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Theron, Paulinus, and Aſpaſio.

OR,

LETTERS & DIALOGUES

UPON THE NATURE OF

Love to God, Faith in Chriſt, Aſſurance

OF A

Title to Eternal Life,

CONTAINING

SOME REMARKS ON THE SENTIMENTS

OF THE

Reverend Meſſieurs Hervey and Marſhal,

ON THESE SUBJECTS.

Publiſhed at the REQUEST of MANY.

By JOSEPH BELLAMY, A. M.

Miniſter of the Goſpel, at Bethlem, in New-England.

"*Amidſt all the darkneſs and uncertainty, which evidently run* "*through the Writings of the beſt of Men, this is our unſpeak-*" *able happineſs, that* we have a more ſure Word of Prophecy; "to which we do well to take heed.—*As for* Offence; *that* "*cannot be given, and ought not to be taken, when all we* "*advance is ſtrictly conformable to the unerring rule of Truth.* "*I have nothing to do with the perſons of Men, but with the* "*Truths of the Goſpel. Ouranius, though eminently devout,* "*may be miſtaken.*" HERVEY.

WASHINGTON:

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1798.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IF Paulinus's ſentiments, finally embraced by Theron, and exhibited in the following *Letters* and *Dialogues*, are agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, there needs no apology for publiſhing them, at a time when the contrary errors ſo much prevail in the Britiſh dominions. And it is hoped, candid Readers will eaſily excuſe the mentioning by name ſome Authors, in the contrary Scheme, as they ſeem to be eſteemed the *beſt* on that ſide of the queſtion.—If his ſentiments are wrong, let ſome Man of a clear head and a friendly heart, ſet him right, from the ſacred Oracles of Truth. And it will be accepted as well by him, as by the public, with the utmoſt gratitude. For theſe are points, in which our deareſt, our ſpiritual and eternal intereſt is greatly concerned: And it is even of infinite importance, that we know the *truth* before it is too late.

"Should any thing be urged," ſays Mr. Hervey (in the preface to his *Theron and Aſpaſio*) "forcible enough to overthrow my arguments, or detect a miſtake in my ſentiments, the World may depend upon ſeeing a *free* and *undiſſembled retractation*. I ſhall look upon it as a duty, which I owe to my Conſcience, to my Readers, and to my God, publickly to acknowledge the error." And indeed, we who claim to be the *miniſters* of Chriſt, are quite inſenſible to the honour of God, and to our own eternal intereſt, as well as the eternal intereſt of our fellow-creatures; if we are not conſcientiouſly concerned

to advance and maintain the *truth*, and nothing but the *truth*. Wherefore, to the above-recited declaration of Mr. Hervey, the publiſher of theſe *Letters* and *Dialogues*, ſays AMEN, with all his heart.

N. B. As Paulinus had ſome *other* books in view, beſides the *two* chiefly referred to; ſo Theron has ſometimes introduced a Text of Scripture, an argument, &c. not contained in either of theſe books, and for which theſe two Authors are not anſwerable.

Poſtſcript by another Hand.

AS it appears by the concluſion of Theron's laſt Letter, that he had not then received the melancholy tidings of his dear friend Aſpaſio's death, no candid Reader will object to him the abſurdity of writing Letters to the dead. And it will be an abuſe upon the Publiſher of this piece, to ſuppoſe it in his intention, to detract from the character of ſuch worthy men as Mr. Hervey and Mr. Marſhal, or to hinder the peruſal of their writings. In theſe, no doubt he ſaw many excellencies; and was not inſenſible, they might give a judicious Reader not a little profitable entertainment, by the bleſſing of God. However, as he apprehended the *truth*, in ſome important caſes, clouded by ſome unhappy *miſtakes*, while he rejoiced in the former, he was willing to bear his teſtimony againſt the latter. And whatever honours are due to the *memory of the juſt*, if the *doctrine of Chriſt*, their Lord and ours, has ſuffered, or is liable to ſuffer in any meaſure, by means of their miſtakes, *That* has an unqueſtionable claim to *ſuperior* honours, and ought in all things to have the *preeminence*.

Letters and Dialogues, &c.

LETTER I.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

New-England, Dec. 15, 1758.

DEAR ASPASIO,

NEWS from your Theron, now in this remote corner of the Earth, you will eagerly expect by every ship that sails from these parts.—But what shall I write, O my friend!—No pleasant walks, no beautiful gardens, no romantic mounts, my dear Aspasio, nor any other theme to entertain and to amuse must you expect from me! Alas, I have been deceived! My hope, once high raised, are, I think, entirely gone. As the *rush without mire, and the flag without water; so the hypocrite's hope shall perish.* (1)

As I was walking in my garden, soon after our visit to Philenor, (2) (which was, as I remember, about the middle of harvest A. D. 1754,) musing on all your agreeable conversation, your fervent zeal, and how you urged me to believe:—To believe what? said I, to myself.—To believe that Christ died for ME.—How, for ME? thought I.—Aspasio knows, I believe that Christ died for sinners.—Yes, but he would have me apply that to my own soul; and believe Christ died for me.—Aspasio knows, I believe

(1) *Job viii.* 11, 13. *See Mr. Hervey's Dialogues, Vol.* III. *p.* 313. *edit.* I.—N. B. *The* first *edition of Mr. Herv. Dial. is referred to in this letter: as Theron is supposed soon after the conversation at Philenor's, to have experienced what follows.*

(2) *Mr. Hervey's Dialogues, vol.* III. *p.* 262.

that Chriſt died; that whoſoever, according to the true ſenſe of the Goſpel, believes in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life. Is this believing in him?—Is this juſtifying ſaving Faith?—To believe I am ONE that he died for—one for whom he intended to procure pardon, reconciliation with God and eternal life?—Yes, this, this is Faith. "A real perſuaſion that the bleſſed Jeſus has ſhed his blood for me, and fulfilled all righteouſneſs in my ſtead, that through this great atonement and glorious obedience, he has purchaſed, even for my ſinful ſoul, ſanctifying grace, and all ſpiritual bleſſings."(1) To believe it was for ME, juſt as if I had been mentioned by NAME: even juſt as my Tenant believed me, when, in his laſt ſickneſs, I ſent a meſſage, aſſuring him, I had cancelled the bond, and forgiven his debt. (2) And juſt as David believed the kingdom of Iſrael ſhould be his own, on the expreſs promiſe of Almighty God. (3) And juſt as I believed my lands to be my own, by the deeds of conveyance. (4) In a word, Aſpaſio would have me go to God, and ſay, "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are mine;" not becauſe I am conſcious of ſanctifying operations in my own breaſt, but becauſe I am conſcious I am a ſinner. All theſe bleſſings being conſigned over to me as ſuch, in the everlaſting Goſpel; with a clearneſs unqueſtionable as the truth, with a certainty inviolable as the oath of God. (5) No clogging qualifications inſiſted on: only believe, and all is mine. (6) I longed to know that Chriſt was mine. (7)

And could I ſee my title clear,
To manſions in the ſkies,
I'd bid farewell to every tear
And wipe my weeping eyes.

But how can I ſee! how can I believe! Oh my unbelieving heart! what ſhall I do?—"Cry to God for help," ſays my Aſpaſio. "Seek the bleſſed ſpirit to teſtify, that God has given me eternal life; and this life is in his Son. And to witneſs with my ſpirit, that I am a child of God (8).

Thus, as I walked, I muſed—my heart was full—I ſtopped—with eyes lift up to Heaven, and ſaid,—I believe,

(1) *Mr. Her. Dial. vol.* III. *p.* 278. (2) *Ibid p.* 279. (3) *P.* 309. (4) *P.* 312. (5) *P.* 280, 313. (6) *P.* 275. (7) *P.* 253, 254. (8) *P.* 316.

Lord, help my unbelief.—I thought of Calvary.—I heard the ſoundings of his bowels, and of his mercies towards me. *O thou of little Faith! wherefore doſt thou doubt?* (1) Wherefore doſt thou doubt of my love to thee, for whom I have ſhed my blood?

I believed, I was raviſhed; I was full of love, joy and gratitude: and with eyes again lift up to Heaven, I ſaid, "Glory be to the Holy Ghoſt for teſtifying of Chriſt in my heart, and appropriating this great ſalvation to my ſoul." (2) And thus I continued rejoicing for ſeveral days, and thought I ſhould never doubt again.

But, oh, alas! the ſcene ſoon changed. I gradually loſt a ſenſe of my great danger, and great deliverance; as the Iſraelites, who ſang God's praiſe, but ſoon forgat his works: or like the ſtony-ground hearers, who heard the Word with joy, endured for a while, and fell away. Or rather like the thorny-ground: for, as about this time I removed into New-England, the cares of the world came in upon me, and choaked the Word, and I brought forth no fruit: rather I loſt all diſpoſition to pray or praiſe, and my devotions degenerated into mere formality.

And now unbelief, as I then called it, began to work. "Surely all is mere deluſion," thought I. But, again, I ſaid, "This is my infirmity." And thoſe words of Scripture were ſome comfort to me, *O thou of little Faith, wherefore doſt thou doubt?—Who againſt Hope believed in Hope.—Who walk in darkneſs and ſee no light, let them truſt in the Lord, and ſtay themſelves on their God.—Why art thou caſt down, O my Soul, hope thou in God?* (3) And I watched and prayed, and ſtrove againſt my unbelieving thoughts. (4)

From this time forward, having no clear marks or ſigns of Grace for my comfort, nor any new manifeſtations of the love of God to my Soul, I began, as you had directed in ſuch a caſe, to *live by Faith.* I uſed every day to go to God, and ſay, "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are mine." And thus, unconſcious of any ſanctifying operations in my own breaſt, I lived wholly by Faith: by Faith, as I thought, on the promiſe and oath of the unchangeable JEHOVAH. (5) And thus I

(1) *Herv. Dial. p.* 276, 277. (2) *Vol.* I. *p.* 156. (3) *P.* 289. (4) *P.* 308, 309. (5) *P.* 313, 314.

continued many months, generally pretty easy; although sometimes troubled with doubts and fears.

But above a year ago, as I was reading my bible, in the 13th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, I found the parable of the Sower; which reached my case, and greatly gained the attention of my heart. Here I saw the various sorts of hearers, the different kinds of Christians described; and perceived that none are esteemed good men by our blessed Saviour, but those who, like the good ground, *bring forth fruit*. This startled me, this gave my faith a shock, I never could get over!

However, not knowing but that I mistook the meaning of that parable, I resolved to search the Scriptures, to see if it were really the character of all true believers, to *bring forth fruit*, i. e. as I understood it, to be holy in heart and life. I began with the Gospel of St. Matthew, and read the New-Testament through, and made a collection of many texts of Scripture, which I wrote down and commented upon. I will give you a specimen from my Diary.

"*Nov.* 20, 1757, I retired as usual to read the holy Scriptures, by which I am to be judged at the last day.—I began to read Christ's Sermon on the Mount: *Blessed are the poor in spirit; Blessed are they that mourn; Blessed are the meek;—the pure of heart*, &c. But alas, O my Soul! I am not conscious of these good qualifications: are there not, nevertheless, blessings laid up for me?——I read on to chapter vii. 19, 27. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire: By their fruits ye shall know them: Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.* This, this, O my Soul, reaches my very case! this is my character! and this my doom! The following verses condemn me too: I am the man that has *built his house upon the sand.*" Thus far my Diary.

But how discouraging soever all this appeared, yet still I maintained some secret thoughts, that I was only a backslider, and should see things clearer after a while. Besides, to give up my hopes, and look upon myself a poor Christless sinner, after I had so long settled down in quiet, was like death to my spirits;—It opened a most frightful prospect before me.—If not converted now, most probably I never shall be! I had as good live on in pleasing delusion, as sink down into despair!

And beſides, I remembered you had ſaid, "This method of ſeeking peace and aſſurance," by ſigns of Grace, "I fear, will embarraſs the ſimple minded, and cheriſh rather than ſuppreſs the fluctuations of doubt; for let the marks be what you pleaſe, they are all a feeble and precarious evidence." And I wiſhed I could boldly ſay, as once I did, "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are mine; however unconſcious of ſanctifying operations in my own breaſt. (1) But our bleſſed Saviour's words ſtruck terror through my ſoul: *He that heareth theſe words of mine and doth them not, is like a fooliſh man, that built his houſe upon the ſand.*

About this time I was, by a religious Perſon well acquainted with my caſe, directed to Mr. Shepherd "on the Parable of the Ten Virgins;" Mr. Edwards "on Religious Affections, Mr. Bainard's Life," and ſome other books of the ſame ſtamp; "which, (ſaid he) are eſteemed by pious people in New-England, as the beſt of books on experimental religion." I obtained the books, I read them, they condemned not only my preſent ſtate, but all my notions of religion: and repreſented true religion to conſiſt in ſomething eſſentially different, of which I had never had the leaſt experience: which inſtead of affording comfort and hope to my dejected mind, did but confirm my former doubts and fears. What now to do, I could not tell—Here three thouſand miles from my dear Aſpaſio, I cannot ſee his face, nor have his aid.—I muſt find out another ſpiritual guide—I heard of one Paulinus, a clergyman, a noted friend to vital piety, a tender faithful guide to bewildered ſouls; but not in my Aſpaſio's ſcheme. My conſcience ſaid, "Go ſee the man, and act an honeſt part; tell him all your caſe, be willing to know the truth." My heart replied, "I cannot go! I cannot go!" But as a ſerious, ſolemn ſenſe of the eternal world was now daily growing in my heart, I was ſoon brought to a better mind; particularly in the evening of *December* 8, 1758. As I was alone for ſecret prayer, I had ſuch a ſenſe of eternity, a boundleſs eternity, and ſuch a view of the dreadfulneſs of eternal damnation—the amazement and horror of ſelf-deceived hypocrites, opening their eyes in eternal woe, who once refuſed to ſee,

(1) *Herv. Dial. p.* 313.

while there was hope, but now muſt ſee when all hope is for ever gone; that I ſhuddered, and was ready even to cry out with anguiſh at the terrifying thought of this being at laſt my dreadful lot! Whereupon, reſolving to be honeſt at all adventures, I determined on a viſit the next Monday evening.—I went, I went again and again; and knowing my dear Aſpaſio would be glad to hear what paſſed, I wrote, down the ſubſtance from time to time, which I now ſend encloſed, in the form of *Three Dialogues;* which, when you have read, I am ſure you will pity my caſe.—And, O my Aſpaſio, ceaſe not to pray for

Your diſconſolate
THERON.

P. S. I expect no opportunity to write you again till early next Spring; when you may look to hear further from your Theron, if on this ſide eternal burnings.—God only knows how that will be. Adieu, my dear Aſpaſio.

DIALOGUE I.

ON Monday evening *(Decem.* 11.*)* I had the happineſs to find Paulinus at home, alone in his ſtudy; he received me with all the politeneſs of a Gentleman, and with all the undiſſembled goodneſs of a Chriſtian. After enquiring into the ſtate of Religion in Great-Britain, when I came from thence; perceiving by what was ſaid, my acquaintance with Aſpaſio, he made ſome enquiries after him, and his ſentiments of Religion, and about a book he has lately ſo ſtrongly recommended. (1) Which gave me

(1) *Mr. Marſhal's Goſpel-Myſtery of Sanctification;*—"*which I ſhall not (ſays Mr. Hervey) recommend in the ſtile of a critic, or like a reader of taſte, but with all the ſimplicity of the weakeſt Chriſtian; I mean from my own experience.*

an opportunity, without letting him into the ſtate of my Soul, a thing I was loth to do, to bring upon the board the topics I deſigned. Wherefore, I began——

Theron. Sir, may I know your ſentiments relative to ſome points in theſe books?

Paulinus. I am willing you ſhould know my ſentiments on any of the doctrines of Religion; but ſhould chuſe to ſay nothing of the ſentiments of any particular author by name.

Ther. I am ſenſible this is not ſo deſirable, nor ſhould I aſk it, but that I am not a little embarraſſed between the ſcheme of Religion advanced in Preſident Edwards's Treatiſe on Religious Affections, and this advanced in theſe books: And I want to know, what may be ſaid in anſwer to the particular arguments of theſe Divines. And I ſhall conſider all you ſay, how plain ſoever: for I deſire you to uſe the greateſt freedom, not in a perſonal light, as deſigned to reflect at all on theſe authors; but only as deſigned to give inſtruction to me. And if you could particularly anſwer ſeveral things I find in them, it would give me much more ſatisfaction, than to hear your opinion in general.—Beſides you know, what authors publiſh to the world, they voluntarily ſubmit to the examination of all. And if the good of mankind, which all authors profeſs to ſeek, calls for a particular examination of any of their writings, they cannot conſiſtently be diſpleaſed, if they are uſed with candor. Theſe authors themſelves have taken the greateſt freedom to ſpeak of the ſentiments of Divines, ancient and modern. And I know my dear Aſpaſio would be perfectly pleaſed to hear you, with the utmoſt freedom, make all your remarks and obſervations on his piece; for he is one

It has been made one of the moſt uſeful books to my own ſoul; I ſcarce ever fail to receive ſpiritual conſolation and ſtrength from the peruſal of it. And was I to be baniſhed into ſome deſolate Iſland, poſſeſſed only of two *books beſides my bible, this ſhould be* one *of the two, and perhaps the firſt that I would chooſe." See Mr. Hervey's Dialogues, edit. 3. vol.* III. *p.* 336.

N. B. *This 3d edition of Mr. Hervey's Dial. is referred to in what follows. And the 6th edition of Mr. Marſhal.*—— *D. ſhall ſtand for Mr. Hervey's Dialogues, vol.* III.——*M. ſhall ſtand for Mr. Marſhal's Goſpel-Myſtery*, &c. *As both theſe books contain one complete ſyſtem, ſo both ſhall be conſidered together.*

of the moſt candid, generous, good-natured gentlemen I ever ſaw: Pray, Sir, therefore make no excuſes, nor be at all upon the reſerve.

Paul. What particular points, Sir, do you refer to?

Ther. The nature of LOVE TO GOD, of JUSTIFYING FAITH, and of ASSURANCE.—To begin with Love to God. I deſire to know what is the primary and chief motive, which ought to induce me to love God. A view of the ineffable glories of the Deity, as he has manifeſted himſelf in his word and in his works? Or a belief of his love to me in particular?

Paul. Before we enquire into the original grounds of love to God, pray tell me, What in God are we to love? and how are we to love him?

Ther. "The Lord is not at all loved with that love that is due to him as Lord of all, if he be not loved with all our heart and ſpirit, and might. And we are to love every thing in him, his Juſtice, Holineſs, ſovereign Authority, all-ſeeing Eye, and all his Decrees, Commands, Judgments, and all his doings." (1)

Paul. Who are under obligations thus to love God? Saints, or Sinners? Chriſtians, or Heathens? Some, or all of mankind.

Ther. All mankind. Even the Heathen, who are without any written law or ſupernatural revelation, are obliged by the light of Nature to love God with all their hearts; and that under the penalty of God's everlaſting wrath. (2)

Paul. If all mankind, even the Heathen world not excepted, are thus under infinite obligations to love God with all their hearts, and to *glorify God as God*, (to uſe the Apoſtle's expreſſion, Rom. i. 21.) it muſt needs be that there is a ground and reaſon of love to God antecedent to a conſideration of his being our reconciled Father and Friend in Jeſus Chriſt. For the Heathen, millions of them, never heard of Jeſus Chriſt. And there are great multitudes in the Chriſtian world, who live and die without an intereſt in God's fatherly love in Chriſt. And yet you ſay, all theſe are under ſuch obligations to love God with all their hearts, that they will deſerve his eternal wrath for the leaſt neglect. And indeed the holy Scriptures moſt expreſsly aſſert the ſame thing, Rom. i. 18—21. Gal. iii. 10.

(1) M. *p.* 2. (2) M. *p.* 4. 5.

Ther. But, Sir, is it not impoſſible (1) we ſhould love God before we ſee that he is our reconciled Father and Friend in Jeſus Chriſt? We muſt know that our ſins are forgiven, and be well perſuaded that God is reconciled to us, before we can love him. (2)

Paul. God never manifeſts himſelf as a reconciled God and Father, to any of the children of men, until they are firſt reconciled to him, and love him. John xiv. 21. Acts iii. 19. Their firſt love to God, therefore, muſt of neceſſity begin on ſome other foundation, from ſome other inducement; or they never can begin to love him at all.

Ther. But what is there in God, that can induce us to love him, unleſs we firſt know that he loves us? I appeal to the experience of all true Saints, as inconſiſtent with your ſuppoſition. (3)

Paul. This is the language of God's law, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.* Pray, what reaſons and grounds are there for this law? Anſwer my queſtion firſt, and then I will anſwer your's. Tell me the grounds and reaſons of this law, and I will tell you what there is to induce us to love God before we know that he loves us.

Ther. The law teaches us, firſt to believe that God is our GOD, our reconciled Father and Friend: *Thou ſhalt love the Lord* THY GOD. (4)

Paul. God is our GOD, the God of the whole human race, as he is our Creator, our Preſerver, our rightful Lord and Sovereign, who has an entire and abſolute authority

(1) *Should a lying fellow bring tidings to an impenitent priſoner juſtly condemned to die for murder, aſſuring him of a pardon from his judge; the deluded murderer might be full of love to his judge, and greatly extol his juſtice, as well as goodneſs, and pour out floods of tears: But on diſcerning his miſtake, he would ſoon return to his former temper. God's nature and law are juſt the ſame, before he forgives us, as after; and as worthy to be loved. But it is eaſier for an impenitent ſinner to commend God's law, in a firm belief he is delivered from the curſe, than to love it as being in its own nature* holy, juſt, *and* good. *Satan knows, it is no evidence of Uprightneſs in God's account, that a man is very religious; if all his Religion ariſes merely from ſelfiſh conſiderations. Job i.* 8, 9, 10, 11.

(2) M. *p.* 21, 25. (3) M. *p.* 25. (4) M. *p.* 28.

over us: But he is not a reconciled Father and Friend to all the human race. Rather *the whole world lieth in wickedneſs*, 1 John v. 19. And the greateſt part of mankind are under the divine wrath. John iii. 36. And God is *angry with them every day; his ſoul hates them, and he is whetting his ſword for their deſtruction, if they repent not.* Pſalm vii. 11, 12, and xi. 5. And yet even while in ſuch a ſtate, you grant, they are under infinite obligations to love God with all their hearts; and that the leaſt defect expoſes them to eternal damnation. Nor have you granted any more than St. Paul expreſsly aſſerts, Gal. iii. 10.—Now, pray, tell me, is this a reaſonable law?

Ther. I grant, this law is holy, juſt and good. (1)

Paul. But then it will follow, that there are reaſons and grounds why God ſhould be thus loved, antecedent to a conſideration of his being our reconciled Father and Friend. Reaſons and grounds which are ſufficient; which really oblige us in point of duty: and therefore ought to influence us in practice. And if we are not influenced by them, we are to blame. Yea, ſo much to blame, you ſay, as to deſerve God's eternal wrath.

Ther. It is certain, that all the perfection, goodneſs and excellency of the divine nature, cannot render God an amiable object to us, unleſs we know that he loves us, and is our reconciled Father and Friend. (2)

Paul. The firſt queſtion is not, whether unregenerate ſinners, while dead in ſin, and enemies to God, do actually love God: but whether they ought not to love him. Whether the perfection, goodneſs and excellency of the divine nature is not a proper inducement, which renders it reaſonable and fit: Yea, which obliges; nay, infinitely obliges them to love God. I think you muſt grant this; for how elſe can the law be holy, juſt and good?

Ther. If I ſhould grant that the perfection, goodneſs and excellency of the divine nature, does render it fit and reaſonable that we ſhould love God with all our hearts; yet it is impoſſible we ſhould love him, except firſt we know he loves us. (3)

Paul. If God is really a Being infinitely amiable in himſelf, and if it is fit and reaſonable we ſhould love him for the perfection, goodneſs and excellency of his nature, then

(1) M. *p.* 4. (2) M. *p.* 25. (3) M. *p.* iv. 25.

there is, yea, there can be no difficulty in the way of the practice of this duty, but what lies in the badness of our hearts; and so, what we are to blame for. And therefore were our hearts right, we should love him for his own loveliness, (1) and feel disposed to glorify God, AS GOD; as the very Heathen ought to do, who never heard of his designs of mercy by Jesus Christ. Nay, all the Heathen world are at this day, and ever have been entirely without excuse, in not being thus affected towards the infinitely glorious God that made them: Yea, they are, for this, infinitely to blame; so as to deserve eternal wrath. And this is St. Paul's doctrine, Rom. i. 18, 21. Nay, this doctrine is fundamental to St. Paul's whole scheme of Religion.—Overthrow this, and you will overthrow his whole scheme. For it is in this view, that he pronounces Jew and Gentile, even the whole world, to stand guilty before God, with their mouths stopt, without one excuse to make for themselves, though doomed to eternal destruction for not loving God with all their hearts. And so holy, just and good does he esteem this law to be, as that it was needful the Son of God should be set forth to be a propitiation, to declare God's righteousness, that HE MIGHT BE JUST, and not go counter to all good rules of government in pardoning and saving true penitents. Rom. iii. 9, 26.

Ther. The Heathen were liable to destruction for their idolatries, and gross immoralities.

Paul. Yes, and also for their not glorifying God AS GOD. *The wrath of God*, says the Apostle, *is revealed from Heaven against* ALL *ungodliness:* against the least degree of disrespect towards the infinitely glorious Majesty of Hea-

(1) *If our hearts were right*, i. e. *were as they ought to be, were as the law requires them to be, we should love God for his own loveliness: But in regeneration our hearts begin to be right; therefore, then, even at that instant, we begin to love God for his own loveliness. For at that very instant when* the vail is taken from our hearts, we all with open face, behold as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, 2 *Cor. iii.* 18. *Even the law as a* ministration of death and condemnation appears glorious, *ver.* 7. 9.——*But every man is to blame, that his heart is not right.* Theron *pleads impossibility.* St. Paul, *however declares this kind of impossibility to be no excuse, Rom. i.* 20, 21.

ven. The leaſt defect of love towards God, expoſes them to eternal deſtruction. This was the Apoſtle's conſtant doctrine, and a chief foundation of his whole ſcheme of principles. Gal. iii. 10. Rom. i. 18, and iii. 20.

Ther. But the Gentiles had not ſo much as heard of the way of ſalvation by Chriſt; and muſt therefore, if their conſciences were awakened, be in fearful expectation of eternal wrath. But ſurely it muſt be abſolutely impoſſible we ſhould love God, if we view him, as diſpoſed to puniſh us in Hell for ever. Yea, "if I look on God as contrary to me, as one that hates me and will damn me, my own innate ſelf-love will breed hatred and heart-riſings againſt him in ſpight of my heart." (1)

Paul. That is, the divine law is ſo intolerably cruel, that unleſs it is entirely ſet aſide as to us, we can never be pacified towards our maker. We are in arms, in open rebellion, ſo virulent that we are full of "hatred and heart-riſings," in ſpite of all reſtraints. And we proclaim in the ſight of Heaven, our cauſe is ſo juſt, that we can never lay down our arms, fall at the foot of our ſovereign and juſtify his law; nay we can never have one good thought of him, till firſt he ſet aſide his law, remove the curſe, and grant us Heaven upon our demands. Upon this condition we will forgive our Lawgiver for what is paſt, and be at peace for the future. On this foot we will lay down our arms, and be reconciled. Our firſt work, therefore is, to believe that God doth give Chriſt and his ſalvation to us, and is become our reconciled Father and Friend. And this belief is to lay the foundation of all our Religion. But, O my dear Theron, ſuch a Faith, growing up out of ſuch an unhumbled, unſubdued heart as this, and a Religion ariſing from ſuch a root, is all deluſion, if there be any ſuch thing in nature as deluſion. (2)

Beſides, tell me, my Theron, do you verily believe, that God's diſpoſition to puniſh ſin, according to his holy Law,

(1) M. *p.* 140.

(2) *How righteous is it, in the holy Sovereign of the world, to ſuffer ſuch a proud, ſelf-righteous Sinner, ſo ready to quarrel for a pardon, to be deluded with a falſe perſuaſion that he is pardoned! As he takes Satan's ſide againſt God and his Law; ſo God may juſtly leave him in Satan's power,* 2 *Theſſ. ii.* 10, 11, 12.

is a hateful diſpoſition? And do you verily believe, that God is an odious Being on this account? Or do you allow yourſelf to hate God, for that, for which he appears infinitely amiable in the eyes of all the Heavenly world? Rev. xix. 1, 6. Or is your heart a carnal, unregenerate heart, under the full power of enmity againſt God and his Law? Rom. viii. 7. It is certain, what you ſay can never be juſtified. For if we have given God juſt cauſe to hate and puniſh us, by our wickedneſs, he is not the leſs lovely for being diſpoſed to do ſo, except he is the leſs lovely for being holy and juſt; that is, the leſs lovely, for that, in which his loveliness in a great meaſure conſiſts.

You acknowledge the Law is *holy*, *juſt* and *good*, even as to the Heathen world, who never heard of a Saviour. Therefore, it is not the Grace of the Goſpel, that makes the Law good. The Law is older than the Goſpel, and was *holy*, *juſt* and *good*, before the Goſpel had a being.—Yea, the Law had been for ever good, if Chriſt had never died. We were not the injured, abuſed party: Chriſt did not die to make ſatisfaction to us, pacify our angry minds, and allay our "hatred and heart-riſings." The Grace of the Goſpel is not granted to counterbalance the rigour of the Law, and to render God's plan of government juſtifiable; and ſo to ſweeten the imbittered minds of God's enemies. God the Father, was not a tyrant, nor did his Son die a ſacrifice to tyranny, to reſcue his injured ſubjects from the ſeverities of a cruel Law. Nay, if the Law in all its rigour had not been *holy*, *juſt* and *good*, antecedent to the gift of Chriſt; there had been no need God ſhould ever give his Son to die, to anſwer its demands. It ought to have been repealed on Adam's fall, if too ſevere for an apoſtate race; and not honoured by the obedience and death of God's own Son. If this Law, as binding on a fallen world, is not, in itſelf, *holy*, *juſt* and *good*, glorious and amiable; the Goſpel of Chriſt is all deluſion. For it is impoſſible the Son of God ſhould die to anſwer the demands of an unrighteous Law. It was wrong he ſhould bear a curſe in our ſtead, which we ourſelves did not deſerve. Such an appointment would have been inconſiſtent with all the Divine perfections. If we view the Law as

too severe, we must view the Gospel as not of God; if we will be consistent with ourselves. (1)

Therefore, you and I must approve the Law as holy, just and good, glorious and amiable, with application to ourselves, before we can with all our hearts believe the Gospel to be true. And therefore, not a belief of God's love to us, but a view of the infinite loveliness of the Divine Nature, must reconcile us to the Divine Law.—Nor does this reasoning attempt to prove an impossibilty; but rather it demonstrates the absolute necessity of regeneration, as antecedent to the first act of Faith; a doctrine your

(1) *In Mr. Hervey's* ix. *Dialogue, Vol. II. p.* 16. *edit.* 1*st. Aspasio having cited the words of the Apostle, to prove his point:* As many as are of the works of the Law, are under the curse. *Gal. iii.* 10. *Theron objects, and Aspasio answers as follows.*

"Theron. *Under the curse! because our attempts to obey, though faithfully exerted, are attended with defects! Is not this unreasonable and shocking? Unreasonable that the God of Justice should establish a Law of such consummate perfection, as no child of Adam can, even with his utmost assiduity and care, fulfil! Shocking, that the God of Mercy should thunder out so severe a denunciation, on the least inadvertent breach, on every unavoidable failure!—This exceeds the relentless rigour of Draco, or the tyrannical impositions of the Egyptian task-masters. Draco is said to have written his laws in blood. Yet he never enacted such institutions, as were absolutely too strict and difficult to be observed. And though the Egyptian task-masters insisted upon the full tale of bricks without allowing the necessary proportion of straw, yet the punishment they inflicted, was incomparably less than everlasting destruction.*"

"Aspasio. *Had God Almighty's design in delivering his Law to fallen mankind, been to propound the means of their justification; your argument would have been valid, and your inference undeniable. But the Supreme legislator had a very different, a far more mysterious end.*" *That is, he designed the Law to be our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ. As Aspasio goes on to shew, p.* 18, 19, 20—*without once thinking, that if the Law antecedent to a consideration of the interposition and death of Christ, was a cruel Law, like that which the Egyptian task-masters urged, it ought to have been repealed. It*

author does not believe: (1) And yet a doctrine plainly taught in Scripture. Joh. 1, 12, 13.

Ther. Whatever we may do in ſpeculation, when at eaſe; it is impoſſible, under a lively ſenſe of the dreadfulneſs of eternal damnation, that we ſhould, with application to ourſelves, approve in our very hearts, the Law in all its rigour, as *holy*, *juſt* and *good*, as being really amiable and glorious in itſelf, till we know we are delivered from its Curſe.

Paul. If the Law, in all it rigour, is not holy, juſt and good, glorious and amiable, before we are delivered from its curſe, 'tis a pity the beloved Son of God was obliged to die to anſwer its demands. 'Tis a pity that a bad, a hateful Law ſhould be ſo infinitely honoured in the ſight of the whole intelligent ſyſtem.—'Tis a pity God ever made it—a greater pity he ſuffered it to ſtand unrepealed. But the greateſt pity of all that he gave his Son, his only begotten and well beloved Son, worſhipped by all the hoſts above, to die upon the ſhameful, painful Croſs, to anſwer its demands. The Goſpel opens a ſad and gloomy ſcene

was a diſhonour to God to make it, and a greater diſhonour ſtill to appoint his Son to anſwer its demands. Nor is a cruel Law fit to be a ſchoolmaſter in God's world: or fitted to teach us any thing, but to have hard thoughts of God. And yet Aſpaſio goes on to ſay (page 21) "Rather than the Divine Law ſhould loſe its honour, Sodom and Gomorrah were laid in aſhes; the ancient world was deſtroyed with a deluge; the preſent frame of Nature are deſtined to the flames, and all its unholy inhabitants muſt be doomed to Hell. Nay, rather than that the leaſt tittle ſhould paſs unaccompliſhed, its curſe has been executed on God's own Son, and all its injunctions have been fulfilled in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt." Very true, but does not all this demonſtrate, that the Law was not too ſevere and ſtrict but perfectly holy, juſt *and* good?—A glorious Law. 2 *Cor.* iii. 7. *And that previous to the conſideration of the Grace of the Goſpel. Had the Law been in itſelf bad, the death of Chriſt could not have made it good. Therefore, it was not* "*God's deſign,*" *that the Law ſhould be our ſchoolmaſter, that made the Law good: But it was in itſelf* holy, juſt *and* good; *and therefore, it was fit to be our ſchoolmaſter.*

(1) *M. p.* 135.

to all the inhabitants of Heaven, if the Law is not a glorious Law. You may, O my Theron, be ravished to think Christ died for you, let the Law be good or bad; but you can never acquiesce in the Gospel way of life by the blood of Christ, as honourable to God, till the Law first appears glorious in your eyes: but rather (forgive me, my friend) I say, you will rather feel the heart of an infidel in your breast. You may be ravished to think Christ died for you; although you conceive of God the Father, as acting the part (Heaven forbid the blasphemy) I say, as acting the part of a tyrant in the whole affair. But then, who can be so stupid, as to believe the Son of God died a sacrifice to tyranny? "If you are safe, you care not how." Is this your heart? If so, you are quite an infidel.—Indeed, this is the heart of every natural man; and it is equally true, that every natural man is under the reigning power of infidelity. *No man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* 1 Cor. xii. 3. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* 1 Joh. v. 1. See also Rom. x. 9. 1 Joh. iv. 15. (1)

(1) *The external Evidences of Christianity may induce men to such a belief of the Gospel, as that they dare not renounce it, though they do not like it; but will not give a heart-satisfying conviction of its truth; so long as it seems to contain a system of doctrines inconsistent with the moral perfections of God. But at first sight, it appears inconsistent with the moral perfections of God, to give his Son to die in our stead, to answer the demands of a Law in its own nature too severe. So long, therefore, as the Law appears in this light, no man can heartily believe the report of the Gospel, Gal. iii.* 10, 13.—*And this is one reason, that all unregenerate men, who in Scripture are considered as enemies to God's Law (Rom. viii.* 7, 9.*) are represented as not believing the Gospel. (1 John, v.* 1, *&c. &c.) And this shews, how our unbelief of the Gospel arises from our enmity against God and his Law (John vii.* 17, *and viii.* 47.*) and so is truly criminal. (John iii.* 18, 19, 20, 21.—*And this accounts for the fearful apprehensions of eternal destruction so common to awakened Sinners, who begin to see their state by Law, but as yet do not approve the Law as* holy, just and good. *It is not strange their fears run so high, when they do not believe the Gospel to be true.—And this accounts for the aptness of awakened* Sinners *to catch hold of false hopes, and build on*

Wherefore, the awakened Sinner, under a live'y ſenſe of the dreadfulneſs of eternal damnation, with part ular application to himſelf, muſt (through the regenerat ng influences of the holy Spirit) be brought to approve the law, in all its rigour, as *holy, juſt* and *good*, as being really amiable and glorious in itſelf, before he can ſo much as believe (in Scripture-ſenſe) the Goſpel to be true. Till this, every man has the heart of an Infidel. Yea, till this, every man is as much of an enemy to the Goſpel (rightly underſtood) as to the Law.

Here, my dear Theron, here lies the great difficulty of embracing Chriſtianity. This ſets the world againſt it. Their hearts hate it, and their wits and pens are in a manner conſtantly employed to baniſh it from the face of the Earth. All the chief errors in Chriſtendom grow up from a ſecret hatred of God's holy Law. But all their elaborate volumes are confuted with this ſingle ſentence: *Chriſt loved the*

falſe foundations: as they are blind to the only true way of eſcape by Jeſus Chriſt. And this ſhews how prepoſterous it is, to think to perſuade Sinners to come to Chriſt, and truſt in him, before firſt they approve the law by which they ſtand condemned. They may be deluded by falſe ſuggeſtions and falſe joys; but they will never believe the Goſpel to be true with all their hearts, till firſt they approve the law. Regeneration muſt be before Faith. (John i. 12, 13.) As to the unthinking multitude, who believe any thing they know not why; they may believe the Goſpel juſt as the Mahometans believe their Alcoran, merely becauſe their fathers believed it before them. But no thinking conſiderate man, who has a right doctrinal underſtanding of the Goſpel-plan, can ever believe it with all his heart, or cordially acquieſce in this way of life; till by ſeeing the glory of the God of Glory, he approves the Law as holy, juſt and good; *and ſo is prepared to ſee the wiſdom of God in the death of his Son.—See Mr. Edwards on the Affections*, p. 182, 199, *on the nature of Faith.—See, alſo, Mr. Edwards on the Freedom of the Will; in which all the objections of the Arminians againſt the divine Law, as requiring more of us than we can do, are ſapped at the foundation, ſee page* 159, 177. *See alſo the Author's True Religion delineated, wherein his ſentiments relative to the nature of Law and Goſpel may be ſeen more at large, and objections anſwered. As alſo in his Sermon on Gal. iii. 24.*

Law in all its rigour, and felt it was holy, juſt *and* good, *or he would never have left his Father's boſom to die upon the Croſs, to anſwer its demands.* Antinomians, Neonomians, Arminians, &c. muſt all give up their various ſchemes, or, if they will be conſiſtent with themſelves, go off into open infidelity. For the Law in all its rigour is right, and glorious too, or the Son of God had never died to anſwer its demands. (1)

(1) *If Infidels triumph to ſee profeſſed Chriſtians advance ſuch abſurd and inconſiſtent ſchemes, they may do well to remember, that the very ſpirit of enmity to God and his Law, which produces theſe ſad effects among profeſſed Chriſtians, hath led them ſtill further, even to give up divine Revelation itſelf.*

Perhaps, firſt, *the Arminian ſpirit wrought in their hearts, and they were (in their own fancy) infallibly certain, that it is not juſt* that God ſhould require more of his Creatures than they can do, and then damn them for not doing,—*The next ſtep, they denied the* Atonement of Chriſt, *and commenced Socinians; for it appeared abſolutely incredible, that the Son of God ſhould die to anſwer the demands of an unjuſt Law.—But, leſtly, when on further conſideration, they found that the Old and New Teſtaments both join to teach, that* Curſed is every man that continueth not in all things written in the book of the Law to do them *(Deut. xxvii. 26.—Gal. iii, 10.) and find that it is aſſerted, that* Chriſt was made a curſe for us, to redeem us from this very curſe *(Ver. 13)*, even from the wrath to come, *(1 Theſ. i. 10.) and perceive, that the doctrine of Atonement is ſo univerſally inwrought into the whole of divine Revelation, that it cannot poſſibly be ſevered from it; and yet conſider, that if Chriſt died to anſwer the demands of the Law, the Law muſt be ſuppoſed to be* holy, juſt and good, *in all its rigour; a point they never can believe: Therefore, to extricate themſelves out of all difficulties at once, (bold, daring rebels to God, that they be!) notwithſtanding all the infallible evidences God has given to its truth, they run the dreadful venture, to give up the Bible itſelf. They had rather turn profeſſed Infidels, than own the divine Law to be* holy, juſt and good. *And then, ſo inconſiſtent are they, they pretend to make the* Law of Nature *their only rule. Not conſidering that their enmity to the* Law of Nature, *the true and real* Law of Nature, *hath driven them to this dreadful length.*

Ther. But, Sir, is not what ſome ſay, agreeable to Scripture, reaſon and experience, *viz.* that as our enmity againſt God ariſes from conceiving him to be our enemy, ſo we can never be reconciled to him, till we firſt ſee and are perſuaded, that he loves us. (1)

Paul. With your leave, Sir, I will venture to affirm, that this ſcheme is contrary to Scripture, reaſon and the univerſal experience of all true Saints.—As to the experience of all true Saints, we have that in the plaineſt language, deſcribed by an inſpired writer, 2 Cor. iii 18 *We* ALL *with open face, beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image.* A ſight of the glory of God is what moves us to love him. Love to God is that image of God we are changed into. The image of God chiefly conſiſts in love, as all own. And this is produced by a ſenſe of God's glory, as the inſpired Apoſtle affirms. —Beſides, this ſcheme is contrary to the whole Tenor of Scripture, which every where teaches, that thoſe who are enemies to God, are actually in a ſtate of *condemnation* (Joh. iii. 18.) *and of Wrath*, (ver. 36.) and never can, nor will be received into the divine favour, till they *repent* and are *converted*, (Acts iii. 19.) *till they turn to God*, (Pov. i. 23, 24. —Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) and are *reconciled to him through Jeſus Chriſt.* (2 Cor. v. 20—Luke xiii. 3, 5.) And indeed a true juſtifying Faith compriſes all this in its very nature, in its very firſt act.—Beſides if one ſhould be ſo deluded, as to believe God was reconciled to him while impenitent, and out of Chriſt, this belief would not, could not bring him to love God. 'Tis true, ſuch an one might, like the carnal Iſraelites at the ſide of the Red-Sea, be full of joy and love, ariſing merely from ſelf-love. A kind of love,

The fool ſaith in his heart, there is no God. *Did mankind really believe that there is a God of infinite Glory, they could not but be convinced that they are really under infinite obligations to love him as ſuch, with all their hearts; and that the leaſt defect deſerves his everlaſting wrath. But a fallen world are dead to God, blind to his beauty, and enemies to his Law; as all their reaſonings, and all their conduct join to prove.—So that Atheiſm is the root of all errors; and enmity to God and his Law ſhuts our eyes againſt the Truth, and gives Infidelity a reigning power over our hearts.*

(1) M. *p.* 25, 26, 27, 140.

which has in it nothing of the nature of true love to God: but is consistent with a reigning enmity against him.

Ther. But if our enmity against God arises from conceiving him to be our enemy, remove the cause, and the effect will cease. If we view him as our reconciled Father and Friend, the occasion of our enmity being removed, our enmity will cease, and we shall naturally love him.

Paul. Right, Theron, you say true, if that be the only cause of our enmity, this will effectually remove it. Nor shall we need to be *born again* (John iii. 3.) or to have any new principle of *divine life* communicated to us. (John iii. 6—Eph. ii. 5.) But from the principles of Nature we may love God thus (Mat. v. 46) and the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the holy Spirit will be wholly needless. The vail need not be taken from our hearts, that we may behold the Glory of God (2 Cor. iii. 18.) Only let God declare that he loves us and all is done. And if he was our enemy before we turned enemies to him, it seems proper and meet he should declare himself to be reconciled first. Be sure, as this will put an end to the whole controversy between him and us, and set all things right. And one would think, that the God of peace would not be backward to make such a declaration, in the most explicit manner, to all the human race, and that without the interposition of a Mediator, if indeed he became an enemy to the human kind before we turned enemies to him. But if the human kind, without the least provocation turned enemies first, and without any reason revolted from their rightful Lord and Sovereign, and when God infinitely deserved their highest love, joined in open rebellion with Satan, God's avowed foe; and if this, our infinitely unreasonable enmity is now the result of the very temper of our whole heart, even of a fixed contrariety of nature to God, his Law and Government, which yet are faultless, yea, perfectly *holy, just and good* (Rom. vii. 12. and viii. 7.) It is infinitely unreasonable that God should forgive us, till we acknowledge this is the case, and approve his Law, by which we stand condemned, in the very bottom of our hearts. (Luke xviii. 13.) Nor, till we do this, can we possibly look to God through Jesus Christ for pardon, as absolutely of mere free Grace. Without which, the Righteous Monarch of the Universe has declared, we never shall be forgiven. (Rom. iii. 24.—Mar. xvi. 16.) But how con-

trary to reaſon is it, to ſuppoſe that God became enemy to the human kind firſt, and that all our enmity ariſes from conceiving him to be our enemy, as though ſome fault were originally on God's ſide, before we revolted from him. And ſo if he would now but become our friend and love us, we ſhould love him without any more ado. What need then of the death of his Son? Or what need of the ſanctifying influences of his Spirit? If he was our enemy firſt, he may well, without a Mediator, declare himſelf reconciled. And this will put an end to the whole controverſy. A ſhocking ſcheme of Religion, this! But ſhocking as it is, and as reluctant as you may be, to own it in this ſhocking dreſs; yet you muſt, my Theron, adhere to it, if you would be conſiſtent with yourſelf, or elſe give up your darling point. For if we are enemies to God, in the temper of our minds, previous to one thought of his being our enemy, a perſuaſion of his love, 'tis ſelf evident, will never reconcile us to him.

Ther. Underſtand me right. If we were to love God primarily and chiefly for his own excellencies, a mere perſuaſion of his love to us, I own, would not be ſufficient to bring us to this. But you are ſenſible, ſir, that many look on this notion of loving God for himſelf, as a mere chimera. What makes God appear lovely to us, is a belief, an aſſured perſuaſion, that our ſins are blotted out; and that God is now reconciled father and friend, and altogether love to us. (1)

Paul. But what warrant has a Chriſt-leſs ſinner, while an enemy to God, to believe that his ſins are blotted out? Or if he does believe ſo, and is raviſhed with his deluſion, how can you prove this raviſhment is of the nature of true Holineſs? The Devil can thus delude and raviſh a poor Sinner: But has Satan power to beget divine Grace, and real Holineſs in the heart?

Ther. But if the Word of God is full on my ſide, this muſt determine the point.

Paul. Amen! I join iſſue here, with all my heart. Nor ſhall any other writings ever determine, for me, any of the doctrines of Religion.

Ther. It is expreſſly written, as the experience of all the Saints in the apoſtolic age, in 1 John iv. 16. *We have known*

(1) *M. p.* 266, 140.

and believed the love that God hath to us. And it follows in ver. 19. *We love him because he first loved us.* In these two verses our whole scheme is expressed in the plainest manner.

Paul. Yes, and it is as expressly written in James ii. 21. *Was not our Father Abraham justified by works?* And it is added, with respect to all good men, ver. 24. *Ye see then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by Faith only.* And in these two verses our whole scheme, say the Arminians, is expressed in the plainest manner.

Ther. We are not to be carried away by the mere sound of words in a single text of Scripture or two, to notions contrary to the whole tenor of the sacred volume. This is the way of Hereticks, who thus *wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction.* (2 Pet. iii. 16.) We are rather by viewing the context, and comparing Scripture with Scripture, to search for the true meaning of the inspired writer. My dear Aspasio has set those words of St. James in their proper light, and proved that they are not at all to the purpose of the Arminians, (Vol. I. p. 268.) And indeed, I wonder how men that ever saw their own righteousness to be as filthy rags, should ever think of perverting the Apostle's words to a meaning, it is plain, he never intended.

Paul. You speak well, my dear Theron, and I wonder how men, who are daily "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord," should ever think of putting such a sense on those words of St. John. A sense, it is plain, he never intended, neither came it into his heart. Indeed, I hope some men's hearts are more orthodox than their heads. However, let that be as it will; for it does not belong to you nor me to judge the fate of men's souls: God only knows their hearts: With God we leave them: Yet their notions of Religion we may examine, compare with Scripture, and pass judgment upon. Here we have a good right to judge.—Wherefore, let us, observing the rules of interpreting Scripture, which you have hinted, rules which all parties must allow to be good: let us, I say, impartially examine those words of the Apostle, in 1 John. iv. 16, 19, which you just now referred to, as clearly expressing your whole scheme —Here my dear Theron, here is the bible; take it, and read the Epistle through; and when you have done, tell me—who are they, what is the character of the men who use this

confident language: "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." Were they Saints or Sinners? Did they know they were the children of God, or were they doubtful? Did they know they were in a good estate by being conscious of sanctifying operations in their own breasts?

Ther. I have read the Epistle—I grant they knew they were the children of God, and heirs of eternal Glory. —They did not merely hope this was the case; but they were certain of it: They KNEW it. (chap. iii. 1, 2.) And they knew it by such evidences as these. Because they knew God, loved him, and kept his commands, (chap. ii. 3, 4. 5.) imitated the example of Christ, (ver. 6.) loved the brethren, (ver. 10.) as bearing the image of God (chap. v. 1.) had overcome the Prince of Darkness (chap. ii. ver. 13.) were weaned from the world (ver. 15.) had such divine illuminations, as enabled them to understand, and confirmed them in the belief of the great doctrines of Religion, so that it was impossible they should be seduced (ver. 19, 27.) purified themselves after the pattern of Christ (chap. iii. 3.) lived in no sin, (ver. 6.) yea, could not live in sin (ver. 9.) made sanctification their criterion of a good estate, (ver. 10) looked upon all that were without it as children of the Devil (ver. 10.) they were governed by divine Grace in their conduct towards their brethren, (ver. 18, 19.) and made it their business to do the things which were pleasing in the sight of God: (ver. 22.) In a word, they were conscious to the sanctifying operations of God's Spirit, which dwelt in them (ver. 24.) *&c. &c.*

Paul. Now tell me, O my Theron, might not these men, on good grounds, and with a safe warrant, say, We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. They knew they were the children of God, and entitled to eternal glory. They knew they were of the number of the Elect, the sheep for whom Christ died with an absolute design to save. They knew all this, not by believing it without any evidence from Scripture, sense or reason; but they knew all this by evidences which pass for infallible in the court of Heaven: Evidences which they knew, and we know, the Judge will pronounce to be good and valid at the great day. Now tell me, O my Theron, if these men knew that God loved them, how can that prove, that Christ-less, impenitent sinners, enemies to God, unreconciled, can know it too? These men had good evidence

for what they believd; but Chriſt-leſs ſinners have no evidence that God loves them, or deſigns to ſave them, "from Scripture, ſenſe or reaſon," as the celebrated Mr. Marſhall is obliged to own. (1)

Ther. But the Apoſtle ſays, We love him becauſe he firſt loved us. Which plainly ſuppoſes, they knew God loved them before they loved him.

Paul. If the Apoſtle, and all thoſe Apoſtolic Saints, ſhould join to declare they never underſtood the matter ſo, this would quite ſatisfy you. But which is altogether equivalent, they all agreed to make this their ſteady maxim: *He that committeth ſin is of the Devil.* (Chap. iii. 8, 9, 10.) But antecedent to the firſt act of Grace, they had only committed ſin. Every act was a ſinful act, before the firſt Gracious and holy act. And therefore, according to their own rule, they were not the children of God, but the children of the Devil; till they had performed, at leaſt, one act of Grace. And until they knew they had performed an act of Grace according to their own rule, they could not know their ſtate was changed for the better. But in the firſt act of ſaving Grace, the Sinner's heart is really reconciled to God through Jeſus Chriſt. So that we begin to love God before we know that he begins to love us — *Repent and be converted*, not becauſe your ſins are already, but that they *may be blotted out* (Acts iii. 19.)

Ther. This is not agreeable to my experience. (1ſt.) I had the love of God, as a reconciled God, manifeſted to my ſoul. (2nd.) Hereupon I believed that God was my reconciled God and Father. (3d.) And ſo I loved God becauſe he firſt loved me. And indeed it is plain the Apoſtle taught, that God loves us before we love him. 1 John, iv. 10. *Not that we loved God, but that he loved us.* He loved us before we loved him.

Paul. But think a little, O my Theron! You do not maintain that a Sinner is actually entitled to the love of God, as his reconciled God and Father, before he believes in Chriſt. This is beyond all diſpute inconſiſtent with the whole tenor of the Goſpel. For unbelievers are *condemned* and under the *wrath of God* (John iii. 18, 36.) *We are juſtified by Faith, and not before Faith.* (Rom. v. 1)

Ther. As to Faith and Juſtification, I chooſe to defer

(1) M. *p.* 173.

these subjects to another time. But pray tell me; how do you understand these words?

Paul. As to the love of God towards us. There is (1st.) Electing love, whereby God *chose us in Christ to salvation before the foundation of the world.* (Eph. i. 4.) (2nd.) Redeeming love towards the Elect, spoken of in 1 Joh. iv. 9, 10. *He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* (3d.) There is the sovereign Grace and love of God, which is exercised in awakening, convincing and converting elect sinners. Eph. ii. 4, 5. *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. By Grace are ye saved.* (4th.) There is the love of God, as a reconciled Father, towards those that are converted and become his children, through Jesus Christ. Joh. xiv. 21. *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: And he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. Ver.* 23. *My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* Rom. viii. 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.* Now the love of God, as a reconciled Father, none enjoy but those who are already the children of God; and they enjoy it, as our blessed Saviour teaches, in consequence of their loving him and keeping his commands. And such was the state of the Saints the Apostle John is speaking of. They knew that they were the children of God, and that they should be saved. And they lived daily in a sense of God's love, as their reconciled Father; for they loved God and kept his commands.

"But how came we to be in this blessed and happy state?" Might they say, "Once we were dead in sin, and enemies to God: Now with open face we behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and love him, and rejoice in his love. Once we were under condemnation and wrath: Now children of God, and heirs of eternal glory. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! And whence is all this? Not from any goodness in us, but of God's mere sovereign Grace. He loved us before we loved him; yea, before the foundation of the world. And we now

love him becauſe he firſt loved us. Yea, we never ſhould have loved him, had not he firſt loved us, and redeemed us by the blood of his Son, and quickened us when dead in ſin by his holy Spirit, and opened our eyes to behold his glory and beauty. Wherefore, ſeeing God is ſo infinite in his love and goodneſs towards us, let us imitate him, and love one another."

Pray, my dear Theron, take your bible once more, and read from the 7th to the 21ſt verſe, in that ivth chap. of the 1ſt Epiſtle of John. Read the whole paragraph critically, and you may eaſily ſee, that this is the ſum of the Apoſtle's reaſonings. "*Beloved let us love one another.*—This is the duty I urge you to: and this is the argument I uſe. *God is Love.* And if we are born of God, if we are made partakers of his nature, we ſhall love our Brother. If we do not love our Brother, our pretences to regeneration are a lie. If we do love our Brother, we are born of God; for *God is Love.* (ſee ver. 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 16, 20, 21.) That *God is Love*, is plain from the work of our Redemption by Chriſt. That the benevolence, love, and goodneſs of the divine nature is ſelf-moving, is plain, becauſe there was no goodneſs in us to move him to give his Son to die for us.—For we did not love God.—We were enemies.—God firſt loved us. Yea, if God had not pitied us in our loſt ſtate, and redeemed us, and brought us to know him, we ſhould never have loved him. We love him now, but we never ſhould have done ſo, had not he firſt loved, redeemed, and converted us. Wherefore, full of gratitude, we love him becauſe he firſt loved us. And as the goodneſs of the divine Nature is thus ſelf-moving, and as God's heart is ſo full of benevolence and love, and as we partake of the very ſame nature by our new birth; ſo we ſhould exerciſe it conſtantly in loving our brethren. The goodneſs of the divine Nature, as manifeſt in our Redemption, which is continually before our eyes, and its beauty which conſtantly affects our hearts, ſhould change us into the ſame image, and make us full of love to our brethren." (Ver. 7, 21.)

Ther. If, by the beauty of the divine Nature, you only mean, that God appears lovely, merely becauſe he loves us, I can underſtand you; and can love God on this account. But when you ſpeak of loving God for himſelf, I

know not what you mean, nor how it is poſſible for any to love God on this foot.

Paul. There is an eſſential difference between being charmed with the beauty of the divine Goodneſs, and being raviſhed merely to think that God loves me. The one will infallibly change us into the divine Image, agreeable to Mat. v. 44, 45, 48; the other will never raiſe us higher than to the Publican's ſtandard, ver. 46, 47.

Beſides, my dear Theron, tell me; do you verily believe, that it is more to God's honor to be your particular friend, than it is to be by NATURE GOD? Does his friendſhip to you make him ſhine brighter, than all the infinite GLORIES OF HIS ETERNAL GODHEAD? And is he more worthy to be loved and worſhiped becauſe he loves you, than for his own REAL DIVINITY? Or, as the Papiſts canonize ſaints for their extraordinary attachment to the Roman Church, and then pay them religious worſhip; ſo do you deify God, for being your particular friend, and give him divine worſhip merely on this account; but for which you would be full of "hatred and heart-riſings againſt him?" We uſe to think divine love and worſhip ought by no means to be paid to a mere creature, how kind ſoever to us. But if you leave DIVINITY, if you leave the GLORY OF THE DIVINE MAJESTY as he is in himſelf, out of the account; and love and worſhip him merely for his love to you, and make him your GOD, merely for that; and ſo pay him divine worſhip not becauſe he is by NATURE GOD, but becauſe he is your particular friend; how will you free yourſelf from the guilt of idolatry?—To be ſure, you are ſo far from paying a proper regard to real Divinity, that you ſhew yourſelf quite blind to his beauty and glory, and ſtupid to that which charms all the heavenly world. And in their eyes, you muſt appear in a very ſelfiſh, impious, contemptible light, in your higheſt raptures.

Had Nicaulis, the Queen of Sheba, on her return from King Solomon's court, in all her converſation, dwelt only on the royal bounty which he gave her, (1 Kin. x. 13.) and expreſſed her love to him on this account alone, wondering how any man of ſenſe could talk of the fine and charming accompliſhments of the King, and what they meant by loving him primarily and chiefly on the foot of his own perſonal merit: would not thoſe gentlemen who had been

her attendants in her tour to Jeruſalem, have been tempted to look upon her as a perſon of no taſte, that the fine and charming accompliſhments of even Solomon, in all his glory, could not touch her heart. And I dare ſay, her name would not have been mentioned in the Jewiſh hiſtory, unleſs with infamy. But what was Solomon's glory, compared with the glory of the King of the whole univerſe!

What would the Queen of Iſrael have thought, had the daughters of Jeruſalem ſaid unto her, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou faireſt among women?" Would ſhe not have ſoon replied, with the fervor of an ardent lover? *My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefeſt among ten thouſand; yea, he is altogether lovely*. Cant. v. 9, 10, 16. And have not the regenerate infinitely more reaſon to adopt this language? For as natural men have by nature a taſte to the beauties of the natural world; ſo ſpiritual men have by grace a taſte to the beauties of the moral world. As King Solomon appeared exceeding glorious to the Queen of Sheba; ſo the Lord Jehovah who ſits on a *Throne high and lifted up, as the thrice holy Monarch of the univerſe*, appears exceeding glorious, not only to Angels in Heaven, but to Saints on Earth, (Iſa. vi. 3.—2 Cor. iii. 18.) And they are all ready in the language of the Queen of Sheba, to ſay, *Happy are thy men, happy are theſe thy ſervants, which ſtand continually before thee.* (1 Kin. x. 8.) The infinite amiableneſs of God, as he is in himſelf, is the chief ſource of the refined joys of the heavenly world. To behold ſuch a God, to love and be beloved by him, is the Heaven of Heaven itſelf. And the more exalted his glory and beauty, the ſweeter their love and joy. His being *what he is in himſelf*, ſo infinitely deſirable, renders it ſo infinitely happifying to them, to enjoy him for ever as their own, Pſal. lxxiii. 25.

Ther. Perhaps there may be more in what you plead for than I have been wont to think. And as I deſign fully to conſider theſe things, that I may be under the beſt advantages to make up a right judgment, pray point out ſome of the chief differences between theſe two kinds of love to God.

Paul. (1ſt.) If I love God for himſelf, God, even God himſelf is the object beloved: And the act by me performed, is properly an act of love to God. If I love God merely becauſe he loves me, I am the object really beloved: And the

act is properly an act of self-love. (2d.) The one supposes the glory and amiableness of the divine Nature is really seen: The other may be where the heart is wholly blind to this kind of beauty, as it does not arise from a sense of God's amiableness, but altogether from selfish considerations.—(3d.) If God is loved for himself, the whole of God's law and government will also be loved, as in themselves *beautiful*, *holy*, *just* and *good*, a transcript and image of God's nature. If God is loved merely because he loves me, I shall be reconciled to God's Law and Government only as considering myself safe from the stroke of divine justice. And I shall be reconciled to God's decrees only as considering them in my favour. Not really caring what becomes of the rest of my fellow men, I shall pretend to like God's plan of government as being safe myself, but for which, I should, as your Author expresses it, be full of "hatred and heart-risings in spite of my heart." (1) If God is loved for himself, every thing which bears his image, will, for the same reason, be loved, as being in itself lovely, as resembling the standard of true beauty: But otherwise, all my love towards all other things of a religious nature, will be merely selfish.—For instance, I shall love the children of God merely on selfish accounts; as, because they love me, belong to my party, &c. So the hypocritical Galatians once loved St. Paul, as they thought he had been the means of their conversion; but when he was afterwards obliged to tell them some truths which they disrelished, their love grew cold; yea, they rather inclined to join with the false teachers, his avowed enemies who were constantly endeavouring to undermine that scheme of Religion which was dearer to him than his life. This proved they never really loved Paul himself; who still continued the same he was before. So the Israelites seemed to love God, much, at the side of the Red-Sea, while they thought he loved them; but the waters of Marah soon brought them to different feelings.—(4th.) If God is loved for himself, it will be natural to imitate him, and delight to please him. For we always love to imitate and please those who are really dear to us, and their *commands are not grievious*. (1 Joh. v. 3.) But you know the character of the men, *who*

(1) *M. p.* 24, 25, 140.

sang God's praise, but *soon forgat his works*. (Psal. cvi. 12, 13.) And *forty years long was he grieved with this generation*. (Psal. xcv. 10.) They were much engaged to have themselves pleased; but cared not what became of God's honour, when they were crossed. (5th) If God is loved for himself, then the enjoyment of God will be our highest happiness. *Whom have I in Heaven but thee?—And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* (Psal. lxxiii. 25.) Whereas, if we love God only in a firm persuasion of his love to us, as himself cannot be our portion, so we shall naturally seek rest elsewhere. For nothing can be a portion to our souls, which is not loved for itself.—The man that marries merely for money, cannot expect to find that delight and satisfaction in his companion, which he might in a person agreeable to his taste. And no wonder he absents himself from her company, and contrives excuses to justify himself. Wherefore, (6th) If God is loved for himself, as there is thereby a foundation laid for a conformity to him in the temper of our minds, and a life of communion with him; so hereby it may be discovered, that we, thus bearing his image are really his children.—And so an assurance of our good estate may be obtained from our sanctification; which on the other scheme never can, if we will be honest to our own souls. As well may the rush grow without mire, and the flag without water; yea, as well may you build a cathedral on the stalk of a tulip, says your Aspasio, (1) as one in your scheme maintain assurance from a consciousness of his own sanctification.

Here, my dear Aspasio, the conversation stopped.—I sat silent, all my thoughts turned inward.—"O my soul," said I to myself, "this is my very case. My sanctification has for a long time, been no more to be seen than the stars at noon. I have found by sad experience, no assurance could possibly be obtained this way. To seek assurance by marks and signs of Grace, only cherishes my doubts, and increases my perplexity. And what if this is indeed the very reason, that really I never had any true Grace?"——I was shocked—my heart recoiled—"O dreadful!—an heir of Hell! after all my high raised hopes!"

Thus I sat silent several minutes, quite lost in self reflection, till Paulinus began again to speak.—"I must dismiss

(1) *D. p.* 360, 362.

these subjects at present," said I, "and retire. Your thoughts on the remaining points, I hope to hear at a more convenient season." Paulinus replied, "When you please, Sir, I am at your service." "To-morrow evening I will wait upon you," said I.—After he had expressed many kind wishes for my good, and I had asked his prayers. I retired to my closet. And, O my Aspasio, you may easily guess how I spent the night. For *the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*"

DIALOGUE II.

Tuesday Evening, December 12, 1758.

I RETURNED at the appointed time. And after some agreeable conversation on general subjects, I introduced the SECOND QUESTION.—But Paulinus insisted I should tell my opinion first—which I did, in the very words of the best writers I had seen.—Thus we begun—

Paul. Pray, tell me exactly, what *justifying Faith* is, in your opinion?

Ther. "It is a real persuasion in my heart, that Jesus Christ is mine, and that I shall have life and salvation by him; that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for me. Faith is an hearty assurance, that our sins are freely forgiven us in Christ.—Justifying Faith hath for the special object of it, forgiveness of sins.—A man doth not believe that his sins are forgiven him already, before the act of believing; but that he shall have forgiveness of sins. In the very act of justification, he believes his sins are forgiven him; and so receives forgiveness. (1)—Faith is a real persuasion that the blessed Jesus

(1) *Marrow of Mod. Div. with Notes. p.* 158, 273.

N. B. Wendelinus is the author of the last mentioned Definition of Faith; who is one of the authorities Mr. Hervey refers to. (D. p. 315.) *And as this Definition seems to have been made with care, and to be very exact; so it is worthy*

hath ſhed his blood for me, fulfilled all righteouſneſs in my ſtead; that through his great atonement and glorious obedience, he has purchaſed even for my ſinful ſoul, reconciliation with God, ſanctifying grace, and all ſpiritual bleſſings." And the language of Faith is this; "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are mine.—God has freely loved me; Chriſt has graciouſly died for me; and the Holy Ghoſt will aſſuredly ſanctify me in the belief, the appropriating belief, of theſe precious truths." This appropriating and taking home to myſelf the bleſſings of the Goſpel is of the eſſence of Faith. (1) "It is not a perſuaſion, that we have already received Chriſt and his ſalvation, or that we have been already brought into a ſtate of Grace: But only that God is pleaſed graciouſly to give Chriſt and his ſalvation unto us, to bring us into a ſtate of Grace. (2) To ſum up all in a word: Faith is a perſuaſion, that I am one for whom Chriſt died with a deſign to ſave; that God is reconciled to me, loves me, and will ſave me. And all this is believed by the direct act of Faith, antecedent to any reflection. (3)

Paul. O my Theron, be you not miſtaken? Is not Faith uſually called *coming to Chriſt, receiving Chriſt, truſting in Chriſt, believing in Chriſt, flying to Chriſt?* &c.

Ther. It is. But this is an after act, and is built upon the former. *Firſt*, I believe, that pardon, grace, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are mine: And then I truſt I ſhall aſſuredly be ſaved by Chriſt.—*Firſt*, I believe that Chriſt died for me in particular, and that God is my God; and this encourages me to come to Chriſt and truſt in him. If I did not know that Chriſt loves me, I ſhould not dare to truſt in him. (4) Wherefore, in the firſt direct act of Faith, I believe that God "is reconciled to me," (5) that Chriſt has "reſcued me from Hell," and "eſtabliſhed my title to all the bleſſings included in the promiſes." (6) Juſt as my tenant believed

of particular attention.—My ſins are not forgiven, but I believe they are forgiven, and ſo receive forgiveneſs; i. e. *I knew it was not true, but I believed it to be true, and ſo it became true. Which exactly anſwers to the account Mr. Marſhal gives of Faith. Of which more preſently.*

(1) D. *p.* 296, 362, 345, 315. (2) M. *p.* 176. (3) D. *p.* 358, 359. (4) D. *p.* 312, 313. (5) D. *p.* 169. (6) D. *p.* 181.

me, when once I ſent him word, "that I had cancelled his bond and forgiven his debt. (1) Juſt as my ſervant believed me, when I freely gave him a little farm. (2) And juſt as you believed the eſtate your own, which was bequeathed to you in your late father's laſt will. You firſt believed your title good, and then took poſſeſſion of it as your own. (3) I am ſenſible, this is not what is called the orthodox opinion; it is more "refined and exalted," (4) and more exactly agreeable to the truth. (5)

Paul. But my dear Theron, how do you know that Chriſt, pardon, grace and glory are your's? What evidence have you for your belief? A belief, on which you venture your precious ſoul for a whole eternity.

Ther. The holy ſcripture clears up my title, (6) and enables me to appropriate to myſelf in particular, what is given, granted and made over in the written word to ſinners in general. (7) To explain myſelf, it is written in Iſa. ix. 6. *To us a Son is given.* (8) Iſa. liii. 6. *The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all.* (9) 1 Cor. xv. 1. *Chriſt died for our ſins.* (10) John vi. 32. *My father giveth you the true bread from Heaven.* (11) 1 John v. 9. *This is the Record, that God hath given to us eternal life.* (12) Acts xiii. 28. *Unto you is preached the forgiveneſs of ſins.* (13) Iſa. xliii. 25. *I, even I, am he, that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions.* (14) And by Faith I appropriate all this to myſelf. I believe that Chriſt is mine, given to me in particular: My ſins in particular were laid on him: He died for my ſins in particular: He is my bread: Eternal life is mine: My ſins are forgiven: My tranſgreſſions are blotted out. And ſo according to Scripture, *I believe the love that God hath to me.* 1 Joh. iv. 16. *I believe I ſhall be ſaved.* Act, xv. 11. *I believe Chriſt loved me, and gave himſelf for me.* Gal. ii. 20. (15) With Thomas I ſay, *My Lord, my God!* Joh. xx. 28. "I am perſuaded in my heart, that Jeſus is my Lord, who bought me with his blood: That Jeſus is my God, who will exert all his adorable perfections for my good. (16) This is Faith, according to the common acceptation of the

(1) D. *p.* 298. (2) D. *p.* 273. (3) D. *p.* 255. (4) D. *p.* 295. (5) D. *p.* 312, 313, 334, 335. (6) D. *p.* 295. (7) D. *p.* 305, 314. (8) D. *p.* 308. (9) D. *p.* 304. (10) D. *p.* 318. (11) D. *p.* 307. (12) D. *p.* 319. (13) D *p.* 303. (14) D. *p.* 329. (15) D. *p.* 326, (16) D. *p.* 330.

word believe. (1) And this Faith our Saviour himſelf, allows to be genuine. (2) And if I ſhould not thus believe, I ſhould make God a liar. (3)

Paul. How make God a liar, my dear Theron? Hath God ſaid that Chriſt died with an abſolute deſign to ſave all mankind? And hath God expreſsly declared, that he will ſave them all? That you think yourſelf obliged in conſcience, while out of Chriſt, to believe he died with an abſolute deſign to ſave you, and that God will certainly ſave you; and that it would be no better than making God a liar, not to believe ſo.

Ther. No, no; God hath never ſaid any ſuch thing, expreſſly or implicitly. Yea, God has plainly enough declared, that Chriſt died with an abſolute deſign to ſave only the Elect; and that in fact, no other ever will be ſaved. This we are all agreed in. (4)

Paul. did you know then that you was one of the Elect, before you believed? That you thought yourſelf bound in conſcience to believe that you ſhould be ſaved; leſt otherwiſe, you ſhould be guilty of ſo horrible a ſin, as to make God a liar.

Ther. No, by no means. For no man can know his election till after Faith and Juſtification.

Paul. How then could you make God a liar? Is it any where declared in his written word, that your ſins in particular are forgiven, and that you ſhall be ſaved.

Ther. No; ſo far from it, that before I believed my ſins were forgiven, they were in fact not forgiven: But I was under condemnation and wrath.

Paul. But ſurely here is ſome great myſtery. You ſay, you believe that Chriſt died with a deſign to ſave only the Elect, and that you did not know that you was Elected; and yet you believed that Chriſt died with a deſign to ſave you. You ſay, your ſins were not forgiven before you believed; and yet you believed they were forgiven. You ſeem, my friend, to be ſo far from any danger of making God a liar by not believing; that rather you make him a liar by believing your ſins are forgiven, when God ſays

(1) D. *p.* 297. (2) D. *p.* 330. (3) D. *p.* 354.

(4) *Boſton on the Two Covenants, p.* 27, 34. *N. B. He ſays, Iſa. liii. 6. (a text Theron juſt now applied to himſelf) reſpects only the elect, p.* 30.

they are not. At leaſt, to make the beſt of it, I do not ſee what evidence you have for your belief. Nay, how can ſuch a Faith as yours poſſibly be the reſult of evidence, and of a rational conviction? For the caſe does not ſeem to admit of any evidence. For how can there be any evidence to prove the truth of that which as yet is not true? Pray, unfold this riddle, like a right honeſt man, and tell me the ſecret of the whole affair.

Ther. This matter is honeſtly ſtated, and that with great exactneſs, in Mr. Marſhall's Goſpel Myſtery; a book, my Aſpaſio values next to the Bible. (1) Theſe are the very words of that celebrated author. "Let it be well obſerved, that the reaſon why we are to aſſure ourſelves in our Faith, that God freely giveth Chriſt and his ſalvation to us in particular, is not becauſe it is a truth before we believe it, but becauſe it becometh a certain truth when we believe; and becauſe it never will be true, except we do in ſome meaſure, perſuade and aſſure ourſelves that it is ſo. We have no abſolute promiſe or declaration in Scripture, that God certainly will, or doth give Chriſt and his ſalvation, to any one of us in particular; neither do we know it to be true already by Scripture, or ſenſe, or reaſon, before we aſſure ourſelves abſolutely of it: Yea, we are without Chriſt's ſalvation at preſent, in a ſtate of ſin and miſery, under the curſe and wrath of God. Only we are bound by the command of God, thus to aſſure ourſelves: And the Scripture doth ſufficiently warrant us, that we ſhall not deceive ourſelves, in believing a lie: But *according to our Faith, ſo ſhall it be to us.*" Mat. ix. 29. (N. B.) "This is a ſtrange kind of aſſurance, far different from other ordinary kinds; and therefore, no wonder if it be found weak and imperfect, and difficult to be obtained, and aſſaulted with many doubtings. We are conſtrained to believe other things on the clear evidence we have that they are true, and would remain true, whether we believe them or no; ſo that we cannot deny our aſſent, without rebelling againſt the light of our ſenſes, reaſon, or conſcience. But here our aſſurance is not impreſſed on our thoughts by any evidence of the thing; but we muſt work it out in ourſelves by the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God." (2) Labouring for it, as my dear Aſpaſio explains

(1) D. *p.* 336. (2) M. *p.* 173, 174.

the words, "inceſſantly and aſſiduouſly, 'till our Lord come." (1) *What things ſoever ye deſire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye ſhall have them. Mar. ix.* 24. (2)

(1) M. *Preface, p.* 7.

(2) *Reader ſtop and think a minute.—What is it, that we are thus to aſſure ourſelves of, without any evidence from Scripture, or ſenſe, or reaſon? That* God ſo loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life? *No: for this is true before we believe it, and whether we believe it or not. And it is a truth plainly taught in Scripture.—What then? "That God freely giveth Chriſt and his ſalvation to me in particular," according to Mr. Marſhal. That "paraon is mine, grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are mine," as Mr. Hervey expreſſes it.—And now it is true enough, this is "not declared in Scripture; is not true before we believe it; and we muſt believe without any evidence from Scripture, ſenſe or reaſon." Thus the point is ſtated in a book Mr. Hervey approves of next to the Bible.*

Objection. "*No,*" *ſays Mr. Gellatly, a great admirer of Mr. Hervey,* "*no ſuch thing. We do not believe we have a* ſaving intereſt *in Chriſt. We only believe we have a* common intereſt. *A* ſaving intereſt *is not made over to us in the Goſpel Grant: But a* common intereſt *is ours by a free deed of gift. Wherefore, I believe I have a* common intereſt, *I claim it, I demand it, I take poſſeſſion of it as my own. And this is Faith. (See Mr. Gel. Obſervations, &c. p.* 76, 88.)

Anſwer, *You claim, you take poſſeſſion.—Of what? my friend! Of a* common intereſt.—*This is your's, you ſay.—This you claim, this you poſſeſs.—And this is* ALL.—*A* common intereſt, *and no more.—You claim no more, and you can have no more on this foot. For you acknowledge, your deed of gift conveys* no more.—*But Meſſrs. Harvey and Marſhal claim more. They take poſſeſſion of a* ſaving intereſt *as their own. And therefore honeſtly confeſs, they have no evidence from Scripture, ſenſe or reaſon. And if Mr. G. ſhould venture to put in as high a claim, I hope he will make as honeſt a Conceſſion.*

Objection. "*Yes.*" *But* "*I believe that Chriſt is mine, and that I ſhall have Life and Salvation by him.*" *P.* 103.

Anſwer. "*Salvation!*"—*But this is a* ſaving intereſt, *ot made over in your deed of gift, as you own. The bible no*

Paul. I have on the table a paper containing twelve ſhort queries, relative to the point in hand. If it is not diſagreeable, I will read it to you.

Ther. If you pleaſe, Sir, I ſhould be glad to hear it.

Paul. It was wrote this very day, on reading that remarkable paſſage in Mr. Marſhal, you have juſt recited, and on a general view of the controverſy, as ſtated by him, and by your friend Aſpaſio, and as expecting to ſee you this evening.

TWELVE QUERIES.

Quer. 1. Did God ever require any one of the ſons of Adam to believe any propoſition to be true, unleſs it was in fact true, before he believed it? We are required to believe, there is a God—that Chriſt is the Son of God—that he died for ſinners—that he ſent his Apoſtles to preach the Goſpel to every creature—that he that believeth ſhall be ſaved—that he that believeth not, ſhall be damned—that without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord: In a word, we are required to believe all the truths taught in the *bible*.—But then, they are all true, before we believe them, and whether we believe them, or not.

Quer. 2. Are not all theſe truths contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament, which it is neceſſary for us to know and believe in order to our ſalvation? Is not this a point which has ever been ſtrenuouſly maintained

where declares, that you in particular "ſhall have life and ſalvation." You believe now "without any evidence from Scripture ſenſe or reaſon," juſt as Mr. Marſhal ſays. So I ſee, your Faith is the ſame as his; but he is frank and open-hearted, and tells the honeſt truth to the world.

Object. *But if a* common intereſt *in Chriſt, and ſalvation are mine, by the free and abſolute grant of the Goſpel; this gives me a warrant, by Faith, to claim and take poſſeſſion of Chriſt and ſalvation as my own for ever:* i. e. *to believe that Chriſt is mine, and that I ſhall have life and ſalvation by him. (p.* 88, 90.*)*

Anſ. *That is, if a* common intereſt *is mine, this gives me a warrant to believe a* ſaving intereſt *is mine. And ſo according to Mr. Marſhal, "though a* ſaving intereſt *is not mine, before I believe; yet if I believe it is mine, then it will be mine."* —*But of this more preſently.*

by all Proteſtants? But are they not all true, before we believe them, and whether we believe them, or not?

Quer. 3, Is it ſafe to venture our ſouls for eternity, merely on the truth of a propoſition no where contained in the bible? "Theron, Chriſt died for thee in particular, and thy ſins are forgiven." Is this propoſition contained in the bible? Is it taught in ſcripture? If it had been, would it not have been true, before it was believed? and whether it was ever believed or no?—If Theron ventures his ſoul upon the truth of this propoſition, and finds himſelf at laſt deceived, can he blame the bible? Was it contained in that book? Did he learn it thence?—Nay, he owns he did not. But then he thinks God has required him to work up himſelf to ſuch a belief, and promiſed, that *according to his Faith, ſo ſhall it be unto him.* And yet owns, he has no evidence of the thing from Scripture, ſenſe or reaſon.

Quer. 4. Did God ever require any one of the ſons of Adam, to believe any thing to be true, without ſufficient previous evidence that it was true?—Look through the bible.—Where ſhall we find one inſtance?—Not in the Old Teſtament—nor in the New Teſtament—no, not even in one of theſe particulars, theſe writers uſually refer to, to illuſtrate and confirm this "ſtrange kind of aſſurance."

Not in Abraham, who *againſt Hope believed in Hope*, that he ſhould have a ſon; Sarah being not only barren, but paſt the age of child-bearing. For he had ſufficient evidence for the thing he believed: Even the known, the plain, the expreſs promiſe of the God of Truth. (1)

Not in the Iſraelites, who left Egpyt, ſet out for Canaan, but *could not enter in becauſe of unbelief.* For they had ſufficient evidence to believe, that God was able and willing to do all that he had engaged. (2) And that if they would

(1) D. *p.* 191, 355.

(2) *God's promiſe, Exod. iii.* 17, *to bring the Iſraelites to Canaan, did not abſolutely oblige him to bring every individual man, woman and child there. Some might die by the way; and yet God* not be a liar. *Exod. xxxii.* 27, 28. *Yea many did die by the way; and yet it is* impoſſible for God to lie. *Heb vi.* 18. *That phraſe in Numbers xiv.* 34, *proves that God did not think himſelf bound by his promiſe to bring them every one there, let them be ever ſo perverſe. But if God was not abſolutely obliged to bring every one there, then no one in particular,*

trust his wisdom, power, goodness and fidelity, be at his beck, and march under his banner, and *wholly follow him*, (Num. xxxii. 11.) they might safely enter, and easily conquer the country, although their *walls were built up to Heaven, and the sons of Anak were there.*——

Not in David—who believed that he should be king of Israel; for he had sufficient evidence for his belief, from the express promise of Almighty God. (1)

Not in the pious Jews in Babylon. (Isa. i. 10.) For although they could not see the least probability, from outward appearances, of their return to their beloved Zion; yet they had a good warrant to trust in the Lord, and stay themselves upon their God, who was able and who had expressly and absolutely promised, at the end of seventy years, to bring them back. (2)

Nor in Peter walking on the water. For he had sufficient evidence, from Christ's commanding him to come to him, to believe that Christ would keep him from sinking. (3)

Nor in the Disciples—so often upbraided for their unbelief of Christ's Resurrection. For they had sufficient evidence that he was risen. (4) Nor in those who had the Faith of miracles, and could say to this mountain, *Be thou removed and cast into the sea;* for they had sufficient evidence, to believe it would be done, resulting from Christ's express promise in the case. When they were called to work miracles in confirmation of the Christian Religion, they had not the least reason to doubt in their hearts, but that he who had authorised them, would, for his honour's sake, and for his word's sake, perform the miracles, which

when they set out from Egypt, had sufficient warrant to believe, and say, "I shall get to Canaan: I know I shall: God has promised, and I should make him a liar, if I did not believe, that I, in particular, should get safe there." After that declaration in Num. xiv. 31. Caleb and Joshua had a good warrant for such a belief. And so, after we know we are united to Christ by a true and lively Faith, we may be certain, that we shall get safe to Heaven at last. Joh. iii. 16. and v. 24. But not before: as there is no absolute promise of salvation to all mankind. Gal. iii. 29. Joh. iii. 18. Rom. ix. 15, 21. 2 Cor. i. 20. Compare Josh. i. 6. with Josh. vii. 5. and Heb. vi. 18. See also Num. xxxii. 15.

(1) D. *p.* 324, 357, 362. (2) D. *p.* 321. (3) D. *p.* 331. (4) D. *p.* 355, 356.

they were inſpired to declare ſhould be done.(1)—Nor in thoſe who came to Chriſt to be healed. For they had ſufficient evidence, to believe that Chriſt was able to do it. (2) Nor indeed is there one inſtance in the bible, of God's requiring a man to believe any thing whatſoever, without ſufficient previous evidence of its truth.

How incredible, therefore! how infinitely incredible is it! That God ſhould firſt put the Bible into our hands, as rational creatures, and charge us ſtrictly to adhere to it on pain of Eternal Damnation; (Rev. xxii. 18.) and then ſuſpend the eternal ſalvation of all mankind on their believing a thing to be true, no where contained in the bible; yea, of the truth of which they have no evidence, from "Scripture, ſenſe or reaſon; yea, which, as yet, is not true, but flatly contradictory to divine revelation: and ſentence men to eternal damnation, for not believing, what they would be glad to believe with all their hearts, had they ſufficient evidence of its truth! For there is no man but would be glad to know, that inſtead of the eternal torments of Hell, he ſhould have the eternal joys of Heaven.(3)

Quer. 5. Is not this the difference between faith and preſumption, as the words are commonly underſtood among

(1) *M. p.* 174. (2) *M. p.* 173.

(3) *Some, who are in this ſcheme, pretend to be great enemies to* carnal reaſon. *But they muſt renounce all reaſon, and the bible too, or one would think, they never can be full proof againſt conviction.—But they ſay, we muſt become fools for Chriſt. But do they really think, that Chriſtianity is, in fact, a fooliſh religion? Chriſtianity, which is the wiſdom of God: and which exhibits a moſt exact picture of all the divine perfections; a picture a moſt infinitely brighter than that which was given in the creation of the world. The work of our Redemption is the maſter-piece of all God's works, and Chriſtianity the brighteſt diſplay of all Gods perfections. Its wiſdom, glory and beauty are ſuch, as gain the attention of all the exalted genius's of the Heavenly world.*—1 *Pet. i.* 12. *What an infinite reproach to God and his Son is it then, for us mortals, to miſrepreſent this rational, divine and glorious religion, ſo as to make it, in fact, one of the moſt fooliſh, inconſiſtent and abſurd things imaginable! and then, to hide the ſhame of its nakedneſs, raiſe an outcry about carnal reaſon!—by this means, many poor ſinners have been early led to look upon*

Quer. 9. Is there one in all St. Paul's catalogue of believers in Heb. xi. whoſe faith conſiſted in believing without any evidence? (1)

Quer. 10. Were ever any awakened ſinners invited and urged to believe, by Chriſt, or his Apoſtle, and told at the ſame time, that the thing they were to believe, was not true as yet? Nor had they any evidence from Scripture, ſenſe or reaſon, it ever would be true; but however moſt ſolemnly aſſured by the promiſe and oath of God, if they would venture to believe without any evidence at all in the caſe, it ſhould be according to their faith.—Was this the thing the Apoſtles dwelt upon in all their preaching? Was this the thing they urged awakened ſinners to, with all their might? No: they never heard of it—neither came it into their hearts, to think that this was juſtifying faith.

Quer. 11. Is not the thing believed a lie? It was not true, before it was believed, as is granted. But believing an untruth, to be true, cannot make it true.—It cannot, according to reaſon—It cannot, according to Scripture—It cannot, according to experience. It was never known, ſince the world began, to produce this effect in any one inſtance; unleſs in this caſe. And we have no evidence from Scripture, ſenſe or reaſon, that it ever did in this.

Quer. 12. Is it not aſtoniſhing, and one of the moſt unaccountable things in the world, that a rational creature, with the Bible in his hands, ſhould ever be able to work up himſelf to believe, what he knows is not yet true; and what he knows, he has no evidence, that it ever will be true? No wonder, theſe men are ſo much troubled with doubts.—No wonder, they are afraid, they believe a lie—No wonder, they are obliged ſo much to ſtrive and ſtruggle againſt this unbelief; a kind of unbelief we no where read of in the Bible. A kind of conflict, no Saint ever had, that ſtands on Scripture record; as themſelves are obliged to own.(2) To ſtruggle daily to believe, without any evidence from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon! to have *this*, for their Chriſtian conflict! an unheard of conflict in the Apoſtolic age! Inſtead of ſtruggling againſt this kind of unbelief, Scripture, ſenſe and reaſon, all join to juſtify it. As nothing can be plainer than that we ought never to believe any thing, with more confidence, than in exact proportion

(1) D. *p.* 326. (2) M. *p.* 186.

to our evidence. To do otherwiſe, and that profeſſedly, is the moſt preſumptuous thing in the world. And to think, by being thus ſtrong in the Faith, we ſhall give glory to God, is the very firſt-born of deluſion, that even Satan himſelf ever begot in the heart of a fallen creature.(1)

(1) D. *p.* 355, 342, 343, 369. *Wendelinus and other ancient and modern writers, without the leaſt ſcruple, ſay, that, in the direct act of juſtifying Faith, I believe "my ſins are forgiven"—"God is reconciled to me," &c. &c. Others who ſeem to be in the ſame ſcheme, are more cautious in their expreſſions; and, to avoid the charge of "believing a lie," they word themſelves ſo ambiguouſly, that it is very difficult to know what they mean. For it has often been urged againſt this ſcheme, "If faith conſiſts in believing my ſins are forgiven, then they are forgiven before I believe, or elſe I believe a lie." —And it is wonderful, to ſee what methods have been taken by writers to avoid this difficulty.—However, when all is ſaid and done, there are in Nature but three ways to ſolve the difficulty; either* (1ſt) *to ſay, that our ſins are really forgiven before we believe.—Or,* (2d) *that although they are not, yet according to the tenor of the Covenant of Grace, they ſhall be, if we do but believe that they are.—Or,* (3d) *a belief that "my ſins are forgiven," muſt be left out of the definition of juſtifying faith.—The* firſt *was the ſolution of Antinomians in former ages. But it is ſo contrary to the expreſs declaration of Scripture (Joh. iii.* 18.*) that it will not do. The* third *gives up the whole ſcheme they contend for.— And ſo that will not do. The* ſecond, *which Mr. Marſhal has taken, bad as it is, is the only one that is left. Now if they all mean as he does, it is to be wiſhed, they would all ſpeak as plain, that we may preciſely know what they intend. This would ſoon bring the controverſy to an iſſue. But when I read their books, they ſeem to me ſometimes to ſolve the difficulty one way, and ſometimes another. Sometimes they repreſent as tho' "Pardon was mine abſolutely before Faith:" and ſometimes juſt the contrary. Sometimes they ſay, "We have the cleareſt evidence from Scripture for this belief:" and ſometimes they ſay, "We have no evidence from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon." Sometimes faith is raiſed up to "a perſuaſion that I in particular am pardoned, and ſhall certainly have eternal life." And then again it ſinks down into a mere "belief that I have a* common intereſt *in Goſpel-offers, ſuch as even reprobates have.'*

mankind, viz. that in the one, we believe becauſe we have ſufficient evidence, in the other, without any evidence at all? And is not this the conſtant character of all ſelf-deceived hypocrites, that they have "a real perſuaſion in their hearts" of the love of God to their ſouls, and a confident expectation of eternal life, without any real evidence?—Mat. vii. 21, 27. Luk. xiii. 25, 26, 27. and xviii. 9, 11.

Quer. 6. Is not this faith analogous to that which the Devil tempted our Saviour to exerciſe? when (Lu. iv. 8) *He brought him to Jeruſalem, and ſet him on a pinacle of the temple, and ſaid unto him, if thou be the Son of God, caſt thyſelf down from hence: For it is written,* (Pſal. xci. 11.) *He ſhall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee, and in their hands they ſhall hold thee up, leſt at any time thou daſh thy*

experimental religion, as a ſilly, fooliſh thing; although, in reality there is nothing in it, but what is as rational as the mathematicks.—Yea, if true religion were not perfectly rational, how could it pleaſe the infinitely wiſe God, who is the fountain and ſource of all reaſon? how could it be ſuited to raiſe, exalt, and ennoble rational creatures? or how could it deſerve to be called by the name of WISDOM, *by Solomon the wiſeſt of men?*

Object. "*But if the religion of the bible is ſo rational a thing, why are not Socinians, Pelagians, &c. pleaſed with it, who ſo greatly cry up reaſon?*

Anſw. *Merely becauſe it is ſo contrary to the darling corruptions of their hearts. Our bleſſed Saviour, who well underſtood human nature, and the nature of his own religion, affirms that this is the true cauſe, Joh. iii. 19, 20, 21. Had they but good hearts, they would be charmed with the wiſdom and glory of the Chriſtian religion, (Joh. viii. 47.) even as the inhabitants of Heaven be, Eph. iii. 10.—For after all their glorying, their own ſchemes, although a little better gloſſed over, yet in reality are as inconſiſtent and abſurd, as this that Theron pleads for.—In the apoſtolic age, divine truths were ſet in ſo clear a light, that the worſt of heretics were obliged, were neceſſitated to ſee, that they were inconſiſtent with themſelves; and ſo were forced to be ſelf-condemned; as is plainly implied in Tit. iii. 10, 11.* An heretick, after the firſt and ſecond admonition, reject: knowing that he that is ſuch, is ſubverted, and ſinneth, being CONDEMNED OF HIMSELF.—*And, no doubt, there is light enough, in the holy Script-*

foot againſt a ſtone.—Here was a promiſe, a precious promiſe out of God's own word. And *he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar.* The Devil urged our Saviour to appropriate, and take it home to himſelf in particular: And be verily "perſuaded in his heart" he ſhould be ſafe, although he caſt himſelf down.—However, on a critical examination of the text the Devil recited, there could be no evidence from that, of ſafety to Chriſt, if he had caſt himſelf down.—So therefore he muſt believe really without any evidence from "Scripture, ſenſe or reaſon;" and the Devil would have had him think, that according to his Faith, ſo ſhould it be to him.

Quer. 7. If the Devil attempted thus to delude our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, by miſapplying a precious promiſe, has he not courage?—Has he not power?—Has he not will?—to attempt to delude poor ſinners in a like manner; that thereby, Devil as he is, he may accompliſh their eternal ruin! And are we not forewarned from Heaven, of a falſe ſpirit, and charged not to believe every ſpirit? (1 Joh. iv. 1.) For that *Satan himſelf is transformed into an Angel of light.* (2 Cor. xi. 14)

Quer. 8. Did ever Chriſt or his apoſtles define Faith to be "a real perſuaſion that Chriſt died for me in particular, and that pardon, Grace and glory are mine?" They call it coming to Chriſt, receiving Chriſt, truſting in Chriſt, believing in Chriſt, believing on Chriſt, &c. but never call it, believing Chriſt is mine, and that my ſins are forgiven. It is true, the Saints in the Old Teſtament, and in the New, uſually ſpeak the language of aſſurance. And it is as true, they had ſufficient evidence of their good eſtate from their ſanctification. This was their evidence. They knew no other. All who pretended to belong to Chriſt without this, were branded for liars. (1. Joh. ii. 4.) But where do we ever read of their endeavouring to work up themſelves to an aſſurance, profeſſedly without any evidence?

tures, to produce the ſame ſtill, were it brought out, and held before the eyes of hereticks in this age, 2 *Tim. iii.* 16, 17.—*For the truth, and only the truth, is, or can be, univerſally conſiſtent: but all falſe ſchemes, follow them up, will appear to be inconſiſtent. Reaſon is wholly on the ſide of truth. And true religion is the only religion, that is perfectly rational and conſiſtent throughout.*

Paul. Thus, my dear Theron, you may see a little by these Queries, what I think of this kind of Faith.—But there is one most mysterious thing, I desire you to explain. —Not why you doubt—I do not wonder, you are often assaulted with doubts. Nor do I wonder, your friend Aspasio meets with the same conflict.(1) You are, both, men of too much sense and reason, not to feel yourselves a little shocked sometimes, in spite of all your principles.—But this I wonder at—I am surprised, how you ever came to believe. Pray, be so kind, as to give me a particular narrative, how faith was wrought in your heart.

Ther. I had lately made a visit at Philenor's, with my dear Aspasio; where, in the kindest and and most affectionate manner, I was urged to believe; assured, it was my duty and interest, and that God's promise and oath were engaged, that I should never be made ashamed; but it should be according to my faith. And all the precious promises, and gracious invitations in God's Holy Word, were set in order before me, in the most moving language, and I was argued out of all my objections.—Whereupon, after my return home, as I was walking in my garden, longing to have an interest in Christ, meditating on the promises, striving to take them home to myself, praying for the Spirit to witness with my Spirit, that I was a child of God, thus earnestly endeavouring to work up myself to this assurance, and thus waiting for the Holy Spirit;—as I was thinking on the dying love of Christ, those words

And this is all I am to believe. But in a few pages, Faith is raised up again as high as ever.—So, that one knows not where to find them—they seem to be pinched; and not to know how to get out. Therefore, they now run here, and then run there; but know not what to do, to avoid the glaring inconsistence of their scheme: and yet dread to give it up.

At present, for ought that appears, Mr. Marshal's solution is the best that the case can admit of—To be sure Mr. Hervey thinks it the best; as he esteems Mr. Marshal's mystery next to the Bible. And in his preface to Mr. Marshal's book, he says, "I shall rejoice in the prospect of having the Gospel-mystery of Sanctification, stand as a fourth volume to Theron and Aspasio." —And therefore I have a just warrant in the present controverse, to consider it as such. And to view all four volumes as containing one compleat scheme. (1) D. *p.* 353.

seemed to be spoken to me, *O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?* Wherefore dost thou doubt of my love to thee, for whom I have shed my blood?—I believed—I was full of love and joy—and for several days, all my thoughts were taken up about Heavenly things. I was weaned from the world. All old things seemed to be passed away, and all things to become new.

Paul. Let any Christless, graceless sinner, in your circumstances, believe, as you believed; and from principles which are natural to mankind, he would feel as you felt. And, as all your affections might flow from natural principles, they were no evidence of a supernatural change; as you may see proved at large, in a book I have as good an opinion of, as your Aspasio has of Mr. Marshal's mystery, &c.(1) Therefore, from these effects of your faith, you cannot argue, it was no delusion. Because, if it had been a delusion, it might have produced just the same.—You will suffer me therefore to enquire, *What warrant had you for this belief?*—For although *all the promises of God are* IN CHRIST, *Yea, and Amen,* (*2 Cor. i.* 20.) yet, to him that is *out of Christ, God is a consuming fire.* He is *condemned,* and the *wrath of God abideth on him.* (*Joh. iii.* 18, 36.)—Pray tell me, must not a sinner be in Christ, before he is entitled to the promises?

Ther. Yes.—For it is his union with, and relation to Christ, which lays the foundation for his interest in all the blessings purchased by him. First, we are *children,* and then *heirs.* (Rom. viii. 17.) First, we are ingrafted into Christ, *the true vine,* and then partake of the sap. (Joh. xv. 1, 7.) First, we are married to Christ, and then we are interested in all his riches and glory.(2)

Paul. A charming truth this, my Theron! And if you will attend to it, and be consistent with yourself, it must lead you back from the paths of error, to the high road which goes directly to the Heavenly Zion.—For, if we must be *in* Christ, before we are interested in his benefits; we must *know* that we are in Christ, before we can know our interests in his benefits. And, therefore, the first direct

(1) *Mr. Edwards on Religious Affections.*

(2) *See all this finely represented, as well as rightly stated,* D *p.* 213. 218. *Whether in a consistence with the rest of his scheme, we shall see hereafter.*

act of faith cannot consist in believing that his benefits are mine.—Arietta was first married to Philenor, before her debts devolved on him, and all his dignity was derived to her. Had she been carried away with a fond dream, with a full persuasion, that Philenor, and all his riches and honour were her's, before marriage, and to the neglect of matrimonial rites, she might have enjoyed the comfort of her dream; but must have really lived in widowhood, and died in debt, never the better for the "wealthy and illustrious Philenor." As this is your Aspasio's own simile, I hope you will the more diligently attend to it.(1) Justifying faith is that act, whereby we, being *dead to the law*, are *married to Christ*. (Rom. vii. 4. 2 Cor. xi. 2) And after marriage we may justly say, *My beloved is mine, and I am his*. (Cant. ii. 16.) but not *before*. (Eph. ii. 12. Joh. iii. 18.)

Ther. Yes. Let me tell you, that any Christless, graceless sinner in the world, has equal right, with the best Saint, to adopt this language, and say, *My beloved is mine, and I am his*. For this ties the very knot,—this constitutes the union.(2)

Paul. I think, for once, my Theron, your dear Aspasio himself seems to contradict you. You doubtless remember his words: "*My beloved is mine and I am his*—I dare not say, is the poesy of the mystic ring—but it is the undoubted effect of this divine union."(3)

Ther. Sure I am, my dear Aspasio taught me by the first direct act of faith, to go to God, and say, "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine:" Not because I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast, but previous to any reflection on inherent graces. I am not therefore, first, by reflection, to know, that I am married to Christ, before I call him my own.—Yea, rather, I must first know, that he is mine, before I can,—before I dare, come to him. This, I am sure, is my Aspasio's doctrine.(4)

Paul. But then Christ and all his spiritual blessings are your's, before you are in Christ; which is contrary to what Aspasio affirms (5) And contrary to the plain sense of the New Testament, as you but just now stated the matter yourself.—But to dwell upon this inconsistence no longer,—

(1) D. *p.* 215. (2) D *p.* 343, 344. (3) D. *p.* 218. (4) D. *p.* 312, 313, 358, 362. (5) D. *p.* 213, 218.

Pray, tell me what warrant you had from Scripture, to believe, that Christ and all his spiritual blessings were your's.

Ther. I was awakened to some sense of my danger of eternal ruin, I longed to believe that my sins were pardoned, and that Christ was mine; but I could not see my title clear. Aspasio told me, it was "perfectly clear." That I had as good a warrant for this belief, as a neighbouring clergyman had to take any book in my library, whom I had lately assured, "that he was as welcome to any book as though they were all his own." Yea, as good a warrant for this belief, as one of my servants had to believe me, when I gave him a farm for his own.(1)

Paul. Shocking!—I would not treat an awakened sinner so, for all the world.—But how did Aspasio make it out, that your title to pardon was thus clear, when Mr. Marshal, his favourite author owns, there is no evidence of the thing from Scripture, sense, or reason?

Ther. He referred me to Joh. vii. 37. *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.* But you thirst, said he; therefore to you, this promise is made.(2) And he was always encouraging me to this belief, by taking a kind notice of my earnest prayers, sorrows, tears, good desires, and sense of unworthiness.(3) And from this quarter my first encouragement arose to hope and believe, that Christ, pardon, grace and glory were mine.

Paul. But according to this, O my Theron, your own awakenings, earnest prayers, sorrows, tears, good desires, and sense of unworthiness, laid the first foundation of your faith. This was the secret language of your heart, "To such a one as I am, the promises belong: and so I may safely believe, they are all my own."—As much your own as your servant's little farm was his. And if your encouragement to believe, took its rise from your own inherent qualifications; if your own goodness, in whatever humble form, emboldened you to come to Christ; your hope of acceptance was really bottomed on your own righteousness: and so your's is a self-righteous faith. And if this be the case, a clear sight of the badness of your heart, and of the strictness of the law, would entirely kill your faith. (Rom. vii. 9)

(1) D. *p.* 269, 273. (2) D. *p.* 270. (3) D *p.* 157, 158, 207, 208, 220, 265, 266, 289, 290, 293, 294.

If your good desires, like so much money in hand, encouraged you to come to Christ; your courage would fail you, did you know, that the best desires you ever had, according to Law and strict Justice, merit eternal damnation. Did you thus feel yourself without money, you would not dare to come.

Ther. But is it not true? Are not the promises made to those that *thirst*? Joh. vii. 37. That *labour and are heavy laden?* Mat. xi. 28, &c.

Paul. These are not promises, my Theron, which convey a title to pardon and salvation to Sinners out of Christ, on condition of their good desires. They are rather invitations to a union with Christ by a true and living faith. They give a Sinner a good warrant to come to Christ: to come *without money and without price* (Isai. lv. 1.) and those who thus come, shall find rest to their souls. But they give no grounds to one out of Christ, encouraged by his own righteousness to believe that pardon, grace, and glory, are his.

Ther. I did not mean that my own good desires, prayers, &c. gave me a right to believe. I had a good right before. As an "abandoned Sinner," (1) I had an actual right to Christ and all his benefits, by an "Actual gift from the Almighty Majesty," just as my servant had to his little farm, by my donation. (2)

Paul. After you had given the little farm to your servant, it was his. It was his, before he believed it his.—Your donation made it his, and not his belief. It was his before he believed it, and whether he believed it, or not. He had sufficient evidence to believe it his, previous to his belief. Now if Christ and all his benefits are your's in this sense, then you was justified, adopted, sanctified, and entitled to eternal glory, while secure in sin; months, nay, years, before any of your conversation with Aspasio.—Yea, your title is as old as the Gospel. Which you consider as your deed of gift, or as Christ's last Will and Testament, in which all these legacies were bequeathed to you. Your title, your absolute title commenced at the death of the Testator.—"When your old acquaintance Charicles, left you a handsome legacy, what did you do to establish your title, and make it your own?"

(1) *D. p.* 307, 308. (2) *D. p.* 272, 273.

Ther. "My title was pre-eſtabliſhed, by my friend's donation. I had nothing to do, but to claim, to accept, and to poſſeſs." And I did the very ſame in the preſent caſe. (1) And ever ſince this firſt act of Faith, "On this unalterable ground, I aſſert and maintain my title. Pardon is mine, Grace is mine, Chriſt, and all his Spiritual bleſſings are mine; becauſe all theſe precious privileges are conſigned over to me in the everlaſting Goſpel." (2) This is the proper notion of believing.—"When I ſent a meſſage to my tenant, aſſuring him, I had cancelled the bond, and forgiven his debt; he believed the meſſage to be true.—So I give credit to the gracious declarations of my God.—So I believe." (3)

(1) *D. p.* 255. (2) *D. p.* 362.

(3) *D. p.* 297, 298.---*And with Theron agrees Mr. Boſton, who in his book on the two Covenants, maintains, that Chriſt in his laſt Will and Teſtament, did actually bequeath regenerating Grace, Juſtification, Adoption, Sanctification, and Eternal Life, freely, abſolutely and unconditionally, to every Sinner of Adam's race. And adds, that Chriſt himſelf is alſo executor of this will, and by his office as ſuch obliged to make out all theſe legacies to all the legatees, that are pleaſed to put in their claim, and make their demands. And faith, according to him, conſiſts in believing all is mine, and in claiming and taking poſſeſſion of all as my own.* (*See p.* 114, 199, 214.) *And ariſes from no higher principle than ſelf-preſervation.* (*P.* 262, 263.)

Saint Paul uſed to ſay, If children, then heirs. (*Rom. viii.* 17. *Gal. iii.* 29.) *But according to this new goſpel, it is, if Sinners, then heirs. And this will be reckoned good news for unregenerate Sinners. They are no longer at God's ſovereign mercy, according to Rom. ix.* 15. *Nor need they come as poor beggars, according to Luke xviii.* 13. *Their title to all things "Is perfectly clear," even while unregenerate and out of Chriſt. And they may come as heirs, who have a legal right to make demands; and put in their claim, and ſay "Pardon is mine, I claim it, I demand it as my own." And the executor is obliged to anſwer their demands, and give out their legacies. This ſcheme, were it true, would ſuit corrupt nature, even better than the Arminian. As we all had rather have eſtates left to us by wills, than be at pains to work for them: So it is eaſier to claim and demand Heaven, than*

Paul. To whom are Chriſt, pardon, grace and glory, conſigned over and conveyed in the Goſpel-grant? What are their names? Or what are their characters? Who are the men ſo highly favoured? In wills and in deeds of gift, you know, the parties, to whom any thing is bequeathed, or given, are mentioned by name. Is it ſo in the Goſpel-grant? Are all theſe bleſſings entailed on believers, or on ſinners, as ſuch?

Ther. On Sinners, on all Sinners of Adam's race; and that conſidered merely as Sinners: as my dear Aſpaſio proved at large. (1) And that which is thus freely given to every Sinner, any Sinner in particular has a good warrant to look upon as his own. Thus, then, ſtands my warrant to believe. All theſe bleſſings are given to Sinners, as ſuch:—But I am a Sinner: Therefore, all theſe bleſſings are given to me. (2)

Paul. That is, "all Sinners are juſtified, adopted, ſanctified, and entitled to eternal life: But I am a Sinner:

to do as the Phariſee did in Luk. xviii. 12. *Thoſe texts in Heb. viii.* 10, 11, 12, *and ix.* 15, 16, 17, *on which they pretend to found their ſcheme, are plainly nothing to the purpoſe. For God does not ſay, "This is the Covenant I will make with all the ſinful race of Adam; I will write my Law in their hearts, &c."* But God ſays, "This is the Covenant I will make with the Houſe of Iſrael." But he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly. *Rom. ii.* 28 29. The children of the promiſe are counted for the ſeed. *Rom. ix.* 8. If ye be Chriſt's, then are ye Abraham's ſeed, and heirs according to the Promiſe. *Gal. iii.* 29. But if out of Chriſt, we are condemned, and the wrath of God abideth on us. *Joh. iii.* 18. 36. *And we can claim nothing. No, not another moment of time, nor liberty to breathe another breath in God's world. We have a title to not one minute's forbearance; But God may ſend us to Hell this inſtant. Rom. iii.* 19. *Gal. iii.* 10.---*Object. But it is ſaid to the elder brother,* All that I have is thine. *Luk. xv.* 31.—*Anſ. Yes. And with deſign to deſcribe the temper of a Phariſee's heart. The younger ſon repreſented Publicans and Sinners, and the elder the Phariſees. (See ver.* 1, 2.) *The poor Publican thought he had no claim to make, but lay at mercy. Luk. xviii.* 13. *The Phariſees ſaid in their hearts, all is our own.*

(1) *D. p.* 298, 319. (2) *D. p.* 305.

Therefore I am juſtified, adopted, ſanctified, and entitled to eternal life." But my dear Theron, if you know what you ſay, if you really mean as you ſay, and if you affirm theſe ſentiments are "Strictly conformable to the unerring Oracles" of God, then, all Adam's race are, according to you, actually juſtified, adopted, ſanctified, and entitled to eternal glory. And thus your devout Aſpaſio carries matters farther than even the famous Doctor John Taylor, whoſe key to the Apoſtolic writings is not half ſo heterodox as this; how much ſoever condemned by all the friends of vital piety. For he only ſuppoſes, that all within the viſible church, are juſtified, adopted, &c. and not all Adam's race.

Beſides, how is all this conſiſtent with the words you juſt now cited out of Mr. Marſhal's Myſtery, a book your Aſpaſio values next to the Bible? "We have no abſolute promiſe or declaration in Scripture, that God certainly will or doth give Chriſt and his ſalvation to any one of us in particular; neither do we know it to be true already, by ſcripture, ſenſe or reaſon, before we aſſure ourſelves abſolutely of it: Yea, we are without Chriſt's ſalvation at preſent, in a ſtate of ſin and miſery, under the curſe and wrath of God. This is a ſtrange kind of aſſurance.—— Therefore, no wonder if it be found weak and imperfect, and difficult to be obtained, and aſſaulted with many doubtings. We are conſtrained to believe other things on the clear evidence we have, that they are true, whether we believe them or no; ſo that we cannot deny our aſſent, without rebelling againſt the light of our ſenſes, reaſon, or conſcience. But here our aſſurance is not impreſſed on our thoughts by any evidence of the thing; but we muſt work it out in ourſelves, by the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of GOD."

Yea, how is all this conſiſtent with your own experience and with the experience of your Aſpaſio? For if all ſpiritual bleſſings are by a deed of gift abſolutely made over to all Sinners of Adam's race, and that conſidered merely as ſuch, plainly in the Goſpel, ſo that their "Title is perfectly clear;" then as true as the Goſpel is true, all are abſolutely entitled to pardon, grace and glory, before they believe, and whether they believe or not. And I never hear of you, or your friend doubting the truth of the Goſpel itſelf. How then can you have any doubts

about your title to Heaven? Why was you so backward to believe your title? Or why was your friend so ready to "Feel for you, and sympathize with you?" How could it be so difficult to believe, while at the same time he "Beheld his title perfectly clear?" (1) Did ever any mortal act thus as to temporal things? Was ever a son of Adam put to great difficulty to believe an inheritance to be his own, when he saw with his own eyes, "his title was perfectly clear," and had the deed of gift well executed in his own hands? My dear Theron, I am even tempted to doubt, whether you, yourselves believe your own scheme. Yea, it seems plain, you are all the while afraid you are deluded. And no wonder, says Mr. Marshal, for you have no evidence from Scripture, sense or reason.—Pray, did your Aspasio ever attempt to prove his scheme out of the Bible?

Ther. Yes. And once speaking of his differing from the orthodox, I remember he said, "I dare not purchase their approbation, I dare not attempt a coalition of sentiments. Pray my dear friend, said he to me, what is the standard of orthodoxy? Is it the word of Revelation? This speaks once, yea twice, nay, some hundreds of times in our favour." (2) And first and last, I am apt to think, he mentioned above an hundred texts of Scripture, to prove his point.

Paul. Out of this great number, pray select some of the most plain and full to the purpose; and on which he seemed to lay the greatest stress; and let us carefully examine them.

Ther. There are many texts which teach us, that God has given his son to a lost world. Isai. ix. 6. *To us a son is given.* (3) Joh. iii. 16. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son.* (4) Other texts declare as follows. Isai. liii. 6. *God laid on him the iniquity of us all.* (5) 1 Tim. i. 15. *He came into the world to save Sinners.* 1 Pet. iii. 18. *Died for the unjust.* (6) 1 Cor. xv. i. *Christ died for our sins.* (7) 1 Joh. v. 9. *This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life.* (8) Act. xiii. 38 *To you is preached the remission of sins.* Act. ii. 39. *The*

(1) *D. p.* 269, 353, (2) *D. p.* 335. (3) *D. p.* 308. (4) *D. p.* 305. (5) *D. p.* 304. (6) *D. p.* 299. (7) *D. p.* 319. (8) *D. p.* 319.

promiſe is to you, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God ſhall call. (1) In which Scriptures, you ſee, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are given and made over to Sinners, as ſuch, freely and abſolutely: So as that every one has a good warrant to believe they are his own. And if we would give the ſame credit to God as my Tenant did to me, we need not, we could not doubt, but that they are all our own. (2)

"When Jonah, in purſuance of the Divine command, cried and ſaid, *Yet forty days and Nineveh ſhall be overthrown,*" without mentioning any by name, "*All, from the leaſt even unto the greateſt, believed;*" applied the threatning to themſelves. When Moſes ſpeaking of the Manna, ſaid, "*This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat,*" without mentioning any by name; the whole congregation ſuppoſed, they had all and every one a good right to take and eat. So when our Saviour ſays, "*My Father giveth you the true bread from Heaven.*" (Joh. vi. 32.) Alluding to the Manna, we may all and every one believe it is our own. (3)

Paul. Your Aſpaſio always ſuppoſes, that all the bleſſings of the Goſpel are granted abſolutely and without any condition; ſo that we have nothing to do, but to believe they are all our own. Whereas, there is always a condition expreſſed or implied. For according to the conſtant tenor of the Goſpel, we muſt firſt be in Chriſt, by a true and living faith, before the bleſſings of the Goſpel are our's. (4)—To deſcend to particulars.—

(1) *D. p.* 303. (2) *D. p.* 298. (3) *D. p.* 305, 307.

(4) *All writers on this ſcheme maintain, that pardon, grace and glory, are unconditionally and abſolutely given, granted and made over to all Sinners of Adam's race. And this abſolute Grant gives each of us a good warrant to believe "pardon, grace and glory are mine."—Reader ſtop, and think one minute—If the grant is not abſolute, it does not make pardon mine, nor give me a right to believe it mine—If it is abſolute, it makes pardon mine before I believe it; and ſo I am juſtified before Faith.—"No, ſay they, it is not mine before I believe it mine. But if I believe it mine, it is mine." But one would think, if it is not mine before I believe, I believe a lie. My ſins are pardoned before I believe, or they are not. If they are pardoned before Faith, then I am*

It is true, God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son. For what? To die for us. To what end? *That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* He that is united to Christ by Faith, therefore, shall be saved. But those who are out of Christ have no interest in his salvation; but are under a present condemnation.—Condemned already. And the wrath of God abideth on them. "Pardon is mine."—No—Condemned already. "God is reconciled to me." No.—*The wrath of God abideth on me.* Joh. iii. 16, 18, 36.

It is true, This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life. But this life is in his Son. Therefore, he that is by Faith united to Christ, hath eternal life. For he that hath the Son, hath life. But those who are out of Christ, have no interest in this eternal life. *For he that hath not the Son, hath not life.* 1 Joh. v. 11, 12.

It is true, That through this man, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. But who hath an interest in this forgiveness? Who is that blessed man that is justified? Those who are out of Christ? No. But, *By him all that believe, are justified,* Act. xiii. 38, 39.

Again, it is true, The promise is to you. And what then? Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the Remission of sins. Were their sins already forgiven? No. Repent and be converted that your sins may; not because they are, but that they may *be blotted out.* Act. ii. 38, 39, and iii. 19.—

not justified by Faith, but before Faith. If they are not, then I believe a lie.—"*No, says Mr. Marshal, according to thy Faith, it shall be unto thee.*" *i. e. If* "*without any evidence from Scripture, sense or reason,*" *I believe that to be true, which is not true, it shall become true. This is the heart and soul of their scheme.—Keep this in constant view, suffer no ambiguous words to drown your mind; and it is easy to see, that there is not one text in the Bible to their purpose. Yea, they give us an exact definition of delusion, which properly consists in this, viz.* "*I believe something to be true, which is not true, till in my imagination it seems true; and so I take the comfort of it, as though it were true.*" *Whereas, in saving Faith there is no truth believed, but what is plainly revealed in the Gospel; as will appear presently.*

But what was their ſtate while impenitent? *Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* Luk. xiii. 3, 5.

Laſtly, it is true, The whole congregation of Iſrael were welcome to take the manna and eat. And 'tis true, that all mankind are welcome to receive Chriſt, the true bread, and eat, and live forever. For this eating is the ſame as uniting to Chriſt, by a true and living Faith.—*He that eateth my fleſh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.* Therefore, *He that eateth me, even he ſhall live by me.* But what is the ſtate of Sinners out of Chriſt? Have they eternal life? No. *Except ye eat the fleſh of the ſon of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* Joh. vi. 32, 57.

Thus the very texts you build your ſcheme upon, are all againſt you. What warrant, therefore, has a Sinner out of Chriſt, to ſay, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are mine?" For theſe precious privileges are not conſigned over to him in the everlaſting Goſpel, while in ſuch a ſtate. Nor ſhall he ever have an intereſt in them, unleſs he is firſt united to Chriſt, by a true and living Faith.

Ther. If the curſe of the Law, which is delivered in general terms, not mentioning Theron by name, belongs to Theron; why do not the promiſes of the Goſpel, delivered alſo in general terms, not mentioning Theron by name, belong to Theron too? (1) The Ninevites, from the leaſt to the greateſt, made particular application to themſelves.

Paul. The Law curſes none but thoſe who have already broken it; and the Goſpel pardons none but thoſe who have already complied with it. Theron has already broken the Law, and fallen under the curſe: Let Theron comply with the Goſpel, and he ſhall be entitled to the bleſſing. The curſe of the Law was not your's, 'till you broke it: Nor are the bleſſings of the Goſpel your's 'till you comply with it. For it is written, *He that believeth not, is condemned already.* A truth, which all unbelievers, from the leaſt even unto the greateſt, ſhould after the example of the Ninevites, make particular application of, to themſelves. I muſt, therefore, ſtill repeat it, what warrant from the word of God have you for your Faith.?

(1) *D. p.* 306.

Ther. Moſes led the whole Congregation of Iſrael, at the ſide of the Red-Sea, tho' the greateſt part of them were in a graceleſs ſtate, to call God their God. (Exod. xv. 2.) And to confirm them in this belief, God himſelf, from Mount Sinai, and generally through all the Law of Moſes, ſays, ſpeaking to the whole Congregation, *I am the Lord, thy God.* (Exod. xx. 2.) And in the days of Jeremiah, when there was ſcarce a good man to be found among them (Jer. v. 1.) and the generality were devoted to Idolatry, and obſtinately impenitent; yet, to the whole nation God ſays, *Turn, O backſliding Children, for I am married unto you.* (Jer. iii. 14.) And he teaches them to ſay, *We come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* (ver. 22) And invites them to look upon him as their Father. (verſe 4.) And as the Jews were all circumciſed at eight days old, and ſo brought into covenant with God, they had all thereby a good warrant to look upon God as their God, and to believe that he was their father, and would ſave them. The ſame may be ſaid of all baptized perſons in the Chriſtian world. (1)

Paul. If this proves any thing to your purpoſe, it proves that all the Chriſtleſs Sinners in Chriſtendom, how wicked ſoever, although even buried up in Popiſh idolatry, are, if they are baptized, all of them married to Chriſt, children of God, and heirs of Heaven. Into what ſtrange abſurdities and inconſiſtences do you run, my dear Theron!

As to circumciſion, the Jews in our Saviour's day ſeemed to think, that it entitled them to ſalvation. But our Saviour taught them, that notwithſtanding their circumciſion, they were, while unregenerate, (John iii. 3.) and antecedent to Faith and union with Chriſt, under condemnation and wrath. (ver. 18, 36.) And Saint Paul affirms, that the Jew as well as Gentile, notwithſtanding their circumciſion, ſtood guilty before God, without any title to life, antecedent to their regeneration and union with Chriſt by a true and living Faith. (Rom. ii. 28, 29, and iii. 1, 2, 9, 19, 28. Gal. iii. 10, 29.) And the ſame may be ſaid of thoſe who are baptized.

As to the texts of Scripture you refer to, their true ſenſe may be eaſily ſeen, if we conſider God's covenant with Abraham; in which he promiſed to be *A God to him and*

(1) *M. p.* 28, 182, 185. *D. p.* 312, 343.

to his ſeed. (Gen. xvii.) And God's covenant at Mount Sinai, in which he took the whole nation to be his peculiar people. (Exod. xix.) From which he calls himſelf *The Lord their God.*: And on account of which, he is called their Huſband, and they are ſaid to be married to him, and are charged with whoredom and adultery for going after other Gods; and are invited to return to him, as a wife to her huſband, and to call him their God and Father. Not that they had any title to pardon, grace and glory, while *uncircumciſed in heart.* (Jer. xxxi. 31, 32. Rom. ii. 28, 29.) With theſe obſervations in mind, it will be eaſy to underſtand the language uſed commonly in the Prophets, particularly in Hoſ. ii. throughout.

Ther. But it is the proper buſineſs of Faith, "To appropriate and take home to ourſelves the grace of God, which lies in the common indefinite grant of the Goſpel." Therefore, as pardon, grace and glory, are, all of them, given and granted to Sinners as ſuch; by Faith, I, a Sinner take home theſe bleſſings to myſelf, i. e. I believe they are mine. (1)

Paul. Yes. But my Theron, there is no ſuch abſolute, unconditional grant contained in the Bible. Nor do the Scriptures teach that Faith is of ſuch a nature.

Ther. Yes. But Saint Paul declares that *Faith is the evidence of things not ſeen* (Heb. xi. 1.) and exhibits a clear demonſtration of our right to enjoy them. (2)

Paul. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Rom. x. 17.) If therefore, the word of God gives a ſinner, while out of Chriſt, no abſolute unconditional right to the bleſſings of the Goſpel, Faith can ſee none. Faith cannot ſee what is not, neither can it believe without evidence. All the believers in Saint Paul's catalogue, had good evidence for what they believed. But you have no evidence from "Scripture, ſenſe or reaſon" for what you believe; as you, yourſelf are obliged to own.

Ther. But all thoſe figurative deſcriptions of Faith, which occur in holy writ, imply this appropriating belief. (3)

Paul. No, my dear Theron, not one of them. Is Chriſt viewed in the beginning of Saint John's Goſpel, as the Creator of all things, who, under the Moſaic diſpenſation, ſuſtained the glorious character of God and King

(1) *D. p.* 305, 314, 317. (2) *D. p.* 318. (3) *D. p* 320.

of Israel, now come to tabernacle among men, come to his own people, as the promised Messiah? He is to be acknowledged, received, and honoured according to his character. But he came to his own, and his own received him not: Did not own him for the Messiah, nor believe in, nor honour him as such. Although he was indeed the very God and King of Israel, who of old dwelt in their Tabernacle and Temple in the form of God, now come to tabernacle in flesh, in the form of a servant: Yet they rejected him, called him a deceiver, and crucified him for claiming to be the Son of God and King of the Jews.—But to as many as received him as the promised Messiah, with all their hearts, gave he power to become the son of God, even to as many as believed in his name. Not, that believed their sins were pardoned without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, but that believed in his name—Trusted in his mediation, merits and atonement, that through his name they might obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal life. (joh. i. 1, 12.) Is Christ compared to the brazen serpent? We are not to believe that we are healed; but to look to him for healing.—Is he compared to a bridegroom? We are not to believe he is our husband;—but as chaste virgins to be espoused to him, that by this spiritual marriage he may become our husband.—Is he compared to the city of refuge? We are not to believe ourselves safe; but to fly to him for safety.—Is he compared to bread and water? We are not to believe our hunger and thirst are assuaged; but to eat the living bread, and drink the living water, that they may be so.—In a word, is he the great High-priest, who has entered into Heaven with the blood of atonement in his hand, by and through whom we may come to God for all things, in full assurance of acceptance in his name? We are not to believe that pardon, grace, and glory are our's; but to draw nigh to God through him, that of God's infinite grace through him, we may be pardoned, sanctified and saved.

Ther. But David, Job, Habakkuk, Paul, the Council at Jerusalem, yea, all the Saints in Scripture, use this appropriating language. They all speak the language of assurance. (1)

Paul. And good reason why, for they all knew, they

(1) *D. p.* 325, 327.

were ſincere godly men, from a conſciouſneſs to their own inherent graces. But there is not a Saint to be found in the Bible, that believes pardon, grace and glory to be his own, without any evidence from "Scripture, ſenſe or reaſon." Forgive me, Sir, if I ſhould ſay, this kind of Faith the Bible is as great a ſtranger to, as to the doctrine of purgatory.

Ther. "I know no other juſtifying Faith, but that which relates to the Goſpel, and believes its report. But here, I find, lies the core and root of our controverſy. This is the preciſe point to be ſettled; what it is to believe." (1)

Paul No, no, my dear Theron, "The core and root of the controverſy" lies not here. You ought to believe the report of the Goſpel," and all the truths of the Goſpel, with a full aſſurance; yea, with all the full aſſurance of Faith. But Proteſtant writers, for above theſe hundred years, have been teſtifying againſt your kind of Faith, becauſe the thing believed is not contained in the Goſpel.—The Goſpel makes no ſuch report. But the thing believed is a lie.—Here my friend, here lies "The core and root of the controverſy," as Mr. Marſhal well knew. (2) And it is a little ſtrange, that your Aſpaſio ſhould not know it too. However, pray tell me what you mean, by believing the report of the Goſpel.

Ther. "The Lord declares by his prophet, *I, even I am he, that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions.* To believe, is to ſubſcribe this declaration: To ſubſcribe it with our hand, and profeſs with our heart, *Lord, it is done, as thou haſt ſaid.*" My tranſgreſſions are blotted out. (3)

Paul. But my dear Theron, this declaration was made above two thouſand years ago. Do you date your juſtification ſo far back? Or do you think the words have had any new meaning put to them by God, of late; which two thouſand years ago they did not mean?

Ther. No. I appropriate and take home the bleſſing to myſelf: And ſo believe the report of the Goſpel.

Paul. This is not to believe what the Goſpel reports; but rather to make a new Goſpel. This is not to believe the truths already revealed; but to make a new Revelation. That the tranſgreſſions of Theron, a Chriſtleſs Sinner, are blotted out, is not taught in this text, nor in any text

(1) *D. p.* 328. (2) *M. p.* 166. (3) *D. p.* 329.

in all the sacred volume, as you yourself very well know. And if this be what you mean by an appropriating Faith, then Mr. Marshall's account of it is very just: it is a believing without any evidence, from "Scripture, sense or reason.(1)"

(1) *The whole party maintain, with Wendelinus, that in the first direct act of Faith, I believe "my sins are forgiven."—And the whole party assert, that before I believed it, "my sins were not forgiven." Therefore, the whole party must concede with Mr. Marshall, that the thing I believe, "was not true before I believed it." And consequently, that I do believe it "without any evidence from Scripture, sense or reason." For if it was not true, there could be no evidence of its truth. And yet the whole party pretend to ground their belief upon Scripture. So that this is the strangest scheme of religion in this respect, that ever was advanced in the Christian world.—The thing I believe as true, is not true before I believe it; and yet I believe it because it is true! It is not contained in Scripture; yet I believe it, because it is contained in Scripture! I know it is no part of the Gospel-revelation; yet I venture my soul upon it for eternity, as the very Gospel of Christ! Now, how do these men feel satisfied in themselves, in believing such inconsistencies? Why thus—"The Gospel makes an absolute unconditional grant of pardon and salvation to all the sinful race of Adam: But I am a Sinner of Adam's race; therefore, pardon and salvation are mine."—But then, one would think they were mine before I believed it, and whether I believed it or no. If the grant doth not make them mine, why do I believe they are mine? If the grant does make them mine, then they are mine before I believe: And so we are not justified by Faith, but* BEFORE *Faith, contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture. No, say some, "I have by grant a common but not a saving interest." But the thing granted is "salvation: and the grant is absolute:—Therefore, "I shall be saved." I ought to believe, that "I shall be saved,:" Yea, they say, I make God a liar, if I do not; but surely, if I believe I shall be saved, I believe I have a saving interest. And so, I believe I have by the grant, what I know is not contained in the grant: and so believe, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense or reason." And yet I ground my belief wholly upon Scripture.—They say, "The grant makes it mine, so as to give me a right to believe it mine, and claim it, and possess it as mine." But then, I ought to believe it mine, precisely in the same* SENSE.

Ther. But Christ has expresly promised, that *according to my Faith, so shall it be to me.* Matth. ix. 29.(1)

Paul. Believe ye, that I am able to do this? said Christ to the two blind men, who cried, *Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.*—They said unto him, *Yea, Lord.* To be sure, they had sufficient evidence to believe it, from the miracles he had already wrought. On which our Saviour touched their eyes: saying, *According to your Faith, be it unto you.*

in which the grant makes it mine. Thus, if the grant makes it mine as being a child of Adam; then I ought to believe it mine, as knowing I am a child of Adam.—If the grant makes it mine, only as being in Christ; then I ought to believe it mine, only as knowing that I am in Christ.—If the grant only makes a common interest mine; then I ought to believe a common interest only to be mine.—If the grant makes a saving interest mine; then I ought to believe a saving interest mine. And what is mine by grant, if the grant is absolute, is mine before I believe it, and whether I believe it, or not. No, say they, "It is not mine before I believe; and yet I must believe it mine. I have no evidence from Scripture; and yet my Faith is wholly founded on Scripture. The Scripture says no such thing any where; and yet the Scripture plainly says this thing in hundreds of places. My sins are not forgiven; and yet I make God a liar, *if I do not believe they are forgiven. It is not true, as yet, nor do I know it ever will be true; but I must believe it, without any evidence from Scripture, sense or reason: And in so doing, I believe the report of the Gospel; although the Gospel never made such a report." If I can believe all these contradictions with all my heart, I am a true believer, and shall be saved. If not, I am blind, carnal, legal; and finally must suffer the pains of eternal damnation for my unbelief.—The Infidels of the age (and no wonder infidelity prevails) stand by; hear the dispute; shake their sides:—The Devil says, "So I would have it." The Daughter of Zion puts on sackcloth, looks up to Heaven, and cries, "Hast thou forsaken the Earth, O Lord! When wilt thou return and scatter these clouds; and cause light to break out, spread and prevail; and darkness and error to flee away! O when shall that blessed day come, that the* knowledge of the Lord shall fill the Earth, as the waters cover the Sea! *When shall* Satan be bound, that he may deceive the nations no more!"

(1) *M. p.* 247.

And what, my Theron, is this to your purpose? who have no evidence from Scripture, sense or reason, for what you believe. Our Saviour never told Sinners, that if they would believe pardon, grace and glory were theirs, it should be unto them according to their Faith: but frequently taught, that many who believed so, would finally be disappointed. Matth. vii. 21, 27.—Luke xiii. 24, 30.

Ther. Yes, our Saviour expressly said, *What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* Mark xi. 24.(1)

Paul. Our Saviour had cursed the barren fig-tree, and it was dried up from the roots. At which his disciples wondering, our Saviour told them, that whenever they were called to perform any miraculous works, and were looking up to God to do them, they must firmly believe he would do the thing, how great soever it was, even although as difficult as to *remove a mountain and cast it into the sea.* And it is plain, they had sufficient evidence, for such a belief: as they knew that God Almighty stood engaged to effect the miraculous works, which he had commissioned them to declare, should be done. Mark, xi. 20, 24.

Ther. But the Apostle James directs all Christians, even when praying for divine wisdom and grace, to *ask in Faith, nothing wavering.* Jam. i. 6. (2)

Paul. To ask in Faith—In the Faith of what? Of truths revealed in the Gospel, concerning the way of our access to God in the name of Christ, our great high Priest, and God's readiness to hear and answer all requests, agreeable to his Will, put up unto him in his Name. These truths ought to be, these truths must be firmly believed. But in order to our going to God in full assurance of Faith, there is no need, I hope, that we believe as true, things, the truth of which we have no evidence of, "from Scripture, sense, or reason." Read the second chapter of this epistle, and you may see the Apostle James was no friend to a presumptuous Faith, a Faith built on no evidence.

Ther. But I am invited in the most affectionate manner, to believe that Christ loves me and will save me, in 2 Cor. v. 20. "*As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* Hark! 'tis the voice

(1) M. *p.* 174. (2) D. *p.* 342.

of infinitely condescending love, speaking by his ambassador—Sinners accept my great salvation. Enjoy what I have purchased for you by my dying agonies. Do not suspect my kindness, or refuse my gifts. This will wound me deeper than the spear which pierced my side.—O the grace of our exalted King!—After all this, can I entertain the least doubt, whether I have a permission to believe firmly?(1) Did the judge ever beseech a condemned criminal to accept of pardon? Does the creditor beseech a ruined debtor, to receive an acquittance in full? Yet our Almighty Lord, and our Eternal judge, not only vouchsafes to offer these blessings, but invites us—intreats us—with the most tender and repeated importunity solicits us, not to reject them." (2)

Paul. In these words you are invited to be reconciled to God; and not to believe that God is reconciled to you.—You may be even ravished, to think of the one, but still be so inattentive to the other, as not to take any notice of it, although before you, in one of the most remarkable texts in the Bible.

Ther. But we are strictly commanded by God himself, to believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ (1 Joh. iii. 23.) and have God's promise and oath to assure us, we shall certainly be saved, if we do. (3)

Paul. True. Yet Christ has never taught us, that Faith consists in believing, that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." But has given us the strongest assurance, that many who are very confident of their title to Heaven, shall finally go to Hell.—Matth. vii. 22.

Ther. Yes, Sir. Suffer me in my turn, to put on the airs of assurance, and to affirm, that this is that very notion of Faith, which was taught, and which was approved as genuine, by our blessed Saviour.—For, "our Lord bears this testimony concerning Thomas; *Thomas thou hast believed.* Now then, I think, we have got an infallible touchstone. Let us examine what that is, which Jesus Christ calls believing. Whatever it be, it is the determination of Truth itself; and should pass for a verdict, from which there lies no appeal. And this, this is the confession of Thomas, *my*

(1) D. *p.* 350. (2) D. *Edit. I. vol.* 1. *p.* 132.
(3) D. *p.* 350, 353.

LORD, and *my* GOD! This, this expreſſes what our divine Maſter calls *believing*. When, therefore, we confeſs with our lips, and are perſuaded in our hearts, that Jeſus is our Lord, who bought us with his blood; that Jeſus is our God, who will exert all his adorable perfections for our good; then we truly believe. We believe in our Saviour's ſenſe of the Word; we have that Faith, which he allows to be genuine." (1)

Paul. Pray, my dear Theron, as your all lies at ſtake, your all for eternity, do take the bible, and read the whole paragraph, with the heart of an honeſt man.

Ther. I will.—Heaven forbid I ſhould act a diſhoneſt part in an affair of ſuch infinite importance! Joh. xx. 24. *But Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jeſus came, ver.* 25, *The other diſciples therefore ſaid unto him, "We have ſeen the Lord." But he ſaid unto them, "Except I ſhall ſee in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thruſt my hand into his ſide, I will not believe," ver.* 26. *And after eight days, again his diſciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jeſus, the doors being ſhut, and ſtood in the midſt, and ſaid, "Peace be unto you," ver.* 27. *Then ſaid he to Thomas, "reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thruſt it into my ſide: and be not fait leſs, but believing," ver.* 28. *And Thomas anſwered, and ſaid unto him "My Lord, and my God," ver.* 29. *Jeſus ſaid unto him, "Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen me, thou haſt believed: bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.*

Paul. No comment is needed. It is impoſſible the ſenſe of the words can be made plainer. The thing that Thomas was ſo faithleſs about, was not his particular intereſt in Chriſt; nor was this the thing he believed, that Chriſt died for him in particular. But the reſurrection of Chriſt was the thing, the only thing, in queſtion with him. Overjoyed to ſee him, feel him, hear him, know him, in the language of fervent love, ready to claſp him in his arms, he cries out, *my Lord, and my God!* Thus then ſtands the argument.—Becauſe Thomas believed that Chriſt was riſen from the dead, on the cleareſt evidence; therefore juſtifying Faith conſiſts in believing, that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are mine," without any evidence at all, from "Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon." My

(1) D. *p.* 229, 230.

dear Theron, was ever book abuſed and perverted in this apoſtate world, one half ſo much, as is the holy Bible!

Ther. But is it not true with relation to every ſinner, and ſo with relation to me, that "Chriſt has bought me with his blood, and will exert all his adorable perfections for my good?"

Paul. Muſt I again put you in mind of what your favourite author ſo plainly affirms? "We have no abſolute promiſe or declaration in Scripture, that God certainly will or doth give Chriſt and his ſalvation to any one of us in particular; neither do we know it to be true already, by Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon, before we aſſure ourſelves of it. Our aſſurance is not impreſſed by any evidence of the thing; but we muſt work it out in ourſelves by the aſſiſtance of the ſpirit of God." And that your Aſpaſio not only likes the book in general, but heartily approves of this paſſage in particular, you may be aſſured, from the notice he has taken of it, in his preface to Mr. Marſhall's Myſtery.

Ther. Yes, and I approve it too. For I never ſuppoſed it was any where taught in Scripture, that "Chriſt has bought me with his blood, and will exert all his adorable perfections for my good," and ſo certainly ſave me in particular. I know there is no ſuch thing affirmed in Scripture. I never pretended there was. And you have miſrepreſented our ſcheme, in ſuppoſing it follows from what we affirm of the free grant of the Goſpel, that we are juſtified, adopted, and entitled to eternal glory, before we believe. We hold no ſuch thing. There is no ſuch thing revealed in the oracles of truth. And indeed if there was, I ſhould not need any ſpecial aſſiſtance of the ſpirit in the work of believing. That I ſhould be ſaved, would be as plain a truth as any other in the Bible. And did I believe the Scriptures to be true, I could not doubt of this, any more than of any other plain truth therein contained.—Whereas, you know, it is impoſſible for a man, although he is ſatisfied the Bible is the word of God, merely by his own ſtrength and reaſon to bring himſelf to believe, unleſs the ſpirit firſt witneſſes with his ſpirit, that he is a child of God. Becauſe, before this, we have no evidence of the thing from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon. But when "the divine ſpirit brings Chriſt and his righteouſneſs nigh unto us, in the promiſe of the Goſpel; clearing at the ſame time our right and warrant to intermeddle withall, with

out fear of vicious intromiſſion ;" then we can appropriate what lies in the general promiſe, to ourſelves in particular: And then we can ſay, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are mine." And then we can ſee "our title perfectly clear." (1)

Paul. O my dear Theron! and thus at laſt, you give up your warrant from the written word; (2) as in fact there is no ſuch thing contained in the Bible; and now your recourſe is to the ſpirit. But, if in fact the written word gives you no warrant for this belief—if in fact you have no right by the Bible to lay this claim, the ſpirit of God has nothing to do in the caſe. He cannot clear up a right, where there is no right to be cleared up. He cannot clear up a warrant, where there is no warrant to be cleared up. I grant it is the office of the holy ſpirit to open our underſtandings to underſtand the Scriptures, and to open our eyes to behold the wonderful things in God's Law. But it is not the office of the holy ſpirit, to open our eyes to ſee truths in the Bible, which in fact, are not there. It is not the office of the holy ſpirit to make us believe a lie; that is, believe that the Bible teaches, what in fact, it does not teach; or to make us new revelations, no where contained in Scripture, on which to venture our ſouls for eternity. Nor is it the buſineſs of Faith, to believe theſe new unſcriptural revelations, but only to be-

(1) D. *p.* 295, 362.

(2) *You give up your warrant from the written Word.—By the firſt direct act of Faith, antecedent to any reflection, I believe that* "*God is reconciled to me.*" (D. *p.* 169, 362) *If this ſuppoſed truth was contained in and taught by the written word, it was true before I believed it, as all grant: and ſo God was* "*reconciled to me*" *before the firſt act of Faith. But they ſay, it was not contained there, it was not true, God was not* "*reconciled to me*" *before I believed. But God's Word does not warrant me to believe, as truth, any profeſſion, the truth of which is not taught in his Word. All the truths contained in his Word, I ought to believe. But I have no right to add or diminiſh. Deut. xii.* 32. Thou ſhalt not add thereto, nor diminiſh from it. *Rev. xxii.* 18. If any man ſhall add unto theſe things, God ſhall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. *If we add to God's Word, we have no warrant from God's Word to believe our additions to be* divine. *If any doubt of this, let them read. 2 Theſſ. ii.* 11.

lieve with all our hearts, the truths already revealed. Or, to uſe your own words, "I know no other juſtifying Faith, but that which relates to the Goſpel, and believes its report." But here, ſir, lies the wound of your Faith, and this is "the core and root of the controverſy," that the thing which you believe, is not revealed in the Bible, nor is there any evidence from Scripture, of the truth of it.—And this you know—this you own, and yet ſtill will perſiſt in believing it, "without any evidence from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon." And to help yourſelf out, you call in the aid of the holy Spirit, to teſtify to a thing unrevealed, to a lie, a known lie; to teſtify that ſomething is contained in Scripture, which you know is not contained there. That with full aſſurance, you may ſay, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are mine—conſigned over to me in the everlaſting Goſpel—a title perfectly clear—without any evidence from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon." (1)

Oh my dear Theron! In matters of this importance, it does not become us to ſooth and flatter; but to ſpeak the truth in uprightneſs. Did you profeſs to be an Antinomian, and openly declare, "that the Elect were juſtified from eternity, or at leaſt from the death of Chriſt; that the holy ſpirit reveals to the Elect their juſtification in God's own time; and that juſtifying Faith conſiſts in believing this new revelation;" then your ſcheme, however inconſiſtent with Scripture, would ſeem, at leaſt, to be conſiſtent with itſelf. But now, as you ſtate things, you are (forgive me my Theron) you are, I ſay, neither conſiſtent with Scripture nor with yourſelf. And your dreſſing up experimental religion in this light (while Arminians, Pelagians, Socinians, and Infidels, laugh at the deluſion) tends only to embolden ſelf-confident hypocrites; and to leave the poor awakened Sinner, that has any common honeſty in his heart, in a more bewildered caſe than ever. Or if, by your charming and affectionate manner of addreſs, the poor blind Sinner is induced to believe you, he is in infinite danger of being led to ſettle on a falſe foundation, to his eternal ruin. For having once believed—Oh dreadful thought!—Having once believed, he muſt never doubt again. He muſt watch and

(1) D. *p.* 269, 362. M. *p.* 173.

pray, fight and ſtrive, againſt doubts, with all his might, as the dreadful Agag, that muſt be purſued with fire and ſword. (1) That being once deluded, it is a thouſand to one, but he lives and dies in his deluſion!

Ther. But does not the holy Scripture expreſsly ſpeak of the *Witneſs* and *Seal of the Spirit?* Rom. viii. 16. Eph. i. 13.

Paul. Yes, it does.—But never—never—as what any had before Faith and juſtification: as is the caſe with you. *Ye were ſealed*, ſays the Apoſtle to the Epheſian Saints. But when? Before they believed? No. AFTER *that ye believed ye were ſealed.* Eph. i. 13. And had they this ſpirit of adoption, before they were already children?—No. But, *becauſe ye are ſons*, becauſe ye are already members of God's family, therefore, *God hath ſent forth the ſpirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* Gal. iv. 6.

So that I muſt needs tell you, my dear Theron, there is not one tittle in the Bible to countenance your ſcheme: But it is all over inconſiſtence, falſehood and deluſion.—And if your heart is no better than your head, you are in an infinitely dreadful ſtate. What your heart is, I do not pretend to ſay. This does not belong to my province. But the ſcheme of religion you plead for, leads directly to deſtruction. And would that pilot be eſteemed an honeſt man, who, for fear of giving offence, ſhould ſit ſilent and ſuffer the ſhip to run upon the rocks—rocks under water, which he knew would daſh the ſhip to pieces in a moment, if not avoided.

Ther. But, is it not impoſſible to truſt in Chriſt, unleſs firſt we believe that Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are ours? (2)

Paul. What would you think, my dear Theron, of a Neonomian, or Arminian, to whom you were opening the way of ſalvation by free grace through Jeſus Chriſt, if he ſhould thus reply? "It is impoſſible to truſt in Chriſt and free grace, unleſs firſt for our encouragement, we are conſcious our lives are reformed, our ſins repented of, and that we are diſpoſed ſincerely to endeavour to do our duty. Were I thus prepared, I ſhould dare to truſt in Chriſt, and could hope that God would accept me through him. But without theſe good qualifications, it is impoſſible I ſhould dare to truſt in Chriſt."

(1) D. *p.* 342, 343. (2) D. *p.* 312.

Ther. I ſhould ſuppoſe that his own righteouſneſs was really at the bottom of his Faith, and the very thing that encouraged him to believe. And ſuch a man does not ſo properly truſt in Chriſt, as in his own righteouſneſs. And a Faith built on a falſe foundation, is certainly a falſe Faith.

Paul. And pray, my Theron, what is it that encourages you to truſt in Chriſt? Not any truths revealed in the Goſpel; but ſomething of which you have no evidence, from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon. A firm perſuaſion of this emboldens you to truſt in Chriſt: yea, is ſo entirely the foundation of your truſt, that it appears to you impoſſible, without this previous perſuaſion, ever to truſt in him. Wherefore, this perſuaſion is at the bottom of your truſt. And, ſtrictly ſpeaking, you do not ſo properly truſt in Chriſt, as in that perſuaſion. Should you now be convinced, that this perſuaſion was a mere deluſion, your truſting in Chriſt would ceaſe in a moment. Juſt as it is with a ſelf-righteous perſon, when his eyes are open to ſee himſelf. Rom. vii. 9. *The Commandment came, ſin revived, and I died.*

Ther. But, "would any perſon of the leaſt prudence, erect his houſe upon a piece of ground, without a previous conviction, that the ſpot was his own." (1)

Paul. Wherefore then, we muſt thus conclude, that all the truths, already plainly revealed in the Goſpel, which are true before we believe them, and whether we believe them or not; that all theſe truths laid together, although clearly underſtood, ſeen in their ſpiritual glory, firmly believed, approved of and liked, would not be ſufficient to encourage a ſinner to truſt in Chriſt. i. e. There is nothing in the written word, which, let it be ever ſo well underſtood, and ever ſo firmly believed, is ſufficient to encourage even a regenerate ſinner (for it is plain, regeneration is before the firſt act of Faith. Joh. 1, 12, 13) to truſt in Chriſt. To ſupply this defect, we muſt firſt believe as truth, what as yet is not true, and that without any evidence from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon. And this belief, this perſuaſion, is to be the foundation of our truſting in Chriſt; ſo entirely the foundation, that without it, we cannot "with the leaſt prudence" truſt in him. And the weight, the whole weight of our eternal ſalvation is at

(1) D. *Edit. 1ſt vol. iii. p.* 285.

bottom laid, not on the Goſpel, the written Goſpel, but on a ſuppoſed truth, we have no evidence of, from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon.

Oh, my dear Theron! This is a precarious foundation to venture your precious, your immortal ſoul upon. And ſhould it give way and break under you, it might let you fall down into eternal ruin. This, this is indeed, to uſe your Aſpaſio's beautiful ſimilitude, "like placing the dome of a cathedral on the ſtalk of a tulip."

Mean while let me tell you, the inſpired Apoſtles verily believed, that in the written word we have, not only full evidence of the truth of the Goſpel itſelf (Joh. xx. 31.) but alſo, the truth of the Goſpel being ſeen, ſufficient encouragement to come to God through Chriſt, in full aſſurance of being accepted through him. (Heb. x. 19, 22.) And on this ground they preached the Goſpel to the world, inviting all to return to God through Jeſus Chriſt; without ever giving the leaſt intimation of any need of their being previouſly perſuaded of ſome things as truths, which were no where plainly contained in the Goſpel.

Ther. Pray, what is there contained in the Goſpel which may be ſufficient to encourage a Sinner, to return to God through Chriſt, with full aſſurance of acceptance thro' him?

Paul. Theſe three truths are ſet in the cleareſt and ſtrongeſt light, in the glorious Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt.

1. That the goodneſs of God, the ſupreme governor of the world, is ſelf-moving, and infinite. It needs no external motive, no goodneſs in us, to draw it forth into exerciſe. Yea, it can ſurmount infinite ill-deſert—ſelf-moved. This is demonſtrated in God's giving his Son, of his own mere motion, to die for a world, ſo ill-deſerving—infinitely ill-deſerving: that no atonement appeared to him ſufficient to ſecure the honour of his law and government, but the blood of his own Son. Let me believe with all my heart, that God has done this deed, a deed infinitely ſuperior to the creation of millions of ſuch worlds as this, all which, with one word's ſpeaking, Meſſiah could have created in a moment. I ſay, let me believe with all my heart, that God, of his own mere motion, has given his Son, one equal to himſelf, to die for ſuch a world as this; and at once I have the fulleſt conviction of his ſelf-moving goodneſs, and infinite grace. It ſtands in a light brighter than the ſun at noon-day.

2. God can conſiſtently with the honour of himſelf, of his law and government, and ſacred authority, pardon and ſave thoſe, who, ſtrictly ſpeaking, are infinitely ill-deſerving, through Jeſus Chriſt, his Son. His honour is, in every point of light, effectually ſecured by the mediation and death of his Son. The dignity, the infinite dignity of the ſon of God, proves this to the enlightened ſoul.—The reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead, is a viſible demonſtration of it. And God himſelf, in plain words, declares it to be true:—That he can now be *juſt, and yet juſtify him that believeth in Jeſus.* (Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26.) Now, if the goodneſs of the divine nature is infinite and ſelf-moving; and if he can, conſiſtently with his own honour, pardon and ſave the infinitely ill-deſerving through Jeſus Chriſt his Son; the only queſtion that remains, is, Who may, among all the ſons of Adam, truſt in this glorious Mediator, return home to God through him, and through his merits and atonement look to the free grace of God for pardon and eternal life?—But,

3. It is moſt expreſsly declared, that *whoſoever will, may come* (Rev. xxii. 17.) and *he that cometh ſhall in no wiſe be caſt out.* (Joh. vi. 37.) Yea, orders are given that theſe glad tidings ſhould be carried all round the world, *the Goſpel preached to every creature.* (Mar. xvi. 15.) And all, even the vileſt and the worſt, are to be, as it were, compelled to come in (Luk. xiv. 23.) *prayed and beſeeched to be reconciled to God* (2 Cor. v. 20.) *to repent and be converted* (Act. iii. 19.) to return home to God through Jeſus Chriſt, to God, who is as ready to be reconciled to the returning Sinner, as the father of the prodigal is repreſented to be, to his returning Son. (Luk. xv. 20.)

Now, when the Sinners eyes, in regeneration, are opened, to behold as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, it will immediately appear to him the fitteſt and happieſt thing in the world, to return home to God, and be forever devoted to him, if he may. And a clear ſight and firm belief of theſe plain Goſpel-truths, gives him the fulleſt aſſurance that he may; that it is God's will he ſhould; and that God ſtands ready to accept him through Jeſus Chriſt, if he does. (1)

(1) *Except my eyes are firſt opened to behold the glory of God, I cannot ſee the ground and reaſon of the Law, nor heartily*

Indeed, I readily grant, that unregenerate Sinners do neither see the infinite amiableness of God, nor really believe the Gospel to be true. The *vail is on their hearts.* (2 Cor. iii. 16.) The Gospel *is hid from them.* (Matth. xi. 25.) They are *blind.* (Rom. xi. 25.) And their blindness is a vicious wicked blindness, arising from a heart void of love to God, and full of enmity against his Law, and against the glorious Gospel of his Son; as was proved in our former conversation. And in this benighted state,

approve it as holy, just and good. Unless the law appears good and glorious, I cannot see the wisdom of God in the death of his Son, nor cordially believe the Gospel to be true. Till I see the Gospel to be true, I am blind to the only door of Hope. Merely a sight of the glory of God as a righteous lawgiver, and a sight of the glory of his holy Law, can give no hope. The truth of the Gospel is seen, I then behold (first.) *The love, the self-moving goodness of God, in the gift of his Son: But not, that he loves me in particular, and is reconciled to me.* Secondly, *I then see, that Christ has secured the honour of the divine government; and that now God can be just, and yet justify the Sinner that believeth in Jesus: But not, that I am one for whom he died, with an absolute design to save.* Thirdly, *I then see, that any Sinner may return to God through Christ; and see that those who do, will be accepted and saved: but not, that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." In a word, I see the truth of what is already revealed in the Gospel: but I do not see truths not revealed there. The holy Spirit helps me to see the truths already revealed; but reveals no new truths. The things which I believe, were true before I believed them. If, after all, any pretend, there is no difference between these two kinds of Faith; I only say, if these two kinds of Faith, like two roads which seem, and but seem, to lead the same way, should, in fact, lead to two different worlds, as far asunder as Heaven and Hell; it is proper to set up those monuments, to warn travellers: and the nearer they are alike, the more need poor travellers have to take heed they do not mistake. But if they do, if they will mistake after warning, their blood will be upon their own heads: and they will eternally remember, that they knew, what they believed, was not revealed in Scripture. They believed without any evidence from Scripture, sense or reason.*

being followed with the fears of eternal misery, they must take some way for hope and comfort. Some go about to establish their own righteousness; and on that, build their hopes for Heaven. Others finding no comfort in the way of duties, try to work up themselves to a belief, that Christ died for them in particular, that God loves them and will save them. And if by any means, they come to feel a strong persuasion of this, it so delivers them from their fears, and so fills them with comfort and joy, that they do all they can to strengthen this persuasion: And to this end, apply an hundred texts of Scripture, perverting them from their plain and natural meaning. And are yet obliged at last to own, that they have no evidence, on which to ground their belief, from Scripture, sense, or reason: Yea, that the thing they believe, is not true, till it becomes true by their believing it to be true. However, their consciences being quieted by this belief, they can now go on, estranged from a God of infinite glory, blind to his infinite beauties: Nor do they believe, that ever any did love God for his own infinite loveliness; although this is the very spirit of all the Angels and Saints in Heaven, and of all good men upon Earth. Isai. vi. 3. 2 Cor. iii. 18. (1)

(1) *To make the matter, if possible, still plainer, it may be thus stated;* 1st. *He that is encouraged to come to Christ from a consciousness of some good qualification in himself, secretly builds his hopes of acceptance with God on his own righteousness.* 2d. *He that is encouraged to come to Christ from a belief that Christ died for him in particular, and that God is reconciled to him, builds his hopes of acceptance with God on a delusion.* 3d. *He that comes to Christ without a disposition to be reconciled to God, is only seeking after salvation from Hell, and does not desire the salvation which the Gospel offers.* 4th. *He that thinks he has a disposition to be reconciled to God, but never saw the glory of God, of his law and government, he but deceives himself.* 5th. *He that is encouraged to come, only by the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, as revealed in the written word, builds his hopes of acceptance on the truth. He that comes on this encouragement, with a hearty disposition to be forever reconciled to God, and devoted to him, and thirsting for grace forever to live to him, is a true convert. He that, after this, lives to God through all trials, proves his faith by his works, as Abraham did.—Gen. xxii.* 12.

Ther. I see you are returned again to your darling topic, the doctrine of loving God for his own loveliness.

Paul. Yes—And this is the very vitals of vital piety. A sense of the beauty of the divine nature, and a firm belief of the truth of the Gospel, lay the foundation for all the rest. (Joh. xvii. 3.) *Repentance towards God, Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*, a life of communion with God and devotedness to him, joy in God, and rejoicing in Jesus Christ. And while the love of God—not a belief that God loves me in particular, without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, but a clear and lively sense of the self-moving goodness and infinite grace of God, as manifested in the gift of his Son, and shining forth in the whole Gospel-way of life, as exhibited in the written word, is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; attended with a full assurance that we are the children of God, resulting from a consciousness of a filial spirit towards God; now we know and believe the love that God hath to us. And inspired with a sense of the divine glory, the beauty of God's Law and government, the glory of the way of salvation by free grace through Jesus Christ, the free and sovereign grace of God in calling us into the kingdom of his Son, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: And habitually, and actually, through the course of our lives, present ourselves a living sacrifice to God through Jesus Christ; to be for him, entirely for him, and that forever. Nor do we feel any need to bring your kind of Faith into the account.

You remember, my dear Theron, that parabolical picture of a true Saint, of a real Christian, given by our blessed Saviour, in Matth. xiii. 23. whose representations, if we do not believe, we do indeed make God a liar. *He that received seed into the good ground, is he*—not that hath a new revelation of a new truth not contained in the Gospel! But is he *that heareth the word, and*—what next? Not, is really persuaded in his heart, that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine,"! without any evidence "from Scripture, sense, or reason" But, heareth the word and *understandeth it so as in it, to behold as in a glass, the glory of the Lord. Which also*—what? Complains that his graces are no more to be seen "than the stars at noon"! No, what

then? *Which alſo beareth fruit.*—How much? So little that no eye can ſee it! Or at moſt, but juſt diſcern it, "as a glow-worm in the night"! And that in ſo unſteady, uncertain a manner, that for his life he cannot tell whether there be any fruit or no; but rather the more he looks, the more "his doubts are increaſed? (1) No, no, far from this—*and bringeth forth ſome a hundred fold, ſome ſixty, ſome thirty.*—Yes, my Theron, that is good ground indeed, which yields an hundred buſhels of grain, for one that was ſown; or ſixty, or even thirty.—And thus, *the grain of muſtard ſeed, becometh a great tree.* (Ver. 31, 32.) And thus, *the leaven* ſpreads *till the whole is leavened.* (Ver. 33.) And this is the idea, the grand and noble idea, our bleſſed Saviour had of a true Chriſtian!—It is granted, there is great difference in the degrees of fruitfulneſs in true converts, ſome an hundred fold, ſome ſixty, ſome thirty.—But thoſe who bring forth no good fruit, whatever raviſhing joys they may ſometimes have had (Ver. 20) are by our bleſſed Saviour pictured by the ſimilitude of—*ſtony ground*—*thorny ground.*

Ther. But I have an unanſwerable objection againſt this account of the nature of juſtifying Faith. For, whereas in the holy Scriptures it is repreſented to be an exceeding difficult thing to believe; according to you, there is no difficulty at all in it, when once the Sinner, in your ſenſe of things, is regenerate, and believes the Goſpel to be true with all his heart.

Paul. Right, my dear Theron. The difficulty is now over. For he is not obliged to believe "without any evidence from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon." The way in which he is to return to God, all lies open, plain before him. And it appears to him the fitteſt and happieſt thing in the world, to return home to God through Jeſus Chriſt. And he does it with all his heart. (2)

(1) D. *p.* 361, 362.

(2) *Return home to God—By this phraſe Paulinus means exactly the ſame with thoſe words in Jer. iv.* 1. If thou wilt return, O Iſrael, ſaith the Lord, return unto me. *And in Ezek, xxxiii.* 11. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die! *And in Act. iii.* 19.--Repent and be converted, that your ſins may be blotted out. *From being enemies, repent and turn, and* be reconciled to God, 2 *Cor. v.*

Ther. Wherein then consists the difficulty of believing?

Paul. The difficulty in the way of embracing the Gospel in a saving manner, according to the New Testament, arises from a worldly spirit, a self-righteous spirit, and being dead in sin.

(1) From a worldly spirit: Men are generally so attached to worldly things, riches, honour, and pleasure, that, although they might be glad to know they should go to Heaven when they die, yet they have no heart to become the disciples of Christ; to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him; and take God for the alone portion of their souls. Therefore, when they are invited to come to this feast (and a feast indeed it is, to a regenerate Sinner, whose eyes are opened to see things as they are) they desire to be *excused*. (Luk. xiv. 18) And they *make light of it, and go their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize.* Matth. xxii 5.

(2) From a *self-righteous spirit.* Rom. ix. 31, 32, 33. For if a Sinner is so terrified with the fears of eternal damnation, that he can take no comfort in worldly enjoyments; and so is quite prepared to hear Aspasio urge him to believe, that God loves him, and Christ died for him; yet there now remains the chief difficulty in the way of true Faith, unremoved, viz. to yield the point, that the Law not only does in fact, require sinless perfection, on pain of eternal damnation, and that he is under the curse of this Law, but that this Law is holy, just, and good: And so he justly condemned, and in fact, in the hands, and at the disposal of a sovereign God. This—this—a proud self-righteous spirit, is diametrically opposite unto.

20.—*It is worthy to be observed, that according to St. Peter repentance is before forgivness.* Repent and be converted, that your sins MAY be blotted out. *And this is the doctrine God has taught in all ages of the world. By Moses, Lev. xxvi.* 40.—*By David, Psal. xxxii.* 5.—*By Isaiah, Isai. lv.* 7.—*By John Baptist, Mar. i.* 4.—*By Christ, Matth, v.* 4. *Luk xiii.* 3.—*By all the Apostles on the day of Penticost, Act. ii.* 37, 38, 39. *and indeed all over the Scripture. But there is nothing of the nature of repentance before forgivness in Theron's scheme. Yea, his repentance, professedly, arises wholly from a belief that his sins are forgiven. So that he is forgiven before he begins to repent.*

And to be brought to this, is killing work. Rom. vii. 9. *The commandment came, ſin revived, and I died.*

(3) From being ſpiritually dead :—For when the Law has thoroughly done its work, and the Sinner ſees and feels the truth, that he is dead in ſin, juſtly condemned, abſolutely helpleſs and undone in himſelf, in the hands of a ſovereign God, who *hath mercy on whom he will have mercy*—there now needs the ſame mighty power whereby Chriſt was raiſed from the dead, to quicken this dead Sinner. And it muſt wholly proceed from the mere free ſovereign grace of God. (Eph. i. 19, 20, compared with Eph. ii. 1, 8.) That regeneration does thus precede the firſt act of Faith, is plain from Joh. i. 12, 13, where concerning all true believers, it is ſaid, *which were born*—that is, antecedent to the firſt act of Faith—*which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* See alſo Joh. iii. 3, 5.

But theſe three difficulties being removed, and Sinners made *willing in the day of his power* (Pſal. cx. 3.) all is eaſy. Sinners now *come flying* to Chriſt, as naturally *as doves to their windows.* (Iſai. lx. 8.) For God appears to be infinitely glorious, and the Goſpel to be divinely true.

And here, by the way, my dear Theron, it is worthy of your diligent attention, that it is a common thing in the New-Teſtament, to promiſe ſalvation to thoſe, who believe the truth of the Goſpel with all their hearts, and to ſpeak of ſuch, as true Saints : Becauſe where this is, every thing elſe will follow of courſe. In this view, you may at your leiſure, read the following Scriptures. Matth. xvi. 16. 17. Mar. xvi, 15. 16. Joh. vi. 68, 69, and xvii. 3, 8, and xx. 30, 31. Act. viii. 37. Rom. x. 9. 1 Cor. xii. 3. 1 Joh. iv. 15, and v. 1, 5. Some of which are ſadly perverted by ſome writers ; particularly, Rom. x. 9. (1)

Ther. The clock ſtrikes nine—It is time for me to retire —However, before I go, pray point out, in brief, the chief differences between what you call true Faith, and the Faith I have been pleading for, that I may have them to conſider at my leiſure. For I deſign more thoroughly to look into this matter, than ever yet I have done.

Paul. Among the many differences which might be mentioned, I will only point out theſe twelve.

(1) D. *p.* 291. *Marrow of Mod. Div. Notes, p.* 155, 156.

(1) Regeneration is neceſſarily previous to the firſt act of true Faith. But your Faith may exiſt in an unregenerate heart.

(2) True Faith ſuppoſes the Law and Goſpel are rightly underſtood, and beheld in their glory; the Law approved with all the heart, as holy, juſt, and good; the Goſpel believed, and complied with, with all the heart. But your Faith is conſiſtent with a reigning enmity againſt both Law and Goſpel.

(3) True Faith is an holy act. But yours has nothing of the nature of holineſs in it; ariſes from no higher principle than ſelf-love.

(4) In true Faith, nothing is believed but what is plainly revealed in the holy Scriptures. But in your Faith, the main things believed, are no where contained in the Bible. "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are mine."

(5) In true Faith, the things believed were as true, before they were believed, as after; being all contained in the Scriptures of truth. But in your Faith, the things believed were not true, before they were believed; not being contained in the Bible.

(6) True Faith is founded wholly on that revelation, which is made in the written word. But your Faith, having no ſupport from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon, is founded wholly in a heated Imagination; or, which is no better, on a new revelation, not contained in the written word: i. e. One is founded on good evidence, the other not.

(7) The great difficulty in the way of true Faith, ariſes from the wickedneſs of the heart. But the great difficulty in the way of your Faith, is, that there is no evidence of the truth of the thing believed, from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon: But rather, a man is obliged to go contrary to them all.

(8) True Faith is wrought in the heart by the holy ſpirit, in regeneration, imparting divine life to the dead ſoul, opening the eyes to behold divine truths in their glory and reality: In conſequence of which, the Goſpel is underſtood, believed, and embraced with all the heart. But your Faith is wrought by your being made, by ſome means or other, to believe ſome things as true, that are not revealed in Scripture.

(9) In true Faith, the way of ſalvation by free grace through Jeſus Chriſt, being underſtood and believed, is

heartily approved of, and acquiesced in, as being glorious for God and safe for the Sinner: And our entire dependence for acceptance with God, is on the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, as exhibited in the written word. Whereas, your Faith does not properly consist in dependence, but in confidence.—Not in looking to the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, that you may be pardoned, sanctified and saved; not in flying for refuge, and laying hold on this hope set before you; but in being confident, that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." In being "really persuaded in my heart, that Christ is mine, and that I shall have life and salvation by him"; without any evidence "from Scripture, sense, or reason." (1)

(10) True Faith is always attended with love to God, arising from a sense of his own infinite amiableness, as its inseparable concomitant. Your Faith is sometimes followed with a seeming love to God, arising merely from believing that he loves you.

(11) But the most remarkable difference of all, is, that true Faith actually unites the man to Jesus Christ, as the *branch is united to the vine.* (Joh. xv. 5.) In consequence of which, every true believer actually receives the spirit of Christ to *dwell in him.* (2) Rom. viii. 9. Eph. i. 13. Gal. iii. 2, 14. 1 Joh. iv, 13, and ii. 27. Rom. viii. 14.

(1) *I grant, that writers on that side of the question, speak much of trusting in Christ, and resting upon him, &c. Yet according to them, previous to this trust, and that which encourages to it, is a belief that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." And so I believe that my sins are pardoned, before I begin to trust in Christ. I do not come to Christ, but rather stand off and keep at a distance, till I see he is mine, and can call God, my God. So that strictly speaking, I am justified, and know that I am justified, before I dare come to Christ, and trust in him. Thus the matter is stated, in*—D. *p.* 312.

(2) *Although it is plain from Scripture, that regeneration is before the first act of saving Faith (Joh. i.* 12, 13.*) And that Faith is wrought by the influences of the holy spirit (Eph. i.* 19.*) Yet it is equally plain, that the gift of the holy spirit, to dwell in us, as an abiding principle of divine life, is after we are united to Christ by Faith (Eph. i.* 13. *Gal. iii.* 14.*)*

Gal. v. 18. In consequence of this, a certain foundation is laid, to bring *forth fruit* unto God (Rom. vii. 4.) in every instance (Matth. xiii. 23.) And *the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* (Prov. iv. 18.) *If he falleth, he riseth up again.* (Prov. xxiv. 16.) *Every branch that beareth fruit,* GOD *purgeth* it, and so *it bringeth forth more fruit.* (Joh. xv. 2.) Whence, near or quite all the Saints we read of in Scripture, usually speak the language of assurance, as being conscious to this divine habitual change wrought in them by God's holy spirit. But thus it is not with your kind of Faith. Nor is assurance this way to be obtained on your scheme.

(12) As a natural consequence of the whole, the several systems of experimental religion, resulting from these two kinds of Faith, however in appearance they may be alike, yet in reality, are essentially different throughout. While the true believer is striving to grow in grace, the false pretender is striving to maintain his delusion.——

Ther. I thank you, sir, for present instructions; and with your leave I will return to-morrow evening; as I want to hear your thoughts on one subject more.

Paul. The evening shall be at your service, God willing.

So ended the second conversation, and I retired again to my closet—with what views of my spiritual state, you may easily guess.—Oh, my dear Aspasio!—What! Are we all wrong! Or have I misunderstood your scheme! I hope, I wish, no poor Sinner on earth was ever so deluded as I have been.—The Lord have mercy on me!—O, my dear Aspasio, that you had been present, and heard all that passed!—But alas, the wide ocean keeps us three thousand miles apart! However, with you, even now with you, is the distressed heart of

YOUR DISCONSOLATE

THERON.

After union to Christ we have a covenant-right to the holy spirit (Gal. iii. 29.) may have divine grace, at any time, for asking (Luk. xi. 13.) But before union with Christ, we have no right—God is at absolute liberty—we lie at his sovereign mercy, (Rom. ix. 15, 18.) And accordingly, regenerating grace is the effect of his sovereign good pleasure, (Matth. xi. 25, 26.) No promises of saving grace are made to the prayers or doings of Sinners out of Christ, (Gal. iii. 10. 2 Cor. i. 20. Joh. iii. 18, 36.

DIALOGUE III.

Wednesday Evening, December 13, 1758.

ACCORDING to appointment, I made my third visit. The subject proposed was the doctrine of ASSURANCE. We soon entered upon it; and this is the sum of what passed:

Ther. May the people of God, in this life, attain to a certain assurance, that they are in a state of favour with God, and entitled to eternal glory?

Paul. As there is a specific difference between true grace and all counterfeits; as true grace in the heart is naturally discernible, like all our other inward biasses; as the Saints in Scripture usually speak the language of assurance; as Saints in all ages are exhorted to seek assurance (2 Pet. i. 10.) and as there are many rules laid down in Scripture to determine in this case, and many promises made for the encouragement of Saints, the designed advantage of which cannot be enjoyed without assurance; so, for these and other reasons, I believe, that assurance is attainable, in this life, in all ordinary cases at least.

Ther. How, and by what means may the children of God attain assurance?

Paul. Sanctification, taking the word in a large and comprehensive sense, is the evidence, the only Scripture-evidence of a good estate.

Ther. What do you mean by sanctification, in this large and comprehensive sense?

Paul. It is usual for divines to distinguish between regeneration and conversion; between first conversion and progressive sanctification; between divine views and holy affections; between grace in the heart, and an holy life

and converſation; but I mean to comprehend all under one general name. You may call it the image of God, or holineſs of heart and life, or a real conformity to the divine Law, and a genuine compliance with the Goſpel of Chriſt. I have already let you ſee what I apprehend to be the nature of Law and Goſpel, of love to God and Faith in Chriſt. When I ſay, this is the only evidence, I mean, that this is the only thing, wherein Saints and Sinners, in every inſtance differ. One has the image of God, the other has not. Or, to expreſs myſelf in the language of inſpiration (Joh. xvii. 3.) *This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent.* And (1 Joh. ii. 3, 4, 5.) *Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that ſaith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoſo keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: Hereby know we that we are in him.*

Ther. What is the beſt method a true Saint can take, to maintain a conſtant aſſurance of his good eſtate?

Paul. To live in the exerciſe of all Chriſtian graces in his own heart every day, and to be conſtantly influenced and governed by them in all his external conduct in the world: *Growing in grace,* and *preſſing forward to perfection.* 2 Pet. i. 5, 11.

Ther. But is it poſſible, that all true Saints ſhould live ſo?

Paul. Why not?—For, they are all delivered from the power of ſin, (Rom. vi. 2, 14.) are married to Chriſt, in whom all fulineſs dwells, (Rom. vii. 4) have already every principle of grace in their hearts, (Joh. i. 15.) and the ſpirit of God actually dwelling in them (Rom. viii. 9.) and conſtantly influencing them, to ſuch a degree, that they do not, they even cannot, feel and live as others do (1 Joh. iii. 9.(1)

(1) 1 *Joh. iii.* 9. *Whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit ſin: for his ſeed remaineth in him: and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of God.—He doth not, and he cannot, at any time: for his ſeed always remaineth in him. ſo that theſe words teach us, that there is at all times a real difference between a Saint and a Sinner.*

It is true, there is no particular bias or inclination, whether natural or gracious, in the heart of man, but may be counteracted. But to counteract the habitual bias of the heart, is quite different from acting agreeably to the habitual

yea actually carrying on the work of sanctification. (Joh. xv. 2.)—The God of all grace ready, mean while, to grant all further needful help, as ready as ever a kind parent was to give bread to a hungry child. (Matth. vii. 7, 11.) So that they are completely furnished to live daily in the exercise of every grace. (Eph. ii. 10.) Yea, this is expected of them, as they would act up to their proper character. (Eph. iv. 1.) Yea, I will venture to add, having so good an authority as the Son of God, that, though there are different degrees of grace and fruitfulness among true Saints, yet it is their common character to *bring forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty.* (Matth. viii. 23.) So that it seems more difficult to reconcile it with Scripture, that a true Saint (there being no extraordinary bodily disease, as the hypochondria, &c. nor other extraordinary circumstances, that may account for it) should live along in the dark, full of doubts and fears about his state, from year to year; I say, more difficult to reconcile this with Scripture, than it is to prove that they may live so, as to make their calling and election sure, according to that exhortation in 2 Pet. i. 5, 11.

bias of the heart. The Saint counteracts the habitual bias of his heart, when he sins. The Sinner acts agreeable to the habitual bias of his whole heart, when he sins. So a Saint never sins with all his heart, as the wicked man does. He cannot, because his seed remains in him; because he is born of God. The spirit lusteth against the flesh; so that he cannot. Gal. v. 17.

Therefore good men, when they fall, are restless till they come to repentance; as was the case with David. Psal. xxxii. 3, 4, 5. *For they are out of their element;* all is vanity and vexation of spirit; *as was the case with Solomon.* Eccl. 1, 2. *As when Haman led Mordecai through the street of Shushan, on the king's horse, dressed in the royal apparel, and proclaimed his honours in the ears of the people, he acted exceeding contrary to the habitual bias of his heart. Esth. vi.—So did Peter, when he denied his master; and therefore at one look of Christ, he went out and* wept bitterly. *So that these instances, though often alledged, are not to the purpose of stoney-ground hearers. For they have no root in themselves.—They* receive the word with joy, endure for a while, and fall away. *Matth. xiii. 20, 21.—See Mr. Edwards on Religious Affections, p.* 274, 277.

Ther. But I have known ſome, eſteemed true converts, who after their converſion, have lain dead, without any ſenſible divine influence, for months together.

Paul. Why did not you add,—and years together?—For once I knew of one, counted an eminent Chriſtian, who declared he lay dead twelve years, without one act of grace all that time. But what good do ſuch converſions do? If men are as much under the power of ſpiritual death after their converſions, as before, what benefit is there in being converted? And what becomes of all thoſe Scriptures, which declare, *He ſhall ſave his people from their ſins.* Matth. i. 21. *That we might ſerve him, without fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs all the days of our lives.* Luk. i. 43. *A new heart will I give you, and a new ſpirit will I put within you, and I will take away the ſtony heart out of your fleſh, and I will give you an heart of fleſh: and I will put my ſpirit within you, and cauſe you to walk in my ſtatutes, and ye ſhall keep my judgments, and do them.* Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. *Who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Tit. ii. 14.—And pray take notice, my dear Theron, that, as God gave the law written on tables of ſtone, to Iſrael, to all *Iſrael according to the fleſh*, which covenant (Deut. ix. 9, 15,) they did break (Heb. viii. 9,) ſo he has expreſsly promiſed to all the *ſpiritual Iſrael*, i. e. to all true believers (Gal. iii. 29,) that he will *write his law in their hearts*; i. e. give them an inward temper of mind anſwerable to his written law. Heb. viii. 10. A hypocrite may go to God and ſay, "pardon is mine, grace is mine," and be raviſhed with his own deluſion: but God doth, in fact, write his law in the heart of every true believer. This is God's mark, put upon all that are of his flock; whereby his ſheep are diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the world.

Ther. But cannot a man, who is very uncertain of his ſanctification, be ſure of eternal life ſome other way?

Paul. Our Saviour having deſcribed the Chriſtian temper and life, in his Sermon on the Mount, concludes with the ſtrongeſt aſſurances, that ſuch, and ſuch only, as are truely ſanctified, ſhall be finally ſaved. If we are ſuch, our *houſe is built upon a rock*; if not, our *houſe is built upon the ſand.*—Now, my dear Theron, we hope to go to Heaven when we die. So do many, who will be finally

disappointed. How shall you and I know, that our foundation is good? Who can tell us? Surely none better than he who is to be our judge. Could we ask our blessed Saviour, LORD, how shall we know? What would he say? Thanks be to God, we know what he would say, as surely as though he should answer us with an audible voice from Heaven. For he is now of the same mind, as when he dwelt on earth. What he then taught, is left on record, plain for all to read, that none might mistake in a point of such infinite importance.

Take your Bible, my dear Theron, read our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount; and there you will see the character of a true Christian, drawn by an infallible hand; and find a test, by which you may safely try your state. The true Christian is *humble, penitent, meek, longing after holiness, merciful, pure in heart, a peace-maker, willing to part with all for Christ, and to go through the greatest sufferings in his cause.* Matth. v. 1, 12. Like *salt*, he is full of life and spirit: Like *light*, by his knowledge and example, he enlightens all around him, and is an *honour* to his master (Ver. 13, 16,) lives by a *stricter rule* than any *hypocrite*— (Ver. 20,) does not justify nor indulge the *least grudge* against his neighbour, or the *first stirrings of any corruption* in his heart (Ver. 21, 42,) *loves* not only his friends, but *his enemies*, even *his worst enemies* (Ver. 43, 48,) *gives alms* and *prays*, as in the *sight of God* (Chap. vi. 1, 5,) is *chiefly concerned* for the *honour* of God, and *kingdom* and *interest* of Christ in the world (Ver. 9, 10,) chuses God for his *portion*, lays up his treasure in Heaven, and means with an honest heart, with a *single eye*, only to be God's servant; and *trusting* his kind providence for temporal supplies he makes it his chief business to be truly religious. Ver. 19, 34. Not of a carping, captious, censorious disposition; but chiefly attentive to, and mostly concerned to amend his own faults. Chap. vii. 1, 5. He prays and his prayers are answered. Ver. 7, 11. And in imitation of the divine goodness, he is kind to all around him, *doing as he would be done by.* Ver. 12. At his conversion, he enters in at this *strait Gate* of strict piety, and through the course of his life, he travels in this *narrow way* of holiness, almost alone, few suited with that road, many walking in *broader ways.* Ver. 13, 14. Nor will he be diverted from these sentiments and ways, by any preachers or wri-

ters, whatever appearances of holineſs and devotion they may put on. Ver. 15.

Ther. But do you really and verily believe, that none will at laſt be admitted into Heaven, but thoſe who are of this character?

Paul. Pray, my dear Theron, read our Saviour's anſwer to your queſtion, and believe it.—Believe that he means as he ſays.

Ther. Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven. Ver. 21.

Paul. Obſerve, that DOTH, not that DID ſome years ago. —But that DOTH, through the courſe of his life.—Forgive this interruption.—Pray read on——

Ther. Many will ſay to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name? And in thy name caſt out Devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?— Ver. 22.

Paul. You ſee they are in confident expectation of eternal life. But what is their doom?

Ther. And then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore, whoſoever heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wiſe man, which built his houſe upon a rock: and the rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that houſe: and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them not, ſhall be likened unto a fooliſh man, which built his houſe upon the ſand: and the rains deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that houſe: and it fell, and great was the fall of it. Ver. 23, 27.

Paul. Obſerve, my dear Theron, our Saviour does not ſay, every one who firmly believeth that he ſhall be ſaved, however unconſcious of ſanctifying operations in his own breaſt, ſhall, as ſure as God is true, be forever happy.— No—but juſt the reverſe. He ſays, that however confident men be of ſalvation, yet if they do not the things contained in his ſermon, their hopes ſhall infallibly be diſappointed. Now ſay, my dear Theron, do you believe this doctrine, taught by our bleſſed Saviour?

Ther. I muſt own, I have not been wont to view things juſt in this light. "I uſed to think, I need not trouble

myſelf, to find out a multitude of marks and ſigns of true grace, if I could find a few good ones. Particularly, I thought I might know I was paſſed from death to life, if I loved the brethren." (1)

Paul. Your few good ones are all counterfeit, if alone, ſeparate from other good ones. For the true Saint receives every grace from Chriſt. Joh. i. 16. Nor did Chriſt mean to ſingle out a few in his ſermon, but to give a brief ſummary of the whole Chriſtian life. And *he that heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them*—not, doth a few of them—but doth them one and all. Read through the firſt Epiſtle of John, and you will ſee this ſentiment confirmed.—Where there is one grace, there is all. If there is not all, there is none. (2)

Ther. But, Sir, ſuffer me to tell you, that "this method of ſeeking peace and aſſurance, I fear, will perplex the ſimple minded; and cheriſh rather than ſuppreſs, the fluctuations of doubt. For, let the ſigns be what you pleaſe, a love of the brethren, or a love of all righteouſneſs, a change of heart, or an alteration of life; theſe good qualifications are ſometimes like the ſtars at noon-day, not eaſily, if at all, diſcernible; or elſe they are like a glow-worm in the night, glimmering, rather than ſhining:—Conſequently will yield at the beſt, but a feeble—at the worſt, a very precarious evidence. If, in ſuch a manner, we ſhould acquire ſome little aſſurance, how ſoon may it be unſettled by the incurſions of daily temptations, or deſtroyed by the inſurrection of remaining ſin! At ſuch a juncture, how will it keep its ſtanding! How retain its being! It will fare like a tottering wall, before a tempeſt;

(1) M. *p.* 291, 292.

(2) *However on the Arminian and Antinomian ſchemes of religion, in which nothing is truly harmonious and conſiſtent, what they call graces, may, ſome particulars of them be found alone; yet on St. Paul's ſcheme this can never happen. For every grace nativelv reſults from thoſe divine views, which lay the foundation of any one grace.* Beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, *as ſhining forth in the law and in the Goſpel,* we are changed into the ſame image,---*i. e. into a real conformity to the law, and a genuine compliance with the Goſpel, compriſing all the branches of religion. See Mr. Edwards on Religious Affections, p.* 249, 261.

or be *as the rush without mire, and the flag without water.* Job viii. 11.

"Instead therefore of poring on our own hearts, to discover, by inherent qualities, our interest in Christ, I should rather renew my application to the free and faithful promise of the Lord: assert and maintain my title on this unalterable ground. Pardon is mine, I would say, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine.—— Why? Because I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast. Rather, because God hath spoken in his holiness; because all these precious privileges are consigned over to me in the everlasting Gospel, with a clearness unquestionable as the truth, with a certainty inviolable as the oath of God." (1)

Paul. But did you not use to think, that Faith was productive of good works? Yea, did not your Aspasio teach you this doctrine?

Ther. I must confess he did. This was once the language of my Aspasio to me, while I was yet an unbeliever. To give me an exalted idea of Faith, thus he taught me. "Faith will make every power of our souls spring forward to glorify our heavenly Father—glorify him by every instance of obedience, fidelity and zeal. (2) It makes all the powers of our souls like the chariots of Amminadib, ready, expedite, and active in duty. (3) This is the love of God, that we walk after his commandments. This is the natural fruit—this the certain evidence of love to that glorious, transcendent, and adorable Being. It buildeth up the fair fabric of universal Godliness." (4) It "will diffuse itself through every intellectual faculty, and extend to every species of duty, till the whole heart is filled with the image, and the whole behaviour regulated by the law of the blessed God." (5) It "will induce us to present all the members of our bodies, and all the faculties of our souls, as a living sacrifice to the honour of God, to be employed in his service and resigned to his will." To "be as pilgrims below, and have our conversation above. Such, my dear Theron," said he to me, "will be the effects of Faith. (6) Nothing is more certain than that Faith

(1) D. *p.* 361, 362 (2) D. *p.* 169. (3) D. *p.* 176.
(4) D. *p.* 177. (5) D. *p.* 179. (6) D. *p.* 181.

is a vital, an operative, a victorious principle. (1) When the firſt converts believed, the change of their behaviour was ſo remarkable, the holineſs of their lives ſo exemplary, that they won the favour, and commanded the reſpect of all the people. Act. ii. 47. In ſhort, it is as impoſſible for the Sun to be in his meridian ſphere, and not to diſſipate darkneſs, or diffuſe light, as for Faith to exiſt in the ſoul and not exalt the temper, and meliorate the conduct." (2) All which, beſides proving it by many texts of Scripture, he illuſtrated at large, in the example of Saint Paul and Abraham (3) and concluded with aſſuring me, that Faith "will give life to every religious duty." (4) And make us "abound in the work of the Lord." (5) Yea, at another time he taught me, "that Faith, even when weak, is productive of good works."(6) Which are "the proof," and do "undeniably atteſt its ſincerity." (7) They are "the grand characteriſtic, which diſtinguiſhes the ſterling from the counterfeit. (8) They will diſtinguiſh the true believer from the hypocritical profeſſor, even at the great tribunal.(9) And at another time, I remember, my Aſpaſio ſaid, "Do we *love our enemies; bleſs them that curſe us; do good to them that hate us; pray for them which deſpitefully uſe us, and perſecute us?* Without this loving and lovely diſpoſition, *we abide*, ſays the Apoſtle, *in death;* are deſtitute of ſpiritual, and have no title to eternal life." (10)

Paul. "No title to eternal life"! How dare you then go to God and ſay, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Chriſt and all his ſpiritual bleſſings are mine"!

Ther. This is that very Faith, which my Aſpaſio taught me to exerciſe. And which he aſſured me, would be "as a torch in a ſheaf,"(11) in kindling every grace into a ſudden flame.

Paul. But why then does not every grace flame out?—Why is not your heart like the chariots of Amminadib? And your title to Heaven clear "from a conſciouſneſs of ſanctifying operations in your own breaſt"? If your Faith is "a vital, an operative, a victorious principle," why

(1) D. *p.* 182. (2) D. *p.* 182, 183. (3) D. *p.* 187, 203. (4) D. *p.* 206. (5) D. *p.* 207. (6) *Vol. I. Edit. I. p.* 251. (7) *Vol. I. Edit. I. p.* 252. (8) *Vol. I. Edit. I p.* 259. (9) *Vol. I. Edit. I. p.* 278. (10) *Vol. II. Edit. II. p.* 303. (11) D. *p.* 336.

cannot you obtain a full aſſurance from that "grand characteriſtic, which diſtinguiſhes the ſterling from the counterfeit," in this world; and which "will diſtinguiſh the true believer from the hypocritical profeſſor, even at the great tribunal;" And without which, you are in fact "deſtitute of ſpiritual, and have no title to eternal life"?

Ther. Once I had this evidence, as I thought, clear in my favour. But by experience I found at length, that no ſteady laſting aſſurance could be had this way. For my graces were moſtly "as the ſtars at noon," quite inviſible: Or at beſt, "as a glow-worm in the night," but juſt to be ſeen. So that the "little aſſurance" I had, was very unſteady. Yea, looking for marks of grace, I found "rather increaſed my doubts;" as I could not but diſcern more evidences againſt me, than for me. Therefore I gave up this way, as tending to perpetual uncertainty. And as a more direct way to aſſurance and peace, I learnt to live by Faith; to go to God, and ſay, "pardon is mine, &c."

Paul. And all, my dear Theron, "without any evidence from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon." Yea, in direct oppoſition to your own Aſpaſio, who affirms, that Faith is "a vital, operative, victorious principle." Pray how do you know, that your Faith is ſterling, and not counterfeit?—Be quite impartial, and ſay, is it not to be feared, that your Faith is what Saint James calls a *dead Faith?*

Ther. But the time once was, when I was full of light, love and joy.

Paul. Yes. Like a "torch in a ſheaf," all in a flame of love, to think your ſins were pardoned. But you ſee, that this ſort of love, like the Iſraelites joy at the ſide of the Red-Sea, does not laſt long. But like the ſtony-ground, it endures for a while, and then comes to nothing. And your graces are now no more to be ſeen than "the ſtars at noon." And you muſt give up your aſſurance, or take another courſe to ſupport it, and another courſe, indeed, you take—to live by Faith? "Without any evidence," as Mr. Marſhall owns, whoſe book your Aſpaſio values next to the Bible—without any evidence "from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon." And is this that glorious Faith, your Aſpaſio once ſo highly extolled! Is all come to this at laſt!

Ther. Yes.—And did not Abraham thus live by Faith? who *againſt Hope believed in Hope.* Rom. iv. 18. And was

not this the way of Saints in general under the old Teſtament? When *they walked in darkneſs and ſaw no light*, they *truſted in the Lord, and ſtayed themſelves on their God.* Iſai. l. 10. And was not this the way of Saints in the Apoſtolic age? *They walked by Faith, and not by ſight.* 2 Cor. v. 7. David checked himſelf for doubting. *Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul?* Pſal. xlii. And Aſaph looked upon it as his ſin. Pſal. lxxvii. 10. *I ſaid, this is my infirmity.*—And Chriſt often upbraided his diſciples for their unbelief. And St. Paul charges the Hebrew converts not to *caſt away their confidence.* Heb. x. 25.

Paul. Pray, my dear Theron, take your Bible, and read the ſeveral texts you refer to; read what goes before, and what follows after; and you may eaſily ſee, not one of them is to your purpoſe. God had promiſed to give Abraham a ſon, although his wife was not only barren, but alſo by reaſon of age paſt child-bearing: and notwithſtanding the difficulties in the way of its accompliſhment, Abraham believed the divine promiſe.—God had by the mouth of Samuel promiſed to give David the kingdom of Iſrael.—But he was baniſhed from his country, and from God's ſanctuary: his enemies taunted; yea, and his life was in continual danger. So that he was ready ſometimes to ſay, *I ſhall periſh one day by the hand of Saul.* But then again he checked himſelf for giving way to ſuch unreaſonable diſcouragement; after the expreſs promiſe of God to him. *Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul!* However, through all the pſalm he appears conſcious to the exerciſe of grace in his heart, and diſcovers not the leaſt doubt of the goodneſs of his ſtate. See Pſal. xlii.—So the captives in Babylon had an expreſs promiſe, that after ſeventy years they ſhould return to Zion. But ſuch an event, ſituate as they were, ſeemed incredible. Every thing looked dark. They had no light. They ſaw no way for their return. But God had promiſed it; and therefore, they (who feared the Lord, and obeyed his voice. i. e. who were "conſcious of ſanctifying operations in their own breaſts") for their encouragement, are exhorted to caſt their burden upon their God, and put an implicit faith in his wiſdom, power and veracity; and truſt in him to accompliſh his word. (Read from Iſai. xlix. 13. to Iſai l. 10.)—So Aſaph knew he was a ſincere godly man; as is evident from the ſeventy-third pſalm, throughout. But he was ſo overwhelmed with

a view of the calamitous ſtate of God's church and people, (ſee Pſal. lxxii. 20. and read the eleven pſalms following, entitled Pſalms of Aſaph) that ſometimes (like thoſe in Iſai. xlix. 14,) he was ready to ſink under diſcouragement, as though God had quite caſt off his church and people for ever. For which he checketh himſelf, and endeavours to raiſe his hopes, from a remembrance of God's wonderful works to Iſrael of old, in bringing them out of Egypt. Pſal. lxxvii. So the Chriſtian Hebrews knew the ſincerity of their hearts, and the goodneſs of their ſtate, by the fruits of holineſs. Heb. vi. 9, 10. 11. And the confidence, that St. Paul exhorts them to hold faſt, was their confidence of the truth of Chriſtianity; for the profeſſion of which, they had already ſuffered much, and were likely to ſuffer more: and yet if they drew back, and renounced Chriſtianity, it would coſt them their ſouls. Heb. x. 23, 39.—And though it is true, our Saviour upbraided his diſciples for not believing he was riſen from the dead, of which they had ſufficient evidence, &c. yet neither they, nor any other perſon, from the beginning of Geneſis, to the end of the Revelation, were ever blamed for doubting their title to eternal life, while their evidences were not clear.

Yea, our Saviour was ſo far from encouraging his followers to this blind Faith, this bold preſumption, that his whole Sermon on the Mount is directly levelled againſt it. None are pronounced bleſſed, but thoſe who are endowed with holy and divine qualifications of heart, and lead anſwerable lives. And though men were endowed with the miraculous gifts of the holy ſpirit, and *propheſied in Chriſt's name, and in his name caſt out Devils, and did many wonderful works*, and made a great profeſſion, and had high confidence, crying, *Lord, Lord;* as our Saviour foreſaw many would: Yet if they were not under the real government of that divine temper, deſcribed in that ſermon throughout, our Saviour affirms, that at the day of Judgment he would bid them depart. Matth. vii. 21, 27.—To go on, therefore, after all this—confident we ſhall have eternal life, though unconſcious of ſanctifying operations in our own breaſts,—is,—forgive me, Theron,—is, I ſay, little better than down-right infidelity. Yea, did we believe our Saviour to be an impoſtor, we might with leſs difficulty expect to get to Heaven in ſuch a way. For as ſure as he was a Meſſenger ſent from God, ſo ſure ſhall we find the

doctrine contained in his Sermon on the Mount verified at that great day, when he shall come to judge the world.—Wherefore, *be not deceived*, O my Theron! *God will not be mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap.* Gal. vi. 7.

To refer to those words of St. Paul (2 Cor. v. 7.) *We walk by Faith, and not by sight*, as you do, and to imagine, that St. Paul and the primitive Christians lived at such a low, blind, presumptuous rate, casts infinite reproach upon Christianity. For they all, with unveiled faces, *beheld as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and were changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.* 2 Cor. iii. 18.—And divine and eternal things all lay open, as it were, to the Apostle's view. He looked at them; he saw them; he believed them: A sense of their infinite importance penetrated his heart. He was clean carried above all the goods and ills of this present world—and like the Sun in the firmament, he kept on a steady course, till he had finished his race, and obtained a crown of righteousness.—And thus HE *lived by Faith.* 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18. and 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.—Yea, it was an avowed principle, in the Apostolic age, to judge of the goodness of their state, by the holiness of their hearts and lives. 1 Joh. iii. 6. *Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not: Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.* Ver. 7. *Let no man deceive you.* Ver. 8. *He that committeth sin, is of the Devil.* Ver. 9. *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin.* Ver. 10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil.*—This was the Apostolic criterion:—and therefore, if any pretended to conversion, if any pretended to be acquainted with Christ, who lived not according to our Saviour's instructions, particularly in his Sermon on the Mount, this was his doom; he was branded for a liar. 1 Joh. ii. 4. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

Ther. I grant, the Saints in Scripture usually speak the language of assurance; but I always thought, "we had no cause to judge, that this assurance was grounded on the certainty of their own good qualifications.(1)"

Paul. Was not Abraham certain of his sincerity, when

(1) M. *p.* 184.

out of love and obedience to God he left his father's houſe and native country; and at one word ſpeaking, felt a heart prepared to offer up his beloved Iſaac? Was not Moſes certain of his ſincerity, when out of love to the cauſe of God, he deſpiſed all the treaſures of Egypt; and afterwards felt he had rather die—had rather have his name blotted out of the book of the living, than that God ſhould not effectually take care of the honour of his own great name? Was not Job certain of his ſincerity, when with ſuch calmneſs he ſaid, *the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; and bleſſed be the name of the Lord?* Yea, did not he conſtantly aſſert his ſincerity through all his trials? Job xxxi. 1, 40. *O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day*, ſays David. Pſal. cxix. 97. *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth I deſire beſides thee*, ſays Aſaph. Pſal. lxxiii. 25. *I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart*, ſays Hezekiah, looking death in the face. Iſai, xxxviii. 3. *Thou knoweſt that I love thee*, ſays Peter. Joh, xxi. 17. *Our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity and Godly ſincerity, we have had our converſation in the world*, ſays Paul. 2 Cor. i. 12. But why do I mention particulars? For this, even this, is the way in which all Scriptural Saints attained aſſurance. 1 Joh. ii. 3. *Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* And had you lived in the Apoſtolic age, O my Theron, I doubt not, all good people would have been ready, on hearing ſuch talk as you have been too much carried away with, to cry out—*But know, thou vain man, that Faith without works, is dead.* Jam. ii: 20.

Ther. "If, in ſuch a manner, we ſhould acquire ſome little aſſurance, how ſoon may it be unſettled by the incurſions of temptation, or deſtroyed by the inſurrection of remaining ſin! At ſuch a juncture, how will it keep its ſtanding! How retain its being! It will fare like a tottering wall before the tempeſt; or be *as the ruſh without mire, and the flag without water.* Job. viii. 11." (1)

Paul. 'Tis true, when the ſtorm ariſes, the houſe that is built upon the ſand, will be "like a tottering wall before the tempeſt." And "*as the ruſh without mire, and the flag without water,*" *ſo the hypocrite's hope ſhall periſh.* Job viii.

(1) D. *p.* 362.

11, 13. But in true Saints, their Faith is "a victorious principle." *For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: And this is the victory, that overcometh the world, even our Faith.* 1 Joh. v. 3. Nor shall any ever be admitted to *eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God,* but *he that overcometh.* This is the message which Christ, since his exaltation in Heaven, has sent to his church on Earth. Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, 26, and iii. 5, 12, 21, and xxi. 7. And therefore, *blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the City.*— Rev. xxii. 14.

Ther. But are there not some, who are but *babes in Christ?*

Paul. Yes. And *as new-born babes,* they *desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby* (1 Pet. ii. 2,) and as they grow up *unto a perfect man* (Eph. iv. 13,) their assurance increases in exact proportion. 2 Pet. i. 5, 10.

Ther. This doctrine of yours, "I fear," will wound weak Christians, and "perplex the simple minded. (1)

Paul. This doctrine, so plainly taught by Jesus Christ, and by all his Apostles, were it once thoroughly understood and firmly believed, would not only "wound" and "perplex" presumptuous hypocrites; but even slay its thousands, yea, its ten thousands: while the righteous would flourish like the green bay-tree, nourished up by such sound and good doctrine. For never did assurance, true and genuine assurance, so abound among professors, as in the Apostolic age, when this was the doctrine universally in vogue. And then the holy lives of their converts were so "exemplary, that they won the favour, and commanded the respect of all the people." And Christianity, thus adorned by the constant behaviour of its professors, gained ground every where, in spite of all the efforts of Earth and Hell. Whereas, in the days of Luther, in the days of Cromwell, and in our day, when your kind of assurance has been so much in vogue, the lives of many professors have been such as to bring reproach upon Christianity, in the sight of the world. It was this, that prejudiced the Papists against the Reformation in Luther's time. It was this, that prejudiced England against experimental religion in Cromwell's time. And it is this, it is this, O

(1) D. *p.* 361.

my Theron, that has brought vital piety into ſuch general contempt in New England, in theſe late years. Our oppoſers cried, "Let us wait, and ſee how theſe converts will turn out a few years hence." They waited—and are confirmed in their infidelity: And thouſands ſeem to be gone off to the Arminian ſcheme, or worſe.—Could I ſpeak, O my Theron, with a voice like that of the Arch-Angel, when he ſhall wake up all the ſleeping dead, I would ſound an alarm to all God's people through the Chriſtian world, warn them againſt this deluſion, and invite them to return back to the old Apoſtolic doctrine.

Ther. But, dear ſir, it is not poſſible for me to maintain aſſurance in this way. To ſuppoſe that my inherent graces, which are ſo difficult to be diſcerned, at beſt, and ſo unſteady and precarious, are a proper foundation on which to build a fixed aſſurance, is a doctrine quite romantic.—Yea, you may as well "place the dome of a cathedral on the ſtalk of a tulip." (1) But on the other hand, by the witneſs of the ſpirit, in contra-diſtinction from inherent graces, a firm and unſhaken aſſurance of our eternal ſalvation may be obtained. (2)

Paul. A firm and ſolid rock is this foundation; as he declares, who is the Son of God, and our final judge. No, ſay you, it is rather like "the ſtalk of a tulip!" On what evidence then will you venture your immortal ſoul, for a whole eternity? On the witneſs of the ſpirit? But, O my dear Theron, what good will this witneſs of the ſpirit do you, when you come to die? When the ſtorm riſes, when the rain deſcends, the flood comes, and the wind beats upon your houſe, it will fall; "like a tottering wall before the tempeſt," if not founded on that very rock, pointed out by our bleſſed Saviour. Ten thouſand witneſſes, from ten thouſand ſpirits, will ſtand you in no ſtead. For as true as that Jeſus was the Meſſiah, the man that *heareth his ſayings and doth them not*, ſhall at laſt hear that dreadful word, *Depart, depart, I know you not—I know you not, ye workers of iniquity.* Then you will find, that *without holineſs, no man ſhall ſee the Lord.* Heb. xii. 14. And then you will ſee that ſaying, now to you ſo incredible, made the teſt of admiſſion into Heaven. *No man can be Chriſt's*

(1) *D. p.* 361. (2) *M. p.* 184, 188.

disciple, unless he love him more than father and mother, wife and children, houses and lands, yea, more than his own life. Mat. x. 37, 38. Luk. xiv. 25, 33. You may come to the *door* and *knock*, and cry, *Lord, Lord, open to me;* and tell him you firmly believed in your heart, you should have eternal life: But if you are found a worker of iniquity, he will bid you depart.—You may cry for mercy; but your cries will be for ever in vain.—That spirit, O my Theron, which would make you believe your state to be good, when according to Scripture it is bad, is not the holy spirit, by which the Scriptures were inspired; nor is its testimony to be credited.

Ther. "But if I must try the witness of the Spirit, by the sincerity of my graces, the testimony of the spirit will stand me in no stead." (1)

Paul. If you trust to the testimony of the spirit, without any regard to the sincerity of your graces, you have nothing but a spirit, a naked spirit, to depend upon. And if your spirit should prove to be Satan, transformed into an Angel of light, you are deluded—your soul is lost—for ever lost.

Ther. But if we must first know by our inherent graces, that we are the children of God, this would render the witness of the spirit needless.

Paul. Unless we first know that we have these inherent graces, we can never be assured of our good estate, according to our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount. Pray mind this, my dear Theron.

Ther. Then you deny the immediate witness of the spirit, I suppose.

Paul. This immediate witness of the spirit, which you plead for, is certainly contrary to Scripture. For, it will tell a man, his state is good, when according to God's word, it is bad. And, which is directly to the case in hand, it leads men to build their assurance, not on that rock our Saviour points out as the only safe foundation, but on something entirely different: And, I am sorry to say it, tempts men to compare what our Saviour calls a rock, to the stalk of a tulip. This spirit, therefore, being contrary to Scripture, is not the spirit of God, but the spirit of delusion.

(1) *M. p.* 188.

Ther. What then, can the witneſs of the ſpirit be?

Paul. The deſign of a witneſs is, to prove a point, to make t evident and certain; that we may believe it without the leaſt doubt. And the proof muſt be legal proof, or it will not paſs in law. Now, the point to be proved, is, that I am a child of God, a true diſciple of Chriſt; and ſo entitled to eternal life. For, none but the children of God, and true diſciples of Chriſt, are entitled to Heaven, according to the word of God: Which is the only rule whereby all are finally to be judged. But Chriſt affirms, that *no man can be his diſciple, unleſs he love him more than father or mother, wife or children, houſes or lands, yea, more than his own life:* And aſſures us in the moſt plain and expreſs manner, that all who expect to go to Heaven, not having ſuch hearts and lives as he deſcribes in his Sermon, ſhall certainly be diſappointed. If, therefore, the ſpirit of God means to make it evident to me, that I am a child of God, a diſciple of Chriſt, and ſo an heir of Heaven, it will be, it muſt be, by a proof that will ſtand in law, a proof the Bible allows to be good. Otherwiſe, no credit is to be given to it: unleſs we will ſet aſide this infallible law-book, by which all the Chriſtian world is to be judged.—If the proof will not paſs with our final judge, it ought not to paſs with us now. But no proof will paſs with our final judge, but what quadrates with the forementioned declarations of our Saviour. For he will not recede from his own words. Therefore, there is but this one way to prove to my conſcience, that I am a child of God, a diſciple of Chriſt, and ſo an heir of glory; there is but one thing that can poſſibly convince me; namely, for the ſpirit of God to give me ſuch an heart as the children of God, and true diſciples of Chriſt have, according to the plain declarations of the Goſpel. By this I may know; and by nothing ſhort of this. If this evidence is doubtful, no other can—no other ſhould ſatisfy me. If this is plain, no other is neceſſary in order to a full aſſurance. Therefore, then the *ſpirit of God witneſſeth with my ſpirit that I am a child of God,* when by a large communication of divine grace, this is made plain beyond all doubt. I feel the heart of a child towards God; a heart full of love, reverence, truſt, obedience; a heart to go to him as a child to a father; or in other words, the ſpirit of adoption, whereby I cry, *Abba,*

Father. And by this I know I am a child of God. And *if a child, then an heir, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ.* Rom. viii. 16, 17, compared with verse 1, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14. All true believers had *this seal of the Spirit* in the Apostolic age. Eph. i. 13. And for ought that you or I know, all true believers have had it in all succeeding ages ever since. 'Tis certain they have in some degree. And it is certain, no full assurance can be had, that is genuine and good, unless they have it in such a degree, as to be plain beyond all dispute.

Ther. I used to think the Spirit helped us immediately, not by the evidences of internal graces, but immediately, without any medium, without any evidence, to see our interest in the love of God, as held forth in the absolute unconditional grant of the Gospel. So that one might say, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine; not because I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast, but because all these blessings are absolutely made over to me in the everlasting Gospel." This deed of conveyance, thus seen by the help of the Spirit, was the grand demonstration of my right to pardon and salvation. And now, *believing the love that God hath unto us, we love him because he first loved us:* And so our love to God, and other graces, are a kind of secondary evidence; without any regard to which, we may, yea, previous to which, we must, have assurance by the direct act of Faith. For it is this assurance, this assurance alone, which inkindles our love and all our graces. (1)

Paul. But it has been already proved, that these blessings are not made over to us, as Sinners, absolutely and unconditionally; but only to those who are in Christ by a true and living Faith. Yours, my dear Theron, forgive me this freedom, yours is a false Gospel—a false spirit—a false Faith—a false love—all is false. Built at bottom, on no evidence "from Scripture, sense, or reason."

Ther. But amidst all this error and delusion, how shall we know the truth!

Paul. By making the written word our rule, our only rule. Once the question was, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, *art thou he that should come? Or, look we for another? Go and shew* John, said our blessed Saviour, *those things which ye*

(1) *D. p.* 358, 359, 360, 361, 362. *M. p.* 184, 188.

do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, and the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them. Matth. xi. 3, 4, 5. These were the characters of the Messiah, according to the sacred writings of the old Testament; and to these he appeals. Now the question is concerning Theron, is he a true believer, a real convert, a Christian, that our Lord will own at the day of judgment? Well, go read, say I, our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount. *Blessed are the poor in spirit—blessed are they that mourn—the meek,* &c. &c. to the end. And see; Is my Theron a man of this character? If so, his house is built upon a rock: If not, it is built upon the sand. If the holy spirit has wrought so great a miracle as to make you such a man, this is what the Devil cannot do. This is such a witness of the spirit, as will pass at the great tribunal: and you will need no other. But without this, ten thousand revelations will avail you nothing. Nay, but that will be your certain doom, *I know you not, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.*

Had one appeared, and claimed to be the Messiah, without performing those mighty works our Saviour did;—would any have been obliged to give credit to his testimony? No surely. And does a spirit come, and testify that my Theron is a child of God, without performing the mighty work of sanctification? Is Theron obliged to give credit to its witness? By no means. If the holy spirit *takes away the heart of stone, and gives you an heart of flesh; writes God's law in your heart, and puts truth in your inward part, so that you walk in his statutes and keep his commandments*—the work is done. You are a true convert. You will be saved. But without this—all is nothing.

Ther. But have not many good men had this immediate witness and testimony of the spirit, I am pleading for?

Paul. How can you know, my dear Theron, that ever there was a good man, since the foundation of the world, who had this witness? We have no instance in Scripture, nor does the word of God lead us ever to look for such a thing.

Ther. How can I know?—Strange question! When some of the best men in the world have held to the immediate witness.

Paul. If we do certainly know our good eſtate by our ſanctification; is not the immediate witneſs needleſs? If men do not certainly know they are good men, by their ſanctification; who on Earth can tell, but that they are hypocrites? And ſo, but that their immediate witneſs comes from the Devil? If they cannot tell—to be ſure, you and I can't. Nor will their immediate witneſs prove the contrary; unleſs you can demonſtrate, that Satan never transforms himſelf into an Angel of light. Beſides, men may "hold to the immediate witneſs" that never had it, through ſome miſtake. And if men have aſſurance by their ſanctification, it is not very likely that God ſhould make them an immediate revelation, merely to clear up a point already clear: i. e. work a kind of miracle, when there is no need of it. Beſides, my dear Theron, how will you know, whether your immediate revelation comes from God, or from the Devil? Will you know by the fruits? No. For this is to "try the witneſs of the ſpirit by the ſincerity of your graces." And then, as you ſay, "the teſtimony of the ſpirit will ſtand you in no ſtead," will be of no ſervice. Will you know without any reſpect to the fruits? But how? Leave holineſs out of the account, and what is there of this kind, but what the devil can do? If he can, how do you know but he will? How do you know but he does? Go to the Anabaptiſts in Germany, in Luther's time—go to the enthuſiaſts in England, in Cromwell's time, and ſee what the Devil has done in former ages.—Yea, I could name towns and perſons in New-England, where and in whom Satan's mighty works have been to be ſeen, within leſs than twenty years ago. All the country knows, that ſome who appeared to have the higheſt confidence of a title to Heaven, have ſufficiently proved to the world, that they were deluded by their immoral lives ſince. Will you after all, ſay, that it is a ſin to doubt?—And that you ought to be ſtrong in Faith, and give glory to God? Yet you muſt remember, that it is all, "without any evidence from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon." And this you know! And this you own!

Who, my dear Theron—who that hath a ſoul to ſave, would, with his eyes open, dare to venture his ALL for ETERNITY, on ſuch a foundation as this! But, which is ſtill more ſurpriſing, who among all rational creatures, can look upon that foundation, which Chriſt himſelf calls

a rock, but as the ſtalk of a tulip, compared with this ! (1)

Oh, my dear Theron, you will excuſe me this freedom, this kind and well-meant freedom. A Miniſter of Chriſt ought not to flatter. Nor is it your intereſt to be ſoothed. The plain naked honeſt truth is what we all need to know. See with your own eyes. Judge for your own ſelf. For your own precious immortal ſoul lies at ſtake.

As to the three queſtions you propoſed, you have now my opinion, and the ſum is this.—The true convert having, in regeneration, had his eyes open to behold the glory of God and Jeſus Chriſt, the glory of the law and of the Goſpel, he approves of the law as holy, juſt, and good ; he believes the Goſpel to be from God, acquieſces in that way of life, truſts in Chriſt, the great Mediator, returns home to God through him, to be forever the Lord's : and being united to Chriſt by Faith, he receives the holy ſpirit to dwell in him forever. In conſequence of which, he brings forth fruit ; growing in grace, and perſevering therein, through all changes and trials, to the end of his life. And ſo, an aſſurance of a title to eternal life is in ſuch ſort attainable by believers, in all ordinary caſes, that it muſt be owing to their fault, if they do not enjoy it. However, no honeſt man ought to believe his ſtate to be good, with more confidence than in exact proportion to his evidence. Nor is there any evidence, that will paſs with our final judge, or that ought to be of any weight with us, but real holineſs. A communication of divine grace, in a large and very ſenſible degree, is that whereby the ſpirit of God makes it evident to our conſciences beyond all doubt, that we are the children of God ; and not by an immediate revelation.

Ther. But what do you think of the caſe of backſliders? May not they be in the dark about their ſtate ? And what ought they to do ?

Paul. They may be in the dark, and full of doubts and fears ; nor can they ever find reſt to their ſouls, until they remember from whence they have fallen, repent and return home to God through Jeſus Chriſt. As their departing from God is the ſource of all their woe ; ſo their caſe

(1) *The reader may ſee this ſubject, viz. The witneſs of the ſpirit, thoroughly diſcuſſed in Mr. Edwards, on Religious Affections.*

admits of no remedy, but to repent and return to God through Jesus Christ again. It would do a backslider no good, to go to God, and say, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." For his religion does not grow up from this belief; but from *beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord*. But I have not time to enter upon this subject. I recommend to you Mr. Shepard, on the Parable of the Ten Virgins; in which if some expressions are not so accurate, yet on the whole, it is one of the best books I know of, for Saints under backslidings. It is so useful a book, that I wish there was one of them in every Christian family.

Here, my dear Aspasio, the conversation stopt—I sat silent—I was self-condemned.—Eternity all opened to my view—"I am a lost creature—Heaven pity my case"!—The tears rolled from my eyes—I could conceal my case no longer—I was persuaded Paulinus had a tender compassionate heart—therefore, I addressed him in the following manner.

Ther. Indeed, sir, I need not hear you upon the case of a backsliding Saint.—I have heard enough already—I am convinced I was never right.—I thought so before I came to see you: and all you have said has confirmed me in this opinion.—I have acted the part of a disputant; but I have done it only for light, to see what answers you would make to what might be said.—Alas! I have all to begin anew!—Just every step I have taken, is wrong. My first manifestation of the love of Christ and pardon of my sins, was wrong: the thing revealed for the truth, was a lie.—My first act of Faith was wrong: the thing believed for truth, was a lie.—My love and joy, and all my religion was wrong: only the result of self-love and delusion——My living by Faith was wrong: It was only quieting my conscience, by holding fast my delusion.—My aversion to sanctification's being the only evidence of a good estate, was wrong: I could not stand trial by that test; and yet nothing else will pass at the great tribunal, with my final judge. But I could have no comfort this way. It tended only to doubts and fears. And doubts and fears tended to destroy all my religion.—All my religion was founded in delusion; nor was there any way for it to subsist, but to hold fast delusion, and refuse to let it go. I have been

doing so now for a long time, and had continued to do so to my dying day, had not some of those texts of Scripture you have so often referred to, given me a shock. And last week I had such awful apprehensions of the dreadfulness of eternal damnation, the amazing dreadfulness of going into eternity self-deceived, as penetrated my very heart. This induced me to make you these visits. And now you see my case—my dreadful case! O dear Paulinus, be you my friend, my spiritual guide!—What shall I do?

Paul. How much are poor lost Sinners in this benighted world to be pitied! Generally their days—their precious days, are spent away secure in sin! If at any time they are a little awakened to see their danger, how apt are they to take any way for comfort, but the right! Matth. vii. 13, 14. We are actually in so ruined a state, that unless God interposes, of his mere sovereign grace, and by the influences of his blessed spirit guides us, we shall wander from the narrow road, get lost and perish! Matth. xi. 25. We are enemies to God, blind to his beauty, disinclined to a reconciliation, averse to real holiness: and any kind of false religion suits such depraved hearts, better than the true. Really to love God for his own infinite amableness, to choose him for our portion, to look upon sin as an infinite evil, to esteem the law, as holy, just, and good, which requires sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation, and to place all our dependence on free grace through Jesus Christ, are, of all things, most contrary to our corrupt biasses. Our native disinclination to the right way, renders us apt to take the wrong: and having once took it, obstinately to persist in it. (1) Happy for you, my dear Theron, that you are brought so far to see your error!

(1) *Jonah ii.* 8. They that observe lying Vanities, forsake their own mercy. *i. e. go contrary to their own interest.—How often have these words been applied, by some writers, to persuade Christless Sinners to believe, that all the blessings of the Gospel are their own! When rather they stand as a warning to all, not to* observe lying Vanities, *lest they* forsake their own mercy, *and go contrary to their own eternal interest. Nothing being more contrary to the interest of a poor Sinner, than to believe delusion, and settle down on a false foundation.*

And for your future conduct, take these hints.——

(1) Beware you return not to that flesh-pleasing, presumptuous way of living, which had well nigh proved your ruin. Your friends may invite you back; your love of ease and present comfort, will second all their arguments, and give them ten-fold more weight than they really have.—Know it, O my Theron, there is a long eternity before you. It is worth your while to *strive to enter in at the strait gate*: Yea, to *take the kingdom of Heaven by violence*. (1) Therefore, count no self-denial, no pains, no endeavours too great; but *do with thy might, what thy hand findeth to do*.

(2) It is absolutely necessary, that you see your need of Christ, in order to come to him.—Coming to Christ, in its own nature, supposes, that we see our need of him.—You cannot see what you need Christ for, unless you see your true character and state according to law. The law is the appointed school-master, to lead Sinners to Christ. The law requires perfect obedience, on pain of eternal damnation. It requires us to love God with all our heart, as being infinitely lovely. The least defect merits eternal woe. If you take measure by this law, as your rule, your true character will appear—*dead in sin*; at *enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be*.—And if you judge of your state, according to this law, you are *condemned already*, and the *wrath of God abideth on you*. you are lost—you stand guilty before God. And if the law is holy, just and good, your mouth is stopt. The Lord is *righteous when he speaketh and clear when he judgeth*, although you should perish for ever. All this you must see. Yea, you must feel it, through and through your heart, as did the Apostle Paul. *The commandment came, sin revived, and I died*. It is for want of thorough conviction, that so many awakened Sinners take up with false comfort. Their wound was never searched to the bottom:—It was skinned over too soon. And such slighty cures, though more easily performed, may prove fatal in the end. But let your legal convictions be ever so deep, you will perish, unless of his mere sovereign grace.——

(1) *Mr. Edwards's Sermons on pressing into the kingdom, and on the justice of God in the damnation of Sinners, are proper for such as Theron.*

(3) *He who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, ſhines in your heart, to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt.*—You are blind, quite blind, to the divine beauty. And conſequently, blind to the beauty of the divine law. And ſo, conſequently, blind too to the beauty of Chriſt, as dying to anſwer the demands of the law. And conſequently under the power of unbelief. Every unregenerate man has the ſpirit of infidelity in his heart. 1 Joh. v. 1. Rom. x. 9. Pſal. xiv. 1. You can never cordially believe, that the Son of God became incarnate, and died to anſwer the demands of a law, in its own nature too ſevere. Such a ſubſtitution cannot appear to be of God, glorious and divine; but rather ſhocking! You can never heartily approve of the law (which requires us to love God for his own divine excellencies, with all our hearts, on pain of eternal damnation for the leaſt defect) as holy, juſt and good, unleſs God appears in your eyes as ONE INFINITELY LOVELY.—So depraved are you, ſo entirely devoid of a reliſh for divine beauty, that God never will appear thus amiable in your eyes, unleſs you are born of the ſpirit, have divine life immediately communicated to you from God, have a ſupernatural and divine ſenſe, taſte, reliſh, imparted to you from on high. Your heart is like the chaos; the Earth was *without form and void, and darkneſs was upon the face of the deep.* And dark, eternally dark, it would have been, had not God ſaid, *Let there be light.* So unleſs *he who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, ſhines in your heart,* you will abide in eternal darkneſs, blind to divine beauty; to the glories of God and Chriſt, of Law and Goſpel. And if the Goſpel continues thus hid from you, you are loſt, forever loſt. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 6.

If the divine law, in itſelf, is not holy, juſt and good, Chriſt's dying to anſwer its demands cannot make it ſo.—If the law was too ſevere, Chriſt's death was a moſt ſhocking affair! A diſlike of the divine law, as too rigorous, is the root of all the chief errors in the Chriſtian world; yea, it is the root of the prevailing infidelity of the preſent age. And it now lies at the bottom of all your hard thoughts of God, O my Theron; which the Devil is not the author of, as ſome imagine, in ſuch caſes. And is a mighty bar to your believing in Chriſt. And nothing can effectually

remove it, but divine light, imparted in regeneration. (1)

(4) Bid a final adieu to vain and carnal companions, to all ſinful and carnal pleaſures and paſtimes, and to every known ſin; all which tend to ſtupify the heart. And by reading, meditation, and prayer, endeavour with all your might to obtain a realizing ſenſe of your true character and ſtate. Caſt yourſelf at the foot of ſovereign grace, and cry, with the blind man, *Lord, that I might receive my ſight!* "That I may ſee and know what I am, what I deſerve, what I need; and the only way to obtain relief, by free grace through Jeſus Chriſt." However, that you may not truſt in your own doings to recommend you to the divine favour, nor be encouraged from your own goodneſs to hope for mercy, conſtantly remember——

(1) *No man can underſtandingly and heartily look to, truſt in, or depend upon the mediation of Chriſt, unleſs he ſees his need of him as a mediator. No man can ſee his need of the mediation of Chriſt, unleſs he ſees that which renders his mediation needful. Now the goodneſs and excellency of the divine law, which we have broke, is the only thing which originally rendered the mediation of Chriſt needful. But for this, the Sinner might have been ſaved without a mediator, without an atonement, as well as with. Nay, better. For if the law were too ſevere, it had evidently been more honourable for God to have repealed, or abated it, than to have appointed his Son to anſwer its demands in our ſtead.*

Some ſeem to think, that the law, although ſuited to the ſtrength of man before the fall, and ſo a good law for an innocent, holy creature, yet is too rigorous for a fallen world. And therefore imagine, that Chriſt died to purchaſe an abatement, and to bring it down to a level with our preſent weakneſs.—But if the law was too ſevere, the juſtice of the divine nature would have moved the governor of the world to have made all proper abatements; nor was the death of Chriſt needful in the caſe. Surely Chriſt need not die, merely to get juſtice done us.

Some ſeem to look upon God the father, as all made up of wrath, the Sinner's enemy: And on God the Son, as all made up of love, the Sinner's friend. And imagine, he died to aſſwage his Father's anger, and move his compaſſions towards poor Sinners. And ſo they love Chriſt, while they hate God and his law.—But this is all a mere chimera. The Father

(5) That the divine law, which you are under, requires that you love GOD for himſelf; whereas, all you do is merely from ſelf-love. Yea, it requires you to love God with all your heart; whereas, there is no love to God in your heart. And it requires this ſinleſs perfection on pain of eternal damnation, for the leaſt defect; ſo that by the law you are already condemned. By mere law you are therefore abſolutely and forever undone. You ſtand guilty before God.—But mere law is the rule of right, and ſtandard of juſtice. If juſtice ſhould take place, you then ſee your doom. There is no hope from this quarter.—Wherefore you lie at the mercy of God, his mere mercy, who is abſolutely unobliged to grant you any relief, for any thing you can do. He might juſtly have left all mankind in this ſtate, without a Saviour. And he may, on the ſame grounds, as juſtly leave you in this ſtate, without a Sanctifier. He did not give his Son to ſave this loſt world, for our righteouſneſs ſake: Yea, had we been righteous, we ſhould not have needed his Son to die in our ſtead.—Nor does God give his holy ſpirit, to convert any poor periſhing Sinner, for his righteouſneſs ſake: Yea, it is his being entirely deſtitute of all that is ſpiritually good, and

is as full of love and goodneſs, as the Son. The Son is as holy and juſt, as great a friend to the law, and as great an enemy to ſin, as the Father. They are both of one heart. Yea, they are both one God. Joh. x. 30.

Some ſeem to reſolve the whole of God's law and government, and the death of Chriſt, into the mere arbitrary will of God: As though the whole were not the reſult of wiſdom, of infinite wiſdom, but rather of mere arbitrary will. But it does not appear, by Scripture or otherwiſe, that the infinitely wiſe God ever determines any thing without reaſon, or does any thing but what is wiſe for him to do. But rather the whole of divine revelation joins to confirm the truth of St. Paul's obſervation, that God worketh all things after the COUNSEL of his own will. *Eph. i.* 11. *All his perfections, if I may ſo ſpeak, ſit in council: And all his decrees and works are the reſult of infinite holineſs, juſtice and goodneſs, directed by infinite wiſdom.*

There is but one way to ſolve the difficulty. There is but one thing can ever ſatisfy our hearts. A ſight of the glory of

dead in sin, that occasions his standing in perishing need of converting grace. And although all the promises of God are in Christ Jesus, *Yea, and in him amen;* yet, as to those who are out of Christ, they are so far from being entitled to the promises, that *the wrath of God abideth on them.*—Therefore——

(6) If ever you are *renewed by the holy Ghost*, it will be, not for any goodness in you, but merely from God's self-moving mercy, and sovereign grace, through Jesus Christ, Tit. iii. 5, 6.

(7) How dreadful soever this representation makes your case appear; yet, if this is your true state, you must see it, that you may know your need of Christ and free grace, and be in a capacity, understandingly, to give a proper reception to the glad tidings of the Gospel, viz. That through Christ, God is ready to be reconciled to the returning penitent, who justifies God, approves his law, quits all claims, and looks only to free grace, through Jesus Christ, for salvation. Luk. xviii. 13. Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26.

(8) Saving Faith consists in looking to free grace, through Jesus Christ, for salvation; thus viewing God's law, and your own case, as they really be. And he that thus *believeth, shall be saved.* Therefore, *repent and be converted, and your sins shall be blotted out. Behold, now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation!* And by me, one of Christ's ministers, *God does beseech you to be re-*

the God of glory, will open to view the grounds and reasons of the law, and convince us that it is holy, just and good, glorious and amiable, and worthy to be kept in credit, to be magnified and made honourable, by the obedience and death of the Son of God.—But then if the law is good, we who have broke it, are not fit to live. Death is our due. The Judge of all the Earth cannot but do right. His nature, law and honour, call aloud for our destruction. He cannot be just, if he don't destroy us. It will bring everlasting reproach upon his government, to spare us, considered merely as in ourselves. When this is felt in our hearts, then, and not till then, shall we feel our need of Christ, and be prepared to look to the free grace of God thro' the redemption that is in Christ, *and to exercise* Faith in his blood, who was set forth to be a propitiation, to declare God's righteousness, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

conciled, and I pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be you reconciled to God. For God hath made his only begotten Son to be a ſacrifice for ſin, that all who are united to him by a true and living Faith, might return to God with acceptance, and be juſtified, and have eternal life through him.

Ther. Every word you have ſpoken, ſinks down into my ears. The Lord grant, the truth may pierce my heart through and through.—The reſt of my days I will devote to the buſineſs of my ſoul.—I thank you for your kind inſtructions—I beg your prayers—the anguiſh of my heart calls me to retire—Adieu!—dear ſir, Adieu!

Paul. May the only wiſe God be your effectual inſtructor, my Theron!—Adieu!

To my dear Aſpaſio,

Theſe Dialogues are preſented by

YOUR AFFECTIONATE

THERON.

LETTER II.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

New-England, March 12, 1759.

DEAR ASPASIO,

MY melancholy Letter of December laſt, with a copy of the ſubſtance of the converſation I had with Paulinus, at three ſeveral times, you have doubtleſs received long ago, as it is now three months ſince I wrote. If you have been impatient at hearing nothing from your friend for ſo long a time, I more:—toſſed to and fro, for months together, like a feeble ſhip at ſea, in a tempeſtuous night, ready every moment to ſink.

At firſt (I mean after I had left Paulinus, and retired, as I had determined to ſpend much time in meditation and prayer) I called in queſtion a maxim, he ſeemed to take for granted; that "we are all, by nature, under a law, requiring perfect obedience, on pain of eternal damnation": Which he ſo inſiſted was a glorious law, holy, juſt and good.—Thus I thought with myſelf—"Perfect obedience! That is more than we can yield.—And am I for ever loſt for the firſt offence?—How can that be juſt! Can the kind Father of the univerſe, require more of his creature, MAN, than he can do? And then puniſh him with eternal damnation, for not doing!—Can this be right?" Indeed I now felt I had an Arminian heart.

But on a certain evening, as I was reading Saint Paul's Epiſtle to the Romans and Galatians, in which he affirms, that *the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men*; that the very Heathen themſelves *are without excuſe*; that *the whole world ſtand guilty before God, and every mouth ſtopt*; that the law

curseth every man who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them; and that Christ was made *a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse* of that very law; I was greatly shocked and confounded. One while I said, this law cannot be right." But again, I said, "why then was it not repealed? Why did the Son of God bear its curse, and die to answer its demands?" I looked through the Old Testament, I looked through the New; and this notion of the law, I saw was so inwrought into both, that it must be granted; or the whole of divine Revelation given up.—I felt the heart of an infidel—I was full of doubts and scruples as to the truth of the Bible. And when I reflected on the external evidence of divine Revelation, as represented by our late writers, particularly by Doctor Leland, whose view of Deistical Writers, I had lately read, I was drove even to Atheism. For if there is a God, the Bible must be true. But if the Bible is true, the law in all its rigour, is holy, just, and good.

Thus I was unsettled in all my principles, and set afloat as on a boisterous ocean, like a ship without a compass or an helm; in great anxiety and deep perplexity, ready many times to conclude to go back, at all adventures, to my old hope, as the only way for rest: thinking, I had as good live and die on a false-hope, as live and die in despair.

Till on a certain time, I began thus to reason in my heart.—"whence all these doubts, O my soul! Whence all these Arminian, Socinian, deistical, atheistical thoughts! Whence have they all arisen! From viewing the law of God, as *requiring perfect obedience, on pain of eternal damnation*—But why? Had I rather turn an Infidel, than approve the law as holy, just, and good?—Is this my heart! Once I thought I loved God, and loved his law, and loved the Gospel.—Where am I now!" Those words of the Apostle seemed to picture my very case; *The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.* Rom. viii. 7. This text engaged my attention, and fixed my thoughts. And looking into my heart, more and more, I found the spirit of an enemy to God and to his law, in full possession of my soul.

Till now I had entertained, at least sometimes, a secret hope, that my state was good; although it seemed as if I had quite given it up. But now I began in a new manner to see, or rather to feel, I was dead in sin.

A realizing ſenſe of God, as the infinitely great Being, the almighty Governor of the world, holy, and juſt, a ſin-revenging God, a conſuming fire againſt the workers of iniquity, daily grew upon my heart, and ſet home the law, in all its rigour. A freſh view of all my evil ways from my youth up, continually prayed upon my ſpirits—ETERNITY! ETERNITY!—Oh how dreadful it ſeemed! I watched, I prayed, I faſted—I ſpared no pains to obtain an humble, broken, contrite heart. But notwithſtanding my greateſt efforts, my heart grew worſe—my caſe more deſperate: till in the iſſue, I found myſelf abſolutely without ſtrength—dead in ſin—loſt—condemned by law—ſelf-condemned—my mouth ſtopt—guilty before God—I was forced to be ſilent; as it was but fair and right, that God ſhould be an enemy to me, who was an enemy to him; and but juſt, if he ſhould forever caſt me off. And in this caſe I had periſhed, had not mere ſovereign grace interpoſed. But in the midſt of this midnight-darkneſs, when all hope ſeemed to be gone, at a moment when I leaſt expected relief (for, *the commandment came, ſin revived, and I died*) even now, *God, who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, ſhined in my heart.* —Thus was the caſe.

It was in the evening (after the day had been ſpent in faſting and prayer) as I was walking in a neighbouring grove, my thoughts fixed with the utmoſt attention, on God, as a conſuming fire againſt his obſtinate enemies—on the law, as curſing the man that continueth not in all things written therein to do them—on my whole life, as one continued ſeries of rebellion—on my heart, as not only dead to God, and to all good, but full of enmity againſt the divine law and government, and (ſhocking to remember!) full of enmity againſt God himſelf. Feeling that my whole heart was thus dead in Sin, and contrary to God, I felt it was a gone caſe with me: There was no hope—no, not the leaſt, from any good in me, or ever to be expected from me. I lay at God's mercy, forfeited—juſtly condemned, loſt—hepleſs—undone! And *I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy*, I clearly ſaw, was the fixed reſolution of the Almighty. Thus ſtood my caſe—a poor, wretched, ſinful, guilty creature, completely ruined in myſelf! I retired to the moſt remote part of the grove. Where, hid under the darkneſs of the evening, and the ſhade of ſpreading trees, no eye could ſee me. Firſt, I ſmote on my

breaſt; but could not look up to Heaven, nor ſpeak one word. I fell on my knees: But I could not ſpeak. I fell proſtrate on the ground: And felt as one ready to ſink into eternal ruin. Having no hope, unleſs from the ſovereign good pleaſure of my angry Judge. As I lay proſtrate on the ground, a new ſcene gradually opened to my view. It was new, and it was exceeding glorious!---GOD appeared not only infinitely great, and infinitely holy, as the SOVEREIGN of the whole UNIVERSE; but alſo infinitely glorious: even ſo glorious, as to be worthy of all the love and honour, which his law requires. The law appeared holy, juſt, and good: I could not but approve it, from my very heart: and ſaid within myſelf, ere I was aware, "Let all Heaven for ever love and adore the infinitely glorious MAJESTY, although I receive my juſt deſert, and periſh for ever!" Next came into view, the whole Goſpel-way of life, by free grace through Jeſus Chriſt; the wiſdom, glory and beauty of which, cannot be expreſſed. The law did bear the divine image, and was glorious; but the Goſpel exhibited all the divine perfections in a ſtill brighter manner, and far exceeded in glory. I ſaw, God might, conſiſtently with his honour, in this way, receive the returning Sinner, however ill-deſerving. I ſaw he was ready to do it—that all might come—even the vileſt and the worſt, encouraged by the ſelf-moving goodneſs and boundleſs grace of God, and the mediation, merits and atonement of Chriſt; I looked up to God through Jeſus Chriſt for mercy, and through Jeſus Chriſt, gave up myſelf to the Lord, to be for ever his, to love him and live to him for ever.—Here proſtrate on the ground, I thus lay above an hour, contemplating the ineffable glories of God, the beauty of his law, and the ſuperabundant excellency of the Goſpel-way of life, by free grace through Jeſus Chriſt: I believed the Goſpel, I truſted in Chriſt, and gave up myſelf to God through him, to be for ever his, with a pleaſure divinely ſweet, infinitely preferable to the moſt agreeable ſenſations I had ever before experienced. What I enjoyed this hour, did more, unſpeakably more, than over-balance all the diſtreſſes of months paſt. (1) To relate how I ſpent the night, and

(1) *Theron's Narrative of his former ſuppoſed converſion (Let. I.) and of his experiences (here) is not deſigned to*

how I have ſpent my days and nights ever ſince, I ſhall omit. But you ſhall ſoon hear again, my dear Aſpaſio, from

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ſuggeſt, that either falſe or true converts all experience things, in every circumſtance, juſt alike: but only to point out the general nature of theſe two kinds of converſion, in a manner ſo familiar, that the weakeſt Chriſtian may ſee the difference.—And if any Chriſtian cannot recollect ſo exactly the particulars of his firſt converſion, yet as all after-acts of grace are of the ſame nature with the firſt, a clear underſtanding of the true nature of ſaving grace, may help him to diſcern his true ſtate.

N. B. What is the true nature of ſaving grace, is not to be decided by the experiences of this or that man, or party of men: but only by the word of God.

LETTER III.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

New-England, April 2, 1759.

DEAR ASPASIO,

WITH pleaſure I now again ſit down to write to my diſtant friend, and ſend my heart beyond the Atlantic to my Aſpaſio.—For neither time, nor place, nor any change can wipe your memory from my mind.

Methinks, were I now with you, as once at the houſe, the hoſpitable houſe, of the wealthy and illuſtrious Philenor, I would tell you all my heart. I remember how you urged me to believe; and how I longed to find ſome ſafe foundation, ſome ſure evidence, on which to build my Faith; and with Thomas, to cry, *my Lord, my God!*—Now I have found it! I have found it!—I *believe, that Jeſus is the Chriſt.* 1 Joh. v. 1. I believe, that *God hath ſet him forth to be a propitiation—to declare his righteouſneſs—that he might be juſt, and the juſtifier of him which believeth in Jeſus.* Rom.

iii. 25, 26. I *believe, that God raised him from the dead.* Rom. x. 9. I believe, that *Christ is entered into Heaven, now to appear in the presence of God,* as the Jewish high-priest of old entered into the holy of holies on the day of atonement, (Heb. ix. 24.) and that he is *the way to the Father,* (Joh. xiv. 6.) the *door; by whom men enter in.* Joh. x. 9. And that *whosoever will, may come* to God through him. Rev. xxii. 17.—Wherefore I am emboldened to *enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,* even into the very presence of the *thrice holy* ONE *of Israel,* in whose sight *the Heavens are not clean*; and to come to God in *full assurance of Faith, nothing doubting* but that God is as willing to be reconciled through Christ, as the Father was to receive the returning prodigal; and as ready to *give his holy Spirit to them that ask him,* as ever parent was to give bread to an hungry child. Heb. x. 19, 22. Mat. vii. 11.—*For he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things;* if we accept his Son as he is offered, and come to God through him, for all things, as we are invited? Rom. viii. 32. Joh. i. 12 and xvi. 23.—For, God's honour is safe, God's law is answered, God's justice is satisfied; and all my guilt, infinite as it is, is no bar in the way of my reception into the divine favour; free as his infinite grace, self-moving as his boundless goodness is, and appears to be, by the gift of his Son.

This way of salvation, my dear Aspasio, is glorious for God, safe for the Sinner, effectual to promote holiness, even *the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth:* And if the Gospel is true there is no room to doubt. "For we are constrained to believe on the clearest evidence."—Yea, "our assurance is impressed" by complete demonstration.

'Tis glorious for God.—For God's law and authority are as much honoured, as if the whole world had been damned: And his grace more glorified, than if Man had never fell.—An incarnate God upon the cross, in the room of a rebellious world, sets God's infinite hatred of sin, his inflexible resolution to punish it, and the infinite goodness of his nature, in a light, infinitely clear, infinitely bright. And contains a fund of instruction, which never can be exhausted, by angels and saints, throughout the endless ages of eternity.—The more I think, the more I am swal-

lowed up! confounded! overwhelmed! O! *the height, the depth, the length, the breadth, of the love of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding*—O! *the depth of the riches of the wiſdom and knowledge of God.* The creation of the Univerſe was a great work: It cauſed the Eternal power and Godhead of the Creator clearly to be ſeen: But compared to the incarnation and death of the Son of God, the Creator, it is not to be mentioned, nor is it worthy to come into mind. Even the application of Chriſt's redemption, in the latter day, is a more glorious work than the firſt creation of the world. Iſai. lxv. 17. *Behold, I create new Heavens, and a new Earth: and the former ſhall not be remembered, nor come into mind.*—Indeed, it had been but a ſmall thing, for the Creator, by his Almighty word, to have called millions of ſuch ſyſtems as ours into being—a thing not worthy to be noticed—nay, ſcarce worth one ſingle thought—compared with—with what?—Let all nature tremble at the news—The incarnation, and the death of the ALMIGHTY CREATOR, in the room of his rebel-creatures, that the honour of his Father's law and government might be effectually ſecured, while ſovereign infinite grace interpoſes to ſave the ſelf-ruined, hell-deſerving rebels, to the eternal diſappointment of Satan, God's enemy, and our mortal foe!

And can it now, after all this, be a queſtion, whether God is ready to be reconciled to thoſe, who, on his own invitation, return to him through Jeſus Chriſt? Or can it be a queſtion, whether Chriſt is willing to be their Mediator and High-prieſt, in the court of Heaven, in the holy of holies above?—What! after God has given his Son to die, that conſiſtently with his honour he might receive ſuch to favour—he not willing! Infinitely incredible!—What! after the Son of God has left his Father's boſom, to lie in a manger! to groan in the garden! And, *be aſtoniſhed, O ye Heavens, and be ye horribly afraid!*—To hang and die upon the croſs, in the room of a God-hating, Chriſt-murdering world; that he might honour his Father's law, break up Satan's plot, and open a way for the Sinner's return! Yet he not willing!—What! willing to die on the croſs, and not willing to mediate in Heaven! Infinitely incredible! Yea, if poſſible, more than infinitely incredible!—So certain my dear Aſpaſio, as the Goſpel is true, juſt ſo certain may your Theron be, that God is ready to

be reconciled to the Sinner, who returns to him through Jesus Christ. Nor does he need a new revelation in the case: nor does he need to be assured of any proposition not plainly revealed in the Gospel. Enough has been already DONE! enough has been already SAID!—But never did your Theron believe these things with all his heart, till by seeing the glory of the God of glory, he saw the grounds and reasons of the law, pronounced it holy, just and good, and worthy to be magnified and made honourable, even by the death of GOD'S OWN SON. 1 Joh. v. 1.

And this kind of Faith, in the nature of things, cannot be without works. For, while your Theron, through the influences of the holy spirit, doth *with open face, behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord;* what can he do, but love, admire, adore the God of glory; and give up himself forever to him through Jesus Christ?—And now—*how can we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* We are *crucified with Christ—buried with him—risen with him*—and can sin, after all, *have dominion over us!* Impossible. Rom. vi. 2. 14. The gratitude, the ingenuity of unrenewed nature, I grant, is not to be depended upon. *Israel sang God's praise but soon forgot his works.* But *beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,* from day to day through the course of our lives, *we are,* we cannot but be, *changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

And, believing the Gospel to be true, no doubt remains, of the safety of our returning to God through Jesus Christ. His glory and beauty inclines me to return. His grace through Christ puts courage in my heart. I return. I find rest to my weary soul. And by this I know, my "Faith is real, and no delusion," even *because he hath given me of his spirit,* (1 Joh. iv. 13.) set his seal upon my heart (Eph. i. 13.) made me his child, in the very temper of my soul (Rom. viii. 16.) and *in my heart his law is written, and in his ways I love to walk.* Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. But as to this, Heaven forbid! that your Theron's confidence should ever be greater than his evidence; his evidence, not only now, but in all future times.——I am, forever,

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LETTER IV.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

New-England, April 3, 1759.

DEAR ASPASIO,

MANY an agreeable hour have we wandered over all the works Nature; viewed the Heavens above, the Earth beneath, and surveyed the mighty Ocean; nor did you ever fail to intermingle devout reflections. If now instead of painting the beauties of the Creation, we rise at once to contemplate the glories of the CREATOR, glories infinitely superior to those of fields and forests, gardens and palaces; yea, infinitely superior to the bright expance of Heaven, adorned with all its shining orbs—no theme can my Aspasio better please.

GOD! how awful is the name! how great is the Being! *Behold, the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: Yea, all nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.* And so great is the excellency of the DIVINE MAJESTY, so exceeding great is his beauty; that to behold his glory, and love and honour and enjoy him, is Heaven itself: It is the chief happiness of all that world. The Seraphim, while he sitteth on his throne, high and lifted up, as the great MONARCH of the Universe, through the brightness of his glory, cover their faces, unable to behold: and, as in a perfect extasy, cry, *holy, holy, holy!*—This is his character, the character he exemplifies in all his conduct, as Lord of Hosts, as governor of the world; in a view of which, they add, *the whole Earth is full of his glory.* Isai. vi. 3.

The two grandest affairs, which according to Scripture, ever have been, or ever will be, transacted in the govern-

ment of this glorious monarch, are the work of our REDEMPTION by the death of his Son, and the final JUDGMENT of the world. Theſe, therefore, let us contemplate, that in them we may behold, *as in a glaſs, the glory of the LORD.*

Who was his Son? *The brightneſs of his glory, and the image of his perſon: By whom, and for whom, all things were created.* Loved equally to himſelf, and honoured with equal honours in all the world above. Let us view him on the Croſs, incarnate! View him there as an incarnate God, dying for Sinners! And fix our attention, whole hours together, on this greateſt, and moſt wonderful of all God's works! The plan was laid in Heaven.—This great event was *determined in the council* there. Act. iv. 28. All the perfections of the Godhead ſat in council, when it was decreed, the Son of God ſhould die.—Strange decree! Why was it made?—Aſtoniſhing! Why did it ever come to paſs?—Did he die, to move the compaſſions of his almighty Father towards a rebellious race? No: For, to give his Son thus to die, was greater grace, than at one ſovereign ſtroke to have cancelled all our debt, and pardoned all the world. Did he die, to take away or leſſen the evil nature and ill-deſert of ſin? No: For infinite purity and impartial juſtice muſt look upon the rebellions of a revolted world, as odious and ill-deſerving, as if he had not died. He died, to bear the puniſhment due to us. We were under the curſe; he was made a curſe in our room; *ſet forth to be a propitiation,* by his holy Father, *to declare his righteouſneſs,* and ſhew the rectitude of his government in the eyes of all created intelligences; *that he might be juſt,* do as his law threatens, and yet not *damn, but juſtify the Sinner that believeth in Jeſus.*

Eternal damnation was our due, according to the divine law: a law not founded in arbitrary will. A law, arbitrarily made, may be arbitrarily repealed; but a law only declaring what is fit, muſt forever ſtand in force. To riſe in rebellion againſt the infinitely glorious majeſty of Heaven, deſerved eternal damnation; as he is infinitely worthy of the higheſt love and honour from all his intelligent creatures. His infinite amiableneſs and honourableneſs infinitely oblige us to love and honour him. All our heart and mind and ſtrength are his due. The leaſt defect de-

fect deſerves eternal woe. Thus the Omniſcient viewed the caſe.—His Son, in the ſame view, approved the law as ſtrictly juſt. Both looked on the ſacrifice and death of an incarnate God, in the room of Sinners, to open a way for their ſalvation, as a plan infinitely preferable to the law's repeal by a ſovereign act. The Son had rather endure the moſt painful, ſhameful death, than that one tittle of the law ſhould fail; it was ſo ſtrictly juſt.—God ought to have his due——The law barely aſſerts the rights of the Creator. So much, however, was his due, as to be loved with all the heart, and obeyed in every thing. And ſo worthy was the Deity of this love and obedience, that the leaſt defect deſerved eternal death. " 'Tis right, 'tis right," ſaid the eternal SON, " that the firſt inſtance, or the leaſt degree of diſreſpect to my eternal Father, ſhould incur eternal ruin to the ſinning creature. And I had rather become incarnate and die myſelf, than yield this point." That GOD is infinitely amiable—that he ought to be loved with all our heart—that the infinite excellency of his nature infinitely obliges us—can never be ſet in a ſtronger light, than it is by the croſs of CHRIST.

The infinite dignity of the Mediator, and the extreme ſufferings he underwent, as an equivalent to our eternal woe, in the loudeſt manner proclaim, that the law was juſt —juſt in the eyes of God—and juſt in the eyes of his Son. A law, threatening eternal damnation, infinite goodneſs would never have enacted, had not impartial juſtice called for it. Much leſs would infinite goodneſs have appointed God's own Son to anſwer its demands, if in its own nature too ſevere. To ſuppoſe, the Son of God died to anſwer the demands of a law, in its own nature, cruel, is to make God a tyrant, and the death of his Son the moſt ſhocking affair that ever happened!

But what did this law, of which we ſo often ſpeak, require? Say, my dear Aſpaſio, what was the firſt and chief command? Your maſter's anſwer you approve—*Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.* But why was love required? Becauſe God was lovely. And why the penalty ſo great? Becauſe his lovelineſs was infinite. If the infinite amiableneſs of the divine Being does not lay an infinite obligation on his creatures, to love him for being what he is, how can we juſtify the law's demands, or vindicate the wiſdom of God in the death of his Son?

From the croſs, where an incarnate God aſſerted the rights of the Godhead by his dying pains, let us paſs to the awful tribunal; where the ſame incarnate God, arrayed in all his Father's glory, with all the Hoſts of Heaven in his train, by the laſt ſentence, which he will pronounce upon his Father's enemies, dooming them to the burning lake, to welter for eternal ages in woe, will ſtill proclaim the juſtice of the law: Would infinite goodneſs, would our compaſſionate Saviour, would he who wept over Jeruſalem, the kind and tender-hearted Jeſus, love to pronounce a ſentence ſo infinitely dreadful, if it were not ſtrictly juſt? Yet he will do it, without the leaſt reluctance; yea, with the higheſt pleaſure: while Angels and Saints ſhout forth their hallelujah's, all around him.

But can this ever be accounted for, on any other hypotheſis, than that the infinitely glorious MONARCH of the univerſe appears, clearly appears, in that ſolemn hour, to be infinitely worthy of all that love and honour his law required, in being what he is; and ſo ſin an infinite evil?

If ſin is really an infinite evil, then it is meet that it ſhould be diſcountenanced and puniſhed as ſuch, i. e. with an infinite puniſhment, i. e. with the eternal pains of Hell. And it was fit, that the governor of the world ſhould make a law, thus to puniſh it. And fit, that this law ſhould be magnified and made honorable. And even wiſe, in the eyes of infinite wiſdom, that one by nature GOD, ſhould become incarnate, and die in the Sinner's ſtead, rather than ſet the law aſide. And on this hypotheſis, the final doom of the wicked may well appear perfectly beautiful in the eyes of all holy intelligences. But ſin cannot be an infinite evil, unleſs we are under infinite obligations to do otherwiſe.

LOVE is the thing required. Not merely a love of gratitude to God, as an almighty benefactor: but a love of eſteem, complacence and delight. We may feel grateful to a benefactor, merely as ſuch, without even a knowledge of his general character; yea, when his general character would not ſuit us, did we know it? The Iſraelites, notwithſtanding their joy and gratitude at the ſide of the Red-Sea, were far from a diſpoſition to be ſuited, to be pleaſed, to be enamoured, with ſuch a being as GOD was. Yea, the more they knew of him, the leſs they ſeemed to like

him; so that in less than two years they were for going back to Egypt again. But if we may feel grateful towards God, merely as our almighty benefactor, without the knowledge of his true character; yet esteem, complacence and delight, suppose his true character known; as that is the object of this kind of love. And what can lay us under infinite obligations to love God, in this sense, but his own infinite AMIABLENESS? Yet the divine law requires us to love God with this kind of love—and that with all our hearts, on pain of eternal damnation for the least defect. And this law was binding on all mankind, previously to a consideration of the gift of Christ to be a Saviour.

While, therefore, the law supposes our obligations to be infinite; and the death of the Son of God, and the final judgment, give the highest possible proof, that the OMNISCIENT esteems the law exactly right; the infinite dignity, excellency and glory of the MOST HIGH GOD, is hereby set in the strongest point of light.

Take away the infinite amiableness of the Deity, and we, in effect, unged him—He ceases to be the GOD OF GLORY—He ceases to be a proper object of this supreme regard, in the eyes of finite intelligences—It is no longer an infinite evil, not to love him—The law is no longer just—The death of Christ is needless—And the whole system of doctrines revealed in the Bible, is sapped at the foundation—Nothing remains, to a thinking man, but infidelity.

And yet, dear Aspasio, this was my very case. The infinite amiableness of the Deity, which is the real foundation of all true religion, was wholly left out of the account, in my love and joy, and in all my religious affections. All my love and joy and zeal arose from my Faith. And my Faith consisted but in believing that Christ, pardon and Heaven were mine.—I rejoiced just like the graceless Israelites, in a sense of their great deliverance, and in expectation of soon arriving to the promised land, a land *flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all lands*. Their's was a graceless, selfish joy; and so was mine.—Their's was soon over; and so was mine. Their carcases finally fell in the wilderness; and, but for the sovereign grace of God, this also had been my very case.

Oh! my dear Aspasio, whose entertaining pen gains the attention of thousands on both sides the Atlantic, pity the ignorance of benighted souls, and guard them against

the dangers, which had well nigh proved the ruin of your own pupil.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE

THERON.

LETTER V.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

New-England, April 4, 1759.

MY DEAR ASPASIO,

WHILE I view God the Creator, whose almighty word gave existence to the whole system—while I view him as the original author and sole proprietor of the whole universe; whose are all things in Heaven and Earth; I see, the right of government naturally belongs to him. It is meet, that he should be KING in his own world: And he cannot but have a rightful authority over the works of his own hands.—While I view him as moral governor of the world, seated at the head of the intelligent creation, *on a throne high and lifted up*, Heaven and Earth *filled with his glory*, as the THRICE HOLY ONE; and hear him utter his voice, saying, I AM THE LORD, and, BESIDES ME THERE IS NO OTHER GOD; and hear him command all the world to *love and adore and obey him, on pain of eternal damnation*; a spirit of love to his glorious majesty inspires me with joy, and makes me exult, to see him thus exalted, and thus honoured. I love to hear him proclaim his law, a law *holy, just and good*, glorious and amiable. I am glad with all my heart, the almighty Monarch of the universe is so engaged, that all his subjects *give unto God the glory due unto his name*. Psal. xcvi. 8.

His law, his glorious law, which once, enemy to God that I was, appeared like "the laws of Draco," now

ſhines with a beauty all divine. I had almoſt ſaid, it is *the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon.*— For indeed it is an exact tranſcript of his glorious perfections, the very picture of his heart, HOLY, JUST, and GOOD. Rom. vii. 12.

When the God of glory dwelt in the Jewiſh temple, in the pillar of cloud, over the mercy-ſeat, his law was by his ſpecial command depoſited in the Ark, the very holieſt place in the holy of holies, as the deareſt, choiceſt treaſure. Thus was it done to the law, which God delighted to honour. But this honour, great as it was, is not to be mentioned, nor is it worthy to come into mind, ſince that infinitely greater regard to the divine law, which God has ſhewn in the gift of his SON. An incarnate God on the croſs, has *magnified the law, and made it honourable*, beyond, infinitely beyond, what was ever done before. But all this honour, infinitely great as it was, was but juſt equal to what the law deſerved.

While I view God, my Creator, my rightful Lord and owner, my ſovereign king, the GOD OF GLORY; and ſee his infinite worthineſs of ſupreme love and honour; I feel, that the leaſt diſreſpect to his glorious Majeſty is an infinite evil. I pronounce the law in all its rigour, *holy, juſt and good.* Even as a *miniſtration of death and condemnation, it appears glorious*, (2 Cor. iii. 7, 8.) and I heartily acquieſce in the equity of the ſentence, with application to myſelf. This makes me feel my need of CHRIST, and prepares my heart to return home to God, forever to live to him. *For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.* Gal. ii. 19

The law, my dear Aſpaſio, threatens eternal damnation for the very firſt tranſgreſſion, for even the leaſt defect. Gal. iii. 10. I break the law every moment; and therefore every moment I merit eternal woe: Such an infinite evil is ſin. It appeared glorious in the eyes of GOD, thus to puniſh ſin, when he made his law—It appeared glorious in the eyes of CHRIST, that ſin ſhould be thus puniſhed, when he went as a lamb to the altar, and voluntarily ſtretched himſelf upon the croſs to die in the Sinner's room. And in a clear view of the glory of the GOD OF GLORY, I ſee the grounds and reaſons of the law; it is *holy, juſt and good.*— I ſee why Chriſt was ſo willing to be nailed to the croſs in the Sinner's ſtead; *to magnify the law and make it*

honourable. And I *have fellowſhip*, a fellow-feeling, *with Chriſt in his ſufferings;* and in the temper of my heart, am *made conformable to his death.* Phil. iii. 10. I feel towards God, and law, and ſin, in a meaſure, as he did. Or, to expreſs all my heart in one emphatical phraſe, I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST. Gal. ii. 20. "The law is good, I deſerve to die. I lay my neck upon the block, or rather ſtretch my hands upon the croſs: and ſay, the *law is holy, juſt and good,* and cry, AMEN, AMEN, AMEN, twelve times going:"—as God, of old, taught his church to do. Deut. xxvi. 14, 20. (1)

(1) *I muſt confeſs, my dear Aſpaſio, I am ſhocked, to hear ſome Divines repreſent the law as a tyrant, as tyrannizing over Chriſt upon the croſs, as tyrannizing over Sinners, as being ſlain for its tyranny, &c. For theſe hard ſpeeches are not ſo much againſt the law, as againſt the God that made it. Juſt as if God and his law were tyrants, while Chriſt and his Goſpel are* all made up of LOVE! *But ſhocking as this is, yet I muſt own, this was once the very temper of my heart.* (*See the Marrow of Mod. Div. with Notes. p.* 146.)—*I loved the Goſpel: I did not love the law. The dying love of Chriſt, O, how ſweet a theme! Law, obligation, duty, were diſagreeable, dead, and legal things. Faith, pardon, joy, Heaven, Grace, free Grace, theſe topics only raviſhed my heart. Chriſt loved the law, or he had never died: I only loved myſelf. The honour of his Father's law was dear to him. Heb 1. 9. Pſal. xl. 8. Matth. v. 17, 18. Myſelf alone was dear to me. I viewed his death, his dying love, as all for me. His agony in the garden, his bloody ſweat, his dying groans, all out of love to me! This pleaſed my heart.—His Father's glory I had never ſeen: The law's beauty I had never beheld: The wiſdom of God, in the death of his Son, I had never brought into the account.—Love, love! love to me, to me! was all in all: This only raviſhed my heart. I loved myſelf, I only loved myſelf.—Strange, that I ſhould think my love to Chriſt ſo great! The very joy I had, to think he died for me, was a full proof that I loved him not at all; ſince I did not delight in the law, nor love the law, in honour to which he died. Had my wife, or child, or friend, or any whom I loved, been puniſhed by that law, I had been full of grief, and thought it very hard: For indeed that law appeared to me like the laws of Draco. But when* CHRIST *was the victim, I was pleaſed:*

Oh! my dear Aſpaſio—in the time of the late rebellion, when I lived in England, had I, through a hearty attachment to the Pretender's intereſt, ſecretly poiſoned ten of the houſe of Lords, and twenty of the houſe of Commons, from mere ſpite, only becauſe of their loyalty to their rightful ſovereign; and had I laid a plot to blow up King and Parliament, burn the city of London, and deliver the nation into the hands of a Popiſh Pretender—all through pure malignity, what would it have availed before a court of juſtice, after I was arraigned, convicted and condemned, to have pleaded, "Oh, ſpare my life—I am ſorry for what I have done—I will never do ſo any more—I will be a good and loyal ſubject for the time to come!" Eſpecially, if all the court knew I was a jacobite by blood, and had ſhewn myſelf a jacobite, in ten thouſand inſtances, all my life long, and had ſtill very much of the heart of a jacobite; and had lived and died a perfect jacobite in heart and practice, were it not for ſome irreſiſtible arguments, or rather ſomething more powerful than arguments, that had begun to give me a new turn of mind? Would my penitence be eſteemed any atonement for my horrid crimes? Nay, rather, would not the whole nation cry, "Away with ſuch a vile wretch from the Earth, for he is not fit to live!" And were I brought to view the whole affair in a right light, and to feel right; what would be the language of my heart? Would it not echo back the general cry? "Right! right! away with ſuch a vile wretch from the Earth! for, indeed, I am not fit to live!"—And on the gallows, even in my dying agonies, I ſhould not have the leaſt reaſon to diſlike the law, by which I was condemned; or to love my judges ever the leſs, for pronouncing the ſentence of condemnation upon me. But rather, with all my heart, I ought to approve the law, as good; and eſteem their conduct to be truly praiſe-worthy.

But to murder thirty of my fellow-worms, blow up King and Parliament, burn a city, ruin a nation, viewed only as

For I loved myſelf: but CHRIST *I did not love. I cared not what he ſuffered, nor why; if I myſelf was ſafe. In truth, if the law is not* holy, juſt and good, *glorious and amiable, the death of* CHRIST, *to anſwer its demands, is the moſt amazing affair that ever happened. But I was wholly ſwallowed up in ſelf: And, "if I was but ſafe, I cared not how."*

injuries to a civil community, and breaches of a civil law, are no crimes, in compariſon with riſing in rebellion againſt the INFINITELY GLORIOUS MONARCH OF THE UNIVERSE; compared with whom, the whole created ſyſtem is *leſs than nothing and vanity.* (1)

Wherefore, in my beſt frames, in my devouteſt hours, when I feel the greateſt veneration for the Deity, and the greateſt regard to his law, and am moſt ſorry that I ever have been, and am ſtill ſuch a vile rebel againſt my rightful ſovereign, the GOD OF GLORY; I am ſo far from thinking that I am fit to live, that my whole heart is ready to ſay, "No—but infinitely unfit to live! Eternal death is my due! And Hell my proper home!" Yea, it appears to me, although I had attained to love God and Chriſt in the ſame degree as Saint Paul did, and were as willing to die in the cauſe of Religion as he was, that yet I ſhould merit Hell every moment for not loving God and Chriſt more. And therefore, with him, I would *have no confidence in the fleſh*; and would ſeek to be found, not in myſelf, but in Chriſt; not having my own righteouſneſs, but his. Phil. iii. 3. 9. And would ſay, *In the Lord* alone *have I Righteouſneſs, and in him* alone *will I glory.* Iſai. xlv. 24, 25.

Yea, ſuffer me to ſay, I apprehend and verily believe, that even Saint Paul himſelf deſerved eternal damnation, for that wickedneſs which God ſaw in his heart, then, at that inſtant, when a little before he died a martyr, he ſaid,

(1) *Is it a Sinner's duty to be willing to be damned?*—NO, *by no means.—The damned will forever hate God: The Sinner ought forever to love him. The damned will be forever miſerable: The Sinner is invited to be forever happy, through Chriſt. His duty is, to be reconciled to God, and return to him through Jeſus Chriſt. Indeed, were there no other way to ſupport the honour of the divine government, but by the eternal miſery of the Sinner, the Sinner ought to be willing, that the honour of the divine government ſhould be ſupported, although at the expence of his eternal ſufferings.—God and Chriſt, Angels and Saints, will all be of this mind, at the day of Judgment, with reſpect to the wicked. And they will all judge rightly. Rom. ii. 2.—Nor will the wicked have any reaſon to diſlike them for it; but, rather, to eſteem their conduct herein truly praiſe-worthy. Rev. xix. 1, 6.*

I am now ready to be offered. For although he was willing, quite willing to die for his master; yet he did not love him perfectly as he ought. He himself owns, he had *not already attained, nor was already perfect.* But the least defect deserves punishment, yea, eternal damnation. Therefore, Saint Paul always felt in his heart, that Hell was his proper due; and always looked on the law, even as a *ministration of death and condemnation,* to be *glorious* (2 Cor. iii. 7, 9) and always placed all his dependence, for acceptance in the sight of God, on Jesus Christ. He did so, not only when first converted, but habitually, all the days of his life, to his very last breath.

O, in how lively, how striking a manner, are all these sentiments expressed in those words of the blessed Apostle, in Gal. ii. 19, 20, which were the genuine language of his heart, and give a picture of the inward temper of his soul. *I through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live to God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I; but Christ liveth in me: And the life I live in the flesh,* even to my latest breath, *I live by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*—*Who loved me,* as his own before the foundation of the world; and in the fulness of time, *gave himself for me,* as one whom the Father had given to him. For, in the midst of these holy views and gracious exercises of heart, Saint Paul's Calling and Election were always sure; and he steadily knew, that he was of that blessed number for whom Christ died, with an absolute design to save. Yet this knowledge was not the foundation, but rather the consequence of his Faith and holiness.

Your Theron does no more doubt of God's readiness to be reconciled to the Sinner, that returns to him through Jesus Christ, than he doubts of the truth of the Gospel. He believes the one just as firmly as he believes the other. If the chief facts related in the Gospel are true, he knows this consequence is equally true. If God has so pitied this apostate world, as to give his own Son to die a sacrifice for sin, to answer the demands of his law, and secure the honour of his government, for this very end, that *he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus*—and if he has testified his acceptance of the atonement, by raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand in Heaven.—I say, if these facts are true, your

Theron knows the conſequence cannot but be true, viz.—That any Sinner, how ill-deſerving ſoever, who, upon the invitation of the Goſpel, ſhall *repent and be converted*, ſhall return to God through Jeſus Chriſt, he will be accepted, pardoned, and ſaved, for Chriſt's ſake. And, *beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord*, I cannot but return and give up myſelf to God through Jeſus Chriſt with all my heart. Pſal. cx. 3. Joh. xvii. 3, 8. Pſal. ix. 10.

Such were the views—ſuch were the tempers of the Apoſtle Paul, who wrote, and of the Chriſtians to whom he directed his Epiſtles; as he himſelf affirms. 2 Cor. iii. 18. And it was under ſuch views, and in conſequence of ſuch tempers, that they were aſſured, the ſpiritual and everlaſting bleſſings of the Goſpel were *theirs*; as another Apoſtle aſſerts. 1 Joh. ii. 3, 4, 5. And in ſuch views, and with ſuch tempers, Saint Paul might well expect, that the conſideration of the infinite goodneſs of God towards them, in their election, redemption, effectual calling, juſtification, adoption, ſanctification, and in the eternal joys of Heaven, to be certainly beſtowed upon them, would powerfully animate them to *preſent themſelves a living ſacrifice to God*, to be for ever entirely his. Rom. 12, 1.

The Saints at Rome, viewed *the wrath of God* as *revealed from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs*, againſt the leaſt ſin, felt themſelves *without excuſe*, their *mouths ſtopt*, *guilty before God*, according to law; a law holy, juſt, and good—were therefore dead to the law and married to Chriſt, exerciſed Faith in the blood of Chriſt, depending entirely on *free Grace through the redemption which is in Chriſt Jeſus*. And as by virtue of their union with Adam, they became Sinners; ſo by virtue of their union with Chriſt, by a true and living Faith, they became righteous. And were *dead to ſin*, ſo that they *could not any longer live therein*. For they not only approved the law as holy, juſt and good, but even *delighted in the law of God after the inward man*, and maintained a conſtant conflict againſt every contrary bias. For they were made partakers of the divine nature—had every one of them the ſpirit of Chriſt dwelling in them; and *walked not after the fleſh, but after the ſpirit*—were daily led by the ſpirit, and lived under the government of divine grace, feeling the temper of children towards God; crying, *Abba, Father*. And if children, they knew they were heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jeſus Chriſt. And

as they were willing to ſuffer with Chriſt, they expected to reign with him. And they eſteemed the ſufferings of this preſent life not worthy to be compared with the glory they had in view, in a future ſtate. Beſides, they found by experience, that all their ſufferings worked together for their good, brought them nearer to God, and made them more like him. And they were perſuaded that nothing in life or death ſhould ever ſeparate them from the love of God: who of his mere ſovereign grace, had predeſtinated, called, and done all things for them; not becauſe they had any claim to make, but becauſe *he would have mercy on whom he would have mercy*; of the ſame lump, making one a veſſel to honour, and another a veſſel to diſhonour. Which ſovereign right to diſpoſe of his own grace, they ſaw belonged to God; *of whom, and by whom, and to whom are all things; to whom be glory for ever!*—Wherefore, as the fitteſt and happieſt thing in the world, they brought themſelves, ſoul and body, as the Jew uſed to bring his bullock to the altar, and preſented themſelves *a living ſacrifice to God*; ſeeking daily to be more and more transformed into the divine image, and devoting themſelves, in all humility and love, to the duties of their ſeveral places—*not ſlothful in buſineſs, but fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord.*—(Pleaſe to read the 12 firſt chapters of the Epiſtle to the Romans.)

The Saints at Epheſus alſo, who formerly had their *underſtandings darkened*, their *hearts blind* and *alienated from God*; yea, who were quite *dead in ſin*; and ſo far from any right to claim mercy, that they were *without Chriſt, having no hope, and without God in the world*; yea, even *by nature children of wrath*: yet theſe, of God's mere ſovereign grace, according to his purpoſe before the foundation of the world, were quickened, had divine life communicated to them, were *raiſed from the dead*, were brought to know Jeſus Chriſt, and truſt in him; in conſequence of which, they were ſealed, had the holy ſpirit given to dwell in them, whereby they were furniſhed to all good works. And conſcious to this divine change, and to the glorious bleſſings they were now made partakers of, they were fervently engaged to walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith they were called—to live up to their holy religion—to forgive others as God had forgiven them, and in all things to imitate their heavenly Father, being followers

all *with fingleneſs of heart, as unto the Lord,* &c.—[Pleaſe to read over the whole Epiſtle.]

But time once was, O my dear Aſpaſio, when your Theron, not conſcious of any ſanctifying operations in his own breaſt, believed all the bleſſings of the Goſpel to be his—without any "evidence from Scripture, ſenſe, or reaſon:" Which belief ſerved to ſtill his conſcience, and keep him at eaſe, while blind to the beauty of the divine Nature, and a ſtranger to the divine life. And in this caſe, having no ſufficient evidence from inherent graces, to ſupport his confidence, he was obliged, without any evidence at all from any quarter, reſolutely to maintain his belief, by believing. Oh, what awful deluſion! How was I like one blindfold; one deſtitute of any ſenſe or reaſon, or knowledge of the Scriptures, *led captive by Satan at his will!*—by *Satan transformed into an Angel of Light.*

Oh, my dear Aſpaſio, pity an ignorant benighted world, who love to flatter themſelves, and to hear no cry from their teachers, but PEACE, PEACE:—And guard them againſt the ſad deluſion, which had well-nigh proved the ruin of your own Theron.

If all your ſentiments, as they exiſt in your own mind, are exactly right; if you had not the leaſt deſign to convey one of thoſe miſtaken notions, which your Theron imbibed from your perſuaſive lips; if he miſunderſtood juſt every word, and framed a mere chimera in his own head, a chimera you abhor with all your heart: Yet, O my kind, my tender-hearted, my dear Aſpaſio, pity an ignorant world, who are like generally to underſtand you as I have done; and in compaſſion to immortal ſouls, be entreated, once more to take your fine, your entertaining, charming pen, which commands the attention of thouſands, and ten thouſands through all the Britiſh dominions in Europe and America, and warn poor Sinners of their dreadful danger; leſt multitudes periſh in the road—the bewitching, the enchanting road—once trodden by your own pupil; and ſo which, but for the ſovereign grace of God, he had been forever loſt!—It is the humble and earneſt requeſt of

YOUR EVER AFFECTIONATE

THERON.

END OF LETTERS & DIALOGUES.