favoured with the light of the Gospel. This is a great and distinguishing privilege in itself ; but it may be abused, and if it is, will aggravate your guilt and condemnation. " JESUS CHRIST crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2. is preached among you ; the foundation, which GOD himself has provided whereon poor sinners may build their eternal hope, is set before you, 1 Cor. iii. 11. You are warned of the evil of sin, of the wrath of GOD denounced against transgressors, and of the impossibility of being saved without that faith which, being of the operation of GOD, purifies the heart, " and works by love."

And the great blessings of life and immortality, pardon, justification, adoption, holiness, perseverance, and eternal glory, are preached amongst you, as the sure and inseparable effects of a living faith in the SON of GOD, Col. ii. 12. Acts xv. 9. Gal. v. 6.

In a little time we must all give an account of our improvement of the opportunities we are favoured with. This thought, joined to a consideration of the state of the parish, leads me to offer a word in season to each of you. Perhaps there is hardly a single person who will not be more or less concerned under one or other of the following particulars.

1. If GOD has taught you the truths I have mentioned above, if you have faith in his Son Jesus Christ, or if, convinced of its necessity, you are humbly and diligently seeking it in the use of the means he has appointed; I may address you in the angel's language to *Mary*, "Hail, that thou art highly favoured!" Luke i. 28. for if you have this faith, you have the promise and earnest of everlasting life; John vi. 47. or if you account yourself but a seeker, the word of the living God is engaged for your success; for he has said, "Those who seek shall find," Matt. vii. 7. I am persuaded that you will readily receive the word of exhortation. You are called with a "high and holy calling," Phil. iii. 14. 2 Tim. i. 9. Watch and pray therefore, that you may be preserved from the snares of the world, and the devices of Satan. That no errors in judgment, no sinful indulgence in practice, nothing contrary to the spirituality, love, gentleness, and patience, which become the Gospel of Christ, may defile your conscience, rob you of your comfort, or "cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of," 2 Pet. ii. 2. through your miscarriage. You are called "out of darkness into marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. that by your profession God may be glorified. Therefore

keep close to his word as your rule; be constant in your application at the throne of grace; attend diligently upon his public ordinances, that thus by waiting upon the Lord your strength may be renewed, Isa. xl. 31. and "your light may shine before men" Matt. v. 16. to his praise. That justice, truth, sobriety, and diligence may adorn the exercise of your ordinary calling; and that you may fill up your relation in life as a master or servant, a husband or a wife, a parent or a child, in such a manner as may and will be expected from one who has "tasted that the Lord "is gracious," 1 Pet. ii. 3. Beware of a worldly or selfish, a proud, peevish or passionate spirit: if you give way to any of these evils, you will walk uncomfortably yourself, you will grieve or discourage others, and you will open the mouths of the wicked to "blaspheme that worthy name by which you are "called," James ii. 7.

II. But if you are one of those who account the Gospel of Christ a burden, and can hardly be brought to give it a patient hearing; what can I say to you? You are already prejudiced against all I can offer, and perhaps account me an enemy because I tell you the truth. Yet I would fain persuade you of my good will. I have no complaint to make of you upon my own account; having received no personal incivility even from those who are dissatisfied with my ministry. Though you are unwilling to hear me from the pulpit, yet let me expostulate a minute with you in this way. If I cannot prove my doctrine by the Scripture, and even, by the articles and public offices of our own church, you have reason to be displeased with me. But why will you venture to reject, what you must confess may at least possibly be the truth? I am sure you cannot disprove the general subjects of my ministry, not even to the satisfaction of your own minds, if you will sit

leisurely down, and examine them by the New Testament. It is, indeed, easy to turn off the inquiry with a laugh, while you are in health and good spirits : but if you can remember a time when you have been sick, and apprehensive of the approach of death, probably you then felt your confidence fail, and was not so sure of the safety of your state as you once thought yourself. Such a time will come again. If you should not be cut off by a sudden stroke, or visited with some illness which may deprive you of your senses (which God forbid should be the case!) you must again be brought within the view of death. You must experience that untried moment, and render up your soul to the tribunal of God. O then beware of resting your eternal hopes upon any less authority than his Word! You may now be supported by the names and examples of men ; but no teacher, or friend, or favourite author, can or will stand between you and your Judge. You may live in a crowd, but you must die alone.— What you think of yourself, or what others may think of you, is of small moment ; the main question is, What you are in the sight of the great Judge, to whom “ all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid,” 1 Cor. iv. 3 : for according to his unalterable sentence, you must stand or fall to eternity. Alas ! if our Gospel is true, and you live and die a stranger to it, “ it will be more tolerable in that day,” for those who never heard of the name of Jesus, than for you, Matt. xi. 22.

III. There are too many people amongst us who abstain from the public worship, not so much from any particular objection they have to the doctrines of the Gospel, as from an inconsiderate and worldly turn of mind, which keeps them in a general neglect of religion. I have more than once publicly lamented and testified against the shameful profanation of

the Lord's day in this town. I am informed, it was not thus some years ago; but the increase of every kind of wickedness (as will generally be the case where the Gospel is known and despised) seems breaking in upon us like a flood. It is with some a day "of buying and selling, of slaying oxen and killing sheep;" Isa. xxii. 13. others associate for drink and vain conversation, to the scandal of the town, the grief of all serious persons, and no less in defiance to the laws of the land, than to the commandments of God. If I could have suppressed these enormities, I would. But as I have not been able to obtain assistance and concurrence sufficient to put the statutes in force, I can only give notice as a minister and a watchman, that "for these things the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience;" Ephes. v. 6. If you, my reader, are concerned in these practices, let me entreat you to consider what you are doing. Why will you "provoke the Lord to jealousy?" 1 Cor. x. 22. Are you stronger than he? If your whole dependence was upon what we call a great man, you durst not wilfully and publicly disobey him: and can you think it safe to trifle with the great God? Do you not know that your life, your health, the peace of your family, and the success of your industry, all depend upon him? Are you not afraid, lest by openly affronting his Majesty in profaning the day he has commanded to be kept holy, you should provoke him to send a curse upon all your concerns, and to blast your endeavours in the course of the week? Haggai i. 6—9. Every rebellion against God makes our state more desperate, sin being progressive. Have you never read, or heard or seen, that the contempt of the sabbath (like a breach in the bank of a river) opens the way for a long train of evils to follow? How many have made a confession to this purpose at the gallows? And how many families

may be found that are as full of misery, dissention, and confusion throughout the week, as they are destitute of the fear and worship of God on the Lord's day? Alas! I shall tremble for you if you do not lay this admonition to heart: I shall fear lest you provoke the Lord to give you up to a reprobate mind, or lest, in the course of his providence, he should set some mark upon you, to teach others by your example, that it is a dreadful thing to sin against the light, Rom. ii. 4. But though his patience should bear with you to the last, and you to the last should despise it, yet death will finally summon you to judgment, unless by his grace you are brought to repentance: though you may say, "Peace, peace to yourself, sudden destruction will then come upon you, and you shall not be able to escape," 1 Thess. v. 3

If you are one of those who do not wholly neglect the public worship of God, but accustom yourself to attend only once in the day, give me leave to ask you, or rather to desire you would ask your own conscience, whether you have a sufficient excuse for not attending twice? I know the circumstances of many families, such as sickness, young children, &c. will necessarily confine some people at home. But a due allowance for these impediments, will by no means account for the great difference between our congregations in the morning and in the afternoon of the same day. Now, if you have not a lawful hindrance to plead, consider whether the same reasons that require your presence at the public worship *once*, are not equally strong for your being there both parts of the day. Why do you go at all? Is it not to join with others in paying homage to the great God? But by doing this *once* only, where opportunity and the example of others invite you *twice*, you contradict yourself; and act as if you thought it was sometimes your duty to join in worship, and sometimes not worth your while. Or do you go with a

hope of receiving good for your souls? Why then should you at any time be willing to stay away? Perhaps the opportunity you miss might have been made peculiarly useful to you. At least the Lord may justly punish your frequent neglect, by withholding his blessing when you do attend. And this may be one reason why you have heard so long to so little purpose.

IV. It is with grief I observe how generally the word of God is disregarded amongst us, though few can plead ignorance of his will. The Scripture denounces a woe against them "who are mighty to drink strong drink," Isa. v. 22. and against "him who urges strong drink upon his neighbour to put him to shame," Hab. ii. 15. The Scripture declares, "Every one that sweareth shall be cut off with a curse," Zech. v. 3. Exod. xx. 7. These threatenings are frequently repeated in the ears of those who have not entirely cast off the very form of religion. Yet I fear intemperance, riot, and profaneness, visibly gain strength from year to year. If you *will* go on in those practices—yet remember I this day take God and your consciences to witness, that "I am pure of your blood," Acts xx. 26. As I have forewarned you before, so I tell you again, the wrath of God hangs over you. "Except you repent you will surely perish;" Luke xiii. 3, 5. and it will be a great aggravation if you perish with your eyes open. Think, I beseech you, before it is too late, of that awful passage—"If there be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood, and it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imaginations of my heart to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in

“this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven,” Deut. xxix. 18, 19.

There is one sin too frequent in the parish, which upon this occasion I think it especially necessary to mention. St. Paul assures us (agreeable to many other passages of Scripture, that “whoremongers and adulterers God will judge,” Heb. xiii. 4. *Adultery*, which implies a breach of the marriage contract, is so dreadful, so irreparable an evil, and as such condemned even by the heathens who know not God, that I would hope none of you are chargeable with it! If you are, however you may conceal your wickedness from your fellow-creatures, you cannot hide it from God; his eye is upon you, and his justice will surely overtake you. Indeed, if he is pleased to give you faith in the name of Jesus, and a sincere repentance of your crimes, there is yet hope; for “the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin;” 1 John i. 7. otherwise I testify to you from this Word, you shall surely perish. He who said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” Exod. xx. 14. will not hold you guiltless in the day of his wrath. But the apostle joins *whoredom* with adultery, and has expressly inserted *fornication* in the black list of those sins which will certainly exclude from a place in the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi. 9. Gal. v. 19. If you have been guilty, may the Lord fix a sense of your sin upon your conscience while you are reading, that you may not think it a light matter, but may instantly humble yourselves before him, and flee to the refuge provided for helpless sinners in the Gospel! Heb. vi. 18. If by his restraining grace and providence you have been hitherto preserved from this iniquity, you have reason to praise him. And O pray to him (I speak more especially to young persons) that you may be enabled to “abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,” 1 Pet. ii. 11. It is your

duty and interest to flee from this hateful evil, and to watch against the temptations which lead to it, as you would avoid a pestilence. By complying with it, you hazard all your peace and comfort in this life, as well as sin against the great God. If a criminal intercourse between single persons does not issue in marriage, a long train of mischiefs is the usual consequence; shame, remorse, misery, and very often total ruin, especially on the woman's part. And even if the parties are afterwards married, though the frequency of such cases may lessen the scandal in the sight of men, the sin committed against God remains the same. And an occasion is opened for such reflections and suspicions, as frequently embitter the peace and destroy the confidence and affection in which they might otherwise have lived.

V. I observe likewise with concern, a spirit of open impiety and infidelity spreading amongst some persons. They are bold to "proclaim their sin as *Sodom*;" Isa. iii. 9. they cannot be content with the practice of wickedness, or with tempting others to partake of their evil deeds, but they are prompted to scoff at the truths of the Gospel, and to ridicule and revile those who will not "run with them into the same excess of riot," 1 Pet. iv. 4. If any one, of this unhappy turn, should read this paper, I would take the opportunity to tell you, that I pity you, and pray for you. I well know the gall and wormwood, Lam. iii. 19. of your state, for it was once my own. I cannot be surprised at any thing you say or do. You sin against the light, and this makes you desperate: "It is hard to kick against the pricks," Acts ix. 5. I can tell from my own past experience, that your heart and your language do not always agree. You are sometimes constrained to reverence the people you affect to despise; and often, when you boast of jollity and pleasure, you feel something within that makes you wish you could change conditions with a

sheep or a dog. I doubt not but you understand what I mean. Why then should you remain in this miserable bondage, when there is One able to set you free? Perhaps you have concluded that you have gone too far to stop; that you have sinned with too high a hand to be forgiven. A secret despair of this kind, is Satan's great engine, by which he hurries many sinners to the most dreadful extravagancies. But may I not allege my own case for your encouragement against such a conclusion? You have probably heard that I was once "a persecutor, a blasphemous and injurious," 1 Tim. i. 13—16. I was so, indeed, to a degree I cannot express. But I obtained mercy. The exceeding abundant grace of our Lord Jesus Christ brought me out of that dreadful state, and in his providence he has placed me amongst you, that if I only pass you in the street, you have a proof before your eyes of his gracious declaration, that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men for the Son of man's sake. There is forgiveness with him that he may be feared," Matt. xii. 31. Psalm cxxx. 4. Oh that I could prevail with you to seek him while he is to be found, to submit to him before the gate of mercy is quite shut! then "I am sure iniquity should not be your ruin:" Ezek. xviii. 30. for "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him," Heb. vii. 25. At least, let me give you one caution: do not make the Scripture, or the people who love it, the subjects of your wanton mirth. "Be not a mocker, lest your bands be made strong," Isa. xxviii. 22. A common proverb says, "It is ill jesting with edged tools." I am sure it may be applied in the present case. If the cause you despise is the cause of God, it will be a dreadful thing to be found fighting against Him.

VI. There remains a considerable number to whom I have not yet spoken; who may know they

are not believers, yet are tolerably regular in their attendance upon the means of grace, and are not habitually guilty of gross and open sins. I commend you for your readiness to hear the Gospel, and rejoice that it has some influence upon your conduct. But I would caution you against resting in outward privileges, or thinking yourself safe because you have escaped the abominations in which you see some others live. There are other sins which, though not so heinous in the judgment of man, are sufficient to ruin the soul. If you "love the world, the love of the Father is not in you, 1 John ii. 15. To be carnally minded is death, Rom. viii. 6. Covetousness is idolatry, Col. iii. 5. If you are under the prevailing power of passion, pride and resentment, you are strangers to the grace of God," Gal. v. 20. In a word, "if you have not the spirit of Christ, you are none of his," Rom. vii. 9. A form of godliness without the power, 2 Tim. iii. 5. will leave you helpless and hopeless. Can you be content to be no more than chaff amongst the wheat, Matt. iii. 12. to converse and worship with the people of God for a season here, and then to be separated from them for ever? If you should see those whom you know and love, your friends and relatives, received into the kingdom at last, and you yourselves shut out, Luke xiii. 25—30. how awful will your disappointment be! May the Lord awaken you to a diligent search into your own hearts, and in his holy Word, and not suffer you to take up with any thing short of a real and saving change! "Look to Jesus, the author and finisher of faith:" Heb. xii. 2. who is exalted to "be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and pardon, life and immortality:" Acts v. 31. and remember you have his faithful promise, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37.

I can truly say, my dear friends, that "my heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved," Rom. x. 1. As some, I fear, have hitherto heard in vain, and some will not hear me at all, I have chosen this method to address you all: I hope none will be offended, for I would not willingly offend a child. I hope I can appeal to yourselves, that God has given me a desire to live peaceably with all men, and, to the utmost of my power, to promote your welfare. "I seek not yours, but you," 2 Cor. xii. 14. In a little time "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," 2 Cor. iii. 10. There I must give an account of my ministry, and you must account for the privileges with which you have been favoured. When I think of the solemnities of that day, and the worth of your immortal souls, I am at a loss for words suitable to my desires on your behalf. "I beseech you by the tender mercies of our God," Rom. xii. 1. I warn you, by his approaching terrors, 2 Cor. v. 11. that you receive not this grace of God in a preached Gospel in vain, 2 Cor. vi. 1. And though I cannot expect to prevail on you all, yet I write in hope, that a blessing from the Lord will make the reading of this paper useful to some. And if it be so, even to one person, I ought to esteem it an over-payment for the labour of my whole life.

And now I commend you to God; to the word of his grace, and to the teaching of his Spirit, Acts xx. 32. I make it my earnest request, to the favoured few who know the Lord, and have received the spirit of prayer, that in your supplications to the throne of grace, you will frequently bear in remembrance,

Your affectionate Friend and Servant

in the Gospel of Christ,

JOHN NEWTON.

A TOKEN
OF
AFFECTION AND RESPECT,

TO THE PARISHIONERS OF

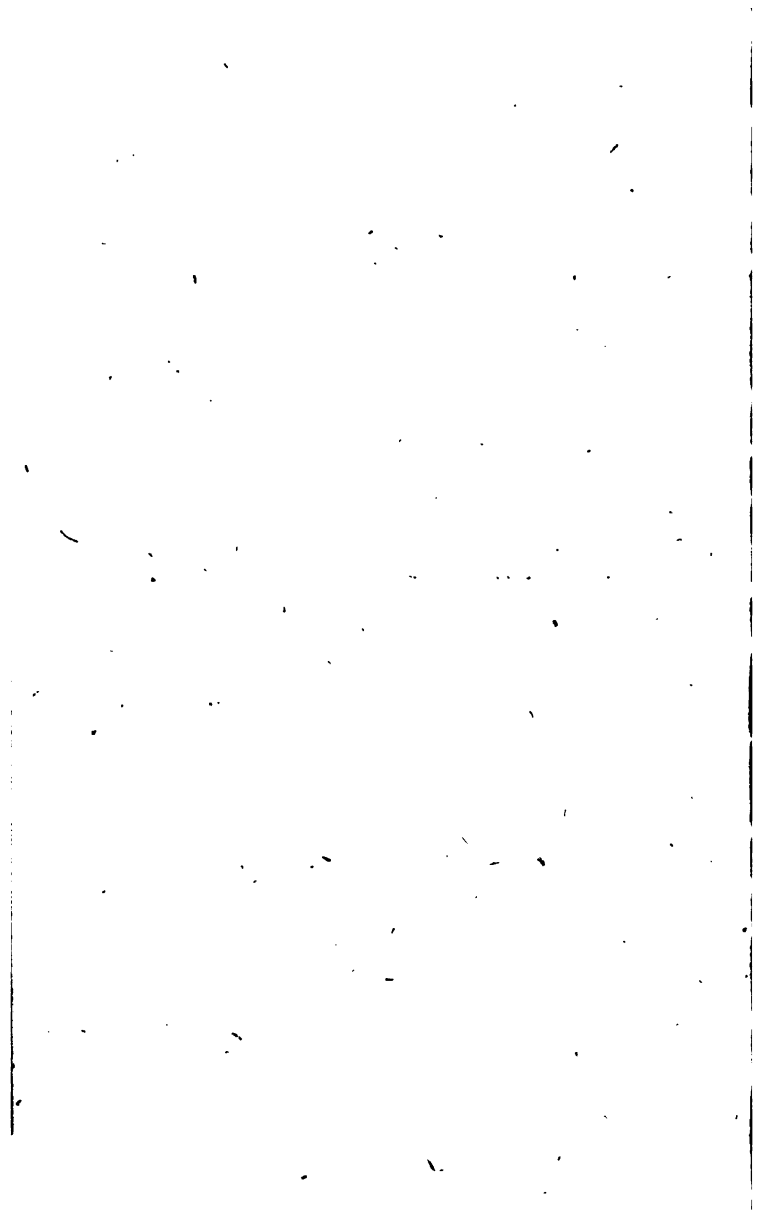
*ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY
WOOLCHURCH, LONDON.*

FROM THEIR MINISTER.



Acts xxvi. 3.

I beseech thee to hear me patiently.



I BESEECH THEE TO HEAR ME PATIENTLY.

MY RESPECTED FRIENDS,

IT being impracticable to *write* separately and distinctly to every person in the parishes with which I am connected as a Minister; I cannot offer you this testimony of my sincere regard for your welfare, without availing myself of the conveniency of the press*. And I wish, while I express myself with freedom, to observe the same respect and tenderness, as if I had an opportunity of conversing personally and severally with each of you.

My income from the parishes is legally settled, and regularly and readily paid. I am well satisfied with it; and have only to wish on this head, that the people of my charge may be benefited by the ministry which they jointly contribute to support. I acknowledge likewise, with thankfulness to God and to you, that in the occasional intercourse I have had amongst you, I have never received the least personal incivility or unkindness from any one. Though I cannot but know and lament, that the subject-matter of my preaching is to many of you not pleasing; and though several steps I have thought it my duty to take, must appear, to some of you, unnecessary and troublesome innovations, I have met with no direct and studied marks of opposition or ill-will. Your conduct has, in this respect,

* A passage is omitted here, expressive of the author's determination to confine this address to his parishioners; but as his executors consider this as applicable only to the period of its publication, they have not scrupled to insert the address among his posthumous writings.

been worthy of the politeness and humanity which distinguish you on other occasions.

The only cause of complaint, or rather of grief, which you have given me is, that so many of those, to whom I earnestly desire to be useful, refuse me the pleasure of seeing them at church on the Lord's day. My concern does not arise from the want of hearers. If either a numerous auditory, or the respectable characters of many of the individuals who compose it, could satisfy me, I might be satisfied. But I must grieve, while I see so few of my own parishioners among them. Let me entreat your favourable attention, while I respectfully and affectionately expostulate on this head.

The general design of my ministry in this city, might, and I trust would have been answered, if it had pleased God to place me in some other parish. But He saw fit to fix me amongst you. This appointment, as it ought to give you a preference in my regard, and to make me studiously solicitous to promote your advantage; so likewise it gives you a more immediate and particular interest than others, in the event of my services. However little worthy of your notice in any other view; if I am a servant of God, a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, if I speak the truth in love, how can I but be pained at the thought, that many to whom the word of salvation is sent, Acts xiii. 26. refuse to hear it, and reject the counsel of God against themselves! Luke vii. 30.

I am unwilling to suppose, and yet, when I consider the progress of infidelity in the present day, I cannot but fear, that there may be some amongst you who absent themselves from the church, not so much from a dislike of what may be called my scheme, or my sentiments, as from a disregard to religion in general, at least to the Christian religion. I know how to pity

persons of this unhappy turn, for it was too long my own. It is not only a hazardous, but an uncomfortable state; for notwithstanding their utmost address and endeavours, they cannot wholly avoid painful apprehensions, lest the Bible, which they wish to be false, should prove to be the truth. It was thus with me, and it must, in the nature of things, be thus with every infidel. To doubt or deny the truth of Christianity is too common: but to demonstrate that it is false, is an utter impossibility. I laboured long in the attempt, but, when I least expected it, I met with evidence that overpowered my resistance; and the Bible, which I had despised, removed my scepticism. He against whom I had hardened myself, was pleased to spare me: and I now live to tell you, that there is forgiveness with him, Psal. cxxx. 4.

But the greater part of you, I am persuaded, will agree with me thus far at least, that the Scripture is a divine revelation. But do not some of you act inconsistently with your acknowledged principles? Can you reconcile your conduct to the precepts of God, or to the character of those who fear and love him, as described either in the Old or New Testament? If you have servants and dependants, you expect to be obeyed; and do you profess yourselves the servants of God, and yet allow yourselves in the breach of his known commandments? The habits of business or amusement in which you live, not only engross your time and thoughts during the rest of the week, but indispose you for the due observation of the day which he has enjoined you to keep holy. You have engagements of another kind, which will not admit of your stated regular attendance on the public worship of God; and if you constrain yourself to be present occasionally, the light which a faithful preacher forces upon your conscience offends you, and makes you will-

ing to catch at every pretence which may furnish you with the shadow of an excuse for not hearing him again.

But this is not the character of all who have withdrawn themselves. Some of you have not forsaken the public worship; you attend at other churches, and are ready to complain that you have been driven from your own. If you have candour to allow that possibly I mean well, yet the manner of my preaching is so different from what you were formerly accustomed to, and from what you approve, that after having heard me, and perhaps more than once, you have been constrained to seek new places, and to resign your seats in your parish church to strangers. If I venture to plead with you upon this ground, it is not without being aware of the delicacy of the subject. It will seem like pleading my own cause. But I am conscious, that I would not trouble you with a single line in the way of self-justification, if it were not for your sakes, and with a desire of obviating such misapprehensions, as I verily believe you cannot retain without disadvantage to yourselves.

As a protestant minister, and preaching to protestant hearers, I not only take my text from the Scriptures, but likewise draw from thence the proofs and illustrations of what I advance in my sermons. I frequently, yea, constantly appeal to the Bible, the acknowledged standard and touchstone of religious sentiments. As a minister of the church of England, when speaking to the professed members of that church, I might likewise appeal to the current doctrine expressed in our liturgy and articles; but I seldom do it, because having, as I conceive, the highest authority, the holy Scripture, on my side, I need no other. If you could be certain, that with respect to the points wherein we differ, the Scrip-

tures are for you and against me, your refusal to hear me would be justifiable. But otherwise it behoves you to be cautious, lest, while you think you only reject what appears to you novel or impertinent, your contempt should unhappily fall upon the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, and of Christ himself. I must magnify my office, Rom. xi. 13. On other occasions, I wish to demean myself as the least of all, and the servant of all; but when I stand in the pulpit, I speak in the name and under the authority of Him, whom we believe will shortly come to be our judge, and who has said, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me," Luke x. 16.

I mean not to take up your time, at present, with a detail or a discussion of sentiments. I offered a brief outline of my thoughts and aims, in the first sermon I preached among you, and which was printed solely with the design of presenting it to you; though by a mistake, that gave me pain at the time, it became more public than I intended. To the profession I then made, I have, by the goodness of God, been enabled invariably to conform. I doubt not but I have spoken the truth; Eph. iv. 15. I have endeavoured to speak it in love. It is true, I have not dared to disguise or palliate my principles. I account it a great mercy to me, that I have not been influenced by the fear or the favour of men. But my conscience bears me witness, that so far as truth and duty would admit, I have studied to avoid whatever might give you offence or pain. When I came to St. Mary Woolnoth, not being altogether a stranger to what is called the world, and to the maxims prevalent in genteel life, I could not promise myself very genteel acceptance as a preacher. I knew that if I would be faithful to my conscience, some of my hearers must be displeased; but though I was constrained to risk your displeasure, I have

been solicitous not to provoke it, or to lay any unnecessary difficulties either in your way, or in my own.

Many persons, whose good sense and liberal education exempt or free them from prejudices of other kinds, are frequently almost as much under the power of *religious* prejudices as the vulgar. We lament this more than we wonder at it. The reason is obvious. In temporal concerns they examine and judge for themselves. But in religious matters, they are content to let others judge for them, and (if I may so speak) to swim with the stream of a prevailing opinion. To this cause I must ascribe some of the exceptions that are taken to my ministry.

In almost every age and country where Christianity has been professed, some hard name or term of reproach has been imposed upon those who ventured to maintain a more evangelical strain of doctrine, or a stricter course of conduct, than was agreeable to the spirit of the times in which they lived. Even the *Christian* name, honourable as we may now think it, was used by the heathens, when it first obtained, as a stigma, a term of the utmost contempt and hatred; and Christians were, by common consent, reputed the off-scouring, and filth of all things, 1 Cor. iv. 13. In a like reproachful sense the names of Lollards and Gospellers were applied, by the papists, to those whom God honoured as his instruments in freeing our fore-fathers from the shackles of popery, by introducing that light of truth which issued in the reformation. Men of the same spirit were afterwards branded in protestant nations with the terms Pietist and Puritan. Of late years the name of Methodist has been imposed as a mark and vehicle of reproach. I have not hitherto met with a person who could give me a definition or precise idea of what is generally intended by this for-

midable word, by those who use it to express their disapprobation. Till I do, I am at a loss whether to confess or deny that I am (what some account me) a methodist. If it be supposed to include any thing, whether in principle or conduct, unsuitable to the character of a regular minister of the church of England, I may, and I do, disown it. And yet it is probable, that some of my parishioners hearing, and easily taking it for granted, that I am a methodist, think it a sufficient proof that it cannot be worth their while to hear me.

That I may not disgust and weary my hearers by the length of my sermons, I carefully endeavour not to exceed three quarters of an hour, at those seasons when I have most reason to hope for the presence of my parishioners. At other times I allow myself a longer term; but even this, I understand, is thought too long. If I considered my preaching only as a customary appendage, without which I could not, with a good grace, collect my dues, we should not long differ upon this point. So far as brevity would be pleasing, it would cost me little trouble to please. But if the proper ends of preaching are to instruct, to admonish, to exhort, and to persuade; if the great truths of Scripture are to be explained, illustrated, and applied; if the various known or probable states and cases of the several persons who compose our auditories are to be attended to; in a word, if, as a preacher, I am conscientiously to endeavour to save myself and them that hear me; 1 Tim. iv. 16. then I confess I know not how to answer these ends, were I to limit myself to a much shorter space than I do. And sometimes, when my heart has been deeply impressed with a sense of the worth of souls, the brevity and uncertainty of life, and the solemnity of that hour when both preachers and hearers must give an account of themselves to God, I

have, perhaps, in defiance of my previous determination, been constrained to exceed it a few minutes, though but seldom. I am persuaded you are mistaken, when you think the length of my discourses is the cause of your dissatisfaction. It is not so much the length, as the subject-matter that wearies you. It is possible I could, if I durst, preach a sermon, which, though it exceeded three quarters of an hour, you would not think too long. Many persons can afford their attention for several hours to pleaders at the bar, or to speakers in parliament, without weariness, whose patience is quickly exhausted under a sermon, where the principles of Scripture are plainly enforced, and a faithful application of them is addressed to the conscience. I mean not to vie with the public speakers you admire. I lay no claim to the honour of an orator, nor do I expect, or even wish, to engage your attention by the elegance and modulation of my periods. If I possessed abilities of this kind, I must decline the use of them. I must speak to the unlearned as well as to the wise, and therefore my principal aim is to be understood. Yet I would hope I am not justly chargeable with speaking nonsense, or expressing myself with a levity or carelessness unsuitable to the pulpit, or disrespectful to the auditory. But, alas! there are too many hearers, who seem more desirous of entertainment, than of real benefit from a sermon! They do not act thus in the affairs of common life. Were they to consult a physician or a lawyer, they would not be content with having their opinion upon a point of law, or a case of medicine in which they themselves had no personal concern. It is their *own* case they expect should be considered. But when they come to church, if the discourse be ingenious, and the elocution of the preacher agreeable, it suffices; and the less the subject comes home to their personal con-

cernment, the more (in general) they are pleased with it. That is, they are disposed to be pleased with the preacher, if he says nothing to make them displeas'd with themselves.

Another objection which I must likewise treat as a prejudice is, that I am an extempore preacher. The practice of reading sermons to a public assembly, has been hitherto peculiar to the English nation. Bishop Burnet observes, that it took its rise soon after the dawn of the reformation amongst us. Latimer and other great men, whose names, now they are dead, are mentioned with some respect, were, when living, treated by many as if they had been methodists. They were contemptuously styled Gospellers, and preaching in unquiet times, when there were insurrections in different parts of the kingdom, they were traduced as our Saviour and his apostles had been before them, and charged with having a design to foment sedition by their sermons. This was done with a view of awakening the suspicion and distrust of Henry VIII. against them, who was a prince sufficiently jealous of his authority. The preachers not only disavowed the charge, but were led to write their discourses, that they might, if necessary, confute their slanderers, by producing what they had actually delivered. The like accusations, and the like suspicions, in some succeeding reigns, rendered the same precaution expedient. At length the custom became general and established. In most, if not in all other parts of Christendom, a man who should attempt to read his sermon from the pulpit, would find but few hearers; he would be judged disqualified for the office of a preacher by his own confession. Insomuch that they who after having previously considered their subject, are not able to speak upon it with some degree of readiness, are obliged not only to write their sermons, but to sub-

mit to the burdensome task of committing them to memory ; for reading them would not be endured. With us, on the contrary, the prejudice in favour of reading is so strong, that many people can form no expectation of sense, argument, or coherence, from a man who preaches without a book. They will require little more proof of its being unworthy of their notice, than to be told he is an extempore speaker. Here again, in the concerns of common life, they judge and act otherwise. There is little doubt but the theatres would soon be much less frequented, if the performers were to appear with books in their hands, and each one to read his respective part. And perhaps the theatre is the only place where a public speaker would be much admired, if it were known that he spoke neither more nor less than he had previously determined to say. In parliamentary debates, and in pleadings in our courts of justice, the occurrence of unexpected replies and objections, and other new circumstances, renders it necessary that a man should be so far master of his subject and his thoughts, as to be able to accommodate himself to those sudden turns, which often lead him into a train of discussions and arguments, which could not be premeditated, because the occasions could not be foreseen. If this habit and facility of speaking off-hand, and applying principles of general knowledge to particular subjects and incidents as they offer, be allowed, approved, and even required in other public speakers, why should it be supposed that the preacher is the only person who cannot, or must not, express his thoughts, but in that order, and in those words, in which he has previously written them ? Is not Divinity a subject sufficiently copious ? Are not the topics which the Scriptures afford, well suited by their importance, certainty, and authority, to awaken the strongest emotions, and to draw forth the

highest exertions of which the human mind is capable? Shall the management of the contested claim of a house or a field, or the interest of contending political parties, be deemed of such consequence as to engage the attention and admiration of hearers? And shall a minister of the Gospel, when called by his office to unfold the wonders of redemption, or to enlarge on the solemn themes of judgment, heaven, and hell, be thought the only man who has chosen a subject incapable of justifying his earnestness; or of furnishing him with such thoughts and expressions upon the spot, as the most judicious part of his auditory need not disdain to hear? Certainly, if the Bible be true, a minister must have the advantage of all other persons who speak in a public character! His subject is more weighty, and of infinitely more concern to his hearers. He speaks in the name of God, and has an express promise of the assistance of his Holy Spirit, if not to supercede his faculties, yet to influence, animate, and guide them, to bring things seasonably to his remembrance, and to apply them to the heart with a divine energy. We know that it is so in fact; and though we are slighted, and perhaps despised, by many, there are others who receive our testimony with joy, and will acknowledge that what the world esteems the foolishness of preaching, 1 Cor. i. 21. has, by the blessing of God, made them wise unto salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15.

I earnestly entreat you, my beloved friends, seriously to consider these things. In the midst of the various sentiments, and opinions which prevail, it is at least certain that we are all mortal, and that life is not only short, but highly precarious. If you believe the Scriptures, you acknowledge, that after death there is an appointed judgment, and an unchangeable, everlasting state. If so, should you not carefully examine the

ground of your hope, and fear even the possibility of a mistake, which, if not rectified before death, will then be fatal and without remedy? If you would not sign a lease or a contract without examining it for yourselves, why will you venture your eternal concerns implicitly upon the prevailing opinions of those around you? Especially, when our Lord himself has told us, that whoever may be right, the *many* are undoubtedly wrong. For "wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and *many* there be that go in thereat; because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that find it," Matt. vii. 13. If for the present you seem confirmed in your manner of thinking and living, by the numbers, names, and examples of those with whom you agree; yet consider, you must soon be separated from them all. Not one of them will be able to comfort you in a dying hour, or to answer for you to God. You may live in a throng, but you must die alone. Religious subjects are seldom the chosen topics of conversation, in what is usually called good company; if occasionally introduced, how superficially are they treated, yet how peremptorily are they decided upon, and then how readily dismissed! But sooner or later their importance will be known. The Scripture is the rule by which we must all be judged at last; it is therefore our wisdom to judge ourselves by it now. Would you be persuaded to do this, praying to God for that assistance which you need to direct your inquiries, and which he has promised he will afford to them that ask him, it would have a happy effect upon your principles and your peace. Search and read for yourselves, if the Scripture does not speak to all mankind as in a state of condemnation, Rom. iii. ; 19. if it affords us any hope of deliverance but for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ; Acts iv. 12. if it intimates any

method of being saved through him, but by a faith, wrought by the operation of God, Mark xvi. 16. and evinced by a temper of love, and a habit of cheerful obedience to his precepts, Col. ii. 12. Gal. v. 6. 1 Pet. i. 2.; if these points, which comprise the general scope of my preaching, are contained and taught in the Bible, they ought not to be spoken against.

I can have no interest to forward by this address, except that interest which I feel in your welfare. I have no favour to solicit from you, but that you would attend to the things which pertain to your eternal happiness. I can truly say, I seek not yours, but you, 2 Cor. xii. 14. Though I am not indifferent to your good opinion, so far as respects my integrity and moral character, yet it is a small thing with me to be judged of man's judgment; nor would your united approbation content me, except I could hope it was founded in your cordial acceptance of the Gospel which I preach. I have taken this method, as it seemed the only one in my power of acquainting some of you with my sentiments, which yet it highly concerns you to know; not because they are mine, but I speak it with confidence) because they are true, and of the utmost consequence. However amiable and benevolent in your private characters, except you are born again, John iii. 3. born from above, delivered from the love and spirit of the world, Gal. i. 4. and made partakers of the love and spirit of the Lord Jesus, Rom. viii. 9. you cannot be accepted of him in the great approaching day of his appearance. My heart longs for your salvation; but whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, I must take your consciences to witness, that I have been faithful to you. If after this (which may God forbid!) any should perish, I am clear of their blood, Acts xx. 26. Permit me to make one request. It is not likely that I shall ever trouble you in this way

again, and therefore I would intreat you to preserve this paper. If it makes no impression on you at present, a more favourable season may come. If you pay but little attention to it in your prosperity, a time of affliction may invite you to peruse it again. If you regard it not while I am living, you may, should you survive me, read it more carefully after my decease. It is however probable, that some of you will not survive me. Death may be even at your door. If the thought of such a visitant be unwelcome to you, it is owing to a secret consciousness that you are not prepared for it, and therefore you seek refuge from the painful apprehension, in a round of business or pleasure; perhaps, for the present, with too much success. Yet sooner or later, the hour you dread must come. "It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death the judgment." There we shall all meet. May the Lord God so influence your minds now, that our meeting then may be comfortable and happy!

Thus far I have written chiefly to those who absent themselves from the church. But I thank God I am not wholly deserted by my parishioners. With regard to those who have patience and candour to hear me, I have a hope that what may now seem harsh and difficult in my sermons, may hereafter approve itself to their judgment. No person in the congregation can be more averse from the doctrines which I now preach than I myself once was. This gives me encouragement for others, especially when they are willing to attend on the means which God has promised to bless. For faith cometh by hearing, Rom. x. 17. If I have at any time, contrary to my intencion, uttered a single sentence in my own spirit, or that might give them *just* cause of offence, I should be glad, if I knew it, to ask their pardon.

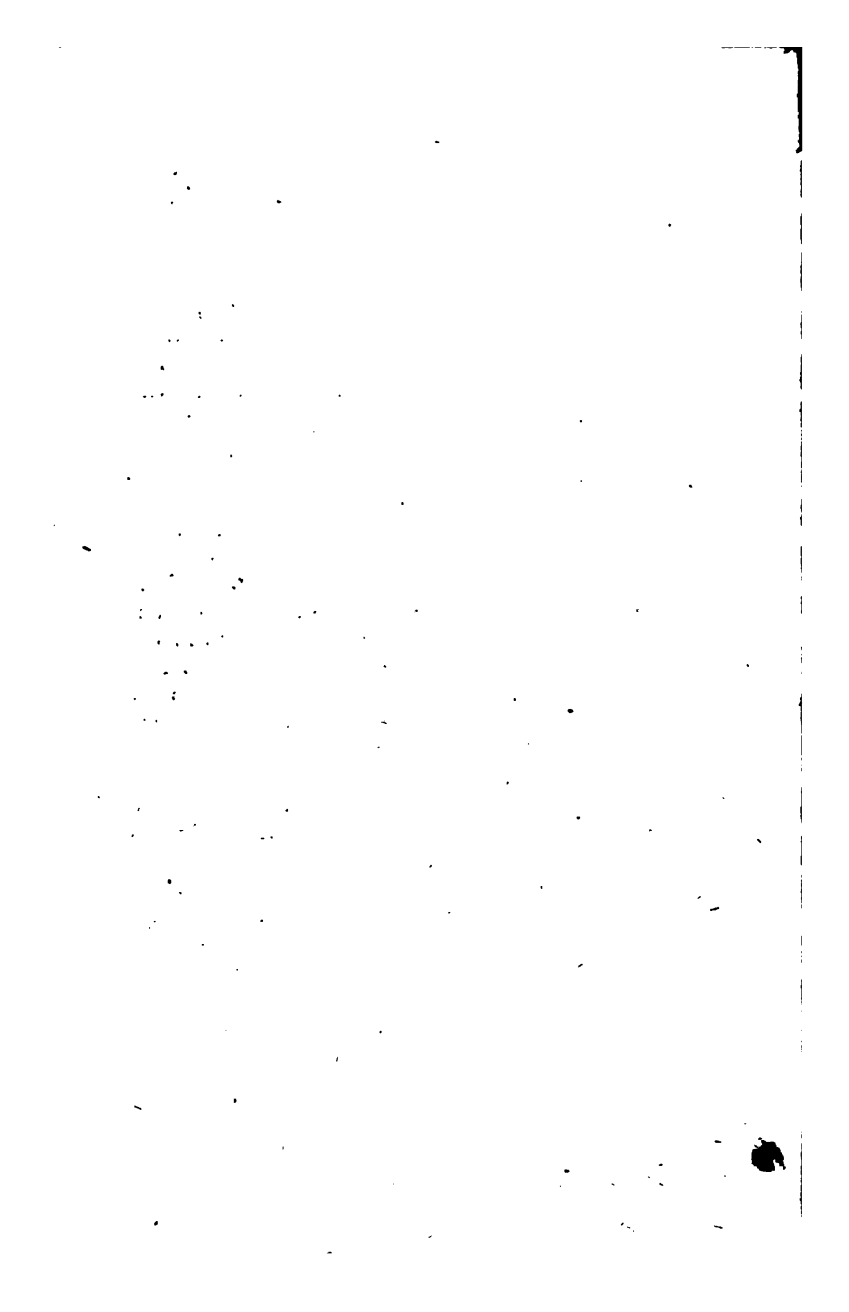
Some of you there are (may God increase the num-

ber) who not only hear, but approve, because they have an experience in their own hearts that I speak the truth. They have felt the evil of sin, and the necessity of a Saviour. They have received the record God has given of his Son, and place their whole dependence upon him, as their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. To these I can address myself with more freedom. You know the difficulties of my situation, and will assist me with your prayers. I trust likewise you will assist me by your conduct, and that your lives and conversations will contribute to stop the mouths of gainsayers, and constrain them to acknowledge, that the doctrines of grace, which I preach, when rightly understood and cordially embraced, are productive of peace, contentment, integrity, benevolence, and humility. Many eyes are upon you, watching for your halting, and seeking occasion by your miscarriages, if they can observe any, to speak evil of the way of truth, 2 Pet. ii. 2. May the Lord Jesus Christ enable you to disappoint them, and make them ashamed! We must expect some opposition, many temptations and trials; but we are engaged in a good cause, and we have a mighty Saviour, a compassionate friend, a prevailing advocate. He knows your path; he sees your conflicts. And he has engaged to support, to guide, and to guard you, and at length to make you more than conquerors, Rom. viii. 37. and to bestow upon you a crown of everlasting life, Rev. ii. 10.

I am your affectionate servant,

JOHN NEWTON.

Heaton, Nov. 1, 1784.



A LETTER
ON
POLITICAL DEBATE,

Printed in the Year 1793.



TO

THE REV. D**** W*****.

DEAR AND REVEREND SIR,

THE kind present of your book, and your kind intention in addressing your sermons to me by name, deserved a more early acknowledgement. I am pleased with every mark of regard from a Christian brother, though I *could* have wished not to be held up to public notice : and Mr. J——t, who likewise meant well, has made the business a little more awkward to me by styling me *Doctor*, an honour which the newspapers informed me (for I have no official intelligence) has been conferred upon me by the college of Princeton in America. However, by the grace of God, I am determined not to assume the title of Doctor, unless I should receive a diploma from a College in the New Settlement at Sierra Leone. The dreary coast of Africa was the university to which the Lord was pleased to send me, and I dare not acknowledge a relation to any other.

I need not express my approbation of your sermons in stronger terms than by saying, that I have seldom met with any thing more congenial to my own sentiments and taste. I read them with great satisfaction.

Though I have very little time for reading, had your whole volume consisted of such sermons, I should have gone through it much sooner : but your lectures on Liberty, though ingenious and well writ-

ten, were not so interesting to me. It was therefore longer before I could find leisure to finish them; and this has occasioned the delay of my letter; for I thought it would be premature to write till I could say I had read them.

I hope I am a friend to liberty, both civil and religious, but I fear you will hardly allow it, when I say, I think myself possessed of as much of these blessings, at present, as I wish for. I can, indeed, form an idea of something more perfect; but I expect no perfection in this state: and, when I consider the Lord's question, "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" I cannot but wonder that such a nation as this should still be favoured with so many privileges, which we still enjoy and still abuse.

Allow me to say, that it excites both my wonder and concern, that a minister, possessed of the great and important views expressed in your two sermons, should think it worth his while to appear in the line of a political writer, or expect to amend our constitution or situation, by proposals of a political reform. When I look around upon the present state of the nation, such an attempt appears to me no less vain and unseasonable, than it would be to paint a cabin while the ship is sinking, or a parlour when the house is already on fire. My dear Sir, my prayer to God for you is, that he may induce you to employ the talents he has given you in pointing out *sin* as the great cause and source of every existing evil, and to engage those who love and fear him, instead of losing them in political speculation, for which very few of them are tolerably competent, to sigh and cry for our abounding abominations, and to stand in the breach, by prayer, that, if it may be, wrath may yet be averted, and our national mercies prolonged. This, I think, is the true patriotism, the best, if not

the only way, in which persons in private life can serve their country. For the rest, there will be always dead to bury the dead. The instruments whom the Lord employs in political matters are usually such as are incapable of better employment. All things and persons serve him; but there are services under the direction of his providence which are not good enough for his own children. They belong to a kingdom which is not of this world; they are strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and a part of their scriptural character is, that they are the "quiet in the land."

The reasoning for a more equal representation in parliament is specious; but while infidelity and profligacy abound among rich and poor; while there is such a general want of principle and public spirit among all ranks; I apprehend, that, whatever changes might take place in this business, no real benefit will follow. The consequence would rather be the introduction of perjury, bribery, drunkenness, and riot, into towns, which have hitherto been more exempted from them than the boroughs. As the numbers of buyers increased, so would the number of those who are willing to be sold. And I know that many judicious people in Birmingham and Manchester are so sensible of this, that they would be sorry to have elections among them, though there are exceptions. I have so poor an opinion of the *bulk* both of the electors and the elected, that, I think, if the seats in the house of commons could be determined by a lottery, abundance of mischief and wickedness might be prevented, and perhaps the nation might be represented to as much advantage by this as by any other method; but these are not my concerns.

The position, that, if the body of a people are aggrieved, they have a right to redress themselves, must be much limited and modified before I can recon-

cile it to Scripture. I am not fond of despots ; but I think, if ever there was one upon earth, Nebuchadnezzar was a despot. Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive ; whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down ; Dan. v. 18, 19. Yet Jeremiah declares, that the Lord had given him this despotic power, and had commanded all the nations to serve him. Surely, if you and I had been there (knowing what we know now), we should not have disputed this command, nor have excited the people, however oppressed, to shake off the yoke which God himself had put upon them : and if, for our sins, the Lord should put us under the power of the Russians, I should rather look to him than to man for deliverance.

I think a heathen said, " The day which deprives a man of his liberty, robs him of half his virtues."— If I was a heathen I should say so too. But the Gospel teaches me otherwise. The apostle expected that believing servants, who at that time, I suppose, were chiefly bond-servants or slaves, would act from nobler principles, and aim at a more sublime end, than the conception of philosophers had ever reached to. That they would act from a regard to the glory of God our Saviour, and to the honour of his Gospel ; Tit. ii. 10. 1 Tim. vi. 1. ; and elsewhere he says, 1 Cor. vii. 21. " Art thou called, being a servant ? care not for it : but if thou mayst be made free, use it rather." If Divine Providence offers you a manumission, accept it with thankfulness ; if not, it is but a trifle to you, who are already the Lord's freedman ; and, in your most servile employments, if submitted to for his sake, you are accepted of him no less than if you were placed in the most honourable and important stations. The Christian, however situated, must be free indeed, for the Son of God has made him so. On the other hand, you and I, dear sir, know how much they are to be pitied

who are frantic for what they call liberty, and consider not that they are in the most deplorable bondage, the slaves of sin and Satan, and subject to the curse of the law, and the wrath of God. Oh! for a voice to reach their hearts, that they may know themselves, and seek deliverance from their dreadful thralldom. Satan has many contrivances to amuse them, and to turn their thoughts from their real danger; and none seem more ensnaring, in the present day, than to engage them in the cry, "Great is the Diana Liberty!" May you and I labour with success to direct them to the one thing which is absolutely needful, and abundantly sufficient. The Socinians are rather the most forward in this cry; which I fear will have a baneful influence upon the power of religion among the more evangelical dissenters. An agreement in political sentiments produces much cordiality and intercourse between those who, in point of doctrine, have stood at the greatest distance. And already, in some pulpits (proh dolor!) a description of the rights of man occupies much of the time which used to be employed in proclaiming the glory and grace of the Saviour, and the rights of God to the love and obedience of his creatures.

As to the revolution in France, I suppose no human person was sorry when the Bastile was destroyed, and the pillars of their oppressive government shaken.—The French had then a great opportunity put into their hands. I pretend not to judge of the political merit of their constitution; but, if I approved it in other respects, I durst not praise it so strongly as you do, while I knew it was planted in atheism, and has been watered with deluges of human blood; while I knew it began in insult to Christianity, and aimed at its abolition.

However, their first admired constitution is now at an end, and has no more force than the repeated oaths

by which they bound themselves to maintain it. And now, not content with pleasing themselves, they are aiming to force their schemes upon the surrounding nations. I should call this Quixotism in the extreme, if I did not consider them as saws and hammers in the hand of the Lord. So far as they are his instruments they will succeed, but not an inch farther. Their wrath shall praise him to the full extent of its acting, and be subservient to his designs; the remainder of it he will restrain. And, when he maketh inquisition for the blood they have wantonly shed, and for their defiance of his great name, neither their phantom liberty, nor their idol Voltaire, will screen them from his notice.

I am sorry for your severe censures on the present administration. For, when I compare the state of the nation in the year 1783, or at the time of the king's illness, with what it is now, I cannot but think that the providence of God raised up Mr. Pitt for the good of these kingdoms, and that no man could do what he has done unless a blessing from on high had been upon his counsels and measures. I speak simply; having nothing to hope, or, as I think, to fear from men in power, I am not concerned to vindicate the conduct of ministry in the lump; but I believe, though it be easy to draw up theories and schemes in the closet, which may look very pretty and plausible upon paper, difficulties will occur in the administration of a great people, which can scarcely be conceived of by persons in private life. And, with respect to Britain at present, I believe, if the prophet Daniel was at the head of our affairs, or if all our ministers were angels, the corruption and venality of the times would labour hard to counteract their designs.

There is no new thing under the sun. When I

read Sallust's account of the Jugurthine war, I seem to read (*mutatis mutandis*) our own history. The wealth and luxury which followed the successes of Lucullus in Asia soon destroyed all appearance of public spirit in Rome. Our acquisitions in the East have had a similar effect. I know some persons who, after giving full proof of their incompetency to manage their own private affairs, after having ruined their families by dissipation, and stained their characters by fraud and bankruptcy, have presently set up for national reformers. I am very sorry they should seem to have the sanction of such a name as yours.

I know not even the names of the gentlemen who compose the society of "the friends of the people," and consequently have no prejudice against their characters. But you yourself are sorry, and seem surprised that they should adopt an eulogium upon Mr. Paine. I am sorry likewise, but I am not surprised. *Ex pedē Herculem!* I rely more upon this feature, than on all their declarations. When you say that, allowing them to be men of penetration, nothing more is necessary to establish the purity of their intentions, it sounds very strange to me, when I consider it as the sentiment of the author of the two sermons which I have read with so much pleasure. Surely it cannot accord with your knowledge of human nature!

When our Lord was upon earth, he refused to be a judge or a divider. And he said afterwards, "My kingdom is not of this world; if it were, then would my servants fight." I should think, as Peter thought, that if any thing could have justified resistance in a disciple, that was the time when Jesus was apprehended by wicked men, to be condemned and crucified; but his master rebuked his zeal. I think that, as Christians, we have nothing to expect

from *this* world but tribulation, no peace but in him. If our lot be so cast that we can exercise our ministry free from stripes, fines, imprisonment, and death, it is more than the Gospel has promised us. If Christians were quiet when under the government of Nero and Caligula, and when persecuted and hunted like wild beasts, they ought to be not only quiet but very thankful now. It was then accounted an honour to suffer for Christ. Of late, the rights of man are pleaded as a protection from the offence of the cross.

Had I been in France some time ago, and if by going between the contending parties I could have reconciled them, I certainly ought to have done it. But to take a part in their disputes myself, and to become openly and warmly a Jacobin or a Feuillant, would be ridiculous in me, if all my connexions and interests were in England, and I expected in a few weeks to leave France for ever. In this view I consider myself now. If I had wisdom or influence to soothe the angry passions of mankind, whether whigs or tories, I would gladly employ them; but, as to myself, I am neither whig nor tory, but a friend to both. I am a stranger, and a pilgrim. My Πολιτευμα, my charter, my rights, my treasures are, I hope, in heaven, and there my heart ought to be. In less than a few weeks I may be removed (and perhaps suddenly) into the unseen world, where all that causes so much bustle upon earth at present, will be no more to me than the events which took place among the antediluvians. How much then does it import me, to be found watching, with my loins girded up, and my lamp burning, diligently engaged in my poor calling! For the Lord has not called me to set nations to right, but to preach the Gospel, to proclaim the glory of his name, and to endeavour to win souls. Happy is that servant, whom his Lord,

when he cometh, shall find you so doing ! In the hour when death shall open the door into eternity, many things which now assume an air of importance, will be found light and unsubstantial as the baseless fabric of a vision.

I know not whether the length and freedom of my letter may not require an apology, as much as my long silence. But, as I give you full credit for what you say of your candour towards those who differ from you in sentiment, I am the less apprehensive of offending you. From the perusal of your sermons, I have conceived a great respect and affection for you. Though we may not meet upon earth, I trust we shall meet where all are perfectly of one mind. In the mean time, I set you down in my heart as a friend and a brother. As I was forced to write, both duty and love obliged me to be faithful and free in giving you my thoughts.

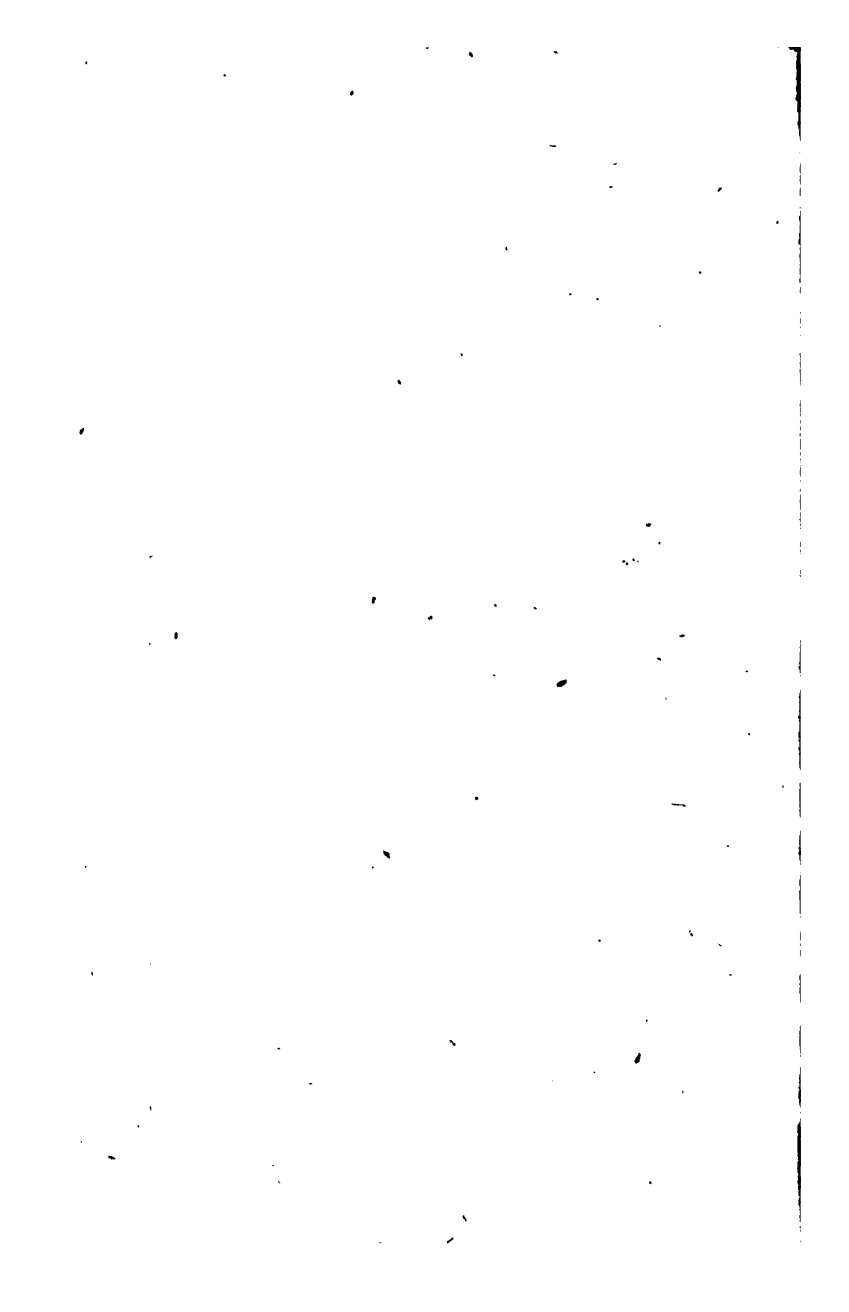
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