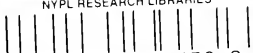
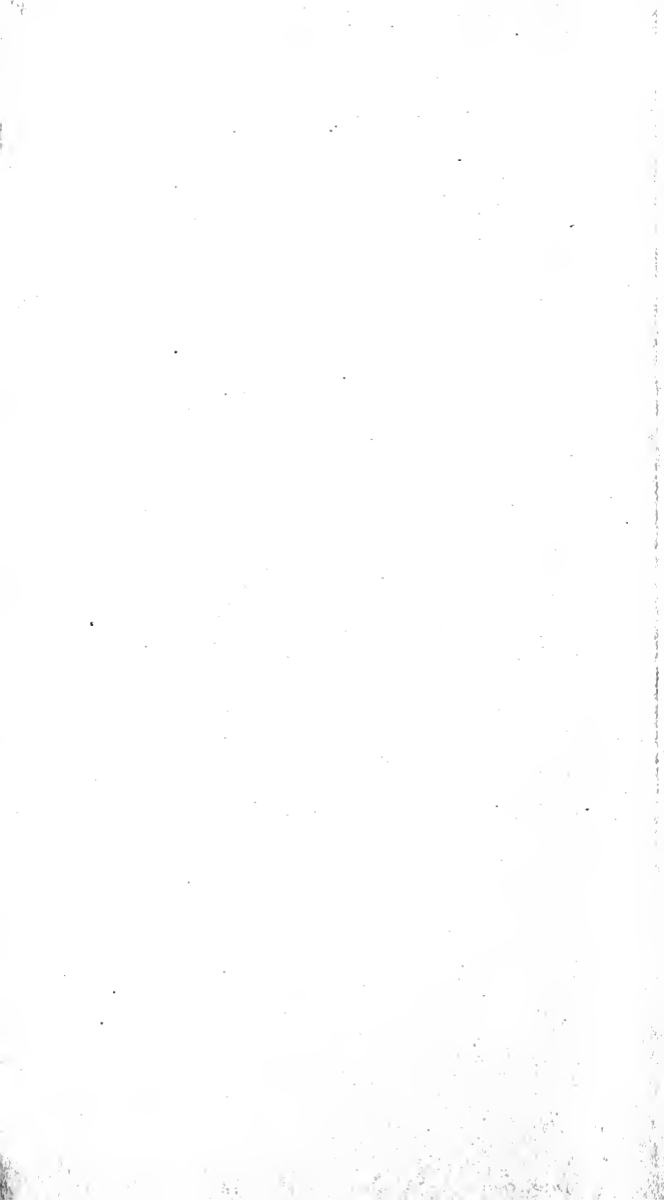


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Filium &c.

Rev. John William de la Roche.

Published by J. Kingdon Baltimore.

FLETCHER'S

APPEAL

TO

MATTER OF FACT & COMMON SENSE;

OR, A

RATIONAL DEMONSTRATION OF

MAN'S CORRUPT AND LOST ESTATE.

WITH THE ADDRESS TO

EARNEST SEEKERS FOR SALVATION.

AND

AN APPENDIX.

From the Nineteenth London Edition.

TO WHICH IS NOW ADDED,

THE LIFE OF THE VENERABLE AUTHOR,

Compiled for this work from the most authentic sources,

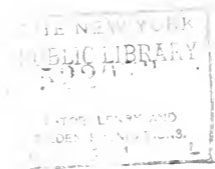
BY J. KINGSTON.

BALTIMORE:

Printed for and sold by J. Kingston, at his Book and Stationary Store,
No. 164, Market-Street; sold also by the principal Booksellers in
the United States.

1814.

J. Robinson, Printer.



District of Maryland, ss.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on this thirty-first day of May, in the thirty-eighth year of the Independence of the United States of America, John Kingston, of the said District, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words and figures following,

* SEAL *

to wit :

“ Fletcher’s appeal to matter of fact and common sense ; or, a rational demonstration of man’s corrupt and lost estate. With the address to earnest seekers for salvation. And an appendix. From the nineteenth London edition. To which is now added, the life of the venerable author, compiled for this work from the most authentic sources,—By John Kingston.”

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, “ An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,” and also to the act, entitled, “ An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,” and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints.

PHILIP MOORE, *Clerk of the District of Maryland*

NOV 21 1858

PREFACE.

“GREAT and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are thy ways, O King of Saints.” These scripture facts were the delightful subjects of Mr. Fletcher’s contemplations, and were certainly in a very uncommon degree displayed in the conviction, conversion, and sanctification of this most extraordinary man. Switzerland may well be glad that she gave him birth, England yet more abundantly so that there he was born again from above, and in that (his adopted country) he shone as a burning and shining light for nearly thirty years, preaching the gospel to the people, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven. In fine! the whole christian church, dispersed throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, have cause directly or indirectly to praise God for the good services this apostolic man has rendered mankind by his labours from the pulpit and the press, also by his pure and spotless life, and by his solemn and triumphant death! No doubt the fervent and effectual prayers of this righteous man availed much with the Almighty, even beyond all that we can now conceive, and brought down upon himself and others such blessings, the value of which can only be known in the great day when John Fletcher shall cast his crown at the Redeemer’s feet and say “here I am, Lord, and the children which thou hast given me.” When I was at Madeley some years ago, I felt as if I was treading on holy ground; when I found myself in the study of that blessed man, the place where he wrote his incomparable writings, and saw the wainscoat of the room discoloured by the breath of his prayer, which on its way to Heaven had passed upon it!

In the course of the two years that I visited Mr. Fletcher's family, I several times looked through his library, and found it contained many books of the highest renown for learning, sense and eloquence.— These were suitable to his own fine classical taste. But it was filled more abundantly with bibles in various languages, and other scarce and valuable books, of the greatest consequence to a christian minister. Mr. Fletcher's pious and judicious mind enabled him to distinguish in men and books the important difference there is betwixt splendid gifts and sanctifying graces, and to estimate the former, however excellent in their place, as dung and dross in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord—indeed when we consider, taking him altogether, what sort of a man he was, we may well conclude that those who perished under his ministry must experience woes beyond the common damned.

Mr. Fletcher considered his good countryman, Professor Osterwald, was perfectly right when he says, "No man can preach experimentally unless he be habitually devoted to God. Piety is a flame which mortals cannot feign, they may paint it in eloquence, but a painted flame is destitute of heat.— Hence ministers must be pious in order to be useful, and every Sabbath in the morning, they should with few exceptions, preach on experimental religion.— The people attend not so much to learn doctrines as to hear something of Heaven, and to be enkindled with heavenly affections. If this be wanting they will become discouraged, and stray like hungry sheep from a barren pasture. Hence we should help them to express the sentiments of devotion by interspersing our sermons with ejaculations and thanksgivings. This was the primitive method of preaching. The apostles could not speak long of the goodness of God without devotion. The flame kindled their hearts,

and it broke forth in powerful effusions of prayer and praise."

The beauties of holiness were in such a manner the armour and ornament of Mr. Fletcher, that, although in his own eyes, he was less than the least of all saints, yet in his presence the best of his christian companions always felt humbled and ashamed on account of their small attainments in the divine life.—Indeed, as Mon. De Renti, a young French nobleman, expressed himself, "I bear about with me a glorious plentitude of the adorable Trinity." So did Mr. Fletcher. This heavenly principle seemed always to fill his heart and rule his life; and although he was by nature a proud, high spirited man, yet so completely was he renewed by grace, and changed from glory into glory by the spirit of the Lord, that what was said by Bishop Burnet of Arch-Bishop Leighton, might with equal truth and propriety be said of Mr. Fletcher, "that for the last twenty years of his life, he never seemed to think a thought or speak a word that one would not wish to think and speak upon a dying bed."

The life of this eminently holy man, the influence of whose substantial virtues has extended from Madeley to America, is compiled purposely for this work, and contains the substance of all that his pious widow has said or written about her beloved husband. Large extracts are also made from the interesting accounts given of his life by the Rev. John Wesley, the Rev. Joseph Benson, the Rev. Joshua Gilpin, and the Rev. Henry Venn. The whole enriched with notes and observations, collected by the compiler in England. Some particulars of which were never before published. One* whose excellent learning, talents, piety, long and intimate acquaintance with Mr. Fletcher constitute him a very sufficient judge, speaks of the Appeal to Matter of Fact

and Common Sense, thus, "I saw this admirable treatise on the subject of original sin and human depravity, in manuscript, at Madeley. It was lost for some time betwixt Bristol and Madeley, but was at length found and published, to the conviction and edification of thousands. I hardly know a treatise that has been made so eminently useful." The likeness which accompanies the work, Mrs. Fletcher assured me was the best ever taken of her husband—upon the whole, it is hoped that no person can read this precious volume without feeling the greatest veneration for Mr. Fletcher's character and writings, and an ardent desire to imitate him as he imitated the great head of the church, who in the last struggles of dissolving nature enabled this faithful servant so gloriously to triumph over death and the grave, and administered to his immortal soul so largely an entrance into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus! Well, this is our consolation, the good that is done upon the earth, the Lord doeth it himself, and to his name be ascribed glory and dominion for ever and ever, and that Mr. Fletcher's portion may be our portion, and his God our God, is the humble hope and sincere desire of the

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Baltimore, June 1, 1814.

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THE
L I F E

OF THE

Rev. JOHN WILLIAM de la FLECHERE.

OF HIS PARENTAGE AND YOUTH.

JOHAN WILLIAM DE LA FLECHERE (this was properly his name,) was born at Nyon in Switzerland,* a town about fifteen miles north of Geneva, on September the twelfth, in the year 1729. His father was an officer in the French service, till he left the army in order to marry. But after a time, he returned to the same line of life, and was a colonel in the militia of his own country. Of this gentleman, whose family is one of the most respectable in the Canton of Berne, and a branch of an Earldom of Savoy, Mr. Fletcher was the youngest son.

He passed the early part of his life,† at Nyon, where he soon discovered an elevated turn of mind accompanied with an unusual degree of vivacity. After having made a good proficiency in school learning, he was removed, with his two brothers, to Geneva, where he was distinguished equally by his superior abilities, and his uncommon application. The two first prizes, for which he stood

* Wesley's Life of Fletcher.

† Gilpin's Notes subjoined to Fletcher's Portrait of St. Paul

a candidate, he carried away from a number of competitors, several of whom were nearly related to the professors: and on these occasions he was complimented by his superiors in a very flattering manner. During his residence at Geneva, he allowed himself but little time, either for recreation, refreshment, or rest. After confining himself closely to his studies all the day, he would frequently consume the greater part of the night in noting down whatever had occurred, in the course of his reading, worthy of observation. Here he acquired that true classical taste, which was so frequently and justly admired by his intimate friends, and which all his studied plainness could never conceal. Here also he laid the foundation of that extensive and accurate knowledge, for which he was afterwards distinguished, both in Philosophical and Theological researches. After quitting Geneva, he was sent by his father to Lentzbourg, a small town in the Swiss Cantons, where he not only acquired the German language, but diligently prosecuted his other studies, to which he ever discovered a passionate attachment. On his return from this place, he continued some time at home, studying the Hebrew language, and perfecting his acquaintance with Mathematical Learning.

His early piety was equally remarkable with his early attainments. From his childhood he was impressed with a deep sense of the majesty of God, and a constant fear of offending him, and manifested great tenderness of conscience.

Mr. Fletcher's early acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures guarded him, on the one hand, from the snares of infidelity, and preserved him on the other, from many of the vices peculiar to youth. His conversation was modest, and his whole conduct marked with a degree of rectitude, not usually to be found in early life.

After Mr. Fletcher had gone through the usual course of study at the university of Geneva, it was the desire of

his parents that he should be a clergyman. "And as far as nature can furnish a man," says Mr. Gilpin, "for offices of a sacred kind, perhaps there never was a person better qualified to sustain the character of a minister of Jesus Christ, than Mr. Fletcher. His disposition and habits, his sentiments and studies, his reverential awe of God, his insatiable thirst after truth, and his uncommon abhorrence of vice, gave his friends abundant reason to apprehend that he was marked, at an early age, for the service of the church. Contrary, however, to all expectation, and contrary to the first designs of his family, before he had arrived at the age of twenty, he manifested views of a very opposite nature. His theological studies gave place to the systems of Vauban and Cohorn, and he evidently preferred the camp to the church. All the remonstrances of his friends, on this apparent change in his disposition, were totally ineffectual; and, had it not been for repeated disappointments, he would have wielded another sword than that of the Spirit. Happily, his projects for the field were constantly baffled and blasted by the appointments of that God, who reserved him for a more important scene of action. His choice of the army is, however, to be imputed rather to principle than inclination. On the one hand, he detested the irregularities and vices to which a military life would expose him: on the other, he dreaded the condemnation he might incur, by acquitting himself unfaithfully in the pastoral office. He conceived it abundantly easier to toil for glory in fields of blood, than to labor for God, with unwearied perseverance, in the vineyard of the church. He believed himself qualified rather for military operations, than for spiritual employments, and the exalted ideas he entertained of the holy ministry determined him to seek some other profession, more adapted to the weakness of humanity, and he preferred being an officer in the army to all others."

OF HIS CONVERSION.

NOTWITHSTANDING the early appearance of piety in Mr. Fletcher, it is evident that he continued, for a long course of time, a perfect stranger to the true nature of Christianity. He was naturally of a high and ambitious turn, though his ambition was sufficiently refined for religious as well as scientific pursuits. He aspired after rectitude, and was anxious to possess every moral perfection. He counted much upon the dignity of human nature, and was ambitious to act in a manner becoming his exalted ideas of that dignity. And here he outstripped the multitude in an uncommon degree. He was rigidly just in his dealings, and inflexibly true to his word; he was a strict observer of his several duties in every relation of life; his sentiments were liberal, and his charity profuse; he was prudent in his conduct, and courteous in his deportment; he was a diligent inquirer after truth, and a strenuous advocate for virtue; he was frequent in sacred meditations, and was a regular attendant at public worship. Possessed of so many moral accomplishments, while he was admired by his friends, it is no wonder, that he should cast a look of self-complacency upon his character, and consider himself, with respect to his attainments in virtue, abundantly superior to the common herd of mankind. But while he was taken up in congratulating himself upon his own fancied eminence in piety, he was an absolute stranger to that unfeigned sorrow for sin, which is the first step toward the kingdom of God. It was not till after he had resided some time in England, that he became experimentally ac-

quainted with the nature of true repentance. This, according to Mrs. Fletcher's account was in the following manner.

Meeting with a person who asked him to go and hear the Methodists; he readily consented,* and from that time became more and more conscious that a change of heart was necessary to make him happy. He now began to strive, with the utmost diligence, according to the light he had, hoping by *doing much*, to render himself acceptable to God. But one day hearing a sermon preached by a clergyman, whose name was Green, he was convinced, he did not understand the nature of saving *Faith*. This conviction caused many reflections to arise in his mind. 'Is it possible,' thought he, 'that I who have always been accounted so religious, who have made Divinity my study, and received the premium of piety, (so called) from the university for my writings on divine subjects, is it possible, that I should yet be so ignorant as not to know what faith is?' But the more he examined himself, and considered the subject, the more he was convinced of the momentous truth. And beginning also to see his sinfulness and guilt, and the entire corruption and depravity of his whole nature, his hope of being able to reconcile himself to God by his own works began to die away. He sought, however, by the most rigorous austerities to conquer this evil nature, and bring into his soul an heavenborn peace. But alas! the more he strove, the more he saw and felt that all his soul was sin. And now he was entirely at a loss what to

* Between thirty and forty years Mr. Fletcher had the deepest fellowship with and affection for the Reverend John and Charles Wesley, also with the Reverend George Whitfield (the great Founders of Methodism, or as I would rather say the blessed instruments in the hand of the Almighty of reviving pure Christianity), and with most of the excellent ones of the earth who lived in his day. Mr. George Clarke, of London, who was himself a Saint indeed, observed to me many years ago, "that such a Believer as Mr. Fletcher he had hardly known before."

do, being conscious of his danger, and seeing no way to escape, till at last he discovered that nothing, except a revelation of the Lord Jesus to his heart, could make him a true believer.

But a few pages transcribed from a diary, written by his own hand, when he was about twenty-five years of age, will give the reader the best information on this subject.

“ The 12th of January, 1755, I received the sacrament, though my heart was as hard as a flint. The following day, I felt the tyranny of sin more than ever, and an uncommon coldness in all religious duties. I felt the burden of my corruptions heavier than ever; there was no rest in my flesh. I called upon the Lord, but with such heaviness as made me fear it was lost labour. The more I prayed for victory over sin, the more I was conquered. Many a time did I take up the Bible to seek comfort, but not being able to read, I shut it again. The thoughts which engrossed my mind, were generally these. I am undone. I have wandered from God more than ever.— I have trampled under foot the frequent convictions which God was pleased to work in my heart. Instead of going straight to Christ, I have wasted my time in fighting against sin with the dim light of my reason, and the mere use of the means of grace; as if the means would do me good without the blessing and power of God. I fear my knowledge of Christ is only speculative, and does not reach my heart. *I never had faith*; and without faith it is impossible to please God. Therefore, all my thoughts, words, and works, however specious before men, are utterly sinful before God. And if I am not washed and renewed before I go hence, I am lost to all eternity.

“ When I saw that all my endeavours availed nothing towards conquering sin, I almost gave up all hope, and resolved to sin on, and go to hell. But I remember, there was a sort of sweetness even in the midst of these abominable thoughts. If I go to hell, said I, I will serve God

there ; and since I cannot be an instance of his Mercy in heaven, I will be a monument of his Justice in hell : and if I shew forth his glory one way or the other, I am content. But I soon recovered my ground. I thought *Christ died for ALL*, therefore he died for me.—He died to pluck such sinners as I am, as brands out of the burning. And as I sincerely desire to be his, he will surely take me to himself : he will surely let me know, before I die, that he hath died for me, and will break asunder these chains wherewith I am bound. If he leave me, for a while, in this dreadful state, it is only to shew me the depth of the misery he will draw me out of. I must then humble myself under his mighty hand, and he will lift me up in his appointed time. But then I thought, this, perhaps, may not be till my dying hour,—and must I sin on till then ? How can I endure this ? But I thought again,—my Saviour was above thirty-three years working out my salvation ; let me wait for him as long, and then I may have some excuse for my impatience. Does God owe me any thing ? Is he bound to time and place ? Do I deserve any thing at his hands but damnation ? I would here observe, that anger in particular seemed to be one of the sins I could never overcome. So I went on sinning and repenting, and sinning again ; but still calling on God's mercy through Christ.

“ I was now beat out of all my strong holds. I felt my helplessness, and lay at the feet of Christ. I cried though *coldly*, yet I believe *sincerely*, ‘ Save me, Lord, as a brand snatched out of the fire ; give me justifying faith in thy blood ; cleanse me from my sins ; for the devil will surely reign over me, until thou shalt take me into thy hand. I shall only be an instrument in his hand to work wickedness, until thou shalt stretch forth thine almighty arm, and save thy lost creature by free unmerited grace.’ I seldom went to private prayer, but this thought came into my mind,—This may be the happy hour when thou wilt pre-

vail with God ; but still I was disappointed. I cried to God ; but my heart was so hard, that I feared it did not go with my lips. I strove, but it was so coldly, that often I had fits of drowsiness even in my prayers. When overcome with heaviness, I went to bed, beseeching God to spare me till next day, that I might renew my wrestling with him till I should prevail.

“ On Sunday the 19th, in the evening, I heard an excellent sermon on these words,—‘ Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ I heard it attentively, but my heart was not moved in the least ; I was only still more convinced, that I was an unbeliever, that I was not justified by faith, and that till I was, I should never have peace with God. The hymn after the sermon suited the subject ; but I could not join in singing it. So I sat mourning, whilst others rejoiced in God their Saviour. I went home, still resolving to wrestle with the Lord like Jacob, till I should become a prevailing Israel.

“ I begged of God, the following day, to shew me the wickedness of my heart, and to fit me for his pardoning mercy. I besought him to increase my convictions, for I was afraid I did not *mourn* enough for my sins. But I found relief in Mr. Wesley’s Journal, where I learned that we should not build on what we feel ; but go to Christ with all our sins and all our hardness of heart. On the 21st, I began to write part of what filled my heart, namely, a confession of my sins, misery, and helplessness, together with a resolution to seek Christ even unto death. But my business calling me away, I had no heart to resume the subject. In the evening I read the Scriptures, and found a sort of pleasure in seeing a picture of my wickedness so exactly drawn in the third chapter of the epistle to the Romans, and that of my condition in the seventh. And now I felt some hope, that God would carry on in me the work he had begun. I often wished to be acquainted with some

one who had been just in my state, and resolved to seek for one to whom I might unbosom my whole soul and apply for advice. As I had heard that mourners sometimes found comfort in reading over any particular text of scripture they opened upon, I opened the Bible once, for that purpose ; but I found nothing that gave me comfort, and so I did it no more, for fear of tempting God.

“ Thursday, my fast-day, Satan beset me hard : I sinned, and grievously too. And now I almost gave up all hope. I mourned deeply, but with an heart as hard as ever. I was on the brink of despair, and continued nevertheless to fall into sin, as often as I was assaulted with temptation. But I must observe, that all this while, though I had a clear sense of my wickedness, and of what I deserved ; and though I often thought that hell would be my portion, if God did not soon pity me, yet I never was much afraid of it. Whether this was owing to a secret hope lodged in my mind, or to hardness of heart, I know not ; but I was continually crying out, ‘ What stupidity ! I see myself hanging as by a thread over hell ! and yet I am not afraid—but sin on ! O what is man without the grace of God ! a very devil in wickedness, though inferior to him in experience and power. In the evening I went to a friend, and told him something of my present state ; he endeavoured to administer comfort, but it did not suit my case : there is no peace to a sinner unless it come from above. When we parted, he gave me some advice which suited my condition better. ‘ God (said he) is merciful ; God loves you ; and if he deny you any thing, it is for your good ; you deserve nothing at his hands, wait then patiently for him, and *never* give up your *hope*.’ I went home resolved to follow his advice, though I should stay till death.

“ I had proposed to receive the Lord’s-supper the following Sunday, I therefore returned to my room, and looked out a sacramental hymn. I learned it by heart,

and prayed it over many times, sometimes with heaviness enough, at others with some devotion, intending to repeat it at the table. I then went to bed, commending myself to God with rather more hope and peace than I had felt for some time. But Satan waked, whilst I slept. I dreamed I had committed grievous and abominable sins; I awoke amazed and confounded, and rising, with a detestation of the corruption of my senses and imagination, I fell upon my knees, and prayed with more faith and less wanderings than usual; and afterwards went about my business with an uncommon cheerfulness. It was not long before I was tempted by my besetting sin, but found myself a new creature. My soul was not even ruffled. I took not much notice of it at first; but having withstood two or three temptations, and feeling peace in my soul, through the whole of them, I began to think it was the Lord's doing. Afterwards it was suggested to me that it was great presumption for such a sinner to hope for so great a mercy. However, I prayed I might not be permitted to fall into a delusion; but the more I prayed, the more I saw it was real. For though sin stirred all the day long, I always overcame it in the name of the Lord.

“ In the evening, I read the experiences of some of God's children, and found my case agreed with their's and suited the sermon I had heard on justifying faith; so that my hope increased. I entreated the Lord to do to his servant according to his mercy, and take all the glory to himself. I prayed earnestly and with an humble assurance, though without great emotions of joy, that I might have dominion over sin, and peace with God; not doubting but that joy and a full assurance of faith would be imparted to me in God's good time. I continued calling upon the Lord for an increase of faith; for still I felt some fear of being in a delusion: and having continued my supplication till near one in the morning, I then opened my Bible on these words, Psa. lv. 22. “ Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he

shall sustain thee ; he will not suffer the righteous to be moved ” Filled with joy, I fell again on my knees to beg of God, that I might always cast my burden upon him. I took up my Bible again, and opened it on these words, Deut. xxxi. “ I will be with thee, I will not fail thee, neither forsake thee ; fear not, neither be dismayed.” My hope was now greatly increased, I thought I saw myself conqueror over sin, hell, and all manner of affliction.

“ With this comfortable promise I shut up my Bible, being now perfectly satisfied. As I shut it, I cast my eye on that word, “ Whatsoever you shall ask in my name, I will do it.” So having asked grace of God to serve him till death, I went cheerfully to take my rest.”

So far we have Mr. Fletcher’s account written with his own hand. To this I add what Mrs. Fletcher says she heard him speak concerning his experience at this time, viz. that he still continued to plead with the Lord to take more full possession of his heart, and sought with unwearyed assiduity to receive a brighter manifestation of God’s love to his soul : till one day, as he was in earnest prayer, lying prostrate on his face before the Lord, he had a view, by faith, of our Saviour hanging and bleeding on the cross, and at the same time, these words were applied with power to his heart :

“ Seiz’d by the rage of sinful men,
I see Christ bound, and bruis’d and slain :
’Tis done, the martyr dies !
His life to ransom our’s, is given,
And lo ! the fiercest fire of heaven
Consumes the sacrifice.
He suffers both from men and God,
He bears the universal load
Of guilt and misery !
He suffers to reverse our doom,
And lo, my Lord is here become
The Bread of Life to me !

Now all his bonds were broken : he breathed a purer air, and was able to say with confidence, ‘ The life I now

live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.' By means of this faith his soul was freed, and sin was put under his feet. Knowing in whom he had believed he could triumph in the Lord, and praise the God of his salvation.

FROM HIS CONVERSION TO HIS TAKING ORDERS, AND ENTERING UPON THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.

It was not long after he had himself *felt the powers of the world to come*, that he was pressed in spirit, to exhort others to seek after the same blessing. And he was the more strongly excited to this, by seeing the world all around him *lying in wickedness*. Being deeply sensible of the goodness of God on the one hand, and of the misery of mankind on the other, he found an earnest longing

“To pluck poor brands out of the fire,
To snatch them from the verge of hell.”

This he began to do a considerable time before he was admitted into holy orders. And even his first labours of love were far from being in vain. For though he was by no means perfect in the *English* tongue, particularly with regard to the pronunciation of it; yet the earnestness with which he spoke, (seldom to be found in *English* preachers) and the unspeakably tender affection to poor, undone sinners, which breathed in every word and gesture, drew multitudes of people to hear him: and by the blessing of God, his word made so deep an impression on their hearts, that very few went empty away.

About this time his father died, as appears by the following letter, addressed to Mr. Richard Edwards, of London, to whose care, as a leader, he was committed, when he was first received into the Methodist Society in London. It was dated Tern, October 19, 1756.

“ Dearest Brother,

“ This is to let you know, that (praised be the Lord,) I am very well in body, and pretty well in soul : But I have very few friends here. And God has been pleased to take away the chief of those few by a most comfortable death. And lately I heard that my aged father is gone the way of all flesh : but the glorious circumstances of his death make me ample amends for the sorrow which I felt. For some years I have written to him with as much freedom as I could have done to a son, though not with so much effect as I wished. But last spring, God visited him with a severe illness, which brought him to a sense of himself. And after a deep repentance, he died about a month ago, in the full assurance of faith. This has put several of my friends on thinking seriously, which affords me great cause of thankfulness. I am your unworthy brother and servant in the Lord,

JOHN FLETCHER.”

A discovery of his sentiments on the subject of the ministry, was no sooner made, but many honourable elders in the household of God, who had discernment enough to distinguish the grace that was in him, and how admirably he was fitted for the work of an evangelist, rejoiced over him as a faithful labourer already hired into the vineyard of Christ. They not only ratified his internal call to the holy ministry, by their unanimous approbation, but earnestly solicited him to obey that call without any further delay. Meanwhile the word of the Lord was as fire in his bones, ever struggling for vent, and not unfrequently breaking forth, as occasion offered, in public reproof, exhortation, and prayer.

In this state he continued for about the space of two years, not wholly determined what course he should pursue, but patiently waiting to hear what the Lord God would say concerning him. And during this season, he was much occupied in making a diligent preparation for the

service of the altar, that, if ever he should be called to so honourable an employment, he might go forth thoroughly furnished to every good work. The chief objects of his pursuit were *sacred knowledge*, and *christian purity*; in both of which he made an uncommon proficiency, surpassing many who had studied for that knowledge, and struggled for that purity, through the greater part of their life. By his private exercises he was fitted for public labours, and by the holy discipline, to which he submitted himself without any reserve, he was trained to spiritual eminence in the school of Christ. To those who perfectly knew him in this state of retirement, he appeared as a *polished shaft*, hid indeed for a season in the quiver of his Lord, yet ready for immediate service, and prepared to fly in any appointed direction.

He was not without promises of preferment in the church: but these served rather to retard than to hasten his entrance into it. Having a sacrifice to perform and not a fortune to secure, he was fearful lest his intention should be debased by views of an interested nature. At length, his humble reluctance was overcome, and after the most mature deliberation, he solemnly determined to offer himself a candidate for holy orders. And to this solemn determination he was urged by the increasing force of two powerful motives *gratitude and benevolence*; *gratitude* to God impelled him to declare the name of his great Benefactor, and bear public testimony to the word of his grace; while *benevolence* towards his fellow-creatures incited him *to spend and be spent*, in promoting their best interests. Constrained by these sacred motives, he publicly dedicated himself to the work of the holy ministry in the year 1757, when he received deacon's orders on Sunday, March the sixth, and priest's orders on the following Sunday, from the hands of the bishop of Bangor, in the Chapel Royal at St. James's.

The following short extracts from three of his letters to

the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley, will shew the state of his mind at this period. The first is dated March 22, 1759.

“ My dear Sir,

“ You left me without permitting me to say, Farewell ; but that shall not hinder me from wishing you a good journey, and I flatter myself, that you are in the habit of returning my prayers.

“ Since your departure, I have lived more than ever like a hermit. It seems to me, that I am an unprofitable weight upon the earth. I want to hide myself from all. I tremble when the Lord favors me with a sight of myself ; I tremble to think of preaching only to dishonor God. To-morrow I preach at West-street with all the feelings of Jonah : O would to God I might be attended with success ! If the Lord shall, in any degree sustain my weakness, I shall consider myself as indebted to your prayers.

“ A proposal has lately been made to me, to accompany Mr. Nathaniel Gilbert to the West Indies. I have weighed the matter ; but on one hand I feel that I have neither sufficient *zeal*, nor *grace*, nor *talents*, to expose myself to the temptations and labours of a mission in the West-Indies ; on the other, I believe, that if God call me thither, the time is not yet come. I wish to be certain, that I am converted myself, before I leave my converted brethren to convert heathens. Pray let me know what you think of this business ; if you condemn me to put the sea between us, the command would be a hard one ; but I might, possibly, prevail on myself to give you that proof of the deference I pay to your judicious advice.

“ I have taken possession of my little hired chamber. There I have *outward* peace, and I wait for that which is within. I was this morning with Lady Huntingdon, who salutes you, and unites with me to say, that we have need of you to make one in our threefold cord, and to beg you will hasten your return, when Providence permits. Our conversation was deep, and full of the energy of faith on the part of the Countess ; as to me, I sat like Saul at the feet of Gamaliel.

J. FLETCHER.”

The second was written in April following, and in this his words are, “ With an heart bowed down with grief, and eyes bathed with tears, occasioned by our late heavy loss, I mean the death of Mr. Walsh,* I take my pen to pray you to intercede for me. What! that *sincere, laborious, and zealous* servant of God! Was he saved only *as by fire*, and was not his prayer heard till the twelfth hour was just expiring? O where shall I appear, I who am an unprofitable servant! Would to God my eyes were fountains of water to weep for my sins! Would to God I might pass the rest of my days in crying, *Lord have mercy upon me! All is vanity*—grace, talents, labours, if we compare them with the mighty stride we have to take from time into eternity! Lord remember me *now* thou art in thy kingdom!

“ I have preached and administered the sacrament at West-street sometimes in the holidays. May God water the poor seed I have sown, and give it fruitfulness, though it be only in one soul!

“ I have lately seen so much weakness in my heart, both as a minister and a christian, that I know not which is most to be pitied, the man, the believer, or the preacher. Could I at last, be *truly* humbled, and *continue so always*, I should esteem myself happy in making this discovery. I preach *merely* to keep the chapel open, until God shall send a workman *after his own heart*. Nos numeri sumus;† this is almost all I can say of myself. If I did not know myself a little better than I did formerly, I should tell you, that I had ceased altogether from placing any confidence in my repentances, &c. &c. but I see my heart is

* Rev. Thomas Walsh, an able minister of the New Covenant, who after severe ministerial labors, accompanied with considerable success—much temptation—and awful desponding sufferings, died in peace, an old man (in appearance) at the age of twenty-eight! in Ireland, his native country.

† I fill an empty space.

so full of deceit, that I cannot depend on my knowledge of myself.

“The day Mr. Walsh died, the Lord gave our brethren the spirit of prayer and supplication, and many unutterable groans were offered up for him at Spitalfields, where I was. Who shall render *us* the same kind office? Is not our hour near? O my God, when thou comest, prepare us, and we shall be ready! You owe your children an elegy upon his death, and you cannot employ your talents on a better subject. J. F.”

June 1st, he writes, “The Lord gives me health of body, and from time to time I feel strength in my soul.—O when shall the witness (meaning himself) who is dead, arise! When shall the Spirit enter into him, and fill him with wisdom, with power, and with love! Pray for me, and support my weakness as much as you can. I am here *Umbra pro copore*.* I preach as your substitute: come and fill worthily an office, of which I am unworthy. My pupils return to Cambridge on Monday, and the whole family sets out for Shropshire on the 11th. Shall I not see you before that time? I have rejected the offer of Dr. Taylor, and have no other temptations than those of a bad heart. That is enough, you will say; I grant it; but we must fight before we conquer. Pray that my courage may not fail. Come, and the Lord come with you! I am, &c. J. F.”

OF HIS QUALIFICATIONS FOR, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY, AND OF HIS LABOURS AT MADELEY AND ELSEWHERE.

“HE who engages himself to fight the battles of the Lord,” says the Rev. Mr. Gilpin,† “has need of uncom-

* A shadow rather than a substance.

† The Rev. Joshua Gilpin, the good rector of Wrockwardine Parish, near Madely, in the county of Salop, (England,) and the excel-

mon strength and irresistible arms ; and if he be destitute of one or the other, he vainly expects to stand in the evil day. The christian warrior is exposed to a vast variety of dangers, and beset with innumerable enemies. His whole life is one continued scene of warfare, in which he wrestles sometimes with visible, and at other times with invisible adversaries. For the labours of this sacred warfare no man ever esteemed himself less sufficient than Mr. Fletcher. He ever considered himself as the weakest of Christ's adherents, and unworthy to follow his glorious standard. But while he boasted no inherent strength, and was ready to occupy the meanest post, he was regarded by his brethren as a man peculiarly *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*. United to Christ, as the branch is united to the vine, he was constantly deriving abundant supplies of vigour from the fountain-head of power. And as the source of his strength was inexhaustible, so its operations were various and incessant. Now it was engaged in subduing sin ; and now, in labouring after that *holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*: there

lent translator from French into English of Fletcher's Portrait of St. Paul. This most admirable work, at once the mirror and model for Christian pastors, was undertaken and nearly completed during Mr. Fletcher's last residence in Switzerland, where it was originally intended for publication. This work Mr. Gilpin enriched with copious traits of its precious author's character, and it is a pity that this truly excellent treatise is not more generally known and estimated in this country. Towards the end of the year 1806, Mr. Gilpin suffered a great fight of afflictions by the death of a dear and only child, who departed this life in the 19th year of his age, with heaven in his heart, and glory in the expectation of his hope. His young spirit went, we trust, to aid the veteran Fletcher in joining with cherubim and seraphim to laud and magnify God's holy name. Joshua Gilpin's most affectionate and tender hearted father published an account of this surprising young man, under the title of a monument of parental affection to a dear and only son. It is, (says Dr. Inglis,) a most interesting piece of biography, equally classical in style, and evangelical in matter, pure alike in thought and in expression ; and the amiable youth the subject of it, in a remarkable degree exemplary. J. K.

it inspired the courage of the mighty, and here it sustained the burdens of the weak : at one time it was discovered by resolution and zeal ; at another, by resignation and fortitude : by the former, this man of God was enabled to grapple with his strongest enemy ; by the latter, he was taught to *endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*

“ Mr. Fletcher’s *arms* were equal to his *strength*, and served to make him truly invincible in the cause of godliness. From his first admission into the true church militant, he was fully persuaded, that armour forged by the art of man must needs be insufficient, either for conquest or security, in a spiritual warfare. He saw it absolutely necessary to be furnished with weapons of celestial temper, and was altogether dissatisfied with his state, till he had put on *the whole armour of God*, with a determined resolution never to put it off, till his last conflict should be decided. He then appeared in the complete christian uniform ; from the helmet of salvation to the sandals of peace, all was entire, and perfectly fitted to his spiritual frame. No mortal part was left unguarded, nor was any joint of his harness so loose as to admit a thrust from the enemy. No part of his sacred panoply appeared uncouth or cumbersome, no part of his carriage constrained or unnatural : he appeared in arms, as in his proper dress, and not as David, when he essayed to go forth in the armour of Saul. On no occasion was he ever known to affect any thing like spiritual pomp ; yet, on every occasion, there was a dignity of character in his deportment, that raised the veneration of every beholder. As the heroes of antiquity were distinguished from the warriors of an inferior order, by the splendor of their arms, so, by the uncommon lustre of his graces, he was distinguished as a chieftain in the christian bands.”

It was about three years after his ordination, that he was presented to the living of Madeley, where he had offi-

ciated for some time previous to this appointment. As Madeley was the place of his choice, so it was a place to which, by his rare endowments, he was peculiarly adapted, and for the reformation of which he appears to have been eminently appointed by the providence of God. Celebrated for the extensive works carried on within its limits, Madeley was remarkable for little else than the ignorance and profaneness of its inhabitants, among whom respect to man was as rarely to be observed, as piety towards God. In this benighted place the Sabbath was openly profaned, and the most holy things contemptuously trampled under foot; even the restraints of decency were violently broken through, and the external form of religion held up as a subject of ridicule. This general description of the inhabitants of Madeley must not, however, be indiscriminately applied to every individual among them; exceptions there were to this prevailing character, but they were comparatively few indeed. Such was the place where Mr. Fletcher was called to stand forth, as a preacher of righteousness, and in which he appeared for the space of five and twenty years, as a burning and shining light.

Immediately upon his settling in this populous village, which was in the year, 1760, he entered upon the duties of his vocation with an extraordinary degree of earnestness and zeal. He saw the difficulties of his situation, and the reproaches to which he should be exposed, by a conscientious discharge of the pastoral office: but, persuaded of the importance of his charge, and concerned for the welfare of his people, he set his face like a flint against all who might oppose the truth or grace of God. As a steward of the manifold grace of God, he faithfully dispensed the word of life, according as every man had need; instructing the ignorant, reasoning with gainsayers, exhorting the immoral, and rebuking the obstinate.* Instant in season and out of

* It is painful to record such instances as the following, of obstinate depravity; but, perhaps it may serve to encourage some poor persecuted

season, he diligently performed the work of an evangelist, and lost no opportunity of declaring the truths of the gospel. Not content with discharging the stated duties of the sabbath, he counted that day as lost, in which he was not actually employed in the service of the church. As often as a small congregation could be collected, which was usually every evening, he joyfully proclaimed to them the acceptable year of the Lord, whether it were in the place set apart for public worship, in a private house, or in the open air. And on these occasions, the affectionate and fervent manner in which he addressed his hearers, was an affecting proof of the interest he took in their spiritual concerns. As the varying circumstances of his people required, he assumed a different appearance among them: at one season he would open his mouth in blessings; and at another, he would appear like his Lord amid the buyers and sellers, with the lash of righteous severity in his hand. But, in whatever way he exercised his ministry, it was evident that his labours were influenced by love, and tended immediately, either to the extirpation of sin, or the increase of holiness.

Nor was he less attentive to the private duties of his station, than to public exhortation and prayer. Like a vigilant pastor, he daily acquainted himself with the wants and dispositions of his people, anxiously watching over

broken-hearted minister, when he finds a pastor so patient and exemplary as Mr. Fletcher, was not exempted from the severest trials and sufferings from those who should have given him the greatest aid and comfort. One of his parishioners, instigated by the demon of discord, manifested, in living and dying circumstances, such an hatred towards him, only because he strove, by the awful judgment and tender mercy of the Lord, to get this unhappy soul as a brand plucked out of the burning, that he refused seeing Mr. Fletcher in his last sickness, and left it in command to his family that Mr. Fletcher should not attend his funeral. This extraordinary instance of prejudice against so holy a man, was given me by one who knew all the circumstances, while I was standing at the poor sinner's grave in Madeley church yard

their several households, and diligently teaching them from family to family. Esteeming no man too mean, too ignorant, or too profane to merit his affectionate attention, he condescended to the lowest and most unworthy of his flock, cheerfully becoming the servant of all, that he *might gain the more*. In the performance of this part of his duty, he discovered an admirable mixture of discretion and zeal, solemnity and sweetness. He rebuked not an elder, but entreated him as a father; to younger men he addressed himself with the affection of a brother, and to the children with the tenderness of a parent; witnessing both to small and great the redemption that is in Jesus, and persuading them to cast in their lot with the people of God. In some of these holy visits, the earnest and constraining manner in which he has pleaded the cause of piety, has melted down a whole family at once: the old and the young have mingled their tears together, and solemnly determined to return right humbly to their God. There were, indeed, several families in his populous parish, to which he had no access, whose members, loving darkness rather than light, agreed to deny him admission, lest their deeds should be reprov'd. In such cases, where his zeal for the salvation of individuals could not possibly be manifested by persuasion and entreaty, it was effectually discovered by supplication and prayer: nor did he ever pass the door of an opposing family, without breathing out an earnest desire, that the door of mercy might never be barred against their approaches.

With respect to his attendance upon the sick, he was exemplary and indefatigable. 'It was a work (says Mr. Wesley) for which he was always ready: if he heard the knocker in the coldest winter night, his window was thrown open in a moment. And when he understood either that some one was hurt in the pit,* or that a neighbour was

* In the parish of Madeley there are a vast number of coal pits, in which many hundreds of people are constantly employed.

likely to die ; no consideration was ever had of the darkness of the night, or the severity of the weather ; but this answer was always given, ‘ I will attend you immediately.’ Anxious (proceeds Mr. Gilpin) upon every suitable occasion to treat with his parishioners on subjects of a sacred nature, he was peculiarly solicitous to confer with them, when verging towards the borders of eternity. At such seasons, when earthly objects lose their charms, and the mind is naturally disposed to look for support from some other quarter, he cheerfully came in to improve the providential visitation, either by salutary advice or seasonable consolation. These were valuable opportunities, which nothing could prevail upon him to neglect, fully convinced that the dictates of truth are never more likely to make a due impression upon the heart, than when they are delivered in the antichamber of death. His treatment of the dying was always regulated by their peculiar circumstances, and his fidelity toward them was sweetly tempered with compassion. If the departing soul was prepared for the promises of the gospel, he thankfully administered them with a lavish hand : if otherwise, he was importunate in prayer, that the mercy of God might be magnified upon his languishing creature, though it should be as at the eleventh hour. As he never visited the chambers of the dying, but in the spirit of earnest supplication, so he seldom quitted them, without some degree of consolatory hope.

There is still another part of his duty, in the discharge of which he discovered unusual earnestness and activity. It was a common thing in his parish for young persons of both sexes to meet at stated times, for the purpose of what is called recreation ; and this recreation usually continued from evening to morning, consisting chiefly in dancing, revelling, drunkenness, and obscenity. These licentious assemblies he considered as a disgrace to the christian name, and determined to exert his ministerial authority for their total suppression. He has frequently burst in upon these

disorderly companies with a holy indignation, making war upon Satan in places peculiarly appropriated to his service. Nor was his labour altogether in vain, among the children of dissipation and folly. After standing the first shock of their rudeness and brutality, his exhortations have been generally received with silent submission, and have sometimes produced a partial if not an entire reformation in many, who were accustomed to frequent these assemblies. With one of these persons I am perfectly acquainted, who having treated this venerable pastor with ridicule and abuse in one of these riotous assemblies, was shortly afterwards constrained to cast himself at his feet and solicit his prayers. This man is now steadily walking in the fear of God, with a thankful remembrance of the extraordinary manner in which he was plucked as a brand from the burning.

These, and every other duty of his sacred vocation, among which I might have particularly noticed the public and private instruction of children, were performed, by this apostolic minister, with an earnestness and zeal, of which I can convey but a very imperfect idea. Never weary of well-doing, he counted it his greatest privilege *to spend and be spent* in ministering to the Church, which he constantly honoured as the *body of Christ*, and in the service of which he sacrificed his strength, his health, and his life.

In preaching, his fidelity in addressing the different classes of his hearers, was correspondent to that spirit of discernment and wisdom, with which he was so eminently favoured. On the one hand, he never attempted *slightly to heal* the hurt of his people : and, on the other, he was solicitous never *to make sad the heart of the righteous*, whom God had not made sad. Wherever he discovered impiety in the conduct, or hypocrisy in the heart, he immediately levelled against it the keenest arrows of conviction. He warned the wicked of his way, and frequently endeavoured to draw him from it, by alarming his heart with salutary fears ; selecting and applying, upon these

occasions, those passages of holy writ, which are peculiarly *profitable for reproof and correction*. And whenever it became necessary, he marshalled against the careless sinner the most terrible denunciations of the Almighty's wrath. In the performance of this part of his duty, he paid but little regard to the outward circumstances of the offending party. Whether the enemies of God appeared in the splendour of riches, or in the meanness of poverty; whether they were distinguished by their erudition, or despicable by their ignorance, he met them with equal firmness in the cause of truth.

The style of his reproofs was adapted, indeed, to the various capacities and habits of these different classes of men; but the substance of those reproofs was invariably the same to whatever class they were directed, neither sharpened by contempt, nor blunted by respect. Unawed either by the majesty of kings, or the madness of the people, he was equally fitted to appear with Moses at an impious court, or to stand with Stephen in a turbulent assembly. But though he was far from betraying any pusillanimity in applying the severe threatenings of the gospel to the obstinately impenitent, yet his heart in this awful employment, was never steeled against the feelings of humanity. His fidelity in this part of his duty was never unaccompanied with compassion and sorrow. He possessed the firmness of Daniel, with all the benevolence of that favoured prophet. Daniel was once directed to interpret and apply to Nebuchadnezzar a mysterious vision of divine vengeance, and the fidelity, with which he performed so painful a duty, is worthy of admiration. But while his interpretation was plain, and his application pointed, it is observable, that they were preceded by evident regret, and followed by affectionate counsel. Such was the manner of Mr. Fletcher, who had learned, from a greater than Daniel, to pronounce a sentence of condemnation with anguish and tears. Luke xix. 41.

But while he was faithful in proclaiming *the day of vengeance* to the disobedient, he neglected not to *proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound*. Both these parts of his duty he performed with fidelity, but the latter only with alacrity and cheerfulness. Peculiarly to fit him for this evangelical service, *the Lord God had given him the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary*; and in the discharge of this favourite part of his office, he was equally skilful, tender and happy. His watchful eye was upon the weak, the faint, and the afflicted. He diligently acquainted himself with the nature and causes of their distress; and whether they fainted through the anguish of remorse, or groaned beneath the violence of temptation, he had a suitable cordial prepared for their relief. He placed before their eyes a rich display of God's everlasting love, and assisted them to extract healing virtue from his unchangeable promises. He feelingly exhorted them to stretch out the withered hand; and till they were enabled actually *to lay hold on the hopes set before them*, he ceased not to proclaim, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin!*

He was thoroughly acquainted with the treatment of afflicted consciences. He knew when to probe, and when to heal; when to depress, and when to encourage: and no man's case was so perplexed or desperate, but he was in some measure prepared to explain and relieve it. He discovered hope for the spiritual mourner amid the most hopeless circumstances, and furnished the tempted with a clew to guide them through the intricacies of their situation. As the Psalmist addressed his own heart in distress, so he addressed himself to every son of affliction in the day of his trouble. He reasoned over the particular case of the afflicted person—*Why art thou so full of heaviness, and why*

is thy soul so disquieted within thee? Art thou afflicted beyond the common lot of thy companions in tribulation, or has any temptation befallen thee, except *such as is common to man?* From reasoning he proceeded to encouragement; *Hope thou in God:* reflect upon his nature, depend upon his word, and ask of the generations that are past, who ever trusted in the Lord and was confounded? From encouragement he rose to assurance; *Thou shalt yet praise him,* notwithstanding the present unpromising appearances: the God of all consolation shall be thy God, *the health of thy countenance,* and thy *portion for ever.*

He was very anxiously desirous, that *the voice of joy and health* might be heard *in the dwellings of the righteous;* nor would he be contented, till he could prevail upon the sorrowful to bear some harmonious part in the work of adoration and thanksgiving. But it is impossible to give a just representation of the sweet and condescending manner, in which he treated every spiritual mourner. He would take up their neglected harps, and tune them to the praises of redeeming love. He would furnish them with a variety of sacred themes, and solicit them, at least, to attempt *one of the songs of Sion.* And while they lingered, he would sweetly take the lead in celebrating the divine goodness. Now he recorded mercies past, and now he recounted promised blessings; now he sung the wonders of grace, and now he pointed to the mysteries of glory. But if it appeared, after all these animating efforts, on his part, that the mourners among his people were unable to accompany him in these joyful exercises, he would suddenly change his song of praise into a strain of supplication, and earnestly implore for them the light of his gracious countenance, whose prerogative it is *to appoint beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*

Thus with all possible plainness and fidelity, this animated preacher administered the good word of God in

his day and generation, whether it was a word of threatening, to the careless and impenitent, or a word of consolation to the fearful and afflicted.

Yet notwithstanding all the pains he took, he saw, for some time, little fruit of his labor : insomuch that he was more than once in doubt, whether he had not mistaken his place ; whether God had indeed called him to confine himself chiefly to one town, or to labor more at large in his vineyard. He seems to have been especially harrassed with doubts upon this subject, if at any time he was weak in faith, and in an uncomfortable state of mind.— Thus in a letter to Mr. Charles Wesley, dated March 10, 1761, he says, “ As I read your elegy,* I could not refrain my tears ; tears so much the more sweet, as they originated in a secret hope, that I should one day strip off the polluted rags of my own righteousness, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, like the christian hero of your poem.

“ I feel more and more, that I neither *abide* in Christ, nor Christ in me ; nevertheless, I do not *so* feel it, as to seek him without intermission. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this heart of unbelief? Blessed be God, who has promised me this deliverance, through our Lord Jesus Christ !*

“ A few days ago, I was violently tempted to quit Madeley : the spirit of Jonah had so seized upon my heart, that I had the insolence to murmur against the Lord ; but the storm is now happily calmed, at least for a season.— Alas ! what stubbornness is there in the will of man ; and with what strength does it combat the will of God, under the *mask of piety*, when it can no longer do so with the uncovered, shameless face of vice ! *If a man bridleth not his tongue, all his outward religion is vain.* May we not add to this observation of St. James, that if a man bridleth not his will, which is the language of his desires, his *in-*

* On the Rev. Dr. Madan, formerly preacher at the Locke Hospital, in London.

ward religion is vain also ? The Lord does not, however, leave me altogether ; and I have often a secret hope, that he will one day touch my heart and my lips with a live coal from his altar : and that then his word shall consume the stubble, and break to pieces the stone."

Again a few weeks after he writes to the same, " I know not what to say to you of the state of my soul : I daily struggle in the slough of Despond, and I endeavour every day to climb the hill Difficulty. I need wisdom, mildness, and courage ; and no man has less of them than I. O Jesus, my Saviour, draw me strongly to him, who giveth wisdom to all who ask it, and upbraideth them not ! As to the state of my parish, the prospect is yet discouraging. New scandals succeed those that wear away ; but *offences must come* : happy shall I be, if the offence cometh not by me !"

Although he did not immediately see much fruit of his labours, yet God soon gave him some proofs that his word was not altogether without its desired effect. In a letter, written some time after his going to Madeley, he mentions three persons who " professed that they had received the consolations of divine love under his ministry : " but, says he, " I wait for their fruits." Another instance is mentioned by Mr. Wesley, which, it seems, occurred when he was under great discouragement : " A multitude of people had flocked together at a funeral. He seldom let these awful opportunities slip without giving a solemn exhortation. At the close of the exhortation which was then given, one man was so grievously offended, that he could not refrain from breaking out into scurrilous, yea, menacing language. But, notwithstanding all his struggling against it, the word fastened upon his heart. At first, indeed, he roared like a lion ; but he soon wept like a child. Not long after he came to Mr. Fletcher in the most humble manner, asking pardon for his past outrageous behaviour, and begging an interest in his prayers. This was such a

refreshment as he stood in need of: and it was but a short time, before the poor broken-hearted sinner was filled with joy unspeakable. He then spared no pains in exhorting his fellow sinners to flee from the wrath to come."

From the beginning Mr. Fletcher did not confine his preaching to the church, nor his labors to his own parish. Soon after his going to reside at Madeley, we find him expressing himself thus to a friend in one of his letters. "I have frequently had a desire to exhort in Madeley-Wood, and Coalbrook-Dale, two villages of my parish; but I have not dared to run before I saw an *open door*: it now, I think, begins to open; as two small societies of twenty persons have formed themselves in those places."

To a little society, which he gathered about six miles from Madeley, he preached two or three times a week, beginning at five in the morning. Nay, for many years, he regularly preached at places, eight or ten, or sixteen miles off: returning the same night, though he seldom got home before one or two in the morning.

In these his labours of love, however, although undertaken and prosecuted with the sole view of glorifying God, and saving souls from death eternal, he met with no little opposition and persecution. Indeed, the highest degrees of piety to God, or of benevolence to mankind, are found insufficient to secure a man from the reproaches of the world. "On the contrary," as Mr. Gilpin has justly observed, "religion and virtue when carried to an extraordinary pitch of excellence, have generally exposed the possessors of them to the slander of malevolence and rigours of persecution." Many were the instances of opposition which the enemies of God and his truth, made to this holy and benevolent man, and various were the snares which they laid to entangle him, out of all which, however, the Lord graciously delivered him, not suffering them to hurt an hair of his head.

His situation with respect to the unworthy part of his parishioners," says Mr. Gilpin, "was similar to the situ-

ation of Daniel, with respect to the Babylonish courtiers : his whole conduct was so admirably regulated by circumspection and prudence, that malice itself could find no occasion against him, *except concerning the law of his God*. The voluptuary detested his temperance and self-denial : the man of pride poured contempt upon his humility and condescension ; the licentious were offended at his gravity and strictness : and the formal were roused to indignation by that spirit of zeal and devotion, which influenced his whole conversation and conduct. All of these, however they might differ among themselves, were leagued together as the inveterate enemies of this venerable pastor. They wrested his words, they misrepresented his actions, and *cast out his name as evil*. But, whatever he was called to suffer from the malice and opposition of his enemies, he endured it all with the utmost magnanimity and composure, *not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing ; but, contrariwise, blessing*. While some indignant professors are ready, with James and John, *to command fire from heaven* for the destruction of their opposers ; and while others are inquiring, with Peter, how often they are to meet their offending brethren with unfeigned forgiveness, he gave himself an example of that uncommon charity, which ‘suffereth long, and is kind ; which is not easily provoked, and thinketh no evil. When he was reviled, he reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not ; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.’

“ Whether he was insulted in his person, or injured in his property ; whether he was attacked with open abuse, or pursued by secret calumny ; through the testimony of a good conscience, he walked amid the most violent assaults of his enemies, as a man completely invulnerable ; and while his firmness discovered that he was unhurt, his forbearance testified that he was unoffended. His love was truly unconquerable : the cold waters of disrespect could

not *quench it*, neither could floods of reproach *drown it*.—*Being reviled, he blessed; being persecuted, he suffered it; being defamed, he entreated; provoking his enemies, by every affectionate method to love and good works.* Whenever he discerned a virtue in the character of an adversary, he commended it, he magnified it, he rejoiced over it, and endeavoured to make it a medium of reconciliation. Whenever he discovered an enemy in distress, he hastened to meet him with tokens of generosity and kindness; *if he hungered, he fed him; if he thirsted, he gave him drink; if he was oppressed, he maintained his cause; if his heart was brought down through heaviness, he endeavoured to support and console him; embracing, with thankfulness, every possible opportunity of heaping coals of fire on his head.*”

It must be observed here, however, that the opposition, which some of his parishioners and others made to him, was of that nature, that he was constrained, although reluctant to denounce upon them the judgments of God, and to warn them, if they did not repent, God would speedily cut them off. And the truth of these predictions, as I may not improperly term them, was shown over and over by their signal accomplishment. January 13, 1766, he wrote to a friend as follows:

“ This evening I have buried one of the warmest opposers of my ministry, a stout, strong, young man, aged twenty-four years. About three months ago, he came to the church-yard with a corpse, but refused to come into the church. When the burial was over, I went to him, and mildly expostulated with him. His constant answer, was ‘ that he had bound himself never to come to church while I was there; adding, that he would take the consequences, &c.’ Seeing I got nothing, I left him, saying with uncommon warmth, (though as far as I can remember, without the least touch of resentment) ‘ I am clear of your blood; henceforth it is upon your own head; you

will not come to church upon your legs, prepare to come upon your *neighbour's shoulders*. He wasted from that time, and to my great surprize hath been buried on the spot where we were, when the conversation passed between us. When I visited him in his sickness, he seemed *tame* as a wolf in a trap. O may God have turned him into a sheep in his last hours !”

Mr. Fletcher was wondrously skilled in adapting himself to the different capacities and conditions of his hearers.— He could stoop to the illiterate, and rise with the learned; he had incontrovertible arguments for the sceptic, and powerful persuasives for the listless believer; he had sharp remonstrance for the obstinate, and strong consolation for the mourner: and, like a scribe thoroughly instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, he brought forth out of his treasures *things new and old*, as occasion required. To hear him without admiration, was impossible; without profit, improbable. The unthinking went from his presence under the influence of serious impressions, and the obdurate with kindled relentings. Many an unsuspecting trifler has he enclosed in the gospel net, and many a happy captive has he led in the course of his public ministry, *from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God*. I shall here transcribe a short passage from a letter addressed to me, by one of the author's esteemed friends. “ I would “ rather have heard,” says the writer, “ one sermon from “ Mr. Fletcher, *viva voce*, than read a volume of his “ works. His words were clothed with power, and enter- “ ed with effect. His writings are arrayed in all the garb “ of human literature. But his living word soared an ea- “ gle's flight above humanity. He basked in the sun, car- “ ried his young ones on his wings, and seized the prey “ for his master. In short, his preaching was *apostolic*; “ while his writings, though enlightened, are but *human*.”

The concern which Mr. Fletcher expressed for the relief of the unfortunate and afflicted, was truly uncommon; but

his compassion was still more abundant toward the immoral and profane, whom he constantly regarded as the most miserable of men. While he detested vice, he pitied the vicious; and while he fled from sin, as from the face of a serpent, he turned to the sinner with the warmest emotions of benevolence and charity. Considering the wicked as poor beyond the power of expression, he joyfully presented them with *the pearl of great price*. He saw them wandering as sheep without a shepherd, and endeavoured to conduct them to the fold of God: he beheld them attempting to quench their thirst at the poisoned streams of worldly pleasure, and affectionately invited them to *the fountain of living waters*; he saw them heedlessly rushing to the gates of death, and laboured to turn their feet into *the way everlasting*.

Animated with that burning charity, by which St. Paul was impelled to publish the gospel from nation to nation, this evangelical preacher was constrained, not only within, but as has been observed above, beyond the limits of his parish, to follow after the ignorant, the careless, and the abandoned, *warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*. Considering the business with which he was charged, as an employment of the highest importance, without paying any servile attention to times or places, he lost no opportunity of executing the commission he had received. His highest wish was to *convert the wicked from the error of his way*; and in the course of so arduous an undertaking, he was prepared, at the command of his Lord, to go forth into the *highways and hedges* with the invitations of the gospel; anxious to do *the work of an evangelist* with all possible fidelity, and not ashamed, that every hour and every place should bear testimony to the affectionate zeal, with which he laboured for the welfare of the church.

As the miser toils to increase his hoards, and as the ambitious person studies to advance his reputation in

the world ; with equal assiduity and desire this holy man endeavoured to promote the reformation of the ungodly. *Rising up early and late taking rest*, he was employed, either directly or indirectly, through the whole of the day, in hiring labourers into the service of his Lord. To engage their attention and excite their desire, he set before them the freedom of that service, the honours that attend it, and the rewards that follow it : to strengthen their feeble resolution, he joyfully offered them every brotherly assistance ; and to shame their inactivity, he pointed them to the example of those, who cheerfully bore all *the burden and heat of the day*. As an affectionate father conducts himself toward his disobedient children, reproving and alluring, admonishing and persuading them, with every affecting testimony of parental tenderness ; so this spiritual father conducted himself toward the children of transgression and impiety, seeking by every affectionate method, to engage them in the pursuit of that *holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*.

With respect to individuals, he was peculiarly careful to choose the fittest opportunity of conversing with them upon sacred subjects. In the day of their prosperity, he sometimes spake to them, as it were at a distance ; but in the day of their adversity, he redoubled his efforts, and followed them with the most familiar attention ; fully persuaded, that religious impressions can never be made in a more favourable season, than when the heart has been softened by previous afflicting providences. Were they destitute of spiritual knowledge ?—he explained to them the mysteries of evangelical truth. Were they presuming upon the mercy they had formerly abused ?—he awakened their fears by representations of that righteous *wrath, which is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness*. Were they doubtful of ever finding acceptance with God ;—he animated their hopes, and encouraged them to a steady dependance upon the promises of God ; happily adapting his

several applications to the circumstances of his spiritual patients. Such was the ardent charity of this father in Christ toward the depraved and unbelieving, wherever he discovered them; a charity, which was frequently no less effectual in its operations, than powerful in its essence. A number of instances of this might be produced if need were.

The same concern for the spiritual welfare of his flock, together with the very mean opinion which he had formed of himself, induced him from time to time to invite other ministers to visit his parish, and assist him to make known to the inhabitants thereof the riches of the grace of God. The Rev. Mr. John Wesley frequently visited him; and many are the invitations which we find to Mr. Charles Wesley, in his letters to that servant of God. Nor did he confine his invitations to ministers of the established church, but requested the aid even of such as had not been episcopally ordained. In or about the year 1764, he writes as follows to Mr. Mather, a well known and eminent preacher in Mr. Wesley's connexion.* "I desire you will call at the Bank† as often as you have opportunity. An occasional exhortation from you or your fellow-labourer, at the Bank, Dale, &c. will be esteemed a favour; and I hope that my stepping, as Providence directs, to any of your places (leaving to you the management of the societies) will be deemed no encroachment. In short, we need not make two parties: I know but *one* heaven below, and that

* The Rev Alexander Mather (a native of Scotland,) whose just praise is in all the Methodist churches, was a man of such excellent knowledge, piety and usefulness, that for almost half a century, he was emphatically styled "Mr. Wesley's right hand." He died in England, August 22d, 1800, and in his dying experience was accomplished that saying of the Psalmist: "Mark the perfect, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."
J. K.

† A place about five miles from his parish, on which he had bestowed much labour, and where he had gathered a small society.

is Jesus's love; let us both go and abide in it, and when we have gathered as many as we can to go with us, too many will still stay behind." May 27, 1766, he says to a friend, "The coming of Mr. Wesley's preachers into my parish gives me no uneasiness. As I am sensible that every body does better, and, of course, is more acceptable than myself, I should be sorry to deprive any one of a blessing; and I rejoice that the work of God goes on by any instrument or in any place."

Thus this man of God laboured to be useful in every possible way. By preaching, conversing, writing; by instructing, reproving, encouraging; exhorting; by warning, and beseeching; by word and deed; by acting and suffering, and especially by letting his light shine before men, and exhibiting to their view an example of sincere and genuine piety and virtue, he endeavoured, with the most ardent zeal, and unwearied diligence, to advance the honour and interest of his divine master. At home and abroad, in company and alone, in public and in private, he ceased not to keep in view and prosecute his great and important design.

But although, as will readily be allowed by every unprejudiced reader of this Narrative, "he* was far more abundant in his public labours, than the greater part of his companions in the holy ministry; yet," as Mr. Gilpin justly observes, "these bore but little proportion to those internal exercises of prayer and supplication, to which he was wholly given up in private. The former, of necessity, were frequently discontinued; but the latter were almost uninterruptedly maintained, from hour to hour. He lived in the spirit of prayer; and whatever employments he was engaged in, this spirit was constantly manifested through them all. Without this he neither formed any design, nor entered upon any duty: without this, he neither read, nor

* Gilpin's Notes.

conversed: without this, he neither visited, nor received a visitant.

“ Before I was of sufficient age,” proceeds the last mentioned reverend author, “ to take Holy Orders, I thankfully embraced the offered privilege of spending a few months beneath the roof of this exemplary man, to whom I was at that time an entire stranger: and I well remember how solemn an impression was made upon my heart, by the manner in which he received me. He met me at his door, with a look of inexpressible benignity; and conducting me by the hand into his house, intimated a desire of leading me immediately into the presence of that God, to whom the government of his little family was ultimately submitted. Instantly he fell upon his knees, and poured out an earnest prayer, that my present visit might be rendered both advantageous and comfortable, that the secret of the Lord might rest upon our common tabernacle, and that our society might be crowned by an intimate fellowship with that promised Emmanuel, in whom all the families of the earth are called to inherit a blessing. This may serve as a specimen of the manner, in which he was accustomed to receive his guests.”

In his social prayers he paid but little attention to those rules, which have been laid down, with respect to the composition and order of these devotional exercises. As the Spirit gave him utterance, so he made his requests known unto God. But, while he prayed *with the Spirit*, he prayed *with the understanding also*. His words flowed spontaneously and without any premeditation, yet always wonderfully adapted to the occasion. Nothing impertinent, artificial, or superfluous, appeared in his addresses to God: and while he presented those addresses, there was a solemnity and animation in his manner, which tended not only to edify, but to quicken and exalt the soul. There have been seasons of supplication, in which he appeared to be carried out far beyond the ordinary limits of devotion;

when like his Lord upon the Mount, while he has continued to pour out his mighty prayer, *the fashion of his countenance has been changed*, and his face has appeared as the face of an angel. None, except those who have frequently joined with him in this enlivening duty, can have any just conception of the manner in which he performed it. They who have enjoyed this privilege, have seen and felt, what is not to be described: and to others, it can only be said, that his prayer was the prayer of faith, always fervent, often effectual, and invariably a mingled flow of supplication and gratitude, humility and confidence, resignation and fervour, adoration and love.

By the ardour of his social prayers, some judgment may be formed of his secret supplications: but of his frequent vehement struggles, and unutterable breathings, in these private exercises, he alone can judge *who seeth in secret*. His deepest and most sensible communications with God were enjoyed in those hours, when the door of his closet was shut against human creatures as well as human cares. And though he rejoiced to lift up his hands in company with his friends, yet, when his heart was at any time peculiarly enflamed with desire, or pressed with affliction, he would say to his friends, as Christ to his disciples, *Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder*. His closet was the favourite retirement, to which he constantly retreated, whenever his public duties allowed him a season of leisure. Here he was privily hidden, as in the presence of God. Here he would either patiently wait for, or joyfully triumph in the loving kindness of the Lord. Here he would plunge himself into the depths of humiliation; and from hence, at other seasons, as from another Pisgah, he would take a large survey of the vast inheritance, which is reserved for the saints. Here he would ratify his solemn engagements to God: and here like the good king Hezekiah, he would spread the various circumstances of his people at the feet of their common Lord. In all cases of difficulty he would

retire to this consecrated place to ask counsel of the Most High; and here, in times of uncommon distress, he has continued during whole nights in prayer before God.

At one period of his life he was brought into such an intricate situation, that he was wholly at a loss to discover what God required at his hand : and such was the difficulty before him, that the opinions of his most experienced friends could afford him but little light with respect to it. In this state, for three months successively, he spread the intricacies of his case before the Judge of all the earth, entreating that he would direct the course of his conduct, by the order of his providence, and the influence of his Spirit. His request was continued till an answer was obtained, which was not till the wall of his chamber could exhibit a proof of his vehement intercession ; that part of it, against which he was accustomed to kneel, appearing deeply stained with the breath he had spent in fervent supplication : such was the ardour of his spirit, and such the devotion of his heart ! The above circumstance was discovered by some about him, who were well acquainted with his manner in trying situations.

His preaching was perpetually preceded, accompanied, and succeeded by prayer. Before he entered upon the performance of his duty, he requested of the great Master of assemblies a subject adapted to the conditions of his people : earnestly soliciting for himself, wisdom, utterance, and power ; for them a serious frame, an unprejudiced mind, and a retentive heart. This necessary preparation for the profitable performance of his ministerial duties, was of longer or shorter duration, according to his peculiar state at that time : and frequently he could form an accurate judgment of the effect that would be produced in public, by the langor or enlargement he had experienced in private. The spirit of prayer accompanied him from the closet to the pulpit ; and while he was outwardly employed in pressing the truth upon his hearers, he was inwardly

engaged in pleading that last great promise of his unchangeable Lord, *I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

From the great congregation he again withdrew to his sacred retreat, there requesting in secret, that a blessing might accompany his public labors, and that the seed which he had sown, being treasured up in honest and good hearts, might sooner or later become abundantly fruitful.

While it is here recorded, that this faithful servant of God was accustomed to *pray without ceasing*, it must be noted, at the same time, as a distinguishing part of his character, that *in every thing he gave thanks*. His heart was always in a grateful frame, and it was his chief delight to honour God by *offering him thanks and praise*. Frequently, when he has been engaged in recounting the gracious dealings of God with respect to himself, or his signal favors conferred upon the church, he has broke out in a strain of holy rejoicing. *O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men!* He considered every unexpected turn of providence, as a manifestation of his Father's good pleasure, and discerned causes of thanksgiving, either obvious or latent, in every occurrence.—Thus, either in the expectation, or in the possession of promised mercies, he *rejoiced evermore*. The immediate causes of his joy were manifold, public and private, spiritual and temporal; but they were all swallowed up in the advancement of Christ's kingdom upon earth. This he considered, as a subject of universal rejoicing, and for this, he more especially desired to *praise the name of God with a song, and to magnify it with thanksgiving*.

As he has justly expressed it in his Portrait of St. Paul, p. 103, 2nd edition—'Pastors, who pray for their flocks, pray not in vain. Their fervent petitions are heard, sinners are converted, the faithful are edified, and thanksgiving is shortly joined to supplication.' With re-

spect to himself it was abundantly so. The seed which he had watered with his tears, and followed with his prayers, produced, at length a plentiful harvest. His ministry was attended with unusual success, and a considerable body of his people saluted each other as brethren in Christ. His exultation over these, in their regenerate estate, was equal to his former solicitude on their account : and as often as an occasion has presented itself of leading a penitent prodigal into the household of God, his carriage has been marked with every possible demonstration of joy. Leading the returning wanderer into his spiritual family, he would cry out, with a countenance full of holy triumph, ‘ If there be joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, then it is meet that we should rejoice and be glad together this day *for this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found.* His joy was continually receiving some accession of this kind. From year to year, sinners were converted from the error of their ways, and believers were built up in their most holy faith : while he appeared among them as a happy father, rejoicing in their prosperity, and blessed in the blessings of his spiritual children.

Such were the different states of earnest prayer, and joyful praise, with which this evangelical preacher was deeply acquainted, and which mutually preceded and succeeded each other in his christian experience.

It was observed to the disgrace of the ancient scribes, that they bound *heavy burdens* upon others, which they themselves refused to touch *with one of their fingers* : and their uncharitable conduct in this respect, was publicly condemned by the blessed Jesus, who pronounced the severest judgments upon their self-indulgence. Contrasted with the carriage of those illiberal pretenders to piety, the conduct of Mr. Fletcher appeared in a truly admirable and exemplary point of view. Far from subjecting others to those hardships and restraints, which he refused to impose

upon himself, he cheerfully endeavoured to lighten the burdens of his brethren, though it was by redoubling his own. He laboured to quicken, and not to retard the progress of the weak and inexperienced. He compassionated their defects, and made excuse for their constitutional infirmities, in the manner of his gracious Master, who kindly apologized for the inattention of his sleeping disciples.

He studied to present the religion of Jesus in its most alluring form, not as a *vial of wrath* but as a *cup of consolation*; not as a galling yoke, but as a sacred tie; not as a depressing burden, but as a never-failing support. When he beheld the incautious entangled in the mazes of temptation, he tenderly lamented the effects of their indiscretion; and instead of throwing unnecessary impediments in the way of their escape, he affectionately laboured to break through the snare, and deliver the captive. If his brother was overtaken in a fault, he endeavoured to *restore him in the spirit of meekness*,—if his conscience was wounded with a sense of his guilt, he hastened to meet him with healing remedies,—if he was overwhelmed with the dread of his besetting sin, and harrassed with the apprehension of future miscarriages, he encouraged him to come *boldly to the throne of grace*, that he might *obtain mercy, and find grace to help him in every time of need*. In his whole deportment towards the ignorant and unfaithful, he copied the character of a skilful and affectionate preceptor, who keeps future difficulties as far removed as possible from the view of his pupils, accommodating their exercises to their several capacities, overlooking their past negligence, supplying their present deficiencies, and mentioning their poor attainments with commendation and praise.

But while his conduct towards others was marked with unusual lenity and tenderness, he exercised the strictest severity with regard to himself. He sought after an entire conformity to the *perfect will* of God. And to accelerate his progress towards this desirable state, he cheerfully re-

nounced his natural habits, and resolutely opposed his own will, unweariedly labouring to bring *every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*. He struggled against the most innocent of his infirmities; he entered upon the most painful exercises; and refused to allow himself in the least temporary indulgencies, which were not perfectly consistent with a life of unfeigned mortification and self-denial. He engaged himself in every kind of spiritual labor, with the most intense application, suffering no talent to remain unoccupied, nor any moment to pass by unimproved: and so perfectly was he inured to habits of christian industry, that he never discovered an inclination to sweeten the most laborious exercises, with those refreshments and relaxations, which he esteemed not only allowable, but, in some cases, necessary, to his weaker brethren. Considering himself as a member of Christ's *militant* church, he complained of no hardships, nor thought any difficulty too great to be encountered, in the course of his warfare. He was careful to act, in every instance, consistently with his high profession; training himself up to spiritual *hardness* and activity, by a resolute attention to the strictest rules of christian discipline; preferring the path of duty before the lap of repose; neither listening to the suggestions of fear, nor regarding the dictates of worldly prudence; stifling even the necessary calls of nature, that he might follow, with less interruption, the leadings of grace; and, finally, *counting* neither ease, nor interest, nor reputation, nor even life itself, *dear* to him, that he might *finish his course with joy.*"

OF THE EXCURSIONS HE MADE TO DIFFERENT PLACES, HIS FIRST VISIT TO HIS NATIVE COUNTRY, HIS OFFICE AND USEFULNESS AT TREVECKA, AND OF THE STEPS WHEREBY HE WAS LED TO WRITE ON CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Fletcher was attached in no common degree to those among whom he was appointed to labour; and although his endeavours were chiefly exercised for their spiritual benefit; yet was his heart enlarged also toward all the children of God, by whatever name they were distinguished, or wherever the bounds of their habitation were fixed. And he was ready, at all times, as far as his duty to his parishioners would permit, to minister to them the word of life. "Considering himself as a *debtor** both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians, he was ready, had it been possible, to have visited the uttermost parts of the earth with the truths of the Gospel: and wherever a christian church was established, he appeared deeply interested in its welfare, expressing a vehement desire, that it might be regulated in all things as the *House of God*, and become, to happy thousands, *the gate of Heaven*. When the members of any distant Church were represented, as exemplary for their faith, their zeal, or their love, he received the report of their advancement in grace with demonstrations of the sincerest joy, and publicly expressed his gratitude to that great Master of Assemblies, *who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants*. When the professors of christianity, in any part of the world, were observed to grow weary of well-doing, either declining from the *Faith of the Gospel*, or neglecting to walk worthy of their high vocation; his heart was penetrated, on their account, with the most lively concern: he lamented their in-

* Gilpin's notes.

stability in secret, and *watered his couch with his tears*. When the spiritual Vine, in some remote part of the vineyard, appeared to be in danger from the fury of the oppressor; when her hedges were broken down and her fruit torn away by the hand of persecution, he entered deeply into the distresses of the suffering church; he fasted, he wept, he prayed, making continual intercession before the great Lord of the Vineyard, that he would look down from heaven, and visit the plant, which he had formerly strengthened for himself; that spreading forth its boughs again unto the sea, and its branches unto the river, the hills might be covered with the shadow of it, and the land be filled with its fruits.

In 1767, he was in Wales and Yorkshire, he also occasionally visited Bristol and Bath, during which time, as well as during his absence in the preceding year, the Rev. Mr. Brown was entrusted with the care of his flock. Of him Mr. Fletcher entertained a high opinion, and placed an entire confidence in his prudence, piety, and zeal. "I thank you," says he to Mr. Ireland, "for your care to procure not only a supply for my church, but such an agreeable, acceptable, and profitable one as Mr. Brown. I know none that should be more welcome than he. Tell him, with a thousand thanks for his condescension, that I deliver my charge over to him fully, and give him a *carte blanche*, to do or not to do, as the Lord shall direct him." How long Mr. Brown continued at Madeley, I cannot say, nor whether he supplied Mr. Fletcher's church during the time the latter spent in his native country, in company with his faithful and tried friend Mr. Ireland, in the spring of the year 1770. He had formed the design of paying his friends this visit in the preceding spring, as appears by the following paragraph of a letter to the same friend, dated March 26, 1769.

"I shall be obliged to go to Switzerland, this year or the next, if I live, and the Lord permit. I have there a bro-

ther, a worthy man, who threatens to leave his wife and children to come and pay me a visit, if I do not go and see him myself. It is some time since our gracious God has convinced him of sin, and I have by me some of his letters which give me great pleasure : this circumstance has more weight with me than the settlement of my affairs."

Nevertheless he did not go during that year, for in 1770 he was still undetermined respecting his intended visit to France and Switzerland, as appears by a letter of the 13th of January to Mr. Ireland, written from Wales.

" I know not what to think of our journey. My heart frequently recoils ; I have lost all my hopes of being able to preach in French, and I think if I could, they will not permit me. I become more stupid every day : my memory fails me in a surprising manner. I am good for nothing, but to go and bury myself in my parish. Judge, then, whether I am fit to go into the world. On the other hand, I fear that your journey is undertaken partly from complaisance to me, and in consequence of the engagement we made to go together. I acquit you of your promise, and if your business do not really demand your presence in France, I beg you will not think of going there on my account. The bare idea of giving you trouble would make the journey ten times more disagreeable to me than the season of the year.

" If your affairs do not really call you to France, I will wait until Providence and grace shall open a way for me to the mountains of Switzerland, if I am ever to see them again. Adieu. Give yourself *wholly* to God. A divided heart, like a divided kingdom, falls naturally, by its own gravity, either into darkness, or into sin. My heart's desire is, that the love of Jesus may fill your soul, and that of your unworthy, and greatly obliged servant,

J. F."

His friend, it appears, had solved his doubts, and answered his objections so much to his satisfaction in his re-

ply, that they soon afterwards undertook their journey, and travelled through a great part of France and Italy, as well as visited Switzerland. It is extremely to be regretted, that neither of them kept a journal during this tour, as the incidents which occurred, I know, were such as would have afforded much important, as well as pleasing information, if recorded in a narrative of this kind. In order, in some degree, to supply this want, I insert here the following short account of some of these occurrences, which Mr. Ireland has kindly favoured me with, in answer to my inquiries.

His words are,—“ It would give me great pleasure to add any thing to what I have already communicated respecting my much esteemed, but deceased friend. But alas! I may as well attempt to gather up water spilt on the ground. I was with him day and night, in our first journey, nearly five months, travelling all over Italy and France; at that time a popish priest resided in his parish, who attempted to mislead the poor people. Mr. Fletcher, therefore, throughout his journey, attended the sermons of the Roman Catholic Clergy, visited their convents and monasteries, and conversed with all the most serious among them, whom he met with, in order that he might thoroughly know their sentiments concerning spiritual religion. And he was so very particular in making his observations respecting the gross and absurd practices of the priests and other clergy, especially while we were in Italy, that we were frequently in no small danger of our lives. He wished to attend the pope’s chapel at Rome, but I would not consent to accompany him, till I had obtained a promise from him, that he would forbear to speak by way of censure or reproof of what he saw or heard. He came into company with a great many men of science and learning, with whom he conversed freely on gospel truths; which most of them opposed with violence. A few heard and were edified. I have often said that I would give a

considerable sum of money, could I recollect or procure a copy of his arguments, and their replies, respecting the capital truths of the Gospel. But, alas! my memory fails me, and although I was exceedingly struck with them at the time I heard them, yet as they occurred frequently, I had not leisure, on the journey, to take minutes of them. His whole life, as you well know, was a sermon: all his conversations were sermons. Even his disputations with infidels were full of instruction. We met with a gentleman of fortune once on a journey, an excellent classical scholar, with whom he continued near a fortnight in an hotel. He said he had travelled all over Europe, and had passed through all the Societies in England, to find a person whose life corresponded with the Gospels and with Paul's Epistles. And he asked me, (for it was with me he first began to converse) if I knew of any Clergyman, or Dissenting Minister in England, possessing a stipend of one hundred pounds a year for the cure of souls, who would not leave them all, if I offered him double that sum. I replied in the affirmative, and soon pointed out my friend Fletcher, when absent. Disputations now commenced, which continued, at intervals, for many days. And they had this effect upon the gentleman, that he ever after revered and respected our friend; and when we met again, many years after at Marseilles, showed him every civility."

The instance referred to by Mr. Ireland in the preceding account, is related more at large by Mr. Gilpin, in the following words:—"Some years ago, he met with a traveller on the continent, who had adopted the sentiments of Voltaire, with respect to the religion of Jesus; a man of much information and refinement, and a strenuous opposer of the Christian Faith. This gentleman no sooner understood that he was sitting in company with a zealous defender of scriptural truth, but, confiding in his own superiority, he carelessly threw out the gauntlet, by ridiculing the sentiments which Mr. Fletcher maintained. Our pi-

ous traveller immediately accepted the challenge with a modest assurance, and the conversation between these two able disputants soon became serious. Every argument, on either side, was proposed with the greatest caution, and every proposition examined with the nicest accuracy. After the contest had continued for several hours together, the gentleman grew impatient at his want of success; while his calmer opponent confuted and exposed the tenets he had vainly endeavoured to maintain.

“ This debate was continued, by adjournment for the space of a week; and, during this season, whatever had been said upon the subject, by the most celebrated writers, was regularly brought forward, and thoroughly canvassed. Mr. Fletcher repeatedly overcame his antagonist, whose arguments became more languid and ineffectual toward the close of the debate, and who regularly lost his temper and his cause together. In the course of this controversy, Mr. Fletcher took a view of the christian’s enviable life, his consolation in trouble, and his tranquillity in danger; together with his absolute superiority to all the evils of life and the horrors of death, interspersing his remarks with many affectionate admonitions, and powerful persuasives to a rational dependence upon the truths of the Gospel.

“ Such was the conclusion of this memorable debate, in the course of which, the unsuccessful disputant conceived so exalted an idea of his opponent’s character, that he never afterwards mentioned his name but with peculiar veneration and regard. And, as a proof that this regard was unfeigned, meeting with Mr. Fletcher about eight years afterwards in Provence, where he lived in affluence and ease, he showed him every possible civility, entertaining him at his own house in the most hospitable manner, and listening to his conversation on spiritual subjects with all imaginable attention and respect.”

Such was the manner in which Mr. Fletcher acquitted himself in the defence of oppressed truth; and whether his

efforts were successful or not, he left behind him, in every place, sufficient proofs of the acuteness, resolution, and constancy, with which he exerted himself in her cause.

Another anecdote, similar to the preceding is related by the same pious author, in the following words:—"Meeting some years ago with a young Genoese, who was returning from Antibes to Genoa, Mr. Fletcher, who was taking the same route, very courteously accepted the offer of his company. After a short conversation had taken place between them, our pious traveller was deeply affected to discover that his companion had imbibed the sceptical notions of the day. Upon this discovery he beheld the youth with a mixture of compassion and hope, secretly determining to improve the providence which had cast this young stranger in his way, by attempting to lead him from the grossness of materialism to the spirituality of the Gospel. As they were detained at Monacho by contrary winds, he thankfully embraced this favourable opportunity of conversing with his fellow-traveller in the freest and most affectionate manner. At first the young man maintained his own sentiments with a great degree of warmth, and with a strong persuasion, that every attempt to refute them would be ineffectual: but in the course of a few hours he was unexpectedly staggered by the forcible arguments of his wiser opponent. At the end of two days' debate, he frankly acknowledged himself vanquished, and expressed a desire, that the controversy might be turned into a liberal inquiry respecting the nature of revealed religion. Here Mr. Fletcher entered upon a part of his province, to which he was always especially disposed, explaining the scriptures in a manner peculiar to himself, equally intelligible and sublime, leading on his astonished companion from mystery to mystery, and opening before him an unbounded prospect of grace and glory. The young man was struck with the masterly skill, and affected with the more than parental concern, of his instructor. He looked up to him

with reverence, and listened to him with admiration: and still, the longer he attended to his discourse, the more he was athirst for information, renewing the sacred subject, with little intermission from morning till night.

“ At length the young gentleman was constrained to acknowledge the natural depravity and darkness of his mind, bewailing his former inattention to the most momentous concerns, and lamenting with many tears, that he had wandered so long without the help of an experienced guide, to extricate him from the mazes of delusion and error. From this time, he desired to be present at morning and evening prayer, on which occasions Mr. Fletcher was careful to expound some portion of scripture peculiarly adapted to his circumstances; and during the continuance of these devotional exercises, such was the solemn attention and deportment of this altered youth, that a stranger would have supposed him a student of deep experience in the school of Christ. These religious impressions were not only continued, but deepened from day to day, till their arrival at Genoa; when Mr. Fletcher had the satisfaction of observing, in the character of his amiable companion, every apparent token of a real and permanent change.

“ During Mr. Fletcher’s continuance at this place, he had frequent opportunities of conversing with his new acquaintance, from whom he received many testimonies of affectionate regard, and whom he endeavoured to establish in the faith of the Gospel. He gave him such directions and warnings as were suited to his state. He exhorted him to search the scriptures, and to continue instant in prayer. He set before him the trials and difficulties, which would probably attend his spiritual progress, together with the advantages and consolations, which must necessarily accompany a religious life. He guarded him against the devices of an ensnaring world, and pointed out the vanity of its richest gifts; how transient its smiles, how trifling its honours, how uncertain its riches, how inconstant its friend-

ship, how feeble its supports ;—entreating him to mark it down in his memory, that the *friend of the world is the enemy of God*. And now, being called away from Genoa, after taking a most affectionate leave of his young disciple, and commending him to God in solemn prayer, *he went on his way rejoicing.*”

We learn further from Mr. Ireland, that while they were at Marseilles, he procured for Mr. Fletcher the use of a Protestant Church in that neighbourhood. After this grant had been obtained, Mr. Fletcher made the circumstance of his preaching there, the subject of most fervent prayer during the whole of the preceding week. And inasmuch as he found no freedom in his mind, nor confidence in praying concerning it, nor expectation of doing good by preaching, he entreated Mr. Ireland every day, even until the Sunday morning when he was to preach, to go and inform the Minister he must decline preaching. Mr. Ireland, however, refused ; and Mr. Fletcher was compelled, by a regard for consistency and propriety of conduct, to go up into the pulpit ; although under great fear and depression of mind. God was pleased, however, when he began to pray, to give him great freedom of speech and enlargement of heart, and he afterwards preached in a manner that astonished all that heard him. The whole congregation, among whom were many Ministers, were in tears, and exceedingly affected, most part of the time that he was engaged in the service.

The reader would observe that in one of the letters quoted above, Mr. Fletcher mentions his having a desire to visit some Hugonots (Protestants) in the South of France, and it was during this tour that his desire was gratified, and that the following circumstance took place, related by Mr. Gilpin in his notes. Indeed while on his last journey to the continent, he was not in a state of health to undertake any labour of the kind.

“Passing some years ago,” says Mr. Gilpin, “through the South of France, he expressed a longing desire to visit the Protestants in the Sevens Mountains, whose fathers had suffered so greatly in the cause of godliness. To converse with the children of those who had laid down their lives in defence of the truth, was a privilege not to be despised by a man, who never lost an opportunity of conversing with a righteous person, without lamenting it as a real misfortune. Though the journey was long and difficult, yet no argument could prevail with him to give up his resolution of attempting it on foot. ‘Shall I,’ said he to his friend, ‘make a visit on horseback, and at ease, to those poor cottagers, whose fathers were hunted along yonder rocks, like partridges upon the mountains? No: in order to secure a more friendly reception among them, I will visit them under the plainest appearance, and with my staff in my hand.’

“Accordingly he set out alone on this christian expedition; and, after travelling till it was nearly dark, he came to a small house, where he requested the favour of sitting up in a chair till the morning. It was not without some hesitation that the master of the cottage consented to receive him: after which he immediately entered into discourse with his host and his wife, who were so much charmed with the conversation and manners of their guest, that they considered the richest provisions their house could afford, as too mean to be set before him. After a hasty repast the conversation was continued on the part of Mr. Fletcher, and attended to by the children, as well as by their parents, with a degree of eagerness, which discovered their desire of religious instruction. Before they retired to rest, prayer was proposed: and while this holy man was engaged in pouring out his fervent supplications before God, the family around him were uncommonly affected, melted into tears, and filled with holy admiration. Early on the morrow, while he repeated his

exhortations and renewed his prayers, he was listened to with the same veneration and earnestness ; when, taking an affectionate leave of the family, he left the whole household in a state of astonishment and concern. This little relation was taken from the poor man himself, who immediately gave it out among his neighbours, that he had nearly refused to admit a stranger into his house, who proved to be rather an angel than a man. This family was of the Romish church.

“ Continuing his journey, Mr. Fletcher reached a little town, where he was entertained by a pious minister, to whom he had been recommended. Here he was received by the serious protestants with open arms, among whom he exercised his ministry with much freedom and success. He conversed with their elders, he admonished their youth, he visited their sick, diligently exhorting and instructing them from house to house, while many among them were comforted, and many built up in their most holy faith.

“ In the course of his progress through these mountains, he put up at a little house, where his landlord was one of those persons who seldom utter a word unaccompanied by an oath. Our benevolent traveller addressed this unthinking creature in his usual pointed and pathetic manner ; and not without effect. His heart was deeply penetrated with the deserved rebuke, he confessed his error, and expressed a serious concern for the irregularity of his past conduct. Mr. Fletcher had many opportunities in the family for the pious exercises of admonition and prayer ; and, from the time of his sojourning among them, an uncommon reformation was apparent in the conversation and manners of his host. It has since appeared, that the solemn exhortations he received, during this season, were attended with so extraordinary an effect upon this poor man, that, if on any future occasion he discovered an unholy warmth in his temper, nothing more was necessary to produce an imme-

diate calm in his mind, than the bare recollection of that venerable stranger, who had once lodged beneath his roof.

“ This tedious journey (of which a much more circumstantial account might be given) while it evinced the love of this indefatigable pastor to those, whom he knew only by report, was productive of the happiest consequences to those who attended his ministry upon this occasion, and especially to those who entertained him in their families.”

It was during this journey also, that while they were travelling through a part of Italy, as they approached the Appian-Way, he directed the driver to stop before he entered upon it. He then ordered the chaise door to be opened, assuring his fellow-traveller, that his heart would not suffer him to ride over that ground, upon which the apostle Paul had formerly walked chained to a soldier, on account of preaching the everlasting Gospel. As soon as he had set his foot upon this old Roman road, he took off his hat, and walking on, with his eyes lifted up to heaven, returning thanks to God, in a most fervent manner, for that light, those truths, and that influence of the Holy Spirit, which were continued to the present day. He rejoiced that England was favoured with the Gospel in its purity; and devoutly implored, that Rome might again have the truths of that Gospel declared in those churches, which were disgraced with a worship little superior to that of ancient Athens. He then took a view of the exemplary life, the extensive travels, and astonishing labours of the great apostle. He recounted his sufferings when a prisoner, and his trials when at liberty; his rigid self-denial, and his voluntary poverty for the furtherance of the Gospel. He spoke of his painful ministry, and his violent persecutions, enlarging, with peculiar energy, upon his last journey from Jerusalem to Rome. He then ran over his experience;—his faith, his love, his abundant revelations, and his constant communion with the Lord Jesus Christ: demonstrating that, without such communion, he could never have

supported the sharp conflicts and repeated sufferings to which he was daily exposed. Here he adverted to his own situation, with a degree of gratitude that surpasses all description. What a miracle of mercy, said he, that a christian, hated and despised as he is by all men, is yet suffered to live: and that we, who desire to be such, can travel to this day unmolested among those, who abhor the truth as it is in Jesus. Their ancestors were stained with the blood of the innocent; and were the gospel to be proposed, in its purity, to the present generation, they would rush upon the preacher of it, as so many beasts of prey; if he, who restrained the lions from devouring Daniel, were not present to control their destructive zeal. These remarks were continued for a long time together, sweetly intermixed with occasional prayer and praise. He breathed nothing but devotion, and had he not been prevented by the presence of the driver, such were his feelings on treading this celebrated road, that he would certainly have acted like St. Paul, when he retired to the river side, *where prayer was wont to be made.*

Soon after his arrival in Switzerland, he was waited upon by the clergy at Nyon, who severally pressed him to honour their pulpits during his stay at that place. On the morrow of his arrival, being the sabbath-day, he addressed his countrymen in an admirable discourse, the result of much prayer and meditation. The subject matter of this sermon, and the manner in which it was delivered, were equally striking. The clearness and pathos, with which he expressed himself on this occasion, attracted the attention of all, and filled many with a serious concern for *the faith once delivered to the saints.* Deists themselves listened with admiration; while the multitude appeared as though they saw and heard one more than man. To adopt the French idea, he carried off the whole audience. During his continuance at Nyon he preached in different churches;

and wherever he was announced, multitudes flocked from all quarters to attend him. The reputation of his great abilities drew together persons of every description; and it was truly refreshing, says an intimate friend of Mr. Fletcher, who was present upon these occasions, to behold the powerful effects of the Gospel among those, who, before that time, had seldom or never heard it proclaimed in its purity. Many despisers of revelation were over-awed and confounded; many formal professors were touched with the power of true religion; and many careless lovers of pleasure were impressed with a solemn sense of eternal things.

One young man, in particular, was so deeply affected by the discourses of this powerful preacher, that he immediately resolved to consecrate himself to the service of God in the work of the holy ministry. Accordingly he betook himself from that time to studies of a sacred nature, and is at this day minister of the protestant church at Lyons. Among others, a good old minister, who was more than seventy years of age, heard him gladly; and earnestly entreated him to lengthen out his visit at Nyon, though it should be but for a single week beyond the time proposed for his departure. He urged his request with much importunity; and when he found that his desire could not conveniently be complied with, the old man wept, and turning to Mr. Fletcher's fellow-traveller, affectingly exclaimed, "O Sir, how unfortunate for this country; during my day it has produced but one angel of a man, and it is our lot to be deprived of him!" The benefit of his public labours in this place was significantly attested by the numerous applications he received in private, for religious instruction. And the grateful sense his countrymen entertained of those labours was fully expressed, in their affectionate concern at his departure from among them. Weeping multitudes crowded round his carriage, anxious to receive a last word

or look : and not a few followed his chariot above two miles from the town, before they had resolution to tear themselves entirely away from the company of this venerable man.

For Nyon to be deprived of the ministry of this illustrious divine was truly unfortunate ; but it was equally happy for that favoured village, which was appointed to be the scene of his exemplary labours. There his *strength* and his *arms* were chiefly exercised, and there his most important victories over sin were obtained. There his name will long continue to be had in honour ; and from thence many a goodly jewel will be collected, to form for him a crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord.

About the middle of summer, as far as I recollect, (says Mr. Benson) in that year, he and his friend returned to England. Soon after their return, I had the happiness of being frequently in company with Mr. Ireland, first at Trevecka, in Wales, and afterwards at his own house at Bristol, and of hearing many pleasing and edifying anecdotes concerning Mr. Fletcher, and the circumstances of their journey. I lament that length of time and the multitude of affairs Providence has called me to be engaged in, have erased these so far from my memory, that I am not able to give a clear or consistent account of them. One thing, however, I well remember, and shall never forget, and that is, the very high esteem and veneration in which Mr. Fletcher was held by his friend and fellow-traveller, who, during the five months spent together on their tour, had seen such proofs, from day to day, of his exalted piety, fortitude, and wisdom, that he was perfectly enraptured with him. If Mr. Fletcher had been an angel in human flesh, his friend could not well have held him in higher estimation, nor have been more lavish and incessant in his praise. He was careful, however, to ascribe the glory of all the excellencies that were in him to the grace of God,

My personal acquaintance with Mr. Fletcher was then but slight*. I had, I think, only had two or three interviews with him, which, as far as I can recollect, were in the year 1768, when I was classical master at Kingswood School. As he occasionally made an excursion from Madely to Bristol and Bath, in one of those excursions we invited him to preach a Kingswood. He was peculiarly assisted while he was applying those encouraging words, *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out*. The people were exceedingly affected; indeed quite melted down. The tears streamed so fast from the eyes of the poor colliers, that their black faces were washed by them, and almost universally streaked with white. And as to himself, his zealous soul had been carried out so far beyond his strength, that when he concluded, he put off a shirt which was as wet as if it had been dipt in water. But this was nothing strange: wherever he preached, it was generally the case. From this time I conceived a particular esteem for him, chiefly on account of his piety; and wished much for a further acquaintance with him: a blessing which I soon after obtained.

*The personal acquaintance between the Rev. Mr. Fletcher and the Rev. Joseph Benson, begun in the year 1768, and continued, to their mutual joy and satisfaction, as long as Mr. Fletcher lived. Mr. Benson now resides in London, principal manager of the extensive book concern belonging to the Methodist Conference in Great Britain. Mr. B. was educated at Oxford University, is now (1814) about sixty seven years old, and one of the most apostolic preachers and writers in that or any other country.—See his volume of *Evangelical Sermons* and his *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*.

J. K.

*OF HIS DECLINING STATE OF HEALTH, THE
PROGRESS OF HIS DISORDER, AND HIS BEHA-
VIOUR UNDER IT.*

THE frequent journeys which Mr. Fletcher took to and from Trevecka,* while he presided over the College, in all weathers, and at all seasons of the year, greatly impaired the firmness of his constitution. And in some of those journies, he had not only difficulties, but dangers likewise to encounter. One day, as he was riding over a wooden bridge, just as he got to the middle thereof, it broke in. The mare's fore-legs sunk into the river, but her breast and hinder parts were kept up by the bridge. In that position she lay, as still as if she had been dead, till he got over her neck, and took off his bags, in which were several manuscripts, the spoiling of which would have occasioned him much trouble. He then endeavoured to raise her up; but she would not stir, till he went over the other part of the bridge. But no sooner did he set his foot upon the ground, than she began to plunge. Immediately the remaining part of the bridge broke down, and sunk with her into the river. But presently she rose up again, swam out, and came to him.

About this time,† Mr. Pilmoor being desirous to see the inside of a coalpit, Mr. Fletcher went with him to the bottom of a sloping pit, which was supposed to be near a mile under the ground. They returned out of it without any inconvenience. But the next day, while several colliers were there, a damp took fire, which went off with a vast explosion, and killed all the men that were in it.

In February, 1773, Mr. Wesley received from him the following letter:

* In the principality of Wales, where the late excellent Countess of Huntington had a college erected for the education (gratis) of pious young men for the ministry.

† Now (1814) the Rev. Dr. J. Pilmoor, one of the Episcopalian clergymen at Philadelphia.

“ Rev. and dear Sir,

“ I hope the Lord, who has so wonderfully stood by you hitherto, will preserve you to see many of your sheep, and me among them, enter into rest. Should Providence call you first, I shall do my best, by the Lord’s assistance, to help your brother to gather the wreck, and keep together those who are not absolutely bent to throw away the Methodist doctrines and discipline, as soon as he that now letteth is removed out of the way. Every help will then be necessary, and I shall not be backward to throw in my mite. In the meantime you sometimes need an assistant to serve tables, and occasionally fill up a gap. Providence visibly appointed *me* to that office many years ago. And though it no less evidently called me hither, yet I have not been without doubts, especially for some years past, whether it would not be expedient, that I should resume my office as your deacon; not with any view of presiding over the Methodists after you; but to ease you a little in your old age, and to be in the way of receiving, perhaps doing, more good. I have sometimes thought, how shameful it was, that no clergyman should join you, to keep in the church the work God has enabled you to carry on therein. And as the little estate I have in my own country is sufficient for my maintenance, I have thought I would one day or other offer you and the Methodists my free service. While my love of retirement made me linger, I was providentially led to do something on Lady Huntingdon’s plan. But being shut out there, it appears to me, I am again called to my first work. Nevertheless, I would not leave this place, without a fuller persuasion that the time is *quite* come. Not that God uses me much here, but I have not yet sufficiently cleared my conscience from the blood of all men. Meantime I beg the Lord to guide me by his counsel, and make me willing to go any where or no where, to be any thing or nothing. Help by your prayers, till you

can bless by word of mouth, Rev. and dear Sir, your wil-
wing, though unprofitable Servant in the Gospel, J. F.”
Madeley, Feb. 6, 1773.

On this letter Mr. Wesley remarks as follows : “ ‘ Providence,’ says Mr. Fletcher, ‘ visibly appointed me to that office many years ago.’ Is it any wonder then, that he should now be *in doubt*, whether he did right in confining himself to one spot? The more I reflect upon it, the more I am convinced, he had great reason to doubt of this. I can never believe it was the will of God that such a burning and shining light should be *hid under a bushel*. No : instead of being confined to a country village, it ought to have shone in every corner of our land. He was full as much called to sound an alarm through all the nation as Mr. Whitefield himself ; nay, abundantly more so, seeing he was far better qualified for that important work. He had a more striking person, equal good-breeding, an equally winning address ; together with a richer flow of fancy, a stronger understanding, a far greater treasure of learning, both in languages, philosophy, philology, and divinity ; and, above all, (which I can speak with fuller assurance, because I had a thorough knowledge both of one and the other) a more deep and constant communion with the Father, and with the Son, Jesus Christ.

“ And yet let not any one imagine, that I deprecate Mr. Whitefield, or undervalue the grace of God, and the extraordinary gifts, which his great Master vouchsafed unto him. I believe he was highly favoured of God ; yea, that he was one of the most eminent ministers, that has appeared in England, or perhaps in the world, during the present century. Yet I must own, I have known many fully equal to Mr. Whitefield, both in holy tempers and holiness of conversation : but one equal herein to Mr. Fletcher, I have not known, no, not in a life of fourscore years.”

“ However, having chosen,” proceeds Mr. Wesley, “ at least for the present, this narrow field of action, he was more and more abundant in his ministerial labours, both in public and in private; not contenting himself with preaching, but visiting his flock in every corner of his parish. And this work he attended to, early or late, whether the weather was fair or foul; regarding neither heat nor cold, rain nor snow, whether he was on horseback or on foot. But this farther weakened his constitution: which was still more effectually impaired, by his intense and uninterrupted studies*; in which he frequently continued, almost without any intermission, fourteen, fifteen or sixteen hours a-day. But still he did not allow himself such food as was necessary to sustain nature. He seldom took any regular meals except he had company: otherwise twice or thrice in four and twenty hours, he ate some bread and cheese, or fruit. Instead of this, he sometimes took a draught of milk, and then wrote on again.”

The state of his health, however, although he had so lately judged himself much better, soon began to decline, and his disorder to increase to such an alarming degree, that the possibility of his recovery, without a miracle, was universally doubted. But far was he, while in these circumstances, from being daunted or cast down at the apparent approach of the king of terrors. Rather “ he looked forward, † with increasing desire, to the happy moment

* Some of Mr. Fletcher’s writings, in the year 1775, attracted the notice of the great ones of the nation. Amongst the rest, the Lord Chancellor presented the work to the King; and his Majesty was so well pleased with it, that a person was immediately commissioned to ask Mr. Fletcher, whether any preferment in the Church would be acceptable; or whether he (the Chancellor) could do him any service. He answered, “ I want nothing but more grace.” Having drank largely of the water of life, he thirsted not for the honour that cometh from man. And his daily experience corroborated this divine truth—*God giveth grace to the humble.*

A. V

when he should exchange the weapons of war for the crown of glory. Not that he was averse to the duties of his vocation, or wearied with the length of his services ; but, being exceedingly *athirst for God, as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panted his soul after the more immediate presence of God.* Though he was favoured with the enjoyment of many inestimable blessings by the way, yet he looked with unutterable longings, to the *end* of his course ; knowing that to be *at home* in the body, is to be *absent from the Lord.* Though he experienced inexpressible delight in the society of such as worshipped in the outer courts of the Lord's house ; still he saw it infinitely more desirable to associate with *the spirits of just men made perfect,* in the inner places of his visible temple. And though he was, at times, permitted a momentary glimpse of heavenly mysteries, yet he earnestly desired that, *mortality being swallowed up of life,* he might *behold with open face the glory of the Lord.*

This desire, which accompanied him through every state, was expressed with a more than ordinary degree of fervour in seasons of weakness and disease. In these solemn intervals, when he appeared to be speedily advancing towards the confines of eternity, he rejoiced as a weary traveller within sight of his home. His immortal prospects became more enlarged and transporting, his conversation was correspondent to the grandeur of his views, and his whole appearance was that of a man, already clothed in the wedding garment, and hastening to sit down *at the marriage supper of the Lamb.* There was something in his deportment, upon these awful occasions, which reminded me of the transfiguration of his Master upon Mount Tabor : While Moses and Elias were conversing with the blessed Jesus on his approaching decease, *the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and glistening :* so, while the harbingers of death were apparently completing their work on the ema-

ciated frame of this holy man, his silent meditations have been frequently accompanied with so much visible delight, such an ecstatic glow has diffused itself over his whole countenance, and his eye has been directed upwards with a look of such inexpressible sweetness, that one would almost have supposed him, at such seasons, conversing with angelical spirits on his approaching dissolution, and the glory that should follow.

But, notwithstanding the intimate views he enjoyed of an happy immortality, and the intense desire he expressed to be with Christ ; when he considered the importance of his charge, and the probability of his being rendered further serviceable to the church, charity toward his companions in tribulation gave birth to a new desire, and kept him in a state of sweet suspense between the labours of grace and the rewards of glory. It was in such a state that he took an affectionate leave of his people at Madeley, viz. in the autumn of this year, being about to spend a few weeks in travelling with Mr. Wesley. “ He delivered,” says Mr. Gilpin, “ a discourse upon that occasion from those pertinent words of St. Paul: *What I shall choose, I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.* In the course of this sermon he adverted, in the most pathetic terms, to the painful situation in which he then presented himself to his hearers ; so debilitated by disease, that he was unable any longer to discharge among them the public duties of his ministerial station. From his present weakness, he looked back to his past labours, making many affecting reflections upon his own unworthiness, the indubitable testimonies he had received of his people’s unfeigned affection, and the unusual success of his ministry among them. Here he enlarged upon the two leading desires of his soul. On the one hand, he made a solemn declaration of the earnest longing, with

which he desired to be *absent from the body*, that he might be *present with the Lord*: and on the other, he expressed a more than parental attachment, which excited in him a wish, that he might still be permitted to labour for their furtherance and establishment in the faith of the gospel. But what to choose, he knew not: nor was his present suspense attended with any degree of anxiety, since he foresaw unquestionable blessings awaiting him on either hand. He saw the balance poised by unerring wisdom, and was cheerfully content to wait the issue, with one uninterrupted request,—That, whether he lived, he might *live unto the Lord*, or whether he died, he might *die unto the Lord*; that, whether living or dying, he might be *the Lord's*.

“Such was the sweet suspense which this man of God experienced between a state of labour and a state of rest, which continued for more than two years, and which was at last happily determined in favour of his people, who were permitted the enjoyment of his ministry for a long season after this period, rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord, and abundantly profiting by the labours of his invigorated servant.”

FROM HIS LEAVING NEWINGTON, TILL HIS RETURN FROM SWITZERLAND TO MADELEY.

It was in the latter end of April, 1777, that Mr. Fletcher was removed from Newington to Bristol, having continued with Mr. Greenwood upwards of fifteen weeks. “I was desired by Mr. and Mrs. Ireland,” says Miss Thornton, “to bear them company to Bristol, which I willingly did. Indeed, I looked upon it as a call from God: nor could I desire a greater honour than to share in the employment of angels, in ministering to a distinguished heir of salvation. At Brislington, near Bristol, he continued in the same holy, earnest course as at Newington. Every

day he drank the Hotwell water, and it agreed with him well. So that he appeared to gather a little strength; though not so swiftly as was expected. And all the strength which he received, he laid out in labours of love: for the benefit of all those, rich or poor, whom Providence cast in his way.

“Whenever he was in company it was his general method, so far as his strength would admit, to pray particularly for every person present. And from his habitual prayer resulted that life and energy in his words, which every one that was blest with his society, felt more or less. Now and then likewise he adventured to pray in the family. But he was not wary enough in this. He more than once, so much exerted himself, that he was brought very low.

Mr. Fletcher missed no opportunity of instructing servants and children, suiting his discourse in a manner peculiar to himself, to their capacity or their business. And what would have appeared low in another, did not appear so, when spoken by him. Thus he advised the cook, ‘To stir up the fire of divine love in his heart, that it might burn up all the rubbish therein, and raise a flame of holy affection:’ to which with the greatest cordiality he subjoined a short prayer. Thus to the house-maid, he said ‘I entreat you to sweep every corner of your heart, that it may be fit to receive your heavenly guest.’ To a poor man who came there in a deep consumption, but little concerned for his soul, he said, in a very solemn manner, (laying one hand on his own breast, and the other on the poor man’s) ‘God has fixed a loud knocker at your breast and mine. Because we did not regard, as we ought to have done, the gentle knocks and calls of his Holy Spirit, his Word, and his Providences, he has taken fast hold here, and we cannot get out of his hand. O let the knocker awaken you, who are just dropping into eternity!’

When one or another occasionally mentioned any unkind thing which had been said of him or his writings, if the person who had said it was named, he would stop the speaker immediately, and offer up the most fervent prayer, for the person of whom he spoke. He did not willingly suffer any one to say any thing against his opponents. And he made all the allowances for them, which, on a change of circumstances, he would have wished them to make for him.

This year our annual Conference (says Mr. Benson) was held at Bristol. Here and at Brislington, I had several opportunities of seeing and conversing with Mr. Fletcher, and always found him in the devout and zealous spirit above described. He happened to be passing by the door of the stable, belonging to our Chapel in Broad-Mead, when I was lighting from my horse, and I shall never forget with what an heavenly air, and sweet countenance, he instantly came up to me in the stable, and in a most solemn manner, putting his hands upon my head, as if he had been ordaining me for the sacred office of the ministry, prayed most fervently for and blessed me in the name of the Lord. To act in this way indeed, towards his friends, was no uncommon thing with him: he was wont to do it frequently, and that in a manner so serious and devout, that it was almost impossible not to be deeply affected with it.

“ In August, 1777,” says Mr. James Rogers,* “ I was appointed to (leave Edinburgh, and) labour in the east of Cornwall. I had long desired to converse with that great and good man Mr. Fletcher: and now an opportunity offered itself. Stopping at Bristol for a few days to rest my-

* This was the Rev. James Rogers, a pious minister, (in connection with the late Rev. Mr. Wesley) the faithful and affectionate husband of the amiable and excellent Mrs. Hester Anne Rogers. He, with his dear partner, and much honoured friend, Mr. Fletcher, are gone the way of all flesh; and are, we hope and trust,

“ Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.”

self and horse, I heard of his being at Mr. Ireland's, about three miles off, in a poor state of health, and with two of my brethren went to see him. When we came there he was returning from a ride, which he was advised by his physician to take every day. Dismounting from his horse, he came towards us with arms spread open, and eyes lifted up to heaven. His apostolic appearance, with the whole of his deportment, amazingly affected us.

“The first words he spoke, while yet standing in the stable by his horse, were a part of the sixteenth chapter of St. John, most of which he repeated. And whilst he pointed out the descent of the Holy Ghost, as the great promise of the Father, and the privilege of all New Testament believers, in a manner I never had heard before, my soul was dissolved into tenderness, and became even as melting wax before the fire.

“As an invidious report had been spread that he had recanted what he had lately written against Calvinism, in those excellent writings of his, entitled his “Checks, &c.” I took the liberty to mention the report, and asked him what he thought had given rise to it? He replied he could not tell; except that he had refrained from speaking on controverted points since he came to Mr. Ireland's: partly by reason of the poor state of his health, and because he did not wish to grieve his kind friend, by making his house a field of controversy. But he assured us he had never yet seen cause to repent of what he had written in defence of the Rev. Mr. Wesley's Minutes. And although he believed his close application was the mean of reducing his body to the state in which we then saw it, yet if he fell a victim, it was in a good cause.

“After a little further conversation upon the universal love of God in Christ Jesus, we were about to take our leave, when Mr. Ireland sent his footman into the yard with a bottle of red wine, and some slices of bread upon a waiter: we all uncovered our heads while Mr. Fletcher

craved a blessing upon the same ; which he had no sooner done, but he handed, first the bread to each, and lifting up his eyes to heaven pronounced these words,—“ The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.” Afterwards handing the wine, he repeated in like manner, “ The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ,” &c. But such a sacrament I never had before. A sense of the Divine Presence rested upon us all ; and we were melted into floods of tears. His worthy friend, Mr. Ireland, grieved to see him exhaust his little strength by so much speaking, took him by the arm and almost forced him into the house ; while he kept looking wishfully, and speaking to us as long as we could see him. We then mounted our horses and rode away. That very hour more than repaid me for my whole journey from Edinburgh to Cornwall.”

Sept. 6, of that year, he wrote as follows, to the amiable and venerable Vincent Perronet, Vicar of Shoreham.*

“ My very dear Father,

“ I humbly thank you for the honour and consolation of your two kind letters. Your vouchsafing to remember a poor, unprofitable worm, is to me a sure token that my heavenly Father earnestly remembers me still. He is God, and therefore I am not consumed :—He is a *merciful, all-gracious* God, and therefore I am blessed with sympathizing friends, and gracious helpers on all sides. O Sir, if in this disordered imperfect state of the Church, I meet with so much kindness, what shall I not meet with when the millennium you pray for shall begin? Oh that the thought, the glorious hope may animate me to perfect holiness in the fear of God ; that I may be accounted worthy to escape the terrible judgments, which will make way for

* The Rev. V. Perronet was one of the best clergymen the Church of England ever had. J. K.

that happy state of things, and that I may have a part in the first resurrection, if I am numbered among the dead before that happy period begin!

Oh! for a firm and lasting faith,
To credit all the Almighty saith!
To embrace the promise of his Son,
And call that glorious rest our own!"

"We are saved by hope, at this time. But hope that is seen is not hope. Let us abound, then, in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost: so shall we antedate the millennium, take the kingdom, and enjoy beforehand the rest, which remains for the people of God. Your great age, dear Sir, and my great weakness, have brought us to the verge of eternity. Oh! may we exult in the prospect, and look on that boundless sea, through the glass of faith, and through the clefts of the Rock of Ages, struck for us, through the veil of Christ's flesh, who, by dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification, is become our resurrection and our life.

"One of my parishioners brought an horse, last week, to carry me home; and desired to walk by my side all the way. By the advice of your dear son, (Mr. William Peronet) who still continues to bestow upon me all the help I could expect from the most loving brother, I sent the man back. I thank God, I am a little stronger than when I came hither. I kiss the rod, lean on the staff, and wait the end. I yesterday saw a physician who told me my case is not yet an absolutely lost case. But the prospect of languishing two or three years longer, a burden to every body, an help to none, would be very painful, if the will of God and the covenant of life in Christ Jesus did not sanctify all circumstances, and dispel every gloom. I remember, with grateful joy, the happy days I spent at Shoreham: *Tecum vivere amem; tecum obeam lubens*.* But, what is better still, I shall live with the Lord and with you

* "I could love to live with you; with you I would willingly die."

for ever and ever. Your obliged servant and affectionate Son,

J. F."

Mr. Fletcher continued at Brislington till the end of summer, by which time it evidently appeared that the Hotwell water, and the other means which had been recommended by his physicians and tried for so many months, had produced little or no good effect. It was then concluded that nothing, humanly speaking, could save his life, but a sea voyage, and his own country air. This, as was observed before, had been recommended by his friend Mr. Ireland, with the advice of a physician, the preceding year. Then, however, he could not be prevailed upon to try these remedies. But now, finding all other means ineffectual, he consented, and that the more readily, as one of his sisters was in a poor state of health, and, indeed, apparently dying in Switzerland, and he ardently wished to see and converse with her before her departure. As soon as a voyage to the Continent was concluded on, he wrote as follows, to Mrs. Thornton.

"I am going to do by my poor sister, what you have done by me, to try to smooth the road of sickness to the chamber of death. Gratitude and blood call me to it:—you have done it without such calls; your christian kindness is freer than mine; but not so free as the love of Jesus, who took upon him our nature, that he might bear our infirmities, die our death, and make over to us his resurrection and his life, after all we had done to render *life hateful* and *death horrible* to him. O! for this matchless love, let rocks and hills, let hearts and tongues break an ungrateful silence; and let your christian muse find new anthems, and your poetic heart new flights of eloquence and thankfulness!

"I shall be glad to hear from you in Switzerland, and shall doubly rejoice, if you can send me word, that she, who is joined to the Lord according to the glory of the

new covenant, is one spirit with him, and enjoys *all the glorious liberty* of the children of God.”

It appears, however, that shortly after this he became so much worse as to have great reason to doubt whether he should be able to make such a voyage. “ You should have heard from me,” says he to the same person a few weeks afterwards, “ if sometimes want of spirits to hold a pen, and for some days, want of paper, had not stood in the way of my inclination. Now I have paper, and a degree of strength, how can I employ both better, than in trying to fulfil with my pen the great commandment, which contains my duty to God and my neighbour? But what can a pen do here?—It can just testify what my heart feels,—That no words can describe, what I owe to my heavenly Benefactor, to my earthly friends, and to you in particular, who have had so much patience as to stand by me, and bear a share in my burdens, for so many months at home and abroad.

“ May the merciful, faithful God, who has promised, that a cup of cold water given to the least of his followers shall not lose its reward ;—may that omnipotent God, who sees you in all the states of weakness, which await you between the present moment and the hour of death, give you all that can make your life comfortable, your trials tolerable, your death triumphant, and your eternity glorious!

“ What I ask for you, I also peculiarly beg for your dear brother and sister, who have vouchsafed to bind so dry, so insignificant (I had almost said, so rotten) a stick as myself, in the bundle of that love, with which they embrace the poor, the lame, the helpless, the loathsome, and those who have their sores without, as Lazarus, or within, as I. May we all be found bound up together in the bundle of life, light, and love, with our Lord! And when he shall make up his jewels, may you all shine among his diamonds of the finest water and the first magnitude!

“ You want, possibly, to know how I go on. Though I am not worth a line, I shall observe to the glory of my

patient merciful Preserver and Redeemer, that I am kept in sweet peace, and a looking for the triumphant joy of my Lord, and for the fullness express in these words, which sweetly filled the sleepless hours of last night,—

“ Drawn,—and redeemed,—and seal’d,
I bless the ONE and THREE;
With Father, Son, and Spirit fill’d
To all eternity.”

“ With respect to my body, I sleep less, and spit more blood than I did when you were here, nor can I bear the least trot of an easy horse. If this continue many days, instead of thinking to go and see my friends on the Continent, I shall turn my steps to my earthly home, to be ready to lay my bones in my church-yard; and in such a case I shall put you in mind of your kind promise, that you would do to the last the office of a guardian angel,—hold up my hands in my last conflict, and close my eyes, when it is over. Two of my parishioners came to convey me safe home, and had persuaded me to go with them in a post chaise; but I had so bad a night before the day I was to set out, that I gave it up. My prospects and ways are shut up, so that I have nothing to look at but Jesus and the grave. May I so look at them, as to live in him who is my resurrection and life; and die in all the meekness and holiness of my Lord and my all! I humbly request a continued interest in your fervent prayers, that I may be found completely ready when my Lord’s messenger shall come for my soul.”

In the latter end of October he found himself a little restored, as appears by a letter written from Madeley on the 21st of that month, and addressed to Lady Mary Fitzgerald; in which he says, “ I have taken the bark for some days, and it seems to have been blessed to the removal of my spitting of blood. Time will decide whether it be a real removal, or only a suspension of that symptom. Either will prove a blessing, as his will is our health.” With re-

spect to his intended journey, he observes to the same Right Honourable person: " My brothers and sisters invite me to breathe once more my natal air, and the physicians recommend to me a journey to the Continent. I wait for the last intimations of Providence to determine me to go. If I do, I shall probably pass through London, and in that case, I could have the honour of waiting upon you. I say probably, because I shall only follow my friend, and a serious family, which goes to spend the winter in the South of France, or in Spain: and I do not yet know whether they design to embark at Dover, or at some port in the West of England."

" You have been afflicted," he further adds, " as well as myself. May our maladies yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness—complete deadness to the world, and increased faith in the mercy, love and power of him, who supports under the greatest trials, and can make our extremity of weakness, an opportunity of displaying the freeness of his grace and the greatness of his power. Tell Mrs. G—— and Mrs. L—— that I salute them under the cross with the sympathy of a companion in tribulation; and rejoice at the thought of doing it when the cross shall be exchanged for the crown. In the mean time let us glory in the cross of our common head, and firmly believe that he is exalted to give us whatever is best for us, in life, in death, and forever."

The following observations in the same letter, are also well worth attention: " In order to live singly to God, the best method is to desire it with meekness; to spread the desire in quietness before him who inspired it; to offer him now all we have and are, *as we can*; and to enlarge our expectation that he may satisfy it with good things, with all his fullness, or that he may *try our patience*, and teach us to know our total helplessness. With respect to the weeping frame of repentance, and the joyous one of faith, they are both good alternately; but the latter is the

better of the two, because it enables us to do and suffer the will of God, and praise him, which honours Christ more : both are happily mixed. May they be so in you, Madam, and in your unworthy, and obliged servant, J. F.”

It was by the advice of Mr. William Perronet, who had been so kind as to go from London to Bristol to visit him, that he took the bark. To him he writes, Nov. 19,—“ May the Lord visit you when you shall be sick ! and may he raise you such kind friends, helpers, and comforters, as he has raised to me. I have continued to take the bark since you went, and it seems to have been blessed to me. My spitting of blood is almost stopt ; my breast stronger. I am, I hope, better upon the whole, and if I do not relapse, I may yet be able to preach, according to your dear Father’s prophecy. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing and thanking you, Sir, and Dr. Turner, in my way to Dover, sometime the week after next.

“ Oh ! my dear friend, Jesus is at the end of the race. Your dear brothers* have run it out : we follow them. O ! for more speed ! more winged dispatch ! more of that power that takes the kingdom of heaven by violence ! That the Lord would give us more power, and make us more faithful in the use of that which we have, is the earnest prayer of your obliged friend, J. F.”

The time of setting out on his journey to the Continent being now fixed, he judged it proper to explain himself more fully than he had done, to some of his friends at Madely, and withal to signify his mind to them respecting some temporal affairs depending there. He, therefore, wrote as follows, to Messrs. Thomas York and Daniel Edmonds, who it seems, for some time, assisted him in managing the secular concerns of the Vicarage.

“ The debt of gratitude I owe to a dying sister, who once took a very long journey to see me, when I was ill in

* Messrs. Vincent and Charles Perronet, and some others of the Rev Mr. Perronet’s children, who had died in great peace and triumph.

Germany, and whom I just stopped from coming, last winter, to Newington, to nurse me ; the unanimous advice of the physicians, whom I have consulted, and the opportunity of travelling with serious friends, have at last determined me to remove to a warmer climate. As it is doubtful, very doubtful, whether I shall be able to stand the journey ; and, if I do, whether I shall be able to come back to England ; and, if I come back, whether I shall be able to serve my church, it is right to make what provision I can, to have it properly served while I live, and to secure some spiritual assistance to my serious parishioners when I shall be no more. I have attempted to build a house in Madeley-Wood, about the centre of the parish, where I should be glad the children might be taught to read and write in the day, and the grown up people might hear the word of God in the evening, when they can get an evangelist to preach it to them ; and where the serious people might assemble for social worship when they have no teacher.

“ This has involved me in some difficulties about discharging the expence of that building, and paying for the ground it stands upon ; especially as my ill health has put me on the additional expence of an assistant. If I had strength, I would serve my church alone, board as cheap as I could, and save what I could from the produce of the living to clear the debt, and leave that little token of my love, free from encumbrances to my parishioners. But as Providence orders things otherwise, I have another object, which is to secure a faithful minister to serve the church while I live. Providence has sent me dear Mr. Greaves, who loves the people, and is loved by them. I should be glad to make him comfortable ; and as all the care of the flock, by my illness, devolves upon him, I would not hesitate for a moment to let him have all the profit of the living, if it were not for the debt contracted about the room. My difficulty lies, then, between what I owe to my fellow-

labourer, and what I owe to my parishioners, whom I should be sorry to have burdened with a debt contracted for the room.

“ I beg you will let me know how the balance^s of my account stands, that, some way or other, I may order it to be paid immediately ; for if the balance is against me, I could not leave England comfortably without having settled the payment. A letter will settle this business as well as if twenty friends were at the trouble of taking a journey ; and talking is far worse for me than reading or writing. I do not say this to put a slight upon my dear friends. I would rejoice to see them, if it would answer any end.

“ Ten thousand pardons of my dear friends, for troubling them with this scrawl about worldly matters. May God help us all, so to settle our eternal concerns, that when we shall be called to go to our long home and heavenly country, we may be ready, and have our acquittance along with us. I am quite tired with writing, nevertheless, I cannot lay by my pen, without desiring my best christian love to all my dear companions in tribulation, and neighbours in Shropshire.”

To another friend, whom he had been also obliged to trouble in that way, his words are :—“ Pardon the trouble I have given you in my temporal concerns ; it is more for the poor and the Lord than for me. O ! my dear friend, let us pass through the things temporal, so as not to lose the things eternal. Let us honour God’s truth, by believing his word, Christ’s blood, by hoping firmly in divine mercy, and all the divine perfections, by loving God with all our hearts, and one another, as Christ loved us. My kind love to all the brethren on both sides the water.

“ Go from me to Mrs. —, tell her, I charge her in the name of God, to give up the world, to set out with all speed for heaven, and to join the few that fear God about her. If she refuse, call weekly, if not daily, and warn her from me. Tell the brethren at Broseley, that I did my bo-

dy an injury the last time I preached to them on the green ; but I do not repine at it, if they took the warning, and have ceased to be neither hot nor cold, and begin to be warm in zeal, love, prayer, and every grace.—Give my love to —, tell him to make haste to Christ, and not to doze away his last days.

“ The physician has not yet given me up ; but I bless God, I do not wait for his farewell, to give myself up to my God and Saviour. I write by stealth, as my friends here would have me forbear writing, and even talking ; but I will never part with my privilege of writing and shouting, *Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory over sin, death, and the grave, through Jesus Christ !* To him be glory for ever and ever.”

The above letters manifest, in a striking light, his gratitude to his benefactors, and his great love to his parishioners, and concern for their salvation. But the latter is discovered still more in the following Pastoral Address to them, written a few days before he left Bristol.

“ To the Brethren who hear the word of God, in the parish church of Madeley.

“ My dear Brethren,

“ I thank you for the declaration of your affectionate remembrance, which you have sent me by —, the messenger of your brotherly love. As a variety of reasons, with which I shall not trouble you, prevent my coming to take my leave of you in person, permit me to do it by letter. The hopes of recovering a little strength to come and serve you again in the gospel, make me take the advice of the physicians, who say, that removing to a drier air and warmer climate, might be of great service to my health. I kiss the rod which smites me. I adore the Providence which lays me aside ; and beg that by this long correction of my heavenly Father, I may be so pruned, as to bring more fruit, if I am spared.

“ I am more and more persuaded that I have not declared unto you cunningly devised fables,* and that the gospel I have had the honour of preaching, though feebly, among you, is the power of God to salvation, to every one who believes it with the heart. God grant we may all be of that happy number ! Want of time does not permit me to give you more directions ; but if you follow those which fill the rest of this page, they may supply the want of a thousand. Have, every day, lower thoughts of yourselves, higher thoughts of Christ, kinder thoughts of your brethren, and more hopeful thoughts of all around you. Love to assemble in the great congregation, and with your companions in tribulation ; but above all, love to pray to your Father in secret : to consider your Saviour, who says *Look unto me and be saved* ; and to listen for your Sanctifier and Comforter, who whispers, that *he stands at the door, and knocks to enter* into your inmost souls, and to set up his kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy, with divine power, in your willing breasts. Wait all the day long for his glorious appearing within you ; and, when you are together, by suitable prayers, proper hymns, and enlivening exhortations, keep up your earnest expectation of his pardoning and sanctifying love. Let not a drop satisfy you ; desire an ocean, at least a fountain springing up to your comfort

* No ! all glory be ascribed to that marvellous grace of God, which enabled Mr. Fletcher, with so much power and effect, to preach the truth ! the whole truth ! and nothing but the truth ! to these precious people in Madeley, with many of whom I had a sweet and intimate acquaintance ; and with delighted eyes and a grateful heart, I saw in them and their children, the good fruit, in some a hundred fold, growing forth from the good seed sowed by this divine man in their hearts, harrowed in by his fervent and effectual prayers, and watered with spiritual tears of the sincerest affection. How many thousands in Madeley parish and elsewhere, when they have seen Mr. Fletcher in the pulpit, and have heard such gracious words fall from his lips, have been constrained to say with the holy Psalmist, “ How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.”—Oh ! for more Fletchers, in the pulpit and out of the pulpit, and then the sons and daughters of Zion would shout aloud for joy.

J. K.

in your own souls, and flowing towards all around you, in streams of love and delightful instructions, to the consolation of those with whom you converse; especially your brethren, and those of your *own households*. Do not eat your morsel by yourselves, like selfish, niggardly people; but whether you eat the meat that perisheth, or that which endureth unto everlasting life, be ready to share it with all. Cast your bread upon the waters, in a temporal or spiritual sense, and it will not be lost. God will bless your seed sown, and it will abundantly increase. Let every one with whom you converse, be the better for your conversation. Be burning and shining lights wherever you are. Set the fire of divine love to the hellish stubble of sin. Be valiant for the truth. Be champions for love. Be sons of thunder against sin; and sons of consolation towards humbled sinners. Be faithful to your God, your king, and your masters. Let not the good ways of God be blasphemed through any of you. Let your heavenly-mindedness and your brotherly-kindness be known to all men! so that all who see you may wonder, and say, *See how these people love one another!*

“ You have need of patience, as well as of faith and power. You must learn to *suffer*, as well as to do the will of God. Do not, then, think it strange to pass through fiery trials; they are excellent for the proving, purifying, and strengthening of your faith: only let your faith be firm in a tempest. Let your hope in Christ be as a sure *anchor cast within the veil*; and your patient love will soon outride the storm, and make you find, there is a peace in Christ and in the Holy Ghost, which no man can give or take away.— May that peace be abundantly given to you, from our common Father, our common Redeemer, and our common Sanctifier, our Covenant God, whom we have so often vouched to be our God and our all, when we have been assembled together in his name.

“ I leave this blessed Island for awhile ; but, I trust, I shall never leave the kingdom of God, the Mount Sion, the New Jerusalem, the shadow of Christ’s cross, the clefts of the rock smitten and pierced for us. There I entreat you to meet me. There I meet you in spirit. From thence, I trust, I shall joyfully leap into the ocean of eternity, to go and join those ministering spirits who wait on the heirs of salvation : and if I am no more permitted to minister to you in the land of the living, I rejoice at the thought, that I shall, perhaps, be allowed to accompany the angels, who, if you continue in the faith, will be commissioned to carry your souls into Abraham’s bosom. If our bodies do not moulder away in the same grave, our spirits shall be sweetly lost in the same sea of divine and brotherly love. I hope to see you again in the flesh ; but my sweetest and firmest hope is to meet you where there are no parting seas, no interposing mountains, no sickness, no death, no fear of loving too much, no shame for loving too little, no apprehension of bursting new vessels in our lungs, by indulging the joy of seeing, or the sorrow of leaving our brethren.

“ In the meantime, I earnestly recommend you to the pastoral care of the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, and to the brotherly care of one another, as well as to the ministerial care of my substitute. The authority of love, which you allowed me to exert among you for edification, I return to you, and divide among you ; humbly requesting, that you would mutually use it, in warning the unruly, supporting the weak, and comforting all. Should I be spared to come back, let me have the joy of finding you all of one heart and one soul ; continuing steadfast in the Apostle’s doctrine, in fellowship one with another, and in communion with our sin-pardoning and sin-abhorring God.— This you may do, through grace, by strongly believing in the atoning blood and sanctifying Spirit of Christ, our common head and our common life ; in whom my soul em-

braces you, and in whose gracious hands, I leave both you and myself. Bear me on your hearts before him in praying love; and be persuaded, that you are thus borne by, my dear brethren, Your's, &c. J. F."

Mr. Fletcher did not leave Brislington till about the beginning of December, when he set out for the South of France, in company with Mr. Ireland, two of his daughters, and another family. While at Reading, on his way, he wrote as follows, to his friend and father in Christ, the Rev. Vicar of Shoreham.

" Reading, Dec. 2, 1777.

" Honoured and Dear Sir,

" I acknowledge, though late, the favour of your letter. I have given up the thought of going to my parish, and am now on the road to a warmer climate. The Lord, if it seem him good, may bless as much the change of air, as he has blessed the last remedy your son prescribed for me; I mean the bark. If I should mend a little, I would begin to have faith in your prophecy. In the meantime let us have faith in Christ, more faith day by day; till all the sayings of Christ are verified to us and in us. Should I go to Geneva, I shall inquire after the Swiss friends of my dear benefactors at Shoreham, to whose prayers I humbly recommend myself and my dear fellow-travellers, one of whom, my little god-daughter, is but eight weeks old.— May God abundantly bless you and your's, and reward you for all the kindness shewn to, honoured and dear Sir, your obliged and obedient son in the gospel, J. F."

On the same sheet he wrote as follows to Miss Peronet.

" My Dear Friend,

" I snatch a moment upon the road, to acknowledge the favour of your letter, and to wish you joy in seeing the Lord is faithful in rewarding as well as punishing. I once met a gentleman, an infidel, abroad, who said, ' Men have no faith: if they believed that by forsaking houses, lands,

friends, &c. they should receive an hundred-fold, they would instantly renounce all. For who would not carry all his money to the bank of heaven to receive an hundred-fold interest?' The Papists have made so bad a use of the rewardableness of works, that we dare neither preach it nor hold it in a scriptural manner. For my part, I think, that if it were properly received, it would make a great alteration in the professing world. *You* dare receive it; try the mighty use of it; and when you have fully experienced it, do not keep your light to yourself, but impart it to all within the reach of your tongue and pen. I am glad you see that, after all, every reward bestowed upon a reprieved sinner, has free grace for its foundation, and the blood of Christ for its mark. May the richest rewards of divine grace be your's, in consequence of the most exalted faithfulness; and let me beseech you to pray, that I may follow you, as you follow Christ, till our reward be full. That God may fill you with all his fulness, is the wish of, my dear friend, your obliged brother,

J. F."

When they arrived at Dover, the wind, though fair, was too high to admit of their venturing out to sea immediately. And I know not whether I ought to impute it to his great care to make the most of time, and snatch every moment of it for doing good, or to his great love to his people, that he would not let this short opportunity pass, without dropping a few more lines to the pious of his flock. To them he writes:—"By the help of Divine Providence, and of your prayers, I have got safe to Dover; and I find that the journey has, so far, been of service to me. I thought to have been in France by this time; but the wind being high, though favourable, the mariners were afraid to leave the safe harbour, lest they should be driven on the French cliffs too fiercely. This delay gives me an opportunity of writing a line to tell you, that I shall bear you on my heart by sea and land; *that the earth is the Lord's, with all the fulness thereof*; that Jesus lives to

pray for us ; and that I still recommend myself to your prayers, hoping to hear of your order, steadfastness, and growth of faith towards Christ, and of love towards each other, which will greatly revive your affectionate friend and brother,

J. F."

He also wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood, before they set sail, as follows :

“ Ten thousand blessings light upon the heads and hearts of my dear benefactors, Charles and Mary Greenwood ! May their quiet retreat at Newington become a Bethel to them ! May their offspring be born again there ! And may the choicest consolations of the Spirit visit their minds, whenever they retire thither from the busy city ! Their poor pensioner travels on, though slowly, towards the grave. His journey to the sea seems to him to have hastened, rather than retarded, his progress to his old mother, earth. May every providential blast blow him nearer to the heavenly haven of his Saviour’s breast ; where, he hopes, one day, to meet all his benefactors, and among them, those whom he now addresses. O my dear friends, what shall I render ? What to Jesus ? What to you ? May he, who invites the heavy laden, take upon him all the burdens of kindness you have heaped on your Lazarus ! And may angels, when you die, find me in Abraham’s bosom, and bring you into *mine*, that, by all the kindness, which may be shewn in heaven, I may try to requite that you have shewn to your obliged brother,

J. F.”

On what day they sailed does not appear. But, it seems, they were not many hours in reaching Calais ; and according to a short account of the former part of their journey, given by Mr. Ireland, in a letter to a friend, they left that place Dec. 12. “ The North wind,” says he, “ was very high, and penetrated us even in the chaise.

We put up at Breteuil, and the next day got to Abbeville: whence we were forced by the miserable accommodations we met with, to set out, though it was Sunday. Mr. Fletcher and I used to lead the way: but now the other chaises got before us. Nine miles from Abbeville our axletree gave way through the hard frost, and we were both left to the piercing cold, on the side of a hill without any shelter. After waiting an hour and a half we sent the axletree and wheels back to be repaired: and leaving the body of the chaise under a guard, procured another to carry us to the next town. On the 15th, our chaise arrived in good repair. Travelling steadily forward (though the country was all covered with snow,) on the 27th we reached Dijon. During the whole journey, Mr. Fletcher shewed visible marks of a recovery. He bore both the fatigue and piercing cold as well as the best of us. On the 31st we put up at Lyons, and solemnly closed the year, bowing our knees before the throne, which indeed we did not fail to do, all together every day. Jan. 4, 1778, we left Lyons, and came on the 9th to Aix. Here we rest: the weather being exceeding fine and warm. Mr. Fletcher walks out daily. He is now able to read, and to pray with us every morning and evening. He has no remains of his cough, nor of the weakness in his breast. His natural colour is restored, and the sallowness quite gone. His appetite is good, and he takes a little wine."

In another letter Mr. Ireland writes thus: "Soon after our arrival here, I rode out most days with my dear and valuable friend. He now and then complained of the uneasiness of the horse, and there were some remains of soreness in his breast. But this soon went off. The beginning of February was warm, and the warmth, when he walked in the fields, relaxed him too much. But when the wind got North or East, he was braced again. His appetite is good; his complexion as healthy as it was eleven years ago. As his strength increases, he increases

the length of his rides. Last Tuesday he set out on a journey of a hundred and twelve miles. The first day he travelled forty miles, without feeling any fatigue. The third day he travelled fifty-five : he bore his journey as well as I did : and was as well and as active at the end of it as at the beginning. During the day, he cried out, " Help me to praise the Lord for his goodness : I never expected to see this day." He now accepted a pressing invitation to preach to the Protestants here. He did so on Sunday morning, on these words : *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.* For some days before, he was afraid he had done wrong in accepting the invitation. But, O ! how shall I be able to express the power and liberty which the Lord gave him ! Both the French and English were greatly affected : the word went to the hearts both of saints and sinners. If the Lord continue his strength and voice (which is now as good as ever it was,) he has an earnest invitation to preach where we are going, near Montpellier. You would be astonished at the entreaties of pastors as well as people. He has received a letter from a Minister in the Levine mountains, who intends to come to Montpellier, sixty miles, to press him to go and preach to his flock. He purposes to spend the next summer in his own country, and the following winter in these parts, or in some part of the South of France."

According to Mr. Wesley, " When he had a little recovered his strength," (but whether at this time or afterwards, during his stay on the Continent, is very doubtful) " he made a tour through Italy, and paid a visit to Rome. While he was here, as Mr. Ireland and he were one day going through one of the streets in a coach, they were informed ' The Pope was coming forward, and it would be required of them to come out of the coach, and kneel while he went by, as all the people did : if they did not, in all probability the zealous mob would fall upon them and knock them on the head.' But this, whatever might be the

consequence, they flatly refused to do; judging the paying such honour to a man, was neither better nor worse than idolatry. The coachman was exceedingly terrified, not knowing what to do. However, he made shift to turn aside into a narrow way. The Pope was in an open landau. He waved his hands as if he had been swimming; and frequently repeated these words, ‘God bless you all!’ Mr. Fletcher’s spirit was greatly stirred, and he longed to bear a public testimony against antichrist. And he would undoubtedly have done it, had he been able to speak Italian. He could hardly refrain from doing it in Latin, till he considered that only the priests could have understood him. One to whom he related this, saying, ‘If you had done this, the multitude would have torn you in pieces:’ he answered, I believe the Pope himself would have prevented it; for he was a man of sense and humanity.”

While he was in the south of France, probably at Marseilles or Aix, and some time in the beginning of the spring, he wrote as follows to his Curate Mr. Greaves. As the letter is without date, the circumstances of time and place are rather uncertain.

“My very dear Brother,

“I am in daily expectation of a line from you, to let me know how you do, and how it goes with our dear flock; but I doubt whether I shall stay long enough here to receive your letter. I received one yesterday from my second brother, who acquaints me, that he was to set out the 23d of last month, to come hither, and take me to my native country, where my sick sister wants greatly to see me. If no accident had befallen him by the way, I think he will be here the latter end of this week, or the beginning of next; so that, please God, I shall set out next week, from this place, where the winter has been uncommonly rainy and windy. We had even half an inch of snow last week, but it was gone long before noon. The climate has, nevertheless, agreed with me better than England, and as a proof of

it, I need only tell you, that I rode last Friday, from Hieres, the Orange-Gardens of France, hither, which is near fifty miles, and was well enough to preach last Sunday in French, at the Protestant Chapel. Two English clergymen came to hear me there, and one of them takes these lines to England, where I hope they will find you in health of body and soul; growing in strength of faith, in firmness of hope, and fervency of love to God and man, and especially to those whom you are tempted to think hardly of, if any such there be. O my dear brother, no religion will, in the end, do us and our people any good, but that which "works by love,"—humble, childlike, obedient love. May that religion fill our souls, and influence all our tempers, words, and actions; and may the leaven leaven the whole lump: may St. James's peaceable religion spread through all our parish. Please, at the first convenient opportunity, to read the following note in the church.

"John Fletcher sends his best christian love to the congregation that worships God in the Parish Church at Madeley; he begs the continuance of their prayers for strength of body and mind, that he may be able (if it be the will of God) to serve them again in the gospel. He desires them to return almighty God thanks, for having enabled him to speak again in public last Sunday, without having had a return of his spitting of blood, which he considers as a token that his life may be spared a little, to go and exhort them to grow in grace, in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in brotherly love, the best marks that we know God, and are in the faith of Christ."

"I hope, my dear brother, you are settled to your satisfaction, and I shall be glad to do what is in my power to make your stay at Madeley agreeable. I hope you read sometimes in the study, the copy of the exhortation given us by the Ordinary, in which are these awful words: 'Cease not from your labour, care, and diligence, till all those who are committed to your charge come to such a

ripeness of age in Christ that there be no room left among them for error in doctrine or viciousness in life.' I wish you may have as much success as we desire; but whatever success we have, we must cast our bread upon the waters, though we should see as little fruit as he that said of old, 'I have laboured in vain:' for our reward will be with the Lord if not with men."

Soon after his brother conducted him from Montpelier to Nyon, the place of his nativity. Here he lived in that which was his father's house, in the midst of his affectionate relations, who took care that he should neither want the best advice, perhaps equal to any in Europe, nor any thing that could possibly contribute to the full recovery of his health.

In a letter from thence to Mr. William Perronet, May 15, he observes:—"The climate, and prospect, and fine roads, and pure air I enjoy here, had contributed to strengthen me a little, when an accident, I think, has pulled me back. About a month ago, something I was chewing got into my windpipe, and caused a fit of coughing, with the greatest efforts of the lungs for half an hour. I then began to spit blood again, and ever since I have had a bad cough, which has sometimes exercised me violently for an hour after my first sleep. My cough, however, has been better again these two days, and I hope it will go off. I have bought a quiet horse, whose easy pace I can bear, and I ride much. Upon the whole, if my cough leave me, I may yet recover my strength. But if it fix, it will probably be my last. The will of the Lord be done! I have not ventured upon preaching since I came hither. It would be impossible for me now to go through it. If the weather should grow hot, I may at any time go to the hills, the foot of which is but five or six miles distant. I drink goats' milk, and have left off meat since the cough came on, but design eating a little again at dinner."

It appears that Mr. Ireland either accompanied him to Nyon in Switzerland, along with his brother, or afterwards met him in Burgundy, where Mr. Fletcher was on the 17th of this same month, and from whence he wrote to the Rev. John and Charles Wesley, and gave a further account of the state of his health, and of the declension of religion and the prevalence of infidelity in France. His letter is peculiarly worthy of a place in the memoirs of his life, as containing, may I not say? an evident prediction of events which have since taken place! It is as follows:—

“ Rev. and dear Sirs,

“ I hope that while I lie by, like a broken vessel, the Lord continues to renew your vigour, and sends you to water his vineyard, and to stand in the gap against error and vice. I have recovered some strength, blessed be God, since I came to the Continent; but have lately had another attack of my old complaints. However, I find myself better again, though I think it yet advisable not to speak in public.

“ I preached twice at Marseilles, but was not permitted to follow the blow. There are few noble, inquisitive Bereans in these parts. The ministers in the town of my nativity have been very civil. They have offered me the pulpit; but I fear, if I could accept the offer it would soon be recalled. I am loath to quit this part of the field without casting a stone at that giant, Sin, who stalks about with uncommon boldness. I shall, therefore, stay some months longer, to see if the Lord will please to give me a little more strength to venture an attack.

“ Gaming and dress, sinful pleasure and love of money, unbelief and false philosophy, lightness of spirit, fear of man, and love of the world, are the principal sins, by which satan binds his captives in these parts. Meterialism is not rare; Deism and Socinianism are very common; and a set of freethinkers, great admirers of Voltaire and Rousseau, Bayle and Mirabeau, seem bent on destroying Christianity

and government. ‘With one hand, (said a lawyer, who has written something against them) they shake the throne, and with the other they throw down the altars.’ If we believe them, the world is the dupe of kings and priests. Religion is fanaticism and superstition. Subordination is slavery and tyranny. Christian morality is absurd, unnatural and impracticable; and Christianity the most bloody religion that ever was. And here it is certain, that by the example of Christians, *so called*, and by our continual disputes, they have a great advantage, and do the truth immense mischief. *Popery will certainly fall in France, in this, or the next century*; and I make no doubt, God will use these vain men, to bring about a reformation here, as he used Henry the Eighth to do that work in England: so the madness of his enemies shall, at last, turn to his praise, and to the furtherance of his kingdom.

“In the meantime, it becomes all lovers of the truth, to make their heavenly tempers, and humble peaceful love, to shine before all men, that those mighty adversaries, seeing the good works of professors, may glorify their Father who is in heaven, and no more blaspheme that worthy name by which we are called Christians.

“If you ask, What system these men adopt? I answer, that some build on Deism, a morality founded on *self-preservation, self-interest, and self-honour*. Others laugh at all Morality, except that, the neglect of which *violently* disturbs society; and external order is the decent covering of Fatalism, while Materialism is their system.

“O dear Sirs, let me entreat you, in these dangerous days, to use your wide influence, with unabated zeal, against the scheme of these modern Celsuses, Porphiries, and Julians; by calling all professors to think and speak the same things, to love and embrace one another, and to stand firmly embodied to resist those daring men; many of whom are already in England, headed by the admirers of Mr. Hume and Mr. Hobbes. But it is needless to say

this to those who have made, and continue to make such a stand for vital Christianity ; so that I have nothing to do but pray, that the Lord would abundantly support and strengthen you to the last, and make you a continued comfort to his enlightened people, loving reprovers of those who mix light and darkness, and a terror to the perverse : and this is the cordial prayer of, Rev. and dear Sirs, your affectionate son, and obliged servant in the gospel,

J. F.”

“ P. S. I need not tell you, Sirs, that the hour in which Providence shall make my way plain to return to England, to unite with the happy number of those who feel, or seek the power of Christian godliness, will be welcome to me. O favoured Britons, happy would it be for them, if they knew their gospel privileges ! My relations in Adam are all very kind to me ; but the spiritual relations, whom God has raised me in England, exceed them yet. Thanks be to Christ, and to his blasphemed religion !”

In a letter to Dr. Conyers, written from the same place, the day following, in which he mentions having sent him his Tract, called *The Reconciliation*, and urges him to labour to promote peace and unanimity among the disciples of Christ, he adds, concerning the French infidels, “ If you saw, with what boldness the false philosophers of the Continent, who are the apostles of the age, attack Christianity, and represent it as one of the worst religions in the world, and fit only to make the professors of it murder one another, or at least to contend among themselves ; and how they urge our disputes, to make the gospel of Christ the jest of nations, and the abhorrence of all flesh ; you would break through your natural timidity, and invite all our brethren in the ministry, to do what the herds do on the Swiss mountains, when wolves attack them ; instead of goring one another, they unite, form a close battalion, and face the common enemy on all sides. What a shame would

it be, if cows and bulls showed more prudence, and more regard for union, than Christians and gospel Ministers !”

Here he took leave of Mr. Ireland, and, in order to shorten his journey back to Nyon and enjoy new prospects, ventured to cross the mountains which separate France from Switzerland. This was of bad consequence. For, “on the third day of the journey,” says he, “I found an unexpected trial: a large hill, whose winding roads were so steep, that though we fed the horses with bread and wine, they could scarcely draw the chaise, obliged me to walk in all the steepest places. The climbing lasted several hours, the sun was hot, I perspired violently, and the next day I spit blood again. I have chiefly kept to goats’ milk ever since, and hope I shall get over this death also, because I find myself, blessed be God, better again, and my cough is neither frequent nor violent.”

In the former part of this year, (1778) a letter was written to the Rev. Mr. Perronet, informing him that there was a valuable estate at his native place, which properly belonged to him, and which might easily be recovered, if he sent one of his sons to claim it. All his friends whom he consulted on the occasion, judged this information was not to be slighted. And his youngest son, Mr. William Perronet, the surgeon and apothecary, frequently mentioned above, was willing to undertake the journey. But before he set out, he wrote to Mr. Fletcher, desiring his advice. Part of his answer was as follows :

Nyon, June 2, 1778.

“While I write to you to make your title clear to a precarious estate on earth; permit me to remind you of the heavenly inheritance entailed upon believers. The Will (the New Testament) by which we can recover it, is proved: the Court is equitable, the Judge loving and gracious. To enter on the possession of part of the estate here, and of the whole hereafter, we need only to *believe*, and *prove evangelically* that we are believers. Let us set about it *now* with earnestness, with perseverance, and with

full assurance, that through faith we shall infallibly carry our cause. Alas! what are estates or crowns, to grace and glory? The Lord grant that we, and all our friends, may choose the better part, which your brother, my dear friend, so happily chose. And may we firmly stand to the choice, as he did, to the last. My best respects wait upon your dear father, your sisters, and nieces. God reward your kindness to me upon them all!

“ This is a delightful country. If you come to see it, and claim the estate, bring all the papers and memorials your father can collect, and come to share a pleasant apartment, and one of the finest prospects in the world, in the house where I was born. I design to try this fine air some months longer. We have a fine shady wood, near the lake, where I can ride in the cool all the day, and enjoy the singing of a multitude of birds. But this, though sweet, does not come up to the singing of my dear friends in England. There I met them in spirit several hours in the day. God bless my dear friends.”

A little after this he says to another friend:—“ The birds of my fine wood have almost done singing; but I have met with a parcel of children, whose hearts seem turned towards singing the praises of God, and we sing every day from four to five. Help us by your prayers. One of them received, I hope, the love of Christ this week.”

About the same time he wrote to Dr. Turner, as follows:

“ Should I gather strength, I should, under God, acknowledge *you*, dear Sir, as the instrument of that blessing, as you were above twenty years ago. Ten thousand thanks I render to you, Sir, and to Mr. Perronet, for your kind and generous care and attendance. May God reward you both, by bestowing upon you all the blessings which can make *me* happy, death comfortable, and eternity delightful and glorious! May the richest cordials of divine love, and the Balm of Gilead, a Saviour’s precious blood, revive

your souls and comfort your hearts! And in your every want and extremity, may you both find such tender helpers and comforters, as have been found in you by, dear Sir, your most obliged, though unworthy patient and servant, J. F.”

It appears by a letter of his to Mr. Ireland, dated July 15, that he continued to recover, and that he failed not to use his strength as fast as he gained it. “ I have ventured,” says he, “ to preach once, and to expound once in the church. Our ministers are very kind, and preach to the purpose : a young one of this town gave us lately a very excellent gospel sermon. Grown up people stand fast in their stupidity or in their self-righteousness. The day I preached, I met with some children in my wood, walking or gathering strawberries. I spoke to them about our Father, our *Common Father* :—We felt a touch of brotherly affection. They said they would sing to their Father, as well as the birds ; and followed me, attempting to make such melody as you know is commonly made in these parts. I out-rode them, but some of them had the patience to follow me home, and said they would speak with me ; but the people of the house stopped them, saying I would not be troubled with children. They cried, and said, *They were sure I would not say so, for I was their good brother.* The next day when I heard it, I inquired after them, and invited them to come to me ; which they have done every day since. I make them little hymns which they sing. Some of them are under sweet drawings. Yesterday, I wept for joy, on hearing one of them speak of conviction of sin, and joy unspeakable in Christ which had followed, as an experienced believer would do in Bristol. Last Sunday I met them in the wood ; there were 100 of them, and as many adults. Our first pastor has since desired me to desist from preaching in the wood, (for I had exhorted) for fear of giving umbrage ; and I have complied, from a concurrence of circumstances which are not worth mentioning : I therefore meet them in my father’s yard.

“ In one of my letters I promised you some anecdotes, concerning the death of our two great philosophers, Voltaire and Rousseau. Mr. Tronchin, the physician of the Duke of Orleans, being sent for to attend Voltaire in his illness at Paris, Voltaire said to him, ‘ Sir, I desire you would save my life, I will give you the half of my fortune, if you lengthen out my days only for six months. If not, I shall go to the devil, and shall carry you away along with me.’ ”

Rousseau died more decently, as full of himself as Voltaire was of the wicked one. He paid that attention to nature and the natural sun, which the Christian pays to grace and the Sun of Righteousness. These were some of his last words to his wife, which I copy from a printed letter circulating in these parts: ‘ Open the window that I may see the green fields once more. How beautiful is nature ! How wonderful is the sun ! See what glorious light it sends forth ! It is God who calls me. How pleasing is death to a man who is not conscious of any sin ! O God ! my soul is now as pure as when it first came out of thy hands : crown it with thy heavenly bliss !’ God deliver us from self and satan, the internal and external fiend. The Lord forbid we should fall into the snare of the Sadducees, with the former of these two famous men, or into that of the Pharisees with the latter. Farewell in Jesus, J. F.”

We may infer, I think, from these and divers other extracts of letters, which appear in this work, under Mr. Fletcher’s own hand, that the following account, by Mr. Gilpin, is perfectly correct. “ As during Mr. Fletcher’s abode in England, his attachment to his absent countrymen was daily expressed in fervent prayer, and frequently in affectionate epistles addressed to those among them, whose situation and abilities might have rendered them eminently useful to the church ; so when present with them, his affectionate concern for their happiness was evinced by the most indefatigable exertions for their advancement in

religion and virtue. When he was, to all appearance, in dying circumstances, even in those seasons, the entreaties of friends, the advice of physicians, together with his bodily infirmities, were found insufficient to restrain him from the exercise of his ministry. His manner of employing himself among them, is modestly expressed in an apology, which he once thought it necessary to make for his conduct upon those occasions ; from which the following passage is extracted. ‘ Afflicted with a dangerous disease, and obliged to entrust the care of my church to a substitute, with the permission of my superiors, I came to this place on a visit to my kinsmen ; and especially for the purpose of breathing my native air, which the physicians, after having already exhausted their art in my favour, considered as the last remedy that remained to be tried with any hope of success. Upon my arrival, the pastors of Nyon, to the first of whom I have had the honor of being known for these six and thirty years, obligingly offered me the use of their pulpits, if my health should permit me to preach. But after appointing different days, on which I hoped to have taken the advantage of their friendly offers, by repeated returns of my weakness, I was prevented from fulfilling my engagements. I have, however, preached three or four times ; but observing in myself, during those exercises, a want of strength to occupy the pulpit with that power and dignity, which are expected in a preacher who appears before a polished audience, I considered it rather as my duty, with the permission, and under the inspection, of our pastors, without ascending the pulpit, to give some familiar instructions to such children and others, as were disposed to receive them ; offering in a room, from time to time, occasional reflections, either upon some book of piety, or some passage of Holy Scripture.’ Such were his customary employments during his residence at Nyon. And to these pious exercises he devoted his remaining strength with that assiduity and perseverance, which abun-

dantly manifested how little he regarded either ease or health, when they came in competition with the advantage and welfare of his countrymen.

But while he engaged himself with so much zeal in the service of his countrymen at large, among his kinsmen and friends his benevolent labours were still more abundant. He expressed the most vehement desires, and employed the most strenuous efforts, that the whole circle of his friends might become a people 'fearing God, and working righteousness.' He admonished them with the authority of a minister, and entreated them with the gentleness of a brother, mixing both his admonitions and entreaties with many affectionate tears. When he perceived in any of them an inclination to linger, either in the darkness of deism, or in the mazes of dissipation, like the deliverers of Lot, he would stretch out his hand, and endeavour with a pious violence, to rescue them from the dangers to which they were exposed. And, on the other hand, when he discovered in any of his friends the least discernable tokens, either of godly sorrow, or of holy desire, he would give a loose to the fervours of that holy joy, which is manifested on similar occasions *in the presence of the angels of God.*

But, perhaps, it is impossible to give any just idea of the extraordinary concern he expressed for the establishment of his near relations in the faith of the Gospel, except in his own words. The following passages translated from an epistle which he formerly addressed to his brother, the Assessor, will set this amiable part of his disposition in a just point of view. After lamenting that he had passed so great a part of his own life in the vain pursuits of the world, he continues,—'And are you not constrained, my dear brother, to make the same lamentation with me? Yes, I cannot but indulge a hope that God will hear my prayers, that he will have some regard to the tears with which I wet this paper, and that, while you are reading

these lines, his grace will operate upon your heart. If you did but know, how much joy there would be in heaven for your conversion; if you could but conceive, what transports of gratitude would overflow your heart and mine; if you were but sensible, how my bowels are moved for you; surely then, without a moment's delay, you would submit to the grace of that Saviour, who is even now speaking in your heart. And can you still hold out, my dear brother? And are you so entire an enemy to your own happiness, so insensible, so hard, as to decline making a full surrender of yourself to God? I will hope better things of you, through the grace of our common Saviour. O may that grace overwhelm thy heart, and melt down all thy hardness!—As we are of one blood, let us also be of one heart and one soul. Do not reject, I conjure you, my brotherly counsels and supplications. Do not refuse to come, where so much felicity awaits you, because pressed to it by a person, who is unworthy to bring you the invitation. We have passed our infancy and our youth beneath the same roof, and under the same masters. We have borne the same fatigues, and tasted the same pleasures. Why then should we be separated now? Why should *they* be divided, who by nature, habit, and friendship, have been so long united?—I have undertaken a journey to the New Jerusalem: O suffer me not to go thither alone. Let neither the fatigues, nor the length of the way, affright you. We shall be provided, even in the desert, with heavenly manna and streams of living water. God himself shall go before us, as in a pillar of fire, and under the protection of his wings, we may walk without fear, *through the valley of the shadow of death*.—Come then, my dear brother, I am most unwilling to leave you behind. Come; support me; go before me; encourage me; shew me the way: I feel the want of a faithful companion, and a christian friend. Suffer me to throw myself at your feet, to embrace your knees, and to wash them with the tears which are now streaming from

my eyes. I ask no part of your temporal possessions ; but entreat you to seek after an eternal inheritance. I desire neither your gold nor your silver ; but I am anxious that you should share my joy. I am solicitous that you should accompany me *to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God* ; that you should mix in that *innumerable company of angels* who worship there, and be counted in the *general assembly and church of the first-born*. In short, I am anxious, my dear brother, that you should come with me, to have your name written in the book of life, and be made free of that holy city, which shall one day descend from God out of heaven. I have a *presentiment*, that you will at last submit to the easy yoke of Christ, and that, after you are converted, you will strengthen your brethren. Do not tell me again, that piety is usually the portion of younger brothers, since I read in the Old Testament, that every first-born male should be consecrated, in a peculiar manner, to God. Let me rather entreat you to take the advantage of your situation. Be at least as far beyond me in piety, as you are in years ; and instead of feeling any jealousy upon this account, my pleasure will be augmented in the great day of our Lord Jesus Christ, to see myself placed at your feet.'

These quotations may serve as a specimen of the manner in which Mr. Fletcher was accustomed to express his ardent desire, in different degrees, for the spiritual prosperity of his countrymen, his friends, and his brethren.

In the meantime, while Mr. Fletcher was thus labouring, even beyond his strength, according to the opportunity offered him, to be useful to his own countrymen, he was not unmindful of his dear flock at Madeley. In a letter written about this time, among other important observations and advices, he says,—“ I am yet in the land of the living, to prepare, with you, for the land where there is life *without death*, praising without weariness of the flesh, and loving without separation. *There*, I once more challenge you to meet me, with all the mind that was in Christ ;

and may not one hoof be left behind! May there not be found one Demas among you, turning aside from the little flock and the narrow way, to love and follow this present, perishing world. May there not be one Esau, who, for a frivolous gratification, sold his birthright; nor another wife of Lot, who looked back for the good things of the city of destruction, and was punished by a judgment, almost as fearful as that of Ananias, Sapphira, and Judas. My dear companions, let us be *consistent*: let us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things, upon your *diligent, frugal, and secondary endeavours*, shall be added unto you. Let us live daily, more and more, upon the free love of our gracious Creator and Preserver, the grace and righteousness of our atoning Redeemer and Mediator, nor let us stop short of the powerful, joyous influence of our Comforter and Sanctifier.

“Bear me on your hearts, as I do you upon mine: and meet we all in the heart of Christ, who is the centre of our union, and our common head; humbly leaving it to him, *when and where* we shall meet again. Farewell in Christ till we meet in the flesh around his table, or in the spirit around his throne. I am your afflicted, comforted brother,
J. F.”

July 18, He writes also to the Rev. Mr. Greaves, entrusted with the oversight of them, and observes,—“I trust you lay yourself out in length and breadth for the good of the flock committed to your care. I should be glad to hear, that all the flock grow in grace, and that the little flock (those united in christian fellowship) grow in humble love.

“Be pleased to read the following note in the church: ‘John Fletcher begs a further interest in the prayers of the congregation of Madeley; and desires those, who assemble to serve God in the church, to help him to return public thanks to Almighty God, for many mercies received;

especially, for being able to do every day a little ministerial duty, which he considers as an earnest of the strength he should be glad to have, to come back soon, and serve them in the gospel ; which he designs to do, please God, in some months. In the meantime, he beseeches them, to serve God as christians, and to love one another as brethren ; neglecting no means of grace, and rejoicing in all the hopes of glory.’

“ I hope, my dear brother, that you remember my request to you in my letter from Dover ; and that you are glad of every possible help to do the people good. The harvest is great, the *labourers* are but comparatively few. Pray the Lord to send more labourers into his harvest ; and rejoice, when he sends us any, who will help us to break up the fallow ground. My love to all our kind neighbours, and to the preachers, whom I beg you will thank in my name.

“ Be pleased, when you have an opportunity, to read the following note to the Societies at Madely, Dawley, and the Banks :

‘ My dear Brethren,

‘ I hope you have no need of a line to assure you of the continuance of my brotherly love for you. We are all called to grow in grace, and, consequently, in love, which is the greatest of all Christian graces. Your prayers for my soul and my body have not been without answer. Blessed be God ! glory be to his rich mercy in Christ, I live yet *the life of faith* ; and as to my body, I recover some strength : which rejoices me the more, as I hope a good Providence will make way for my laying it out, in inviting you to leave the things which are behind, and to press with *earnestness, unity, and patience*, towards the mark of our heavenly calling in Christ. God bless you all, with all the blessings brought to the church by Christ Jesus, and by the other Comforter ! Fare ye all well in Jesus : and re-

member, at the throne of grace, your affectionate brother and servant in Christ,* J. F.”

Mr. Fletcher arrived in England, in the middle of the spring, (1780) in tolerable health, being quite recovered from his consumption. Calling at London, he preached at the new Chapel, slept at Newington, April 27, and the next day set out for Bristol. He stayed there only a short time, and then retired to Mr. Ireland's, at Brislington. The interview which Mr. Rankin† had with him here, immediately upon his arrival, manifests very clearly that he brought back from the Continent the same fervent spirit which had accompanied him thither. Of this Mr. Rankin gives me the following account :

“ In the year 1781, being stationed in Bristol with my much esteemed friend, Mr. Pawson,‡ I was informed of

* Passing through Madeley parish one day in the year 1805, I overtook an aged Christian woman, and in the course of conversation, I asked her if she had ever seen Mr. Fletcher. She immediately replied with great earnestness and feeling, yes, Sir, glory be to God, that ever Mr. Fletcher came into this parish, for under one sermon that he preached, the Lord opened my blind eyes, and I roared out for the disquietude of my soul; under another sermon, said she, which I heard him preach, a new song was put into my mouth on even praise and thanksgiving to God.—I heard Mrs. Fletcher once say, that the good which her dear husband did in this world will not be fully known, until the great and final day shall make it manifest; and I do most firmly believe the sentiment is just.

J. K.

† The Rev. Thomas Rankin, a Methodist minister.—He travelled pretty extensively in this country, to preach the gospel, prior to the Revolutionary war; at the commencement of which, he returned to England, leaving behind him his faithful fellow labourer, the Rev. Francis Asbury, now (1814) senior bishop of the methodist episcopal church in America; who, from that period to the present day, has been working the works of him that sent him, with unalterable perseverance, zeal, and success. Mr. Rankin finished his course with joy, after having faithfully served God in his generation, May 17th, 1810, at his house in London.

J. K.

‡ The Rev. John Pawson. He travelled more than forty years in the Methodist Connection, in Europe, preaching the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with a large share both of the wisdom and the power of

Mr. Fletcher's arrival at Brislington, from his journey to Switzerland. I rode over to Mr. Ireland's the day after, and had such an interview with him as I shall never forget in time or eternity. As I had not seen him for upwards of ten years, his looks, his salutation, and his address, struck me with a mixture of wonder, solemnity, and joy. We retired into Mr. Ireland's garden, where we could converse with more freedom. He then began to enquire concerning the work of God in America, and my labours for the five years I had spent on that Continent. I gave him as far as I was capable, a full account of every thing that he wished to know. While I was giving him this relation, he stopped me six times, and, when under the shade of the trees, poured out his soul to God, for the prosperity of the work, and our brethren there. He appeared to be as deeply interested in behalf of our suffering friends, as if they had been his own flock at Madeley. He several times called upon me also, to commend them to God in prayer. This was an hour never to be forgotten by me while memory remains. Before we parted, I engaged

Christ; and many were the seals to his ministry. The doctrine and discipline of the methodist church he highly esteemed. Mr. Pawson was a just and holy man, and his path shone brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day: he died at Wakefield, in Yorkshire, in the year 1806, and such an uncommon glory rested upon him in his last hours, that ministers and people of all denominations (at his own particular request) flocked to his dying chamber, and saw in him, how a child of God can rejoice amidst all his pain and weakness, that he is going to his Heavenly Father to join the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. O glorious Christianity, nothing like religion, "pure and undefiled," both for time and eternity. A few hours before Mr. Pawson's death, he baptized an infant, and, for the last time on earth, offered his unfeigned homage to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Mrs. Pawson, his pious widow, departed this life, gloriously triumphant in the faith, at Leeds, June 2nd 1809. Her humility, meekness, gentleness, christian simplicity, deadness to the world, habitual spirituality of mind, and entire devotedness to God, endeared her to all her Christian friends, and constituted her a mother in Israel. I knew them both well, and can never forget their amiable example. J. K.

him to come to Bristol, on the Monday following, in order to meet the select band in the forenoon, and to preach in my place in the evening. He did so accordingly. During the hour that he spent with the select band, the room appeared as 'the house of God and the gate of heaven.' He preached in the evening, from the 2nd Epistle to the Thesalonians, chap. ii. verse 13. The whole congregation was dissolved in tears. He spoke like one who had but just left the converse of God and angels, and not like a human being. The different conversations I had with him, his prayers and preaching during the few days which he stayed at Bristol and Brislington, left such an impression on my mind, and were attended with such salutary effects, that for some months afterwards, not a cloud intervened between God and my soul, no, not for one hour. His memory will ever be precious to me while life shall remain, and the union of spirit which I felt with that holy and blessed man, will have its consummation in those regions of light, love, and glory, where parting shall be no more. I beg leave here to subjoin an extract from a letter written to me, a few weeks after he arrived at Madeley.

“ My dear brother, Madeley, June 25, 1781.

“ I thank you for your kind remembrance of, and letter to me. I found myself of *one heart* with you, both as a preacher and believer, before I left Bristol, and I am glad you find freedom to speak to me as your friend in Christ. By what you mention of your experience, I am confirmed in the thought, that it is often harder to keep in the way of faith and light than to get into it. 2. That speculation and reasoning hinder us to get into that way, and lead us out of it when we are in it. 3. The only business of those who come to God, as a Redeemer or Sanctifier, must be to feel their want of redemption and sanctifying *power from on high*, and to come for it by simple, cordial, working faith. Easily the heart gets into a false rest before our last enemy is overcome. Hence arises a relapsing in an imperceptible

degree, into indolence and carnal security : Hence a dreaming that we are rich and increased in goods. This is one of the causes of the declension you perceive among some of the Methodists. Another is the *outward rest* they have, which is consistent with the selfish views of hypocrites, and with the *unbending of the bow of faith*, in those who are sincere. Another may be, judging of the greatness of the work by the numbers in society. Be the consequence what it will, those who see the evil should honestly bear their testimony against it, first in their own souls, next by their life, and thirdly by their plain and constant reproofs and exhortations. The work of justification seems stopped, in some degree, because the glory and necessity of the pardon of sins, to be *received and enjoyed now by faith*, is not pressed enough upon *sinner*s ; and the need of *retaining it upon believers*. The work of sanctification is hindered, if I am not mistaken, by the same reason, and by holding out the being *delivered from sin* as the mark to be aimed at, instead of being *rooted in Christ*, and *filled with the fulness of God*, and with power from on high. The dispensation of the Spirit is confounded with that of the Son, and the former not being held forth clearly enough, formal and lukewarm believers in Jesus Christ suppose they have the gift of the Holy Ghost. Hence the increase of *carnal professors* : See Acts viii. 16. And hence so few *spiritual men*. Let us pray, hope, love, believe for ourselves, and call, as you say, for the display of the Lord's arm. My love to your dear fellow-labourer, Mr. Pawson. Pray for your affectionate brother,
J. F."

Mr. Ireland being confined by affliction, and wishing, nevertheless, to accompany his friend to Madeley as soon as he should be able, Mr. Fletcher stayed a few days at Brislington, waiting for his recovery, before he set out for his parish. Upon their arrival there it was his first care to inquire into the spiritual state of his dear flock : but he did not find such cause of rejoicing as he had fondly ex-

pected. This may be easily gathered from the letter he then wrote to his friend at Newington. It runs thus :

“ Madeley, June 12, 1781.

“ My very dear Friend,

“ I stayed longer at Brislington than I designed. Mr. Ireland was ill, and would nevertheless come hither with me : so that I was obliged to stay till he was better. And indeed it was well I did not come without him : for he has helped me to regulate my outward affairs, which were in great confusion. Mr. Greaves leaves me : and I will either leave Madeley, or have an assistant able to stir among the people : for I had much rather be gone than stay here, to see the dead bury their dead. Well, we shall soon remove out of all, and rest from our little cares and labors. You do not forget, I hope, that you have need of patience, as well as I, to inherit the promises, the best and greatest of which are not sealed, but to such as keep the word of Christ's patience, and such as persevere with him in his temptations. Hold on then, patient faith and joyful hope ! If I were by you, I would preach to your heart and my own, a lecture on this text, *We are saved by hope*, and by a faith which is never stronger than when it is contrary to all the feelings of flesh and blood.

“ Pray what news of the glory ? Does the glory of the Lord fill the temple, your house, your heart ? A cloud is over my poor parish : but alas ! it is not the luminous cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night. Even the few remaining professors stared at me the other day, when I preached to them on these words, *Ye shall receive the Holy Ghost : for the promise is unto you*. Well, the promise is unto us ; if others despise it, still let us believe and hope. Nothing enlarges the heart, and awakens the soul, more than that believing, loving, expectation. Let us wait together until we are all endued with power from on high.”

The above letter manifests still further that he had sustained no loss of his piety and devotedness to God while

abroad. And although, as it appears, he now entertained thoughts of changing his condition in life, it is evident his mind was not hereby diverted from the pursuit of his holy vocation and ministry, nor his zeal in the least damped.— This is rendered still more evident from a letter I received from him about the same time, with an extract from which I shall conclude this Chapter.

“ My dear Brother,

“ I rejoice at, and am much obliged to you for your kind remembrance of me : and I shall be glad to tie faster the blessed knot at the approaching Conference, (to be held at Leeds, in the beginning of August next,) if my health permit me to be there, according to my design. Happy are you if you live by faith in the atoning blood, for justification and sanctification. It is the Spirit alone which can shew us the worth, and make us feel the powerful influence of the Saviour’s blood and righteousness : and so far as my little experience goes, he gives that blessed privilege only to those, who in the depth of poverty wait for that divine revelation. I learn not to despise the least beam of truth, and I quietly and joyfully wait for the bright sunshine.

“ The best way to avoid errors is to lie very low before God ; to know his voice and consult him in all things ; learning to mortify our wise pride ; as well as our aspiring will, and our disordered passions. But more of this if we live to see each other again.

“ I am at present without an assistant here, but hope soon to have Mr. Bailey, one of the Masters at Kingswood School. If he come, I shall be at liberty to go to Leeds, and I hope God will strengthen me for the journey. A godly wife is a peculiar blessing from the Lord.* I wish you joy for such a loan. Possess it with godly fear and holy joy ; and the God that gave her you help you both

* This is said with a reference to my having married about a year and an half before.

to see your doubled piety take root in the heart of the child that crowns your union. So prays, my dear brother, your affectionate friend,
J. F."

OF HIS MARRIAGE.

ALTHOUGH the great Apostle has ranked *the forbidding to marry* among the *doctrines of devils*, and has expressly declared, *Marriage is honourable to all men, and the bed undefiled*; yet a kind of prejudice hangs on the minds of many even of those that love God, inclining them to disapprove of the marriage of persons eminent in religion.—Yea, many are of opinion that it is not consistent with high degrees of holiness: and that when any who have deep experience in the things of God marry, they are in some measure fallen from grace. Hence many were surprised, that so eminent a Christian as Mr. Fletcher should take this step. And they could hardly help thinking, that he had lost some degree of his excellent piety, and that he was not so unreservedly devoted to God as he had been some time before.

In order to satisfy every reasonable person that he had not sustained any loss at all; that his entire self-devotion was in nowise impaired either before or at the time of his marriage, the most convincing way, as Mr. Wesley has observed, will be to give as particular an account as possible of the steps which led to this union; and of what occurred at the time when it took place. This I shall do, first, in the words of the Rev. Mr. Gilpin, and then in those of one who was well acquainted with them both, and, in particular, was in habits of great intimacy with the pious and amiable person who was the object of Mr. Fletcher's choice.

“The attention of Ministers,” says Mr. Gilpin, “in choosing such companions, as may not hinder their suc-

cess in the ministry is of so great importance, that in some countries the conduct of a pastor's wife, as well as that of the pastor himself, is supposed either to edify or mislead the flock. Nay, the minister himself is frequently condemned for the faults of his wife: thus, in the protestant churches of Hungary, they degrade a pastor, whose wife indulges herself in cards, dancing, or any other public amusement, which bespeaks the gaiety of a lover of the world, rather than the gravity of a christian matron. This severity springs from the supposition, that the woman, having promised obedience to her husband, can do nothing but what he either directs or approves. Hence, they conclude, that example having a greater influence than precept, the wife of a minister, if she be inclined to the world, will preach wordly compliance with more success by her conduct, than her husband can preach the renunciation of the world by the most solemn discourses.— And the incredulity of the stumbled flock will always be the consequence of that unhappy inconsistency, which is observable between the serious instructions of a well disposed minister, and the trifling conduct of a woman with whom he is so intimately connected. Nor are there wanting apostolic ordinances sufficient to support the exercise of this severe discipline:—*Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the Bishop or Deacon be one that ruleth well his own house, having his children, and every part of his family, in subjection with all gravity: for if a man know not how to rule his own house, now shall he take care of the church of God?* 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5, 11.

“ Early in life Mr. Fletcher was introduced to the company of Miss Bosanquet,* a lady of distinguished piety,

* Mrs. Fletcher was born in London, 1773, of parents highly respectable, as the Bosanquets, their immediate descendants, are at this day. Mrs. Fletcher remembered her Creator in the days of her youth, and became a decided religious character at that lovely period when gaiety

and one who had been exposed to peculiar sufferings in the cause of godliness. From the very first acquaintance of these two excellent persons, they were deeply sensible of each other's worth, and felt the secret influence of a mutual attraction. But, notwithstanding the peculiar regard they entertained for each other, no intimate intercourse subsisted between them for many years after this period. Both were called to an extraordinary course of spiritual exercises ; but, by the providence of God, they were appointed to labour in different stations. While *he* was exhausting his strength in the service of his flock, *she* was no less honourably employed in applying an ample fortune to the relief of the friendless ; collecting together, and supporting under her own roof, an extensive family, composed of the afflicted, the indigent, and the helpless, but chiefly consisting of orphan children. To these occupations they devoted the prime of their days, and during more than twenty years unwearied attention to these sacred employments, no regular correspondence was maintained between them. They knew, however, and rejoiced in each other's labours : but while every succeeding report tended to increase their mutual regard, they greatly endeavoured to turn the whole stream of their affections toward heavenly things, joyfully sacrificing every inferior consideration to the interest of the church, and the glory of their common Master.

“ It was not till his last return from Switzerland, after his unexpected recovery from a dangerous illness, that Mr. Fletcher renewed his personal acquaintance with Miss Bosanquet, who received him as a friend restored from the grave. They had each of them studiously followed the leadings of Providence in their appointed stations ; and, at this time, a combination of extraordinary circumstances led them into those habits of intimacy, which daily in-

and folly too frequently prevail, especially where great natural vivacity and a plentiful fortune, unite their influence to form and establish the fashionable character, &c. &c.—See Biographical Dictionary. J. K

creased their deep rooted attachment to each other. There existed on either side, a variety of motives to their immediate union, and not a single reason of any weight for their continued separation. Every seeming impediment was suddenly removed out of the way, and all things wonderfully conspired to accelerate that entire connection between them, which promised a large addition to their mutual comfort. At length, with the fullest persuasion that they acted under the divine influence, they received each other at the altar, in the most solemn and affecting manner, as from the immediate hand of God, and in the presence of a multitude of friends, who rejoiced to see so much solid piety and worth united by an indissoluble tie."

The account given by Mrs. C. in a letter to Mr. Wesley, is much more particular: and as she was an eye and ear witness of what she relates, I doubt not but it will fully satisfy all who seriously consider it, that his soul was, at that time, all alive and wholly devoted to God. And this whole transaction may well be recommended to the imitation of all Christians, who enter the holy state of matrimony.

"Rev. Sir,

"I think it my privilege, and have often found it a blessing, to comply with the request of my honoured father, which I now do also in great love to my valuable and much esteemed friends, Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher. I will therefore endeavour, with the assistance of my gracious Lord, to recollect and acquaint you with some particulars of the life and character of these truly devoted servants of God, with whose intimate acquaintance I have been favoured for near thirty years. But indeed I feel my great insufficiency to relate what might be said with the strictest truth of these worthies.

"My acquaintance with Mrs. Fletcher began when she was about seventeen years of age. She had from her early childhood been strongly drawn to seek the Crucified, and

was now athirst for a clean heart, and longed to have a right spirit renewed within her. Nor did her desire to love God with all her heart, lessen, but increase her love to her neighbour: as I, the most unworthy, am well able to testify, to whom she has been a tried friend, even to the present hour.

“ To give you a clear view of this, I need only transcribe part of a letter, which she wrote to me May 23, 1757.

‘ My dearest Friend,

‘ The Lord has been indeed merciful, above all that we can ask or think. I found a greater blessing the last time I was with you than ever. I am more enabled to pray and earnestly to seek after holiness. But what most stirs me up is, I seem to hear the Lord calling upon me, *Depart ye, depart ye: go ye out thence: touch not the unclean thing: be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.* For some time these words have been much in my mind, with both pleasure and profit. But within this day or two, the Lord has more clearly shewn me the way wherein I ought to walk. He seems to call me out to more activity; so that I am ready to cry out, ‘ What would thou have me to do?’ Then I consider, Can I do any more for the souls or bodies of the poor about me? But this does not seem to be the thing. What I am now led to wish for is, with both soul and body to serve those who are in Christ. And as soon as the Lord has prepared me for his work, and set me at liberty, my firm resolution is, by the grace of God, to be wholly given up to the Church. I plainly see, I have no more to do with the world than to allow myself the necessaries of life. And though it has pleased God that I have no need to work for my living, yet surely that is no reason my hand should be idle. I would be like those described, 1 Tim. v. 10, *To bring up children, to lodge strangers, to be ready to do the meanest offices for the saints: to relieve the afflicted, to visit the fatherless and widows, and diligently to follow every good work.* O pray

for me, that the Lord may shorten his work in me, and quickly make an end of sin! O that he would say to my soul, *Thou art all fair my love! There is no spot in thee.* O when shall I be wholly given up both body and soul, to him who gave himself for me!

“ I admired the spirit of this letter ; but little expected to see these good desires brought so fully into practice, as they were a few years after. And this may suffice as a clear proof, that God fulfils the desires of them that fear him: yea, and shews unto them the path, wherein he would have them to walk. That her light given before was not delusive is plain! as it is well known, how many years she has *brought up children, lodged strangers, relieved the afflicted, and diligently followed every good work.*

“ With regard to the dear saint, that is now swallowed up in his beloved employment, praise and adoration, it is eight or nine and twenty years since I wast first favoured with his heavenly conversation, in company with Mr. Walsh and a few other friends, most of whom are now in the world of spirits. At these seasons how frequently did we feel—

“ The o'erwhelming power of saving grace !”

How frequently were we silenced thereby, while tears of love our souls o'erflowed! It sweetly affects my soul, while I recollect the humility, fervour of spirit, and strength of faith, with which dear Mr. Fletcher so often poured out his soul, before the Great Three One, at whose feet we have lain in holy shame and divine silence, till it seemed earth was turned to heaven! With what delight does my soul recal those precious moments! Yet a little while and we shall all magnify his name together.

“ This heavenly-minded servant of the Lord resembled his Master likewise in his love to precious souls. I heard him preach his first sermon at West-Street Chapel. I think his text was, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* His spirit appeared in his whole attitude and action,

though he could not well find words in the English language to express himself: but he supplied that defect, by offering up prayers, tears, and sighs abundantly. Nearly about this time he saw Miss Bosanquet, and began his acquaintance with her. But although they had a particular esteem for each other, yet they had no correspondence for above twenty years. It was not till the yearly Conference drew near, in July, 1781, that he paid her a visit at her own house near Leeds. They had much conversation together, and contracted an intimate acquaintance. After a few days, Miss Bosanquet asked your (Mr. Wesley's) advice, concerning Mr. Fletcher's proposal. You approved it entirely, being persuaded, it would be much to the glory of God."

About the middle of September Mr. Fletcher returned to Madeley, where he continued till the end of October, when he again visited Yorkshire, intending immediately after his marriage to set out with his spouse to his beloved parish. For he seemed to think every hour a day while he was detained from his dear people. But unavoidable hindrances occurring, their mutual friend, the Rev. Mr. Cross, was so kind as to supply Madeley, while Mr. Fletcher took care of Mr. Cross's parish in his absence.

"His general conversation," proceeds Mrs. C. "while at Cross-Hall, was praising God, and speaking of the love of our dear Redeemer. He took opportunities likewise of speaking to every one in the family, concerning the state of their souls, and giving them, from time to time, such directions as were suitable thereto. At other times, he met us all together, and gave us proper exhortations and directions. Our daily meals were as a Sacrament; when he drank to any one it was, "Heavenly health," or "The cup of salvation." At or after the meal, he generally begun, or called us to begin that verse,

“ Still, O my soul, prolong
 The never-ceasing song !
 Christ my theme, my hope, my joy !
 His be all my happy days !
 Praise my every hour employ :
 Every breath be spent in praise !”

After dinner he often sung several verses of Primitive Christianity : particularly that,

“ O that my Lord would count me meet,
 To wash his dear disciples feet !”

Sometimes he read many of those verses with tears streaming down his face. Thus did he walk with God, filled with the Spirit of his beloved Lord : confirming his love to all the family, and caring both for their spiritual and temporal concerns.

“ My soul was much affected, when he asked each of us, in a sweet, humble manner, ‘ Can you give me your friend ?’ To think of parting was indeed grievous to us all. Yet we did not dare to withhold her from him : as we all believed the union was of God, and would be to their present and eternal benefit. The first sermon which he preached in Leeds, on the Sunday morning before the Conference, will never be forgotten by any that heard it, who desire to be perfected in love. He preached in many places while in Yorkshire, and to numerous congregations. I have heard of many who were blest thereby : some convinced of sin, others comforted. And whenever he either preached or conversed, the comforts of the Holy Ghost were multiplied.

“ Monday, November 12, was the day appointed for the outward uniting of those, whose hearts were before united by the Holy Spirit. On the morning of this day, several friends met together on this solemn occasion : who can all, with me, truly say, ‘ I have been at one Christian wedding.’ Jesus was invited, and truly he was at our Cana.—

We reached Cross-Hall before family-prayers: Mr. Fletcher was dressed in his canonicals: and after giving out one of Mr. Wesley's Marriage Hymns, he read the seventh, eighth, and ninth verses of the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation: and spoke from them in such a manner, as greatly tended to spiritualize the solemnities of the day. He said, "We invite you to our wedding: but the Holy Ghost here invites you to the marriage of the Lamb. The Bride, the Lamb's wife, has made herself ready. This Bride consists of the whole Church triumphant and militant united together. Ye may all be the Bride, and Jesus will condescend to be the Bridegroom. Make yourselves ready by being filled with the Spirit." He was very solemn in prayer, and said, 'Lord thou knowest, we would not take this step, if we had not eternity in view, and if we were not as willing to be carried into the church-yard, as to go into the church.' At breakfast he reminded us, 'The postillions are now ready to carry us to the church, in order to see our nuptials solemnized; but death will soon be here, to transport us to the marriage of the Lamb.'

"On the way to the church, (Bateley church, which was near two miles off,) he spoke much of the mystery which is couched under marriage, namely the union between Christ and his Church. 'The first Adam,' said he, 'received his wife from his side: our heavenly Adam purchased his bride, by a fountain opened in his pierced side.' They were married in the face of the congregation; the doors were opened, and every one came in that would.—We then returned home, and spent a considerable time in singing and prayer. We were near twenty of us. I then presented Mrs. Fletcher with some Wedding Hymns. She looked them over, and gave them to Mr. Fletcher. He read the scripture at the top, namely, *Husbands love your wives*: and added, *as Christ loved the Church*. Then turning to us, he said, 'My God, what a task! Help me, my friends, by your prayers to fulfil it. As Christ loved

the Church ! He laid aside his glory for her ! He submitted to be born into our world ; to be clothed with a human body, subject to all our sinless infirmities. He endured shame, contempt, pain, yea, *death itself* for his Church ! O my God, none is able to fulfil this task, without thine almighty aid. Help me, O my God ! Pray for me, O my friends !

“ He next read, *Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands.* Mrs. Fletcher added, *As unto the Lord.* Well, my dear, returned Mr. Fletcher, *Only in the Lord.* And if ever I wish you to do any thing otherwise, resist me with all your might. From dinner, which was a spiritual meal, as well as a natural one, until tea-time, our time was spent chiefly in fervent prayer or singing. After singing the Covenant Hymn, Mr. Fletcher went to Mrs. Fletcher, and said to her, ‘ Well, my dearest friend, will you join with me in joining ourselves in a perpetual covenant to the Lord ? Will you, with me, serve him in his members ? Will you help me to bring souls to the blessed Redeemer ? And in every possible way, this day lay yourself under the strongest ties you can, to help me to glorify my gracious Lord ?’ She answered like one that well knew where her strength lay, ‘ May my God help me so to do !’

“ In the evening Mr. Valton* preached in the Hall, from those most suitable words, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits ? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.* His words did not fall to the ground : many were greatly refreshed. After preaching, there was a sweet contest among us : every one thought, I, in particular, owe the greatest debt of praise : till we jointly agreed to sing,

* The Rev. John Valton, a Methodist minister, almost universally beloved for his child-like simplicity and heavenly mindedness, and extensive usefulness in the ministry. He died in England a few years ago in the same holy spirit that he had lived, blessing and praising God.

‘ I’ll praise my maker while I’ve breath,
 And when my voice is lost in death,
 Praise shall employ my nobler powers :
 My days of praise shall ne’er be past,
 While life, or thought, or being last,
 Or immortality endures.’

“ On the Wednesday following, the Select Society met : and it was a precious season. Among other things Mr. Fletcher said, ‘ Some of you perhaps may be a little surprised at the step my dearest friend and I have taken. But I assure you it was the result of much prayer and mature deliberation. Five and twenty years ago, when I first saw my dear wife, I thought, if I ever married, she should be the person. But she was too rich for me to think of. So I banished every thought of the kind. For many years after, I had a distaste to a married life, thinking it impossible to be as much devoted to God in a married, as in a single life. But this objection was removed, by reading, *Enoch begat sons and daughters. And Enoch walked with God, and was not : for God took him.* I then saw, if Enoch at the head of a family might walk with God, and be fit for translation, our souls, under the gospel dispensation, might attain the highest degree of holiness in a similar state, if too great an attachment, leading the soul *from* God, rather than *to* him, did not take place ; instead of that, which should be a mean of increasing its union with Jesus. Yet still, many obstacles stood in my way ; but at length they were all removed. Every mountain became a plain, and we are both well assured, that the step we have taken has the full approbation of God.’

“ But to repeat all the precious sayings of this servant of God, would require many volumes : for his mouth was always opened with wisdom, tending to minister grace to the hearers. My earnest prayer is, that the spirit of faith and love, and heavenly wisdom, may rest upon *you* also, and guide you in all your extensive labours, till they are

swallowed up in eternal rest. I remain, Rev. Sir, your unworthy child and servant,
S. C."

An extract from one or two of his letters written to some intimate friends, soon after his marriage will manifest still further, both the state of his mind on this occasion, and the just, scriptural views he had of the new relation into which he had entered. Dec. 26, 1781, he writes from Cross-Hall, the former residence of Mrs. Fletcher, as follows, to the Hon. Mrs. C.

" My very dear Friend,

" The kind part you take in my happiness demands my warmest thanks ; and I beg you will accept them multiplied by those, which my dear partner presents to you. Yes, my dear friend, I am married in my old age, and have a new opportunity of considering a great mystery, in the most perfect type of our Lord's mystical union with his church. I have now a new call to pray for a fulness of Christ's holy, gentle, meek, loving Spirit, that I may love my wife, as he loved his Spouse, the Church. But the emblem is greatly deficient: the Lamb is worthy of his Spouse, and more than worthy, whereas I must acknowledge myself unworthy of the yoke-fellow, whom Heaven has reserved for me. She is a person after my own heart ; and I make no doubt we shall increase the number of the happy marriages in the Church Militant. Indeed they are not so many, but it may be worth a Christian's while to add one more to the number. God declared it was not good, that man, a social being, should live alone, and therefore he gave him a help meet for him : for the same reason our Lord sent forth his disciples two and two. Had I searched the three kingdoms I could not have found one brother willing to share gratis, my weal, woe, and labours ; and complaisant enough to unite his fortunes to mine ; but God has found me a partner, a sister, a wife, to use St. Paul's language, who is

not afraid to face with me the colliers and bargemen of my parish until death part us.

“Buried together in our country village, we shall help one another to trim our lamps, and wait, as I trust you do continually, for the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom. Well, for us the heavenly child is born, to us a double son is given, and with him the double kingdom of grace and glory. O my dear friend, let us press into, and meet in both of these kingdoms. Our Surety and Saviour is the way and the door into them; and blessed be free grace, the way is free, as the King’s highway, and the door open, like the arms of Jesus crucified.”

January 1st, 1782, he adds, “I live, blessed be God, to devote myself again to his blessed service in this world, or in the next, and to wish my dear friends all the blessings of a year of Jubilee. Whatever this year bring forth, may it bring us the fullest measures of salvation attainable on earth, and the most complete preparation for heaven. I have a solemn call to gird my loins and keep my lamp burning. Strangely restored to health and strength, considering my years; by the good nursing of my dear partner, I ventured to preach of late as often as I did formerly, and after having read prayers and preached twice on Christmas-day, &c. I did, last Sunday, what I had never done,—I continued doing duty from ten till past four in the afternoon, owing to christenings, churchings, and the sacrament which I administered to a church full of people; so that I was obliged to go from the communion table, to begin the evening service, and then to visit some sick. This has brought back upon me one of my old, dangerous symptoms, so that I had flattered myself in vain, to do the whole duty of my parish. My dear wife is nursing me with the tenderest care, gives me up to God with the greatest resignation, and helps me to rejoice, that life and death, health and sickness, work all for our good, and are all *our’s*, as blessed instruments to forward us in our jour-

ney to heaven. We intend to set out for Madeley tomorrow. The prospect of a winter's journey is not sweet; but the prospect of meeting you and your dear sister, and Lady Mary, and all our other companions in tribulation in heaven, is delightful. The Lord prepare and fit us for that glorious meeting! Your most obliged and affectionate servant,
J. F."

The next day they left Cross-Hall, as they proposed, and set out on their journey to Madeley; on which occasion the friend who gives the above account of their marriage, observes: "Jan. 2, 1772, we had a very solemn parting. But in the midst of all the sorrow which we felt, was a sweet assurance that we should meet again, not only in this world, but

'Where death shall all be done away,
 And bodies part no more.'

This brings to my mind a sentence which he wrote to us, a little before his death. 'Time is short. It remains that we die daily. Stand fast in Christ, the resurrection and the life. That we may have a happy meeting, is the wish and prayer of your affectionate friends,

JOHN and MARY FLETCHER."

After their arrival at Madeley, he writes to Lady Mary Fitzgerald, as follows:—"I thank you, my Lady, for your kind congratulations on my marriage. The Lord has indeed blessed me with a partner after my own heart,—dead to the world, and wanting, as well as myself, to be filled with all the life of God. She joins me in dutiful thanks to your Ladyship, for your obliging remembrance of her in your kind letter, and will help me to welcome you to the little hermitage we spoke of last year in London, if your Ladyship's health or taste, should call you to retire awhile from the hurry of the town." And about a year after in a letter to Mr. Charles Wesley, his words are: "I thank you for your hint about exemplifying the love of Christ

and his Church. I hope we do. I was afraid, at first, to say much of the matter: for new married people do not, at first, know each other; but having now lived fourteen months in my new state, I can tell you, Providence has reserved a *prize* for me, and that my wife is far better to me, than the Church to Christ; so that if the parallel fail, it will be on my side."

"From this period," to use Mr. Gilpin's words, "Mr. Fletcher considered himself as possessed of the last possible addition to his earthly happiness, never mentioning this memorable event, but with expressions of extraordinary gratitude and devotion to the God of all his mercies. And from this time, to the other parts of his character must be added that of an attentive and affectionate husband, which he maintained with a becoming mixture of dignity and sweetness, to the day of his death. By her Christian conversation, her devotional habits, and her spiritual experience, Mrs. Fletcher was peculiarly suited to a state of the most entire and intimate fellowship with this eminent servant of God. She was of equal standing with him in the school of Christ, and of the same uncommon growth in grace; she had drank of the same spirit, was actuated by the same zeal, and prepared in every respect to accompany him in the Christian race. By her discretion and prudence she bore the whole weight of his domestic cares; while, by the natural activity of her mind, and her deep acquaintance with divine things, she seconded his ministerial labours with astonishing success. Like Zacharias and Elizabeth, these extraordinary persons *were both eminently righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*. In their separate stations they had long been distinguished as lights in dark places: but, after uniting their rays, they shone with redoubled lustre, *putting to silence the ignorance of foolish men*, and dissipating the prejudices which many had entertained against the truths of the Gospel.

“ For the space of almost four years, these Christian *yoke-fellows* continued to enjoy, without interruption, all the inexpressible felicities of the most complete union; a union which appeared to promote, at once, their own particular happiness, and the interests of the people among whom they jointly laboured.

*FROM HIS MARRIAGE TILL THE BEGINNING
OF HIS LAST ILLNESS.*

FROM the time of his settling at Madeley with Mrs. Fletcher, he had no return of his consumptive disorder. On the contrary, by the blessing of God on her peculiar care and tenderness, not only his health was confirmed, but his strength restored as in the days of his youth. In the meantime he took care to employ all his returning strength in the work of faith and the labour of love. “ I have yet strength enough,” says he, to Mr. Charles Wesley, Dec. 19, 1782, “ to do my parish duty without the help of a curate. O that the Lord would help me to do it acceptably and profitably! The colliers begun to rise in this neighbourhood: happily the cockatrice’s egg was crushed before the serpent came out. However, I got many a hearty curse from the colliers, for the plain words I spoke on that occasion. I want to see days of power both *within* and *without*: but in the meantime I would follow closely my light in the narrow path. My wife joins me in respectful love to Mrs. Wesley and yourself.

J. F.”

More particularly Mr. Fletcher was diligent in that which he had always found to be one of the most difficult parts of his duty. There were in the parish of Madeley, no less than eighteen public-houses. These were continual nurseries for sin, particularly on Sunday evenings. It had been, for many years, his unwearied endeavour,

to put an end to these abuses. Yet, as he very seldom had a churchwarden who was heartily willing to second him therein, his endeavours were almost ineffectual, producing very little fruit. But for two years God was now pleased to favour him with a churchwarden, who was resolved to act according to his oath: he then cheerfully renewed his endeavours, visiting several of these houses every Sunday, (all of them in their turn.) In every one he bore a faithful testimony. And in some it was attended with much good. O that no one of those, who have been at any time within the reach of his voice, may finally inherit that curse, *Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!*

For many years he had felt, with the deepest sensibility, the disconsolate condition of poor, uninstructed children: and some years ago he began a School, wherein he taught them himself every day. After pursuing this method for some time, he erected a School in Madeley-Wood. But afterwards his thoughts were much engaged concerning the utility of Sunday Schools; especially after they were recommended to him, by Mrs. Darby,* an intelligent and pious person whom he always found ready to promote every good work. He then earnestly set about promoting them in his own parish. Three hundred children were soon gathered together, whom he took every opportunity of instructing, by regular meetings, for some time before the Schools were opened. These meetings he attended with the utmost diligence, till the very Thursday before his illness. In order to encourage the children, his method was to give them little hymn-books, pointing them to some friend or neighbour, who would teach them the hymns, and instruct them to sing. The little creatures were greatly taken with this new employment: insomuch that many of them would scarce allow themselves time to

* This excellent woman is a Member and Minister in the Society of Friends.

eat or sleep, for the desire they had of learning their lessons. At every meeting, after inquiring, Who had made the greatest proficiency? he distinguished them by some small rewards.

In instructing of children, one great difficulty is, to draw and fix their attention. He had a singular gift for doing this, as appears by the following anecdote, and others that might be related, if need were: Once, when he visited Kingswood-School, having collected all the youths together, and secretly addressed the throne of grace, he called for pen, ink, and paper, told the Scholars he came to seek for volunteers for Christ, and desired all those who were willing to enlist in his service, to enter their names on the paper. A peculiar blessing attended the proposal, it led several of them to a serious concern for their souls, and to a resolution of giving themselves up, to live and die in the Lord's service. At another time, when he had a considerable number of children before him in a place in his parish, as he was persuading them to mind what they were about, and to remember the text which he was going to mention, just then a Robin flew into the house, and their eyes were presently turned after him. 'Now,' said he, 'I see you can attend to that Robin. Well, I will take that Robin for my text.' He then gave them an useful lecture on the harmlessness of that little creature, and the tender care of its Creator.

As to the success of his unwearied labours, although he was much discouraged when he first returned from abroad, finding so many of those who had once run well, grown weary and faint in their minds: yet it was not long before he found fresh cause to rejoice, and to know, that God was with him of a truth. It was not long before he observed a general reformation had taken place in the parish. And it was not only an outward reformation, even of many that had been notorious for all manner of wickedness: but an inward also; many, both young and

old, having learned to worship *God in spirit and in truth*. A considerable number of these still mourn their loss of him, as sheep bereaved of their shepherd. And yet one cannot doubt, but a still larger company of his own children have hailed him on the celestial shore. But the season is coming when all secrets shall be laid open; and all the jewels of his crown shall be made manifest in that day.

One instance of the effect of his ministry, he mentioned some years since at Bristol. "One Sunday," said he, "when I had done reading prayers at Madeley, I went up into the pulpit, intending to preach a sermon, which I had prepared for that purpose. But my mind was so confused that I could not recollect either my text or any part of my sermon. I was afraid I should be obliged to come down, without saying any thing. But having recollected myself a little, I thought I would say something on the first lesson, which was the third chapter of Daniel, containing the account of the three worthies cast into the fiery furnace: I found, in doing it, such an extraordinary assistance from God, and such a singular enlargement of heart, that I supposed there must be some peculiar cause for it. I therefore desired, if any of the congregation had met with any thing particular, they would acquaint me with it in the ensuing week.

"In consequence of this, the Wednesday after, a person came, and gave me the following account. 'Mrs. K. had been for some time much concerned about her soul. She attended the church at all opportunities, and spent much time in private prayer. At this her husband (who is a Butcher) was exceedingly enraged, and threatened severely what he would do, if she did not leave off going to John Fletcher's church: yea, if she dared to go any more to any religious meetings whatever. When she told him, she could not in conscience refrain from going, at least to the parish church, he grew quite outrageous, and

swore dreadfully, if she went any more, he would cut her throat as soon as she came home. This made her cry mightily to God, that he would support her in the trying hour. And though she did not feel any great degree of comfort, yet having a sure confidence in God, she determined to go on in her duty, and leave the event to him. Last Sunday, after many struggles with the devil and her own heart, she came down stairs ready for church. Her husband asked her, whether she was resolved to go thither? She told him she was. 'Well then,' said he, 'I shall not, as I intended, cut your throat, but I will heat the oven, and throw you into it, the moment you come home. Notwithstanding this threatening, which he enforced with many bitter oaths, she went to church, praying all the way, that God would strengthen her to suffer whatever might befall her. While you were speaking of the three Hebrews whom Nebuchadnezzar cast into the burning fiery furnace, she found it all belonged to her, and God applied every word to her heart. And when the sermon was ended, she thought, if she had a thousand lives, she could lay them all down for God. She felt her whole soul so filled with his love, that she hastened home, fully determined to give herself to whatsoever God pleased: nothing doubting, but that either he would take her to heaven, if he suffered her to be burnt to death, or that he would some way deliver her even as he did his three *servants that trusted in him*. But when she opened the door, to her astonishment and comfort she found her husband's wrath abated, and soon had reason to believe that he was under a concern for the salvation of his soul.' The next Lord's day, contrary to his former ungodly custom, he attended divine service at the church, and even received the Lord's supper. These good impressions, however, it is feared, have not produced any lasting change on his heart and life. But I now know, why my sermon

was taken from me, namely that God might thus magnify his mercy.”

Many were the dangers he went through in the course of his ministry; but the Lord delivered him out of them all. One of these Mrs. Fletcher relates in the following words:

“ My husband having appointed to preach one Sunday, at a church about fourteen miles off, I felt some concern for his riding so far, and doing the whole Sunday’s duty twice: especially as it was necessary for him to return home the same night. The evening being exceeding dark and wet, I was strongly led to commend him to God in prayer. While I was doing this, it was suggested to me, that his horse was fallen, and had thrown him over his head: and the whole scene appeared to be clearly represented before my eyes. ‘ My God,’ said I, ‘ he is thine. His life, his limbs, his health, all are thine! I commit him to thee by faith.’ Immediately that word was impressed on my heart, *The righteous is in the hand of the Lord; and there shall no evil touch him.* And it filled my soul with such a sweetness, that I could feel no fear. The night was uncommonly bad, which occasioned many friends to continue with me. And while they expressed their great uneasiness at his staying two hours longer than we could well account for, I was obliged to hide the calmness I felt by silence, lest some should have supposed it insensibility. At last he came well, and praising God; but asked for water to wash himself, because his horse had fallen, and thrown him with great force over his head. Yet, glory be to God, he was no way hurt, except having a little skin grazed from one of his fingers. As he set the Lord always before him, so he found his help in every time of need.”

In the beginning of the year 1783, his kind friend and host Mr. Greenwood was called away. On this mournful occasion he writes as follows to Mrs. Thornton.

“ Yesterday I received your melancholy, joyful letter, as I came from the sacrament, where the grace of God had armed me to meet the awful news. And is my merciful host gone to reap the fruit of his mercy to me? I thought I should have been permitted to go first and welcome him into everlasting habitations; but Providence has ordered it otherwise, and I am left behind to say, with you and dear Mrs. Greenwood, *The Lord gave, and has taken away, and blessed be his holy name.*

“ The glory with which his setting sun was gilded, is the greatest comfort by which Heaven could alleviate his loss. Let me die as he did, and let my last end be like his! I was so sensibly affected by your account, that I could not help reading part of your letter at church in the afternoon, and desiring all the congregation to join me in thanksgiving, for the late mercies he had vouchsafed to my generous benefactor. On such occasions, let sighs be lost in praise; and repining in humble submission and thankful acquiescence. I hope dear Mrs. Greenwood mixes a tear of joy with a tear of sorrow. Who would not be landed on the other side the stream of time, if he were sure of such a passage? Who would wish his best friend back on the shores of sorrow, so triumphantly left by Mr. Greenwood?

“ So Mr. and Mrs. Perronet are no more; and Lazarus is still alive! What scenes does this world afford? But the most amazing is certainly that of Emmanuel crucified and offering *us* pardons and crowns of glory! May we ever gaze at that wonderful object, until it has formed us into love, peace, and joy! We thank you for the sweet name you still call us by, and we heartily take the hint, and subscribe ourselves, your affectionate, grateful friends, and ready servants in Christ,
J. and M. F.”

Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher had been earnestly requested by several serious persons at Dublin, to come over and spend a few weeks in that city, for the purpose of promot-

ing the interests of religion, by their godly exhortations and example. As long as civility or piety would suffer it, they declined the journey; but after being repeatedly urged to undertake it, at the united instances of the Methodist Society, they judged it improper any longer to withhold their consent, lest, in disregarding the solicitations of a willing people, they should disobey the summons of God. Accordingly, in the summer of this year, (1789,) they accepted the invitation, and appeared for a season in another kingdom, as two burning and shining lights. A gentleman of Dublin, who enjoyed much of their company during this holy visit, writes as follows:

“I wish it were in my power to send you any anecdotes of our dear deceased friend. But, unless I were to send you an account of the words and actions of every day, I know not where to begin. One particular circumstance, however, I will relate.—Upon his going to leave us, knowing the scanty pittance he received from his parish, we thought it but an act of common honesty to refund him the expence he had been at in coming, and to bear his charges back again. Accordingly, after he had preached, on the last evening of his stay among us, the steward and trustees united to press his acceptance of a small purse, not as a present, but as a debt, justly due to him. But he firmly and absolutely refused it. At length, being very urgent with him, and importunate to an excess, he took the purse in his hand. ‘Well,’ said he, ‘do you really force it upon me? Must I accept of it? Is it entirely mine? And may I do with it as I please?’ ‘Yes, yes,’ we all replied, ‘God be praised then, God be praised,’ said he, casting his brim-full eyes to heaven, ‘behold what a mercy is here! Your Poor’s Fund was just out: I heard some of you complaining that it was never so low before. Take this purse. God has sent it you, raised it among yourselves, and bestowed it upon your Poor. You cannot deny me. It is

sacred to them. God be praised! I thank you, I heartily thank you, my dear, kind brethren.'

"Thus was his free Gospel a bountiful provision for our Poor, while this last generous action served to harrow in the precious seed, that his labour of love had been sowing among us. Indeed, it was a crowning of his labours, a sealing of his message, that will never be forgotten by us, that is registered in the pages of eternity, and will follow him among those works, that he ever gloried to cast at the feet of Jesus."

From Dublin, Aug. 23, he wrote to Lady Mary Fitzgerald, as follows :

"Honoured and dear Madam,

"I see the truth of those words of our Lord, *In me ye shall have peace*, comfort, strength, and joy; *Be of good cheer*. We came here to see the members of our Lord, and we find you removed, and removing farther still, than you now are. What does this Providence teach us? I learn, that I must rejoice in the Lord above all his members, and find them all in him, who fills all in all; who is the life of all our friends, the joy of all our brethren. If our Lord be your life, your strength, and your all, you cannot go from your spiritual friends; they will meet you in the common centre of all life and righteousness; there they will bless you, rejoice in your joy, and sympathize in your sorrow.

"If Providence call you to England by Scotland, by which route your Ladyship apprehends so much difficulty, you know we must, at least, go to heaven by a way equally painful,—the narrow way, the way marked with blood, and with the tears and cross of the Son of God; and if we follow him weeping, we shall return *with everlasting joy on our heads*. Even now the foretaste of those joys is given to us through hope, for *by hope we are saved*. Let our faith and hope be in God, rooted and grounded in him, who gives vital heat to our hearts, and who fans there the

spark of grace, which his mercy has kindled ; and may that spark, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, become a fire of holy love, heavenly zeal, and heavenly glory. Such power belongeth to the Almighty.

“ My dear Partner, who, like myself, is deeply sensible of your Ladyship’s kindness in remembering us, joins me in thanks for your obliging note, and in cordial wishes, that all the desires of your believing soul may be granted you, both for time, death, and eternity. We subscribe ourselves with grateful sincerity, honoured Madam, your devoted servants in our bleeding Lord. J. and M. F.”

While in Dublin, Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher were entertained chiefly at the house of William Smyth, Esq. On their return to Madeley, in November, they expressed their gratitude for the kindness shewn them in the following words :

“ Dear Sir,

“ The many great favours you have loaded us with, during our long stay under your hospitable roof, prompted us to make the earliest acknowledgment of our obligations, and to beg you would receive our warmest thanks, for such unexpected, and undeserved tokens of your brotherly love. But the desire of filling our only frank, has hindered their being more early traced upon paper ; though they have been, are now, and we trust, shall ever be deeply engraven on our hearts. You have united for us the Irish hospitality, the English cordiality, and the French politeness. And now Sir, what shall we say ? You are our generous benefactor, and we are your affectionate, though unprofitable servants. In one sense, we are on a level with those, to whom your shew charity in the streets : we can do nothing but pray for you, your dear partner, and your’s. You kindly received us for Christ’s sake ; may God receive you freely for his sake also ! You have borne with our infirmities :—the Lord bears with your’s also ! You have let your servant serve us ;—

the Lord give all his servants and his angels charge concerning you, that you hurt not your foot against a stone, and may be helped out of every difficulty! You have given us a most pleasing resting place, and comfortable apartment under your roof, and next your own chamber:—the Lord grant you eternal rest with him in his heavenly mansions! May he himself be your habitation and resting place for ever; and place you and your's with his own jewels, in the choicest repository of precious things! You have fed us with the richest food:—May the Giver of every perfect gift fit you for a place at his table, and may you rank there with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! You have given us wines:—may you drink, with Christ himself, the fruit of the vine, new in your Father's kingdom! You have given us a rich provision for the way:—when you cross the flood, the deep flood of death, may you find that your heavenly Lord has made such a rich provision of faith, righteousness, hope, and joy for you, that you may rejoice, triumph, and sing, while you leave your earthly friends to go home! which, by the by, is more than we were enabled to do; for instead of singing in our cabins, there was very different melody.

“ However, we could soon with grateful, joyful hearts, look back from the British to the Irish shore, and greet in spirit, the dear friends we have left there. The Lord bless and increase them in spiritual, and, if best for them, in temporal goods also! The Lord crown them and theirs with loving-kindness, and mercies equal to the love of our God, and the mercies of our Saviour! And now, dear Sir, what shall I add? I cannot now even see my bible but through the *medium* of your love, and the token with which it alternately loads my pocket and my hand. I cannot even seal a letter, with a good wafer, but I find a new call to repeat my thanks to you. I would begin again, but my scrap of paper is full as well as my heart; and I must spare a line to tell you, that I had the pleasure of seeing

our kind benefactress, Mrs. Smyth, safe at Bristol, with her little charge, and Lady Mary. We remain, dear Sir, your most affectionate and most obliged pensioners and servants,

J. and M. F."

At the same time they addressed an affectionate letter to the members of the Methodist Society in Dublin, from which I present the reader with the following short extract :

"To all our dear Brethren, members of the Methodist Society in Dublin, who after kindly inviting John and Mary Fletcher, patiently bearing with them, and their infirmities, and entertaining them in the most hospitable, Christian manner, have added to all their former favours, that of thanking them for their most pleasant and profitable journey.—

"Brethren, and dearly beloved in the Lord,

"We have felt shame enough under the sense of your kindness and patience towards us, and of our unprofitableness towards you, when at Dublin. You need not have added to our shame by the new token of your love, the friendly letter we have received from you. We, we are indebted to you, dear brethren; we owed you the letter of thanks you have gratuitously sent. But in all things you will have the pre-eminence, and we are glad to drink the cup of humility at your feet. May the Lord, who can part a sea by the touch of a rod, and could at first cause the earth to bring forth abundantly all manner of trees and plants, without seed, so bless the seed of the word, which we sowed in great weakness among you, as to make it produce a full crop of humble repentance, cheerful faith, triumphant hope, and the sanctifying influence of God's Spirit in your hearts, in all your families, in all your assemblies, and in your whole Society! If your profuse liberality towards *us*, abounded to the comfort of our poor brethren, we doubly rejoice on *your* account, and on *theirs*."

*HIS CHARACTER, TAKEN CHIEFLY FROM THE
REV. MR. GILPIN'S ACCOUNT.*

ALTHOUGH it be the method of almost all Writers,* to place the Character of the person whose Life they write, at the conclusion of their work, there seems to be a particular reason for pursuing a different plan with respect to Mr. Fletcher. God gave such an uncommon display of his power and goodness, in behalf of his highly favoured servant, at his death, that it seems quite proper, the account of that last scene, should close the history of him, and that nothing should follow it. I shall, therefore, here insert the best account I can collect of the character of this great and good man. But as we have scarce any light from himself, there is a peculiar difficulty in the way. "He was on all occasions," as Mr. Wesley has justly observed, "very uncommonly reserved in speaking of himself, whether in writing or conversation. He hardly ever said any thing concerning himself, unless it slipped from him unawares. And among the great number of papers which he has left, there is scarce a page, (except that single account of his conversion to God,) relative either to his own inward experience, or the transactions of his life. So that the most of the information we have, is gathered up, either from short hints scattered up and down in his letters, from what he had occasionally dropped among his friends, or from what one and another remembered concerning him."

From the imperfect account, however, which has already been given of him, any discerning person may, with very little difficulty, extract his character. In general, it is easy to perceive, that a more excellent man has not appeared in the church for some ages. It is true, in several ages, and in several countries, many men have excelled in particular virtues and graces. But who can point out in any age or nation, one that so highly excelled in all? One

* Mr. Wesley's Life of Fletcher.

that was enabled in so large a measure to *put on the whole armour of God*? Yea, so to *put on Christ*, as to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*?

It is evident, as Mr. Gilpin relates,* that his life might, with the greatest propriety, be termed, “ a life of faith. Through the whole of his christian pilgrimage, he *walked by faith, not by sight*. By faith he embraced the truths of the Gospel, when they were first proposed to him in plainness and simplicity ; not barely *admitting*, but *relying* upon them with an intire confidence. By faith he relinquished the world, while it presented him with many flattering prospects, *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*. By faith he endured the displeasure of his friends, and patiently suffered their contradiction, *esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world, and having respect unto the recompence of reward*. By faith he engaged himself in the christian warfare, unmoved either by its difficulties or its dangers : and by faith *he endured to the end, as seeing him who is invisible*. Though his faith was always increasing, yet during his christian profession, there never was a time in which he was regarded as a man weak, or wavering, in the faith of the Gospel. On the contrary, he seems to have borne a strong resemblance to those two extraordinary characters, whose faith, upon their very first application to Christ, not only procured his approbation, but appeared to excite his astonishment.

His faith was frequently put to the severest tests ; but after being tried to the uttermost, it remained unshaken. He regarded the promises of God as the firm supports of this grace, nor was he ever seen to *stagger* at any of those *promises through unbelief*. If the promise was great and important ; if its full accomplishment was even doubted by his most esteemed fellow-labourers ; yet this holy man

* Portrait, page 43.

continued *strong in faith, giving glory to God: being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform.* By this mighty grace he engaged in the most difficult duties, and saw many mountainous obstacles removed from his path. By this he was enabled to bear *the heat and burden of the day*: and, by this, notwithstanding all the discouragements that could be thrown in his way, he went on from conquering to conquer.

“ The nature of his faith was evidenced by the works it produced. He stood not as a cumberer of the ground in his Master’s vineyard; but *like a tree planted by the water side*, he brought forth *his fruit in due season*. He stood as an humble representation of that Tree of Life, which grows by the River of Paradise; for in his fruit there was a wonderful variety, and every successive season was, with him, a season of spiritual plenty. He not only bore that delicate kind of fruit, which requires the sunshine of prosperity; but produced, with equal luxuriance, those hardier graces which can only be matured by the rigours of adversity.

“ It is the privilege of every christian to be united to Christ; that, as he and the Father are *one*, so his disciples may be *one* with their adorable Master. This privilege, in its lowest sense, is inconceivably estimable in the church of Christ; but by this eminent servant of God, it was enjoyed in a more than ordinary degree. His union with the blessed Jesus, answerable to the greatness of his faith, was intimate and constant. He experienced the fulfilment of that condescending promise; *If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me*: he obeyed the summons, and received the promised visitant; and from that time his heart became the dwelling place of Christ. There he experienced the teachings of uncreated wisdom, and held ineffable communion with the *Author and Finisher of faith*, imbibing abundantly the Spirit of his Divine Instructor,

and sitting *under his shadow with great delight*. By this sacred intercourse, continued from day to day, his union with Christ became so entire, that he was at length enabled to adopt the expressive declaration of the great apostle,—*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*

“The strictness of this union was evinced by his whole disposition and carriage. The mind that was in Christ, was discovered also in him. He denied himself, he took up his cross, and trod in the footsteps of his Master. He cheerfully submitted to the yoke of Jesus, and was effectually taught by his example, to be *meek and lowly in heart*. He breathed the language of universal benevolence, and copied the character of his Lord with so great exactness, that *all men took knowledge of him, that he had been with Jesus*. Fellowship with Christ is, with the generality of christians, a state of much uncertainty, and subject to many changes; but, by this holy man, it was well nigh uninterruptedly enjoyed, through all the different stages of the spiritual life. It was his consolation in the season of adversity, and his glory in the day of rejoicing: it sustained him in the hour of temptation, and afforded him peace in the midst of trouble. At home or abroad, he still was sitting with Christ Jesus in heavenly places. In sickness or in health, he daily conferred with this Physician of inestimable value. In honour or dishonour, he still was dignified with the favour of this Everlasting King. In short, the whole circle of his christian friends are ready to testify, that neither *tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor life, nor death*, were able to separate this faithful pastor from the love of Christ: for whom he suffered the loss of all things, and by whose gracious presence that loss was abundantly overpaid.”

Next to his faith, and the union and communion which he had with Christ thereby, we may notice his *patience* and *fortitude* under the various trials whereby his faith, and other graces were exercised. “*Thou, O God, hast*

tried us like as silver is tried, has been the language," observes Mr. Gilpin, "of the faithful in every period of the church: *for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*. Of that chastisement, *whereof all the children of the kingdom are partakers*, Mr. Fletcher was not without a painful share. He had fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, and could bear ample testimony to the fatherly corrections of that righteous God, *whose fire is in Sion, and his furnace in Jerusalem*. His trials were of various kinds, frequently repeated, many times of long continuance, and, on some occasions, peculiarly severe. But from whatever quarter his trials arose, whether he suffered through bodily infirmity and pain, from the infidelity of *false brethren*, or from the despitefulness of open enemies, he suffered as a man unreservedly devoted to the will of God, regarding neither ease nor health, the consolations of social intercourse, nor the estimation of the world, but so far as they tended to promote either the welfare of his brethren, or the glory of their common Lord.

"Three things were especially observable in his conduct, with respect to trials in general.

"First. He was careful never to plunge himself into difficulties through inadvertence and precipitation. Conscious that his path was encompassed with innumerable dangers and snares, he proceeded in his course with the utmost wariness and circumspection, deliberating on the tendency of every expression, and weighing the probable consequences of every step. Without swerving to the one hand by intemperate zeal, or to the other by worldly compliance, he steadily persevered in the path of duty, endeavouring *to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward men*.

"Secondly. Wherever he saw a trial awaiting him, in the order of Providence, how terrific an aspect soever it might wear, he went on to meet it without the least indi-

cation of despondency or fear. He esteemed no difficulty too great to be surmounted, no cross too heavy to be endured, nor any enemy too strong to be opposed, in the way of God's appointment. Here he considered himself as under the immediate protection of the Almighty, and *knowing in whom he believed, he committed the keeping of his soul to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

“ Thirdly. He entered into the conflict under a lively impression of the truth of that apostolic declaration: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.* This sentiment sustained him in the day of trouble, and produced in him a degree of fortitude proportioned to the severity of the trial. He could smile under the langours of disease, and the violence of pain; he could hear, without emotion, the reproaches of malice, and receive, without resentment, the shafts of ingratitude; *counting it all joy when he fell into divers temptations, and glorifying the Lord in the fiercest fires of affliction.*

“ But while he discovered an astonishing degree of firmness under the sharpest trials, he was a perfect stranger to that stoical sullenness, which steels the heart against the attacks of adversity. His fortitude was sustained, not by insensibility, but by patience and resignation. Through the most afflicting providential dispensations, his attention was fixed upon that wondrous example of patient suffering, which was exhibited in the High Priest of his profession: and if ever his sensibility constrained him to cry out, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; his resignation as constantly disposed him to add, nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.* Such was the conduct of Mr. Fletcher with respect to trials of every kind. He never created them through imprudence; he never avoided them through timidity; he never endured them, but with an uncommon share of fortitude and patience: and it may be added, that he never experienced the

removal of a trial, without thankfully ascribing his support under it, and his deliverance from it, to the gracious interference of that invisible Arm, which is *mighty to save*.

“ With such dispositions, it is not difficult to conceive that, like Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, he held communion with the Son of God in the hottest *furnace of affliction*; so that, like Job, he came forth from the most grievous trials as gold purified in the fire. The friends he has left behind him can joyfully testify, that he had learned the happy art of *glorying even in tribulations*; from a consciousness, *that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope*. Nay, they are further prepared to testify, that his hope was matured into the fullest assurance, when they recollect how he would frequently come forth from a state of keen distress, repeating the confidential exclamation of the great apostle: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us.*”

His devotion to the Lord Jesus was equal to his faith in him, and his other graces. “ Though this be strictly enjoined by the Church,” as is justly observed by the author last quoted,* “ it is rarely discernible in the conduct of her members. As the majority of christians are satisfied with a superficial knowledge of the Redeemer, so their devotion to him is purely of a professional nature. Their attachment to Christ may dispose them to some few external marks of respect toward him, but is insufficient to produce in them any single act of genuine obedience, or self-denial. They reverence his name, while they reject his authority; and acknowledge him as a Saviour, while they refuse to follow him as a guide. In all these respects it was totally otherwise with the man, whose

* Portrait, page 65.

character is here faintly delineated. His devotion to Christ was sincere and unreserved, first, as a private christian, and afterwards as a Minister of the gospel. As a private christian, he was a strict and constant follower of the blessed Jesus, renouncing, for his sake, all the transient gratifications of time and sense. Whatever he had formerly admired and pursued, he voluntarily laid at the feet of his Lord. Those requisitions of Christ, which are generally looked upon as strict in the extreme, he submitted to without a murmur; cutting off the *right hand*, plucking out the *right eye*, and casting away whatever might prove offensive to his spotless Master, with all the determination of a deep-rooted attachment. He cast aside every weight, he resisted every sin, and neglected nothing, that might prove either the sincerity of his zeal, or the fervour of his love. He dedicated his time, his studies, his acquisitions, and his substance, to the service of his Lord; and desired to present him, at once, with his whole being, as a living sacrifice, expressive of his entire devotion.

“As a minister of the gospel, his devotion to Christ was expressed, if possible, in a still more absolute manner. He entered more universally into his service, and manifested a greater degree of zeal for the honour of his Name. He imitated his perfections in a more unlimited sense, and interested himself more deeply in the extension of his kingdom upon earth. His renunciation of the world became more complete, and his self-denial more strict. He acted with greater resolution, and suffered with greater firmness, in the cause of christianity. His devotion to Christ was now carried to a higher pitch, than most christians are willing to believe attainable in the present life. He had no interest to serve, no inclination to gratify, nor any connection to maintain, but such as was entirely conformable to the nature of his union with the holy Jesus. Wherever he came, he breathed the spirit of devotion, and wherever he was familiarly known, the purity, the resolu-

tion, and the constancy of that devotion, were universally apparent.* He daily felt and acted in conformity to the powerful obligations, by which he was bound to the Captain of his salvation. His vows of inviolable affection and fidelity, were solemnly renewed, as occasion offered, both in public and private: and it was wonderful to observe, through all the vicissitudes of his christian warfare, how perfect a harmony was maintained between his inclinations and his engagements, his habits and his profession. It would be very easy, to expatiate largely under this head, though very difficult to give a description, in any tolerable degree, adequate to the subject. Instead of presenting the reader with several pages upon the point now before us, it

* There was a certain something in Mr. Fletcher's person and manner, that instantly and indescribably affected the passions in almost every one that saw him. That of fear and dismay in the wicked, and love and sympathy in the breast of the good; especially as he entered the Sanctuary of God, his exceeding joy, and while delivering the word of this life to the people, he appeared indeed to perform every religious exercise under the influence of that most Christian temper expressed by St. Paul, thus:

“Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” Oh! what a man of God was Mr. Fletcher; how would his enlarged heart have rejoiced had he lived to see this day, when such mighty efforts are making with such glorious effect to introduce the Holy Scriptures amongst all Nations, and Tongues, and People. From the Palace of the Prince to the Hut of the Hottentot the influence of the Bible is felt—Hail Bible Societies! Hail Missionary Societies! “Go on and prosper,” until infidelity, the hell born monster, is chased back to his own den. What would Mr. Fletcher have said had he been present when his old and much esteemed friend, the Reverend Doctor Thomas Coke, in the 66th year of his age, with all the zeal and fire of youth, took his departure from England, in November 1813, for the Island of Ceylon, to preach that same blessed Gospel in Asia, which he had preached already with so much wisdom and grace in Europe and America, also to the African race in the West Indies. O may the Lord God of Elijah go forth with all Christian Ministers and Missionaries, in the power of his Spirit, until the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of his glory in Christ Jesus. Amen and Amen. J. K

shall suffice to say, that this venerable man's *entire devotion* to Jesus Christ, as a Minister of the gospel, was variously expressed, 'in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report.'

Another particular in his character, touched upon by Mr. Gilpin,* is his perfect disinterestedness. "Upon his discovering," says he, "the *goodly pearl* of evangelical truth, Mr. Fletcher, like the merchant in the gospel, immediately bartered his all for the possession of so invaluable a gem. Till then, he had been engaged in pursuits of a worldly nature: but, from that time, he sought after no other treasure than the *unsearchable riches* of grace, nor desired any inheritance except that, which is reserved for the saints in everlasting light. Through every period of his religious life, he appeared as a pilgrim and stranger in the world, unallured by its smiles, unmoved by its frowns, and uninterested in its changes. His affections were wholly fixed upon things above; and while thousands and ten thousands were contending around him, for the advantages and honours of the present life, he desired to pass unnoticed through its idle hurry, without being entangled in its concerns, or encumbered with its gifts. It was with him, as with a person engaged in a race, which must be attended with immense gain, or irreparable loss,—he kept his eye immovably fixed upon the goal; and whatever gilded trifles were thrown in his way, he resolutely trampled on them all, uninterruptedly *pressing toward the mark, for the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus*. His mind was never distracted with a multiplicity of objects, nor did he ever mingle temporal expectations with eternal

* Portrait, page 252.

hopes. Considering one thing only as absolutely necessary to his happiness, while he pursued the substance he rejected the shadow ; and while he contended for an incorruptible crown, he had no ambition to appear in the fading garlands of earthly glory. Possessed of that faith which *overcometh the world*, he beheld it with the feelings of his tempted Master ; anxious for its good, but despising its yoke ; prepared to labour in its service, but resolute to reject its rewards ; deaf to its promises, blind to its prospects, and dead to its enjoyments.

“ He received, indeed, a part of his maintenance from the altar at which he served : but so scanty was the income produced by his parish, that it scarcely sufficed, in some years, for the liberality of his contributions toward the relief of the poor. Yet so perfectly satisfied was he with his inconsiderable appointments at Madeley, that he desired nothing more than to conclude both his labours and his life in that favoured village. Had he been disposed to improve every favourable opportunity of advancing his temporal interests, he might have succeeded beyond many who are anxiously plotting and contriving the means of their future promotion in the world. But, as a proof of his superiority to every allurements of this nature, he peremptorily refused, once and again, the offer of additional preferment. And, as a further testimony of his perfect disinterestedness, after having so far destroyed his health, by the excess of his labours, that he was obliged to retire for a season from his charge, he solemnly determined, in case of continued weakness, to give up together the profits and duties of his ministerial station.”

The reader will recollect the anecdote respecting his disinterestedness when in Dublin. But the disposition here described, was not confined to pecuniary matters. It was exemplified through his whole conduct, which manifested, upon all occasions, that he acted under the entire

influence of that disinterested *charity* which *seeketh not her own*.

And as he regarded not his own temporal interest, so neither did he seek his own honour. "Among all the candidates for human praise," proceeds Mr. Gilpin,* "there is none more conspicuous than the man, who exhibits his pretensions to applause from the pulpit. Dishonourable as it is to the cause of christianity, the place, from which humility and self-denial were formerly recommended to the world, is frequently employed by modern divines, as a stage, for the ostentatious display of their superior parts and accomplishments. Preferring the praise of men, before the honour that cometh from God, multitudes of pastors are more solicitous to be ranked with profound theologians, elegant scholars, and masters of elocution, than to be numbered among the zealous and unaffected preachers of the everlasting Gospel. They court the applause of the world, by seeking after such qualifications as will naturally recommend them to its favour; while they secure themselves from its reproaches, by carefully avoiding whatever might tend to degrade them in its estimation. In short, they are abundantly more solicitous for the advancement of their own reputation, than for the honour of their Master, or the increase of his kingdom.

"Between pastors of this description and Mr. Fletcher, the most distant resemblance was not to be discovered. The favour of God was his ultimate aim through life; and, for the possession of so invaluable a privilege, he was content to forego the riches, the friendship, and even the good opinion, of the world. Despising the common pursuits of men, he aspired after that true greatness, which never yet excited the envy of the mighty, or the emulation of the ambitious. *Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report*, in such things he was daily and diligently occupied; not that the

* Portrait, page 153.

report of his virtues might raise his reputation among men, but rather, that he might become *an example to the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in spirit, in purity.* Though few men have ever had so just a claim as himself to universal approbation, yet no man ever appeared so perfectly deaf to the Syren Voice of admiration, and praise. He permitted nothing to be related in his presence, that apparently tended to his advantage. He could bear his actions censured, his opinions condemned, and his character traduced, with an astonishing degree of silent composure. But if at any time his virtues or abilities were mentioned, with the least appearance of respect, he would instantly put a stop to the conversation, with an air of severity which he seldom assumed upon any other occasion. On matters of this nature, he resolutely refused to hear the voice of the charmer, with whatever discretion and delicacy the subject might be attempted. He counted himself no better than an unprofitable servant; and, as such, it was an invariable rule with him, in every company, to take the lowest seat; which he occupied, not as a man, who was conscious that his merits entitled him to a more honourable place, but rather as one, who considered himself unworthy the favour of God, or the notice of man.

“As an Ambassador of Jesus Christ, he sought not his own honour, but the honour of him that sent him. Neither exalted by the grace he had received, nor elated with his success in the ministry, he still opened his commission in every place, in the lowly manner of the great Apostle: *Unto me who am less, than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.* He counted nothing, either upon his attainments or his talents. Instead of endeavouring to make a pompous display of his excellencies, he studiously concealed them from the notice of the world: and whether he was engaged in planting with Paul, or in watering with Apollos, he sought to turn every eye from the per-

son of the labourer, to the presence of that God, who alone can give the increase. Far from courting the applause of a world, in which his Lord had been publicly despised and rejected, he was sincerely disposed to drink of the cup, and to be baptized with the baptism of his Master.

Instead of toiling for the triumphs of vain glory, he inured himself to bear the reproach of the cross; and instead of soliciting the smiles of the world, he prepared himself to endure *contradiction of sinners*. Fully persuaded, *that it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master*, he sought after an entire conformity to the mind and character of his Lord. Though formed to preside, he voluntarily took upon himself the form of a servant, and submitted to the lowest offices of condescension and charity. Though capable, as a preacher, of fixing the attention and raising the admiration of the multitude, he absolutely renounced all pretensions to regard, and modestly made himself of no reputation. As a proof that he was not ambitious, either of the uppermost seats in synagogues, or of honourable salutations in places of public resort, he laboured for the church in a state of comparative retirement and obscurity: manifestly evidencing to all around him, that he came *not to be ministered unto, but to minister*. In this unenvied situation of his choice, he spent the laborious days of a useful life, *as unknown, yet well known; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things*. Thus, *by a patient continuance in well-doing*, he sought for *glory, honour, and immortality*, unnoticed by the ambitious and the vain, but eminently conspicuous among those *whose praise is not of men but of God.*"

Nearly related to his disregard of, and deadness to the praise of men, was his *humility*. "This," continues Mr. Gilpin,* "is at once the groundwork and perfection of

* Portrait, page 128.

Christianity. Where this holy temper increases in the soul, there every grace is proportionably carried toward a state of maturity; but wherever this is wanting, there, sooner or later, every appearance of grace must wither and die: *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble*. Examples of deep humility are uncommon, even in the church of Christ: but among the rarest examples of this kind, Mr. Fletcher must be allowed a distinguished place. From his natural disposition, perhaps no man had ever greater opposition to struggle against in his progress to humility; but as few professors of religion were ever known to resist their natural propensities with so determined a resolution, few ever gained so complete a victory over themselves, as Mr. Fletcher. Lowliness of mind was considered, by the generality of his friends, as the most distinguished trait in the character of this great man; and it may be truly asserted, that no person ever conversed with him, either at home or abroad, without being struck with the genuine meekness and simplicity of his whole carriage. This admirable disposition, which is lovely in the lowest of its possessors, was peculiarly striking in him, in whom it shone forth amid an uncommon variety of accomplishments, and attended with a train of excellent graces.

“Wherever he appeared, he was seen, according to the advice of St. Peter, completely *clothed in humility*: and though there was something singular in this truly christian garb, yet its unaffected comeliness was universally acknowledged and admired. Many, who think it necessary to appear before God in a state of humiliation, come forth from their closets and walk into the world with an air of conscious superiority: as though it were possible, at the same time, *to walk humbly before God*, and haughtily in the presence of their fellow-creatures. But the man whose character I attempt to describe, was perfectly consistent with himself. Such as he appeared before God in

his private acts of devotion, such he appeared before men, in every part of social and public life. He aspired not after high things, but condescended to men of low estate. His family and connections, his attainments in science and in grace, with whatever else might be considered as tending to his advantage, he regarded as matters of trivial estimation; while, in the lowliness of his heart, he adopted the language of the great Apostle: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* In honour he preferred all men before himself, and never appeared so perfectly satisfied with his station, as when his humble employments bespoke him the servant of all. So unlimited was his condescension in this respect, that he esteemed no occupation too low or degrading, by which he might benefit his neighbour, or by which he might testify respect either to God or man.

“ I cannot forbear relating here a little circumstance, which may perhaps appear trifling to some, but which uncommonly affected me at the time it happened. Mr. Fletcher was called out to attend the sick. In the meantime a funeral was announced; and I was happy to embrace an opportunity of affording the least assistance to this venerable man, in the course of his extensive labours. While I was engaged in reading the Office on that occasion, Mr. Fletcher, who had heard at a distance the call of the bells, hastily entered the church; and as he passed up the aisle, observing that a young lad was officiating in the absence of the clerk, he instantly took his place, and went through the whole of the service, with a degree of humility and composure, that cannot be expressed. He afterwards assured me, that while he beheld me kindly performing the duty of an absent minister, he could not observe the place of an inferior servant of the church improperly filled up, without attempting to supply it himself, with a greater degree of decorum and reverence.

“ I shall here insert another anecdote to the same purpose. While Mr. Fletcher continued tutor to the young men at Tern-Hall, he usually attended the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Cartwright, pastor of a neighbouring church, a man, of whose piety and zeal he made frequent and honourable mention. It was the custom of this gentleman frequently to catechise, in public, the children of his parish. And on one of these occasions he requested that no person of maturer age, who stood in need of instruction, would esteem it a disgrace to appear in the number of the catechumens. When no one had condescension enough to occupy so mean a station, Mr. Fletcher left his seat, and, with an air of unaffected modesty, took his place among the children; giving a public proof, by the depth of his humility, that he was in an advanced state of preparation for the highest degrees of exaltation.”

It was owing to his humility, that he was ever ready to acknowledge and repair his errors, if at any time he was betrayed into any thing that could bear that name, which certainly was very seldom. “ It is true,” as Mr. Gilpin has remarked,* “ had he ever sat down to a sketch of his own life, an undertaking to which he was repeatedly urged by a multitude of his friends, it is most probable the world would then have been presented with a large detail of those defects, which were scarcely apparent to any eye but his own. It is not meant to be insinuated here, that Mr. Fletcher was entirely free from those infirmities, by which, in different degrees, the most exalted characters have been tinged. But it may be safely affirmed, that those few imperfections were so outnumbered and obscured by his uncommon excellencies, that they could not long detain the eye, even of malice itself. The only defect in his character, which ever fixed the attention, even of those who may be suspected to have passed by his merits without

* Portrait, page 163.

the regard they deserved, was a certain warmth in his temper, which has appeared upon a variety of occasions. But with respect to this acknowledged warmth, it must be allowed by all, that it was at no time discoverable in him, except when he was called forth to act, either as a lover of truth, or a reprover of sin. In these two characters, indeed, he constantly appeared with a degree of zeal which gave offence to many; but which was entirely consistent with his high reputation for meekness and charity. He was not ashamed, however, openly to confess and bewail this apparent defect; and if ever it betrayed him into a mistake, he discovered the utmost solicitude, till he could make some suitable reparation. I shall content myself with presenting the reader with two instances of his conduct in this particular.

“ In one period of his life, he considered himself obliged to wield the controversial pen. As the dispute was of importance, so it was of long continuance, and maintained on all sides with a considerable degree of warmth. In the course of the controversy, it was objected against our author, that he managed the debate with an acrimonious severity, which was equally ill-adapted, both to the nature of his cause, and the characters of his opponents. Though this charge might have been retorted upon some of his antagonists with tenfold force, yet he frankly admitted it on their part, and stood self-abased amidst the loudest plaudits of his friends. Before the dispute was completely terminated, his declining state of health obliged him to quit the kingdom, with very little hope of ever visiting it again. But he found it impossible to do this, without giving an intimation to his opponents, that he desired nothing so much as an opportunity of embracing them before his departure; that, all doctrinal differences apart, he might testify his sincere regret, on account of having given them the least displeasure, and receive from them some condescending assurance of reconciliation and

good-will. Those of his antagonists, who had generosity sufficient to accept his invitation, were equally affected and refreshed by the solemn interview that succeeded. And some of them, who before that time had no personal acquaintance with him, expressed the highest satisfaction at being introduced to the company of one, whose air and countenance bespoke him fitted rather for the society of angels than the conversation of men.

“ A second instance of the manner in which he acknowledged and repaired his mistakes, is as follows :—While he was one day interring a corpse, he was suddenly interrupted in his duty, by a voice of execration and blasphemy. Instantly, with a look of holy indignation, he turned to that part of the multitude, whence the voice appeared to proceed ; and singling out, as he supposed, the guilty person, he publicly rebuked her in terms as severe as the nature of the offence demanded. After the service was concluded, he received information that his rebuke had been improperly directed—When he immediately recalled the people, who were then dispersing from the grave ; and pointing to the person, whom he had unwittingly injured, he expressed the utmost concern at having confounded the innocent with the guilty, and declared, that as his error was public, so he desired publicly to solicit the pardon of the offended party.

“ These may serve as sufficient proofs of the candid and condescending manner, in which Mr. Fletcher was accustomed to acknowledge and repair those unintentional errors, which neither his wisdom nor piety could wholly prevent.”

The same spirit of humility, which made Mr. Fletcher so ready to acknowledge his own errors, induced him to throw the mantle of tender forbearance and forgiving love over those of others, especially of such as, he had reason to believe, notwithstanding their defects were truly pious, and to discern and esteem the image of their heavenly Fa-

ther in them. " His fellowship* with these was intimate and unreserved. He saluted them as the children of God, and honoured them as heirs of an eternal inheritance. These were the companions of his choice, both in public and in private : with these he took sweet and solemn counsel, and with these he rejoiced to worship in the house of God. Whether they were poor or rich, illiterate or learned, bond or free, he considered them as fellow-partakers of the same grace, and received them, *without partiality*, as the redeemed of the Lord. He constantly watched over them for good, and eagerly embraced every opportunity of rendering them acceptable service. He bore their burdens, he distributed to their necessities, he covered their defects, and healed their divisions.

" Esteeming all the children of God, as *members one of another*, his catholic spirit disdained those unnatural partitions, by which different parties of christians have endeavoured to separate themselves from each other.† Sincere worshippers, of every denomination, he regarded as *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God* ;

* Portrait, page 125.

† While Mr. Fletcher was preaching one Sunday morning at the Methodist Chapel, in Leeds, during the conference of 1784, to a deeply affected congregation, made up of more than 100 Ministers and upwards of 4000 people, his subject was the Resurrection of the Just, the words were, " The dead shall be raised and we shall be changed," the Spirit in a manner so awfully glorious came down upon him, constraining him to utter such words with such uncommon fervour and effect, that the whole audience seemed for the present to be quite lost, absorbed and swallowed up in God, and while they were all waiting at this " Gate of Heaven," Mr. Fletcher with great feeling turned to his own experience and future prospects, and gave vent to his full soul in the following emphatic language :

" These eyes shall see them fall,
Mountains, and stars, and skies,
These eyes shall see them all
Out of their ashes rise;
These lips his praises shall rehearse
Whose nod restores the universe "

desiring no greater honour, than to be counted as their brother, and commanded as their servant.

“ The following are his own expressions: ‘ God forbid, that I should exclude from my brotherly affection, and occasional assistance, any true minister of Christ, because he casts the Gospel-net among the Presbyterians, the Independents, the Quakers, or the Baptists! If they will not wish me good luck in the name of the Lord, I will do it to them. They may excommunicate me, if their prejudices prompt them to it; they may build up a wall of partition between themselves and me; but, *in the strength of my God*, whose love is as boundless as his immensity, *I will leap over the wall.*’

“ Extraordinary as these declarations may appear, they are not to be considered as the professions of an affected generosity, but as the sincere expressions of a heart overflowing with brotherly love. For, fully persuaded, *that a house divided against itself cannot stand*, Mr. Fletcher was anxious to maintain a state of uninterrupted peace and unanimity in the household of God. As a fellow-citizen with the saints, he considered himself essentially interested in the weal or woe of his brethren, and was constantly observed, either mingling his tears with those who wept, or triumphing in the joy of such as rejoiced before God. Hence he could not behold, as an unconcerned spectator, the distress to which the church was exposed in his day, and the dissensions, by which it was torn in pieces; but rather as a true disciple of that gracious Redeemer, who *loved the church, and gave himself for it*. He was engaged, indeed, in those great debates, which disturbed the tranquillity of the religious world for so long a season; and, during those sharp contests, he appeared, it is true, in the very front of the battle. To all who knew him, however, it was sufficiently evident, that he entered not into the conflict with any design, either to signalize himself, or to establish the reputation of a party, but rather to confirm and build up

the church in her most holy faith. Zeal for God constrained him, upon this occasion, to take up a cross, which he regarded as almost insupportable ; and when he came forth from the retirement he loved, in the character of a public disputant, he came forth with the language of the evangelical prophet in his mouth : *For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof, as a lamp that burneth.* His attacks were constantly directed not against the leaders of any particular sect, but against the errors of every sect : and, in carrying on these attacks, he manifested a degree of impartiality and candour, which few have ever discovered in similar circumstance. While he cautiously exposed the apparent mistakes of his opponents, he put his own religious opinions to a fiery trial ; and whatever was unable to stand the severest test, he considered as no better than vanity and dross. Like the Apostle Paul, *he could do nothing knowingly against the truth, but for the truth :* and on whatever side this was discoverable, he saluted it with all that respect and veneration, which effectually distinguished him as a lover of Truth.

Through the whole contest he treated his opponents with much deference and regard, cordially acknowledging them as brethern in Christ, and constantly mentioning them as persons, whose piety and zeal could scarcely be paralleled. He ardently desired to embrace them, as his *Companions in the kingdom and patience* of their common Master ; and, as a standing proof of his pacific disposition toward them, one of the last pieces he published in the controversy was entitled *The Reconciliation :* a work, in which he urged the strongest motives to charity and concord, endeavouring, by every possible mean, to prevail with the professing part of the world, to *keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* The following passage selected from that work, will sufficiently evince his utter de-

testation of party-spirit and divisions in the Christian Church. ‘Come with me, my Calvinian and Arminian Brethren, to the Temple of Peace, where *the Lord’s banner over you will be love, and his mercy will comfort you on every side. If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies ; fulfil ye the joy of all, who wish Zion’s prosperity : be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. He is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ ; in whom there is neither Greek nor Jew, bond nor free, neither Calvinist nor Arminian, but Christ is All in All. My heart is enlarged : for a recompence in the same, be ye also enlarged, and grant me my humble, perhaps my dying request : reject not my plea for peace. If it be not strong, it is earnest ; for (considering my bodily weakness,) I write at the hazard of my life ; animumque in vulnere pono.’*

“Such was the catholic spirit discovered by this great man, in the warmest of his religious contentions ; such was the forbearance and affection, which he constantly exercised toward the most zealous of his opposers ; and such was his anxious concern, that every *inferior* name might be lost in that *exalted* Name, by which alone the world can be saved, saying, in the language of his Master, *Whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

In the meantime, however, he was far from betraying what he knew to be the Truth, or from manifesting any backwarkness to stand forth in its defence. “Truth,” says our Author,* “although she has many professed admirers, yet seldom finds a steady follower, and still less frequently a resolute defender. Without a solid understanding, an upright heart, and an unconquerable resolution, no

* Portrait, page 220.

man is properly qualified to maintain the rights of truth. He that is void of understanding, will never discover the worth of truth; he that is destitute of an upright heart, will feel but little attachment to truth, notwithstanding all her worth, while he, that is of an irresolute temper, will rather desert her standard, than suffer in her cause. Balaam was eminently distinguished by a spirit of discernment, but was destitute of an upright heart: Peter was possessed of an upright heart, but betrayed, on a memorable occasion, the want of an undaunted spirit; Saul, the pharisee, though remarkable for his uprightness and resolution, was miserably defective with respect to spiritual discernment; while Paul, the apostle, uniting in his character these several qualifications, became a zealous and steady defender of truth." It would be difficult to say, in which of these three qualifications Mr. Fletcher principally excelled; so happily proportioned was his sincerity to his discernment, and the firmness of his resolution to the uprightness of his heart! Thus remarkably furnished for the service of truth, he engaged himself in her cause, with an extraordinary degree of activity and zeal, earnestly desiring to see the uttermost parts of the earth illuminated with her beams, and the inhabitants of every country submitting to her authority. Wherever he came, he exalted her honours, and bore testimony to her matchless worth, making mention of *her ways, as ways of pleasantness*, and recommending *her paths, as paths of peace*.

“Whenever he saw spiritual truth triumphant, he rejoiced at the sight, *as one that findeth great spoil*; when he beheld her despised and rejected, he cheerfully shared her disgrace, and suffered in her cause. If her excellencies were at any time obscured by the misconceptions of the ignorant, he endeavoured to dissipate that obscurity, and exhibit her to the world in all her native lustre. If he saw her assaulted, he voluntarily exposed himself to danger in her defence: and whether the attack was made by mista-

ken friends, or inveterate enemies, he opposed it, as a man wholly proof against the undue influence of prejudice or interest, resentment or respect. In all his struggles for truth, he contended with confidence, but without obstinacy; with zeal, but not with bitterness; *in meekness instructing those that opposed themselves, if God, peradventure, might give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.* If the error he discovered was merely of a circumstantial nature, he pursued it with less severity; but if it was a fundamental error, he opposed it with a holy vehemence, giving it no quarter, till it was allowed by the candid and impartial, to be absolutely untenable: in the meantime, making it abundantly manifest, by his modest and courteous deportment, that he contended, not for the acquisition of victory, but for the exaltation of truth.

“ His ardent attachment to Divine Truth would not permit him to hear, in silence, the least insinuation, that might be thrown out to the disadvantage of Christianity. And in some companies, he thought it necessary to call upon the avowed despisers of Revelation, either to establish or retract the charges they had exhibited against the religion of Jesus. In England he very rarely mixed with persons of an irreligious conversation; but in his passage through other countries, he was frequently obliged to associate with men of a character altogether opposite to his own. In Italy, France, and Holland, he has taken his seat, with a steady composure, among Deists, Socinians, and Freethinkers; and after vainly endeavouring, in the politest manner, to introduce a conversation respecting Divine truth, has been often constrained to signify his desire of exchanging an argument with any gentleman in company, on the subject of Natural Religion. As these offers were always made in the most graceful terms, they were frequently accepted in a becoming manner, when a conversation has usually taken place, sufficiently interesting to excite the curiosity and engage the attention of every person

present. Upon every occasion of this nature, he appeared perfectly dispassionate and recollected, discovering an accurate acquaintance with every part of his subject, and never failing to foil his strongest antagonists upon their own ground. And in the close of every such debate, he was careful to recapitulate the principal arguments which had been advanced by either party, in the course of the contest; ascribing the victory he had obtained to the irresistible power of Truth, and enumerating the special advantages of Revealed, over Natural Religion."

We have noticed Mr. Fletcher's affection for the children of God: we must now observe, that while he loved them with a pure heart fervently, in proportion as he conceived they severally exhibited the excellencies and perfections of their Creator; he looked upon every individual of the human race, with emotions of benevolence and charity. For in all he discovered some traces of the image of the Deity, although defaced and obscured, which merited attention even in ruins. His love was free and unconfined, uninterrupted by prejudice, and unmixed by suspicion.* He had a place in his large and generous heart for persons of every description. He considered himself as related to the inhabitants of every nation, and connected with the members of every church; appearing, in every sense, as a citizen of the world, honouring the whole human race as the offspring of God, and encircling them all with the arms of brotherly affection, however distinguished from one another by situation or endowments, opinions or habits. He never left his beloved retirement, which was rendered sacred by converse with the highest object of his affections, unless he was called abroad upon errands of kindness and mercy. And whenever he came forth into the world, he looked upon all around him, with an air of benignity, and a glow of affection, which strongly mark-

* Portrait, page 121.

ed him as a follower of that God, *who is loving unto every man, and whose mercy is over all his works.*

“ Instead of inquiring with the lawyer in the Gospel, *Who is my neighbour?* he acted like the good Samaritan, treating even the stranger and the outcast, as he journeyed through life, with the kindness of a neighbour, the sympathy of a friend, and the tenderness of a brother. While self-love may be likened to a stagnant lake, the charity of this self-renouncing pastor may be fitly compared to a copious river, which, after enriching a multitude of towns, villages, and hamlets, and after fertilizing a thousand fields, loses itself in the bosom of the ocean, from whence it sprung. And here it may be properly observed, that this noble current was sufficiently deep to sustain any burden, and sufficiently rapid to force itself a passage through every obstruction.

“ His love was *without dissimulation, not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.* It was larger than his largest professions, and appeared on different occasions, in a vast variety of forms; in condescension, in compassion, in hospitality, in forbearance, in kindness, and in liberality. By these benevolent dispositions, together with those affectionate labours, in which he was constantly employed, he gave the most convincing proofs, that he was *rooted and grounded* in that universal love, which is *the fulfilling of the whole law.*”

The source of all these graces, which shone so conspicuous in him, was his Piety. “ But this* was of too exalted a nature to admit of any adequate description. They who saw him only at a distance, revered him as a man of God; while they who enjoyed a nearer acquaintance with him, were held in a state of constant admiration at his attainments in the divine life. He appeared to enjoy an uninterrupted fellowship with the Father, and with his Son

* Portrait, page 35.

Jesus Christ. Every day was with him a day of solemn self-dedication, and every hour an hour of praise or prayer. Naturally formed for pre-eminence, no common degrees of grace were sufficient to satisfy his unbounded desires. He towered above the generality of Christians, *earnestly desiring the best gifts*, and anxious to walk in the *most excellent way*. While others are content to taste the living stream, he traced that stream to its source, and lived at the fountain-head of blessedness. He was familiar with invisible objects and constantly walked as in the presence of God. To those who were much conversant with him, he appeared as an inhabitant of a better world; so perfectly dead was he to the enjoyments of the present life, and so wholly detached from its anxious cares! Wherever he was called by the providence of God, he was acknowledged as a *burning and shining light*. The common lights of christians were eclipsed before him; and even his spiritual friends could never stand in his presence, without being overwhelmed with a consciousness of their own inferiority and unprofitableness. While they have seen him rising, as it were, upon the wings of an eagle, they have been confounded at their inability to pursue his flight; and while he has given way to the emotions of his fervent love, they have blushed at their own ingratitude and lukewarmness. *The candle of the Lord eminently shone upon his head, and the secret of God was upon his tabernacle. When he went out through the city, or took his seat in the company of the righteous, he was saluted with unusual reverence, and received as an angel of God. The young men saw him and hid themselves, and the aged arose and stood up. Even those who were honoured as princes among the people of God, refrained talking, and laid their hand upon their mouth. When the ear heard him, then it blessed him; and when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him.*

“ His character was free from those inconsistencies, which are too generally observable among the professors

of Christianity. Whether he sat in the house, or whether he walked by the way; in his hours of retirement, and in his public labours, he was constantly actuated by the same spirit. When he spoke, his conversation was in heaven: and the hearts of his intimate friends still burn within them, on every recollection of the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. When he was silent,—his very air and countenance bespoke an angelic mind absorbed in the contemplation of God. When he was engaged in the ordinary actions of life, he performed them with such a becoming seriousness, that they assumed a striking and important appearance. In all the changing circumstances of life, he looked and acted like a man, whose treasure was laid up in heaven. There his affections were immovably fixed, and thitherward he was continually tending with all the powers of his soul: he spoke of it as the subject of his constant meditation, and looked to it as travellers to their appointed home. At times, when the pious breathings of his soul were too forcible to be repressed, he would break forth into expressions of adoration among his spiritual associates, and cry out, while tears of joy were bursting from his eyes,—*My God! My Saviour! Thou art mine! a wretch unworthy of thy notice! Yet thou hast visited me with thy mercy, and honoured me with thy favour! I adore thine unfathomable love! Ye, who have tasted of his grace, assist me to magnify his name.* He was an instrument always in tune: and none can tell, but those who have heard, how sweetly it would answer to the touch of him that strung it. He was an instrument of uncommon compass, and wondrously adapted to every occasion. Every breath that swept over the cords of this living lyre, drew from it some according sound: if from man, it produced strains of affection and sympathy; if from God, it called forth higher sounds of gratitude and devotion. His piety suffered no event to pass by unimproved. Every object led him into

the presence of God, and every occurrence gave rise to a train of serious reflections."

One thing more, particularly noticed by the Reverend Author of these excellent traits of our pious Friend's character, is the perseverance of his piety, zeal, and diligence to the end of his life. "It is no unusual thing," he observes,* "to behold the professors of christianity divested, at a maturer age, of that burning love, and that irresistible zeal, by which they were peculiarly distinguished in early life. Of the many thousands, who have in every age, begun the sacred race with an apparent determination to obtain the prize, the greater part, either wearied with the inconveniencies of the way, or deluded by the suggestions of the world, if they have not altogether forsaken the path of life, have proceeded in it with so much irresolution and weakness, that, at the conclusion of their course, it has remained a matter of much uncertainty, whether they have reached, or fallen short of the mark of their high calling. With Mr. Fletcher it was wholly the reverse. The resolution that at first engaged him to enter upon the christian course, appeared, not only without any diminution, but with increasing vigour, through the several stages of his rapid progress. He outran the most zealous of his companions, he overtook many who were steadily persevering in *the path of life*, and appeared at the head of those who were pressing after the highest attainable state of sanctity and grace. From the commencement, to the conclusion of his pilgrimage, there was never once perceived in him the least imaginable tendency to a loitering or lukewarm disposition: if he was not every moment actually upon the stretch after spiritual improvement, he was observed, at least, with *his loins girded, his shoes on his feet, and his staff in his hand*. The fervour of his spirit was a silent, but sharp reproof to the negligent and unfaithful: and so perfectly averse was he to every species of

* Portrait, page 327.

trifling, that no man of a light or indolent spirit could possibly associate with him for any length of time.

“ As he approached the end of his course, the graces he had kept in continual exercise for so long a season, became more illustrious and powerful : his faith was more assured, his hope more lively, his charity more abundant, his humility more profound, and his resignation more complete. *Planted, at an early age, in the house of the Lord, he flourished in the courts of our God through all the remaining years of his life, growing up like a palm-tree, and spreading abroad like a cedar in Lebanon :* and if the *fruit* that he brought forth in his age was not more plenteous, than that which he had produced in former years, (which was surely impossible,) yet it was more happily matured, and more equally distributed among his luxuriant branches. To those who were intimately conversant with him at this season, he appeared as a scholar of the highest attainments in the school of Christ; or rather, as a regenerate spirit in his latest state of preparation for the kingdom of God : and this extraordinary eminence in grace was discoverable in him, not from any high external professions of sanctity, but from that *meekness of wisdom, that purity of conversation, and that lowliness of mind,* by which his whole carriage was uniformly distinguished.

“ For some years before his decease, he expressed a continual desire, that his labours and his life might be terminated together : and with respect to his resigned prayer in this matter, the assertion of the Psalmist was strikingly verified,—*The Lord will fulfil the desire of them that fear him.* His zeal for the glory of God appeared with undiminished fervour, and his diligence in filling up the duties of his vocation, continued with unabating vigour, till within a few days of his removal into Abraham’s bosom. Instead of outliving his zeal and diligence in the best of causes, it may truly be said, that he fell an honourable martyr to his indefatigable exertions in the service of the

Church; since it was from the beds of the diseased and the dying, that he brought away with him the infectious distemper, which put so unexpected a period to his labours. But even after the symptoms of this distemper had appeared sufficiently alarming to awaken the apprehensions of his friends, they were unable either to damp his zeal, or to control his activity: his declining sun was to set, not in obscurity and confusion, but with that mild and steady lustre, which might betoken something of its future glory."

HIS CHARACTER, BY MRS. FLETCHER, AND OTHERS.

HAVING in the preceding chapter, presented the reader with the character of Mr. Fletcher, drawn by the masterly pen of the Rev. Mr. Gilpin, a near neighbour, and intimate friend, who knew him well, I shall now offer to his consideration one equally just and striking, drawn by a person still more intimate with him, and more thoroughly acquainted with his manner of life, and the most secret springs of his whole deportment. "From Mrs. Fletcher," as Mr. Wesley has observed, "he concealed nothing. They had no secrets, with regard to each other, but had indeed one house, one purse, and one heart. Before her it was his invariable rule, to *think aloud*: always to open the window in his breast. And to this we are indebted for the knowledge of many particulars, which must otherwise have been buried in oblivion."

The following are mostly her own words, for where they are clear and expressive, as they generally are, it is not judged right to alter them for altering's sake.

"Whatever he might be with regard to *Charity*," says she, "he was no less eminent for the spirit of *Faith*. Indeed he was not so much influenced by impressions, (which many mistake for faith,) as abundance of people have been:

but by a steady firm reliance upon the love, and truth, and faithfulness of God. His ardent desire was, so to believe, as to become a partaker of all the great and precious promises: to be a witness of all that mind which was in Christ Jesus. And being conscious that he must be crucified with his Master, or never reign with him, he gave himself up to Him, to lie in his hand as the passive clay. He would often say, 'It is my business in all events, to hang upon the Lord, with a sure trust and confidence, that he will order all things for the best, as to time and manner. Indeed it would be easy to be a believer, nay, in truth, there would be no room for faith, if every thing were seen here. But against hope to believe in hope; to have a full confidence in that unseen Power, which so mightily supports us in all our dangers and difficulties, this is the believing which is acceptable to God.' Sometimes when I have expressed some apprehension of an approaching trial, he would answer, 'I do not doubt but the Lord orders all wisely; therefore I leave every thing to Him.' In outward dangers, if they were ever so great, he seemed to know no shadow of fear. When I was speaking once, concerning a danger, to which we were then particularly exposed, he answered, 'I know God always gives his angels charge concerning us; therefore we are equally safe every where.'

"Not less eminent than his faith was his *Humility*. Amidst all his labours for God, and for the good of souls, he ever preserved that special grace, the making no account of his own labours. He held himself and his own abilities, in very low esteem: and seemed to have that word continually before his eyes, 'I am an unprofitable servant.' And this humility was so rooted in him, as to be moved by no affront. I have known many, even of the most provoking kind offered him; but he received them as his *proper portion*: being so far from desiring the honour which cometh of men, that he took pleasure in being little and unknown." "Perhaps it might appear," ob-

serves Mr. Wesley, "from some passages of his life, that in this he even leaned to an extreme. For genuine humility does not require, that any man should *desire to be despised*. Nay, we are to avoid it, so far as we possibly can, consistently with a good conscience; for that direction, *Let no man despise thee*, concerns every man as well as Timothy."

"It is rare," proceeds Mrs. Fletcher, "to meet with an eminent person who can bear an equal. But it was his choice and his delight, to prefer every one to himself. And this he did in so free and easy a manner, that in him it appeared perfectly natural. He never willingly suffered any unkindness shewn to him to be mentioned again: and if it were, he generally answered, 'O let it drop; we will offer it in silence to the Lord.' And indeed the best way of bearing crosses, is to present them all in silence to God.

"From this root of humility sprung such *patience*, as I wish I could either describe or imitate. It produced in him, a mind most ready to embrace every cross with alacrity and pleasure. For the good of his neighbour, nothing seemed hard, nothing wearisome. Sometimes I have been grieved to call him out of his study two or three times in an hour: especially when he was engaged in composing some of his most important works. But he would answer, with his usual sweetness, 'O my dear, never mind that. It matters not, if we are but ready to meet the will of God. It is conformity to the will of God that alone makes an employment excellent.' He never thought any thing too mean, but sin; he looked on nothing else as beneath his character. If he overtook a poor man or woman on the road, with a burden too heavy for them, he did not fail to offer his assistance to bear part of it. And he would not easily take a denial. This proof indeed of condescension and kindness he has frequently given.

"In bearing pain he was most exemplary, and continued to be more and more so to the last. Nor was his descend-

ing to the capacities of the ignorant, the least remarkable, or least humbling part of his ministry. And he had a most resolute courage in the reproof of sin. To daring sinners, it is well known he was a Son of Thunder; and no worldly considerations were regarded, whenever he believed God had given him a message to deliver to any of them.

“ One considerable part of humility is, to know our own places, and stand therein. Every member has its peculiar appointment in the human body, where the wise Creator has placed it. And it is well that each should continue in its place. For every dislocated bone gives pain, and causes disorder, and must continue so to do, till it be replaced in its proper socket. Just so, every dislocated affection or disposition must occasion disorder, and give pain to the soul, till it be restored to its own place; till it be entirely fixed on, or resigned to God; till a person give his whole self to the disposal of Infinite Wisdom. This is the proper place of every rational creature: and in this place he invariably stood. Whatever he believed to be the will of God, he resolutely performed, though it were to pluck out a right eye, or to lay his Isaac on the altar. When it appeared that God called him to any journey, he immediately prepared for it, without the least hesitation: although for the last three or four years of his life, he hardly ever travelled to any considerable distance, without feeling some tendency to a relapse into his former disorder. And it was generally some weeks after his return, before he recovered his usual strength.”

His disengagedness from the world, and love of the poor, Mrs. Fletcher joins together. “ Never,” says she, did I behold any one more dead to the things of the world. His treasure was above: and so was his heart also. He always remembered that admonition of the Apostle, *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the things of this life.* It was his constant endeavour to preserve

a mind free and disencumbered: and he was exceeding wary of undertaking any business that might distract and hurry it. Nevertheless, in his worldly concerns, knowing himself to be a steward for God, he would not, through carelessness, waste one penny. He likewise judged it to be his bounden duty to demand what he knew to be his right. And yet he could well reconcile this with that word, *He that will have thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.* But whether he had less or more, it was the same thing upon his own account: as he had no other use for it, after frugally supplying his own wants, and the wants of those dependant on him, but to spread the gospel, and assist the poor.* And he frequently said he was never happier than when he had given away the last penny he had in his house. If at any time I had gold in my drawers, it seemed to afford him no comfort. But if he could find a handful of small silver, when he was going out to seek the sick, he would express as much pleasure over it, as a miser would in discovering a bag of hid treasure. He was never better pleased with my employment, than when he had set me to prepare food or physic for the poor. He was hardly able to relish his dinner, if some sick neighbour had not a part of it; and sometimes, when any one of them was in want, I could not keep the linen in his drawers. On Sundays he provided for numbers of people, who came from a distance to hear the word: and his house, as well as his heart, was devoted to their convenience. To relieve them that were afflicted in body or mind, was the delight of his heart. Once a poor man, who feared God, being brought

* The income of his living was not on an average quite 500 dollars a year. The smallness of this sum will appear less surprizing when the Reader is informed, that the principal land-holders in Mr. Fletcher's parish, were members of the Quaker Society, who it is well known pay no Church rates in England but by constraint, therefore, to avoid contention with a people with whom he lived in peace and love, Mr. Fletcher cheerfully relinquished his legal privilege. J. K.

into great difficulties, he took down all the pewter from the kitchen shelves, saying, ‘ This will help *you*: and I can do without it: a wooden trencher will serve *me* just as well.’ In epidemic and contagious distempers, when the neighbours were afraid to nurse the sick, he has gone from house to house, seeking some that were willing to undertake that office. And when none could be found, he has offered his service to sit up with them himself. But this was at his first coming to Madeley. At present there is in many, (and has been for many years,) a most ready mind, to visit and relieve the distressed.

“ He thoroughly complied with that advice,—

‘ Give to all something; to a good, poor man.
Till thou change hands, and be where he began.’

I have heard him say, that when he lived alone in his house, the tears have come into his eyes, when five or six insignificant letters have been brought him, at three or four pence a-piece; and perhaps he had only a single shilling in the house, to distribute among the poor to whom he was going. He frequently said to me, ‘ O Polly, can we not do without beer? Let us drink water, and eat less meat. Let our necessities give way to the extremities of the poor.’

“ But with all his generosity and charity, he was strictly careful to follow the advice of the apostle, *Orve no man any thing*. He contracted no debt. While he gave all he had, he made it a rule to pay ready money for every thing; believing this was the best way to keep the mind unincumbered and free from care. Meanwhile his substance, his time, his strength, his life, were devoted to the service of the poor. And last of all he gave *me* to them. For when we were married, he asked me solemnly, ‘ Whether I was willing to marry his parish?’ And the first time he led me among his people in this place, he said, I have not married this wife only for myself, but for *you*. I

asked her of the Lord for *your* comfort, as well as my own.

“ All his life, as well as during his illness, particularly at Newington and Brislington, (as has been largely related,) he was *grateful*, in a very high degree, to those who conferred the least benefit upon him, yea, or even endeavoured so to do.”

It will be pleasing and edifying to the reader to see how he was wont to express his gratitude on these occasions. To one he says, “ Your absence made me postpone thanking you for all the kindness you showed me when at Bristol; and to lay me under still greater obligations, you have sent me a hamper of wine, and broad cloth; as if it were not enough to adorn and cover the outside, but you must also warm and nourish the inside of the body.

“ I have now the opportunity of telling you, without further delay, that you should have a little mercy on your friends, in not loading them with such burdens of beneficence. How would you like to be loaded with kindnesses you could not return? Were it not for a little of that grace, which makes us not only willing, but happy to be nothing, to be obliged and dependant, your present would make me quite miserable. But the mountains of divine mercy, which press down my soul, have inured me to bear the hills of brotherly kindness.

“ I submit to be clothed and nourished by you, as your servants are, without having the happiness of serving you. To yield to this is as hard to friendship, as to submit to be saved by free grace, without one scrap of our own righteousness. However, we are allowed, both in religion and friendship, to ease ourselves by thanks and prayers, till we have an opportunity of doing it by actions. I thank you then, my dear friend, and pray to God that you may receive his benefits as I do yours. Your broad-cloth can lap me round two or three times; but the mantle of divine love, the precious fine robe of Jesus's righteousness, can

cover your soul a thousand times. The cloth, fine and good as it is, will not keep out a hard shower; but that garment of salvation will keep out even a shower of brimstone and fire. Your cloth will wear out, but that fine linen, the righteousness of the saints, will appear with a finer lustre the more it is worn. The moth may fret your present, or the tailor may spoil it in cutting; but the present which Jesus has made you, is out of the reach of the spoiler, and ready for present wear; nor is there any fear of cutting it out wrong; for it is seamless, woven from the top throughout, with the white unbroken warp of thirty three years perfect obedience, and the red west of his agony and sufferings unto death.

“ Now, my dear friend, let me beseech you to accept of this heavenly present, as I accept of your earthly one. I did not send you one farthing to purchase it; it came unsought, unasked, unexpected, as the Seed of the Woman; and it came just as I was sending a tailor to buy me some cloth for a new coat; immediately I stopped him, and I hope when you next see me, it will be in your present. Now let Jesus see you in his. Walk in white, adorn his gospel, while he beautifies you with the garment of salvation. Accept it freely: wear no more the old rusty coat of nature and self-righteousness,—send no more to have it patched,* make your boast of an unbought suit, and love to wear the livery of Jesus. You will then love to do his work; it will be your meat and drink to do it; and that you may be vigorous in doing it, as I shall take a little of your wine for my stomach’s sake, take you a good deal of the wine of the kingdom for your soul’s sake. Every promise of the gospel is a bottle, a cask, that has a spring within, and can never be drawn out. But draw the cork of unbelief, and drink abundantly, O beloved, nor be afraid of

* Mr. Fletcher’s generous friend had kindly requested him not to send his coat to be patched; hence this ingenious and affectionate reply.

intoxication ; and if an inflammation follow, it will only be that of divine love.

“ I beg you will be more free with the heavenly wine, than I have been with the earthly, which you sent me. I have not tasted it yet, but whose fault is it? Not your’s certainly, but mine. If you do not drink daily spiritual health and vigour out of the cup of salvation, whose fault is it? Not Jesus’s, but your’s; for he gives you his righteousness to cover your nakedness, and the consolations of his Spirit to cheer and invigorate your soul. Accept and use. Wear, drink, and live to God. That you may heartily and constantly do this, is my sincere prayer for you and your’s.”

To the same, he writes at another time. “ I thank you, my dear friend, for all your favours, and all your attention to me. Your more than fraternal love covers me with confusion, and fills me with acknowledgments. What returns shall I make? I will drink the cup of thanksgiving, and I will bless the name of the Lord. I will thank my dear friend, and wish him all the temporal blessings he has conferred upon me, and all those spiritual ones, which were not in his power to bestow. Live in health; live piously; live content; live in Christ; live for eternity; live to make your wife, your children, your servants, your neighbours happy, as far as their happiness depends on you; and may the God of all grace give back a hundred-fold to you and your dear wife, all the kindnesses with which you have loaded me! The Lord make you happy as a father, a master, and a christian! The God of peace be with you without interruption!”

To another, his language on some similar occasion is: “ Your kind letter I received in the beginning of the week, and your kind present at the end of it. For both I heartily thank you; nevertheless I could wish it were your last present, for I find it more blessed to give than to receive, and in point of the good things of this life, my body does

not want much, and I can do with what is more common, and cheaper than the rarities you ply me with.

“Your bounty upon bounty reminds me of the repeated mercies of our God. They follow one another as wave does wave at sea; and all to waft us to the pleasing shore of confidence and gratitude, where we can not only cast anchor near, but calmly stand on the Rock of Ages, and defy the rage of tempests.”

“Another uncommon talent which God had given him,” says Mrs. Fletcher, “was a peculiar *sensibility* of spirit. He had a temper the most feeling of any I ever knew. Hardly a night passed over, but some part of it was spent in groans for the souls and bodies committed to his care.* I dreaded his hearing, either of the sins or sufferings of any of his people, before the time of his going to bed, know-

* The following account may be relied upon, I received it in the Parish of Madeley, from one who well knew the circumstances, and simply related the facts as they were. A young person in his Parish who had been brought by his ministry from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, being afflicted with a consumptive disorder, Mr. Fletcher tenderly and constantly visited her. The young woman lay sick at her Father's, a place not less than four miles from Mr. Fletcher's dwelling. Yet such was his cheerful attention to this house of mourning—Such his ardent desire (weak and feeble as he sometimes was himself, by labours, by watchings and fastings) to comfort the afflicted, and help them to bear their burdens, that through wet and dry, cold and heat, (generally on foot) would this affectionate Pastor visit them, and when this young woman was near death, Mr. Fletcher desired her parents to send for him, that he might, in her dying chamber, help her to praise God and shout Victory! Victory! through the blood of the Lamb. The event of her death happened in the night, and immediately on the arrival of the Messenger at the Vicarage, Mr. Fletcher made himself ready and set out on this errand of mercy. A considerable quantity of rain had just before fallen, and through the badness of the road, and the haste he made, he lost first one, then the other of his shoes, but “As nothing is hard to love,” his bare feet carried him to the spot in time to witness how a Christian can triumph over death! and how “to him that believeth all things are possible.” Reader, go thou and imitate this most excellent man. J. K.

ing how strong the impressions would be on his mind, chasing sleep from his eyes.

“ And yet I have heard him speak of a time, twelve or fourteen years ago, when he was greatly tempted to think that he was not sensible enough of the afflictions of his fellow-creatures. He thought Christ bore our infirmities, and carried our sorrows: but, said he, ‘ I have not that Christ-like temper: I do not bear the sorrows of others.’ After being for some time buffeted with this temptation, he prayed that a measure of this spirit might be given to him. Not long after, as he was visiting a poor sick family, so lively a sense of their affliction on a sudden fell upon his mind, that he could scarce get home. As soon as he sat down in his house, his soul was penetrated with such a sense of the woes of mankind, as utterly depressed and overcame him, and drank up his spirits, insomuch that he could not help himself, nor move from one chair to another; and he was no more able to walk or help himself, than a newborn child. At the same time he seemed to lose the use of his memory, and of all his faculties. He thought, What is this? Is it a disease? Is it a stroke of the palsy? Rather is it not an answer to my own ill-judged, though well-intended prayer? Did I not ask a burden unsuitable to a finite, and capable of being borne only by an infinite Being! He remained some hours in this situation. Then it came into his mind, If this be a purely natural event, the will of the Lord be done! But if it be the answer to an improper prayer, God will answer again by removing it. He cried to the Lord, and was restored to strength both of body and mind.

“ When we were at Leeds, in the year 1784, I had another proof of the tender sensibility of his heart. O how deeply was he affected for the welfare of his brethren! When any little disputes arose between them, his inmost soul groaned under the burden. And by two or three o’clock in the morning, I was sure to hear him breathing

out prayers for the peace and prosperity of Sion. When I observed to him, I was afraid it would hurt his health, and wished him to sleep more, he would answer, ‘O Polly, the cause of God lies near my heart!’

Toward *me*, his tenderness was exerted in its utmost extent. My soul, my body, my health, my ease, and comfort, were his daily study. We had no thought, either past or present, which we purposely concealed from each other. My spiritual advancement was his constant endeavour; and to this he was continually stirring me up, inviting me to walk more closely with God: urging that thought, ‘O my dear, let us pray for dying grace; for we shall not be long here.’ His temporal affairs he committed solely to me, though he was always ready to assist me in the smallest matters.

“ One article more remains to be spoken of, namely, his *Communion with God*. Although he enjoyed this, more or less, at all times, and in all places, yet I have frequently heard him observe, that the seasons of his closest communion were always in his own house, or in the church: usually in the latter. It is much to be lamented, that we have no account of it from his own pen. It was his constant endeavour to set the Lord before him, and to maintain an uninterrupted sense of his presence. In order to this, he was slow of speech, and had the greatest government of his words. Indeed he both acted, spoke, and thought, as under the eye of God. And thus he remained unmoved in all occurrences; at all times, and on every occasion possessing inward recollection. Nor did I ever see him diverted therefrom, on any occasion whatever, either going out or coming in, whether by ourselves or in company. Sometimes he took his journies alone: but above a thousand miles I have travelled with him: during which neither change of company, nor of place, nor the variety of circumstances which naturally occur in travelling, ever seemed to make the least difference in his

firm attention to the presence of God. To preserve this uniform habit of soul, he was so watchful and recollected, that to such as were unexperienced in these things, it might appear like insensibility. But no one could converse in a more lively and sensible manner, even on natural things, when he saw it was to the glory of God. He was always striving to raise his own and every other spirit, to a close and immediate intercourse with God. And I can say with truth, all his union with me was so intermingled with prayer and praise, that every employment, and every meal was, as it were, perfumed therewith."

HIS DEATH.

"SOME weeks before he was taken ill, (says Mrs. Fletcher,) he mentioned to me a peculiar manifestation of love, which he received in his own house, with the application of those words, *Thou shalt walk with me in white.* He added, It is a little thing so to hang upon God by faith, as to feel no departure from him, and no raising in the heart against him. This does not satisfy me. And I sometimes find such gleams of light and love, such wafts as it were, of the heavenly air, so powerful as if they would just then take my soul with them to glory! But *I am not filled.* I want to be filled with all the fullness of God. In conformity to these sentiments, when he was in his last illness, he expressed himself thus, '*I am filled, most sweetly filled.*' This conveyed much to my mind, as I understood by it the accomplishment of his large desires.

"Sometime before the beginning of his last sickness, he was peculiarly penetrated with a sense of the nearness of eternity. There was scarce an hour in which he was not calling upon us to drop every thought and every care, that we might attend to nothing but the drinking deeper into God. We spent much time in wrestling with God,

and were led in a peculiar manner to abandon our whole selves, our souls and bodies into the hands of God ; ready to do, and willing to suffer whatever was well-pleasing to Him.

“ And now the time drew near, when his faith was to be called to its last grand exercise. A little before this, being on his knees in prayer for light, whether he should go to London or not? The answer to him seemed to be, ‘ Not to London, but to thy grave.’ When he acquainted me with this, he said, with a heavenly smile, ‘ Satan would represent it to me as something dreadful, enforcing those words, *‘ The cold grave ! the cold grave !’* On the Sunday following, (I think it was the next day,) that anthem was sung in the church, *‘ The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in green pastures, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. He shall convert my soul, and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil ; for thou art with me, thy rod and staff shall comfort me. Thou shalt prepare a table before me, against them that trouble me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.*

“ In his return home, he observed in how uncommon a degree these words had been blest to his soul. And from that very time I do not remember to have seen in him any, the least marks of temptation. He shewed an unusual cheerfulness and liveliness in every part of his work, and seemed to increase in strength of body, as well as in strength of soul. Truly it was to him according to his faith. He *feared no evil*, and *his cup was filled* with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

“ On Thursday, August 4, he was employed in the work of God, from three in the afternoon till nine at night. When he came home, he said, ‘ I have taken cold,’ but seemed not to regard it. He was far from well on Friday

and Saturday ; but was uncommonly drawn out in prayer. On Saturday night he was abundantly worse, and his fever appeared very strong. I begged that he would by no means think of going to church in the morning. But he told me it was the will of the Lord ; in which case I never dared to persuade."

The Rev. Mr. Gilpin (as he has informed us) " called upon him in the morning, with an earnest request, that he would permit him, if not to take the whole of his duty on that day, at least to share it with him. But this he would by no means be prevailed upon to suffer, assuring him, with an air of holy confidence, that God would sufficiently strengthen him to go through the duties of the day. This was his last appearance in public : and several who were present upon this memorable occasion, were affected beyond all description, with the melancholy circumstances of the day. He opened the reading service with apparent strength ; but before he had proceeded far in it, his countenance changed, his speech began to falter, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could keep himself from fainting. Every eye was rivetted upon him, deep solicitude was painted on every face, and confused murmurs of distress ran through the whole congregation. In the midst of this affecting scene, Mrs. Fletcher was seen pressing through the croud, and earnestly entreating her dying husband no longer to attempt what appeared to be utterly impracticable. But he, as though conscious that he was engaged in his last public work, mildly refused to be entreated ; and struggling against an almost insupportable languor, constrained himself to continue the service. The windows being opened, he appeared to be a little refreshed and begun to preach with a strength and recollection that surprised all present. In the course of his sermon, the idea of his weakness was almost lost in the freedom and energy with which he delivered himself. Mercy was the subject of his discourse : and while he expatiated on

this glorious attribute of the Deity, its unsearchable extent, its eternal duration, and its astonishing effects, he appeared to be carried above all the fears and feelings of mortality. There was something in his appearance and manner that gave his word an irresistible influence upon this solemn occasion. An awful concern was awakened through the whole assembly, and every one's heart was uncommonly moved. Upon the hearts of his friends, in particular, a most affecting impression was made at this season; and what deepened that impression was the sad *pre-sentiment* which they read in each other's countenance, of their pastor's approaching dissolution.

“ After sermon he walked up to the communion-table, uttering these words, ‘ I am going to throw myself under the wings of the cherubim, before the mercy-seat.’ Here the same distressing scene was renewed with additional solemnity. The people were deeply affected while they beheld him offering up the last languid remains of a life, that had been lavishly spent in their service. Groans and tears were on every side. In going through this last part of his duty, he was exhausted again and again; but his spiritual vigour triumphed over his bodily weakness. After several times sinking on the sacramental table, he still resumed his sacred work, and cheerfully distributed, with his dying hand, the love-memorials of his dying Lord. In the course of this concluding office, which he performed by means of the most astonishing exertions, he gave out several verses of hymns, and delivered many affectionate exhortations to his people, calling upon them, at intervals, to celebrate the mercy of God in short songs of adoration and praise. And now, having struggled through a service of near four hours continuance, he was supported, with blessings in his mouth, from the altar to his chamber, where he lay for some time in a swoon, and from whence he never walked into the world again.

“ After this, (proceeds Mrs. Fletcher,) he dropt into a sleep for some time, and, on waking, cried out with a pleasant smile, ‘ Now, my dear, thou seest I am no worse for doing the Lord’s work. He never fails me when I trust in Him.’ Having eaten a little dinner, he dozed most of the evening, now and then waking with the praises of God in his mouth. At night his fever returned, but it was not violent; and yet his strength decreased amazingly. On Monday and Tuesday we had a little paradise together. He lay on a couch in the study; and though often changing posture, was sweetly pleasant, and frequently slept a good while together. When he was awake, he delighted in hearing me read hymns, and treatises on faith and love. His words were all animating, and his patience beyond expression. When he had a very nauseous medicine to take, he seemed to enjoy the cross, according to a word which he was used often to repeat, ‘ We are to seek a perfect conformity to the will of God; and leave him to give us pleasure or pain, as it seemeth him good.’

“ I asked him Whether he had any directions to give me, if he should be taken from me? since I desired to form my whole life thereby. He replied, ‘ No, not by *mine*: the Holy Ghost shall direct thee. I have nothing particular to say.’ I said, Have you any conviction, that God is about to take you? He said, ‘ No: only I always see death so inexpressibly near, that we both seem to stand on the verge of eternity.’ While he slept a little, I besought the Lord, if it were his good pleasure, to spare him to me a little longer. But my prayer seemed to have no wings: and I could not help mingling continually therewith, Lord give me perfect resignation! This uncertainty made me tremble, lest God was going to put into my hands the bitter cup, with which he threatened my husband. Some weeks before, I myself was ill of a fever, and not without danger. My husband then felt the whole parting scene, and struggled for a perfect resignation. He said, ‘ O Polly, shall

I ever see the day, when thou must be carried out to bury ! How will the little things which thy tender care has prepared for me, in every part of the house, wound and distress me ! How is it ? I think I feel jealousy ! I am jealous of the worms ! I seem to shrink at the thought of giving my dear Polly to the worms.'

" Now all these reflections returned upon my heart, with the weight of a millstone. I cried to the Lord, and these words were deeply impressed on my spirit, *Where I am, there shall my servants be, that they may behold my glory.* This promise was full of comfort to my soul. I saw that in Christ's immediate presence was our home, and that we should have our re-union, in being deeply centred in him. I received it as a fresh marriage for eternity : as such I trust for ever to hold it. All that day, whenever I thought of the expression, *to behold my glory*, it seemed to wipe away every tear, and was as the ring whereby we were joined anew.

'Awaking some time after, he said, 'Polly, I have been thinking it was Israel's fault that they asked for *signs*. We will not do so : but abandoning our whole selves to the will of God, will lie patiently before him ; assured that he will do all things well.'

" ' My dear love,' said I, ' If I have ever done or said any thing to grieve thee, how will the remembrance wound my heart if thou shouldst be taken from me !' He entreated me with inexpressible tenderness, not to allow the thought, declaring his thankfulness for our union, in a variety of words written on my heart, with the adamant pen of friendship deeply dipt in blood.

" On Wednesday he told me, he had received such a manifestation of the full meaning of those words, *God is Love*, as he could never be able to express. ' It fills my heart,' said he, ' every moment, O Polly, my dear Polly, *God is Love !* Shout ! Shout aloud ! I want a gust of praise to go to the ends of the earth ! But it seems as if I could

not speak much longer. Let us fix on a sign between ourselves. Now,' said he, (tapping me twice with his finger,) 'I mean, God is love. And we will draw each other into God. Observe! By this we will draw each other into God.'

"Sally coming in,* he cried out, 'O Sally, God is love! Shout both of you! I want to hear you shout his praise!' All this time the medical friend, who attended him diligently, hoped he was in no danger: as he had no head-ache, but much sleep without the least delirium, and an almost

* Sarah Lawrence, whose genuine piety, and amiable manners endeared her to a large circle of Christian friends, departed this transitory life, at Madeley, Salop, Dec. 3, 1800, aged 44 years, and lies buried in the same vault with Mr. Fletcher. Her epitaph on the tombstone sets forth that she was the adopted daughter of John and Mary Fletcher. Sarah Lawrence, in her last sickness, observed to Mrs. Fletcher, "We have scarce ever been parted a day these 40 years: how many hundred miles have we travelled together, and if the cold hand of death should now tear us asunder, it will not be for long, we shall have a blessed meeting in glory!" Mrs. Fletcher replied, "Little did I think to see this day; but we are called to resign ourselves to all the will of God"

"For the joy that's set before thee,
Bear a momentary pain;
Die to live the life of glory,
Suffer, with thy Lord to reign."

The following remarks were made by Mrs. Fletcher, immediately after Miss Lawrence's death: "My loss in Sarah Lawrence is unspeakable. She was a friend of a thousand; a child, and more than a child: but no arm of flesh is lasting; this is the lesson I am called to learn, and my whole dependence is on those everlasting arms which cannot fail. In the beginning of her illness, two years ago, she thought, one morning, in a dream, my dear husband stood at her bed-side, and looking on her with tender sympathy, he said, 'The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.' And I apprehend she alluded to that, when, a little before she expired, she so earnestly said, 'Tis beyond compare;' meaning, that I might tell all her friends, the present display of glory was already incomparably beyond all she had ever suffered. Well, on this I must fix my eyes, and pass my solitary days firmly anchored on that sure ground, 'Thy will be done,'

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regular pulse. So was the disease, though commissioned to take his life, restrained by the power of God.

“ On Thursday his speech began to fail. While he was able, he spoke to all that came in his way. Hearing that a stranger was in the house, he ordered her to be called up. But the uttering only two sentences made him ready to faint away. And while he had any power of speech, he would not be silent to his friendly Doctor. ‘ O Sir,’ said he, ‘ you take much thought for my body : permit me to take thought for your soul!’ When I could scarce understand any thing he said, I spoke these words, *God is love*. Instantly, as if all his powers were awakened, he broke out in a rapture, ‘ God is love ! love ! love ! O for that gust of praise ! I want to sound !’—Here his voice again failed. All this time he was much in pain, and suffered many ways : but still with such unutterable patience, as none but those that were present can conceive. If I did but name his sufferings, he would smile and make the sign.

“ On Friday, observing his body covered with spots, I felt a sword pierce through my soul. As I was kneeling by his side, with my hand in his, entreating the Lord to be with us in this tremendous hour, he strove to say many things, but could not articulate the words. All he could do was to press my hand, and frequently repeat the sign. At last he breathed out, ‘ Head of the Church, be head to my wife !’

“ When I was forced to leave him for a few moments, Sally said to him, ‘ My dear master, do you know me ?’ He replied, ‘ God will put his right hand under you.’ She added, ‘ O my dear Master, should you be taken away, what a disconsolate creature will my poor, dear Mistress be !’ He replied, ‘ God will be her all in all.’

“ He always took a peculiar pleasure in repeating or hearing those words,

‘ Jesu’s blood through earth and skies,
Mercy, free, boundless mercy cries.’

Whenever I repeated them to him, he would answer, ‘Boundless! boundless! boundless!’ He now added, though not without much difficulty,

‘Mercy’s full power I soon shall prove,
Lov’d with an everlasting love.’

“On Saturday in the afternoon, his fever seemed quite off, and a few friends standing near his bed, he reached his hand to each: and looking on a Minister, said, ‘Are you ready to assist to-morrow?’ His recollection surprised us, as the day of the week had not been named in the room. Many were of opinion, he would recover: and one of them said to him, ‘Do you think the Lord will raise you up?’ He strove to answer, and could just pronounce, ‘Raise me up in the resurr.’—Meaning in the resurrection. To another, who asked the same question, he said, ‘I leave it all to God.’

“In the evening the fever came again, and with greater violence than ever. The mucus then falling on his throat, almost strangled him. It was supposed, the same painful symptom would grow more and more violent to the last. As I felt this exquisitely, I cried to the Lord to remove it. And, glory be to his name, he did! From that time it returned no more.

As night drew on, I perceived him dying very fast. His fingers could hardly make the sign, which he scarce ever forgot: and his speech seemed quite gone. I said, ‘My dear creature, I ask not for myself: *I know thy soul*: but for the sake of others, If Jesus be very present with thee, lift up thy right hand.’ Immediately he did. ‘If the prospect of glory sweetly open before thee, repeat the sign.’ He instantly raised it again, and in half a minute, a second time. He then threw it up, as if he would reach the top of the bed. After this, his hands moved no more. But on my saying, ‘Art thou in pain?’ He answered, ‘No.’ From this time he lay in a kind of sleep, though with his

eyes open and fixt. For the most part he sat upright, against pillows, with his head a little inclining to one side. And so remarkably composed, yea triumphant was his countenance, that the least trace of death was scarce discernible in it. Eighteen hours he was in this situation, breathing like a person in common sleep. About thirty-five minutes past ten on Sunday night, August 14, his precious soul entered into the joy of his Lord, without one struggle or groan, in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

“ And here I break off my mournful story: but on my bleeding heart, the fair picture of his heavenly excellencies will be for ever drawn.”

The reader will not think me tedious, if I subjoin here, the account which the Rev. Mr. Gilpin has given of this last scene of the life of this incomparable man. “ After having manifested so much resolution and constancy in fighting *the good fight of faith*, it is no wonder, that Mr. Fletcher was permitted to *finish his course with joy*, and that the concluding scenes of his warfare were peculiarly triumphant and glorious. Equally prepared for every event, he met his last great trial with all that composure and steadiness, which had invariably distinguished him upon every former occasion of suffering. He entered *the valley of the shadow of death*, as one who feared no evil. He considered it as the high road to that incorruptible inheritance which is reserved for the saints; and, looking forward with a hope full of immortality, he saw, beyond its limited gloom, those everlasting hills of light and glory, to which his soul aspired.

“ A few days before his dissolution, he appeared to have reached that desirable point, where the last rapturous discoveries are made to the souls of dying saints. Roused, as it were, with the shouts of angels, and kindled into rapture with visions of glory, he broke into a song of holy triumph, which began and ended with the praises of God’s unfathomable love. He laboured to declare the secret ma-

nifestations he enjoyed, but his sensations were too powerful for utterance, and, after looking inexpressible things, he contented himself with calling upon all around him to celebrate and shout out that *adorable love*, which can never be fully comprehended or adequately expressed. This triumphant frame of mind was not a transient feeling, but a state that he continued to enjoy, with little or no discernible interruption, to the moment of his death. While he possessed the power of speech, he spake as one whose lips had been touched with *a live coal from the altar*; and when deprived of that power, his countenance discovered that he was sweetly engaged in the contemplation of eternal things.

“ On the day of his departure, as I was preparing to attend my own church, which was at the distance of nine miles from Madeley, I received a hasty message from Mrs. Fletcher, requesting my immediate attendance at the Vicarage. I instantly followed the messenger, and found Mr. Fletcher with every symptom of approaching dissolution upon him. I had ever looked upon this man of God with an extraordinary degree of affection and reverence; and on this afflicting occasion my heart was uncommonly affected and depressed. It was now in vain to recollect that public duty required my presence in another place: unfitted for every duty, except that of silently watching the bed of death, I found it impossible to withdraw from the solemn scene to which I had been summoned. I had received from this evangelical teacher, in days that were past, many excellent precepts with respect to *holy living*; and now I desired to receive from him, the important lesson with respect to *holy dying*. And truly this concluding lesson was of inestimable worth, since so much patience and resignation, so much peace and composure, were scarcely ever discovered in the same circumstances before.—*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!*”

“ While their Pastor was breathing out his soul into the hands of a *faithful Creator*, his People were offering up their joint supplications on his behalf in the house of God. Little, however, was seen among them on that trying occasion, but affliction and tears. Indeed it was a day much to be remembered, for the many affecting testimonies of distress, which appeared on every side. The whole village wore an air of consternation and sadness, and not one joyful song was heard among all its inhabitants:—Hasty messengers were passing to and fro with anxious inquiries and confused reports:—And the members of every family sat together in silence that day, awaiting, with trembling expectation, the issue of every hour. After the conclusion of evening service, several of the poor, who came from distant parts, and who were usually entertained under Mr. Fletcher’s roof, still lingered about the house, and seemed unable to tear themselves away from the place, without a sight of their expiring Pastor. Secretly informed of their desire, I obtained them the permission they wished. And the door of the chamber being set open, immediately before which Mr. Fletcher was sitting upright in his bed, with the curtains undrawn, unaltered in his usual venerable appearance, they slowly moved one by one along the gallery, severally pausing as they passed by the door, and casting in a look of mingled supplication and anguish. It was, indeed, an affecting sight, to behold these unfeigned mourners successively presenting themselves before the bed of their dying benefactor, with an inexpressible eagerness in their looks, and then dragging themselves away from his presence with a distressing consciousness *that they should see his face no more.*

“ And now the hour speedily approached, that was to put a solemn termination to our hopes and fears. His weakness very perceptibly increased, but his countenance continued unaltered to the last. If there was any visible change in his feelings, he appeared more at ease and more

sweetly composed, as the moment of his dismissal drew near. Our eyes were rivetted upon him in awful expectation. But, whatever we had felt before, no murmuring thought was suffered, at this interesting period, to darken the glories of so illustrious a scene. All was silence,—when the last angelic minister suddenly arrived, and performed his important commission with so much stillness and secrecy, that it was impossible to determine the exact moment of its completion. Mrs. Fletcher was kneeling by the side of her departing husband; one who had attended him with uncommon assiduity, during the last stages of his distemper, sat at his head; while I sorrowfully waited near his feet. Uncertain, whether or not he was totally separated from us, we pressed nearer, and hung over his bed in the attitude of listening attention,—his lips had ceased to move, and his head was gently sinking upon his bosom,—we stretched out our hands; but his *warfare was accomplished*, and the happy spirit had taken its everlasting flight.

“Such was the undisturbed and triumphant death of this eminently holy and laborious Pastor, who entered into rest on the evening of Sunday, August 14, 1785. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord! *They rest from their painful labours, and are followed by those exemplary works, which they considered as unworthy a place in their remembrance: they escape from the windy storm and tempest, and are brought to their desired haven: they have a right to the tree of life, they enter in through the gates into the city, and stand with everlasting acceptance in the presence of God.*

“This afflicting providence is severely felt by the survivor who has lost, at this separating stroke, whatever she had counted most valuable on this side eternity. But, while she feels all the anguish of an immediate separation from her dearest friend, she looks forward with a joyful hope of being one day united to his happy spirit, where the

pangs of parting can be known no more. Mrs. Fletcher was surrounded, upon this sad occasion, by a multitude of sincere mourners, who, while they deplored the loss of their inestimable Pastor, recollected with peculiar satisfaction, that the last years of his life had been years of abundant consolation and peace: and who now rejoice that, in his removal from among them, he left behind him a lively representative of himself, one who enters into his labours and watches over his flock, a support to the needy, a guide to the ignorant, and *a mother in Israel.*”

So far Mr. Gilpin. Mrs. Fletcher adds, “When I call to mind his ardent zeal, his laborious endeavours to seek and save the lost, his diligence in the employment of his time, his Christ-like condescension toward me, and his uninterrupted converse with heaven: I may well be allowed to add, My loss is beyond the power of words to paint. I have often gone through deep waters; but all my afflictions were nothing to this. Well: I want no pleasant prospect but upwards; nor any thing whereon to fix my hope, but immortality.

“From the time I have had the happiness and honour of being with him, every day more and more convinced me he was the Christian. I saw, I loved, in him the image of my Saviour, and thought myself the happiest of women, in the possession of the most sympathizing and heavenly friend. My sorrow bears a due proportion. But it is alleviated by that thought, *United in God we cannot be divided.* No: we are of one household still: we are joined in him as our centre; *of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.* It is said of New Testament believers, *they are come to the spirits of just men made perfect:* to the glorious privilege of communion with the Church triumphant. But this is far more apparent to the eyes of celestial spirits, than to ours, which are yet veiled with flesh and blood. Yet as there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, and as the prayers of saints still on earth

are represented by incense in the hands of the elders, I can only consider departed spirits, and ministering angels, as one innumerable company, continually surrounding us. And are they not as nearly united to their fellow-soldiers now, as when they were in the body? What should hinder? Gratitude and affection are natives of heaven, and live for ever there. Forgetfulness is a property of mortality, and drops off with the body. Therefore they that loved us in the Lord, will surely love us for ever: can any thing material interrupt the sight or presence of a spirit? Nay,

‘ Walls within walls no more the passage bar,
Than unopposing space of liquid air.’

“ On the 17th, his remains were deposited in Madeley Church-yard, amidst the tears and lamentations of thousands. The service was performed by the Rev. Mr. Hatton, Rector of Waters-Upton, whom God enabled to pay a public tribute of respect to the memory of this great man, in a funeral sermon from Hebrews xiii. 7, and to speak in a pathetic manner to the weeping flock. In the conclusion, at my request, he read the following paper.

“ As it was the desire of my beloved husband to be buried in this plain manner, so out of tenderness, he begged, that I might not be present. And in every thing I would obey him.

“ Permit me then, by the mouth of a friend, to bear an open testimony, to the glory of God, that I who have known him in the most perfect manner, am constrained to declare, that I never knew any one walk so closely in the ways of God as he did. The Lord gave him a conscience tender as the apple of an eye. And he literally preferred the interest of every one to his own.

“ He was rigidly just, and perfectly loose from attachment to the world. He shared his all with the poor, who lay so close to his heart, that, at the approach of death, when he could not speak without difficulty, he cried out,

“ *O my Poor ! What shall become of my Poor ?** He was blessed with so great a degree of humility, as is scarce to be found. I am witness how often he has rejoiced, in being treated with contempt. Indeed, it seemed the very food of his soul, to be little and unknown.

“ His zeal for souls I need not tell you. Let the labours of twenty-five years, and a martyr’s death in the conclusion, imprint it on your hearts. His diligent visiting of the sick, occasioned the fever, which, by God’s commission, tore him from you and me. And his vehement desire to take his last leave of you with dying lips and hands, gave (it is supposed) the finishing stroke, by preparing his blood for putrefaction. Thus has he lived and died your servant. And will any of you refuse to meet him at God’s right hand in that day ?

“ He walked with death always in his sight. About two months ago, he came to me and said, ‘ My dear love, I know not how it is, but I have a strange impression, death is near us, as if it were to be some sudden stroke upon one of us. And it draws out all my soul in prayer, that we may be ready.’ He then broke out, ‘ Lord, prepare the soul thou wilt call ! And O ! stand by the poor disconsolate onè that shall be left behind !’

“ A few days before his departure, he was filled with love in an uncommon manner. The same he testified as long as he had a voice, and continued to the end, by a most iamb-like patience, in which he smiled over death, and set his last seal to the glorious truths he had so long preached among you.

“ Three years, nine months, and two days, I have possessed my heavenly-minded husband. But now the sun of my earthly joys is set for ever, and my soul filled with an anguish, which only finds its consolation in a total re-

* Mrs. Fletcher has done much for the poor since Mr. Fletcher’s death. She told me once that it seemed to her as if the Lord multiplied her money in the drawer.

signation to the will of God. When I was asking the Lord, if he pleased to spare him to me a little longer, the following promise was impressed on my mind, *Where I am, there shall my servants be, that they may behold my glory.* Lord, hasten the time !”

“ There is little need,” says Mr. Wesley, “ of adding any farther character of this man of God, to the foregoing account, given by one, who wrote out of the fullness of her heart. I would only observe, that for many years I despaired of finding an inhabitant of Great-Britain, that could stand in any degree of comparison with Gregory Lopez, or Mons. de Renty. But let any impartial person judge, if Mr. Fletcher were at all inferior to them ? Did he not experience as deep communion with God, and as high a measure of inward holiness, as was experienced by either one or the other of those burning and shining lights ? And it is certain his outward light shone before men, with full as bright a lustre as theirs. I was intimately acquainted with him for thirty years. I conversed with him morning, noon, and night, without the least reserve, during a journey of many hundred miles. And in all that time, I never heard him speak an improper word, or saw him do an improper action. To conclude. Within fourscore years, I have known many excellent men, holy in heart and life. But one equal to him I have not known ; one so uniformly and deeply devoted to God. So unblamable a man in every respect, I have not found either in Europe or America. Nor do I expect to find another such on this side eternity.

“ Yet it is possible *we* may be such as he was. Let us then endeavoured to follow him, as he followed Christ.”

But some may inquire, Has not Mr. Wesley exceeded the truth in this testimony ? Has he not given a too favourable representation of the character of his friend, influenced, perhaps, by the similarity of their views respecting the great subject of general redemption and other subjects connected therewith, and by the very prompt and able

manner in which Mr. Fletcher stood forth in defence of these views, when attacked by Mr. Wesley's opponents? I shall answer these inquiries by presenting the reader with an exactly similar testimony borne by an eminent minister of Christ, whose sentiments on these points of doctrine were the reverse of those of Messrs. Wesley and Fletcher. This I shall do by inserting the following letter, which I received from a very pious and intelligent clergyman in May last, in consequence of his having lately read the first edition of this work.

“ My dear Sir,

“ Had not my time been very fully employed since I had the pleasure of seeing you in London, I should before now, have fulfilled my promise in sending you the character, which the late Rev. Mr. Venn, Vicar of Yelling, gave me of the truly apostolic Mr. Fletcher.* The testimony of Mr. Venn, is the most valuable, as there were several points of doctrine, in which he differed from Mr. Fletcher: and I believe he felt himself a good deal interested, in the support of several of those tenets, which Mr. Fletcher publicly opposed. But difference of opinion on points, respecting which, good men, probably, never will be all agreed on earth, could not close the eyes of the great and good Mr. Venn, against the extraordinary excellencies of Mr. Fletcher, and therefore he spake of him with all the rapture and affection which pre-eminent graces will always excite in the breast of a true Christian. In the following narration, I believe you will have nearly the words of Mr. Venn, as I was much impressed with his account of Mr. Fletcher, and wrote down what I remembered of it at the close of the day on which I heard it. With an expression in his countenance I shall not soon forget, making men-

* The Rev. Henry Venn, a clergyman in the Protestant Episcopal Church of England, a very holy man, and for many years a popular preacher in London. His sermon on the Cross of Christ, and his New whole duty of Man, are excellent publications. J. K.

tion of Mr. Fletcher, he exclaimed, ‘ Sir, he was a luminary ; a *luminary* did I say ?—He was a *sun*. I have known all the great men for these fifty years ; but I have known none like him. I was intimately acquainted with him, and was under the same roof with him once for six weeks ; during which time, I never heard him say a single word which was not proper to be spoken, and which had not a tendency to ‘ minister grace to the hearers.’ One time meeting him when he was very ill of an hectic fever, which he had brought upon himself by his intense labour in the Ministry, I said, ‘ I am sorry to find you so ill.’ Mr. Fletcher answered with the greatest sweetness, ‘ Sorry, Sir ! Why are you sorry ? It is the chastisement of my heavenly Father, and I rejoice in it. I love the rod of my God, and rejoice therein, as an expression of his love and affection towards me.’

“ Mr. Venn being here asked whether Mr. Fletcher might not have been imprudent in carrying his labours to such an excess, answered, ‘ His heart was in them, and he was carried on with an impetus which could not be resisted. He did not look on the work of the Ministry, as a mere duty, but it was his pleasure and delight. Tell a votary of pleasure that his course of life will impair his property and health, and finally ruin him : he will reply that he knows all this : but he must go on ; for life would not be tolerable without his pleasures. Such was the ardour of Mr. Fletcher, in the Ministry of the Gospel. He could not be happy but when employed in his great work.’ Something having escaped one in the company which seemed to bear hard upon a particular body of Christians, Mr. Venn gave a solemn caution against evil speaking in these words, ‘ Never did I hear Mr. Fletcher speak ill of any man. He would pray for those that walked disorderly, but he would not publish their faults.’

“ This, I believe, is the substance of what fell from Mr. Venn, respecting the Rev. Mr. Fletcher, and the *manner*

in which he spake, shewed that his admiration of that great and good man was raised to the highest pitch. Indeed Mr. Venn was a person peculiarly qualified to appreciate the value of Mr. Fletcher, as the ardour of his own zeal and devotion most nearly resembled that of Mr. Fletcher. He lived in very uncommon nearness to God, and as I have been informed, made a most triumphant entrance into the kingdom of glory. I am, my dear Sir, yours affectionately.—”

The following character of Mr. Fletcher appeared in the Shrewsbury Chronicle, of August, 1785.

“ On the 14th instant, departed this life, the Rev. John Fletcher, Vicar of Madeley, in this county, to the inexpressible grief and concern of his parishioners, and of all who had the happiness of knowing him. If we speak of him as a man, and a gentleman, he was possessed of every virtue, and every accomplishment, which adorns and dignifies human nature. If we attempt to speak of him as a Minister of the Gospel, it will be extremely difficult to give the world a just idea of *this great Character*. His deep learning, his exalted piety, his never-ceasing labours to discharge the important duties of his function, together with the abilities, and good effect with which he discharged those duties, are best known, and will never be forgotten in that vineyard in which he laboured. His charity, his universal benevolence, his meekness, and exemplary goodness, are scarcely equalled amongst the sons of men. Anxious, to the last moment of his life, to discharge the sacred duties of his office, he performed the service of the church, and administered the holy Sacrament to upwards of two hundred communicants, the Sunday preceding his death, confiding in that Almighty Power which had given him life, and resigning that life into the hands of him who gave it, with that composure of mind, and those joyful hopes of a happy resurrection, which ever accompany the last moments of the just.”

THE following hymn was written and sung as a petition to the Throne of Grace, for the invaluable life of the excellent John Fletcher. I was present, (says the writer,) in the church of Madeley, on the Sunday before his death, and never was witness to a scene so impressive and pathetic. Every breast felt, every countenance expressed one common sentiment. Tears, sobs, and suppressed groans, the expressive language of nature, strongly spoke how sincerely they esteemed their venerable Pastor, as more than a Father. But when the hymn was sung, it is impossible to convey an idea of the general burst of sorrow which accompanied it. Even those who had spurned his instructions, deprecated his death as a public loss, and expressed their grief with uncommon agitations; as though the consciousness of their ingratitude to that holy man, gave peculiar poignancy to their feelings. Indeed, of the thousands who knew Mr. Fletcher, few can mention his name without dwelling upon it with delight, as connected with the recollection of the fairest example they have known of pure and undefiled Religion.

A HYMN.

- 1 O Thou, before whose gracious throne,
We bow our suppliant spirits down;
View the sad breast, the streaming eye,
And let our sorrows pierce the sky.
- 2 Thou know'st the anxious cares we feel,
And all our trembling lips would tell;
Thou only canst assuage our grief,
And yield our mourning hearts relief.
- 3 Tho' we have sinn'd, and justly dread
Thy vengeance hovering o'er our head:
Yet, Power Benign! thy seavant spare,
Nor turn aside the people's prayer.
- 4 Avert the swift descending stroke,
Nor smite the shepherd of the flock,
Lest o'er the barren waste we stray,
To prowling wolves an easy prey.

- 5 Restore him, sinking to the grave;
Stretch out thine arm, make haste to save;
Back to our longing wishes give,
And bid our friend, our father, live!
- 6 Deep in our troubled thoughts he lies,
Bound to each soul by sacred ties:
Thy pitying aid, O God, impart,
Nor tear him from each bleeding heart.
- 7 Yet, if our supplications fail,
And prayers and tears cannot avail,
Condemn'd, on this benighted coast,
To mourn our faithful leader lost;—
- 8 Be thou his strength, be thou his stay;
Support him thro' the painful way;
Let thy right hand sustain his head,
And thy bright smiles illumine his bed.
- 9 Drest in the robes of heavenly state,
May thy blest angels round him wait;
Prepare his happy soul to rise,
And bear him to his native skies.

P. D.

HIS EPITAPH.

Here lies the Body of
The Rev. JOHN WILLIAM de la FLECHERE,
Vicar of Madeley,
Who was born at Nyon, in Switzerland,
September the 12th, 1729,
And finished his Course, August the 14th, 1785,
In this Village;
Where his unexampled Labours
Will long be remembered.
He exercised his Ministry for the space of
Twenty-five Years,
In this Parish,
With uncommon Zeal and Ability.
Many believed his Report, and became
His Joy and Crown of Rejoicing;
While others constrained him to take up
The Lamentation of the Prophet,
“ All the Day long have I stretched out my Hands
Unto a disobedient and gainsaying People :
Yet surely my Judgment is with the Lord,
And my Work with my God.”
“ He being dead yet speaketh.”

AN
APPEAL
TO
MATTER OF FACT
AND
COMMON SENSE,
OR, A
RATIONAL DEMONSTRATION
OF
MAN'S
CORRUPT AND LOST ESTATE.

*To the principal Inhabitants of the Parish of Madeley, in
the county of Salop,*

GENTLEMEN,

YOU are no less intitled to my private labours, than the inferior class of my parishioners. As you do not chuse to partake with them of my evening instructions, I take the liberty to present you with some of my morning meditations. May these well-meant endeavours of my pen, be more acceptable to you than those of my tongue! And may you carefully read in your closets, what you have perhaps inattentively heard in the church! I appeal to the Searcher of hearts, that I had rather impart truth than receive tithes: You kindly bestow the latter upon me; grant me, I pray, the satisfaction of seeing you favourably receive the former, from,

GENTLEMEN,

Your affectionate Minister

and obedient Servant,

J. FLETCHER.

Madeley, 1772.

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FIRST PART.

THE Doctrine of man's corrupt and lost estate is stated at large, in the words of the Prophets, Apostles, and Jesus Christ; and recapitulated in those of the Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy of the Church of England.

SECOND PART.

Man is considered as an inhabitant of the *natural* world, and his fall is proved by arguments deduced from the misery, in which he is now undeniably involved; compared with the happiness, of which we cannot help conceiving him possessed, when he came out of the hands of his gracious Creator.

A view of this misery in the following particulars.—i. The disorders of the globe we inhabit, and the dreadful scourges with which it is visited.—ii. The deplorable and shocking circumstances of our birth.—iii. The painful and dangerous travail of women.—iv. The untimely dissolution of still-born, or new-born children.—v. Our natural uncleanness, helplessness, ignorance, and nakedness.—vi. The gross darkness in which we naturally are, both with respect to God and a future state.—vii. The general rebellion of the brute creation against us.—viii. The various poisons that lurk in the animal, vegetable, and mineral world, ready to destroy us.—ix. The heavy curse of toil and sweat, to which we are liable; instances of which are given in the hard and dangerous labours of the au-

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THIRD PART.

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FIFTH PART.

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The whole is concluded with an ADDRESS to the serious *Reader*, who inquires what he must do to be saved—And with an APPENDIX, concerning the evangelical harmony, that subsists between *living faith* and *loving obedience*.

INTRODUCTION.

IN religious matters we easily run into extremes. Nothing is more common than to see people embracing one error, under the plausible pretence of avoiding another.

Many, through fear of infidelity, during the night of ignorance and storm of passion, run against the wild rocks of superstition and enthusiasm; and frequently do it with such force, that they *make shipwreck of the faith*, and have little *of godliness* left, except a few broken pieces of its *form*.

Numbers, to shun that fatal error, steer quite a contrary course: supposing themselves guided by the compass of reason, when they only follow that of prejudice, with equal violence they dash their speculative brains against the opposite rocks of deism and prophaneness; and fondly congratulate themselves on escaping the shelves of fanaticism, whilst the leaky bark of their hopes is ready to sink, and that of their morals is perhaps sunk already. Thus, both equally over-look sober, rational, heart-felt piety, that lies between those wide and dangerous extremes.

To point out the happy medium which they have missed, and call them back to the narrow path, where reason and revelation walk hand in hand, is the design of these sheets. May *the Father of lights* so shine upon the reader's mind, that he may clearly discover truth, and notwithstanding the severity of her aspect, prefer her to the most soothing error!

If he is one of those, who affect to be the warm votaries of reason, he is intreated to be a *close-thinker*, as well as a

free-thinker; and with careful attention to consider reason's dictates, before he concludes, that they agree with his favourite sentiments. He has, no doubt, too much candour, not to grant so equitable a request; too much justice, to set aside *matter of fact*; and too much good sense, to disregard *an appeal to common sense*.

Should he incline to the opposite extreme, and cry down our rational powers; he is desired to remember, *right reason*, which is that I appeal to, is a ray of *the light that enlightens every man who comes into the world*, and a beam of the eternal *Logos*, the glorious *Sun of righteousness*.

God, far from blaming a proper use of the noble faculty, by which we are chiefly distinguished from brutes, graciously invites us to the exercise of it: *Come now*, says he, *and let us reason together*. Jesus commends the unjust steward, for reasoning better upon his wrong, than the children of light upon their right principles. Samuel desires the Israelites to *stand still, that he may REASON with them before the Lord*. St. Peter charges believers to *give an answer to every one, that asketh them a REASON of their hope*. And St. Paul, who *reasoned* so conclusively himself, intimates, that *wicked men are UNREASONABLE*; and declares, that a total dedication of ourselves to God is *our REASONABLE service*: and while he challenges the vain *disputers of this world*, who would make jests pass for proofs, invectives for arguments, and sophistry for reason; he charges Titus to use, not merely *sound speech*, but, as the original also means, *SOUND REASON*, *that he who is of the contrary part may be ashamed*.

Let us then, following his advice and example, pay a due regard both to reason and revelation: So shall we, according to his candid direction, break the shackles of prejudice, *prove all things*; and, by divine grace, *hold fast that which is good*.

AN

APPEAL

TO

MATTER OF FACT, &c.

FIRST PART.

IN every religion there is a principal truth or error, which like the first link of a chain, necessarily draws after it all the parts with which it is essentially connected. This leading principle, in christianity distinguished from deism, is the doctrine of our corrupt and lost estate : for if man is not *at variance* with his Creator, what need of a *Mediator* between God and him? If he is not a *depraved, undone* creature, what necessity of so wonderful a *Restorer* and *Saviour* as the Son of God? If he is not *enslaved* to sin, why is he *redeemed* by Jesus Christ? If he is not *polluted*, why must he be *washed in the blood* of that immaculate *Lamb*? If his soul is not *disordered*, what occasion is there for such a divine *Physician*? If he is not *helpless* and *miserable*, why is he perpetually invited to secure the *assistance* and *consolations* of the Holy Spirit? and in a word, if he is not *born in sin*, why is a *new birth* so absolutely necessary, that Christ declares with the most solemn asseverations, *without it no man can see the kingdom of God?*

The doctrine then being of such importance, that genuine christianity stands or falls with it; it may be proper to state it at large: and as this cannot be done in stronger and plainer words, than those of the sacred writers, and our pious reformers; I beg leave to collect them, and present the reader with a picture of our natural estate, drawn at full length by those ancient and masterly hands.

I. Moses, who informs us, that *God created man in his own image, and after his likeness*, soon casts a shade upon his original dignity, by giving us a sad account of his fall. He represents him after his disobedience, as a criminal under sentence of death; a wretch filled with guilt, shame, dread, and horror; and a vagabond, turned out of a lost paradise into a *cursed* wilderness, where all bears the stamp of desolation for his sake. Gen. iii. 17. In consequence of this apostacy he died, and *all die in him: for, by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned in him, who was all mankind seminally and federally collected in one individual.* 1 Cor. xv. 22. Rom. v. 12.

The sacred historian, having informed us how the first man was corrupted, observes, that *he begat a son in his own image*, sinful and mortal like himself; that his first-born was a murderer; that Abel himself offered sacrifices to avert divine wrath, and that the violent temper of Cain soon broke out in all the human species. *The earth, says he, was filled with violence—all flesh had corrupted its way—and God saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth, so great, that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil, continually.* ONLY evil, without any mixture of good: and CONTINUALLY, without any intermission of the evil. Gen. vi. 5.

When the deluge was over, the Lord himself gave the same account of his obstinately rebellious creature. *The imagination of man's heart*, said he to Noah, *is evil from his youth*, Gen. viii. 21. Job's friends paint us with the

same colours: One of them observes, that *Man is born like the wild ass's colt*: And another, that *he is abominable and filthy and drinks iniquity like water*. Job xi. 12, and xv. 16.

David doth not alter the hideous portrait: *The Lord*, says he, *looked down from heaven upon the children of men; to see if there were any that did understand and seek God*. And the result of the divine inspection is: *They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy: There is none that doth good, no not one*. Psal. xiv. 2. Solomon gives a finishing stroke to his father's draught, by informing us, that *foolishness is bound in the heart of a child*, and not of a child only, for he adds, *The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and while they live madness is in their heart*. Prov. xxii. 15. Eccl. ix. 3.

Isaiah corroborates the assertions of the royal prophets, in the following mournful confession: *All we, like sheep, have gone astray—We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*. Isa. liii. 6. and lxiv. 6.

Jeremiah confirms the deplorable truth, where he says: *The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond; it is graven upon the tables of their hearts. O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. For the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: Who can know it?* Jer. iv. 14. and xvii. 1. 9.

Thus the prophets delineate mankind in a natural, impenitent state. And do the apostles dip their pencil in brighter colours? Let them speak for themselves. The chief of them informs us, that *the natural, unrenewed man receives not the things of the Spirit of God*, and that *they are foolishness to him*. 1 Cor. ii. 14. And he lays it down as matter of fact, that *the carnal mind, the taste and disposition of every unregenerate person, is not only averse to goodness, but ENMITY itself against God*, the adorable

fountain of all excellence. A blacker line can hardly be drawn, to describe a fallen, diabolical nature. Rom. viii. 7.

Various are the names, which the apostle of the gentiles gives to our original corruption; and they are all expressive of its pernicious nature, and dreadful effects. He calls it emphatically *sin*, a sin so full of activity and energy, that it is the life and spring of all others: *Indwelling sin*, a sin which is not like the leaves and fruits of a bad tree, that appear for a time, and then drop off; but like the sap that dwells and works within, always ready to break out at every bud:—*The body of sin*, because it is an assemblage of all possible sins in embryo, as our body is an assemblage of all the members which constituted the human frame:—*The law of sin*, and *the law in our members*, because it hath a constraining force, and rules in our mortal bodies, as a mighty tyrant in the kingdom which he hath usurped:—*The old man*, because we have it from the first man, Adam; and because it is as old as the first stamina of our frame, with which it is most closely interwoven;—*The flesh*, as being propagated by carnal generation, and always opposing the Spirit, the gracious principle, which we have from Adam the second:—And *concupiscence*, that mystic Jezebel, who brings forth the infinite variety of *fleshy, worldly, and mental lusts, which war against the soul*.

Nor are St. James and St. John less severe than St. Paul, upon the unconverted man. The one observes, that his *wisdom*, the best property naturally belonging to him, *descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish*: And the other positively declares, that *the whole world lieth in wickedness*. Jam. iii. 15. 1 Joh. v. 10.

Our Lord, whose spirit inspired the prophets and apostles, confirms their lamentable testimony. To make us seriously consider sin, our mortal disease, he reminds us, that *the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick*. Luke v. 31. He declares that *men love darkness rather than light*. That *the world hates him*; and that its

works are evil. John iii. 19. and xv. 18. and vii. 7. He directs all to pray for the *pardon of sin*, as *being evil*, and *owing ten thousand talents* to their heavenly creditor. Mat. vi. 12. vii. 11. xviii. 24. And he assures us, that *the things which defile the man, come from within*; and that *out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness*, and, in a word, ALL MORAL EVIL. Mark vii. 21. Mat. xv. 19.

Some, indeed, confine what the scriptures say of the depravity of the human heart, to the abandoned heathens and persecuting Jews; as if the professors of morality, and christianity were not concerned in the dreadful charge. But if the apostolic writings affirm, that Christ *came not to call the righteous, but SINNERS*; that *he died for the UN-GODLY*; and that *he suffered the just for the UNJUST*; it is plain, that unless he did not suffer and die for moral men and christians, they are by nature *sinners, ungodly, and unjust* as the rest of mankind. Rom. v. 6. 1 Pet. iii. 18.

If this assertion seems severe, let some of the best men that ever lived, decide the point, not by the experience of immoral persons, but by their own. *I abhor myself*, says Job, *and repent in dust and ashes.* Job xlii. 6. *Behold I was shapen in iniquity*, says David, *and in sin did my mother conceive me.* Ps. li. 5. *Wo is me for I am undone*, says Isaiah, *because I am a man of unclean lips.* Isa. vi. 5. *I know*, says Paul, *that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.* Rom. vii. 18. *We ourselves*, says he, to Titus, *were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another,* Tit. iii. 3. And speaking of himself, and the christians at Ephesus, he leaves upon record, this memorable sentence: *We were BY NATURE the children of wrath even as others,* Eph. ii. 3. Such humbling thoughts have the best of men entertained both of their natural estate, and themselves!

But as no one is a more proper person to appeal to, in this matter, than this learned apostle, who, by continually conversing with Jews, Heathens, and Christians in his travels, had such an opportunity of knowing mankind; let us hear him sum up the suffrages of his inspired brethren. *What then, says he, are we better than they?* Better than the immoral Pagans and hypocritical Jews, described in the two preceding chapters? *No, in no wise.* And he proves it by observing: (1) The UNIVERSALITY of human corruption: *ALL are under sin, as it is written, there is NONE righteous, no not ONE:* (2.) The EXTENT of it in individuals, as it effects the whole man, especially his mind; *there is none that understandeth the things of God: His affections, there is none that seeketh after God: And his actions, they are all gone out of the way of duty: There is none that doeth good, no not one: For all have their conversation in the lusts of the flesh and of the mind.—*(3.) The OUTBREAKINGS of this corruption through all the parts of the body: *Their throat, their lips, their mouth, their feet, their eyes, and all their members are together become unprofitable, and instruments of unrighteousness. As for their tongue, says St. James, it is a world of iniquity, it defileth the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.* And lastly, its MALIGNITY and VIRULENCE: It is loathsome as *an open sepulchre,* terrible as one who *runs to shed blood,* and mortal as *the poison of asps.*

From the whole, speaking of all mankind in their unregenerate state, he justly infers that *destruction and misery are in their ways.* And lest the self-righteous should flatter themselves that this alarming declaration doth not regard them, he adds, that *the scriptures conclude ALL under sin; that there is no difference, for ALL have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; and that the moral law denounces a general curse against its violators, that EVERY MOUTH may be stopped and ALL THE WORLD may*

become guilty before God. Rom. iii. 9 to 23. vi. 19. Eph. ii. 2.

If man is thus corrupt and guilty, he must be liable to condign punishment. Therefore, as the prophets and apostles agree with our Lord, in their dismal descriptions of his depravity; so they harmonize with him, in their alarming accounts of his danger. Till he flies to the Redeemer as a condemned malefactor, and secures an interest in the salvation provided for the lost, they represent him as on the brink of ruin.

They inform us, that *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven*, not only against some atrocious crimes, but against **ALL unrighteousness of men.** Rom. i. 18. That **EVERY transgression and disobedience, shall receive a just recompense of reward.** Heb. ii. 2. That *the soul that sinneth shall die*, because *the wages of sin is death*, Ezek. xviii. 4. Rom. vi. 23. They declare, that *they are cursed, who do err from God's commandments*: That *cursed is the man, whose heart departeth from the Lord*: That *cursed is every one, who continues not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them*: That *whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all*: And that, *as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law.* Ps. cxix. 21. Jer. xvii. 5 Gal. iii. 10. Jam. ii. 10. Rom. ii. 12.

They intreat us to turn, lest we should be found with *the many*, in the *broad way to destruction*, Ez. xviii. 23. Matt. vii. 13. They affectionately inform us, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*: That *our God is a consuming fire to the unregenerate*: That *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, hang over every soul of man who doeth evil*: That *the Lord shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them, who know him not, and obey not the gospel*: That *the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people who forget God*: That *they shall be punished with eternal destruction*,

from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power: And that they all shall be damned, who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. Heb. x. 31. and xii. 29. Rom. ii. 9. 2. 2 Thes. i. 8. and ii. 12. Ps. ix. 17.

Nor does our Lord, who is both the fountain and pattern of true charity, speak a different language. He bids us *fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*: Luke xii. 5. He solemnly charges us to oppose corrupt nature with the utmost resolution, lest we be *cast into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*. Mark ix. 43. With tenderness he informs us, that *who-soever shall say to his brother, Thou fool! shall be in danger of hel' fire*; that not only the wicked, but *the unprofitable servant shall be cast into outer darkness, where will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth*: And that he himself, far from conniving at sin, will fix the doom of all impenitent sinners, by this dreadful sentence: *Depart from me, ye cursed: into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. Matt. v. 22. and xxv. 30. 41.

II. I flatter myself that the doctrine, which we are to try by the touch-stone of reason, has been already sufficiently established from scripture. Nevertheless, that the reader may have the fullest view of so momentous a subject, I shall yet present him with a recapitulation of the whole, in the words of our pious reformers, taken out of the Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy of the church of England.

The 9th article thus describes our depravity and danger: “Original, or birth-sin, is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it *deserveth God's wrath and damnation.*”

The 35th article gives sanction to the Homilies in the following words; "The book of Homilies contains a good and wholesome doctrine, and therefore we judge them to be read in churches, by ministers, diligently and distinctly, that they may be understood by the people." Let us then see, how they set forth the *good* and *wholesome*, though lamentable and humbling doctrine of our lost estate.

The title of the 2d is, "A sermon of the misery of mankind, and of his condemnation to death everlasting by his sin." In the close of it, the contents are summed up in these words: "We have heard how evil we are of ourselves; how of ourselves, and by ourselves we have no goodness, help, or salvation: but on the contrary, sin, damnation, and death everlasting."

Our church is uniform in her woful accounts of man's misery. Hear her in the 1st Homily for Whitsunday: "Man, OF HIS OWN NATURE (since the fall) is fleshly and carnal, corrupt and nought, sinful and disobedient to God, without any spark of goodness in him, without any virtuous or godly motion, only given to evil thoughts and wicked deeds."

In the Homily on the nativity, she speaks thus: "He (disobedient man) was now cursed and abhorred: Instead of the image of God, he was now become the image of the devil, the bond-slave of hell. Altogether spotted and defiled, he seemed to be nothing else but a lump of sin; and therefore, by the just judgment of God, he was condemned to everlasting death. Thus, in Adam, all men became universally mortal, having in themselves nothing but *everlasting damnation of body and soul."

* Prejudiced persons, who, instead of considering the entire system of truth, run away with a part detached from the whole, will be offended here, as if our church "damned every body." But the candid reader will easily observe, that, instead of dooming any one to destruction, she only declares, that the Saviour finds all men in a state of condemnation and misery, where they would eternally remain, were it not

The same doctrine is delivered with the same plainness in the 2d part of the Homily on the passion. "Adam died the death, that is, became mortal, lost the favour of God, and was cast out of paradise, being no longer a citizen of heaven, but a firebrand of hell, and a bond-slave of the devil. And St. Paul bears witness, that by Adam's offence death came upon all men to condemnation, who became plain reprobates, and cast-aways, being perpetually damned to the everlasting pains of hell-fire.

Agreeably to this, we are taught, in the 2d part of the Homily on repentance, that "part of that virtue consists in an unfeigned acknowledgment of our sins to God, whom, by them, we have so grievously offended, that if he should deal with us according to his justice, we deserve a thousand hells, if there were so many."

The same vein of wholesome, though unpleasant doctrine, runs through the Liturgy of our church. She opens her service by exhorting us *not to dissemble nor cloak our manifold sins and wickedness*. She acknowledges in her confessions, that *we have erred and strayed from God's ways, like lost sheep,—that there is no health in us,—that we are miserable sinners, miserable offenders, to whom our sins are grievous, and the burden of them is intolerable*.

She begins her baptismal office, by reminding us, that *all men are conceived and born in sin*. She teaches in her catechism, that *we are by nature born in sin and the children of wrath*. She confesses in the collect before the general thanksgiving, that *we are tied and bound with the chain of our sins*, and entreats God to *let the pitifulness of his great mercy loose us*: and in her suffrages she beseeches him to *have mercy upon us, to spare us, and make*

for the compassionate equity of our gracious God, which does not permit him to sentence to a *consciousness* of eternal torments, any one of his creatures, for a sin, of which they never were *personally* guilty; and of which, consequently, they can never have any *consciousness*.

speed to save us; a language that can suit none but condemned sinners.

Duly sensible of our extreme danger, till we have secured an interest in Christ, at the grave she supplicates the *most holy God, not to deliver us into the bitter pains of eternal death*; and in the litany she beseeches our Lord Jesus Christ, *by his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, to deliver us from his wrath and everlasting damnation*. Thus is our church every where consistent with herself, and with the oracles of God, in representing us as corrupt, condemned creatures, in Adam; till we are penitent, absolved believers in Jesus Christ.

The doctrine to be demonstrated in this treatise being thus fully stated, in the consentaneous words of the sacred writers, and our pious reformers, I shall close this part by an appeal to the reader's candor and common sense. If such are the sentiments of our church, are those *churchmen* reasonable, who intimate, that all the maintainers of them are either her open or secret enemies? and may they rank with modest, humble *christians*, who, instead of the self-abasing scripture doctrine here laid down, boldly substitute pompous, pharisaic descriptions of the *present* dignity and rectitude of human nature? without waiting for the obvious answer, I pass to the first class of arguments, on which the truth of this mortifying doctrine is established.

SECOND PART.

AS no man is bound to believe what is contrary to common sense ; if the above-stated doctrine appears irrational, Scriptures, Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy, are quoted in vain : When men of parts are pressed with their authority, they start from it as an imposition on their reason, and make as honorable a retreat as they possibly can.

Some, to extricate themselves at once, set the Bible aside, as full of incredible assertions. Others, with more modesty, plead that the scriptures have been frequently misunderstood, and are so in the present case. They put grammar, criticism, and common sense to the rack, to shew that when the inspired writers say, the human *heart is desperately wicked*, they mean that it is extremely good ; or at least like blank paper, ready to receive either the characters of virtue, or of vice. With respect to the testimony of our reformers, they would have you to understand, that in this enlightened age, we must leave their harsh, uncharitable sentiments, to the old puritans, and the present methodists.

That such objectors may subscribe as a solemn truth, what they have hitherto rejected as a dangerous error ; and that humbled sinners may see the propriety of an heart-felt repentance, and the absolute need of an almighty Redeemer ; they are here presented with some proofs of our depravity, taken from the astonishing severity of God's dispensations towards mankind.

AXIOM.

If we consider the supreme Being, as creating a world for the manifestation of his glory, the display of his perfections, and the communication of his happiness to an intelligent creature, whom he would attach to himself by the strongest ties of gratitude and love ; we at once perceive, that he never could form this earth and man in their present, disordered, deplorable condition. It is not so absurd to suppose the meridian sun productive of darkness, as to imagine that *infinite goodness* ever produced any kind or degree of evil.

Infinite holiness and wisdom having assisted infinite goodness, to draw the original plan of the world ; it could not but be entirely worthy of its glorious author, absolutely free from every moral defilement, and natural disorder : nor could *infinite power* possibly be at a loss, to execute what the other divine attributes had contrived. Therefore, unless we embrace the senseless opinion of the materialists, who deny the being of a God ; or admit the ridiculous creed of the manichees, who adore two Gods, the one the gracious author of all the good, and the other the mischievous principle of all the evil in the world ; we must conclude with Moses, that *every thing which God made, was at first very good* ; or in other words, that order and beauty, harmony and happiness, were stamped upon every part of the creation, and more especially on man, the masterpiece of creating power in this sublunary world. On this axiom I raise my

I. ARGUMENT.

Does not the natural state of the earth cast a light upon the spiritual condition of its inhabitants ? Amidst a thousand beauties, that indicate what it was, when God pro-

nounced it *very good*, and as the original also imports, *extremely beautiful*: Amidst the elegant and grand ruins, which form the variety of our smiling landscapes, and romantic prospects; can an impartial inquirer help taking notice of a thousand striking proofs, that a multiplied curse rests upon this globe; and that man, who inhabits it, is now disgraced by the God of nature and providence?

Here deceitful morasses, or faithless quicksands obstruct our way: There, miry, impassible roads, or inhospitable sandy deserts, endanger our life. In one place, we are stopped by stupendous chains of rocky mountains, broken into frightful precipices, or hideous caverns: And in another, we meet with ruinous valleys, cut deep by torrents and water-falls, whose tremendous roar stuns the astonished traveller. Many of the hills are stony, rude, and waste; and most of the plains are covered over with strata of barren sand, stiff clay, or infertile gravel.

Thorns, *thistles, and noxious weeds grow spontaneously every where, and yield a troublesome, never-failing crop: While the best soil, carefully plowed by the laborious husbandman, and sown with precious seed, frequently repays his expensive toil with light sheaves; or a blasted harvest.

Consider that immense part of the globe, which lies between the tropics: it is parched up by the scorching beams of the vertical sun: There, the tauny inhabitants fan themselves in vain; they pant, they melt, they faint on the sultry couch, and like the birds of night, dare not appear abroad till evening shades temper the insufferable blaze of day. View the frozen countries around the poles: In summer,

* Those who oppose the doctrine of the fall, say that, "Weeds have their use." I grant they are serviceable to thousands of poor people, who earn their bread by pulling the general nuisance out of our fields and gardens: But till our objectors, have proved that thistles are more useful, and therefore grow more spontaneously, and multiply more abundantly, than corn; we shall discover the badness of their cause through the slightness of their objection.

the sun just glances upon them by his feeble, horizontal rays: In winter, he totally deserts them, and they lie bound with rigorous frosts, and buried in continual night. There, the torpid inhabitants know neither harvest nor vintage, the ocean seems a boundless plain of ice, and the continent immense hills of snow.

The temperate zones are indeed blessed with milder climates: But even here, how irregular are the seasons! To go no farther than this favoured island. What means the strange foresight, by which the ice of January is laid in to temper the ardours of July; and the burning mineral is stored in June, to mitigate the frost in December? But notwithstanding these precautions, what continual complaints are heard, about the intensesness of the heat, the severity of the cold, or the sudden pernicious change from the one to the other!

Let us descend to particulars. In winter, how often do drifts of snow bury the starved sheep, and entomb the frozen traveller! In summer, how frequently do dreadful storms of hail cut down, or incessant showers of rain wash away the fruits of the earth! Perhaps, to complete the desolation, *water* pours down from all the neighbouring hills; and the swelling streams, joining with overflowing rivers, cause sudden inundations, lay waste the richest pastures, and carry off the swimming flocks; while the frightened inhabitants* of the vale, either retire to the top of their deluged houses, or by the timely assistance of boats, fly from the imminent and increasing danger.

If heaven seems to dissolve into water in one place, in another it is like brass; it yields neither fruitful rains nor cooling dews: The earth is like iron under it, and the perishing cattle loll out their parched tongues, where they once drank the refreshing stream. Suppose a few happy districts escape these dreadful scourges for a number of

* This was the case of several families in the author's parish, November 1770,

years, are they not at last visited with redoubled severity? And, whilst abused affluence vanishes as a dream before the intolerable dearth, do not a starving, *riotous populace, leave their wretched cottages, to plunder the houses of their wealthy neighbours, desperately venturing the gallows for a morsel of bread.

When some, secure from the attacks of water, quietly enjoy the comforts of plenty, *fire* perhaps surprises them in an instant: They awake, involved in smoke, and surrounded by crackling flames, through which (if it is not too late) they fly naked at the hazard of their neck, and think themselves happy if, while they leave behind them, young children or aged parents, burning in the blaze of all their goods, they escape themselves with dislocated joints or broken bones. Their piercing shrieks, and the fall of their house, seem to portend a general conflagration; loud confusion increases, disasterous ruin spreads; and perhaps, before they can be stopped, a street, a suburb, a whole city is reduced to ashes.

Turn your imagination from the smoaking ruins, to fix it upon the terrifying effects of the *air*, agitated into roaring tempests and boisterous hurricanes, before their impetuous blast, the masts of ships and cedars of Lebanon, are like broken reeds; men of war, and solid buildings like the driven chaff. Here, they strip the groaning forest, tear the bosom of the earth; and obscure the sky with clouds of whirling sand: And there they plough up the liquid foaming plains, and with sportive fury turn up mountains for ridges, or cut valleys instead of furrows. As they pass along, the confounded elements dreadfully roar under the mighty scourge, the rolling sea tosses herself up to heaven, and solid land is *swept with the besom of destruction*.

To heighten the horror of the scene, *thunder*, the majestic voice of an angry God, and the awful artillery of

* This happened some years ago in this neighbourhood.

heaven, bursts in loud claps from the lowering sky. Distant hills reverberate and increase the alarming sound, and with rocking edifices declare to man, that *vengeance belongeth unto God*: And, to enforce the solemn warning, repeated flashes of *lightning*, with horrible glare, dazzle his eyes, and with forked fires strike consternation into his breast ; if they do not actually strike him dead, in the midst of his shattered habitation.

Nor doth heaven alone dart destructive fires ; *earth*, our mother earth, as if it were not enough frequently to corrupt the atmosphere by pestilential vapours, borrows the assistance of the devouring element, to terrify and scourge her guilty children. By sudden, frightful chasms, and the mouth of her burning mountains, she vomits clouds of smoke, sulphureous flames, and calcined rocks ; she emits streams of melted minerals, covers the adjacent plains with boiling fiery lavas ; and, as if she wanted to ease herself of the burthen of her inhabitants, suddenly rises against them, and *in battles of shaking* at once crushes, destroys, and buries them in heaps of ruins.

These astonishing scenes, like a bloody battle that is seen at a distance, may indeed entertain us : They may amuse our imagination, when in a peaceful apartment, we behold them beautifully represented by the pen of a Virgil, or the pencil of a Raphael. But to be in the midst of them, as thousands are sooner or later, is inexpressibly dreadful : It is actually to see the fore-runners of divine vengeance, and hear the shaking of God's destructive rod : It is to behold at once a lively emblem, and an awful pledge of that *fire and brimstone, storm and tempest*, which the righteous Governor of the world will *rain upon the ungodly* ; when *the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, with the works that are therein, shall be burnt up*.

Now as reason loudly declares, that the God of order, justice, and goodness, could never establish and continue

this fearful course of things, but to punish the disorders of the *moral* world by those of the *natural*: we must conclude that man is guilty, from the alarming tokens of divine displeasure, which sooner or later are so conspicuous in every part of the habitable globe.

II. ARGUMENT.

We have taken a view of the residence of mankind: let us now behold them entering upon the disordered scene. And here reason informs us, that some mystery of iniquity lies hid under the loathsome, painful, and frequently mortal circumstances, which accompany their birth. For it can never be imagined, that a righteous and good God, would suffer innocent and pure creatures, to come into the world skilled in no language but that of misery, venting itself in bitter cries, or doleful accents.

It is a matter of fact, that infants *generally* return their first breath with a groan, and salute the light with the voice of sorrow: *Generally*, I say, for sometimes they are born half-dead, and cannot without the utmost difficulty be brought to breathe and groan. But all are born at the hazard of their lives: For, while some cannot press into the land of the living, without being dangerously bruised; others have their tender bones dislocated. Some are almost strangled; and it is the horrible fate of others, to be forced into the world by instruments of torture; having their skull bored through or broken to pieces, or their quivering limbs cut or torn off from the unfortunate trunk. Again,

While some appear on the stage of life embarrassed with superfluous parts, others unaccountably mutilated, want those which are necessary: And what is more terrible still, a few, whose hideous, mishapen bodies seem calculated to represent the deformity of a fallen soul, rank

among frightful monsters ; and to terminate the horror of the parents, are actually smothered and destroyed.

The spectators, it is true, concerned for the honour of mankind, frequently draw a veil over these shocking and bloody scenes ; but a philosopher will find them out, and will rationally infer that the deplorable and dangerous manner in which mankind are born, proves them to be degenerate fallen creatures.*

III. ARGUMENT.

If we let our thoughts ascend, from the little sufferers, to the mothers that bear them ; we shall find another dreadful proof of the divine displeasure and of our natural depravity. Does not a good master, much more a gracious God, delight in the prosperity and happiness of his faithful servants? If mankind were naturally in their Creator's favour, would he not order the fruit of the womb to drop from it, without any more inconveniency, than ripe vegetables fall from the opening husk, or full-grown fruit from the disburdened tree? But how widely different is the case!

Fix your attention on pregnant mothers: See their disquietude and fears. Some go before hand through an imaginary travail, almost as painful to the mind, as the real

* Logicians will excuse the author, if he prefers the common, unperfected manner of proposing his arguments, to the formal method of the schools. But they may easily try his enthymemes by giving them the form of syllogisms, thus:

I. Argument. If the rod of God is fearfully shaken over this globe, the disordered habitation of mankind ; it is a sign they are under his displeasure.

But God's rod is fearfully shaken over this globe, &c. Therefore mankind are under his displeasure.

II. Argument. A pure and innocent creature cannot be born under such and such deplorable circumstances.

But man is born under such and such deplorable circumstances. Therefore man is not a pure and innocent creature.

labour is to the body. The dreaded hour comes at last.— Good God! What lingering, what tearing pains; what redoubled throes, what killing agonies attend it! See the curse—or rather, see it not. Let the daughter of her who tasted the forbidden fruit without the man, drink that bitter cup without him. Fly from the mournful scene, fly to distant apartments—But in vain—The din of sorrow pursues and overtakes you there.

A child of man is at the point of being born; his tortured mother proclaims the news in the bitterest accents. They increase with her increasing agony. Sympathize and pray, while she suffers and groans—Perhaps while she suffers and dies: For it is possibly her dying groan that reaches your ear. Perhaps nature is spent in the hard travail; her son is born, and with Jacob's wife, she closes her languid eye and expires. Perhaps the instruments of death are upon her: The keen steel mangles her delicate frame: As Cesar's mother; she generously suffers her body to be opened, that her unborn child may not be torn from her in pieces; and the fertile tree is unnaturally cut down that its fruits may be safely gathered.

Perhaps neither mother nor child can be saved, and one grave is going to deprive a distracted mortal of a beloved Rachel, and a long expected Benjamin. If this is the case, O earth, earth, earth, conceal these slain, cover their blood, and detain in thy dark bosom, the fearful curse that brought them there. Vain wish! Too active to be confined in thy deepest vaults, it ranges through the world: With unrelenting fierceness it pursues trembling mothers, and forces them to lift up their voice for speedy relief: Though varied according to the accents of an hundred languages, it is the same voice—that of the bitterest anguish:—And while it is reverberated from hamlet to hamlet, from city to city, it strikes the unprejudiced inquirer, and makes him confess, that these clouds of unbribed witnesses, by their loud, consentaneous evidence,

impeach SIN, the tormentor of the woman, and murderer of her offspring.

But suppose the case is not so fatal, and she is at last delivered ; her labour may be over, yet not her pain and danger ; a lingering weakness may carry her slowly to her grave. If she recovers, she may be a mother, and yet unable to act a mother's part. Her pining child sucks her disordered breast in vain : Either the springs of his balmy food are dried up, or they overflow with a putrid loathsome fluid, and excruciating ulcers cause the soft lips of the infant, to appear terrible as the edge of the sword.

If she happily escapes this common kind of distress, yet she may date the beginning of some chronical disease, from her dangerous lying-in ; and in consequence of her hard wrestling for the blessing of a child, may with the patriarch go halting all her days. How sensible are the marks of divine indignation, in all these scenes of sorrow ! And consequently how visible our sinfulness and guilt.

Nor can the justness of the inference be denied, under pretence that the females of other animals, which neither *do* nor *can* sin, bring forth their young with pain, as well as women. For, if we take a view of the whole earth, we shall not see any females, except the daughters of Eve, who groan under a periodical disorder, that intails langour and pain, weakness and mortal diseases, on their most blooming days. Nor do we in general find any, that are delivered of their offspring with half the sorrow and danger of women. These two remarkable circumstances loudly call upon us, to look for the cause of the sorrow, which attends the delivery of female animals, where that sorrow is most sensibly felt ; and to admire the perfect agreement that subsists between the observations of natural philosophers, and the assertion of the most ancient historian. Gen. iii. 16.

IV. ARGUMENT.

If we advert to mankind, even before they burst the womb of their tortured mothers, they afford us a new proof of their total degeneracy. For reason dictates, that if they were not conceived in sin, the Father of mercies could not, consistently with his goodness and justice, command the cold hand of death to nip them in the unopened, or just opened bud. This nevertheless happens every hour. Who can number the earliest miscarriages of the womb? How many millions of miserable embryos feel the pangs of death before those of birth, and preposterously turn the fruitful womb into a living grave? And how many millions more of wretched infants, escape the dangers of their birth-day, and salute the troublesome light, only to take their ultimate leave of it, after languishing a few days on the rack of a convulsive, or torturing disorder? I ask again, would a good and righteous God seal the death-warrant of such multitudes of his unborn or newly born creatures, if their natural depravity did not render them proper subjects of dissolution?

It is true, the young of beasts suffer and die as well as infants; but it is only because they are involved in our misery. They partake of it, as the attendants of a noble traitor share in his deserved ruin. Sin, that inconceivable, virulent, and powerful evil, drew down God's righteous curse upon all that was created for man's use, as well as upon man himself. Hence only springs the degeneracy and death, that turn beasts to one promiscuous dust with mankind. Compare Gen. iii. 17. Rom. v. 12. and viii. 22. We may then justly infer, from the sufferings and death of still-born or new-born children, that man is totally degenerate, and liable to destruction, even from his mother's womb.

V. ARGUMENT.

But take your leave of the infant corpse, already buried in the womb, or deposited in a coffin of a span long ; fix your attention on the healthy, sucking child. See him stupidly staring in his nurse's lap, or awkwardly passing through childhood to manhood. How visible is his degeneracy in every stage !

Part of the divine image, in which he was made in Adam, consisted in purity, power, and knowledge : but now he is naturally the least cleanly, as well as the most helpless and ignorant of all animals. Yes, if the reader could forgive the indelicacy of the assertion, for the sake of its truth, I would venture to shew, that there is no comparison between the cleanliness of the little active animals, which suck the filthy swine, and of helpless infants, who suck the purer breasts of their tender mothers. But casting a veil over the dribbling, loathsome little creatures ; without fear of being contradicted, I aver, that the young of those brutes, which are stupid to a proverb, know their dams, and follow them as soon as they are dropped ; whilst infants are months without taking any particular notice of their parents, and without being able, I shall not say to follow them, but even to bear the weight of their swaddled body, or stand upon their tottering legs.

With reference to the knowledge necessary for the support of animal life, it is undeniable that brutes have greatly the advantage of mankind. Fowls and fishes, immediately, and with amazing sagacity, single out their proper nourishment, among a thousand useless and noxious things : But infants put indifferently to their mouth all that comes to their hand, whether it be food or poison, a coral or a knife : And, what is more astonishing still, grown-up persons scarce ever attain to the knowledge of the quantity or quality of the meat and drink, which are most suitable to their constitutions.

All disordered dogs fix at once upon the salutary vegetable, that can (in some cases) relieve their distress : But many physicians, even after several years study and practice, hurt, and sometimes kill, their patients by improper medicines. Birds of passage, by mere instinct, find the north and south more readily than mariners by the compass. Untaught spiders weave their webs, and uninstructed bees make their combs to the greatest perfection : But fallen man must serve a tedious apprenticeship to learn his own business ; and with all the help of masters, tools, and patterns, seldom proves an ingenious artist.

Again, other animals are provided with a natural covering, that answers the double end of usefulness and ornament : But indigent man is obliged to borrow from plants, beasts, and worms, the materials with which he hides his nakedness, or defends his feebleness : and a great part of his short life is spent in providing, or putting on and off garments, the gaudy tokens of his shame, or ragged badges of his fall.

Are not these plain proofs, that man, who according to his superior rank, and primitive excellency, should in all things have the pre-eminence, is now a degraded being, cursed for his apostacy with his native uncleanness, helplessness, ignorance, and nakedness, above all other animals ?

VI. ARGUMENT.

Man's natural ignorance, great as it is, might nevertheless be overlooked, if he had but the right knowledge of his Creator. But alas ! The holy and righteous God judicially withdraws himself from his unholy apostate creature. Man is not properly acquainted with him *in whom he lives, and moves, and hath his being*. This humbling truth may be demonstrated by the following observations.

God is infinitely perfect ; all the perfection which is found in the most exalted creatures, is but the reflection of the transcendent effulgence, belonging to that glorious Sun

of spiritual beauty; it is but the surface of the unfathomable depths of goodness and loveliness, which regenerate souls discover in that boundless ocean of all excellence. If therefore men saw God, they could far less help being struck with holy awe, overwhelmed with pleasing wonder, and ravished with delightful admiration, than a man born blind, and restored to sight in the blaze of a summer's day, could help being transported at the glory of the new and unexpected scene.* *Could we but see virtue in all her beauty*, said an heathen, *she would ravish our hearts*: How much greater would our ravishments be, if we were indulged with a clear, immediate discovery of the divine beauty, the eternal original of all virtue, the exuberant fountain of all perfection and delight? But, alas! how few thus behold, know, and admire God, may easily be seen by the impious or vain conduct of mankind.

If a multitude of men ingenuously confess, they know not the king; if they take his statue, or one of his attendants for him; or if they doubt whether there be a king; or sport with his name and laws in his presence; we reasonably conclude that they neither *see* nor *know* the royal person. And is not this the case of the superstitious, who, like the Athenians, worship an *unknown God*? Of idolators, who bow to favourite mortals, or lifeless images, as to the true God? Of infidels, who doubt the very being of a God? And of open sinners, the bulk of mankind, who live every where as if there was none?

Our natural ignorance of God, manifests itself still more evidently, by the confessions both of real and nominal christians. The former, before they knew God, and were admitted to *behold his glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ*, bitterly complained as Isaiah, *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself*; or mournfully asked with David, *How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?* It is plain then, that, by nature, they were as others, *without God* (practi-

* Si virtus conspiceretur oculis, mirabiles amores excitaret sui. Cic.

cal atheists) *in the world*, and have as much reason as St. Paul to declare, that *the world by wisdom knew not God*.

As for *nominal* christians, though they daily pray that *the fellowship of the Holy Ghost may be with us all*, it is evident they are utter strangers to communion with God by his Holy Spirit. For if we affirm that he blesses his children with a spiritual discovery of his presence, and *manifests himself to them as he doth not to the world*, they say we are mad, or call us enthusiasts. This behaviour shews beyond all confessions, that they are totally unacquainted with *the light of God's countenance*: For what greater proof can a blind man give, that he has no knowledge of the sun, than to suspect his neighbour of lunacy, for affirming that sunshine is a delightful reality?

From this moral demonstration of our natural ignorance of God, I draw the following conclusion. If the Lord, who is a mild and condescending king to all his loyal subjects, a father full of endearing and tender love to all his dutiful children, hides his face from mankind in a natural state; and if what little they know of him, is only by conjecture, hear-say, or * inference; it is a proof, that they are under his displeasure; and consequently, that they are rebellious, fallen creatures.

For, what but rebellion could thus separate between beings so nearly related, as an infinitely gracious Creator, and favourite creatures, whose soul is, according to an heathen, *divinæ particula auroe*; and according to Moses, *the very breath of God*? We may then rationally conclude with the evangelical prophet, that *our iniquities have separated between us and our God*, and that *our sins have hid his face from us*, eclipsed the sun of righteousness, and brought such darkness on our souls, that, by nature, we know neither what we are, nor what we should be; nei-

* This is the *knowledge of God* mentioned Rom. i. 21. It is sufficient to leave *without excuse* those who do not improve it, till they attain to the saving knowledge mentioned, John xvij. 3. 1 John v. 20.

ther whence we come, nor whither we are going ; neither the grand business we have to do, nor the danger that attends our leaving it undone.

VII. ARGUMENT.

If by nature mankind know not the Lord to be their God, is it surprising that beasts should not know mankind to be their lords? Nevertheless, reason agrees with scripture, in maintaining that man, by far the noblest work of God here below, should, according to the reason and fitness of things, bear rule over all the sublunary creation. But alas! even in this respect, *How is the crown fallen from his head!* Inferior animals have as little regard for him, as he has for his God.

Notwithstanding his artful contrivances, greedy birds and mischievous beasts, eat up, trample down, or destroy part of the fruit of his rural labour. In warmer climes, armies of locusts, more terrible than hosts of men, frequently darken the air, or cover the ground, and equally mock at human power and craft. Wherever they light, all verdure disappears, and the summer's fruitfulness is turned into wintry desolation.

If locusts do not reach this happy island ; caterpillars, and a variety of other seemingly insignificant, but really formidable insects, make a more constant, though less general attack upon our trees and gardens. In vain are they destroyed by millions, they cannot be fully conquered ; and the yearly returning plague forces the considerate spectator, to acknowledge the finger of a sin-avenging providence.

Happy would it be for man, if rebellious animals were satisfied with the produce of his fields and orchards : But alas ! They thirst after his blood, and attack his person.—Lions, tigers, rattle-snakes, crocodiles, and sharks, whenever they have an opportunity, impetuously attack, furi-

ously tear, and greedily devour him. And what is most astonishing, the basest reptiles are not afraid to breed in his stomach, to live in his very bowels, and to consume his inward parts: while swarms of flying, leaping, or creeping insects, too vile to be named, but not to humble a proud apostate, have the insolence to fix upon his skin; and by piercing or furrowing his flesh, suck his blood, and feast upon him from his cradle to the grave.

Domestic animals, it is true, do man excellent service: But is it not because he either forces, or bribes them to it, by continual labour and expense, with which he breaks and maintains them? What business have multitudes of men, but to serve the drudges of mankind? What are smiths, farriers, farmers, servants, grooms, hostlers, &c. but the slaves of brutes, washing, currying, shoeing, feeding, and waiting upon them both by day and by night?

And yet, notwithstanding the prerogative granted to Noah's piety, Gen. ix. 2. and the care taken of domestic animals, do they not rebel as often as they dare? Here, sheep deemed the quietest of all, run astray, or break into the fields of a litigious neighbour: There, the furious bull pursues and gores, or the raging dog sets upon the inoffensive traveller. To day you read, that an impetuous, foaming steed hath hurried away, thrown off, and dragged along his unfortunate master, whose blood sprinkling the dust, and brains dashed upon the stones, direct the search of his disconsolate friend: And to-morrow you may hear, that a vicious horse has darted his iron fenced hoof into his attendant's breast or forehead, and has lamed or killed him on the spot.

And would the wise governor of the world, the kind protector of his obedient creatures, permit this rebellion, even of the tamest animals, and basest vermin against man, if man himself was not a daring rebel against him?

VIII. ARGUMENT.

That a contemptible insect should dare to set upon, and be able to devour a proud monarch, an Herod in the midst of his guards, is terrible: But the mischief stops not here. Numerous tribes of other base animals are armed with poisonous tongues or stings, and use them against mankind with peculiar rage. To say nothing of mad dogs, have not asps, *vipers, tarantulas, scorpions, and other venomous serpents and insects, the destructive skill of extracting the quintessence of the curse which sin, our moral poison, hath brought upon the earth? when we come within their reach, do they not bite or sting us with the utmost fury? and by infusing their subtle venom in our blood, spread they not anguish and destruction through our agonizing frame? answer, ye thousands, who died in the wilderness of the bite of fiery serpents; and ye multitudes, who in almost all countries have shared their deplorable fate.

Let us descend to the *vegetable* world. How many deceitful roots, plants, and fruits deposit their pernicious juices in the stomach of those, who unwarily fed upon them! Did not Elisha, and the sons of the prophets narrowly escape being poisoned altogether, by one of them fatally mistaking a pot-herb? And do not many go quickly or slowly to their grave by such melancholy accidents?

Minerals and *metals* are not the last to enter into the general conspiracy against mankind. Under inoffensive appearances, do not they contain what is destructive to the animal frame? and have not many fallen a sacrifice to their ignorance of the mischief lurking in arsenic, and

* Some will say that viper's flesh is useful in physic. I grant it; but is the *poison* of that creature useful? This must be proved before the argument can be invalidated.

other *mineral productions? Nor are metallic effluvia less hurtful to hundreds; and the health of mankind is perhaps more injured by copper alone, than it is preserved by all the mineral waters in the world: It is acknowledged that numbers are poisoned by food prepared in utensils made of that dangerous metal; and how many are insensibly hurt by the same means, is only known to a wise and righteous providence.

Thus God leaves us in the world, where mischief lurks under a variety of things, apparently useful, without giving us the least intimation of destruction near. To say that *infinite goodness* can deal thus with *innocent* creatures, is offering violence to our reason, and an affront to divine justice. Conclude then with me, reader, that we have lost our original innocence, and forfeited our Creator's favour.

IX. ARGUMENT.

But if the generality of mankind escape all the various sorts of poison, do they escape the curse of toil and sweat? and is not a great majority of them, reduced to such sordid want, and pressing necessity, as to be obliged to do the greatest drudgery for a wretched maintenance?

When *God made them to have dominion over the works of his hands*; when he *put all things in subjection under their feet, and crowned them with glory and honour*; they filled up each happy hour in evidencing their love to him and to each other: they spent their golden moments in admiring the variety and beauty of his works, finding out the divine signatures impressed on them, swaying their mild scepter over the obedient creation, and enjoying the rich,

* It is objected, that excellent remedies are prepared with antimony and mercury. But it is well known that the persons who use them only expel one poison with another: as the decayed constitution of those who have frequent recourse to such violent medicines abundantly prove.

incorruptible fruits, which the earth spontaneously produced in the greatest perfection and abundance. Thus their pleasure was without idleness or pain, and their employment without toil or weariness.

But no sooner did disobedience open the floodgates of natural evil, than arduous labour came in, full tide, upon mankind; and a thousand painful arts were invented to mitigate the manifold curse which sin had brought upon them.

Since the fall, our bodies are become vulnerable and shamefully naked; and it is the business of thousands to make or sell all sorts of garments for our defence and ornament. The earth has lost her original fertility; and thousands more with iron instruments open her bosom, to force her to yield us a maintenance; or with immense labour, secure her precarious, decaying fruits: Immoderate rains deprive her of her solidity, and earthquakes or deluges destroy her evenness; numbers therefore are painfully employed in making or mending roads. Each country affords some only of the necessaries or conveniences of life; this obliges the mercantile inhabitants to transport, with immense trouble and danger, the produce of one place, to supply the wants of another. We are exposed to a variety of dangers: Our persons and property must be secured against the inclemency of the weather, the attacks of evil beasts, and the assaults of wicked men: Hence the fatigue of millions of workmen in wood and stone, metals and minerals: and the toils and hazards of millions more, who live by making, wearing, or using the various instruments of war and slaughter.

Disorder and injustice give rise to government, politics, and a labyrinth of laws; and these employ myriads of officers, lawyers, magistrates, and rulers. We are subject to a thousand pains and maladies; hence myriads more prescribe and prepare remedies, or attend and nurse the sick. Our universal ignorance occasions the tedious labour of giving and receiving instruction in all the branches of human

and divine knowledge. And to complete the whole, the original tongue of mankind is confounded, and even neighbouring nations are barbarians to each other : from hence arises the painful lucubrations of critics and linguists, with the infinite trouble of teaching and learning various languages.

The curse introduced by sin is the occasion of all these toils. They are soon mentioned, but alas ! how long, how grievous do they appear to those who feel their severity ! How many sighs have they forced from the breasts, how much sweat from the bodies of mankind ! Unite the former, a tempset might ensue : Collect the latter, it would swell into rivers.

To go no further than this populous parish, with what hardships, and dangers do our indigent neighbours earn their bread ! See those who ransack the bowels of the earth to get the black mineral we burn : How little is their lot preferable to that of the Spanish felons, who work the golden mines ?

They take their leave of the light of the sun, and suspended by a rope, are let down many fathoms perpendicularly towards the centre of the globe : They traverse the rocks through which they have dug their horizontal ways : The murderer's cell is a palace, in comparison of the black spot to which they repair : The vagrant's posture in the stocks, is preferable to that in which they labour.

Form, if you can, an idea of the misery of men kneeling, stooping, or lying on one side, to toil all day in a confined place, where a child could hardly stand ; whilst a younger company, with their hands and feet on the black dusty ground, and a chain about their body, creep and drag along, like four-footed beasts, heavy loads of the dirty mineral, through ways almost impassible to the curious observer.

In these low and dreary vaults all the elements seem combined against them. Destructive damps, and clouds of noxious dust infect the air they breathe. Sometimes water incessantly distills on their naked bodies; or bursting upon them in streams, drowns them and deluges their work. At other times, pieces of detached rocks crush them to death, or the earth breaking in upon them, buries them alive. And frequently sulphureous vapours, kindled in an instant by the light of their candles, form subterraneous thunder and lightning: What a dreadful phenomenon! How impetuous is the blast! How fierce the rolling flames! How intolerable the noisome smell! How dreadful the continued roar! How violent and fatal the explosion!

Wonderful providence! Some of the unhappy men have time to prostrate themselves; the fiery scourge grazes their back, the ground shields their breasts; they escape. See them wound up out of the blazing dungeon, and say if *these are not brands plucked out of the fire*. A pestiferous steam, and clouds of suffocating smoke pursues them.—Half dead themselves, they hold their dead or dying companions in their trembling arms. Merciful God of Shadrach! Kind protector of Meshech! Mighty deliverer of Abednego! Patient preserver of rebellious Jonah! Will not *these* utter a song—a song of praise to *thee*—praise as ardent as the flames they escape—lasting as the life thou prolongest!—Alas! they refuse! and some—O tell it not among the Heathens, lest they for ever abhor the name of *christian*—Some return to the very pits, where they have been branded with sulphureous fire by the warning hand of providence; and there, sporting themselves again with the most infernal wishes, call aloud for a fire that cannot be quenched, and challenge the Almighty to cast them into hell, that bottomless pit whence there is no return.

Leave these black men at their perilous work, and see yonder barge-men hauling that loaded vessel against wind

and stream. Since the dawn of day, they have wrestled with the impetuous current ; and now, that it almost overpowers them, how do they exert all their remaining strength, and strain their every nerve ! How are they bathed in sweat and rain ! Fastened to their lines as horses to their traces, wherein do they differ from the laborious brutes ? Not in an erect posture of body, for in the intuseness of their toil they bend forward, their head is foremost, and their hands upon the ground. If there is any difference, it consists in this : Horses are indulged with a collar to save their breasts ; and these, as if theirs was not worth saving, draw without one : The beasts tug in patience, silence and mutual harmony ; but the men with loud contention and horrible imprecations. O sin, what hast thou done ! Is it not enough that these drudges should toil like brutes, must they also curse one another like devils ?

If you have gone beyond the hearing of their impious oaths, stop to consider the sons of Vulcan confined to these forges and furnaces. Is their lot much preferable ? A sultry air, and clouds of smoke and dust, are the elements in which they labour. The confused noise of water falling, steam hissing, fire-engines working, wheels turning, files breaking, hammers beating, ore bursting, and bellows roaring, form the dismal concert that strikes the ears ; while a continual eruption of flames, ascending from the mouth of their artificial vulcanos, dazzle their eyes with a horrible glare. Massy bars of hot iron are the heavy tools they handle, cylinders of the first magnitude, the enormous weights they heave, vessels full of melted metal the dangerous loads they carry, streams of the same burning fluid the fiery rivers, which they conduct into the deep cavities of their subterraneous moulds ; and millions of flying sparks, with a thousand drops of liquid, hissing iron, the horrible showers to which they are exposed. See them cast ; you would think them in a bath, and not in a furnace : They bedew the burning sand with their streaming sweat ;

Nor are their wet garments dried up, either by the fierce fires that they attend, or the fiery streams which they manage. Certainly, of all men, these have reason to remember the just sentence of an offended God : *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou earn thy bread all the days of thy life.*

All, indeed, do not go through the same toil ; but all have their share of it, either in body or in mind. Behold the studious son of learning ; his intense application hath wasted his flesh, exhausted his spirits, and almost dried up his radical moisture. Consider the man of fortune : Can his thousands a year exempt him from the curse of Adam ? No ; he toils perhaps harder in his sports and debaucheries, than the poor ploughman that works his estate.

View that corpulent epicure, who idles away the whole day, between the festal board and the dozing couch. You may think that he, at least, is free from the curse which I describe ; but you are mistaken : While he is living, as he thinks, a life of luxurious ease and gentle inactivity, he fills himself with crude humours, and makes way for the gnawing gout and racking gravel. See even now, how strongly he perspires, and with what uneasiness he draws his short breath, and wipes his dewy, shining face ! Surely he toils under the load of an undigested meal. A porter carries a burden upon his brawny shoulders, but this wretch has conveyed one into his sick stomach. He will not work ; let him alone, and ere long, acute pains will bathe him in as profuse a sweat as that of the furnace-man ; and strong medicines will exercise him to such a degree, that he will envy even the collier's lot.

It is evident, therefore, that mankind are under a curse of *toil and sweat, according to the divine sentence re-

* It has been asserted that the short pleasure of eating and drinking, makes amends for the severest toil. The best way to bring such idle, sensual objectors to reason, would be to make them earn every meal by two or three hours threshing. Besides, what great pleasure can those have in eating, who actually starve, or just stay gnawing hunger by food coarser than that which their rich neighbours give to their dogs ?

corded by Moses ; and that they are frequently condemned by providence to as hard labour for life, as wretched felons rowing in the galleys, or digging in the mines.* But as it is absolutely incredible, that a good God, who by a word can supply the wants of all his creatures, should have sentenced *innocent* mankind to these inconceivable hardships, to procure or enjoy the necessaries of life ; it is evident they are guilty, miserable offenders.

X. ARGUMENT.

Hard labour and sweat, make up but one of the innumerable calamities incident to the wretched inhabitants of this world. Turn your eyes which may you please, and you will see some flying from, others groaning under, the rod of God ; and the greatest number busily making a scourge for the backs of their fellow creatures, or their own.

To pass over the misery of the brute creation : To say nothing of the subtilty and rapaciousness, with which (after the example of men†) they lay wait for, and prey upon one another : To cast a veil over the agonies of millions, that are daily stabbed, strangled, shot, and even flead, boiled, or swallowed up alive, for the support of man's life, or the indulgence of his luxury : and not to mention again the almost uninterrupted cries of feeble infancy : On-

* God's image disinherited of day,
Here plunged in mines forgets a sun was made ;
There, beings deathless as their haughty Lord,
Are hammer'd to the galling oar for life,
And plough the winter's wave, and reap despair.

YOUNG.

† Eager ambition's fiery chase I see ;
I see the circling hunt of noisy men,
Burst law's inclosure, leap the mounds of right,
Pursuing and pursued, each others prey ;
As wolves, for rapine ; as the fox, for wiles ;
Till *death*, that mighty hunter, earths them all.

YOUNG.

ly take notice of the tedious confinement of childhood, the blasted schemes of youth, the anxious cares of riper years, and the deep groans of wrinkled, decrepid, tottering old age—Fix your attention upon family trials: Here a prodigal father ruins his children, or undutiful children break the hearts of their fond parents: There, an unkind, husband embitters the life of his wife, or an imprudent wife stains the honour of her husband: a servant disobeys, a relation misbehaves, a son lies ill, a tenant breaks, a neighbour provokes, a rival supplants, a friend betrays, or an enemy triumphs: Peace seldom continues one day.

Listen to the sighs of the afflicted, the moans of the disconsolate, the complaints of the oppressed, and shrieks of the tortured: Consider the deformity of the faces of some, and distortion or mutilation of the limbs of others: To awaken your compassion, *here a beggar holds out the stump of a thigh or an arm: There a ragged wretch hops after you, upon one leg and two crutches; and a little farther you meet with a poor creature, using his hands instead of feet, and dragging through the mire the cumbrous weight of a body without lower parts.

Imagine, if possible, the hardships of those who are destitute of one of their senses: Here, the blind is guided by a dog, or gropes for his way in the blaze of noon; There, the deaf lies on the brink of danger, inattentive to the loudest calls: Here sits the dumb sentenced to eternal silence: There, dribbles the idiot doomed to perpetual childhood; and yonder the paralytic shakes without intermission, or lies senseless, the frightful image of a living corpse.

Leaving these wretched creatures, consider the tears of the disappointed, the sorrows of the captive, the anxieties of the accused, the fears of the guilty, and terrors of the

* Some for hard masters broken under arms,
In battle lopp'd away, with half their limbs,
Beg bitter bread through realms their valor sav'd.

condemned. Take a turn through jails, inquisitions, houses of correction and places of execution. Proceed to the mournful rooms of the languishing, and wearisome beds of the sick; and let not the fear of seeing human woe, in some of its most deplorable appearances, prevent you from visiting hospitals, infirmaries, and bedlams:

A place

Before your eyes appears, sad, noisome, dark,
 A lazar-house it seems, wherein are laid
 Numbers of all diseases'd: all maladies
 Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
 Of heart-sick agony, all fev'rous kinds,
 Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
 Intestine stone, and ulcer, cholic-pangs,
 Demoniac phrenzy, moaping melancholy,
 And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
 Marasmus, and wide wasting pestilence,
 Dropsies, and astmas, and joint-racking rheums.
 Dire is the tossing! Deep the groans! *Despair*
 Attends the sick, busiest from couch to couch:
 And over them, triumphant *Death* his dart
 Shakes; but delays to strike, tho' oft invoc'd
 With vows as their chief good, and final hope.

MILTON.

To close the horrible prospect, view the ruins of cities and kingdoms, the calamities of wrecks and sieges, the horrors of sea-fights and fields of battle; with all the crimes, devastations, and cruelties that accompany revenge, contention and war; and you will be obliged to conclude with *Job*, that corrupt *corrupt man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards*; with *David*, that *the earth is full of darkness and cruel habitations*; and with every impartial enquirer, that our depravity, and God's justice, concur to make this world *a vale of tears* as well as a field of toil

and sweat; a vast prison for rebels already "tied with the chains of their sins," a boundless scaffold for their execution, a golgotha, an *aceldama*, an immense *field* of torture and *blood*.

Some will probably say: "This picture of the world is drawn with black lines, but kinder providence blends light and shade together, and tempers our calamities with numberless blessings." I answer: It cannot be too thankfully acknowledged, that while patience suspends the stroke of justice, God, for Christ's sake, restores us a thousand forfeited blessings, that *his goodness may lead us to repentance*. But alas! What is the consequence, where divine grace does not prove victorious over corrupt nature? To all our sins, do we not add the crime of either enjoying the favours of providence with the greatest ingratitude, or of abusing them with the most provoking insolence.

Our actions are far more expressive of our real sentiments, than our words. Why this variety of exquisite food, says the voluptuary, whose life loudly speaks what his lips dare not utter? Why this abundance in delicious wines, but to tempt my unbridled appetite, and please my luxurious palate? Would God have given softness to silks, brightness to colours, and lustre to diamonds, says the self-applauding smile of a foolish virgin, who worships herself in a glass? Would he have commanded the white of the lily thus to meet the blush of the rose, and heighten so elegant a proportion of features, if he had not designed that the united powers of art, dress, and beauty, should make me share his divine honors? Why are we blessed with dear children and amiable friends, says the ridiculous behaviour of fond parents and raptured lovers, but that we should suspend our happiness on their ravishing smiles, and place them as favourite idols in the shrine of our hearts? And why has heaven favoured me both with a strong constitution, and an affluent fortune, says the rich

slave of brutish lusts, but that I may drink deeper of earthly joys and sensual delights?

Thus blessings abused or unimproved, become curses in our hands: God's indulgence encourages us to offend him: We have the fatal skill of extracting poison from the sweetest flowers; and madly turn the gifts of providence into weapons, to attack our Benefactor and destroy ourselves. That there are then such perverted gifts, does not prove that mankind are innocent, but that *God's patience endureth yet daily*, and that a Saviour *ever liveth to make intercession for us*.

Should it be farther objected, that "our pleasures counter-balance our calamities!" I answer: The greatest part of mankind are so oppressed with want and cares, toil and sickness, that their intervals of ease may rather be termed "an alleviation of misery," than "an enjoyment of happiness." Our pains are real and lasting, our joys imaginary and momentary. Could we exercise all our senses upon the most pleasing objects, the tooth-ach would render all insipid and burdensome; a fit of the gout alone damps every worldly joy, while all earthly delights together cannot give us ease under it: So vastly superior is the bitterness of one bodily pain, to the sweetness of all the pleasures of sense!

If objectors still urge, that "sufferings are needful for our trial:" I reply, they are necessary for our *punishment* and *correction*, but not for our *trial*. A good king can *try* the loyalty of his subjects, without putting them to the rack. Let Nero and Bonner *try* the innocent by all sorts of tortures, but let not their barbarity be charged upon a God strictly just, and infinitely good.

However "calamities prove a blessing to some." And so does transportation: But who ever inferred from thence, that reformed felons were transported for the *trial* of their virtue, and not for the *punishment* of their crimes? I conclude therefore, that our calamities and miseries de-

monstrate our corruption, as strongly as the punishments of the bastinado and pillory, appointed by an equitable judge, prove the guilt of those, on whom they are frequently and severely inflicted.

XI. ARGUMENT.

Would to God the multiplied calamities of life, were a sufficient punishment for our desperate wickedness! But alas! they only make way for the pangs of death. Like traitors, or rather like *wolves* and *vipers*, to which the Son of God compares natural men, we are all devoted to destruction. Yes, as we kill those mischievous creatures, so God destroys the sinful sons of men.

If the reader is offended, and denies the mortifying assertions, let him visit with me the mournful spot, where thousands are daily executed, and where hundreds make this moment their dying speech. I do not mean what some call "the bed of honor," a field of battle, but a common death-bed.

Observing, as we go along, those black trophies of the king of terrors, those escutcheons, which preposterous vanity fixes up in honor of the deceased, when kind charity should hang them out as a warning to the living; let us repair to those mournful apartments, where weeping attendants support the dying, where swooning friends embrace the dead, or whence distracted relatives carry out the pale remains of all their joy.

Guided by their groans and funeral lights, let us proceed to the dreary charnel-houses and calvaries, which we decently call *vaults* and *church-yards*: And without stopping to look at the monuments of some, whom my objector remembers as vigorous as himself; and of others, who were perhaps his partners in nightly revels; let us hasten to see the dust of his mouldered ancestors, and to read

upon yonder coffins the dear name of a parent, a child, perhaps a wife, turned off from his bosom into the gulph of eternity.

If this sight does not convince him, I shall open one of the noisome repositories, and shew him the deep hollows of those eyes, that darted tender sensations into his soul; and odious reptiles fattened upon the once charming, now ghastly face, he doted upon. But, methinks he turns pale at the very proposal, and, rather than be confronted with such witnesses, acknowledges that he is condemned to die, with all his dear relatives, and the whole human race.

And is this the case? Are we then under sentence of death? How awful is the consideration! Of all the things that nature dreads, is not *death* the most terrible? And is it not (as being the greatest of temporal evils) appointed by human and divine laws, for the punishment of capital offenders; whether they are named *felons* and *traitors*, or more genteelly called *men* and *sinner*s? Let matter of fact decide.

Whilst earthly judges condemn murderers, and traitors, to be hanged or beheaded; does not *the Judge of all* sentence sinful mankind, either to pine away with old age, or be wasted with consumption, burned with fevers, scalded with hot humours, eaten up with cancers, putrified by mortifications, suffocated by asthmas, strangled by quinsies, poisoned by the cup of excess, stabbed with the knife of luxury, or racked to death by disorders as loathsome, and accidents as various as their sins?

If you consider the circumstances of their execution, where is the material difference between the malefactor and the sinner? The jailor and the turn-key confine the one to his cell: The disorder and the physician confine the other to his bed. The one lives upon bread and water: The other upon draughts and boluses. The one can walk with his fetters: The other loaded with blisters can scarcely turn himself. The one enjoys freedom from pain, and has

the perfect use of his senses : The other complains he is racked all over, and is frequently delirious. The executioner does his office upon the one in a few minutes : But the physician and his medicines make the other linger for days, before he can die out of his misery. An honest sheriff, and constables armed with staves, wait upon one : while a greedy undertaker and his party, with like emblems of authority, accompany the other : And if it is any advantage to have a numerous attendance, without comparison the felon has the greater train.

When the pangs of death are over, does not the difference made between the corpses consist more in appearance than reality ? The murderer is dissected in the surgeon's hall, gratis, and the rich sinner is embowelled in his own apartment at great expense. The robber exposed to open air, wastes away in hoops of iron ; and the gentlemen confined to a damp vault, moulders away in sheets of lead : And while the fowls of the air greedily prey upon the one, the vermin of the earth eagerly devour the other.

And if you consider them as launching into the world of spirits ; is not the advantage, in one respect, on the malefactor's side ? He is solemnly assured he must die ; and when the death-warrant comes down, all about him bid him prepare, and make the best of his short time : But the physician and chaplain, friends and attendants, generally flatter the honorable sinner to the last : And what is the consequence ? He either sleeps on in carnal security, till death puts an end to all his delusive dreams ; or, if he has some notion that he must repent, for fear of discomposing his spirits, he still puts it off till *to-morrow* ; and in the midst of his delays God says, *Thou fool THIS NIGHT thy soul shall be required of thee*. What wonder is it then, if when the converted thief goes from the ignominious tree to paradise, the impenitent rich man passes from *his purple bed*, into an awful eternity, and there *lifts up his eyes in unexpected torments* ?

If these are truths too obvious to be denied, wilt thou, Sinner, as the thoughtless vulgar, blunt their edge, by saying, with amazing unconcern, "Death is a debt we must all pay to nature?" Alas! This is granting the point; for if all have contracted so dreadful a debt, all are in a corrupt and lost estate. Nor is this debt to be paid to *nature*, but to *justice*; otherwise dying would be as easy as sleeping, or any other natural action: But it is beyond expression terrible to thee, from whose soul the Redeemer has not extracted *sin*, the monster's *sting*: And if thou dost not see it now in the most alarming light, it is because either thou imaginest it at a great distance; or the double veil of rash presumption, and brutish stupidity, is yet upon thy hardened heart.

Or wilt thou, as the poor heathens, comfort thyself with the cruel thought, that "thou shalt not die alone?" Alas! dying companions may increase, but cannot take off the horror of dissolution. Besides, though we live in a crowd, we generally die alone: Each must drink that bitter cup, as if he were the only mortal in the universe.

What must we do then, in such deplorable circumstances? What! But humble ourselves in the dust, and bow low to the sceptre of divine justice; confessing that since the righteous God has condemned us to certain death, and in general to a far more lingering and painful death, than murderers and traitors are made to undergo, we are certainly degenerate creatures and capital offenders, who stand in absolute need of an Almighty Redeemer.

Permit me now, candid reader, to make a solemn appeal to thy reason assisted by the fear of God. From all that has been advanced, does it not appear, that man is no more the favoured, happy, and innocent creature he was, when he came out of the hands of his infinitely gracious Creator? And is it not evident that, whether we consider him as born into this disordered world, or dying out of it, or passing from the womb to the grave, under a variety of

calamitous circumstances, God's providential dealings with him, prove that he is by nature in a corrupt and lost estate?

A part, how small! of this terraqueous globe
Is tenanted by man, the rest a waste,
Rocks, deserts, frozen seas, and burning sands,
Wild haunts of monsters, poisons, stings, and death;
Such is earth's melancholy map; but far
More sad, this earth is a true map of man:
So bounded are its haughty lord's delights
To woe's wide empire, where deep troubles toss,
Loud sorrows howl, invenom'd passions bite,
Ravenous calamities our vitals seize,
And threat'ning fate wide opens to devour.

YOUNG.

THIRD PART.

WE have hitherto considered man as a miserable inhabitant of a wretched world. We have seen him surrounded by multitudes of wants : pursued by legions of distresses, maladies, and woes ; arrested by the king of terrors : cast into the grave ; and shut up there, the loathsome prey of corruption and worms. Let us now consider him as a *moral agent* ; and by examining his disposition, character, and conduct, let us see whether he is wisely punished, according to the sentence of impartial justice ; or wantonly tormented, at the caprice of arbitrary power.

We cannot help acknowledging, it is highly reasonable, first, that all intelligent creatures should love, reverence, and obey their Creator ; because he is most eminently their Father, their Master, and their King : Secondly, that they should assist, support, and love each other, as fellow subjects, fellow servants, and children of the same universal parent : and thirdly, that they should preserve their souls and bodies in peace and purity ; by which means alone they can be happy in themselves, profitable to man, and acceptable to God. This is what we generally call *natural religion*, which is evidently founded upon eternal reason, the fitness of things, and the essential relation of persons.

The propriety of these sanctions is so self-evident that *the Gentiles, who have not the written law, are a law unto themselves, and do* (but alas ! how seldom and from what motives !) *the things contained in the law, thus shewing that the work, the sum and substance of the law, though much blotted by the fall, is still written in their heart.* Nor

will it be erased thence in hell itself; for nothing but a sight of the equity of God's law, can clear his vindictive justice in the guilty breast, give a scorpion's sting to the worm that gnaws the stubborn offender, and arm his upbraiding conscience with a whip of biting serpents.

Since the moral law so strongly recommends itself to reason, let us see how universally it is observed or broken; So shall matter of fact decide, whether we are pure and upright, or polluted and depraved.

XII. ARGUMENT.

Those who reject the scriptures, universally agree, that *all have sinned*, and that *in many things we offend all*. Hence it appears, that persons of various constitutions, ranks, and education; in all nations, religions, times, and places; are born in such a state, and with such a nature, that they infallibly commit *many* sins in thought, word or deed.

But *one* transgression would be sufficient, to render them obnoxious to God's displeasure, and to bring them under the fearful curse of his broken law: For, even according to the statutes of this realm, a man, who *once* robs a traveller of a small sum of money, forfeits his life; as well as the bloody highwayman, who for years barbarously murders all those whom he stops, and accumulates immense wealth by his repeated barbarities.

The reason is obvious: Both incur the penalty of the law which forbids robbery; for both effectually break it, though one does it oftner, and with far more aggravating circumstances than the other. So sure then as one robbery deserves the gallows, one sin deserves death: for *the soul that sinneth*, says God's law, and not the soul that committeth so many sins, of such or such an heinousness, *it shall die*. Hence it is, that the first sin of the first man was punished both with spiritual and bodily death, and

with ten thousand other evils. The justice of this sanction will appear in a satisfactory light, if we consider the following remark.

1. In our present natural state, we are such strangers to God's glory, and the spirituality of his law ; and we are so used to *drink* the deadly poison of *iniquity like water*, that we have no idea of the horror, which should seize upon us, after a breach of the divine law. We are therefore as unfit judges of the atrociousness of sin, as lawless, hardened assassins, who shed human blood like water, are of the heinousness of murder.

2. As every wilful sin arises from a disregard of that sovereign authority, which is equally stamped upon all the commandments ; it hath in it the principle and nature of all possible iniquity, that is, the disregard and contempt of the Almighty.

3. There is no *proper merit* before God, in the longest and most exact course of obedience, but infinite demerit in one, even the least act of wilful disobedience. *When we have done all that is commanded us, we are still unprofitable servants* ; for the self-sufficient God has no more need of us, than a mighty monarch, of the vilest insects that creep in the dust beneath his feet : And our best actions, strictly speaking, deserve absolutely nothing from our Creator and Preserver, because we owe him all we have, and are, and can possibly do. But if we transgress in one point, we ruin all our obedience, and expose ourselves to the just penalty of his broken law. The following example may illustrate this observation.

If a rich man gives a *thousand* meals to an indigent neighbour, he acts only as a *man*, he does nothing but his duty ; and the judge allows him no reward. But if he gives him only *one* dose of poison, he acts as a *murderer*, and must die a shameful death : So greatly does one act of sin outweigh a thousand acts of obedience ! How exceedingly

absurd then is the common notion, that our good works counter-balance our bad ones ! Add to this, that

4. Guilt necessarily rises in proportion to the baseness of the offender, the greatness of the favours conferred upon him, and the dignity of the person offended. An insulting behaviour to a servant is a fault, to a magistrate it is a crime, to a king it is treason. And what is wilful sin, but an injury offered by an impotent rebel, to the infinitely powerful law-giver of the universe, to the kindest of benefactors, to the gracious Creator and preserver of men—an insult given to the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth, in whose glorious presence the dignity of the greatest potentates and arch-angels, as truly disappears as the splendour of the stars in the blaze of the meridian sun? Sin therefore flying into the face of such a law-giver, benefactor, and monarch, has in it a kind of infinite demerit from its infinite object; and rebellious, ungrateful, wretched man, who commits it a thousand times with a thousand aggravations, may, in the nervous language of our church, be said in some sense, to *deserve a thousand hells if there were so many.*

XIII. ARGUMENT.

Our natural depravity manifests itself by constant omissions of duty, as much as by flagrant commissions of sin, and perhaps much more. Take one instance out of many, that might be produced. Constant displays of preserving goodness, and presents undeservedly and uninterruptedly bestowed upon us, deserve a perpetual tribute of heart-felt gratitude : God demands it in his law ; and conscience, his agent in our souls, declares it ought in justice to be paid.

But where shall we find a deist, properly conscious of what he owes the supreme being, for his “ creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life ?” And where a christian duly sensible of “ God’s inestimable love in the

redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ?" A *due sense* of his ever-multiplied mercies, would fill our souls with never-ceasing wonder, and make our lips overflow with rapturous praise. The poet's language would suit our grateful sensations, and without exaggeration paint the just ardor of our transports.

Bound every heart and every bosom burn.
 Praise flow for ever (if astonishment
 Will give thee leave) my praise, for ever flow :
 Praise ardent, cordial, constant, &c.

Is not any thing short of this tranquil frame of mind, a sin of omission, a degree of ingratitude, of which all are naturally guilty ; and for which, it is to be feared, the best owe ten thousand talents, both to divine goodness and justice ?

Throw only a few bones to a dog, and you win him : He follows you : Your word becomes his law : Upon the first motion of your hand he flies through land and water to execute your commands : Obedience is his delight, and your presence his paradise : He convinces you of it by all the demonstrations of joy, which he is capable of giving : And if he unhappily loses sight of you, he exerts all his sagacity to trace your footsteps ; nor will he rest, till he finds his benefactor again.

Shall a brute be so thankful to a man for some offals, while man himself is so full of ingratitude to God, who created him, preserves his life from destruction, and hourly crowns him with mercies and loving-kindness ! How should shame cover our guilty faces ! Surely if the royal prophet could say, he *was as a beast before god* ; may we not well confess, that in point of gratitude, we are worse than the dullest, and most stupid part of the brute creation ? For even *the ox*, says the Lord, *knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib ; but Israel doth not know me,*

my people doth not consider my daily favours. And if the very heathens affirmed, that **to call a man ungrateful to an human benefactor was to say of him all possible evil in one word*; how can we express the baseness and depravity of mankind, who are universally so ungrateful, to so bounteous a benefactor as *God himself*?

XIV. ARGUMENT.

But, though we seem made of cold inattention, when the sight of divine mercies should kindle our heart into gratitude and praise; we soon get out of this languid frame of mind: For, in the pursuit of sensual gratifications, we are all activity and warmth: we seem an ardent compound of life and fire.

What can be the reason of this amazing difference? What but rebellious sense, and wanton appetite, raised at the sight or idea of some forbidden object! The bait of pleasure appears, corrupt nature summons all her powers, every nerve of expectation is stretched; every pulse of desire beats high: the blood is in a general ferment; the spirits are in an universal hurry; and though the hook of a fatal consequence is often apparent, the alluring bait must be swallowed. The fear of God, the most inestimable of all treasures, is already gone; and if the sinful gratification cannot be enjoyed upon any other term, a good reputation shall go also. Reason indeed makes remonstrances; but the loud clamours of flesh and blood, soon drown her soft whispers. The carnal mind steps imperiously upon the throne: Sense, that conquers the greatest conquerors, bears down all opposition: The yielding man is led captive by a brutish lust; and while angels blush, there is joy in hell over the actual, and complete degradation of an heaven-born spirit.

* *Ingratum si dixeris, omnia dicis.*—JUV.

Some indeed affirm, that these conflicts suit a state of probation and trial. But it is evident that either our temptations are too violent for our strength, or our strength too weak for our temptations ; since, notwithstanding the additional help of divine grace, there never was a mere mortal, over whom they never triumphed.

Nor can we exculpate ourselves by pleading, that these triumphs of sense over reason, are neither long nor frequent. Alas ! how many perpetrate an act of wickedness in a moment, and suffer death itself for a crime which they never repeated !

See that chrysal vessel. Its brightness and brittleness represent the shining, and delicate nature of true virtue. If I let it fall, and break it, what avails it to say, “ I never broke it before—I dropped it but once—I am excessively sorry for my carelessness—I will set the pieces together, and never break it again.” Will these excuses and resolutions prevent the vessel from being broken—broken for ever ? The reader may easily make the application.

Even heathen moralists, by their fabulous account of the companions of Ulysses, turned into swine, upon drinking *once* of Circe’s enchanted cup, teach us, that *one* fall into sensuality, turns a man into a brute ; just as one slip into unchastity or dishonesty, changes a modest woman into a strumpet, or an honest man into a thief. Again,

Ought not reason to have as absolute a command over appetite, as a skilful rider has over a well-broken horse ? But suppose we saw all horsemen universally mastered, one time or other, by their beasts ; and forced, though but for a few minutes, to receive the bit, and to go or stop at the pleasure of the wanton brutes : Should we not wonder, and justly infer, that man had lost the kind of superiority, which he still maintains over domestic animals ? And what then, but the commonness of the case, can prevent our being shocked, when we see rational creatures overcome, and led captive by carnal appetites ? Is not this the wan-

ton, rebellious beast mounting upon his vanquished, dastardly rider?

We may then conclude, that the universal rebellion of our lower faculties against our superior powers, and the triumphs of sense over reason, demonstrate, that human nature has suffered as fatal a revolution, as these kingdoms did, when a degraded king was seen bleeding on the scaffold, and a base usurper lording it in the seat of majesty.

XV. ARGUMENT.

Happy would it be for us, if our fall manifested itself only by some transient advantages of sense over reason. But alas! the experience of the best demonstrates the truth of Isaiah's words, *the whole head is sick*.

To say nothing of the gross stupidity, and unconquerable ignorance, that keep the generality of mankind just above the level of brutes; how strong, how clear is the UNDERSTANDING of men of sense in worldly affairs! How weak, how dark in spiritual things! How few idiots are there, but can distinguish between the shadow and the substance, the cup and the liquor, the dress and the person! But how many learned men, to this day, see no difference between water-baptism and spiritual regeneration, between the means of grace and grace itself, between *the form* and *the power of godliness!* at our devotions, is not our mind generally like the roving butterfly; and at our favourite diversions, and lucrative business, like the fastening leach? Can it not fix itself on any thing, sooner than on *the one thing needful*; and find out any way, before that of peace and salvation?

What can be more extravagant than our IMAGINATION? How often have we caught this wild power, forming and pursuing phantoms, building and pulling down castles in the air! how frequently hath it raised us into proud conceits, and then sunk us into gloomy apprehensions! and

where is the man, that it never led into such mental scenes of vanity and lewdness, as would have made him the object of universal contempt, if the véil of a grave and modest countenance, had not happily concealed him from public notice?

And has our MEMORY escaped unimpaired by the fall? Alas! let us only consider, how easily we forget the favours of our Creator, and recollect the injuries of our fellow-creatures; how little we retain of a good book or pious discourse, and how much of a play or frivolous conversation: and how exactly we remember an invitation to a party of pleasure, whilst the loudest calls to turn to God and prepare for death, are no sooner heard than forgotten—Let us I say, consider these things, and we shall be forced to confess, that this useful power loses like a sieve the living water of truth, drinks in like a sponge the muddy streams of vanity, and is never so retentive, as when it is excited by revenge, or some other detestable temper.

“ A wretch that is condemned to die to-morrow cannot forget it, says Baxter; yet poor sinners, who are uncertain to live an hour, and certain speedily to see the Majesty of the Lord, to their inconceivable joy or terror, can forget these things, for which they have their memory; and which, one would think, should drown the matters of this world, as the report of a cannon does a whisper, or as the sun obscures the poorest glow-worm. O wonderful stupidity of an unregenerate soul! O astonishing distraction of the ungodly! That ever men can forget eternal joy, eternal woe, the eternal God, and the place of their unchangeable abode; when they stand even at the door, and there is but the thin veil of flesh between them, and that amazing sight, that eternal gulph, into which thousands are daily plunging.”

Nor does our *REASON make us amends for the defects

* By *reason* I mean that power, by which we pass judgment upon, and draw inferences from what the *understanding* has simply apprehended.

of our other faculties. Its beams, it is true, wonderfully guide some persons through the circle of sciences, and the mazes of commercial or political affairs. But when it should lead us in the search of *the truth which is after godliness*, unless it is assisted from above, how are its faint rays obstructed by the gross medium of flesh and blood, broken by that of passion, and sometimes lost in that of prejudice! Wise sons of reason, learned philosophers, your two hundred and eighty-eight opinions concerning the *chief good*, are a multiplied proof of my sad assertion: all miss the mark. Not one of them makes the supreme felicity to consist in the knowledge and enjoyment of God, the amiable and adorable parent of all good.

True reason, alas! is as rare as true piety. The poor thing, which, in spiritual matters, the world calls *reason*, is only the ape of that noble faculty. How partial, how *unreasonable** is this false pretender! If it does not altogether overlook the awful realities of the invisible world, which is too frequently the case! how busy is it to reason away faith, and raise objections against the most evident truth,† even that which I now contend for? And when

* Our earth's the bedlam of the universe,
Where reason (undiseas'd in heaven) runs mad,
And nurses *folly's* children as her own,
Fond of the foulest. YOUNG.

† A late publication in vindication of Pelagianism appears to me no small instance of this. The Rev. Author takes his estimate of human nature, not from universal experience, but his undulged imagination; not from St. Paul the chief of the apostles, but from Dr. Taylor, *to whom he acknowledges his obligations for several of the best passages in his sermon*. Passing over the exposition of his text, where he oddly supposes that our Lord meant, *by the drawings of God*, the natural powers of man; which is as reasonable as to suppose, that when he said, *without ME ye can do nothing*, he meant that *me* should signify *ourselves*: Passing this over, I shall just point out his capital mistake. He tells us, that *All our faculties and powers ARE good and beautiful in their order*, [that they were so before the fall is fully granted] *and tend naturally to the happiness both of the individual and the system*; and he adds,

right reason has been worsted by sense, how ready is the impostor to plead against the faculty which it personates! How skilful in cloaking bad habits under the genteel name of "human foibles?" And how ingenious, in defending

that *How weak soever and imperfect our intellectual faculties may be, yet to speak reproachfully of them in general is a species of blasphemy against our Creator.* If to expose the present weakness of our rational faculties, and shew how greatly they are disordered and impaired by the fall, is what this divine calls *speaking reproachfully of them*, have not the best men been found guilty of this pretended *blasphemy*? How far the Apostles and Reformers carried it, may be seen in the first part of this treatise. How he can clear himself of it, as a subscriber to the 9th, 10th, and 35th articles of our church, I cannot see: And by what means he will justify his conduct to the world, in receiving hundreds a year to maintain the doctrine of the church of England, while he publicly exposes it as *a species of blasphemy*, is still a greater mystery. Far from seeing that *all the faculties and powers*, by which this is done, are *good and beautiful*, I cannot help thinking that some of them are materially defective; and that though such a conduct may very much *tend to the emolument of the individual* it has little tendency to the *happiness of the system*. For my part, were I to commence advocate for the *uprightness* of human nature, I would save appearances, lest Dr. Taylor himself should say, *Non defensoribus istis*, &c.—But dropping this point, I appeal to common sense: Who is most guilty of *blasphemy against our Creator*; he who says God made man both holy and happy, affirming that the present weakness of our rational powers, is entirely owing to the original apostacy of mankind: Or he, who intimates, that the gracious Author of our being, formed our intellectual faculties weak and imperfect as they now are? If it is not the latter, my understanding is strangely defective.—In vain does this learned divine tell us, that *the candle of the Lord which was lighted up in man at first, when the inspiration of the Almighty gave him understanding, was not extinguished by the original apostacy, but has kept burning ever since, and that the divine flame has caught from father to son, and has been propagated quite down to the present generation.* If it is reasonable to charge with *a species of blasphemy* those, who reverence their Creator too much, to father our present state of imperfection upon him, I must confess *my reason fails*: I have outlived *the divine flame* for one, or it never *caught from my father to me*.—A fear lest some well-meaning person should mistake the taper of Pelagius, or the lamp of Dr. Taylor, for *the candle of the Lord*, and follow it in the destructive paths of error, extorts this note from my pen. See the objections that follow the xxii. Argument.

the most irrational and dangerous methods of losing time, as “innocent sports, and harmless diversions!”

These observations, which must appear self-evident to all, who know the world or themselves, incontestably prove the degeneracy of all our rational powers, and consequently the universality of our natural corruption.

XVI. ARGUMENT.

When *the whole head is sick*, is not *the whole heart faint*? Can our will, conscience, and affections, run parallel to the line of duty; when our understanding, imagination, memory, and reason are so much warped from original rectitude? Impossible! Experience, thou best of judges, I appeal to thee. Erect thy fair tribunal in the reader's breast, and bear an honest testimony to the truth of the following assertions.

Our WILL, in general is full of obstinacy: We must have our own way, right or wrong. 'Tis pregnant with inconstancy: We are passionately fond of a thing one day, and tired of it the next: We form good resolutions in the morning, and break them before night. 'Tis impotent: When we see what is right, instead of doing it with all our might we frequently remain as inactive, as if we were bound by invisible chains; and we wonder by what charm, the wheels of duty thus stop against our apparent inclination; till we discover that the spring of our will is broken, or naturally works the wrong way: Yes, it is not only unable to follow the good, that the understanding approves; but full of perverseness to pursue the evil, that reason disapproves: We are prone to do, contrary to our design, those things which breed remorse and wound conscience: and sooner or later, we may all say with the heathen princess, who was going to murder her child,

*Video meliora, probo que,
Deteriora sequor.

NOR is CONSCIENCE itself untainted. Alas : how slow is it to reprove in some cases ! In others, how apt not to do it at all ! In one person, it is easy under mountains of guilt ; and in another, it is unreasonably scrupulous about mere trifles : It either *strains out a gnat*, or *swallows a camel* : When it is alarmed, in some it shews itself ready to be made easy by every wrong method ; in others, it obstinately refuses to be pacified by the right. To day, you may with propriety compare it to a dumb dog, that does not bark at a thief ; and to-morrow, to a snarling cur, that flies indifferently at a friend, a foe, or a shadow ; and then madly turns upon himself, and tears his own flesh.

If conscience, the best power of the unconverted man, is so corrupt, Good God ! what are his AFFECTIONS ? Almost perpetually deficient in some, and excessive in others, when do they attain to, or stop at, the line of moderation ? Who can tell, how oft he has been the sport of their irregularity and violence ? One hour we are hurried into rashness by their impetuosity : the next, we are bound in sloth by their inactivity : Sometimes every blast of foolish hope, or ill-grounded fear ; every gale of base desire, or unreasonable aversion ; every wave of idolatrous love, or sinful hatred ; every surge of misplaced admiration, or groundless horror ; every billow of noisy joy, or undue sorrow, tosses, raises, or sinks our soul ; as a ship in a storm, which has neither rudder nor ballast. At other times, we are totally becalmed ; all our sails are furled, not one breath of devout or human affection stirs in our stoical, frozen breast ; and we remain stupidly insensible, till the spark of temptation, dropping upon the combustible matter in our hearts, blows us up again into loud passion :

* If the reader wants to know the English of these words, he may find it, Rom. vii. 15.

And then, how dreadful and ridiculous together, is the new explosion.

If experience pronounces that these reflections are just, the point is gained. Our *whole heart is faint*, through the unaccountable disorders of our *will*, the lethargy or boisterous fits of our *conscience*, and the swooning or high fever of our *affections*: And we may without hypocrisy, join in our daily confession, and say, *There is no health in us.*

XVII. ARGUMENT.

The danger of these complicated maladies of our souls, evidences itself by the most fatal of all symptoms, *our manifest alienation from God.* Yes, shocking as the confession is, we must make it, if truth has any dominion in our breast: unrenewed man loves not his God. That eternal beauty, for whose contemplation; that supreme good, for whose enjoyment he was created, is generally forgotten, despised, or hated. If the thought of his Holy Majesty presents itself, he looks upon it as an intruder: It lays him under as disagreeable a restraint, as that, which the presence of a grave, pious master puts upon a wanton idle servant: Nor can he quietly pursue his sinful courses, till he has driven away the troublesome idea; or imagined with the Epicure, a careless God, who wants resolution to call him to an account, and justice to punish him for his iniquity.

Does any one offer an indignity to his favourite friend, or only speak contemptibly of the object of his esteem, he feels as if he was the person insulted, and reddening with indignation, directly espouses his cause: But every body, the meanest of his attendants not excepted, may with impunity insult the King of kings in his presence, and take the most prophane liberties, with his name and word, his laws and ministers: He hears the wild blasphemery, and re-

gards it not ; he sees the horrid outrage, and resents it not ; and yet, amazing infatuation ! he pretends to love God.

If he goes to the play, he can fix his roving eyes and wandering mind, three hours together upon the same trifling object, not only without weariness but with uncommon delight. If he has an appointment with the person, whom he adores as a deity ; his spirits are elevated, expectation and joy flutter in his dilated breast : He sweetly anticipates the pleasing interview, or impatiently chides the slowly flowing minutes : His feelings are inexpressible. But if he attends the great congregation which he too often omits upon the most frivolous pretences, it is rather out of form and decency, than out of devotion and love ; rather with indifference or reluctance, than with delight and transport. And when he is present there, how absent are his thoughts ! How wandering his eyes ! How trifling, supine, irreverent* his whole behaviour ! he would be ashamed to speak to the meanest of his servants with as little attention as he sometimes prays to the Majesty of heaven. Were he to stare about when he gives them orders, as he does when he presents his supplications to the Lord of lords, he would be afraid that they would think he was half drunk, or had a touch of lunacy.

Suppose he still retains a sense of outward decency, while the church goes through her solemn offices ; yet how heavy are his spirits ! How heartless his confessions ; how cold his prayers ! the blessing comes at last, and he is blessed indeed—not with *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost*, for that he gladly

* Men homage pay to men,
Thoughtless beneath whose dreadful eye they bow
In mutual awe profound, of clay to clay,
Of guilt to guilt, and turn their backs on Thee,
Great Sire ! whom thrones celestial ceaseless sing ;
To prostrate angels an amazing scene !

YOUNG.

leaves to "poor enthusiasts," but with a release from his confinement and tedious work. And now that he has "done his duty, and served God," he hastes away to the company that suits his taste.

See him there. Do not his very looks declare, he is in his own element? With what eagerness of spirit, energy of gesture, and volubility of tongue, does he talk over his last entertainment, chase, or bargain? Does not the oil of cheerfulness make all his motions as free and easy, as if weight and friction had no place at all in his light and airy frame?

Love of God, thou sweetest, strongest of all powers, didst thou ever thus metamorphose his soul, and impart such a sprightly activity to his body? and you that converse most familiarly with him, did you ever hear him say? *Come and I will tell you what the Lord has done for my soul: Taste, and see how good the Lord is.*—No, never; for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*; Nor can it be expected that God, who hath no place in his joyous reflections, should have one in his cheerful conversation. On the contrary, it will be matter of surprise to those who introduce the delightful subject of the love of God, if he does not wave it off as dull, melancholy, or enthusiastical.

But as he will give you to understand, "he is no hypocrite, and therefore confines devotion to his closet," follow him there—Alas! he scarce ever bends the knee to *Him that sees in secret*: Or, if he says his prayers as regularly as he winds his watch, it is much in the same spirit: For suppose he does not hurry them over, or cut them as short as possible; yet the careless, formal manner in which he offers them up, indicates as plainly as his public conduct, the aversion lurking in his heart against God: And yet he fancies he loves him: With a sneer that indicates self-applause, and a pharisaic contempt of others; "Away with all your feelings and raptures, says he, *This is the love of*

God that we keep his commandments.” But alas ! which of them does he keep ! Certainly not the *first*—for the Lord is not the supreme object of his hopes and fears, his confidence and joy : Nor yet the *last*—for discontent and wrong desires are still indulged in his selfish and worldly heart. How unfortunate, therefore, is his appeal to the *commandments*, by which his secret enmity to the law, government, and nature of God is brought to the clearest light !

XVIII. ARGUMENT.

But as the heart-felt love of God is supposed to be downright enthusiasm by some moralists, who dashing in pieces the first table of the law against the second, pretend that all our duty to God consists in the love of our neighbour ; let us examine the unconverted man’s charity, and see whether he bears more love to his fellow-creatures, than to his Creator.

Nothing can be more erroneous than his notions of *charity*. He confounds it with the bare *giving of alms* : not considering that it is possible to do this kind of good, from the most selfish and *uncharitable* motives. Therefore, when the fear of being accounted covetous, the desire of passing for generous, the vanity of seeing his name in a list of noble subscribers, the shame of being outdone by his equals, the teasing importunity of an obstinate beggar, the moving address of a solicitor whom he would blush to deny, or the pharisaic notion of making amends for his sins and purchasing heaven by his alms—when any, I say, of these sinister motives sets him upon assisting industrious poverty, relieving friendless old age, or supporting infirm and mutilated indigence, he fancies that he gives an indubitable proof of his *charity*.

Sometimes too he affixes to that word, the idea of a fond hope, that every body is going to heaven : For if you intimate, that the rich voluptuary is not with Lazarus in Abra-

ham's bosom, and that the foolish virgins are not promiscuously admitted to glory with the wise, he wonders at "your uncharitableness," and thanks God "he never entertained such unchristian thoughts of his neighbours."

He considers not, that *charity* is the fair offspring of the *love of God*, to which he is yet an utter stranger; and that it consists in an universal, disinterested benevolence to all mankind, our worst enemies not accepted: a benevolence that sweetly evidences itself by bearing with patience the evil which they do to us, and kindly doing them all the good we possibly can, both with respect to their soul and body, their property and reputation.

If this is a just definition of charity, the unrenewed man has not even the outside of it. To prove it, I might appeal to his impatience and ill-humour, his unkind words and cutting raileries (for I suppose him too moral ever to slander or curse any one :) I might mention his supercilious behaviour to some, who are entitled to his affability as men, countrymen, and neighbours: I might expatiate on his readiness to exculpate, enrich, or aggrandize himself at the expense of *others*, whenever he can do it without exposing *himself*.

But waving all these particulars, I ask: Whom does he truly love? You answer: "Doubtless the person to whom he makes daily protestations of the warmest regard." But how does he prove this regard? Why, perhaps by the most artful insinuations, and dangerous attempts to rob her of her virtue. Perhaps he has already gained his end—Unhappy Magdalen! How much better would it have been for thee to have fallen into the hands of an highway-man? Thou wouldst only have lost thy money, but now thou art despoiled of the honor of thy sex, and the peace of thy mind: Thou are robbed at once of virgin innocence, a fair reputation, and possibly a healthy constitution. If this is a specimen of the unconverted man's love, what must be his hatred.

But I happily mistake: "He is no libertine, he has a virtuous wife, and amiable children, and he loves them, say you, with the tenderest affection." I reply, that these relations being *immortal spirits*, confined for a few years, in a tenement of clay, and continually on the remove for eternity; his laudable regard for their *frail bodies*, and proper care of their *temporal prosperity*, are not a sufficient proof that he loves them in a right manner. For even according to *wise heathens, our *soul* is our *better part*, our *true self*. And what tender concerns does the unrenewed man feel for the soul of his bosom friend? Does he regard it more than the body of his groom, or the life of his horse? Does he, with any degree of importunity, carry it daily in the arms of love and prayer, to the throne of grace for life and salvation? Does he, by good instructions, and a virtuous example, excite his children to secure an eternal inheritance? and is he at least as desirous to see them wise and pious; as well-bred, rich, handsome, and great? alas! I fear it is just the reverse. He is probably the first to poison their tender minds with some of the dangerous maxims that vanity and ambition have invented: and, supposing he has a favourite dog, it is well if he is not more anxious for the preservation of that one domestic animal, than for the salvation of all their souls.

If these observations are founded upon matter of fact, as daily experience demonstrates, I appeal to common sense, and ask: Can the natural man, with all his fondness, be said to have a true love even for his nearest relatives? and is not the regard that he manifests for their *bodies* more like the common instinct, by which doves cleave to their mates, and swallows provide for their young; than like the generous affection which a rational creature ought to bear to *immortal SPIRITS*, awfully hovering in a scale of probation, which is just going to turn for hell or heaven.

* Nos non corpora sumus: Corpus quidem vas est aut aliquod animi receptaculum. Cic. Tusc. Quaest. lib. 1.

XIX. ARGUMENT.

Nor is it surprising that the unrenewed man should be devoid of all true love to his nearest relations : for he is so completely fallen, that he bears no true love even to *himself*. Let us overlook those who cut their throats, shoot, drown, or hang themselves. Let us take no notice of those who sacrifice a year's health for a night's revel ; who enflame their blood into fevers, or drive putrefaction into their bones, for the momentary gratification of a shameful appetite ; and are so hot in the pursuit of a base pleasure, that they leap after it even into the jaws of an untimely grave : Let us, I say, pass by those innumerable, unhappy victims of intemperance and debauchery, who squander their money upon panders and harlots, and have as little regard for their health, as for their fortune and reputation ; and let us consider the case of those good-natured, decent persons, who profess to have a real value for both.

Upon the principle laid down in the last argument, may I not ask, What love have these for their immortal part, their *true self*? What do they do for their souls? Or rather what do they not leave undone? And who can shew less concern for their greatest interest than they?

Alas! in spiritual matters, the wisest of them seem on a level with the most foolish. They anxiously secure their title to a few possessions in this transitory world, out of which the stream of time carries them with unabated impetuosity, while they remain *stupidly thoughtless of their

* Time flies, death urges, knells call, heaven invites,
 Hell threatens; all exerts; in effort all;
 More than creation labours! labours more!
 And is there in creation, what, amidst
 This tumult universal, wing'd dispatch,
 And ardent energy, supinely yawns?
Man sleeps; and *man* alone; and *man*, whose fate,
 Fate irreversible, intire, extreme,

portion in the unchangeable world, into which they are just going to launch: They take particular notice of every trivial incident in life, every idle report raised in their neighbourhood, and supinely overlook the great realities of death and judgment, hell and heaven.

You see them perpetually contriving how to preserve, indulge, and adorn their dying bodies; and daily neglecting the safety, welfare, and ornament of their immortal souls. So great is their folly, that earthly toys make them slight heavenly thrones! So wilful their self-deception, that a point of time* hides from them a boundless eternity! So perverted is their moral taste, that they nauseate the word of truth, the precious food of souls, and greedily run upon the tempter's hook, if it is but made of solid gold, or gilt over with the specious appearance of honour, or only baited with the prospect of a favourite diversion. And whilst, by uneasy fretful tempers, they too often impair their bodily health; by exorbitant affections and pungent cares, they frequently break their hearts, or pierce themselves through with many sorrows.

Does such a conduct deserve the name of well-ordered *self-love*, or preposterous *self-hatred*? O man, sinful man, how totally art thou depraved, if thou art not only thy own

Endless, hair-hung, breeze-shaken, o'er the gulph
A moment trembles; drops! and *man*, for whom
All else is in alarm, *man*, the sole cause
Of this surrounding storm! and yet he sleeps,
As the storm rock'd to rest.

YOUNG.

* And is it the flight of threescore years
To push eternity from human thought,
And bury souls immortal in the dust?
A soul immortal spending all her fires,
Wasting her strength in strenuous idleness;
Thrown into tumult, raptur'd, or alarm'd,
At ought this scene can threaten, or indulge,
Resembles Ocean into tempest wrought
To waft a feather, or to drown a fly.

YOUNG.

most dangerous enemy, but often thy most cruel tormentor!

XX. ARGUMENT.

This depravity is productive of the most detestable brood. When it has suppressed the love of God, perverted the love of our neighbour, and vitiated self-love; it soon gives birth to a variety of execrable tempers, and dire affections, which should have no place but in the breast of fiends, no out-breaking but in the chambers of hell.

If you ask their name: I answer—*Pride*, that odious vice, which feeds on the praises it silyly procures, lives by the applause it has meanly courted, and is equally stabbed by the reproof of a friend, and the sneer of a foe. *The spirit of independance*, which cannot bear controul, is galled by the easiest yoke, gnaws the slender cords of just authority, as if they were the heavy chains of tyrannical power; nor ever ceases struggling till they break, and he can say: “Now I am my own master.” *Ambition* and *Vanity*, which, like Proteus, take a thousand shapes, and wind a thousand ways, to climb up to the high seat of power, shine on the tottering stage of honour, wear the golden badge of fortune, glittering the gaudy pomp of dress, and draw by distinguishing appearances, the admiration of a gaping multitude. *Sloth*, which unnerves the soul, infeebls the body, and makes the whole man deaf to the calls of duty, loath to set about his business, (even when want, fear, or shame, drives him to it) ready to postpone or omit it upon any pretence, and willing to give up even the interests of society, virtue and religion, so he may saunter undisturbed, doze the time away in stupid inactivity, or enjoy himself in that dastardly indolence, which passes in the world for quietness and good nature. *Envy*, that looks with an evil eye at the good things our competitors enjoy, takes a secret pleasure in their misfortunes, under various pretexts exposes their

faults, slyly tries to add to our reputation what it detracts from theirs, and stings our heart when they eclipse us by their greater success or superior excellencies. *Covetousness*, which is always dissatisfied with its portion, watches it with tormenting fears, increases it by every sordid mean, and turning its own executioner, justly pines for want over the treasure, it madly saves for a prodigal heir. *Impatience*, which frets at every thing, finds fault with every person, and madly tears herself under the distressing sense of a present evil, or the anxious expectation of an absent good. *Wrath*, which distorts our faces, racks our breasts, alarms our households, threatens, curses, stamps and storms even upon imaginary or trifling provocations. *Jealousy*, that through a fatal skill in diabolical optics, sees contempt in all the words of a favourable friend, discovers infidelity in all his actions, lives upon the wicked suspicions it begets, and turns the sweets of the mildest passion into wormwood and gall. *Idolatrous love*, which preys upon the spirits, consumes the flesh, tears the throbbing heart, and when it is disappointed, frequently forces its wretched slaves to lay violent hands upon themselves—*Hatred*, of our fellow-creatures, which keeps us void of tender benevolence, a chief ingredient in the bliss of angels; and fills us with some of the most unhappy sensations belonging to accursed spirits. *Malice*, which takes an unnatural, hellish pleasure in teasing beasts, and hurting men in their persons, properties, or reputation—And the offspring of malice, *Revenge*,* who always thirsts after

* Man hard of heart to man! Of horrid things
Most horrid! Midst stupendous, highly strange!
Yet oft his courtesies are smoother wrongs;
Pride brandishes the favours he confers,
And contumelious his humanity:
What then his vengeance? Hear it not, ye stars!
And thou pale moon! turn paler at the sound,
Man is to man the sorest, surest ill.—
Heav'n's Sovereign saves all beings but Himself
That hideous sight, a naked human heart.

YOUNG.

mischief or blood; and shares the only delight of devils, when he can repay a real or fancied injury seven-fold. *Hypocrisy*, who borrows the cloak of religion; bids her flexible muscles imitate vital piety; attends at the sacred altars, to make a shew of her fictitious devotion; there raises her affected zeal in proportion to the number of the spectators; calls upon God to get the praise of man; and lifts up adulterous eyes and thievish hands to heaven, to procure herself the good things of the earth. And hypocrisy's sister, narrow-hearted *Bigotry*, who pushes from her civility and good-nature, stops her ears against arguments and entreaties; calls *huguenots, infidels, papists, or heretics*, all who do not directly subscribe to her absurd or impious creeds; dogs them with a malignant eye; throws stones or dirt at them about an empty ceremony, or an indifferent opinion; and at last, if she can, sets churches or kingdoms on fire, about a turban, a surplice, or a cowl. *Perfidiousness*, who puts on the looks of true benevolence, speaks the language of the warmest affection; with solemn protestations invites men to depend on her sincerity, while she lays a deep plot for their sudden destruction; and with repeated oaths beseeches heaven to be witness of her artless innocence, while she moves the centre of hell to accomplish her dire designs. The fatal hour is come; her stratagem has succeeded; and she now kisses and betrays, drinks health and poisons; offers a friendly embrace, and gives a deadly stab. *Despair*, who scorns to be beholden to mercy, gives the lie to all the declarations issued from the throne of grace, obstinately turns his wild eyes from the great expiatory sacrifice; and at last, impatient to drink the cup of trembling, wildly looks for some weapon to destroy himself. *Distraction*, begotten by the shocking mixture of two, or more of these infernal passions raised to the highest degree of extravagance: *Distraction*, that wrings her hands, tears her dishevelled hair, fixes her

ghastly eyes, turns her swimming brains, quenches the last spark of reason; and like a fierce tiger, must at last be chained by the hand of caution, and confined with iron bars in her dreary dwelling.

And to close the dismal train, *Self-murder*, who always points wretched mortals to ponds and rivers, or presents them with cords, razors, pistols, daggers, and poison, and perpetually urges them to the choice of one of them. "You are guilty, miserable creatures, whispers he: The sun of prosperity is forever set, the deepest night of distress is come upon you: You are in a hell of woe: The hell prepared for satan, cannot be worse than that which you feel, but it may be more tolerable: Take this, and boldly force your passage out of the cursed state in which you groan." He persuades, and his desperate victims, tired of the company of their fellow-mortals, fly for refuge to that of devils: they shut their eyes; and, horrible to say! But how much more horrible to do! Deliberately venture from one hell into another to seek ease; or, to speak with more truth, leap with all the miseries of a known hell, into all the horrors of one which is unknown.

And are your hearts, O ye sons of men, the favourite seats of this infernal crew? Then shame on the wretch that made the first panegyric on the dignity of human nature! He proved my point: He began in *pride*, and ended in *distraction*.

Detestable as these vices and tempers are, where is the natural man, that is always free from them? Where is even the child ten years old, who never felt most of these vipers, upon some occasion or other, shooting their venom through his lips, darting their baleful influence through his eyes, or at least stirring and hissing in his disturbed breast? If any one never felt them, he may be pronounced more than mortal: But if he has, his own experience furnishes him with a sensible demonstration, that he is a fallen

spirit, infected with the poison that rages in the devil himself.

XXI. ARGUMENT.

Bad roots, which vigorously shoot in the spring, will naturally produce their dangerous fruit in summer. We may therefore go one step further, and ask, where is the man thirty years old, whose depravity has not broke out into the greatest variety of sinful acts? among the persons of that age, who never were esteemed worse than their neighbours, shall we find a *forehead* that never betrayed daring insolence? A *cheek*, that never indicated concealed guilt by an involuntary blush, or unnatural paleness? A *neck*, that never was stretched out in pride and vain confidence? An *eye*, that never cast a disdainful, malignant, or wanton look? An *ear*, that an evil curiosity never opened to frothy, loose or defaming discourse? A *tongue*, that never was tainted with unedifying, false, indecent, or uncharitable language? A *palate*, that never became the seat of luxurious indulgence? A *throat*, that never was the channel of excess? A *stomach*, that never felt the oppressive load of abused mercies? *Hands*, that never plucked, or touched the forbidden fruit of pleasing sin? *Feet*, that never once moved in the broad, downward road of iniquity? And a *bosom*, that never heaved under the dreadful workings of some exorbitant passion? Where, in short, is there a *face* ever so disagreeable that never was the object of self-worship in a glass? And where a *body*, however deformed, that never was set up as a favourite idol, by the fallen spirit that inhabits it?

If iniquity thus works by all the powers, and breaks out through all the parts of the human body; we may conclude by woful experience, not only that the plague of sin is begun, but that it rages with universal fury; and to use again the evangelical prophet's words, that *from the sole of the*

foot, even to the head of the natural man, there is no spiritual soundness in him, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.

XXII. ARGUMENT.

What can be said of each individual, may, with the same propriety, be affirmed of all the different nations of the earth. Let an impartial judge take four unconverted men, or children, from the four parts of the world: Let him examine their actions, and trace them back to their spring; and, if he makes some allowance for the accidental difference of their climate, constitution, taste, and education; he will soon find their disposition as equally *earthly, sensual, and devilesh*, as if they had all been cast in the same mould. Yes, as oak-trees are oaks all the world over, though by particular circumstances some grow taller and harder, and some more knotted and crooked than others: So all unregenerate men resemble one another; for all are proud, self-willed, impenitent, and *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*.

Do not sloth, gluttony, drunkenness, and uncleanness; cheating, defrauding, stealing, and oppression; lying, perjury, treachery and cruelty; stalk openly, or lurk secretly every where? Are not all these vices predominant among black and white people, among savage and civilized nations, among Turks and Jews, heathens and christians? whether they live on the banks of the Ganges or the Thames, the Mississippi or the Seine? Whether they starve in the snows of Lapland, or burn in the sands of Guinea?

O Sin, thou fatal pest, thou soul-destroying plague, would to God thy fixed abode were *only* in the Levant! and that, like the external pestilence, thou wert chiefly confined to the Turkish dominions! But alas! the gross immorality and prophaneness, the various crimes and villa-

nies, the desperate impiety and wild blasphemy, under which every kingdom and city have groaned, and still continue to do night and day, over the face of the whole earth, are black spots so similar, and symptoms so equally terrible, that we are obliged to confess, they must have a common internal principle; which can be no other than a bad habit of soul; a fallen corrupted nature. Yes, the universality and equality of the effects, shew to an unprejudiced mind, that the cause is universal, and equally interwoven with the nature, which is common to all nations, and remains the same in all countries and ages.

FIVE OBJECTIONS.

I. If the self-righteous moralist answers, that "sin and wickedness are not so universal as this argument supposes:" I reply that the more we are acquainted with ourselves, with the history of the dead, and secret transactions of the living; the more we are convinced, that if all are not guilty of *outward* enormities, all are deeply tainted with *spiritual* wickedness.

Even those excellent persons who, like Jeremiah, have been in part *sanctified before they came forth out of the womb*, can from sad experience confess with him, that *the heart is deceitful above all things*, and say with David, *My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly*.

Thousands indeed boast of the goodness of their hearts: they flatter themselves that to be righteous, it is enough to avoid the gross acts of intemperance and injustice: with the Pharisees they shut their eyes against the destructive nature of the love of the world, the thirst of praise, the fear of men, the love of ease, sloth, sensuality, indevotion, self-righteousness, discontent, impatience, selfishness, carnal security, unbelief, hardness of heart, and a thousand other spiritual evils. Full of self-ignorance, like Peter, they imagine there is no combustible matter of wickedness in

their breasts, because they are not actually fired by the spark of a suitable temptation. And when they hear what their corrupt nature may one day prompt them to, they cry out with Hazael, *Am I a dog, that I should do this thing?* Nevertheless by and by they do it, if not outwardly as he did, at least in their vain thoughts by day, or wicked lewd imaginations by night. So true is the wise man's saying! *He that trusteth his own heart is a fool.*

II. "If historians give us frequent accounts of the notorious wickedness of mankind (says the advocates for human excellence) it is because private virtue is not the subject of history: and to judge of the moral rectitude of the world by the corruption of courts, is as absurd as to estimate the health of a people from an infirmary."

And is private vice any more the subject of history than private virtue? If it were, what folios would contain the fulsome and black accounts of all the lies and scandal, the secret grudges and open quarrels, the filthy talking and malicious jesting, the unkind or unjust behaviour, the gross or refined intemperance, which deluge both town and country?

Suppose the annals of any one numerous family were published, how many volumes might be filled with the detail of the undone fondness, or forbidding coldness; the variance, animosity, and strife, which break out between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, masters and domestics, upper and lower servants, &c. What ridiculous, impertinent scenes would be opened to public view! What fretfulness, dissimulation, envy, jealousy, tale-bearing, deceit! What concealed suspicions, aggravated charges, false accusations, underhand dealings, imaginary provocations, glaring partiality, insolent behaviour, loud passions!

Was even the best moralist to write the memoirs of his own heart, and give the public a minute account of all his impertinent thoughts, and wild imaginations; how many

paragraphs would make him blush! How many pages, by presenting the astonished reader with a blank or a blot, would demonstrate the truth of St. Paul's assertion, *They are all gone out of the way, there is none that doeth good*, none but spoils his best works by a mixture of essential evil! Far then from finding * "those vastly superior numbers, who in safe obscurity are virtuously and innocently employed," we may *every where* see the truth of the confession, which our objectors make in the church, "There is no health in us."

I say *every where*, for is cabal confined to court, any more than lewdness to the army, and prophaneness to the navy? Does not the same spirit of self-interest and intrigue which influences the choice of ministers of state, preside also at the election of members of parliament, mayors of corporate towns, burgesses of boroughs, and petty officers in a country parish? We may then, (notwithstanding the unfortunate comparison, on which this objection is founded) conclude without absurdity, that as all men, sooner or later, by pain, sickness, and death, evidence their natural weakness and mortality; whether they live in *infirmaries*, palaces, or cottages: So all men, sooner or later, by their thoughts, words and actions, demonstrate their natural corruption; whether they crowd the jail-yard, the drawing-room, or the obscure green of a country village.

III. The same objectors will probably reply: "If corruption is universal, it cannot be said to be equal; for numbers lead a very harmless, and not a few a very useful life."

To this I answer, that all have naturally *an evil heart of unbelief*, forgetful of, and *departing from the living God*. In this respect, *there is no difference, all the world is guilty before God*. But thanks be to the Father of mercies, all

* See the note [mark'd †] p. 295.

do not remain so. Many cherish the seed of supernatural grace, which we have from the Redeemer ; they bow to his sceptre, become *new creatures, depart from iniquity, and are zealous of good works.* And the same gracious power, that has renewed them, is at work upon thousands more ; hourly restraining them from much evil, and daily exciting them to many useful actions.

With respect to the harmlessness, for which some unrenewed persons are remarkable, it cannot spring from a better nature than that of their fellow-mortals ; for the nature of all *men*, like that of all *wolves*, is the same throughout the whole species. It must then be owing to the restraining grace of God, or to a happier constitution, a stricter education, a deeper sense of decency, or a greater regard for their character : perhaps only to the fear of consequences, and to the want of natural boldness, or of a suitable temptation and fair opportunity to sin. Nor are there few, who pass for temperate, merely because the diabolical pride lurking in their heart, scorns to stoop so low, as to indulge their beastly appetites : While others have the undeserved reputation of good-natured, because they find more delight in quietly gratifying their sheepish indolence or brutal desires, than in yielding to the uneasy, boisterous tempers, which they have in common with devils.

As to the virtues by which some of the unconverted distinguish themselves from others, they either spring from God's preventing grace, or are only vices in disguise. The love of praise, the desire of honour, and the thirst of gold, excite thousands to laudable designs, and useful actions. Wicked men, set on work by these powerful springs, do lying wonders in the moral world, as the magicians did in the land of Egypt. They counterfeit divine grace, and for a time seem even to out-do believers themselves. Hence it is, that we frequently see the indolent industrious, the coward brave, the covetous charitable, the pharisee religious, the magdalen modest, and the dastardly slave of his

lusts a bold asserter of public liberty. But the searcher of hearts is not deceived by fair appearances: he judges of their actions according to the motives whence they spring, and the ends for which they are performed: *You are*, says he to these all seemingly virtuous sinners, *like whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly; but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*

Were I to describe these saints of the world by a comparison, I would say, that some of them resemble persons, who artfully conceal their ulcers, under the most agreeable appearance of cleanliness and health. Many that admire their faces and looks, little suspect what a putrid, virulent fluid runs out of their *secret* sores. Others of them, whose hypocrisy is not of so gross a kind, are like persons infected with a mortal disease, who though the mass of their blood is tainted, and some noble part attacked, still walk about, do business, and look as fresh-coloured as if they were the picture of health. Ye sons of Æsculapius, who, without feeling their pulse, and carefully weighing every symptom, pronounce them very well upon their look alone, do ye not blunder in physic, just as my objectors do in divinity?

IV. But still they urge, that "It is wrong to father our sinfulness upon a pretended natural depravity, when it may be entirely owing to the force of ill example, the influence of a bad education, or the strong ferments of youthful blood."

All these, I reply, like rich soil and rank manure, cause original corruption to shoot the higher, but do not form its pernicious seeds. That these seeds lurk within the heart, before they are forced up by the heat of temptation, appears indubitable, if we consider, (1.) That all children, on particular occasions, manifest some early inclination to those sins, which the feebleness of their bodily organs, and the want of proper ferments in their blood do not permit them to commit: (2.) That infants betray envy, ill-hu-

mour, impatience, selfishness, anger and obstinacy, even before they can take particular notice of ill-examples, and understand bad counsels: And (3.) That though uncleanness, fornication, and adultery, on account of the shame and danger attending them, are committed with so much secrecy, that the *examples* of them are seldom, if ever, given in public; they are nevertheless some of the crimes which are most universally or eagerly committed.

Besides, if we were not more inclined to vice than virtue, good examples would be as common, and have as much force, as bad ones. Therefore the generality of bad examples cannot arise but from the general sinfulness of man; and to account for this general sinfulness by the generality of bad examples, is *begging* the question, and not *proving* the point.

Add to this, that as weeds, since the curse, grow even in fields sown with the best wheat; so vice since the fall, grows in the midst of the best examples, and the most excellent education: Witness the barbarous crimes committed by pious Jacob's children, and penitent Adam's eldest son.

V. "But if Cain sinned, say our objectors, and all mankind sin also, it is no more than Adam himself once did by his own free choice, though he was created as exempt from original depravity as an angel. What need is there then to suppose, that he communicated to his posterity an inbred proneness to sin?"

To this I reply: It is not one accident or single event, but a continual repetition of the same event, that proves a proneness. If a man, who is perfectly in his senses, by some unforeseen accident falls into a fit of madness, we may account for his misfortune from that accident; and no certain judgment can be formed of the bodily habit of his family. But if all his children, through an hundred generations, are not only subject to the same mad fits, but also die in consequence of them, in all sorts of climates, and

under all sorts of physicians ; common sense will not allow us to doubt, that it is *now* a family disorder, incurable by human art. The man is Adam, the family mankind, and the madness sin. Reader, you are desired to make the application.

XXIII. ARGUMENT.

“ But all are not employed in sin and wickedness, for many go through a constant round of *innocent diversions* ; and these, at least, must be *innocent and happy*.” Let us then consider the amusements of mankind : Or rather, without stopping to look at the wise dance of the Israelites round the golden calf, and the modest, sober, and humane diversions of the Heathens, in the festivals of their lewd, drunken and bloody gods ; let us only see, how far *our own* pleasures demonstrate the *innocence and happiness* of mankind.

How excessively foolish are the plays of children ! How full of mischief and cruelty the sports of boys ! How vain, foppish, and frothy the joys of young people ! And how much below the dignity of upright, pure creatures, the snares that persons of different sexes perpetually lay for each other ! When they are together, is not this their favourite amusement, till they are deservedly caught in the net, which they imprudently spread ? But see them asunder.

Here, a circle of idle women, supping a decoction of Indian herbs, talk or laugh all together, like so many chirping birds or chattering monkies, and scandal excepted, every way to as good purpose. And there, a club of grave men blow, by the hour, clouds of stinking smoke out of their mouth, or wash it down their throat with repeated draughts of intoxicating liquors. The strong fumes have already reached their heads ; and while some stagger home, others triumphantly keep the field of excess ; though one is already stamped with the heaviness of the ox, another

worked up to the fierceness and roar of the lion, and a third brought down to the filthiness of the vomiting dog.

Leave them at their *manly* sport, to follow those musical sounds, mixed with a noise of stamping; and you will find others profusely perspiring, and violently fatiguing themselves, in skipping up and down a room for a whole night, and ridiculously turning their backs and faces to each other an hundred different ways. Would not a man of sense prefer running ten miles upon an *useful* errand, to this useless manner of losing his rest, heating his blood, exhausting his spirits, unfitting himself for the duties of the following day, and laying the foundation of a putrid fever or a consumption, by breathing the midnight air corrupted by clouds of dust, by the unwholesome fumes of candles, and by the more pernicious steam, that issues from the body of many persons, who use a strong exercise in a confined place.

In the next room indeed they are more quiet, but are they more rationally employed? Why do they so earnestly rattle those ivory cubes; and so anxiously study those packs of loose and spotted leaves? Is happiness graven upon the one, or stamped upon the other? Answer, ye gamesters, who curse your stars, as ye go home with an empty purse and a heart full of rage.

“We hope there is no harm in taking an innocent game at cards,” reply a ridiculous party of superannuated ladies; “gain is not our aim, we only play to kill time.” You are not then so well employed as the foolish Heathen emperor, who amused himself in killing troublesome flies and wearisome time together. The delight of rational creatures, much more of Christians on the brink of the grave, is to redeem, improve, and solidly enjoy time; but yours alas! consists in the bare, irreparable *loss* of that invaluable treasure. Oh, what account will you give of the souls you neglect, and the talents you bury!

And shall we kill each day? If trifling kill,
 Sure vice must butcher: Oh! what heaps of slain
 Call out for vengeance on us! time destroy'd
 Is suicide, where more than blood is spilt.

YOUNG.

And are *public* diversions better evidences of our innocence and happiness? Let reason decide. In cities, some are lavish of the gold, which should be laid by for payment of their debts, or the relief of the poor, to buy an opportunity of acting under a mask, an impertinent or immodest part without a blush; and others are guilty of the same injustice or prodigality, that they may be entitled to the honour of waiting upon a company of idle buffoons, and seeing them act what would make a modest woman blush, or hearing them speak what persons of true piety, or pure morals, would gladly pay them never to utter.

Are *country* amusements more rational and innocent? What shall we say of those christian, or rather heathenish festivals called *Wakes*, annually kept in honour of the saint to whom the parish church was formerly dedicated? are they not celebrated with the idleness, vanity, and debauchery of the *floralia*; with the noise, riots, and frantic mirth of the *bacchanals*; rather than with the decent solemnity, pious cheerfulness, and strict temperance, which characterise the religion of the holy Jesus?

The assizes are held, the judge passes an awful sentence of transportation or death upon guilty wretches, who stand pale and trembling before his tribunal; and twenty couple of gay gentlemen and ladies, as if they rejoiced in the infamy and destruction of their fellow mortals, hire on the occasion a band of musicians, and dance all night, perhaps in the very apartment, where the distracted victims of justice a few hours before wrung their hands and rattled their irons.

The *aces* are advertised, all the country is in motion, neither business, rain, nor storm, can prevent thousands from running for miles, and sometimes through the worst of roads, to feast their eyes upon the danger of their fellow creatures, and divert themselves with the misery of the most useful animals. Daring mortals hazard their necks upon swift coursers, which are tortured by the severest lashes of the whip, and incessant pricks or tearing gashes of the spur, that they may exert their utmost force, strain every nerve, and make continued efforts even beyond the powers of nature: Whence (to say nothing of fatal accidents, which yet alas! too frequently happen) they sometimes pant away their wretched lives in a bath of sweat and blood; and all this, that they may afford a barbarous pleasure to their idle, wanton, and barbarous beholders.

In one place the inhuman sport is afforded by an unhappy bird, fixed at some distance, that the sons of cruelty may long exercise their merciless skill, in its lingering and painful destruction: Or by two of them trained up, and high fed for the battle. The hour fixed for the obstinate engagement is come: and, as if it was not enough that they should pick each other's eyes out with the strong bills that nature has given them, human malice, or rather diabolical cruelty, comes to the assistance of their native fierceness. Silver spurs, or steel talons, sharper than those of the eagle, are barbarously fastened to their feet; thus armed, they are excited to leap at each other, and in an hundred repeated onsets to tear their feathers and flesh, as if they were contending vultures; and if at last one blinded, covered with blood and wounds, unable to stand any longer the metallic claws of his antagonist, enters into the agonies of death; the numerous ring of stamping, clapping, shouting, eagerly betting, or horridly cursing spectators, is as highly delighted, as if the tortured, dying creature, was the common enemy of mankind.

In another place, a multitude of spectators is delightfully entertained by two brawny men, who unmercifully knock one another down, as if they were oxen appointed for the slaughter, and continue the savage play, till one, with his flesh bruised and his bones shattered, bleeding and gasping as in the pangs of death, yields to his antagonist, and thus puts an end to the shocking sport.

But it is perhaps a different spectacle, that recommends itself to the bloody taste of our baptised heathens. Fierce dogs are excited by fiercer men, with fury to fasten upon the nose, or tear out the eyes, of a poor confined animal, which pierces the sky with his painful and lamentable bellowsings, enough to force compassion from the heart of barbarians, not totally lost to all sense of humanity; whilst in the mean time the surrounding savage mob, rends the very heavens with the most horrid imprecations, and repeated shouts of applauding joy; sporting themselves with that very misery, which human nature (were it not deplorably corrupted) would teach them to alleviate.*

These are thy favourite amusements, O England, thou centre of the civilized world, where reformed christianity, deep-thinking wisdom, and polite learning, with all its re-

* ‘I ever thought, says judge Hale, in his contemplations, that there is a certain degree of justice due from man to the creatures, as from man to man; and that an excessive use of the creature’s labour is an injustice, for which he must account. I have therefore always esteemed it as a part of my duty, and it has always been my practice to be merciful to my beasts; and upon the same account I have declined any cruelty to any of thy creatures, and, as much as I might, prevented it in others as a tyranny. I have abhorred those sports that consist in the torturing of thy creatures; and if any noxious creature must be destroyed, or creatures for food must be taken, it has been my practice to do it in a manner that may be with the least torture or cruelty to the creature; ever remembering, that though God has given us a dominion over his creatures, yet it is under a law of justice, prudence, and moderation: otherwise we should become *tyrants* and not *lords* over God’s creatures; and therefore those things of this nature, which others have *practised as recreations*, I have *avoided as sins*.’

finement, have fixed their abode ! But, in the name of common sense, how can we clear them from the imputation of absurdity, folly, and madness ? And by what means can this be reconciled, I will not say to the religion of the meek Jesus, but to the philosophy of a Plato, or calm reason of any thinking man ? How perverted must be the taste, how irrational and cruel the diversions of barbarians, in other parts of the globe ! And how applicable to all, the wise man's observation ! *Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, and madness in the breasts of the sons of men.*

XXIV. ARGUMENT.

The total corruption of our nature appears not only in the inclination of mankind to pursue irrational, and cruel amusements ; but in their general propensity to commit the most *unprofitable, ridiculous, inhuman, impious, and diabolical* sins.

1st, The most *unprofitable* : For instance, that of sporting in prophane oaths and curses with the tremendous name of the Supreme Being. *Because of swearing the land mourneth*, said a prophet thousands of years ago ; and what land, even in christendom, yea, what parish in this reformed island mourns not, or ought not to mourn, for the same provoking crime ? a crime, which is the hellish offspring of practical atheism, and heathenish insolence, a crime that brings neither profit, honor, nor pleasure to the prophane wretch who commits it, a crime for which he may be put to open shame, forced to appear before a magistrate, and sent for ten days to the house of correction, unless he pays an ignominious fine ; and what is more awful still, a crime, which, if persisted in, will one day cause him to gnaw his impious tongue in the severest torments. Surely man, who drinks this insipid and yet destructive iniquity like water, must have his moral taste strangely vitiated, not to say, diabolically perverted.

2dly. The most *ridiculous* sins. In what country, town, or village do not women betray their silly vanity? Is it not the same foolish disposition of heart, which makes them bore their ears in Europe, and slit their noses in America, that they may unnaturally graft into their flesh pieces of glass, shining pebbles, glittering gold, or trinkets of meaner metal? and when female Hottentots fancy they add to the importance of their filthy person, by some yards of the bloody intestines of a beast, twisted round their arms or necks, do they not evidence the very same spirit of the ladies in our hemisphere, who too often measure their dignity by the yards of coloured silk bands, with which they crown themselves, and turn the grave matron into a pitiful may-queen?

3dly. The most *inhuman* sins. “An hundred thousand mad animals, whose heads are covered with hats, says Voltaire, advanced to kill, or to be killed, by the like number of their fellow mortals. covered with turbans. By this strange procedure they want, at best, to decide whether a tract of land, to which none of them all lays any claim, shall belong to a certain man whom they call Sultan, or to another whom they call Cæsar, neither of whom ever saw, or ever will see the spot so furiously contended for: And very few of those creatures, who thus mutually butcher one another, ever beheld the animal for whom they cut each others throats. From time immemorial this has been the way of mankind almost over all the earth. What an excess of madness is this! And how deservedly might a superior Being crush to atoms this earthly ball, the bloody nest of such ridiculous murderers!”

The same author makes elsewhere the following reflections, on the same melancholy subject: “Famine, pestilence, and war, are the three most famous ingredients of this lower world. The two first comes from God, but the last, in which all three concur, comes from the imagination of princes or ministers. A king fancies that he has a right

to a distant province. He raises a multitude of men, who have nothing to do, and nothing to lose; gives them a red coat, and a laced hat, and makes them wheel to the right, wheel to the left, and march to glory. Five or six of these belligerent powers sometimes engage together, three against three, or two against four: but whatever part they take, they all agree in one point, which is, to do their neighbour all possible mischief. The most astonishing thing belonging to their infernal undertaking, is, that every ring-leader of those murderers, gets his colours consecrated, and solemnly blessed in the name of God, before he marches up to the destruction of his fellow-creatures. If a chief warrior has had the good fortune of getting only two or three thousand men slaughtered, he does not think it worth his while to thank God for it: But if ten thousand have been destroyed by fire and sword, and if (to complete his good fortune) some capital city has been totally overthrown; a day of public thanksgiving is appointed on the joyful occasion. Is not that a fine art which carries such desolation through the earth: and one year with another destroys forty thousand men, out of an hundred thousand!"

Athly. The most *impious* sins; for instance, that of *idolatry*; "Before the coming of Christ, says a late Divine, all the polite and barbarous nations among the Heathens, plunged into it with equal blindness. And the Jews were so strongly wedded to it, that God's miraculous interposition, both by dreadful judgments and astonishing mercies, could not for eight hundred years, restrain them from committing it in the grossest manner."

Nor need we look at either Heathens or Jews, to see the proneness of mankind to that detestable crime; Christians alone can prove the charge. To this day, the greatest part of them pray to dead men and dead women; bow to images of stone and crosses of wood; and make, adore, and swallow down the wafer-god: And those who pity them for this ridiculous idolatry, till converting grace inter-

poses, daily *set up their idols in their hearts*, and without going to the plain of Dura, sacrifice all to the King's *golden image*.

And *5thly*, The most *diabolical sin*; *Persecution*, that favourite offspring of *Satan transformed into an angel of light*. *Persecution*, that bloody hypocritical monster, which carries a bible, a liturgy, and a bundle of canons in one hand; with fire, faggots, and all the weapons invented by cruelty in the other; and with sanctified looks, distresses, racks, or murders men, either because they love God, or because they cannot all think alike.

Time would fail to tell of those, who, on religious accounts, have been stoned and sawn asunder by the Jews, cast to the lions and burnt by the Heathens, strangled and impaled by the Mahometans, and butchered all manner of ways by the Christians.

Yes, we must confess it, Christian Rome hath glutted herself with the blood of martyrs, which Heathenish Rome had but comparatively tasted: and when Protestants fled from her bloody pale, they brought along with them too much of her bloody spirit. Prove the sad assertion, poor Servetus: When Romish inquisition had forced thee to fly to Geneva, what reception didst thou meet with in that reformed city? Alas! the Papists had burned thee in effigy, the Protestants burned thee in reality, and Molock triumphed to see the two opposite parties, agree in offering him the human sacrifice.

So universally restless is the spirit of persecution, which inspires the unrenewed part of mankind, that when people of the same religion have no outward opposer to tear, they bark at, bite, and devour one another. Is it not the same bitter zeal, that made the Pharisees and Sadducees among the Jews, and now makes the sects of Ali and Omar among the Mahometans, those of the Jansenists and Molinists among the Papists, and those of the Calvinists and

Armenians among the Protestants, oppose each other with such acrimony and virulence ?

But let us look around us at home : When persecuting Popery had almost expired in the fires, in which it burned our first church-men, how soon did those who survived them commence persecutors of the Presbyterians ? When these, forced to fly to New-England for rest, got there the staff of power in their hand, did they not, in their turn fall upon, and even hang the Quakers ? and now that an act of toleration binds the monster, and the lash of pens consecrated to the defence of our civil and religious liberties, makes him either afraid or ashamed of roaring aloud for his prey ; does he not shew, by his supercilious looks, malicious sneers, and settled contempt of vital piety, what he would do, should an opportunity offer ? And does he not still, under artful pretences, go to the utmost length of his chain, to wound the reputation of those, whom he cannot devour, and inflict at least **academic death* upon those whose person is happily secured from his rage.

O ye unconverted among mankind, if all these abominations every where break out among you ; what cages of unclean birds, what nests swarming with cruel vipers, are your *deceitful and desperately wicked hearts !*

XXV. ARGUMENT.

How dreadfully fallen is man, if he has not only a propensity to commit the above-mentioned sins, but to transgress the divine commands with a variety of shocking aggravations ! Yes, mankind are prone to sin :

I. *Immediately*, by a kind of evil instinct : as children, who peevishly strike the very breast they suck ; and betray the rage of their little hearts, by sobbing and swelling, sometimes till, by forcing their bowels out of their place, they bring a rupture upon themselves ; and frequently till

* See *Pietas Oxoniensis*

they are black in the face, and almost suffocated. II. *Deliberately*, as those, who having life and death clearly set before them, wilfully, obstinately chuse the way that leads to certain destruction. III. *Repeatedly*, witness liars, who, because their crime costs them but a breath, frequently commit it at every breath. IV. *Continually*, as rakes, who would make their whole life one uninterrupted scene of debauchery, if their exhausted strength, or purse, did not force them to intermit their lewd practices; though not without a promise to renew them again, at the first convenient opportunity. V. *Treacherously*, as those Christians, who forget divine mercies, and their own repeated resolutions, break through the solemn vows and promises made in their sacraments, and sinning with an high hand *against their profession*, perfidiously fly in the face of their conscience, the church, and their Saviour. VI. *Daringly*, as those who steal under the gallows, openly insult their parents or their king, laugh at all laws human and divine, and put to defiance all, that are invested with power to see them executed. VII. *Triumphantly*, as the vast number of those, who glory in their shame, sound aloud the trumpet of their own wickedness, and boast of their horrid, repeated debaucheries, as admirable, and praise-worthy deeds. VIII. *Progressively*, till they have filled up the measure of their iniquities, as *individuals*; witness Judas, who from covetousness, proceeded to hypocrisy, theft, treason, despair and self-murder: Or, as a *nation*; witness the Jews, who after despising and killing their prophets, rejected the Son of God; affirmed he was *mad*; stigmatized him with the name of *Deceiver*; said he was *Beelzebub* himself; offered him all manner of indignities; bought his blood; prayed it might be on them, and their children; rested not, till they had put the *Prince of Life* to the most ignominious death; and horrible to say! made sport with the groans, which rent the rocks around them, and threw the earth into convulsions under their feet. IX. *Unnatu-*

rally: (1.) By *astonishing barbarities*; as the women, who murder their own children; the Greeks and Romans, who exposed them to be the living prey of wild beasts: the savages, who knock their aged parents on the head; the Cannibals, who roast and eat their prisoners of war; and some revengeful people, who, to taste all the sweetness of their devilish passion, have murdered their enemy, and eaten up his liver and heart. (2.) By the most *diabolical superstitions*: As the Israelites, who, when they had *learned the works of the Heathens, sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils*; and by the horrible practices of witchcraft, endeavoured to raise, and deal with infernal spirits: And (3.) by the most *preposterous gratification of sense*: Witness the incests *and rapes committed in this land; the infamous fires, which drew fire and brimstone down from heaven upon accursed cities; and the horrid lusts of the Canaanites, though alas! not confined to Canaan; which gave birth to the laws recorded, Lev. xviii. 7, 23. and xx. 16.† Laws that are at once the disgrace of mankind, and the proof of my assertion. X. What is most astonishing of all *by Apostacy*: As those, who having *begun in the spirit, and tasted the bitterness of repentance, the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, make shipwreck of the faith, deny the Lord that brought them, account the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing*: and so scandalously end

* The reason, which engaged the publisher of these sheets, to preach to some of the colliers in his neighbourhood, was the horrid length they went in immorality. One of them, whose father was hanged, upon returning himself from transportation, in cool blood attempted to ravish his own daughter in the presence of his own wife, and was just prevented from completing his crime, by the utmost exertion of the united strength of the mother and the child. When brutish ignorance, and heathenish wickedness break out into such unnatural enormities, who would not break through the hedge of canonical regularity?

† In the last century, an Irish Bishop was clearly convicted of the crime forbidden in those laws, and suffered death for it.

the flesh, that they are justly compared to *trees withered, plucked up by the roots, twice dead, and to raging waves of the sea foaming out their own shame, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.*

Good God! what line can fathom an abyss of corruption, the overflowings of which are more or less attended with these multiplied and shocking aggravations?

XXVI. ARGUMENT.

If the force of a torrent may be known by the height, and number of the banks, which it overflows; the strength of this corruption will be rightly estimated from the high, and numerous dikes raised to stem it, which it nevertheless continually breaks through.

Ignorance and debauchery, injustice and impiety, in all their shapes, still overspread the whole earth; notwithstanding innumerable means used, in all ages, to suppress and prevent them.

The almost total extirpation of mankind by the deluge, the fiery showers that consumed Sodom, the ten Egyptian plagues, the entire excision of whole nations who were once famous for their wickedness, the captivities of the Jews, the destruction of thousands of cities and kingdoms, and millions of more private judgments, never fully stopped immorality in any one country.

The striking miracles wrought by prophets, the alarming sermons preached by divines, the infinite number of good books published in almost all languages, and the founding of myriads of churches, religious houses, schools, colleges and universities, have not yet caused impiety to hide its brazen face any where. The making of all sorts of excellent laws, the appointing of magistrates and judges to put them in force, the forming of associations for the reformation of manners, the filling of thousands of prisons,

and erecting of millions of racks and gallows, have not yet suppressed one vice.

And what is most amazing of all, the life, miracles, sufferings, death, and heavenly doctrine of the Son of God; the labours, writings, and martyrdom of his disciples; the example, and intreaties of millions that have lived and died in the faith; the inexpressible horrors and frightful warnings of thousands of wicked men, who have testified in their last moments, that they had worked out their damnation, and were just going to their own place; the blood of myriads of martyrs, the strivings of the Holy Spirit, the dreadful curses of the law, and the glorious promises of the gospel—All these means together, have not extirpated immorality and prophaneness, out of one single town or village in all the world; no, nor out of one single family for any length of time. And this will probably continue to be the desperate case of mankind, till the Lord lays to his powerful hand; seconds these means by the *continued* strokes of the sword of his Spirit; *pleads by fire and sword with all flesh*; and according to his promise, causes *righteousness to cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea*.

Is not this a demonstration founded on matter of fact, that human corruption is not only deep as the ocean; but impetuous as an overflowing river, which breaks down all its banks, and leaves marks of devastation in every place? This will still appear in a clearer light, if we consider the strong opposition, which our natural depravity makes to divine grace in the unconverted.

XXVII. ARGUMENT.

When the Lord, by the rod of affliction, *the sword of the spirit*, and the power of his grace, attacks the hard heart of a sinner; how obstinately does he resist the sharp, though gracious operation! To make an honourable and vigorous defence, he puts on the shining robes of his for-

mality; he stands firm in the boasted armour of his moral powers; he *daubs with untempered mortar* the ruinous wall of his conduct; with self-righteous resolutions, and pharisaic professions of virtue, he builds as he thinks, an impregnable tower; musters and draws up in battle array his poor works, artfully putting in the front those that make the finest appearance, and carefully concealing the vices, which he can neither disguise, nor dress up in the regimentals of virtue.

In the mean time he prepares *the carnal weapons of his warfare*, and raises the battery of a multitude of objections to silence the truth that begins to gall him. He affirms, “the preachers of it are *deceivers and mad men* ;” till, he sees the Jews and Heathens fixed even upon Christ and St. Paul the very same opprobrious names: He calls it a “new doctrine ;” till he is obliged to acknowledge that it is as old as the Reformers, the Apostles, and the Prophets: He says “it is fancy, delusion, enthusiasm ;” till the blessed effects of it, on true believers, constrain him to drop the trite and slanderous assertion: He declares, that “it drives people out of their senses, or makes them melancholy,” till he is compelled to confess, that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*, and that none are so happy and joyful, as those who truly love, and zealously serve God: He urges, that “it destroys good works ;” till a sight of the readiness of believers, and of his own backwardness to perform them, makes him ashamed of the groundless accusation: He will tell you twenty times over, “There is no need of so much ado ;” till he discovers the folly of being careless on the brink of *eternal ruin*, and observes that the nearness of *temporal danger* puts him upon the utmost exertion of all his powers. Perhaps, to get himself a name among his prophane companions, he lampoons the scriptures, or *casts out firebrands and arrows* against the despised disciples of Jesus, “they are all poor and illiterate,” says he, “fools or knaves, cheats and hy-

pocrites," &c. &c. till the word of God stops his mouth, and he sees himself the greatest hypocrite, with whom he is acquainted.

When by such heavy charges, he has long kept off the truth from his heart, and the servants of God from his company, this kind of ammunition begins to fail; and he barricades himself with the fear of being undone in his circumstances, till experience convinces him, that *No good thing shall God withhold from them that live a godly life,* and that *All things shall be added to them, who seek first the kingdom of God.* He then hides himself in the crowd of the ungodly, and says, "if he perishes, many will share the same fate;" till he sees the glaring absurdity of going to hell for the sake of company. He shelters at last under the protection of the rich, the great, the learned despisers of Christ and the cross; till the mines of their wickedness springing on all sides around him, makes him fly *to the sanctuary of the Lord;* and *there he sees the ways, and understands the end of these men.*

When all his batteries are silenced, and a breach is made in his conscience, he looks out for some secret way to leave Sodom, without being taken notice of, and derided by those who fight under Satan's banner; and the fear of being taken for one of them that *fly from the wrath to come,* and openly take the part of an holy God against a sinful world, *pierces him through with many sorrows.*

Are the outworks taken, has he been forced to part with his gross immoralities, he has generally recourse to a variety of stratagems: Sometimes he publicly dismisses Satan's garrison, *fleshly lusts which war against the godly,* and keep them under the ungodly soul; but it is only to let them in again secretly, either one by one, or with forces seven times greater, *so that his last state is worse than the first.* At other times he hoists up the white flag of truth, apparently yields to conviction, favours the ministers of the gospel, admits the language of Canaan, and warmly con-

tends for evangelical doctrines: But alas! the place has not surrendered, his heart is not given up to God: spiritual wickedness, under fair shows of zeal, still keeps possession for *the God of this world*; and the shrewd hypocrite artfully imitates the behaviour of a true Israelite, just as *Satan transforms himself to an angel of light*.

Is he at last deeply convinced, that the only mean of escaping destruction, and capitulating to advantage, is to deliver up the traitor *Sin*? Yet what a long parley does he hold about it! What a multitude of plausible reasons, does he advance to put it off from day to day! "He is yet young—The Lord is merciful—All have their foibles—We are here in an imperfect state—It is a little sin—It may be consistent with loyalty to God—It hurts nobody but himself—Many pious men were once guilty of it—By and by he will repent as they did, &c. &c." When louder summons and increasing fears, compel him to renounce *the lusts of the flesh*, how strongly does he plead for *those of the mind*! And after he has given up his bosom-sin with his lips, how treacherously does he hide it in the inmost recesses of his heart.

Never did a besieged town dispute the ground with such obstinacy, and hold out by such a variety of stratagems, as corrupt man stands it out against the repeated attacks of truth and grace. If he yields at all, it is seldom before he is brought to the greatest extremity. He *feeds on the dust of the earth*; he tries to *fill his soul with the husks of vanity*: and fares hard on sounds, names, forms, opinions, withered experience, dry notions of faith, and empty professions of hope, and fawning shows of love, till the *mighty famine arises*, and the intolerable want of substantial bread, forces him to surrender at discretion, and without reserve.

Some stand it out thus, against the God of their salvation, ten or twenty years; and others never yield, till the terrors of death storm their affrighted souls, their last sickness batters down their tortured bodies, and *the poison*

of the arrows of the Almighty drinks up their wasted spirits. What a strong proof is this of the inveteracy, and obstinacy of our corruption.

XXVIII. ARGUMENT.

But a still stronger may be drawn, from the amazing struggle of God's children with their depravity ; even after they have, through grace, powerfully subdued, and gloriously triumphed over it. The Redeemer himself *is the Captain of their salvation* : They are embarked with him, and bound for heaven : They look at the compass of God's word : They hold the rudder of sincerity : They crowd all the sails of their good resolutions and pious affections, to catch the gales of divine assistance : they *exhort one another daily*, to ply the oars of faith and prayer with watchful industry : tears of deep repentance and fervent desire, often bedew their faces in the pious toil : they would rather die than draw back to perdition ; but, alas ! the stream of corruption is so impetuous, that it often prevents their making any sensible progress in their spiritual voyage : and if, in an unguarded hour, they drop the oar, and faint in *the work of faith, the patience of hope, or the labour of love*, they are presently carried down into the dead sea of religious formality, or the whirlpools of scandalous wickedness. Witness the lukewarmness of the Laodiceans, the adultery of David, the perjury of Peter, the final apostacy of Judas, and the shameful flight of all the disciples.

XXIX. ARGUMENT.

When evidences of the most opposite interest, agree in their deposition of a matter of fact, its truth is generally corroborated. To the last argument, taken from some sad experiences of God's people, I shall therefore add one, drawn from the religious rites of paganism, the confessions of ancient heathens, and the testimony of modern deists.

When the heathens made their temples stream with the blood of slaughtered hecatombs, did they not often explicitly deprecate the wrath of heaven and impending destruction? and was it not a sense of their guilt and danger? and an hope, that the punishment they deserved, might be transferred to their bleeding victims, which gave birth to their numerous, expiatory, and propitiatory sacrifices? If this must be granted, it is plain, those sacrifices were so many proofs, that the considerate Heathens were no utter strangers to their corruption and danger.

But let them speak their own sentiments. Not to mention their allegorical fables of Prometheus, who brought a curse upon earth by stealing fire out of heaven; and of Pandora, whose fatal curiosity let all sorts of woes and diseases loose upon mankind: Does not Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* give a striking account of the fall, and its dreadful consequences? Read his description of the golden age, and you see Adam in Paradise; proceed to the iron age, and you behold the horrid picture of our consummate wickedness.

If the ancients had no idea of that native propensity to evil which we call *original depravity*; what did Plato mean by our **Natural wickedness*? And Pythagoras by † *The fatal companion, the noxious strife that lurks within us, and was born along with us*? Did not Solon take for his motto the well known saying, which, though so much neglected now, was formerly written in golden capitals over the door of Apollo's temple at Delphos, ‡ *Know thyself*? Are we not informed by Heathen Historians, that Socrates, the Prince of the Greek sages, acknowledged he was

* *Κακια εν φυσει.* Hence that excellent definition of true religion, *Θεραπεια Ψυχης*, The cure of a diseased soul.

† *Αυρηι γαρ συνοπαδος ερις βλαπτουσα λελοθειν*

Συμφυτος. Aur. Carm.

‡ *Γνωθι σεαυτου.*

naturally prone to the grossest vices? Does not Seneca, the best of the Roman philosophers, observe, **We are born in such a condition, that we are not subject to fewer disorders of the mind than of the body?* Yea, that † *All vices are in all men, though they do not break out in every one:* and that ‡ *To confess them is the beginning of our cure?* and had not Cicero lamented before Seneca, that *Men are brought into life by nature as a step-mother, with a naked, frail, and infirm body, and a soul prone to divers lusts?*

Even some of the sprightliest poets, bear their testimony to the mournful truth I contend for. Propertius could say, § *every body has a vice, to which he is inclined by nature.* Horace declared, that || *No man is born free from vices, and that he is the best man who is oppressed with the least—* That ¶ *Mankind rush into wickedness, and always desires what is forbidden—* That ** *youth hath the softness of wax to receive vicious impressions, and the hardness of a rock to resist virtuous admonitions—* In a word: that *we are mad enough to attack heaven itself, and that our repeated crimes do not suffer that God of heaven to lay by his wrathful thunder-bolts.* ††

* Hac conditione nati fumus: Animalia obnoxia non paucioribus animi quam corporis morbis.

† Omnia in omnibus vitia sunt, sed non omnia in singulis extant.

‡ Vitia sua confiteri sanitatis principium est.

§ Unicuique dedit vidit vitium natura creato.

|| Nam vitiis nemo sine nascitur, optimus ille est Qui minimis urgetur.

¶ Gens humana ruit per vitium nefas,
Nitimur in vitium semper cupimus que negata.

** Cereus in vitium flecti, monitoribus asper.

†† Cælum ipsum petimus stultitia; neque
Per nostrum patimur scelus
Iracunda Jovem ponere fulmina.

And Juvenal, as if he had understood what St. Paul says of the *carnal mind*, affirms that * *Nature unchangeably fixt tends, yea runs back to wickedness*, as bodies to their centre.

Thus the very depositions of the Heathens, in their lucid intervals, as well as their sacrifices, prove the depravity and danger of mankind. And so does likewise the testimony of some of our modern, deistical Philosophers.

The ingenious author of a book, called *Philosophical Enquiries concerning the Americans*, informs us, it is a custom among some Indians, that as soon as the wife is delivered of a child, the husband must take to his bed, where he is waited on by the poor woman, who should have been brought there; and that to this day, the same ridiculous custom prevails in some parts of France. “*From this and other instances, says our Enquirer, we may collect, that however men may differ in other points, there is a most striking conformity among them in ABSURDITY.*”

The same philosopher, who is by no means tainted, with what some persons are pleased to call *enthusiasm*, confirms the doctrine of our natural depravity by the following anecdote, and the ironical observation with which it is closed. The Eskimaux (the wildest and most sottish people in all America) call themselves *men*, and all other nations *barbarians*. “*Human vanity, we see, thrives equally well in all climates; in Labrador as in Asia. Beneficent nature has dealt out as much of this comfortable quality to a Greenland, as to the most consummate French petit maitre.*”

The following testimony is so much the more striking, as it comes from one of the greatest poets, philosophers, and deists, of this present free-thinking age. ‘Who can, without horror, consider the whole earth, as the Empire of destruction! It abounds in wonder, it abounds also in

* Ad mores natura recurrit

Damnatos, fixa et mutari nescia.

' victims ; it is a vast field of carnage and contagion.
 ' Every species is without pity, pursued and torn to pieces
 ' through the earth, and air, and water. In man there is
 ' *more* wretchedness than in *all* other animals put together :
 ' he smarts continually under two scourges, which other
 ' animals never feel ; anxiety, and a listlessness in appetite,
 ' which make him weary of himself. He loves life, and
 ' yet he knows that he must die. If he enjoys some tran-
 ' sient good, for which he is thankful to heaven, he suffers
 ' various evils, and is at last devoured by worms. This
 ' knowledge is his fatal prerogative : other animals have it
 ' not. He feels it every moment, rankling and corroding
 ' in his breast. Yet he spends the transient moment of
 ' his existence in diffusing the misery that he suffers ; in
 ' cutting the throats of his fellow-creatures for pay ; in
 ' cheating and being cheated, in robbing and being robbed,
 ' in serving that he may command, and in repenting all
 ' that he does. The bulk of mankind are nothing more
 ' than a crowd of wretches, equally criminal and unfortu-
 ' nate, and the globe contains rather carcasses than men.
 ' I tremble upon a review of this dreadful picture, to find
 ' that it implies a complaint against providence, and I wish
 ' that I had never been born.' *Voltaire's Gospel of the*
*Day.**

* Wild error is often the guide, and glaring contradiction the badge
 both of those who reject revelation, like Voltaire ; and of those, who
 indirectly set aside one half of it, like the Pharisees and antinomians
 around us. See a striking proof of it. This very author, in another
 book, (O ! see what *antichristian* morality comes to !) represents the hor-
 rible sin of Sodom as an *excusable mistake of nature*, and assures us, that
 " *At the worst of times, there is at most upon earth, one man in a thousand,*
that can be called wicked." Now for the proof ! " *Hardly do we see one of*
those enormous crimes, that shock human nature, committed in ten years at
Rome, Paris, or London, those cities where the thirst of gain, which is the
parent of all crimes, is carried to the highest pitch. If men were essential-
ly wicked, we should find every morning husbands murdered by their wives,
&c. as we do hens killed by foxes." According to this apostle of the de-
 istical world, it seems that the most intense thirst of gold is no de-

XXX. ARGUMENT.

And yet, O strange infatuation! *vain man will be wise,* and wicked man pretends to be righteous! Far from repenting in the dust; he pleads his innocence, and claims the rewards of imaginary merit! Incredible as the assertion is, a thousand witnesses are ready to confirm it.

Come forth, ye natural sons of virtue, who with scornful boasts attack the doctrine of man's depravity. To drown the whispers of reason and experience, sound each your own trumpet—Thank God, you “are not as other men”—Inform us, you “have a good heart,”—and “a clear conscience:” Assure us, you “do your duty, your endeavours, your best endeavours” to please the author of your lives—Vow, you never were guilty of any crime, never did any harm:—And tell us, you hope to mount to heaven, on the strong pinions of your “good works and pious resolutions.”

agree of wickedness; that a woman, to be very good, needs only not cut her husband's throat while he is asleep; and that it even little matters whether she omits the dire murder out of regard to *his* life, or *her own*. What moral philosophy is here! Why if the sin of Sodom is a peccadillo, a frolicsome mistake; and nothing is wickedness but a treacherous cutting of an husband's or a parent's throat; I extend my charity four times beyond thee, O Voltaire, and do maintain, that there is not one wicked m n in *five* thousand.

I insert this note, to obviate the charges of severe critics, who accuse me of dealing in “gross misrepresentations, false quotations, and forgeries,” because I quote some authors, when they speak as the oracles of God; and do not swell my book with their inconsistencies, when they contradict the scriptures, reason, and the truths, which they themselves have advanced in some happy moments; and because I cannot force my reason to maintain with them, both sides of a glaring contradiction.

O ye deistical moralists, let me meet with more candor, justice, and mercy from you, than I have done from the warm opposers of the second gospel-axiom. It is enough that you discard scripture, do not like them, make it a part of your orthodoxy, to murder reason, and kick common sense out of doors.

When you have thus acted the Pharisee's part before your fellow-creatures ; go to your Creator, and assume the character of the publican. Confess with your lips, you are *miserable sinners, who have done what you ought not to have done, and left undone what you ought to have done* : Protest *there is no health in you* : Complain that *the remembrance of your sins is grievous unto you, and the burthen of them intolerable* : But remember, O ye self-righteous formalists, that by this glaring inconsistency, you give the strongest proof of your unrighteousness. You are nevertheless modest, when compared with your brethern of the Romish church.

These, far from thinking themselves *unprofitable servants*, fancy they are literally *righteous overmuch*. Becoming merit-mongers, they make a stock of their works of supererogation, set up shop with the righteousness they can spare to others, and expose to sale indulgencies and pardons, out of their pretended treasury. Nor are there wanting sons of Simon, who with ready-money purchase, as they think, not *livings* in the church below ; but which is far preferable, *seats* in the church above, and *good places* at the heavenly court.

Was ever a robe of righteousness (I had almost said a fool's coat) so coarsely woven by the slaves of imposture and avarice ! and so dearly bought by the sons of superstition and credulity !

O ye spiritual Ethiopians, who paint yourselves all over with the corroding *white* of hypocrisy, and after all, are artful enough to lay on *red* paint, and imitate the blush of humble modesty. Ye that borrow virtue's robes to procure admiration, and put on religion's cloak to hide your shameful deformity : Ye that deal in external righteousness, to carry on with better success the most sordid of all trades, that of *sin* ; of the worst of sins, *pride* ; of the worst of pride, which is *spiritual* : Ye numerous followers of those, whom the prophet of christians called crafty *serpents*, and soft

brood of vipers : Ye, to whom he declared that *publicans and harlots shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before you* : if I call you in *last*, to prove the desperate wickedness of the human heart, it is not because I esteem you the weakest advocates of the truth I contend for, but because you really are the strongest of my witnesses.

And now, candid reader, forget not plain matter of fact ; recollect the evidence given by reason ; pass sentence upon these last arguments which I have offered to thy consideration ; and say whether man's disposition and conduct towards his Creator, his fellow-creatures, and himself, do not abundantly prove, that he is by nature in a *fallen* and *lost* estate.

FOURTH PART.

THE preceding arguments recommend themselves to the common sense of thinking heathens, and the conscience of reasonable deists; as being all taken from those two amazing volumes, which are opened to, and legible by all; the *world* and *man*. The following are taken from a third volume, the *bible*, despised by the wits of the age, merely because they study and understand it, even less than the other two. “The bible,” says one of them with a smile, “save yourself the trouble of producing arguments drawn from that old legend, unless you first demonstrate its authenticity by the noble faculty, to which you appeal in these pages.” For the sake of such objectors, I here premise, by way of digression, a few rational arguments to evince, as far as my contracted plan will allow, the divine authority of the scriptures.

1. The sacred pen-men, the prophets and Apostles, were holy, excellent men, and *would* not; artless illiterate men, and therefore *could* not, lay the horrible scheme of deluding mankind. The hope of gain did not influence them, for they were self-denying men, and left all to follow a master who *had not where to lay his head*; and whose grand initiating maxim was, *Except a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple*. They were so disinterested, that they secured nothing on earth but hunger and nakedness, stocks and prisons, racks and tortures; which indeed was all that they could, or did expect in consequence of Christ’s express declarations. Neither was a desire of honour the

motive of their actions ; for their Lord himself was treated with the utmost contempt, and had more than once assured them, that they should certainly share the same fate : Besides, they were humble men, not above working as mechanics for a coarse maintenance, and so little desirous of human regard, that they exposed to the world the meanness of their birth and occupations, their great ignorance and scandalous falls.

Add to this, that they were so many, and lived at such distance of time and place from each other, that had they been impostors, it would have been impracticable for them to contrive, and carry on a forgery without being detected. And as they neither would, nor could *deceive* the world ; so they neither could nor would be *deceived* themselves : For they were days, months, and years, *eye* and *ear*-witnesses of the things which they relate : and when they had not the fullest evidence of important facts, they insisted upon new proofs, and even upon sensible demonstrations ; as for instance Thomas, in the matter of our Lord's resurrection, *John* xx. 25. And to leave us no room to question their sincerity, most of them joyfully sealed the truth of their doctrines with their own blood. Did *so many* and *such* marks of veracity, ever meet in any other authors ?

2. But even while they lived, they confirmed their testimony by a variety of miracles, wrought in divers places, and for a number of years : sometimes before thousands of their enemies, as the miracles of Christ and his disciples ; sometimes before hundreds of thousands, as those of Moses. These miracles were so well known and attested, that when both Christ and Moses appealed to their authenticity, before their bitterest opposers, mentioning the persons upon whom, as well as the particular times when, and the places where, they had been performed ; the facts were never denied, but passed over in silence, or maliciously attributed to the prince of the devils. By such a *piti-
ful slander* as this, Porphyry, Hierocles, Celsus, and Ju-

lian the apostate, those learned and inveterate enemies of christianity, endeavoured (as the pharisees had done before them) to sap the argument founded upon the miracles of Christ and his disciples. So sure then as God would never have displayed his arm, in the most *astonishing manner for the support of imposture, the sacred pen-men had their commission from the Almighty, and their writings are his *lively oracles*.

3. Reason itself dictates, that nothing but the plainest *matter of fact*, could induce so many thousands of prejudiced and persecuting Jews, to embrace the humbling, self-denying doctrine of the cross, which they so much despised and abhorred. Nothing but the clearest evidence, arising from undoubted truth, could make multitudes of lawless, luxurious heathens receive, follow, and transmit to posterity the doctrine and writings of the Apostles; especially at a time when the vanity of their pretensions to miracles, and the gift of tongues, could be so easily discovered, had they been impostors—at a time when the profession of christianity exposed persons of all ranks to the greatest contempt, and most imminent danger. In this respect the case of the primitive christians, widely differed from that of Mahomet's followers; For those, who adhered to the warlike, violent impostor, saved their lives and properties, or attained to honour, by their new, easy, and flesh-pleasing religion: but those, who devoted themselves to the meek, self-denying, crucified Jesus, were frequently spoiled of their goods, and cruelly put to death, or if they escaped with their lives, were looked upon as the very dregs of mankind.

* Once indeed the Lord permitted the magicians of Egypt so to use their art, as to counterfeit for a time some of Moses' miracles; but it was only to make the authenticity of others more conspicuous; this being the happy effect of the contest, when those ministers of Satan withdrew confounded, and forced to acknowledge, that the finger of God was evidently displayed through the rod of their antagonist.

Add to this, that some of the most profound parts of the scriptures, were addressed to the inhabitants of polite Greece, and triumphant Rome, among *whom philosophy and literature, with the fine arts and the sciences, were in the highest perfection; and who, consequently, were less liable to be the dupes of forgery and imposture. On the contrary, gross ignorance overspread those countries, where Mahomet first broached his absurd opinions, and propagated them with the sword: A sure sign this, that the sacred writers did not, like that impostor, avail themselves of the ignorance, weakness, and helplessness of their followers, to impose falsehood upon them.

When the authenticity of the miracles was attested by thousands of living witnesses, religious rites were instituted, and performed by hundreds of thousands, agreeable to scripture injunctions, in order to perpetuate that authenticity. And these solemn ceremonies have ever since been kept up in all parts of the world; the *passover* by the Jews, in remembrance of Moses' miracles in Egypt; and the *eucharist* by christians, as a memorial of Christ's death, and the miracles that accompanied it, some of which are recorded by Phlegon the Trallian, an heathen historian.

* *Not many noble, not many wise are called*, says the Apostle; nevertheless some of both, even at the rise of christianity, openly stood up for its truth. Among the *noble* we find Joseph, a member of the great Jewish council, Dionysius one of the judges at Athens, and Flavius Clemens a Roman senator: and among the *wise*, Quadratus, Aristides, and Athenagoras, Athenian philosophers; Clemens, Arnobius, Ammonius, Annatolius, &c. men of great learning at Alexandria; and at Rome, Justin Martyr and Tertullian, both famous apologists for the religion of Jesus, the latter of whom, in the second century, told the Roman governors, that their corporations, councils, and armies, and the emperor's palace, were full of christians: Nor is this improbable, since so early as St Paul's days *the saints of Caesar's household saluted those of the Roman provinces*. Phil. iv. 22. How credulous are they who can believe that persons of such rank and learning could be deluded by Jewish fishermen into the worship of a crucified impostor.

5. The scriptures have not only the external sanction of miracles, but the internal stamp of the omniscient God, by a variety of prophecies, some of which have already been most exactly confirmed by the event predicted; witness the rise and fall of the four grand monarchies according to Daniel's prophecy, chap. ii. and vii. and the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, foretold by Christ, Matt. xxiv. 2. while others are every day fulfilled in the face of infidels, particularly the persecution of the real disciples of Christ in our times, as well as in all ages, (See Matt. x. 22, 35, John xv. 20, and Gal. iv. 29.) and the present miserable state of the Jews, so exactly described by Moses above three thousand years ago. See Deut. xxviii. 65.

6. Sometimes the plainest *prophecies*, the most public *miracles*, and the *annals* of kingdoms, well known when those books were first received, wonderfully concur to demonstrate their authenticity. Take one instance out of many. A prophet out of Judah, above 300 years before the event, thus foretold the pollution of Jeroboam's altar at Bethel, before Jeroboam himself, who was attended by his priests, his courtiers, and no doubt, a vast number of idolatrous worshippers: *O altar, altar, thus says the Lord, behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, who shall burn men's bones upon thee: and this is the sign: Behold, this very day, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it scattered.* King Jeroboam, enflamed with anger, *stretched forth his hand against the man of God, saying to his guards, Lay hold on him; but his extended hand was dried up so that he could not pull it in again to him; the rending of the altar, and scattering of the fire, instantly took place: and the capital prophecy was exactly fulfilled by pious king Josiah, as you may see by comparing 1 King xiii. 1. &c. with 2 Kings xxiii. 15. &c.* Can we reasonably suppose, that books, containing accounts of such public events, would have been received as *divine* by a *divided* people, if their authenticity

had not been confirmed by indubitable matter of fact? Nay, is it not as absurd to assert it, as it would be to affirm, that the offices for the 5th of November, and the 30th of January, were forged by crafty priests; and that the papists, puritans, and royalists of the last century, agreed to impose upon the world the history of the gun-powder plot, and of King Charles's decollation, with which those parts of our liturgy are so inseparably connected?

7. This scattered, despised people, the irreconcilable enemies of the christians, keep, with amazing care* the old testament, full of the prophetic history of Jesus Christ, and by that means afford the world a striking proof that the new testament is true; and christians in their turn show, that the old testament is abundantly confirmed, and explained by the new. The Earl of Rochester, the great wit of the last century, was so struck with this proof, that upon reading the 53d chapter of Isaiah, with floods of penitential tears he lamented his former infidelity, and warmly embraced the faith, which he had so publicly ridiculed.

* If the histories contained in the old testament, were in general for the credit of the Jews, the *love of praise* might indeed have engaged some of them to join in a public forgery. But that book of which they have always been so tenacious, presents the world chiefly with an account of their monstrous ingratitude, unparalleled obstinacy, perpetual rebellions, abominable idolatries; and of the fearful judgments, which their wickedness brought upon them. Moses, who leads the van of their sacred authors, sums up his history of the Israelites and draws up their character in these disgraceful words, which he spake to their face: *You have been rebellious against the Lord, from the day that I knew you*, Deut. ix. 24. And even David and Solomon, their greatest kings, are represented in those books as guilty of the greatest enormities. O ye deists, I appeal to your reason, and ask, Would you *die for*, would you even *conive at* a notorious forgery, supposing the design of it were merely to impose upon the world as *divine*, a book that should perpetually stigmatize your ancestors, and fix horrid blots upon the names, for which you have the greatest veneration?

8. To say nothing of the venerable antiquity, and wonderful preservation of those books, some of which are by far the most ancient in the world: To pass over the inimitable simplicity, or true sublimity of their stile; they carry with them such characters of truth, as command the respect of every unprejudiced reader.

They open to us the mystery of the creation, the nature of God, angels, and man, the immortality *of the soul, the end for which we were made, the origin and connection of moral and natural evil, the vanity of this world and the glory of the next. There we see inspired shepherds, tradesmen and fishermen, surpassing as much the greatest philosophers, as these did the herd of mankind, both in meekness of wisdom and sublimity of doctrine: There we admire the purest morality in the world, agreeable to the dictates of sound reason, confirmed by the witness which God has placed for himself in our breast, and exemplified in the lives of men of like passions with ourselves: There we discover a vein of ecclesiastical history and theological truth, consistently running through a collection of sixty-six different books, written by various authors, in different languages, during the space of above 1500 years: There we find, as in a deep and pure spring, all the genuine drops and streams of spiritual knowledge, which can possibly be met with in the largest libraries: There the workings of the human heart are described, in a manner that demonstrates the inspiration of the Searcher of hearts: There we have a particular account of all our spiritual maladies, with their various symptoms, and the method of a certain cure; a cure that has been witnessed by millions of martyrs and departed saints, and is now enjoyed by thousands of good

* It is remarkable that the wisest heathens with all their philosophy, seldom attained to a full assurance of the immortality of the soul. Cicero himself says: *Nescio quomodo dum lego assentior; cum posui librum, et mecum ipse de immortalitate animorum cœpi cogitare assentio omnia illa elabitur.* Tusc. Quest. lib. I.

men, who would account it an honour to see the truth of the scriptures with their own blood : There you meet with the noblest strains of penitential and joyful devotion, adapted to the dispositions and states of all travellers to Sion: and there you read those awful threatnings and cheering promises, which are daily fulfilling in the consciences of men, to the admiration of believers, and the astonishment of attentive infidels.

9. The wonderful efficacy of the Scriptures is another proof that they are of God. When they are faithfully opened by his ministers, and powerfully applied by his Spirit, they *wound and heal, they kill and make alive*, they alarm the careless, turn or enrage the wicked, direct the lost, support the tempted, strengthen the weak, comfort mourners, and nourish pious souls. As the woman of Samaria said of Jesus, *Come see a man that told me all that ever I did: Is not this the Christ?* a good man can say of the Bible, “Come see a book that told me all that was in my heart, and acquainted me with the various trials and dangers I have met with in my spiritual travels; a book where I have found those truths, which, like a divinely tempered sword, have cut my way through all the snares and forces of my spiritual adversaries; and by whose directions my soul has happily entered the paradise of divine and brotherly love. Is not this the book of God?”

10. To conclude : It is exceedingly remarkable, that the more humble and holy people are; the more they read, admire, and value the scriptures: and on the contrary, the more self-conceited, worldly-minded, and wicked; the more they neglect, despise, and asperse them.

As for the objections which are raised against their perspicuity and consistency, those who are both pious and learned know, that they are generally founded on prepossession, and the want of understanding in spiritual things; or on our ignorance of several customs, idioms, and cir-

cumstances, which were perfectly known when those books were written. Frequently also the *immaterial* error arises merely from a wrong punctuation, or a mistake of copiers, printers or translators; as the daily discoveries of pious critics, and ingenuous confessions of unprejudiced inquirers, abundantly prove.

To the preceding arguments, I beg leave to add the following queries. Do not disbelievers, by supposing that the scriptures are a forged book, and consequently that christianity is a false religion, run upon the very rocks, which they seem so afraid of? And may they not be charged with indirectly setting their seal to opinions, far more incredible than those which they reject?

(1.) O ye *Disputers of this world*, if ye believe that Moses and Jesus Christ, St. Peter and St. Paul, publicly worked *sham* miracles for years, in various cities and countries, before thousands of their sharp-sighted opposers, without being ever detected in any of their tricks; might you not as reasonably believe, that thousands of shrewd men, were once turned into stupid asses?

(2.) If you believe, that the gospel is the production of human deceit; and yet, that in the prodigious number of apostates once concerned in carrying on the amazing villainy, such as Judas, Demas, Simon Magus, *Alexander the Coppersmith, who did St. Paul much evil*, &c. not one was ever found, that would prove the forgery: might you not as reasonably believe, that if Mr. Wilkes and all his friends knew of a gross villainy, carried on by the ministry, in order to turn the kingdom upside down; neither he nor any one of them, could ever be prevailed upon to disclose and prove it to the world?*

* Pliny, a learned and prudent Roman governor, who was employed by the emperor Trajan in stopping the progress of christianity, wrote to him, that the apostates affirmed, the whole of their crime had been to meet before day and sing an hymn to Christ as to their God. His own words are, "Affirmabant hanc fuisse sumam vel culpæ suæ vel

(3.) You believe that, the miracles and resurrection of Christ, together with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, were nothing but enthusiastical or knavish pretensions: and yet you are forced to grant, that thousands of Jews, strongly attached to their religion, amazingly averse to that of Jesus, and guilty of persecuting him unto death, took him openly for their Saviour, a few weeks after they had seen him publicly scourged; and in the very city, in sight of which he had just been crucified between two thieves. Now, is not this as absurd as to believe, that if a few fishermen cried up the last person hanged in London for a notorious forgery; and if they affirmed that he was the Son of God, appealing to a great number of miracles, supposed to have been wrought by him in the squares and hospitals of the metropolis, and especially in St. Paul's church-yard: and maintaining that some of them had been acknowledged genuine by the *great council of the nation; they could by such notorious lies, engage thousands of citizens and some aldermen, to put all their trust in the villain hanged *at their special request?*

(4.) You believe that christianity is a gross imposture; and yet you cannot deny, that thousands of learned Romans and wise Greeks, who agreed to despise the Jews

“erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo quasi Deo dicere.”

* Some remarkable instances of this we have in the sacred books, published when the facts mentioned therein were notorious, and when some of the persons named were probably yet alive. After the resurrection of Lazarus, *the chief priests and the pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we? for this man does many miracles. If we let him alone, all men will believe on him.* John xi. 47.—And after Peter and John had publicly cured the cripple, who used to beg at the gate of the temple; *the rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem, saying what shall we do to these men? for that indeed a NOTABLE MIRACLE has been done by them, is manifest to ALL them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.* Acts iv. 5—16:

above all other men, took for their Saviour that very Jesus, of whom his own countrymen had been ashamed, and whom they had crucified as an impostor. Is not this as absurd as to believe, that thousands of wise Englishmen, and sensible Frenchmen, could be induced by the absurd tale of two or three Hottentots, to worship a certain Hottentot, whom the whole nation of Hottentots had condemned to be hanged, as being more worthy of an ignominious death than the bloody ringleader of a seditious mob?

(5.) If you believe with one of the popes, that the history of Christ is "a mere fable," and that there never was such an extraordinary person, you believe that the heathens, the Jews, and the Mahometans, have agreed with the Christians, their sworn enemies, to carry on the most amazing imposture. For Pliny, Tacitus, Ducian and Suetonius, heathen authors, who lived soon after Christ, make express mention of him : as do also Mahomet, many of the rabbies, and Julian the Emperor, that powerful and crafty apostate, who not only never denied Christ's existence, but openly acknowledged that Paul, Mark, Matthew, and Peter, were the authors of the Gospels and Epistles, which bear their name. Now is not this as ridiculous as to believe, that the pope, the mufty, and the inquisitors, have laid their heads with Messrs. Voltaire, Hume, and Rousseau, to favour a forgery subversive of popery, mahometanism, and infidelity?

(6.) If you deny the authenticity of the four gospels, which are the only ancient histories, that we have of our Saviour ; and yet believe, that there was such a personage as Jesus Christ, whose fame so spread through the Roman empire, that in less than 330 years, he was not only reckoned superior to the Roman Emperor, but to Jupiter himself ; and that nevertheless not one historian, during all that time, gave the world a *particular* account of him : [which must be the case, if the four gospels are a forgery :] Might

you not as reasonably suppose, that if a blazing meteor appeared in our day, and eclipsed the stars, the moon, and the sun itself; no astronomer for several centuries would take *particular* notice of so wonderful a phenomenon?

(7.) If the gospel is a delusion, you believe that St. Paul, who was a man of sense, learning, and intrepidity, was seduced by—no body, to preach for near 30 years, with astonishing zeal and matchless hardships, an imposture, against the abettors of which, he just before *breathed* nothing but *threatnings and slaughter*. Would it be half so absurd to believe, that Mr. Wilkes has suddenly commenced the minister's advocate, goes through the kingdom to recommend the present administration, and accounts it an honour to be mobbed, whipt, or stoned in every borough, for his excessive attachment to the king?

(8.) The instantaneous conversion of thousands, was wrought by means of public appeals to notorious matter of fact. Hear the language of the Apostles to the Jews. *This ye yourselves* KNOW, Acts ii. 24. *Ye* KNOW *the thing done through* ALL *Judea*, Acts x. 37, 38. *The king* KNOWETH *these things*. *This thing* was NOT *done in a corner*, Acts xxvi. 26. Now if Christianity is not founded upon indubitable facts, might you not as well believe, that twelve men broke loose from bedlam, brought last year thousands of deists over to christianity, by saying to them, "*Ye know*"—what you are perfect strangers to; that is, "*Ye know*"—that we are a pack of bedlamites?

(9.) If the gospel is forged, you believe that the Corinthians, &c. handed down to posterity, as a sacred treasure, epistles where St. Paul mentions their amazing conversion from gross immoralities; congratulates them about the *spiritual* or miraculous *gifts*, in which they abounded, 1 Cor. xii. 1. and gives them particular directions, how to use the *gift of tongues* to edification; when yet they were totally unacquainted with any such things. Might you not with equal wisdom believe, that, if Mr. Wilkes wrote to

the house of commons, a congratulatory epistle about their having received *by the laying on of his hands* the power of speaking Turkish, Arabic and Chinese, they would carefully transmit his letter to the next generation, as a divine performance; and that none of Mr. Wilkes's enemies would ever expose the impudence of so absurd a pretension?

(10.) If you say that the Apostles were fools, you must believe, that *foolish* fishermen laid a scheme with so much *wisdom*, and carried it on with so much *art* as to deceive multitudes of Greeks noted for their acuteness, and numbers of Romans famous for their prudence. Might you not as well believe that twelve poor, unarmed *idiots*, once combined to take the strongest towns in Europe, and accomplished their strange design by means, that strike the profoundest politicians with astonishment?

(11.) If you affirm that the Apostles were *cheats* and *liars*, you run into as great a difficulty, for you must believe that the greatest *knaves* that ever existed, contrary to their own principles and advantage, went through the world, exposing themselves to the greatest hardships and severest tortures unto death, to recommend both by their *example* and *precepts*, the strictest piety towards God, and the most scrupulous *honesty* towards man; perpetually denouncing eternal destruction to cheats and hypocrites, and the torments of a *lake that burneth with fire and brimstone to every one who loveth or maketh a lie*. Would it be more absurd to believe, that the twelve greatest epicures in England, have for a course of years, fulfilled a mutual agreement of preaching night and day, abstinence and fasting through the three kingdoms, merely to have the pleasure of starving to death for their pains?

(12.) To conclude: If the gospel (and consequently the scripture) is an imposture, you suppose that some poor Galilean fishermen, only by means of an *absurd lie*, which they told without wit, and wrote without elegance, foiled

the multitude of the jewish and pagan priests, who had prejudice, custom, possession, learning, oratory, wealth, laws, governors, and emperors on their side; yea, and *truth* also, upon your principles, at least when they decried the gospel as a *cheat*. Would it be more ridiculous to believe, that David killed Goliath with a grain of sand, and cut off his head with a spire of grass: or that our sailors sink men of war with a puff of breath, while our soldiers batter down ramparts with snow-balls?

O ye sons of worldly wisdom, drop your unjust prejudices; candidly weigh both sides of the question, and you will soon see, that in rejecting the gospel as an imposture, you display a far greater degree of *credulity*, than we do in cordially receiving it.

After this short defence of the oracles of God, and this little attack upon the persons who suspect their authenticity, I hope I may (consistently with the plan of *an appeal to reason*) produce from THE SCRIPTURES, a few more arguments to prove the original depravity and lost estate of mankind.

XXXI. ARGUMENT.

The spiritual life of the soul consists in its union with God, as the natural life of the body does in its union with the soul: and as poison and the sword kill the latter, so unbelief and sin destroy the former.

The first man was endued with this two-fold life; *God*, says the divine historian, *breathed into him the breath of lives, and he became a living body and a living soul*: he had both an animal life in common with beasts, and a spiritual life in common with angels. St. Paul, who calls this angelical life *the life of God*, intimates that it consisted both in that experimental *knowledge* of our Creator, wherein, says our church, “standeth our eternal life,” and in *right-*

teousness and true holiness, the moral and most glorious image of the supreme Being.

To suppose man was created void of this essential *knowledge* and *holy love*, is to suppose he came very wicked out of the hands of the parent of all good: For what is a rational creature, that neither *knows* nor *loves* his Creator, but a monster of stupidity and ingratitude, a wretch actually dead to God, and deserving present destruction?

When the Lord therefore said to man, *in the day that thou eatest thereof*, that is, in the day that thou sinnest, *thou shalt surely die*, it was as if he had said; "In that very day, sin shall assuredly separate between thee and the God of thy life: Thou shalt certainly lose the glorious view, which thou hast of my boundless goodness and infinite perfections: Thou shalt infallibly quench the spirit of ardent love, and stop the breath of delightful praise, by which thou livest both to my glory and thy comfort: And thy soul *dead in trespasses and sins*, shall remain in the filthy prison of a mortal body, till death breaks it open, to remove thee to thy own place."

And was not this Adam's case after his fall? Did he not *know that he was naked*, stript of the glorious image of his Creator? Did not guilty *shame* immediately prompt him to *hide* and protect, as well as he could, his degenerate and infebled body? Devoid of the ardent love he felt for God before, and of the pure delight he enjoyed in him, was not he left the wretched prey of tormenting *fears*? Did he not evidence his hatred of his heavenly Benefactor, by *dreading* his voice, and flying from him as hastily as he should have fled from the infernal serpent?

Was he not deprived of the knowledge by which at first sight, he discovered the nature of Eve, and gave to all living creatures names expressive of their respective properties?—Was he not I say, deprived of that intuitive knowledge and excellent wisdom, when he foolishly *hid himself among the trees* from his *all-seeing, omnipresent* Creator?

And is it not evident that he was lost to all sense of filial fear towards God, and conjugal love towards Eve, when, instead of self-accusations, penitential confessions, and earnest pleas for mercy, he shewed nothing at his trial but stubbornness, malice, and insolence?

Such was the state of corruption into which Adam had deplorably fallen, before he multiplied the human species. Now, according to the invariable laws of providence, an upright, holy nature can no more proceed from a fallen, sinful one, than gentle lambs can be begotten by fierce tygers, or harmless doves by venomous serpents: Common sense therefore, and natural philosophy dictates, that our first parents could not communicate the angelical life which they had lost, nor impart to their children a better nature than their own: and that their depravity is as much ours by nature, as the fierceness of the first lion, is the natural property of all the lions in the world.

FOUR OBJECTIONS.

1. Should it be said, that “ This doctrine reflects on the attributes of God, who, as the wise and gracious Governor of the world, should have foreseen and prevented the fall of Adam ;”

I answer : (1.) *God made man in his image*, part of which consists in free agency, or a power to determine his own actions. And if creating a free agent is not repugnant to divine wisdom and goodness ; the wrong choice or sin of a free agent, can be no impeachment of those perfections in the Deity.*

* God answers thus for himself in MILTON.

Man will fall,

He and his faithless progeny. Whose fault ?

Whose but his own ? Ingrate ! he had of me

All he could have : I made him just and right.

Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.

(2.) Suppose man had not been endued with freedom of choice, he would only have ranked among admirable machines, and nothing could have been more absurd than to place him in a state of probation. And suppose, when he was in that state, divine power had irresistibly turned the scale of his will to obedience, the *trial* would have been

Such I created all th' ethereal pow'rs ;
 Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
 Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere
 Of true allegiance, constant faith or love,
 Where only what they *needs must do*, appear'd ;
 Not what they *would* ? What praise could they
 receive ?

What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
 When will and reason (reason also is choice)
 Useless and vain, of freedom both despoil'd,
 Made passive both, had serv'd *necessity*,
 Not me ? They therefore, as to right belong'd,
 So were created, nor can justly accuse
 Their Maker, or their making, or their fate :
 As if predestination over-rul'd
 Their will, dispos'd by absolute decree,
 Or high fore-knowledge. They themselves decreed
 Their own revolt, not I ; if I fore-knew,
 Fore-knowledge had no influence on their fault,
 Which had no less prov'd certain un'foreknown.

Young expresses the same sentiment with his peculiar boldness and energy.

Blame not the bowels of the Deity :
 Man shall be bless'd as far as man *permits*.
 Not man alone, all *rationals*, Heav'n arms
 With an illustrious, but tremendous, pow'r
 To counter-act its own most gracious ends ;
 And this of strict necessity, not choice :
 That pow'r deny'd, *man*, *angels* were no more,
 But passive engines, void of praise or blame,
 Heav'n *wills* our happiness, *allows* our doom :
 Invites us ardently, but not compels ;
 Heav'n but persuades, almighty man decrees ;
 Man is the maker of immortal fates,
 Man falls by man, if finally he falls.

prevented, and the council of divine wisdom foolishly defeated.

(3.) God did all, that a wise and good Ruler of rational and free creatures, could do to prevent sin. He placed in Adam's heart, a vigorous principle of holiness: He granted him sufficient strength to continue in obedience: He indulged him with his blessed presence and converse, to encourage him in the way of duty: He strictly forbade him to sin: He enforced the prohibition by the fearful threatening of death; He promised to crown his continuance in holiness, with a glorious immortality; and gave him *the tree of life*, as a pledge of this inestimable blessing. To have gone farther, would have been entirely inconsistent with his wisdom: an absolute restraint being as contrary to the liberty of a moral agent, and the nature of the divine law; as chaining down an harmless man that he may not commit murder, is contrary to the freedom of Englishmen, and the laws of this realm. Nor can we, either with reason or decency, complain that God did not make us *absolutely immutable* and *perfect* like himself: This is charging him with folly, for not enduing us with infinite wisdom, and knowledge every way boundless; that is, for not making us *gods* instead of *men*.

(4.) In case men fell, divine mercy had decreed his recovery by Jesus Christ: And when the Almighty Redeemer shall have brought life out of death, and light out of darkness, the mysterious drama of creation and redemption, of which we see but one or two acts, will appear, even to our objectors, every way worthy of its infinitely wise and gracious Author.

II. In the mean time they will still urge, that "Adam's posterity (then unborn) could not *justly* partake of the consequences of his transgression." But, shall cavils overthrow *matter of fact*? Do not we see in every unrenewed person, the unbelief, pride, sinful curiosity, sensuality, and alienation from God, to which our first parents were sub-

jected at their fall? Do not women bear children with sorrow as well as Eve? Is the ground less cursed for us than for Adam? And do not we toil, suffer, and die as he did? If this order of things were *unjust*, would the *righteous* God have permitted its continuance to the present time? Besides,

Adam contained in himself, as in miniature, all his posterity. The various nations of men, are nothing but different branches growing from the original root. They are *Adam*, or *man*, existing at large; as the branches of a spreading oak, with all the acorns that have grown upon, and dropped from them, during a long succession of summers, are nothing but the original acorn, unfolding and multiplying itself with all its essential properties. It is then as ridiculous to wonder, that the sons of depraved Adam should naturally be depraved, as that an acorn should naturally produce an oak; and a poisonous root, a malignant plant. Again,

Adam was the general head representative, and father of mankind; and we suffer for his rebellion *legally*; as the children of those who have sold themselves for slaves, are born in a state of wretched slavery; and as the descendents of a noble traitor, lose the title by their ancestor's crime: *Naturally*, as the sons of a bankrupt suffer poverty for their father's extravagance, or as *Gehazi's leprosy* *came to him and his seed for ever*: And *unavoidably*, as an unborn child shares the fate of his unhappy mother, when she inadvertently poisons, or desperately stabs herself.

III. "But," say the same objectors, "supposing it be granted, that we are naturally depraved; yet if our depravity is *natural*, it is *necessary*; and we are no more *blameable* for it, than lions for their fierceness, or Ethiopians for their black complexion."

(1.) Our objectors would not, I presume, be understood to insinuate by "blameable," that our depravity does not render us detestable in the eyes of an holy God, or that it is

not in itself blame-worthy. Do they less dislike the complexion of the Ethiopians, or less detest the destructive rage of lions, because it is *natural* to them? If moral dispositions ceased to be worthy of praise or dispraise, as soon as they are rooted, *morally necessary*, and, in that sense, *natural*; what absurd consequences would follow! Sinners would become guiltless by arriving at complete impenitency; and God could not be praised for his holiness, nor Satan dispraised for his sinfulness; holiness being as essential to God, by the absolute perfection of his nature, as sin is morally necessary to the devil, by the unconquerable habit which he has wilfully contracted, and in which he obstinately remains.

(2.) Should they mean, that “we are not *answerable* or *accountable* for our depravity:” I reply, Though I should grant (which I am very far from doing*) that we are *no way* accountable for our moral infection, yet it cannot be denied that we are answerable for our *obstinate refusal* of relief, and for the *wilful neglect* of the means found out by divine mercy for our cure. Can we justly charge God with either our misfortune, or our guilt? Do not parents, by the law of nature, represent their unborn posterity? If Adam ruined us by a *common transgression*; has not Christ, the second Adam, provided for us a *common salvation*? Jude 3. Heb. ii. 3. If by the *offence of one*, (Adam,) *judgment came upon all men to condemnation*; by the *righteousness of one* (Christ,) *is not the free gift come upon all*

* MILTON introduces Adam speaking thus;

Ah why should all mankind,
For one man's fault, thus guiltless be condemn'd,
If guiltless? but from me what *can* proceed,
But all corrupt, both mind and will deprav'd,
Not to *do* only, but to *will* the same
With *me*? How can they then acquitted stand
In sight of God? Him after all disputes
Forc'd I absolve

men to justification of life? Rom. v. 18. And since God has declared, that *the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father* beyond the short period of this transitory life, if any suffer after death, is it not entirely for their own unbelief, and peculiar sins? * Compare John iii. 18, 19. and Mark xvi. 16. But what follows compleatly vindicates our Creator's goodness.

(3.) Do sin and misery abound by our fall in Adam? Grace and glory *abound much more* by our *redemption* in Jesus Christ, Rom. v. 20. And "it must be owing to our own perverseness, or our own negligence," (says the ingenious Hervey with great truth) "if we do not levy a tax upon our loss, and rise even by our fall." † This leaves us not the least shadow of reason, to complain of the divine proceedings respecting us.

* MILTON introduces God speaking thus to the Messiah.

Man shall not quite be lost, but sav'd who will,
Yet not of will in him, but grace in me
Freely vouchsaf'd: once more I will renew
His lapsed pow'rs—yet once more he shall stand
On even ground against his mortal foe,
By me upheld—Be thou in Adam's room
The head of all mankind, though Adam's son.
As in him perish all men, so in thee,
As from a second root, shall be restor'd
As many as are restor'd, without thee none.
His crimes make guilty all his sons; thy merit
Imputed shall absolve them, who renounce
Their own both righteous, and unrighteous deeds;
And live in thee transplanted, and from thee
Receive new life.

† Creation's great superior, man, is thine;
Thine is *Redemption*. How should this great truth
Raise man o'er man, and kindle seraphs here!
Redemption! 'Twas Creation more sublime;
Redemption! 'Twas the *labour* of the skies;
Far more than labour—It was *death* in heav'n.
A truth so strange! 'Twere bold to think it true;
If not far bolder still to disbelieve.

We may then conclude, that a moral depravity, which comes upon us by the *wilful* choice of a parent, in whom we *seminally* and *federally* existed—a depravity which cleaves to us by an *obstinate neglect* of the infinitely precious means provided to remove it—a depravity which works now by *our own personal choice*, and to which we daily give *our* assent by the *free* commission of sins that are avoidable, leaves us not only accountable, but *inexcusable* before God.

IV. However the advocates for the natural purity of the human race, (endeavouring to clog with difficulties, what they cannot disprove to be matter of fact) still assert, “As we have our souls *immediately* from God, *if* we are born sinful he must either create *sinful* souls, which cannot be supposed without impiety; or send *sinless* souls into *sinful* bodies, to be defiled by the unhappy union, which is as inconsistent with his goodness as his justice. Add to this, say the objectors, that nothing can be more unphilosophical than to suppose, that a body, a mere lump of organised matter, is able to communicate to a pure spirit that moral pollution, of which itself, is as incapable, as the murderer’s sword is incapable of cruelty.”

This specious objection, which Dr. Watts acknowledges to be “the very chief point of difficulty, in all the controversies about original sin,” is wholly founded upon the vulgar notion, that we have our souls immediately from God by infusion: It will therefore intirely fall to the ground, if we can prove, that we receive them, as well as our bodies, by traduction from Adam: and that this is fact, appears, if I am not mistaken, by the following arguments.

(1.) We have no ground from scripture or reason to think, that adulterers can, when they please, put God upon *creating* new souls to animate the spurious fruit of their crime. On the contrary, it is said, that *God rested on the seventh day from ALL his work* of creation.

(2.) Eve herself was not *created* but in Adam; God breathed no breath of life into her, as he did into her husband to make him *a living soul*. Therefore when Adam saw her, he said; *she shall be called woman, because she her whole self, not her body only [her whole self, not her body only] was taken out of man*. If then the soul of the first woman sprang from Adam's soul, as her body from his body; what reason have we to believe, that the souls of her posterity are immediately infused, as Adam's was when God created him?

(3.) All agree, that under God we receive *life* from our parents; and if *life*, then certainly our *soul*, which is the *principle of life*.

(4.) Other animals have power to propagate their own species *after its kind*; they can generate *animated* bodies: Why should man be but *half* a father? When did God stint him to propagate the mere *shell* of his person, the body without the soul? Was it when *he blessed him, and said, Be fruitful and multiply?* When he spoke thus, did he not address himself to the *soul*, as well as to the body? Can the body alone either understand or execute a command? Is it not on the contrary highly reasonable to conclude, that by virtue of the divine appointment and blessing, the *whole* man can be *fruitful and multiply*; and the soul, under proper circumstances, can generate a soul, as a thought begets a thought; and can kindle the flame of life, as one taper lights another, without weakening its immortal substance, any more than God the Father (if I may be allowed the comparison) impairs the divine essence by the *eternal* generation of his *only begotten Son*.

(5.) Does not *matter of fact* corroborate the preceding argument? A sprightly race-horse generally begets a mettlesome colt; while a heavy cart-horse begets a colt, that bears the stamp of its sire's dulness. And is it not so with mankind in general? The children of the Hottentots and Eskimaux are commonly as *stupid*; while those of the

English and French, are usually as *sharp*, as their parents. You seldom see a wit springing from two half-witted people, or a fool descended from very sensible parents. The children of men of genius, are frequently as remarkable for some branch of hereditary genius; as those of blockheads, for their native stupidity. Nothing is more common, than to see very passionate and flighty parents have very passionate and flighty children. And I have an hundred times discovered, not only the features, look, and complexion of a father or a mother in a child's face; but seen a congenial soul looking out [if I may so speak] at those windows of the body which we call *the eyes*. Hence I conclude that the advice frequently given to those, who are about to chuse a companion for life, "*Take care of the breed,*" is not absolutely without foundation; although some lay too much stress upon it, forgetting that a thousand unknown accidents may form exceptions to the general rule; and not considering that the peculiarity of the father's breed may be happily corrected by that of the mother, [and vice versa:] and that as the grace of God yielded to, may *sweeten* the *worst* temper, so sin persisted in, may *sour* the *best*.

(6.) Again, Moses informs us, that fallen *Adam* *begat a son in his own likeness and after his image*: But had he generated a body without a soul, he would not have *begotten a son in his own likeness*, since he was not a mere mortal body, but a *fallen embodied spirit*. Compare Gen. v. 3. with xlv. 26.

"But upon this scheme, will objectors say if Adam was converted when he begat a son, he begat a converted soul." This does by no means follow; for if he was born of God after his fall; it was *by grace through faith*, and not by nature through generation: he could not therefore communicate his *spiritual regeneration* by *natural generation*, any more than a great scholar can propagate his learning together with his species.

Should it be again objected, that “the soul is not generated, because the scriptures declare, *The Lord is the Father of the spirit of all flesh, and the spirit returns to God who gave it:*” I answer, It is also written, that Job and David were *fearfully made and fashioned by the hands of God in the womb; that he formed Jeremiah in the belly; and that we are the offspring of him, who made of one blood all nations of men.* Now if the *latter* scriptures do not exclude the interposition of parents, in the formation of their children’s *bodies*; by what rule of criticism or divinity can we prove, that the *former* exclude that interposition in the production of their *souls*.

Nor can materialists, who have no ideas of generation, but such as are gross and carnal like their own system, with any shadow of reason infer, that “if the soul is generated with the body, it will also perish with it:” For dissolution is so far from being a necessary consequence of the spiritual generation of souls, that it would not so much as have followed the generation of our bodies, if Adam had not brought *sin into the world, and death by sin.* Again, if wheat, a material seed which grows out of the same earthly clod with the chaff that encloses it can subsist unimpaired, when that mean cover is destroyed: how much more can the soul (that spiritual, vital heavenly power, which is of a nature so vastly superior to the body in which it is confined) continue to exist, when flesh and blood are returned to their native dust!

Should some persons reject what I say of the traduction of souls, in order to illustrate the derivation of original sin: and should they say, that they have no more idea of the *generation*, than honest Nicodemus had of the *regeneration of a spirit*: I beg leave to observe two things.

First, If such objectors are converted, they will not deny the *regeneration* of souls by the Spirit of God, since they experience it, and our Lord speaks of it as a blessed reality, even while he represents it as a mystery *unknown* as

to the manner of it, John iii. 8—13. Now if pious souls have been *regenerated* from the beginning of the world, without exactly knowing *how*; is it reasonable to deny that souls are *generated*, merely because we cannot exactly account for the manner, in which that wonder takes place.

Secondly, Should my objectors be versed in natural philosophy, they need not be told, that even the kind of generation, which they allow, is as much a *mystery* to man, as the movement of a watch is to a child, that just sees the case and the glass. If they will not believe me, let them believe him, who *gave his heart to search out by wisdom, concerning all things that are done under heaven*, and who, touching upon our question, says: *As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so, thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all.* Eccl. xi. 5.

For my part, I do not see, why the same Almighty Preserver of men, who (as St. Paul tells us) *made of ONE BLOOD* the bodies of *all nations of men*, might not of *one ACTIVE THOUGHT*, and *ARDENT DESIRE*, *have made* the souls of *all nations of men* also. Have not *thought* and *desire* as great affinity to the nature of the *soul*, as *blood* has to that of the *body*? and consequently are not our ideas of the *traduction* of the *soul*, as clear as those, which we can form of the *generation* of the *body*.

Having dwelt so long upon the manner in which mankind naturally propagate original corruption, together with their *whole* species, I hope, I may reasonably resume the conclusion of my argument, and affirm, that, if Adam corrupted the fountain of human nature in himself, we, the streams cannot but be naturally corrupted.

XXXII. ARGUMENT.

God being a *Spirit*, reason and revelation jointly inform us, that his law is *spiritual*, and extends to our thoughts

and tempers, as well as to our words and actions. At all times, and in all places, it forbids every thing that is sinful, or has the least tendency to sin; it commands all that is excellent, and enjoins it to be done in the utmost perfection of our dispensation.

Therefore, if we have not always trusted and delighted in God, more than in all things and persons: if for one instant we have *loved*, or feared *the creature more than the Creator*; we have had *another God besides the Lord*. Col. iii. 5. Phil. iii. 19. Have we once omitted to adore him *in spirit and in truth* inwardly, or at any time worshipped him without becoming veneration outwardly; we have transgressed as if we had *bowed to a graven image*, John iv. 24. Though perjury and imprecations should never have defiled our lips: yet, if ever we mentioned God's tremendous name thoughtlessly, or irreverently in prayer, reading, or conversation, we have *taken it in vain*, and the Searcher of hearts *will not hold us guiltless*, Phil. ii. 10.— And if it has not been our constant practice and delight, to *enter his courts with praise*, and spend the whole Sabbath in his blessed service, we have polluted that sacred day, and the guilt of prophaneness may justly be charged upon us. Isai. lviii. 13.

Did we ever shew any disrespect to our superiors, or unkindness to our equals and inferiors; we have violated the precept that commands us to *honor all men*, and be punctual in the discharge of all social and relative duties. 1 Pet. ii. 17. Did we ever weaken our constitution by excess, strike our neighbour in anger, wound his character with an injurious word, or only suffer hatred to rise in our breast against him; we have committed a species of *murder*; for, *Whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire*; and *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer*, Matt. v. 22. 1 John iii. 15. Are we *the friends of the world*, an apostle brands us with the name of *adulterers*, because we are false to our heavenly

bridegroom, James iv. 4. And if we have only *looked on a woman to lust after her*, Christ declares that we *have committed adultery with her already in our heart*, Matt. v. 28. Have we overcharged our customers, exacted upon any one in our bargains, insisted on a full salary for work done by halves, defrauded the king of any part of his taxes, or taken advantage of the necessity and ignorance of others to get by their loss: we swell the numerous tribe of reputable thieves and genteel robbers, Matt. xxii. 21. Neglecting to keep our word and baptismal vow, or speaking an untruth, is *bearing false witness against our neighbour*, ourselves, or Christ who stiles himself *the truth*, Rev. xxii. 15. And giving place to a fretful, discontented thought, or an irregular, envious desire, is a breach of that spiritual precept, which made St. Paul say, *I had not known lust, or a wrong desire to be sin, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet*, Rom. vii. 7.

Such being the extreme spirituality of the law, who can plead that he never was guilty of breaking one, or even all of the ten commandments?

And if we have broken them all, either in their literal or spiritual meaning, and are threatened for every transgression, with a curse suitable to the Lawgiver's infinite majesty, who can conceive the greatness of our guilt and danger? Till we find a sanctuary under the shadow of a Saviour's wings, are we not as liable to the strokes of divine vengeance, as a felon, guilty of breaking all the statutes of his country, is liable to the penalty of human laws?

If this is not the case, there is no justice in the court of heaven, and the laws given with so much terror from the Almighty's throne, like the statutes of children, or the pope's bulls, are only *bruta fulmina*, words without effect, and thunders without lightnings.

Some indeed flatter themselves, that "the law, since the gospel-dispensation, abates much of its demands of perfect love." But their hope is equally unsupported by reason

and scripture. The law is the eternal rule of right, the moral picture of the God of holiness and love. It can no more vary, than its eternal, unchangeable original. The Lord *will not alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth.* He must cease to be what he is, before his law can lose its power to bind either men or angels; and all creatures shall break sooner than it shall bend; for if it commands us only to *love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves,* what JUST abatement can be made in so equitable a precept? Therefore man, who breaks the righteous law of God as naturally as he breathes, is and must continue, under its fearful curse, till he has secured the pardon and help offered him in the gospel.

XXXIII. ARGUMENT.

Nor is the gospel itself without its threatenings; for if the Lord, on the one hand, “opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers;” he declares, on the other, that *they shall all be damned who believe not the truth,* when it is proposed to them with sufficient evidence; and that *he who believeth not is condemned already, BECAUSE he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.* 2 Thess. ii. 12. John iii. 18. From these awful declarations, I draw the following argument.

If faith is so essential a virtue, how depraved and wretched is man, who is so excessively *slow of heart to believe* the things that concern his salvation! Matter of fact daily proves, that we readily admit the evidence of men, while we peremptorily reject the testimony of God. Commodore Byron’s extraordinary account of the giants in Patagonia is or was every where received: But that of Jesus Christ, concerning those who *walk in the broad way to destruction,* is and has always been too generally disregarded. Matt. vii. 13.

On reading in a news-paper an anonymous letter from Naples, we believe, that rivers of liquid fire flow from the convulsed bowels of a mountain, and from burning lakes in the adjacent plains : But if we read in the scripture, that *Tophet*, the burning lake, *is prepared of old* for the impenitent, we beg leave, to with-hold our assent ; and unless divine grace prevents, we must fall in, and feel before we will assent and believe, Isa. xxx. 33.

Who, that has seen a map of Africa, ever doubted, whether there is such a kingdom as that of Morocco, though he never saw it, or any of its natives ? But who, that has perused the gospel, never doubted, whether *the kingdom of heaven within us*, or that state of *righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*, which God opens to believers upon earth, is not a mere imagination ? Though Christ himself invites us to it, and many pious persons, not only testify they enjoy it, but actually shew its blessed fruits in heavenly tempers, a blameless life, a triumphant death. Mark i. 14. Luke xvii. 21. Rom. xiv. 17. Rev. i. 6.

With what readiness do we depend upon an honest man's promise, especially if it is reduced into a bond ? But with what reluctance do we rely on the *many great and precious promises* of God, *confirmed by an oath*, delivered before the most unexceptionable witnesses, and sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ ? 2 Pet. i. 4. 2 Cor. i. 20. Heb. vi. 17.

And ye, numerous tribe of patients, how do ye shame those who call themselves christians ! So entire is the trust which you repose upon a physician's advice, whom perhaps you have seen but once, that you immediately abstain from your pleasant food, and regularly take medicines, which for what you know, may be as injurious to your stomach, as they are offensive to your palate : But we, who profess christianity, generally quarrel with Christ's prescriptions ; and if we do not understand the nature of a remedy which he recommends, we think this a sufficient reason for

refusing it. he reveals Christ only, if we can help it, we will take nothing with firm trust.

One fallacious *Christness* is often sufficient to make us believe, that a neighbour *cannot* do us an injury; but twenty ministers of *truths* cannot persuade us, God *hath sworn in his wrath*, that if we die in our sins *we shall not enter into his rest*, Psal. xcvi. 11. or that if we *come to him* for pardon and life, *he will in no wise cast us out*, John vi. 37.—The most defamatory and improbable reports spread with uncommon swiftness; and pass for matter of fact: But when St. Paul testifies, that *if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, Rom. viii. 9. who believes his testimony? Does not the same mind that was open to scandalous lies, prove shut against such a revealed truth?

Isaiah asks, *Who hath believed our report?* and Jesus says, *When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith upon the earth?* alas! there would have been no room for these plaintive questions, if *the word of God* had not been proposed to our faith; for the most groundless and absurd assertions of men find multitudes of believers. We see daily, that an idle rumour about a peace or a war, meets with such credit as to raise or sink the stocks in a few hours.

It is evident that man has a foolish and *evil heart of unbelief*, ready to *strain out a gnat* in divine revelation, while he greedily *swallows up the camel* of human imposture. Now if it is part of the gospel which Christ commands his ministers to *preach to every creature*, that *he who believeth not shall be damned*, Mark xvi. 16. how great is the depravity, and how imminent the danger of fallen man, who has such a strong propensity, to so destructive, so damnable a sin as unbelief!

XXXIV. ARGUMENT.

But, let us come still nearer to the point. If we are not *by nature conceived in sin*, and *children of wrath*, millions

of infants, who die without actual sin, to need of the blood of Christ to wash their robes, in the liturgy to purify their hearts. The incarnation of the *divine* word, and the influences of the Holy Spirit, are not necessary to them, as the visits of a physician, and his remedies to persons in perfect health. Their spotless innocence is a sufficient passport for heaven: Baptism is ridiculous, and the christian religion absurd in their case.

Nor does it appear, why it might not be as absurd with regard to the rest of mankind, did they but act their part a little better: For if we are naturally innocent, we have a natural power to remain so; and by a proper use of it, we may avoid standing in need of the salvation procured by Christ for the *lost*.

Nay, if innocent nature, carefully improved, may be the way to eternal life, it is certainly the readiest way, and the Son of God speaks like the grand deceiver of mankind, when he says, *I am the way, NO MAN cometh to the Father but BY ME.* Christians, let self-conceited deists entertain the thought, but harbour it not for a moment; in you it would be highly blasphemous.

XXXV. ARGUMENT.

And that you may detest it the more, consider further, that all the capital doctrines of christianity are built upon that fundamental article of our depravity and danger. If *all flesh hath not corrupted its way*, how severe are those words of Christ, *Except ye repent, ye shall all perish: and Except ye be converted, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven?* If all are not carnal and earthly by their first birth, how absurd is what he said to Nicodemus; *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven?* If there is any spiritual health in us by nature, how notoriously false are these assertions: *All our sufficiency is of God: Without me ye can do nothing?* If every natural

man is not the reverse of the holiness, in which Adam was created; how irrational these and the like scriptures? *If any man is in Christ, he is a NEW CREATURE: In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a NEW CREATURE*—To conclude: If mankind are not universally corrupt, guilty, and condemned; how unnecessarily alarming is this declaration! *He that believeth not on the Son of God is condemned already—The wrath of God abideth on him:* and if we are not foolish, unrighteous, unholy and enslaved to sin; why is *Christ made to us of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption?* Take away then the doctrine of the fall, and the tower of evangelical truth, built by Jesus Christ, is no more founded on a rock, but upon the sand: Or rather, the stately fabric is instantly thrown down, and leaves no ruins behind it, but the dry morality of Epictetus, covered with the rubbish of the wildest metaphors, and buried in the most impertinent ceremonies.

XXXVI. ARGUMENT.

One more absurdity still remains. If man is not in the most imminent danger of destruction, nothing can be more extravagant than the great article of the christian faith thus expressed in the Nicene creed: *Jesus Christ, very God of very God, by whom all things were made, for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, was made man, and was crucified FOR US.*

Is it not astonishing, that there should be people so infatuated as to join every Lord's day in this solemn confession, and to deny, the other six, the horrible danger to which they are exposed, till they have an interest in Christ? Is not the least grain of common sense sufficient to make an attentive person see, that if he, *by whom all things were made, came from heaven for OUR salvation, if he was made man that he might suffer and be crucified for us;* he saw

us guilty, condemned, lost and obnoxious to the *damnation*, which we continually deprecate in the litany? Shall we charge the Son of God, *in whom are hid all the treasures of divine wisdom*, with the unparalleled folly of coming from heaven to atone for *innocent* creatures, to relieve persons *uncondemned*, to redeem a race of *freemen*, to deliver from the curse a people *not accursed*; to hang by exquisitely dolorous wounds, made in his sacred hands and feet, on a tree more ignominious than the gallows, for *honest men* and *very good sort of people*; and to expire under the sense of the wrath of heaven, that he might save from hell people in *no danger* of going there?

Reader, is it possible to entertain for a moment these wild notions, without offering the utmost indignity to the Son of God, and the greatest violence to common sense? And does not reason cry, as with the sound of a thousand trumpets, “If our Creator could not save us consistently with his glorious attributes, but by becoming incarnate, passing through the deepest scenes of humiliation and temptation, distress and want, for thirty three years: and undergoing at last the most shameful, painful, and accursed death in our place; our wickedness must be desperate, our sins execrable, our guilt black as the shadow of death, and our danger dreadful as the gloom and torments of hell?”

“*Shocking doctrine!*” says the self-conceited moralist, as he rises from his chair full of indignation, and ready to throw aside the arguments he cannot answer. Reader, if you are the man, remember that this is an appeal to *reason* and not to *passion*, to *matter of fact*, and not to your vitiated taste for *pleasing error*. You may cry out at the sight of a shroud, a coffin, a grave, “*Shocking objects!*” But your loudest exclamations will not lessen the awful reality, by which many have happily been *shocked* into a timely consideration of, and preparation for, approaching death.

“ But this doctrine, you still urge, drives people to despair.” Yes to a despair of being saved by their own merits and righteousness ; and this is as reasonable in a sinner who comes to the Saviour, as despairing to swim across the sea, is rational in a passenger that takes ship. Our church, far from speaking against it, says, that *sinner should be dismayed at God’s rightful justice, and should DESPAIR indeed, as touching any hope that may be IN THEMSELVES.* Hom. On falling from God, 2d part.

A just despair of ourselves is widely different from a despair of God’s mercy, and Christ’s willingness to save the chief of sinners, who flies to him for refuge. This horrible sin, this black crime of Judas, springs rather from a sullen, obstinate rejection of the remedy, than as some vainly suppose from a clear knowledge of the disease : And that none may commit it, Christ’s ministers take particular care not to preach the law without the gospel, and the fall without the recovery : no sooner have they opened the wound of sin, festering in the sinner’s conscience, than they pour in the balm of divine promises, and make gracious offers of a free pardon, and full salvation by the compassionate Redeemer, who came to *justify the ungodly, and to save the lost.*

And indeed those only, who see their sin and misery, will cordially embrace the gospel : for common sense dictates, that none care for the king’s mercy, but those who know they are guilty, condemned criminals. How excessively unreasonable is it then to object, that the preaching of man’s corrupt and lost estate drives people to despair of divine mercy, when it is absolutely the only means of shewing them their need of it, and making them gladly accept it upon God’s own terms.

Leaving therefore that trite objection to the unthinking vulgar, once more, judicious reader, summon all your rational powers ; and, after imploring help from on high to use them aright, say, whether these last arguments do not

prove, that no *christian* can deny the complete fall of mankind, without renouncing the capital doctrines of his own religion; overturning the very foundation of the gospel, which he professes to receive; staining the glory of the Redeemer, whom he pretends to honor; and impiously taking from his crown, *wisdom, truth, and charity*, the three jewels that are its brightest ornaments. Sum up then all that has been advanced concerning the afflictive dealings of God's providence with mankind, and the base conduct, or wicked temper of mankind towards God, one another, and themselves. Declare, if all the arguments laid before you, and cleared from the thickest clouds of objections that might obscure them, do not cast more light upon the black subject of our depravity, than is sufficient to shew that it is a melancholy truth. And finally pronounce, whether the doctrine of our corrupt and lost estate, stated in the words of the sacred writers, and of our pious reformers, is not *rationaly demonstrated*, and established upon the firmest basis in the world, *Matter of fact*, and the dictates of *common sense*.

FIFTH PART.

WHEN a doctrine has been clearly demonstrated, the truths that *necessarily* spring from it, cannot reasonably be rejected. Let then common sense decide, whether the following consequences do not *necessarily* result from the doctrine of the fall, established in the preceding parts of this treatise.

I. INFERENCE. If we are by nature in a corrupt and lost estate, the grand business of ministers is to rouse our drowsy consciences, and warn us of our imminent danger : It behoves them to *cry aloud and spare not, to lift up their voice like a trumpet, and shew us our transgressions and our sins* : Nor are they to desist from this unpleasing part of their office, till we *awake to righteousness, and lay hold on the hope set before us.*

If preachers, under pretence of peace and good nature, let the wound fester in the conscience of their hearers, to avoid the thankless office of probing it to the bottom : If, for fear of giving them pain by a timely amputation, they let them die of a mortification : Or if *they heal the hurt of the daughter of God's people slightly, saying Peace ! Peace ! when there is no peace ;* they imitate those sycophants of old, who, for fear of displeasing the rich and offending the great *preached smooth things, and prophesied deceit.*

This cruel gentleness, this soft barbarity is attended with the most pernicious consequences, and will deservedly meet with the most dreadful punishment. *Give sinners*

warning from me, says the Lord to every minister: *When I say to the wicked, the unconverted, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, he shall die in his iniquity, in his unconverted state; but his blood will I require at THY hand.* See Matt. xviii. 3. Ezek. iii. 18. and xiii. 10.

II. INFER. If we are naturally depraved and condemned creatures; *self-righteousness* and *pride*, are the most absurd and monstrous of all our sins. The deepest repentance and profoundest humility become us: To *neglect* them, is to stumble at the very threshold of true religion; and to *ridicule* them, is to pour contempt upon reason, revelation, and the first operations of divine grace on a sinner's heart.

III. INFER. If the corruption of mankind is universal, inveterate, and amazingly powerful, no mere creature can deliver them from it. They must remain unrestored; or they must have an almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, unwearied, infinitely patient Saviour; willing day and night to attend to the wants, and public or secret applications of millions of wretched souls; and able to give them immediate assistance throughout the world; in all their various trials, temptations, and conflicts, both in life and in death. Is the most exalted *creature* sufficient for these things?

When such a vast body as mankind, spread over all the earth for thousands of years, made up of numerous nations, all of which consist of multitudes of individuals, each of whom has the springs of all his faculties and powers enfeebled, disordered, or broken: When such an immense body as this, is to be restored to the image of the infinitely holy, glorious and blessed God, common sense dictates, that the amazing task can be performed by no other than the original Artist, the great Searcher of hearts, the omnipotent Creator of mankind.

Hence it appears, that notwithstanding the cavils of Arius, the Saviour is GOD OVER ALL *blessed for ever, all*

things were made by him, he upholds all things by the word of his power, and every believer may adore him, and say, with the wondering apostle, when the light of faith shone into his benighted soul, My Lord, and my God!

IV. INFER. If our guilt is immense, it cannot be expiated without a sacrifice of an infinite dignity: Hence we discover the mistake of heathens and carnal Jews, who trusted in the sacrifices of beasts: the error of deists, Mahometans, and Socinians, who see no need of any expiatory sacrifice; and the amazing presumption of too many christians, who repose a considerable part of their confidence in the proper merit of their works; instead of placing it entirely in the infinitely meritorious sacrifice of the immaculate Lamb of God humbly acknowledging that all the gracious rewardableness of the best works of faith, is derived from his precious blood and *original* merit.

V. INFER. If our spiritual maladies are both numerous and mortal, it is evident, we cannot *recover* the spiritual health that we enjoyed in our first parents, but by the powerful help of our heavenly Physician, the second Adam. How absurd is it then to say, that we are saved, or *recovered* by doing good works, without the quickening grace of a Saviour?

A wretched beggar is lame both in his hands and feet: An officious man, instead of taking him to a person famous for his skill in relieving such objects of distress, assures him that the only way of getting well, is to run of errands for his prince, and work for his fellow-beggars. You justly wonder at the cruelty and folly of such a director: But you have much more reason to be astonished at the conduct of those miserable empirics, who direct poor, blind, lame sinners, labouring under a compilation of spiritual disorders, and sick even unto eternal death, to save themselves merely by serving God, and doing good to their neighbours; as if they needed neither repentance towards God, nor faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, nor yet free grace

to enable them to repent, believe, and serve God acceptably.

How much more rational is the evangelical method of salvation! *we are saved*, says the apostle, we are restored to *saiving health*, and a spiritual activity to serve God and our neighbour, *not of words, not of ourselves*; but *by grace*, by mere favour; *through faith*, through such an entire confidence in our Physician, as makes us gladly take his powerful remedies, abstain from the pleasing poison of sin, and feed on those divine truths which communicate angelical vigor and happiness to our souls. Eph. ii. 8.

VI. INFER. If our nature is so completely fallen and totally helpless, that in spiritual things *we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing truly good as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God*; it is plain we stand in absolute need of his Spirit's assistance, to enable us to pray, repent, believe, love and obey aright. Consequently, those who ridicule the Holy Spirit, and his sacred influence, despise the great *helper of our infirmities*, and act a most irrational, wicked, and desperate part. Rom. viii. 26.

VII. INFER. If by nature we are *really* and truly born in sin, our regeneration cannot be a mere metaphor, or a vain ceremony; our spiritual birth must be *real* and *positive*. How fatal therefore is the mistake of those, who suppose that the *new birth* is only a figurative expression for a *decent behaviour*! How dreadful the error of those, who imagine that all, whose faces have been typically washed with material water in baptism, are now effectually *born again of living water and the Holy Spirit*! And how inexcusable the case of the multitudes, who, in the church of England, are under this dangerous mistake, so prudently guarded against by our pious reformers!

In our catechism, they clearly distinguish between *the outward visible sign or form in baptism*, and *the inward, spiritual grace*: And by defining the latter, *a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness*, they declare that

whosoever is not *dead* or *dying to sin* and *alive to righteousness*, is not truly regenerate, and has nothing of baptism but the *outward and visible sign*. In the 27th of our articles they mention, that *baptism is not the new birth, but a SIGN of regeneration or new birth whereby, as by an instrument, they who receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church*. And if our church returns thanks for the regeneration of the infants, whom she has admitted to baptism, it is chiefly* upon a charitable supposition, that they have *received it rightly*, and will, *for their part faithfully perform the promises made for them by their sureties*. If they refuse to do it *when they come of age*, far from treating them as her regenerate children, she denounces a general excommunication against them, and charges them *not to come to her holy table, lest Satan brings them, as he did Judas, to destruction both of body and soul*.

VIII. INFER. If the fall of mankind in Adam, does not consist in a capricious imputation of his personal guilt, but in a real, present participation of his depravity, impotence and misery; the salvation that believers have in Christ, is not a capricious imputation of his personal righteousness; but a real present participation of his purity, power and blessedness, together with pardon and acceptance.

Unspeakingly dangerous then is the delusion of those, whose brains and mouths are filled with the notions and expressions of *imputed righteousness*; while their poor, carnal, unregenerate hearts remain perfect strangers to the *Lord our righteousness*.

* I say *chiefly*, because our church gives thanks also for Christ's general grace and mercy to children, declaring herself *persuaded of the good will of our Heavenly Father towards this [unbaptised] infant*, through Christ, who said, that *of little children is the kingdom of Heaven*. The truth lies between the error of the *pelagians*, who suppose that unbaptised infants are *sinless* like angels; and that of the *papists*, who affirm that they are *graceless* as devils.

IX. INFER. If the corrupt nature which sinners derive from Adam, spontaneously produces all the wickedness that overspreads the earth; the holy nature which believers receive from Christ, is also spontaneously productive of all the fruits of righteousness, described in the oracles of God: *Good works springing out** NECESSARILY *of a true and lively faith.*

Such ministers, therefore, as clearly preach our fall in Adam, and that faith in Christ, which is productive of genuine holiness and active love, will infallibly promote good works and pure morality: When those who insist *only* upon works and moral duties, will neither be zealous of good works themselves, nor instrumental in turning sinners from their gross immoralities. The reason is obvious: Evangelical preachers follow their Lord's wise direction: *Make the tree good, and the fruit shall be good also*, but moralists will have *corrupt trees bring forth good fruit*, which in the nature of things is impossible, Matt. xii. 33. Luke vi. 43. Therefore, as nothing but faith *makes the tree good*, and as *without faith it is impossible to please God*: the christian, that will come to him with good works, *must not only believe* [as heathens] *that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him*; but also that *he was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, &c.*

X. INFER. If corruption and sin work so powerfully and sensibly, in the hearts of the unregenerate, we may, without deserving the name of enthusiasts, affirm that the regenerate are sensible of the powerful effects of divine grace in their souls; or to use the words of our 17th article, *They feel in themselves the workings of the Spirit of Christ*: For where the poison of sin hath abounded, and has been of course abundantly felt; grace,

* This is to be understood of a moral, and not of an absolute, irresistible necessity, for faith never unmans the believer.

the powerful antidote that expels it, does *much more abound*, and consequently may be much more perceived.

Therefore *the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of sins*, the assurance of faith, and *the peace of God passing all understanding*, are the EXPERIENCED *blessings* of the converted; as certainly as a guilty conscience, the gnawing of worldly cares, the working of evil tempers, the tumults of unbridled appetites, and the uproars of rebellious passions, are the EXPERIENCED *curse*s of the unconverted.

Reader, if these inferences are justly drawn, is it not evident, that the * principles generally exploded among us, as enthusiastical or methodistical, flow from the doctrine demonstrated in this treatise, as naturally as light from the sun? These consequences lead you perhaps farther than you could wish; but let them not make you either afraid or ashamed of the gospel. Prejudices, like clouds, will vanish away; but truth, which they obscure for a time, like the sun, will shine for ever. A great man in the law said, *Fiat Justitia, ruat mundus*. Improve the noble sentiment, and say with equal fortitude, *Stet Veritas, ruat mundus*: Let truth stand, though the universe should sink into ruins.

But happily for us, the danger is all on the side of the opposite doctrine; and that you may be convinced of it, I present you next with a view of the

* Those doctrines, pointed out in the ten abovementioned inferences, are—1. The alarming severity of the law.—2. The need of a deep, heart-felt repentance.—3. The divinity of Christ.—4. The infinite merit of his sacrifice.—5. Salvation by faith in him.—6. The influences of his Holy Spirit.—7. The reality of the new-birth.—8. The necessity of a present salvation.—9. The zeal of believers for good works, and 10 The comfortable assurance which they have of their regeneration.

DREADFUL CONSEQUENCES

Necessarily resulting from the ignorance of our depravity and danger.

1. As the tempter caused the fall of our first parents, by inducing them to believe, that they *should not surely die*, if they broke the divine law : So now we are fallen, he prevents our recovery by suggesting, “the bitterness of death is past,” and “we are in a state of safety.”—Hence it is, that you sleep on in carnal security, O ye deluded sons of men, and even dream, ye are safe and righteous. Nor can ye escape for your lives, till the veil of unbelief is taken away, and ye awake to a sight of your corrupt and lost estate ; For there is no guarding against, nor flying from, an unseen, unsuspected evil : Here, as in a conspiracy, the danger continually increases, till it is happily discovered.

2. If we are not sensible of our natural corruption, and the justice of the curse entailed upon us on that account ; can we help thinking God a tyrant, when he threatens unconverted moralists with the severest of his judgments, or causes the black storms of his providence to overtake us and our dearest relatives ?

Answer, ye self-righteous pharisees, that so bitterly exclaim against the ministers, who declare by the authority of scripture, that, *except ye repent, ye shall all perish*. Answer, fond mother, whose tears of distraction, mix with the cold sweat of the convulsed, dying infant on the lap. Dost thou not secretly impeach divine justice and accuse heaven of barbarity ? Ah ! if thou didst but know the evil nature, which thou and thy Isaac have brought into the world ; if thou sawest the root of bitterness, which the hand of a gracious Providence even now extracts from his heart ; far from being ready to *curse God, and die* with thy child, thou wouldst patiently acquiesce in the kindly-severe dispensa-

tion: Thou wouldst *clear him when he is judged* by such as thyself, and even *glorify him in the evil day of this painful visitation*.

3. Though man's heart is hardened as steel, it does not frequently emit the hellish sparks of such murmurings against God, because it can seldom be struck by the flint of such severe afflictions; yet the mischief is there, and will break out, if not by *blasphemous despair*, at least by its contrary, *presumptuous madness*. Yes, reader, unless thou art happily made acquainted with the strength of thy inbred depravity thou wilt rashly venture among the sparks of temptation: With carnal confidence thou wilt ask, "What harm can they do me?" And thou wilt continue the hazardous sport, till sin and wrath consume thee together. Nor will this be more surprising, than that one, who carries a bag of gun-powder, and knows not the dangerous nature of his load, should fearlessly rush through the midst of flames or sparks, till he is blown up and destroyed.

4. This fatal rashness is generally accompanied with a glaring inconsistency. Do not you make the assertion good, ye saints of the present age, who pretend to have found the secret of loving both God and the world? Do not we hear you deny to men, that you are *condemned*; and yet cry to God to *have mercy upon you*? But if you are not condemned, what need have you of *mercy*? And if you are, why do you deny your lost estate? Thou too, reader, wilt fall into this absurdity, unless thou knowest thy just condemnation. But the mischief will not stop here; for,

5. Ignorance of the mystery of iniquity within you, must, in the nature of things, cause you to neglect prayer, or to pray out of character. As unhumiliated moralists, instead of approaching the throne of grace, with the self-abasement of the penitent publican, saying, *God be merciful unto me a sinner*: you will provoke the Most High, by

the open prophaneness of the sadducee; or insult him by the self-conceited services of the pharisee, boasting "ye do no harm," and *thanking God ye are not as other men*. On these rocks your formal devotion will split, till you know, that, as the impenitent and prayerless shall perish, so the Lord accepts no penitential prayer, but that of *the man, who knows the plague of his own heart*; because he alone prays in his own character, and without hypocrisy. 1 Pet. v. 5. 1 Kings viii. 38.

6. And as you cannot approach the throne of grace aright while you remain insensible of your corruption; so the reading or preaching of God's word, till it answers the end of conviction, is of no service to you, but rather proves, to use St. Paul's nervous expression, the *savour of death unto death*. For when the terrors of the law only suit your case, you vainly catch at the comforts of the gospel; or rather you remain as unaffected under the threatnings of the one, as under the promises of the other: You look on mount Sinai and on mount Sion, with equal indifference, and the warmth of the preacher who invites you to *fly from the wrath to come*, appears to you an instance of religious madness. Nor is it a wonder it should, while you continue unacquainted with your danger: When a mortal disease is neither felt nor suspected, a pathetic address upon its consequences and cure, must be received by any reasonable man, with the greatest unconcern; and the person that makes it in earnest, must appear exceedingly ridiculous. Again,

7. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*, says the Lord. This is true particularly with regard to the knowledge of our depravity. Reader, if thou remainest a stranger to it, thou wilt look upon slight confessions of outward sins as true repentance; and the *godly sorrow that worketh repentance to salvation*, will appear to thee a symptom of melancholy. Taking an external reformation of manners, or a change of ceremonies and opinions, for

true conversion, thou wilt think thyself in a safe state, while thy heart continues habitually wandering from God, and under the dominion of a worldly spirit. In a word, some of the branches of the tree of corruption thou mayst possibly lop off, but the root will still remain and gather strength. For it is plain, that a bad root, supposed not to exist, can neither be heartily lamented, nor earnestly struck at with the ax of self-denial.

Even an Heathen could say ;* “ the knowledge of sin, is the first step towards salvation from it : For he who knows not that he sins, will not submit to be set right : Thou must find out what thou art, before thou canst mend thyself. Therefore when thou discoverest thy vices, to which thou wast before a stranger, it is a sign that thy soul is in a better state.”

8. It is owing to the want of this discovery, O ye pretended sons of reason, that thinking yourselves born pure, or supposing the disease of your nature to be inconsiderable, you imagine it possible to be your own physicians, when you are only your own destroyers. Hence it is, that while you give to Jesus the titular honour of *Saviour*, you speak perpetually of being “ saved merely by your duties and best endeavours.” Hear him warning you against this common delusion ; *O Israel*, says he, *thou hast destroyed thyself but in ME is thy help found. The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick*, beyond all hopes of recovering themselves.

9. The prescriptions of this wise physician, are excessively severe to flesh and blood, and some of his remedies as violent as our disease. Therefore, except we see the greatness of our danger, we shall beg to be excused from

* *Initium est salutis notitia peccati, nam qui peccare se nescit corrigi non vult: Deprehendas te oportet antequam emendes. Sen. Ep. xxviii. Et hoc ipsum argumentum est in melius translatis animi, quod vitia sua, quæ adhuc ignorabat, videt. Ep. vi.*

taking the bitter potion. Who can have resolution enough to *cut off a right hand, to pluck out a right eye, to take up his cross daily, to deny himself, and lose even his own life,* or what is often dearer, his fair reputation? Who, I say, can do this, till a sight of imminent ruin on the one hand, and of redeeming love on the other, makes him submit to the painful injunctions? Thou lovely youth, noted in the gospel for thy harmlessness, I appeal to thy wretched experience. When the physician of souls, at whose feet thou wast prostrate, commanded thee to *sell all and follow him,* what made thee *go away sorrowful* and undone? Not barely thy *great possessions,* but the ignorance of thy condition: *For all that a man hath will he give for his life,* when he sees it in immediate danger, Matt. xix. 22.

10. If it is a desperate step to turn away from the Prince of life, it is a daring one to approach him with a mere compliment. Of this nevertheless you are guilty, ye unawakened sinners, who daily appear before the throne of grace, with *thanks and praises to God, for his inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.* Alas! When you deny the state of sin and misery, in which you are by nature, and yet presume to thank God for *redemption* from it, do you not mock him as solemnly as you would the king, were you to present him every day an address of thanks, for redeeming you from Turkish slavery, when you never knew yourselves slaves in Turkey? O how provoking to God must these unmeaning thanksgivings be! Surely one day they will be ranked among the indignities, offered by earthly worms to *the Majesty on high.*

11. Some indeed, more consistent than you, openly throw off the mask. Seeing neither the unfathomable depth of their misery by the fall, nor the immense height of their aggravated iniquities, they do not trifle with, but at once *deny the Lord that bought them.* Yes, far from admiring the established method of a salvation, procured

at so immense a price, as the incarnation and crucifixion of the Son of God, they are not afraid to intimate it is irrational: and upon their principle they may well do it; for if our ruin is not immense, what need is there for an immensely glorious Redeemer? And if our guilt reaches not up to heaven, why should the Son of God have come down from thence, to *put away sin by the sacrifice of himself?*

12. As we slight or reject the Saviour, till we are truly convinced of the evil and danger of sin; so we worship a false God, a mere idol. For instead of adoring Jehovah, infinite in his holiness and hatred of sin, inviolable in the truth of his threatenings against it, and impartial in his strict justice—a God in whose presence unhumiliated sinners *are not able to stand, and with whom evil cannot dwell*; we bow to a *strange God*, whom pious men never knew—a God formed by our own fancy, so *unholy* as to connive at sin, so *unjust* as to set aside his most righteous law, and so *false* as to break his solemn word, that we must *turn or die*, Ez. xxxiii. 11. Is not this worshipping a God of our own making; or as David describes him, a *God altogether such as ourselves?* To adore an idol of paste, made by the baker and the priest, may be indeed more foolish, but cannot be more wicked, than to adore one made by our wild imagination, and impious unbelief.

13. We may go one step farther still and affirm, that till we are deeply convinced of sin, far from worshipping the true God [which implies knowing, loving and admiring him in all his perfections] we hate and oppose him in his infinite *holiness* and *justice*. The proof is obvious: Two things diametrically opposite in their nature, can never be approved of at once. If we do not side with divine holiness and justice, abhor our corruption, and condemn ourselves as hell-deserving sinners; far from approving, we shall rise against the holy and righteous God, who sentences us to eternal death for our sin: We shall at least

wish he were less pure and just than he is ; which amounts to wishing him to be no God. While proud fiends betray this horrid disposition, by loud blasphemies in hell ; ye do it, O ye unconvinced sons of men, by your aversion to godliness upon earth. *Haters of God* is then the proper name, and *enmity against him*, the settled temper of all un-humbled, unconverted sinners. Rom. i. 30, and viii. 7.

14. When the nature of God is mistaken, what wonder if his law is misapprehended ? *The law is good*, says St. Paul, *if a man use it lawfully* ; but if we make an improper use of it, the consequence is fatal. Since the fall, the law of God, as contra-distinguished from the gospel of Christ, points out to us the spotless holiness, and inflexible justice of its divine Author. It teaches us with what ardour and constancy we should love both our Creator and our fellow-creatures. As a bank cast against the stream of our iniquity, it accidentally serves to make it rise the higher, and to discover its impetuosity ; for *by the law is the knowledge of sin*. It demonstrates man's weakness, who *consents indeed to the law that it is good, but finds not how to fulfil it*, Rom. vii. 16, 19. As a battery erected against our pride, when it has its due effect, it silences all our self-righteous pleas, and convinces us that a returning sinner *is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ* : a broken law, a law which *worketh wrath*, being absolutely unable to absolve its violator. In a word, *it is our school-master to bring us to Christ*, and drives us with the rod of threatened punishments, to make us touch the sceptre of mercy, held out to us from the throne of grace.

But while we remain strangers to our helpless and hopeless state by nature, far from making this proper use of the law, we trust in it and fancy that the merit of our unsprinkled obedience to it is the way of salvation. Thus we *go about to establish our own righteousness, making light of the atoning blood, which marks the new and living way to*

Heaven. This very mistake ruined the pharisees of old, and destroys their numerous followers in all ages. Rom. ix. 31.

15. And when we form such wrong apprehensions of *law*, is it possible that we should have right views of the *gospel*, and receive it with cordial affection? Reason and experience answer in the negative. What says the gospel to sinners? *You are saved BY GRACE*, through mere favour and mercy, *not by the covenant of works, lest any man should boast* like the pharisee. Eph. ii. 8. Now, ye decent formalists, ye fond admirers of your own virtue, are you not utterly disqualified to seek and accept a pardon in a gospel way? For your seeking it upon the footing of mere *mercy*, implies an acknowledgment, that you deserve the ruin threatened against sinners. And suppose a pardon were granted you, before you had a consciousness of your sad deserts, you could not receive it as an act of *mere grace*, but only as a reward justly bestowed upon you for the merit of your works. It is plain then, that according to the gospel plan, none can be fit subjects of salvation, but those who are truly sensible of their condemnation.

16. But as the grace of God in Christ, is the original and properly meritorious cause of our salvation: So the grand instrumental cause of it is *faith* on our part. *Through faith are ye saved*, says St. Paul. Now if to have faith in Christ, is habitually to lift up our hearts to him, with an humble and yet cheerful confidence, seeking in him all our *wisdom, righteousness, and strength*, as being our instructing prophet, atoning priest, and protecting king; it is evident that till we awake to a sight of our fallen state, we cannot believe, nor consequently be saved.— O ye that never were sensible of your spiritual blindness, can you with sincerity take Jesus for your guide, and desire his *Spirit to lead you into all truth*? Does not

David's prayer, *Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wonderful things of thy law*; appear to you needless, if not fanatical? And is not the Redeemer's *prophetic office* thrown away upon such sons of wisdom as you are?

Have you a greater value for Jesus than they, O ye *just men*, who have *no sensible need* of heart-felt *repentance*, and whose breasts were never dilated by one sigh, under a due sense of your guilt and condemnation? Can you, without hypocrisy, apply to him as the *High Priest* of the *guilty*, claim him as the *advocate* of the *condemned*, or fly to him as the *Saviour* of the *lost*? Impossible! Ye fondly hope ye never were lost, ye were always "good livers, good believers, good churchmen;" ye "need not make so much ado" about an interest in the blood of the new covenant.

And ye, who flushed with the conceit of your native strength, wonder at the weakness of those, that continually bow to the sceptre of Jesus's grace for protection and power; can you without a smile of pity hear him say, *Without me ye can do nothing*. Is it possible that you should sincerely implore the exertion of his royal power, for victory over sins, which you suppose yourselves able to conquer: and for the restoration of a nature, with the goodness of which you are already so well satisfied? Your reason loudly answers, **No**: Therefore, till you see yourselves corrupt, impotent creatures, you will openly neglect the Redeemer, give to your aggravated sins the name of "human frailties," and trust to your baffled, and yet boasted endeavours. Self-deception! Art thou not of all impostors the most common and dangerous, because the least suspected?

To sum up and close these important remarks: Look at those who, in mystic Babylon, are not truly sensible of their total fall from God, and you will see them setting their own reason above the holy scriptures; and their

works in competition with the infinitely meritorious sacrifice of Christ. Inquire into their principles, and you will discover that they either openly explode as enthusiastical, or slightly receive as unnecessary, the doctrines of salvation by faith in Christ, and regeneration by the Spirit of God. Examine their conduct, and you will find they all *commit sin, and receive the mark of the beast secretly in their right hand, or openly in their foreheads.* Rev. xiii. 16. Sort them, and you will have two bands, the one of sceptics and the other of formalists, who, though *at as great enmity between themselves,* as Pilate and Herod, are like them *made friends together* by jointly *deriding and condemning* Jesus in his living members.

And if with the candle of the Lord you search the Jerusalem of professing christians, you will perceive that the want of an heart-felt, humbling knowledge of their natural depravity, gives birth to the double-mindedness of hypocrites, and the miscarriages or apostacy of those, who once distinguished themselves in the evangelical race: You will easily trace back to the same corrupt source, the seemingly opposite errors of the *loose antinomian*, and the *pharisaic legalist*, those spiritual thieves, by whom the sincere christian is perpetually reviled: and in short, you will be convinced, that if you set your eyes upon a man, who is not yet deeply conscious of his corrupt and lost estate, or whose consciousness of it has worn away, you behold either a trifler in religion, a dead-hearted pharisee, a sly hypocrite, a loose antinomian, a self-conceited formalist, a scoffing infidel, or a wretched apostate.

You see, reader, what a train of fatal consequences, results from rejecting, or not properly receiving, the doctrine demonstrated in these sheets: and now you may cordially embrace it, permit me to enumerate the

UNSPEAKABLE ADVANTAGES,

Springing from an affecting knowledge of our fallen and lost estate.

No sooner is the disease rightly known, than the neglected Jesus, who is both our gracious physician and powerful remedy, is properly valued, and ardently sought; *All that thus seek, find*; and all that find *him*, find saving health, eternal life, and heaven.

Bear your testimony with me, ye children of Abraham and of God, who *see the* brightness of a gospel *day and rejoice*. Say, what made you first wishfully *look to the hills, whence your salvation is come*, and fervently desire to behold the sin-dispelling beams of the *Sun of Righteousness*? Was it not the deep, dismal night of our fallen nature, which you happily discovered, when awaking from the sleep of sin, you first saw the delusive dreams of life, as they appear to the dying? What was *the desire of nations* to you till you felt yourselves lost sinners? Alas! Nothing: Perhaps less than nothing; an object of disgust or scorn. When *the pearl of great price* was presented to you, did you regard it more, than the vilest of brutes, an oriental pearl? And, as if it had not been enough to look at it with disdain, were not some of you ready to *turn again and rend*, after the example of snarling animals, those who affectionately made you the invaluable offer? Matt. vii. 6.

But when the storm that shook mount Sinai, overtook your careless souls, and ye saw yourselves sinking into an abyss of misery; did ye not cry out, and say as the alarmed disciples, with an unknown energy of desire, *save Lord or we perish*? And when conscious of your lost estate, ye began to believe, that he *came to seek and to save that which was lost*; how dear, how *precious* was he to you in

all his offices? How glad were you to take guilty, weeping Magdalen's place, and wait for a pardon at your *High Priest's* feet? How importunate in saying to your *king*, as the helpless widow; *Lord, avenge me of mine adversary, my evil heart of unbelief!* How earnest, how unwearied in your applications to your *prophet*, for heavenly light and wisdom! The incessant prayer of blind Bartimeus was then yours, and so was the gracious answer which the Lord returned to him: You *received* your spiritual *sight*. And Oh! what saw you then? The sacred *book unsealed!* *Your sins blotted out as a cloud!* *The glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ;* and "the kingdom of heaven opened to all believers!"

Then, and not till then, you could say from the heart, *this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief,* 1 Tim. i. 15. Then you could cry out with his first disciples: *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!* 1 John iii. 1. *We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, whom having not seen we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls.* Gal. iii. 26. 1 Pet. i. 8. *We trusted in him and are helped: Therefore our heart danceth for joy, and in our song will we praise him.* Psal. xxviii. 8. *To him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.* Rev. i. 5.

And this will also be your triumphant song, attentive reader, if deeply conscious of your lost estate, you spread your guilt and misery before him, who *came to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; and to comfort all that mourn, by giving them beauty for ashes,*

the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Isa. lxi. 1. Your sorrow it is true may endure for a night, but joy will come in the morning, the joy of God's salvation, and the pardon of your sins.—Having much forgiven you, you will then love much and admire in proportion the riches of divine wisdom, goodness, justice, and power, that so graciously contrived, and so wonderfully executed the plan of your redemption.—You will be ravished in experiencing, that a condemned sinner can, not only escape impending ruin, but enter into present possession of a spiritual paradise, where peace and joy blossom together, and whence welcome death, will ere long, translate your triumphant soul to those unseen, unheardof, inconceivable glories, which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Cor. ii. 9.

Nor will the blossoms of heavenly *peace* and *joy*, only diffuse their divine fragrancy in your soul; all *the fruits of holiness* will grow together with them, *to the glory of God*, and the profit of mankind. And thou wilt not be the last, thou fair, thou blushing *humility*, to bend all the spreading branches of *the tree of righteousness*. No, we cannot be vain, or despisers of others, when we see that we are all corrupted, dying shoots of the same corrupted, dead stock: We cannot be self-righteous, when we are persuaded, that the best fruit which we can *naturally* produce is only splendid sin, or vice coloured over with the specious appearance of virtue: We must lie prostrate in the dust, when we consider the ignominious cross, where our divine surety hung, bled, and died to ransom our guilty souls.

A genuine conviction of our corruption and demerit thus striking at the very root of our pride, necessarily fills our hearts with inexpressible gratitude for every favour we receive, gives an exquisite relish to the least blessing we enjoy, and teaches us to say with the thankful patriarch, *I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies*: and

as it renders us grateful to God, and all our benefactors, so it makes us patient under the greatest injuries, resigned in the heaviest trials, glad to be reprov'd, willing to forgive the faults of others, open to acknowledge our own, disposed to sympathise with the guilty; tender-hearted towards the miserable, incapable of being offended at any one, and ready to do every office of kindness, even to the meanest of mankind.

Again, no sooner are we properly acquainted with our helplessness, than we give over leaning on an arm of flesh, and the broken reed of our own resolutions. Reposing our entire confidence in the living God, we fervently implore his continual assistance, carefully avoid temptations, gladly acknowledge, that *the help which is done upon the earth, the Lord doth it himself*, and humbly give him the glory of all the good that appears in ourselves and others.

Once more, as soon as we can discover our spiritual blindness, we mistrust our own judgment, feel the need of instruction, modestly repair to the experienced for advice, carefully search the scriptures, readily follow their blessed directions, and fervently pray, that no false light may mislead us out of the way of salvation.

To conclude: a right knowledge, that *the crown is fallen from our head*, will make us abominate sin, the cause of our ruin, and raise in us a noble ambition of regaining our original state of blissful and glorious righteousness.—It will set us upon an earnest enquiry into, and a proper use of, all the means conducive to our recovery. Even the *sense* of our guilt will prove useful, by helping to break our obdurate hearts, by imbittering the baits of worldly vanities, and filling our souls with penitential sorrow. *Before honor is humility*. This happy humiliation makes way for the greatest exaltation: For *thus saith the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity. I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and the heart*

of the contrite, to fill the hungry with good things, and beautify the meek with salvation. Isaiah lvii. 15.

If these advantages, which exceed the worth of earthly crowns, necessarily result from the proper knowledge of our corrupt and lost estate ; who but an infatuated enemy of his own soul, would be afraid of that self-science ? Who but an obstinate pharisee, would not esteem it next to the knowledge of Christ, the greatest blessing which heaven can bestow upon the self-destroyed, and yet self-conceited children of men ?

Careless reader, if thou art the person, if remaining unshaken in thy carnal confidence, and supposing thyself *wiser than seven men that can render a reason*, thou not only despisest the testimony of the sacred writers and our pious reformers, laid before thee in the first part of this treatise, but disregardest the numerous arguments of *matter of fact* and *common sense*, and remainest unaffected by the most dreadful consequences of self-ignorance on the one hand, and by the greatest advantages of self-knowledge on the other ; I have done, and must take my leave of *thee*.

May the merciful and holy God, whose laws thou dost daily violate, whose word thou hourly opposest or forgettest, whose salvation thou dost every moment neglect, whose vengeance thou continually provokest, and whose cause I have attempted to plead, bear with thee and thy insults a little longer ! May his infinite patience yet afford thee some means of conviction, more effectual than that which is at present in thy hands ! Or shouldst thou look into this labour of love once more, may it then answer a better purpose than to aggravate thy guilt, and enhance thy condemnation, by rendering the folly of thy unbelief more glaring, and consequently more inexcusable !

END OF THE APPEAL.

A
CONCLUDING ADDRESS

TO THE
SERIOUS READER,

WHO ENQUIRES

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?



“ Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there?
Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people
recovered ?” JER. viii. 22.

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AN

ADDRESS

TO THE

SERIOUS READER, &c.

HAVING taken my leave of the thoughtless and gay, who regard an appeal to their reason, as little as they do the warnings of their conscience ; I return to thee, *serious and well-disposed reader. I am too much concerned for thy soul's welfare, to lay down my pen, without shewing thee more perfectly the way to the kingdom of heaven, by *testifying to thee, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Thou art happily weary of feeding upon the husks of earthly vanities. I have a right therefore, as a steward of the mysteries of God, to bring out of the divine treasury, the pearls of evangelical truth ; and I gladly cast them before *thee*, persuaded, that far from awakening thy anger, they will excite thy desires, and animate thy languid hopes.

* This address is only calculated for *serious persons*, who cordially assent to the doctrine established in the *rational demonstration of our fallen and lost estate*. As other readers have been dismissed with the portion of truth that belongs to them, they are desired not to meddle with *this*, lest their cavils confirm St. Paul's observation, *We preach Christ crucified to the self-righteous jews a stumbling-block, and to the self-conceited Greeks foolishness.*

Instead of ridiculing, or dreading an heartfelt conviction of thy lost estate, thou now seest it is a desirable privilege, an invaluable blessing. Ready to mourn, because thou canst not mourn, thou complainest, that thou hast only a confused view of thy total depravity. Thou wantest the feelings of the royal penitent, when he said, *Behold I was shapen in iniquity, &c. I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me;* but conscious thou canst not raise them in thy heart by natural powers, thou desirest some scriptural directions suitable to thy case. Give me leave to introduce them by a few

PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS

On the nature and depth of penitential sorrow.

I. Thou knowest, that *except thou truly repentest, thou shalt surely perish*, and that there is no true repentance, where there is not true sorrow for sin. *I rejoice*, says St. Paul to the Corinthians, *that ye were made sorry after a godly manner; For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death.* Hence it appears, that there are two sorts of sorrow springing from opposite sources; *God and the world*; the one a *godly sorrow*, and the other *the sorrow of the world*. Learn then to distinguish them by their various causes and effects, so shalt thou avoid the danger of mistaking the one for the other.

The sorrow of the world, which many cover with the cloak of religion, arises from fear of contempt, dread of poverty, secret jealousy, revenge dissatisfied, love disappointed, baffled schemes, losses in business, unkindness of friends, provocation of enemies, or the death of some idolized relative. Nay, this sorrow may sometimes spring from a mixture of self-righteous pride and slavish fear. Some cannot bear to be robbed of their fond hopes of me-

riting heaven by their imaginary good works : They lose all patience, when they see their best righteousness brought to light, and exposed as *filthy rags* : They are cut to the heart, when they hear, that their apparent good deeds deserve punishment as well as their black enormities : Or like condemned malefactors, they dread the consequences of their crimes, while they feel little or no horror for the crimes themselves.

Exceedingly fatal are the effects of this sorrow in the persons whom it overcomes : Their indignant hearts, unable to bear either disappointment, contradiction or condemnation, rise against second causes, or against the decrees of Providence ; fret at the strictness of the law, or holiness of the Lawgiver ; and pine away with uninterrupted discontent. Hence, spurning at advice, direction, and consolation, they wring their hands, or *gnaw their tongues with anguish* ; impatience works them up into stupid sullenness or noisy murmuring ; they complain, that their *punishment is greater than they can bear* ; and, imagining they are more severely dealt with than others, they hastily conclude, *Behold, this evil is from the Lord, why should I wait for him any longer ?* Thus black despair seizes upon their spirits, and if grace does not interpose, they either live on to fill up the measure of their iniquities, as Cain, Pharaoh and Haman, or madly lay violent hands upon themselves, as Ahitophel, and Judas.

This sorrow cannot be too much guarded against, as it not only destroys many persons, but does immense hurt to religion. For those who are glad of any pretence to pour contempt upon godliness, taking occasion from the instances of this sorrow, harden their own hearts, and prejudice all around them against the blessed, *godly* sorrow, which every minister of the gospel endeavours to excite ; maliciously representing it as one and the same with the mischievous *sorrow of the world*.

Their mistake will be evident, if we trace godly sorrow back to its source. It does not spring merely from fear of punishment; but chiefly from humbling views of God's holiness, the impurity of the human nature, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the transcendent excellency of the law, which condemns the sinner.

And this happy sorrow differs not less from the other in its effects, than it does in its cause. The persons who are blessed with it, far from murmuring, or fretting at the divine commandment, see it to be *holy, just and good*, both in its preceptive and penal part. They so absolutely acquiesce in it, that they would not alter it, if they could. They clear God, accuse themselves, subscribe their own sentence, and acknowledge, *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed*. Each of them can say "Wherefore should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of sins? It is good that he should both hope, and quietly wait for God's salvation: I will therefore watch to see what he will say unto me, for he will speak peace unto his people." Thus in a constant use of all the ordinances of God, they meekly wait, wrestling with their unbelieving fears, till victorious *faith comes by hearing* of the matchless love of Jesus Christ; and then, *fearing the Lord and his goodness, they sing the song of the Lamb*, and run upon his delightful errands.

As thou seest, serious reader, the nature, necessity, and excellence of *godly sorrow*, thou art probably desirous of being informed, how deep thine must be, to constitute thee a *true penitent*. Know then, that it must be deep enough to imbitter thy most pleasing, profitable, and habitual sins, and to prevent thy resting without a clear sense of thy peculiar interest in Christ. It must be profound enough to make him and his gospel infinitely precious to thee, and to produce, under God, the blessed effects mentioned in the fifth part of the preceding treatise.

To be more particular, a true penitent may certainly without despair or madness, go as far in godly sorrow, as David does in his penitential psalms, or our church in the first part of the homily on fasting. “When good men, *says she*, feel in themselves the heavy burden of sin, see “damnation to be the reward of it, and behold with the eye “of their mind the horror of hell, they tremble, they quake, “they are inwardly touched with sorrowfulness of hearts “for their offences, and cannot but accuse themselves, and “open their grief unto Almighty God, and call on him for “mercy. This being done seriously, their mind is so occupied, partly with sorrow and heaviness, partly with an “earnest desire to be delivered from this danger of hell “and damnation, that all desire of meat and drink is laid “aside, and loathing of all worldly things and pleasures “comes in place, so that they like nothing better than to “weep, to lament, to mourn, and both with words and “behaviour of body, to shew themselves weary of this “life.”

Nevertheless it must be observed, that godly sorrow needs not be equal, either in degree or duration, in all penitents. Those, whose hearts, through divine grace, open as readily and gently as that of Lydia, happily avoid many of David's pangs and Job's terrors. The powerful and instantaneous, or the gentle and gradual manner, in which souls are awakened; the difference of constitutions; the peculiar services that a few are called to, and for which they are prepared by peculiar exercises; the horrid aggravations that have attended the sins of some; and the severe correction, which the Lord is obliged to give others, for their stout resistance against his grace—all this may help us to account for the various depths of distress, through which different penitents pass in their way to Christ and salvation.

The Lord does not needlessly afflict the children of men, any more than a tender father, unnecessarily corrects his

disobedient children: He only wants us to forsake our sins, renounce our own imaginary righteousness, and come to Christ to be made partakers of his merits, holiness and felicity. The sorrow which answers these ends, is quite sufficient; though it should be ever so light, and of ever so short a duration. On the contrary, a distress as heavy as that of Judas is unavailable, if instead of driving us from sin to Jesus Christ, it only drives us from prophaneness to hypocrisy, or from presumption to despair.

If still perplexed, thou askest what thou must do, to get a sense of thy depravity, productive of true repentance; I answer, that an affecting discovery of the guilt, nature, and danger of sin, is only attained by the assistance of God's Spirit, who alone effectually *convinces the world of sin*. John xvi. 8. But the Lord has graciously appointed means, in the right use of which he never denies a sinner the convincing and converting power of his blessed Spirit, and what they are thou art informed in the following

DIRECTIONS,

Proper for an half-awakened sinner, desirous of being duly convinced of his corrupt and lost estate.

II. Beware of *fools*, that make a mock at sorrow for sin, and at *sin* itself. Beware of those *blind leaders of the blind*, who having a form of godliness, deny the power thereof: Instead of pointing thee to the throne of grace, and bidding thee behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, they will only direct thee to the church-walls and communion-table; and perhaps, if they see thee under dejection of spirit for thy sins, they will recommend the play-house, the card-table, or what they call "a cheerful glass." From such turn away, or they will persuade thee that repentance is melancholy; conviction of sin, despair; and the love of God, enthusiasm, 2 Tim. iii. 5.

That they may not be able to laugh, or frown thee out of the way of salvation, dwell in thy thoughts on God's awful perfections. *Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.* The unspotted, resplendent holiness beaming forth from him, as from an immensely glorious Sun of righteousness, will shew thee thy sins as innumerable as the flying motes discovered in a dusty room, where the natural sun can penetrate. Consider that they are committed by a worm of earth, against the majesty of heaven; and they will all appear to thee infinitely great: especially if thou measurest them and thyself by the true rule, the oracles of God; casting away the three false standards which self-deceivers measure themselves by, namely, the good opinion of their worldly minded neighbours, the defective examples of their fellow-sinners, and the flattering suggestions of their own blind self-love.

Follow the example of *the noble Bereans: search the scriptures daily, whether these things are so*, Acts xvii. 11. View in that faithful mirror, the picture both of the natural and of the regenerate man, and ask thy conscience which thou resemblest most. If, imitating the godly man described in the first psalm, thou *meditatest in the law of the Lord day and night*; the straitness of the heavenly rule, will soon shew thee how very far gone thy thoughts, words, actions, tempers, and nature, are from original righteousness.

To this meditation, add a frequent survey of the follies of thy childhood, the vanity of thy youth, the worldly-mindedness of thy riper years, the capital transgressions which conscience accuses thee of, and the *hardness of heart*, and *alienation from the life of God*, that the scriptures charge thee with. Confess all to the Lord as thou art able, remembering that the wages of sin is *death*, who flies fast upon thee with the wings of time—*Death*, who often gives no warning, and ushers in *judgment*, with all the horrors of *hell*, or the joys of *heaven*; and pray that

these awful realities may affect thee now, as they will in thy last moments.

Frequently reflect, how total must be our loss of spiritual life, which cannot be repaired but by a *resurrection*, a *new-birth*, or a *new creation*, Col. iii. 1. John iii. 7. Gal. vi. 5. and how desperate the disease of our fallen nature, which cannot be healed but with the blood of a divine physician. *Consider*, attentively consider *him*, whose piercing look softened the obdurate heart of cursing Peter, whose amazing sufferings brought an hardened thief under the deepest concern for his salvation, and whose dying groans *rent the rocks, shook the earth, and opened the graves*. The tender flower of evangelical sorrow grows best in the shade of his cross: A believing view of him as suffering for thee, will melt thee into penitential tears, and seal upon thy relenting heart the gracious promise, *They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn*. Zech. xii. 10.

In the mean time improve the daily opportunities, which thou hast of studying human corruption in the life and tempers of all around thee, but chiefly in thy own careless and deceitful heart: Take notice of its pride and self-seeking, of its risings and secret workings, especially when unexpected temptations trouble thy imaginary peace of mind: For, at such a time, thy corruption, like the sediment in the bottom of a vial that is shaken, will shew its loathsomeness and strength.

Converse frequently, if thou canst, with persons deeply convinced of sin. Attend a plain, heart-searching ministry as often as possible; and when the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, pierces thy soul, beware of fretful impatience. Instead of rising with indignation against the preacher, and saying, as proud Ahab did to the man of God, *Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?* account him thy best friend, that wounds thee deepest, provided he brings thee to Christ for a cure: and when the arrows of

the word fly abroad, drop the shield of unbelief, make bare thy breast, welcome the blessed shaft, and remember, that the only way of conquering sin, is to fall wounded and helpless at the Redeemer's feet.

Nevertheless, the impressions of the word will soon wear off, if thou dost not importunately intreat the Searcher of hearts, to light the candle of his grace in thy soul, that thou mayest clearly see whether thy *inward parts* are *holiness to the Lord* as thou fondly supposedst; or *very wickedness*, as the scripture testifies. It is only in God's light, that we can clearly discover our blindness.

This *light*, it is true, *shineth in darkness*, but frequently *the darkness comprehendeth it not*. That this be not thy dreadful case, do not *grieve* and *quench the* convincing *Spirit* by persisting in the *wilful* omission of any duty, or *deliberate* commission of any sin: Nothing but *obstinate unbelief* darkens the mind, and hardens the heart, more than this. Therefore instead of burying thy *one talent* with *the slothful servant*, earnestly pray the Lord to make thee faithful to thy convictions, and to deepen them daily till they end in a sound conversion.

In order to this, do not slightly heal the wound in thy conscience: It is better to keep it open than to skin it over by improper means: Many, through a natural forwardness and impatience, have recourse to them; and ruin is the consequence of their mistake. That thou mayest avoid it, serious reader, I intreat thee to pay a due regard to the following

CAUTIONS,

Proper for a penitent, who desires to make his calling and election SURE.

III. When thou hast affecting views of thy lost estate, beware of resting like Felix in some pangs of fear, fits of

trembling, and resolutions of turning to God by and by, *when thou shalt have a convenient season*. Neither give place to desponding thoughts, as if there was no appeal from the tribunal of justice to the throne of grace.

Run not for ease to vain company, bodily indulgence, entangling affections, immoderate sleep, excessive drinking or hurry of business. *Cain built a city* to divert his trouble of mind, and multitudes like him, by *the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, or the desire of other things*, daily *choak* the good seed, the precious *word* of conviction. Mark iv. 19.

Be not satisfied with faint desires of living the life of the righteous, or idle wishes of dying their death. Remember that *the desire of the slothful kills him*: and if thou hast experienced some drawings of grace, meltings of heart, or breathings after God; sit not down at last, as the Laodiceans, in a careless state, *neither hot nor cold*. It is far better to go on thy way weeping, and seeking *the pearl of great price* till thou really find it, than to rest contented with an hasty conceit that thou art possessed of it, when thou art not.

Stop not in an outward reformation, and a form of godliness, like many, who mistake the *means* or *doctrine of grace* for grace itself; and because they say their heartless prayers both in public and private, or go far and often to hear the gospel preached in its purity, fondly hope, that they are the favourites of God, and in the highway to heaven.

Under pretence of increasing thy convictions, do not bury them in heaps of religious books. Some read till their heads are confused, or their hearts *past feeling*.— Thus, though *ever learning, they are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*. Hear then, as well as read the word of life; but think not thyself converted when thou hast *received it with joy*: The stony-ground hearers went as far as this: Herod himself *heard John gladly, ho-*

reared him, did many things, but left the most important undone; for he never dismissed the incestuous woman he lived with; and at last sacrificed to her revenge, the honest preacher he once admired.

Do not confound the *covenant of works* made with *innocent* Adam *before* the fall, and the *covenant of grace* made with *sinful* Adam *after* the fall. Gen. ii. 17. and iii. 15. and Rom. v. 11.—21. They are excellent in their place, but when they are mixed together, they destroy each other's efficacy. The dreadful thunders, heard in paradise lost; and the melodious songs uttered in paradise regained, do not strike *at once* the same spiritual ear. The galling yoke of the law of works, and the heavy load of its condemnation are dropt; when we take upon us Christ's easy yoke, and submit to his light burden. In a word, the first Adam gives place to the second when we *find rest unto our souls*. Let then the *curse* of the law of innocence, be swallowed by the *blessing* of the gospel: or rather, let it make way for the grace of Christ in thy soul, as an emetic makes way for a cordial in a disordered stomach. If thou takest them together, their respective use is prevented. The first covenant loses its *humbling* efficacy, and the second its *restorative* power. Therefore, if thou hast really received *the sentence of death in thyself*; leave the curse of the first covenant in the grave of Christ, *crucified for thy sins*; and welcome the pardoning, renovating grace of Christ; *risen again for thy justification*.

On the other hand, rest contented with speculative knowledge, and unaffecting, though clear ideas of the gospel-way of salvation. Light in an unrenewed understanding, mistaken for *the mystery of faith in a pure heart*, like an ignis fatuus, or false light, leads thousands through the bogs of sin, into the pit of destruction. Acts viii. 13.

Pacify not thy conscience by activity in outward services, and a warmth in God's cause: Party spirit or natural steadiness in carrying on a favourite scheme, yea, or

seeking thy own glory, may be the springs that set thee on work. Jehu faithfully destroyed Baal and Jezebel, but his zeal for the Lord covered the secret desire of a crown. Take care also, not to mistake gifts for graces; fluency of speech for converting power; the warmth of natural affection for divine love; or an impulse of God's Spirit, on some particular occasion, for an evidence of spiritual regeneration. Balaam spoke and prophesied like a child of God, and *many will one day say to Christ, Lord, have we not prophesied, spoke all mysteries, cast out devils, and done many wonderful works in thy name; to whom he will answer, Depart from me, I know you not.*

Avoid the self-conceit of many, who feed on the corrupted manna of their past experiences, and confidently appeal to the wasted streams of those consolations, which once refreshed their hearts; when alas! it is evident *they have now forsaken the fountain of living water, and hewn to themselves broken cisterns that hold no water;* unless the mire of evil tempers, selfish views, and heartless professions of faith, may pass for *the streams which gladden the city of God.*

Neither do thou heal thyself by touches of sorrow, by tears, good desires, or outward marks of humiliation for sin, as king Ahab. Nor by excessive fasting, retiring from business, or hard usage of the body, as many Roman catholics: Nor yet by misapplying the doctrine of predestination, and setting down notions of election for evidences of salvation, as many protestants: No, nor by *doting about questions, strifes of words, and perverse disputings, which eat as a canker,* as some in St. Paul's days, and too many in ours. 1. Tim. vi. 4.

To conclude, think not thou art absolutely made whole when the power of outward sin is weakened or suspended, when thou hast learned the language of Canaan, canst speak or write well on spiritual subjects, art intimately acquainted with the best ministers of Christ, and hast cast

thy lot among the despised children of God, taken their part, shared in their reproach, and secured their esteem and prayers. Judas did so for years: *Saul was once also among the prophets*: Ananias and Sapphira were supposed to be good believers for a time, the foolish virgins joined in society with the wise, and were perhaps unsuspected, to the last; and Peter himself stood in need of *conversion*, long after he had outwardly *left all to follow Christ*. Luke xxii. 32. So important is that charge of our Lord! *Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many will seek to enter in and shall not be able.*

To these cautions against the various ways, by which the generality of penitents skin over the wound of sin in their conscience, permit me to add an

EVANGELICAL EXHORTATION

Pointing out the divine method of a sound cure, which, though least regarded, and last tried, by most sinners, is not only effectual in some, but infallible in ALL cases.

IV. Wouldst thou serious reader, be made whole in an evangelical manner? To thy convictions of original and actual sin must be added, a conviction of unbelief. Feel then, that thou hast neglected Christ's great salvation: Own thou didst never ask, or never persevere in asking the unfeigned, saving, powerful faith by which *the atonement is received* and enjoyed, Rom. 5. 11. Acknowledge, that the faith thou hast hitherto rested in was not *that gift of God*, that grace of his own operation, wrought in thee according to the working of his mighty power, and mentioned Eph. ii. 8. Col. ii. 12. Eph. 1. 19. And confess, it was not the right christian faith; because it chiefly grew from the seed of prejudice and education, as the faith of Jews and Turks; and not from the seed of divine grace and power, as the faith of St. Paul, Gal. i. 15. and because it never yielded the heavenly fruits which *gospel-faith* in-

fallibly produces: Such as—a *vital union with Christ*, Gal. ii. 20. *The pardon of sins*. Col. i. 14. Acts xiii. 30. *Peace with God*, Rom. v. 1. *Dominion over sin*, Rom. vi. 14. *Victory over the world*, 1 John v. 4. *The crucifixion of the flesh*, Gal. v. *Power to quench the fiery darts of the wicked*, Eph. vi. 15. *Joy unspeakable*, 1 Pet. i. 8. *And the salvation of thy soul*, 1 Pet. i. 9. Heb. x. 39.

Be not afraid of this conviction of unbelief; for it generally goes before divine faith, as the fermentation of a grain of corn in the earth, is previous to its shooting its stalk towards heaven. *God concludes*, shuts us up in *unbelief* says St. Paul, *that he may have mercy upon us*. Rom. xi. 32. *When the comforter is come*, says our Lord, *he will convince the world of sin, because they believe not in me*. This is the transgression which peculiarly deserves the name of *sin*, as being the *damning* sin according to the gospel, Mark xvi. 16. the sin that binds upon us the guilt of all our other iniquities, and keeps up the power of all our corruptions. Its immediate effect is to *harden the heart*, Mark xvi. 14. and *make it depart from the living God*, Heb. iii. 12. and this hardness and departure are the genuine parents of all our actual sins, the number and blackness of which increases or decreases, as the strength of unbelief grows or decays.

A conviction of this sin is of the utmost importance, as nothing but an affecting sense of its heinousness and power, can make us entirely weary of ourselves—nothing but a sight of its destructive nature can prevent our resting without a complete cure.

But when thou art once convinced of unbelief, do not increase the difficulty of believing by imagining true faith at an immense distance. Consider it as very near thy heart. That which convinces thee of sin and unbelief can in a moment, and with the greatest ease convince thee of righteousness, and *reveal in thee Christ the hope of glory*. How quickly can the Spirit take of the

things that belong to him, and show them unto thee! *Say not then in thy heart, who shall ascend into heaven, or descend into the deep to get me the seed of faith? But let St. Paul shew thee the new und living way. The word is nigh thee says he, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for we are saved by faith, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Hear then the word of the Lord.*

Are thy sins really grievous to thee? Is the burden of them intolerable? wouldst thou part with it at any rate? Dost thou fully renounce thy speculative and barren faith? Hast thou received the sentence of eternal death in thy conscience, acknowledging thy case (for any thing thou canst do without Christ) helpless, hopeless, desperate? and art thou truly brought to the grand inquiry, *what must I do to be saved?* See, feel, confess, that thou standest in absolute need of a divine physician, an Almighty Redeemer; and, that the God-man Jesus Christ, joins both those extraordinary characters in his wonderful person. Submit to be *saved by grace*, by free grace, through his infinite merits, and not thy wretched deserts; and instead of opposing, continually study God's wonderful method of saving sinners, the worst of sinners, *by faith* in his blood.

There is no name but his under heaven, whereby we must be saved; neither is there cure, or salvation in any other, Acts iv. 12. *As by him all things were created, so by him they subsist, and by him they must be restored.* The power of his word and breath, made man a living soul; and now that we are dead to God, the same power, applying his blood and righteousness, must *create in us clean hearts, and renew right spirits within us.* This and this only, heals wounded consciences, washes polluted souls, and raises the dead in trespasses and sins.

Wouldst thou then be made whole? *Determine*, as St. Paul, *to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified*: aim at believing, realizing, applicatory views of what he is, and what he has done and suffered for thee. Through all the clouds of thy guilt and unbelief, which will vanish before our *Sun of righteousness*, as mists before the material sun, *behold him as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world*, and thine. See the immense dignity of his person: *he is God over all blessed for ever*; and yet he condescends to be *Emmanuel, God with us, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone*. Consider the inexpressible value, and inconceivable efficacy of his precious, all-atoning blood. It is the blood of the sacred body, assumed by the eternal *Logos*, when he *appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh*, both as a victim and a priest, to suffer the penalty of his own righteous law for us, and to *put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*—the blood of *the lamb of God, slain to sprinkle many nations*—the blood of that mysterious Being, who fills *the bosom of the Father*, and the everlasting throne, at whose feet all the heavenly powers *cast their crowns*; and to whom, in the midst of the acclamations and adorations of *an innumerable company of angels*, in the midst of *sounding trumpets, thunderings, lightnings, and voices, the spirits of just men made perfect ascribe salvation*, free, full, immensely dear bought *salvation*: and to say all in one word, it is *the blood of God manifest in the flesh*. Acts xx. 28. 1 Tim. iii. 16. For **JEHOVAH** *our righteousness is the seed of the woman and the Son of man*: The God-head and the manhood are wonderfully joined in him: and in consequence of this mysterious union, he is not only a proper *mediator between God and man*, but the sole medium of reconciliation and union, between the offended Majesty of heaven and the rebellious sons of Adam. As the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness, when viewed by the wounded Israelites was the only means by which the poison of the fiery ser-

pents could be expelled, and health restored to their tortured, dying bodies: So Jesus lifted up on the cross, when beheld by the eye of faith, as bleeding and dying in our stead, is the only way by which sin, the sting of death can be extracted out of our guilty, perishing souls: the only antidote that can restore us to saving health and eternal life. John iii. 14. Apply whatever we will, besides this sovereign remedy; we may poison, but can never heal the envenomed and mortal wound.

But remember, Sinner, that faith alone can make the blessed application. Adam fell by rejecting in unbelief the word of threatening, and thou canst never rise, but by receiving in faith *the word of reconciliation*. Gen. ii. 17. 2 Cor. v. 19. Instead then of confusing thy thoughts, and scattering thy desires by the pursuit of a variety of objects; remember that *one thing is needful* for thee—Christ and his salvation received by faith: *for, to as many as receive him, he gives power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*. Beseech him, therefore to manifest himself to thee by his word and Spirit. *He is the author and finisher of faith, the giver of every good and perfect gift*; ask of him, an heart-felt confidence, that *God so loved thee, as to give his only begotten Son, that thou shouldst not perish but have everlasting life*, a firm confidence, that as the first Adam wilfully ruined thee; so he, *the second Adam, freely loved thee, and gave himself for thee*: and that thou *hast redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, not according to thy merits, but the riches of his grace*.

The least degree of this divinely-wrought confidence, will begin to attract and unite thy soul to him, who *is our life and peace, our strength and righteousness*. The everlasting gospel will then be music in thine ears, and power in thy heart. Its cheerful, solemn sound, will raise thy drooping spirits, and make thee fix the eye of thy mind on *the sign of the Son of man, the uplifted banner of the*

cross: And oh! while the self-righteous see nothing there but the *despised, rejected man of sorrow*, what wilt thou discover? *God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself! God manifest in the flesh to destroy the works of the devil! Jehovah Jesus, the captain of our salvation, treading the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of the Almighty! Of the people there was none with him, therefore his own arm brought salvation unto him.*

While the gospel trumpet is blown in Sion, and the self-hardened, scoffing infidel, hears it with disdain and ridicule, what joy will the awful declarations convey to thy penitent and listening soul! With what rapturous delight wilt thou hang upon the lips of the messengers of peace, the sons of consolation; who preach free salvation by the blood of Jesus! While he himself, *confirming the word of his servants*, says to the melting heart, with his *still, small, and yet powerful renovating voice*: *Behold, I sit upon my throne making all things new—The words that I speak are spirit and life—I do not condemn thee, thy sins are forgiven—Be thou clean—Thy faith hath saved thee—Go in peace and sin no more.* Rev. xxi. 5. John vi. 63. Luke vii. 48, 50. Matt. viii. 3. John viii. 11.

And oh! what will thy believing, enlarged heart experience *in that day of God's power*, and thy spiritual birth! *Christ the true light of the world, the eternal life of men, coming suddenly to his temple*, and filling it with the light of his countenance, and the power of his resurrection! *Christ shedding abroad in thy ravished soul, the love of thy heavenly Father*, thy bitterest enemies, and all mankind! In a word, *the Holy Ghost given unto thee!* Or, *Christ dwelling in thy heart by faith!* John i. 4. 1 John v. 12. Rom. 8. 15. and v. 5. Gal. i. 16. Eph. i. 13. and iii. 17.

Being thus *made partakers of Christ*, and of the *Holy Ghost*, Heb. iii. 14. and vi. 4. thy loving heart, thy praising lips, thy blameless life will agree to testify, that *the*

Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, and that if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new. Matt. ix. 6. 2 Cor. v. 17.

Till this is thy happy experience, pray (as the drawings of the Father, and convictions of the Spirit will enable thee) earnestly pray for living faith, for a *faith* that may be to thee *the substance of the pardon thou hopest for, and the evidence of the great sacrifice thou dost not see, but which our divine surety really offered upon the cross for thee.* Consider how deplorable a thing it is, that thou shouldst be prevented from claiming, receiving, enjoying the delightful knowledge of thy interest in the Redeemer's death ; when his pardoning love, and *the word of his grace,* offer it thee *without money and without price,* and absolutely nothing but infatuating unbelief or spiritual sloth, keeps thee from the invaluable blessing. Be not satisfied idly to wait in the divine ordinances, till thou *seest the kingdom of God come with power ;* but as the *violent do, take it by force.*

Prisoner of hope, be strong, be bold,
 Cast off thy doubts, disdain to fear,
 Dare to believe, of Christ lay hold ;
 Wrestle with Christ in mighty prayer :
 Tell him, I will not let thee go,
 Till I thy name, thy nature know.

Be attentive to the calls of the Spirit, and follow the drawing of the Father, till they bring thee to the Son ; and keep thine eye upon the dawning light of the gospel, till *the morning star arise in thy heart.* Venture, confidently venture upon the boundless mercy of God in Jesus Christ. If a spirit of infirmity bows thee down, yield not to it, *seventy times seven times,* try to arise and look up, calling aloud for help against it. Say, if possible *with tears,* as

the distressed father in the gospel, *Lord I believe, or, Lord I would believe, help thou my unbelief*: Or with tempted Job, *though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee*.

In this manner knock with the earnestness of the importunate widow, till the door of faith open, and thou begin to see the salvation of God, but stop not here at the threshold of christianity. *Have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*. Go on from faith to faith, till thy day of pentecost is fully come, till thou art endued with power from on high, baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which Christ received of the Father, and abundantly shed on his servants and handmaids, when he was glorified. Compare Matt. iii. 11. Eph. i. 13. John vii. 39. Acts i. 5, 8, and ii. 33, 39, and viii. 15, and xix. 2. John vii. 39. Tit. iii. 6.

In the mean time, use all the means of grace with an eye to their end; stir up the gift of hope that is in thee; and to raise thy drooping expectation, receive the encouraging testimony of God's redeemed, praising people, whose hearts and tongues are ready to testify to thy ears what the following lines declare to thine eyes.

V. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and is manifested unto us.—Yes, we have found him, of whom Moses and the prophets did write. From blessed experience we declare, that the Messiah is come, that his essence is Love incarnate, his name free Salvation, and his delight the eternal happiness of the children of men. He is the chief among ten thousand prophets, priests, kings and saviours; he is altogether lovely. We staked our souls upon his eternal truth, and it was done to us, both according to his word and our faith: Therefore with humble joy we declare, that he an-*

swers the prayers, and delivers the souls of perishing sinners, as graciously as he did in the days of his flesh.

Upon trials, a thousand times successfully repeated, we proclaim him the help of the helpless, the hope of the hopeless, the health of the sick, the strength of the weak, the riches of the poor, the peace of the disquieted, the comfort of the afflicted, the light of those that sit in darkness, the companion of the desolate, the friend of the friendless, the way of the bewildered, the wisdom of the foolish, the righteousness of the ungodly, the sanctification of the unholy, the redemption of captives, the joy of mourners, the glory of the infamous, and in a word, the salvation of the lost.

Though he was the Creator of men and angels, he vouchsafed to be born of a woman, that we, the wretched offsprings of degenerate Adam, might be born again, born of God. Though he had stretched forth the heavens like a curtain, and bespangled them with stars innumerable; he wrapped himself in the scanty, fading garment of our flesh, and put on the vail of our miserable humanity, that we might be invested with the glory, and communicable perfections of the divine nature. Though he was the King of kings, and Lord of lords, he did not disdain to take upon him the form and office of a servant, that we might be delivered from the slavery of satan, and that angels might be sent forth to minister for us, who are the heirs of salvation. Though he was the *fulness of him who fills all in all*, he worked, that we might not want; toiled, that we might rest; endured hunger and thirst, that we might taste the hidden manna, eat the bread of life, and drink with him the mystic wine of his Father's kingdom. His omnipotent word covers a thousand hills with verdure, and clothes millions of creatures with rich furs, glittering scales, and shining plumage; but O infinite condescension! he submitted to be stript of his plain raiment, that our shame might not appear; he became

naked, that we might be adorned with robes of righteousness, and garments of salvation. Though his riches were immense and unsearchable like himself, though heaven was his throne, and earth his footstool, he became poor, was destitute of a place where to lay his head, that we might be rich in faith here, and heirs of the kingdom hereafter. Though he was, is now, and ever shall be the joy of the heavenly powers, and the object of their deepest adoration ; he was voluntarily despised of men, that we might be honoured of God : He was acquainted too with griefs, that we might rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Though supreme Lawgiver and Judge of all, matchless love made him yield to be judged, and unjustly condemned at Pilate's bar that we might be honorably acquitted, and gloriously rewarded before his awful tribunal. Though archangels laid their crowns at his feet, and seraphim veiled their faces before him, unable to stand the dazzling effulgence of his glory, he suffered himself to be derided, scoffed, spit upon, scourged, and crowned with thorns ; that we might be acknowledged, applauded, embraced, and presented with never-fading crowns of righteousness and glory. *The Lord of Hosts* is his name ; he is deservedly called *Wonderful Counsellor, the everlasting Father, the mighty God, the prince of peace* ; cherubic legions fly at his nod ; and yet, astonishing humiliation ! *His shoulders, on which he laid the government* of the world, felt the infamous load of a malefactor's cross ; and barbarous soldiers followed by an enraged mob, led him as a lamb to the slaughter, that we might be delivered from the heavy curse of the law, and gently conveyed by celestial powers into Abraham's bosom. *Let all the angels of God worship him*, is the great decree, to which the heavenly hierarchy submits with incessant transports of the most ardent devotion : and yet, he was crucified as an execrable wretch, guilty of treason and blasphemy ; that we, daring rebels and abominable sinners, might be *made*

kings and priests unto God, partaking of *his* highest glory, as he partook of *our* deepest shame : And, to crown his loving-kindness, he expired in the midst of rending rocks, and a supernatural darkness ; that we might feel his tender mercies, and be indulged with the light of heaven, when we go through the dreary valley of the shadow of death, to reap the joys of eternal life.

Survey this wond'rous cure :

And at each step let higher wonder rise !

Pardon for infinite offence ! and pardon

Through means that speak its value infinite !

A pardon bought with blood ! with blood divine !

With blood divine of him, we made our foe !

Persisted to provoke ! though woo'd and aw'd,

Bless'd and chastis'd, bold flagrant rebels still !

Bold rebels 'midst the thunders of his throne !

Nor we alone ! a rebel universe !

Yet for the foulest of the foul he dies.

But this is not all ! Having *through the grace of God* tasted death for every man, and perfumed the grave for believers,

He rose ! He rose ! He broke the bars of death.

Oh the burst gates, crush'd sting, demolish'd throne,

Last gasp of vanquish'd death ! Shout, earth and heav'n,

This *sum of good* to man ; whose nature, then,

Took wing, and mounted with him from the tomb !

Then, then, we rose ; then first humanity

Triumphant, pass'd the crystal gates of light. YOUNG.

O the depth of the mystery of faith ! O the breadth, the length, the height of the love of Christ ! All his stupendous humiliation from his Father's bosom, through the virgin's womb, to the accursed tree ; all his astonishing exaltation,

from the dust of the grave, and the sorrows of hell, to the joys of heaven, and the highest throne of glory ; all this immense progress of incarnate love—all, all is ours ! His mysterious incarnation reunites and endears us to God ; his natural birth procures our spiritual regeneration ; his unspotted life restores us to a blissful immortality ; his bitter agony gives us calm repose : his bloody sweat washes away our manifold pollutions ; his deep wounds distil the balm that heals our envenomed sores ; his perfect obedience is our first title to endless felicity ; his full atonement purchases our free justification ; his cruel death is the spring of immortal life ; his grave the gate of heaven ; his resurrection, the pledge of glory ; his ascension, the triumph of our souls ; his sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high, the earnest of our future coronation and exalted felicity ; and his prevailing intercession, the inexhaustible fountain of all our blessings.

Come then, conscious sinners, come to the feast of pardoning love ; taste with us, that the Lord is gracious. Let not a false humility detain thee, under pretence, that “ thou art not yet humbled and broken enough for sin.” Alas ! who can humble thee but Jesus, that says, *without me ye can do nothing ?* and how cast thou be *broken*, but by *falling upon this chief corner-stone ?* If humiliation and contrition are parts of the salvation which he merited for thee, is it not the quintessence of self-righteousness, to attempt to obtain them without him ? away then, for ever away with such a dangerous excuse !

Nor let the remembrance of thy sins keep thee from the speediest application to Jesus for grace and pardon. What ! though thy crimes are of the deepest dye, and most enormous magnitude ; though they are innumerable as the sand on the sea shore, and aggravated by the most uncommon and horrid circumstances ; yet thou needest not despair : he has *opened a fountain for sin* of every kind, and un-

cleanness of every degree; *his blood cleanses from ALL sin.*

He is a Redeemer most eminently fitted, a Saviour most completely qualified to restore corrupt, guilty, apostate undone mankind; the vilest of the vile, the foulest of the foul not excepted. He is *almighty*, and therefore perfectly able to restore lapsed powers, root up inveterate habits, and implant heavenly tempers. He is *love* itself, compassionate, merciful, pardoning *love*, become incarnate for thee. And shall he, that spared not his own life, but delivered himself up for us all—shall he not with his own blood, also freely give us all things?

Behold, oh behold him with the eye of thy faith: cruelly torn with various instruments of torture, he hangs aloft on the accursed tree, between two of the most execrable malefactors; and there, insulted more than they, he bears our infamous load of guilt. *He knows no sin*, and yet *he is made sin for us*: he becomes a curse, to redeem us from the curse of the law: his own self bears our sins in his own body on the tree: he is wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace is upon him, God hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all, and with his stripes we are healed.

See, PARDON FOR LOST SINNERS is written with pointed steel and streaming blood, on his pierced hands and feet: The double flood issuing from his wounded side, more than seals the dear-bought blessing: The hand-writing against us is nailed to his cross, and blotted out with his precious blood: his open arms invite, draw, and welcome returning prodigals: and there encircled, the worst of sinners may find a safe and delightful retreat, a real and present heaven.

O sinner, let thy heart fly thither on the wings of eager expectation and impetuous desire. By all that is near, dear, and sacred to thee, fly—fly from eternal death—fly for eternal life. The *law*, violated by ten thousand trans-

gressions, pursues thee with ten thousand curses : the sword of *divine vengeance* flames over thy devoted head : *Sin*, the sting of death, has been a thousand times shot into thy wretched breast ; its subtle and dire poison continually works in thy hardened, or distressed heart : *Guilt*, the sting of sin—the never dying worm, perpetually benumbs thy stupid soul, or gnaws thy restless conscience : *Raging lusts*, those sparks of the fire of hell, which nothing but the blood of the cross can quench : or *fierce passions*, those flashes of infernal lightning, that portend an impending storm, frequently break out in thy benighted soul ; an heart-felt pledge of tormenting flames : *Satan*, whom thou hast perhaps invoked by horrid imprecations, goes about as a roaring lion, seeking to ensnare his careless votary, or devour his desperate worshipper : *Death* levels his pointed spear, at thy thoughtless or throbbing heart : *Hell* itself is moved from beneath, to meet thee at thy coming ; and *the grave* gapes at thy feet, ready to close her hideous mouth upon her accursed prey.

Fly then, miserable sinner—if thy flesh is not brass, and thou canst not dwell with everlasting burnings, fly for shelter to the bloody cross of Jesus. There thou wilt meet *him, who was, and is, and is to come ; Emmanuel God with us*, who appeared as the son of man, to *make his soul an offering for sin*, for thy sin ; and saved thy life from destruction, by losing his own in pangs, which made the sun turn pale, shook the earth, and caused the shattered graves to give up their dead.

He is even now near to thy heart ; he stands at the door, and gently knocks by the word of his grace. If thou hearest his voice, and openest by believing, he will come in : the word of reconciliation shall be powerfully ingrafted into thy heart ; thou shalt know, experimentally know the *truth*, and the *truth* shall make thee free. Assured that he hath by himself purged thy sins, abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gos-

pel, thou shalt sup with him and he with thee ; thou shalt eat the bread of God, which came down from heaven, to give life to a perishing world. Evangelical *truth* received by faith, will heal, nourish, comfort and sanctify thy soul.

But perhaps thy guilty heart receives no consolation from these lines. Thou still considerest Christ only as a severe Lawgiver, or as an inflexible Judge ; and not as the *propitiation for thy sins*, and thy gracious, all-prevailing Advocate with the Father. Oh ! how dost thou wrong both him, and thyself, by such false conception ! And how soon would thy gloomy fears give place to triumphant joy, if thy thoughts of him corresponded with his gracious designs concerning thee !

Wouldst thou know him better ; behold him through the glass of his word, and not through the mist of thy fears ; and thou wilt see that, far from watching over thee for evil, he fixes upon thee the piercing eye of his redeeming love ; waits, that he may be gracious to thy soul, and calls, continually calls for thee. Oh ! if thou hast an ear listen, and as thou listenest wonder at the kind, reviving words, which proceed out of his mouth.

VI. * * Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, says the Lord ; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto

* This part of the address is almost literally transcribed from the scripture, and it is designed for none but mourners in Sion, dejected sinners, who are backward to come to Christ, that they may have life. These want *line upon line*, and invitation upon invitation ; and it is well if, after all, they are encouraged to come. As for full souls, I know they will loath this honey-comb. But while they complain " it has too many cells, and they are filled with the same thing ;" some poor hungry hearts will say, "*One thing is needful* for us. We cannot have too much virgin honey ; its sweetness makes amends for the want of variety. If the manna falls abundantly round our tents, it will stir us up to praise, and not to murmur. Fulness of the bread of life will not make us wax fat and kick like Jeshurun, but bless God for his rich profusion, and with the disciples, we shall even *gather the fragments that nothing be lost.*"

‘ her, that her warfare is accomplished, and her iniquity is
 ‘ pardoned; for, in me, she hath received of the Lord’s
 ‘ hand, double for all her sins: He is well pleased for
 ‘ my righteousness sake, I have magnified the law and
 ‘ made it honourable; I have been lifted up, and now I
 ‘ draw all men unto me. My delights are with the sons
 ‘ of men, and therefore am I exalted, that I may have
 ‘ mercy upon them. Behold, I come with a strong hand,
 ‘ my reward is with me, and my work before me. Every
 ‘ valley shall be exalted, every mountain and hill shall be
 ‘ made low; the crooked shall be made straight, and the
 ‘ rough places plain; my glory shall be revealed, and all
 ‘ flesh shall see it together.’

‘ Harken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from
 ‘ righteousness; I bring near my righteousness, it shall
 ‘ not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry. Seek ye
 ‘ me while I may be found, call upon me while I am near:
 ‘ Return unto me, and I will have mercy upon you: and
 ‘ though ye have only done evil before me from your
 ‘ youth, I will abundantly pardon: For my thoughts are
 ‘ not revengeful as your thoughts, nor my ways unloving
 ‘ as your ways: In me you shall be saved with an everlast-
 ‘ ing salvation.’

‘ Come therefore unto me, all ye that travail and are
 ‘ heavy laden, and I will give you rest: My yoke is easy,
 ‘ my burden is light, and my rest glorious. Ho! every
 ‘ one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that
 ‘ hath no money; come ye buy and eat all that can revive,
 ‘ strengthen, and delight your souls; yea, come, buy wine
 ‘ and milk without money and without price. Wherefore
 ‘ do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and
 ‘ your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken dili-
 ‘ gently unto me, eat that which is good, and let your soul
 ‘ delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come un-
 ‘ to me; hear, and your soul shall live: I will make an
 ‘ everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of

‘ David, and you shall all know me, from the least to the greatest ; for I will forgive your iniquity ; and remember your sin no more.’

‘ Oh, if thou knewest the gifts of God, wretched sinner, and who it is that saith unto thee, *If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink*, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water ; a well, a fountain of it would have sprung up in thee unto everlasting life ; yea, out of thy belly, thy inmost soul, rivers of living water, the greatest abundance of the purest joy, would have flowed forever. I, even I, am he that blot-teth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins : I will guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought ; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, or like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.’

‘ O how often would I have gathered thee in years past, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings ! How often would I have led thee, as an eagle fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, and beareth them ! but thou wouldst not. Nevertheless, this is still the day of my power, mercy, and love : I pardon those whom I reserve, and I will yet be pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done. I was angry with thee, but mine anger is turned away, my thoughts towards thee are thoughts of peace, and I am become thy salvation. Come then, let us now reason together, and though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’

Why does not thy drooping heart, O sinner, leap for joy, or melt with gratitude, at these tender invitations of thy Saviour ? Thinkest thou, they do not belong to thee ? Dost thou suppose that Jesus, who is all purity and holiness, must turn away with abhorrence from such a guilty, polluted and abominable creature as thou art ? One so void of all good, so full of all evil, so completely lost and

undone as thou seest thyself? Art thou afraid that thy relapses into sin have been so frequent, and thy backslidings so multiplied, that hope, which comes to all, can no more come to thee? Or does the enemy of thy soul suggest thou art careless, hardened and sunk into stupid unbelief? Does he insinuate, thou hast so long trifled with divine grace, art gone such lengths in horrid wickedness, or hast contracted such unconquerable habits of indulging thy carnal mind, or following thy vain imaginations, that infinite mercy can no longer pardon thy sins, or infinite power change thy nature? Art thou even tempted to believe, thou hast committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and art almost, if not altogether, given up to a reprobate mind? O check those gloomy, despairing thoughts; resist the devil; and give place to more true and honorable sentiments of Jesus.

Wherefore dost thou doubt, O thou of little faith! Is any thing too hard for the Lord! Are not all things possible with God? Can the almighty, who became incarnate to die, as man, in thy place, want either ability or willingness to help thee, be thy case ever so deplorable and desperate? Are not darkness or light, sickness or death, all one to him, who is *the light of the world and the Prince of life*; and who, with a word or a touch raised the dead, whether they were yet warm on a bed, cold in a coffin, or already putrefied in a grave?

Confine not then, poor dejected sinner, thy Saviour's boundless mercy within the narrow limits of thy unbelieving thoughts. Get scriptural views of his pardoning love, and true discoveries of his redeeming power. To guess aright at the prodigious extent of his mercy, lift up the dim eyes of thy struggling faith, and behold a great multitude, which no man can number, standing before the throne, with their robes washed, and made white in the blood of the Lamb.

Among those countless monuments of divine mercy, those illustrious trophies of free grace, see David, who, after having been admitted to close communion, with God, plunged for ten months in the horrible guilt of adultery, treachery, hypocrisy, and murder! See Paul, once so fierce an enemy to the truth, so fiery a blasphemer of Jesus, so raging a persecutor of the saints, that his very breath was *threatnings and slaughter against them!*—See Peter, who, after a great profession of faithfulness and upon an apparently slight temptation, denied three times his Master, his Saviour, and his God, in his very presence—Peter guilty of lying, cursing, and perjury; immediately after he had been apprised of the imminent temptation, and armed against it, both by receiving the holy sacrament at our Lord's own hand, and being admitted to see his wonderful agony, and glorious miracles.—These, and thousands more agree to tell thee, *For this cause we obtained mercy, that in us first, Jesus Christ might shew forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them, which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.*

If all these witnesses do not silence thy doubts, and encourage thy hopes; Jesus himself, the faithful and true witness, will yet plead the cause of his dying love, against thy unbelieving fears: Thy gracious Advocate with God, will yet be God's condescending Advocate with thee. O let thy clamorous conscience keep silence, while he preaches to thee the everlasting gospel of his grace. And if to-day thou hearest his voice, harden not thy heart, come out of the cave of unbelief, wrap thyself in the mantle of divine mercy, and worship the pardoning God, the God of never-failing truth and everlasting love.

Gracious Saviour! make thine own words, spirit and life, to the soul thou hast formed by thy breath and purchased with thy blood. Blessed comforter! While thy precious sayings strike the eyes of this hopeless reader, let the love which thou sheddest abroad, soften, melt and re-

vive his poor, oppressed heart, and let salvation come this day to the house of a son or daughter of Abraham! a touch, a breath from thee will break the bars of iron, burst the gates of brass, and make the everlasting doors lift up their heads, that the King of glory may come in.

Who is the King of glory? Who is this, that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This, that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?

‘ I, that speak in righteousness, mighty to save, I have trodden the wine-press alone, mine own arm hath brought salvation unto me, salvation for the lost: It is gone forth; my righteousness is near: the isles shall wait on me, and on my arm shall they trust. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me: He hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to comfort all that mourn, and by the blood of the covenant, to send forth the prisoners out of the pit where there is no water.’

‘ Fear not therefore, thou worm Jacob, I am the first and the last, he that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore. Yes, I ever live to make intercession for thee; and because I live, thou shalt live also. All power is given, all judgment is committed to me in heaven and earth: I have the keys of death and hell: A Jonah, who cries to me out of the very belly of hell, is not out of the reach of my gracious and omnipotent arm.’

‘ Who art thou that hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? I, even I am he that comforteth thee. I bring glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. I have triumphed over all thine enemies on the cross. I have led captivity captive, and received gifts

‘ for men, even the promise of the Father, that the Lord
 ‘ God the Spirit may dwell in them. At my command
 ‘ the great, the evangelical trumpet is blown, and they that
 ‘ are ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the out-
 ‘ casts in the land of Egypt do come, and are welcome to
 ‘ mount Sion. Hasten with them, thou captive exile,
 ‘ hasten to me, that thou mayest be loosed, and that thou
 ‘ shouldest not die in the horrible pit of thy natural state.’

‘ Thy helplessness is no hindrance to my loving-kind-
 ‘ ness: I break not the bruised reed, I quench not the
 ‘ smoking flax: I uphold all that fall, I raise up all those
 ‘ that are bowed down: I say to the prisoners, Go forth;
 ‘ and to them that are in darkness, shew yourselves: I
 ‘ strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees:
 ‘ I say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear
 ‘ not; behold, I will come with vengeance and a recom-
 ‘ pense, I will come and save you.’

‘ My tender mercies are over all my works. When the
 ‘ poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their
 ‘ tongue faileth for thirst; I the Lord, will hear them; I,
 ‘ the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open
 ‘ rivers in high places, I will make the wilderness a pool,
 ‘ and the dry land springs of water.’

‘ It is true, thou hast sinned with an high hand, both
 ‘ against thy light, and against my love; but how shall I
 ‘ give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, sin-
 ‘ ner? How shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as
 ‘ Zeboim, those rebellious cities, on which I poured my
 ‘ flaming vengeance? My heart is turned within me, my
 ‘ repentings are kindled together; I will not destroy thee;
 ‘ for I am God and not man. I have seen thy ways, and
 ‘ will heal and lead thee, and restore comfort to thee; for
 ‘ I create the fruit of the lips, Peace! Peace to him that is
 ‘ afar off, and to him that is near, I will heal him.’

‘ Thou hast not chosen me, but I have chosen thee; thou
 ‘ art my servant, fear not, for I am with thee; be not dis-

‘mayed, for I am thy God. My strength is sufficient for thee; I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. They that war against thee shall be as nothing, for I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, and make my strength perfect in thy weakness. I will bring thee by a way thou hast not known. I will make darkness light before thee, and crooked paths straight: When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee, for I am the Lord, thy Saviour and thy God. I have carried thee from the womb, and even to hoary hairs will I bear and deliver thee.’

‘Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted and drunken, but not with wine: I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit would fail before me, and the soul which I have made. I turn the water of affliction into the wine of consolation. Behold, I take out of thy hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury: thou shalt no more drink it again; I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thy soul: and in the room of it, I give thee the cup of the New Testament in my blood, shed for the remission of sins: It is now ready, draw near, drink thou of it, and taste that I am gracious.’

‘Come near, that I may speak a word in season to thy weary spirit. Why standest thou afar off? Come near, I say, that my soul may bless thee. Let me shew thee my glory, and proclaim my soul-reviving name: *The Lord! The Lord God! merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin!* Let me wash thy heart from iniquity, guilty sinner; for, unless I wash thee, thou hast no part with me. Unless thou art born again of water and of the Spirit, thou canst not see the kingdom of God. But this

‘ is the covenant of promise which I make with thee : I will
‘ sprinkle clean water upon thee, and thou shalt be clean ;
‘ a new heart will I give thee, and a new spirit, even my
‘ own Spirit, will I put within thee, and thou shalt be com-
‘ pletely born of God ; and at that day thou shalt know
‘ that I am in the Father, and thou in me, and I in thee.’

‘ Who is he that condemneth ? It is I, who died for thy
‘ sins, yea rather, who rose again for thy justification, who
‘ am even at the right hand of God, who also make inter-
‘ cession for thee. The same compassionate love, that
‘ made me weep over ungrateful Jerusalem, and groan over
‘ dead Lazarus, made me bleed and die for thee. O that
‘ in this thy day, thou mayest know the things that belong
‘ unto thy peace, and the efficacy of that sacrifice, by which
‘ I have for ever perfected them that are sanctified ! O
‘ that unbelief, so injurious to me, and so pernicious to
‘ thee, may no longer hide my love from thine eyes !’

‘ What ! afraid of my purity, art thou ready to cry out
‘ as my apostle, *Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful*
‘ *man ?* And dost thou tremble at my words as a criminal
‘ at the sentence of his judge ? O be of good cheer, it is I,
‘ be not afraid. Am not I thy light and strength, thy
‘ shield and buckler, thy tower and resting place, thy
‘ strong hold whereunto thou mayest always resort, thy cas-
‘ tle and fortress, the horn also of thy salvation, and thy
‘ refuge ? as for thy sins, if thou desirest to part with them,
‘ they will no more hinder me from visiting thee, than the
‘ sickness of a patient prevents a physician from giving him
‘ his attendance.’

‘ I know thou art a sinner, a great sinner : For this
‘ cause came I down from heaven to Bethlehem—to Geth-
‘ semane—to Calvary. I know thine iniquities are more
‘ in number than the hairs of thy head ; like a sore burden,
‘ they are too heavy for thee to bear ; and therefore have I
‘ borne them for thee in my own body on the tree. I
‘ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance :

‘ I am the man that receiveth sinners, and eateth with
 ‘ them : I am the friend of returning publicans and har-
 ‘ lots ; all manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven
 ‘ them through faith in my blood : God was in me recon-
 ‘ ciling the world unto himself, not imputing their tres-
 ‘ passes unto them : and now, I beseech thee, be *thou* (for
 ‘ one) reconciled to God ; for in me God is reconciled to
 ‘ *thee*, thy sin is covered, and thine iniquity forgiven.’

‘ Great as thy crimes are, poor mourner in Zion, I up-
 ‘ braid thee not with them ; my infinitely meritorious sa-
 ‘ crifice, hath long ago atoned for their heinousness, and
 ‘ now I cast the mantle of my pardoning love over their
 ‘ multitude : Thou art ashamed of them, and shall I be
 ‘ ashamed of thee ? Far be the thought from thee—I glory
 ‘ in extending my boundless mercy to such miserable ob-
 ‘ jects as thou art. This is a faithful saying, and worthy
 ‘ of all men to be received, that I came into the world to
 ‘ save sinners : and if with my servant Paul, thou seest
 ‘ thyself the *chief* of them, let me do the *chief* part of the
 ‘ errand, on which I came ; look unto me—partake with
 ‘ him of my *richest* salvation—loose thy cares in the bosom
 ‘ of my mercy—and receive the atonement I made for thee,
 ‘ but receive it *now* ; for I have heard thee in a time ac-
 ‘ cepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured
 ‘ thee : Behold, *now* is the accepted time : Behold, *now* is
 ‘ the day of salvation, the day in which I bind up the
 ‘ breach of my people, and heal the stroke of their wound.’

‘ Whence arise, O poor sinner, thy backwardness and
 ‘ misgivings ? I have ransomed thee from the power of the
 ‘ grave, and thou art mine : I come to heal thee, and re-
 ‘ veal to thee the abundance of peace and truth : I bring
 ‘ thee a cure for thy wounded conscience, and saving
 ‘ health for thy sin-distempered soul !’

‘ In a little wrath, and for a small moment, I have hid
 ‘ my face from thee ; but with everlasting kindness will I
 ‘ have mercy on thee ; for I am the Lord thy Redeemer.

‘ Believe it, and faith will work by love, and love will cast
‘ out fear: Thus shalt thou take hold of my strength, that
‘ thou mayest make peace with me, and thou shalt make
‘ peace with me; for I am a strength to the needy in his
‘ distress, an hiding place from the wind, a covert from the
‘ tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the
‘ shadow of a great rock in a weary land.’

‘ Come, then, be not of them that draw back from me
‘ to perdition, but of them who believe to the saving of the
‘ soul. Far from casting away thy little confidence, which
‘ hath great recompence of reward, hold it fast; resist even
‘ unto blood, striving against the damning sin of unbelief;
‘ trust in me for ever, for in me Jehovah thy righteousness,
‘ is everlasting strength; and let me no longer complain
‘ that thou, (one of my oppressed people in spiritual
‘ Egypt) wilt have none of me, and wilt not even come to
‘ me, that thou mightest have life more abundantly.’

‘ Not by works of righteousness which thou hast done,
‘ but according to my mercy I saved thee. I am the
‘ Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. What my
‘ gracious purpose planned before time, I have executed
‘ in time. My life and death have completed the wonder-
‘ ful bridge, by which thou canst go over the great deep
‘ fixed between an holy God, and thy sinful soul. Con-
‘ cerning a main arch of this mighty work, with one of my
‘ last breaths, I said *It is finished*; and I now confirm the
‘ glad tidings with regard to the whole. With my right
‘ hand, and with my holy arm, I have gotten myself the
‘ victory, and parted for thee, not the waves of the red sea,
‘ but the dreadful billows of the fiery gulph. And now I
‘ return to see thee safe over. Leave only the world and
‘ sin behind, and walking by faith, follow me through the
‘ regeneration to a throne of glory.’—

‘ Whence arises, sinner, this backwardness to trust in
‘ my promise, and venture after me? Dost thou suspect
‘ the sincerity of my tenders of grace? And by thinking,

‘ that I secretly except thee from my mercy, when I offer
 ‘ it thee openly, dost thou still make me a dissembler, a
 ‘ liar? O wrong me not so far. I am the truth itself: I
 ‘ abhor dissimulation in my creatures: and I, that say, a
 ‘ man should not use deceit, shall I use deceit? Shall I
 ‘ have concord with Belial? Shall there be an agreement
 ‘ between the faithful Witness, and the father of lies? Shall
 ‘ I sentence him, that loveth a lie, to the lake that burneth
 ‘ with fire and brimstone, and be guilty of making one my-
 ‘ self? Horrible to suppose! Reject the blasphemous
 ‘ thought, Sinner, it wounds me in the tenderest part.’

‘ No, no, I do not put on a mask of pretended love, to
 ‘ hide a rancorous, unforgiving temper: The general invi-
 ‘ tation that formerly passed my lips, is still the very lan-
 ‘ guage of my heart, *Whosoever will, let him come and take*
 ‘ *of the water of life freely*; and the promise, which I for-
 ‘ merly made, is still firmer than the pillars of heaven,
 ‘ *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out*. Let
 ‘ these words, like incorruptible seed, beget thee again to
 ‘ a lively hope, and help thee to stir thyself up to lay hold
 ‘ on me, and my great salvation.’

‘ I grant *that no man cometh unto me, except the Father*
 ‘ *draw him*: But does he not say; I have loved thee with
 ‘ an everlasting love, therefore *with loving-kindness, with*
 ‘ *the cords of a man, with bands of love have I drawn*
 ‘ *thee*? Does he not draw thee even now? Who stirs
 ‘ thee up to repentance? Who raises in thee a desire of
 ‘ coming unto me by prayer? Who indulges thee at times
 ‘ with sweet hopes and alluring joys, to encourage thee to
 ‘ come? Is it not my Father, and thine, thou poor starv-
 ‘ ing prodigal? And that nothing may be wanting on his
 ‘ part to make thee come, to drawing does he not add driv-
 ‘ ing? Does he not obstruct all thy prospects of creature-
 ‘ happiness, and blast all thy worldly, yea and all thy self-
 ‘ righteous schemes? And while he touches thy heart
 ‘ with the rod of distress, does he not lay the scourge of

‘ affliction on thy back, and put this gracious invitation in
 ‘ thy hand? Away then with thy hard thoughts of my
 ‘ Father: He and I are a flame of eternal love: I and the
 ‘ Father are one.’

‘ Neither say thou in thy heart, This is a day of trou-
 ‘ ble, rebuke, and blasphemy; the children are come to
 ‘ the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth. Shall
 ‘ I bring to thee birth, and not give strength according to
 ‘ the day? Dost thou fear that my zeal, my strength, and
 ‘ the sounding of my bowels towards thee are restrained?
 ‘ Am not I Jesus still? Is my love waxed cold that it
 ‘ cannot pity? Is my hand shortened at all that it cannot
 ‘ save? Is mine ear heavy that it cannot hear? Or have
 ‘ I no power to deliver? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up
 ‘ the sea, I clothe the heaven with blackness; and if in
 ‘ the greatest storm, I say to the raging billows, *Be still!*
 ‘ There is a great calm: Fear not then, the zeal of the
 ‘ Lord of hosts—my zeal will do this, and more for thy
 ‘ soul; yea, I will do for thee exceeding abundantly above
 ‘ all that thou canst ask or think.’

‘ I see what passes in thy heart, O thou unwise and
 ‘ slow of heart to believe, all that I and my prophets have
 ‘ spoken: I read thy new excuses. Thou sayest thou
 ‘ dost not suspect me, my faithfulness and my power: but
 ‘ thyself, thy helplessness and the treachery of thy own
 ‘ desperately wicked heart. What, shall this sore evil hin-
 ‘ der thee from coming to me, who alone can remedy it?
 ‘ Wilt thou pray to be excused, from believing on such an
 ‘ account as this? Oh drop this last, this most absurd
 ‘ plea; and walk in the steps of the faith of thy father
 ‘ Abraham, Rom. iv. 16. Consider not the deadness and
 ‘ hardness of thy heart, but the reviving softening love of
 ‘ mine; not thy want of power, but my omnipotence; not
 ‘ the suggestion of satan, but the declarations of my gos-
 ‘ pel. Wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but
 ‘ against the powers of eternal darkness, and the spiritual

‘wickedness of an unbelieving thought. Strive to enter in at the strait gate of faith. Against hope believe in hope, that I quicken the dead, and call the things which are not as though they were. Stagger no more at my promises, through unbelief, but be strong in faith, and give glory to God, by being fully persuaded, that what I promise, I am able and willing to perform.’

‘In me thou mayest find the richest and readiest supply of all thy wants: I am both the Resurrection of the dead, and the life of the living: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believe then, and thou shalt not come into condemnation—Believe, and thou shalt receive power; thou shalt see the glory of God; thou shalt be established; yea, and sealed with the holy Spirit of promise—Believe and thou hast everlasting life, and shalt not come into condemnation—Believe, and a grain of faith will remove mountains of guilt and unbelief—Believe with all thy heart—All things are possible to him that believeth, and he shall inherit all promises: For to him that overcometh (and *faith* is the victory) will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and to sit with me on my throne; as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne—*Only believe* then, and through faith thou shalt subdue the kingdom of darkness, work righteousness, obtain promises, stop the mouth of the roaring lion, quench the violence of temptation’s fire, escape the flaming point of Satan’s darts, out of weakness be made strong, wax valiant in fight, turn to flight the armies of thy spiritual adversaries, and receive thy dead soul raised to life again.’

‘Thou hast played with the fiery serpents, they have bitten thy heart, but I have already sucked the worst of the mortal poison. In the perilous attempt my soul was seized with sorrow even unto death, and an unheard-of agony, attended with a bloody sweat, came upon my bo-

‘ dy. A racking cross was the bed I was stretched upon ;
‘ sharp thorns proved the pillow on which I rested my
‘ fainting head. The bitterest sarcasms were my consolations ;
‘ vinegar and gall my cordials ; a band of bloody
‘ soldiers the cruel wretches appointed to tear open my
‘ veins ; whips, nails, hammers, and a spear, the instruments
‘ allowed them to do the dreadful operation. For
‘ hours I bled under their merciless hands : and thy fearful
‘ curse, O sinner, flowed together with my blood. In
‘ the mean time, noon-day light was turned into the gloom
‘ of night, a dire emblem of the darkness that overspread
‘ my agonizing soul: and at last, while earthquakes rocked
‘ me into the sleep of death, I gave up the ghost, with
‘ cries that astonished my bitterest enemies, and made
‘ them smite their breasts in pangs of involuntary sympathy.
‘ Thus, to make thee partaker of my saving health,
‘ I took the shameful and painful consequences of thy
‘ mortal distemper upon me. And now sinner, despise
‘ no more such amazing love, requite it with a believing
‘ look. Consider my wounds, till thy conscience feels
‘ their wonderful effect. Behold my atoning blood, till
‘ thou can witness it heals all thy infirmities.’

‘ Knowing the terrors of the Lord, I persuade, men.—
‘ Come thou poor prisoner of hope, turn by faith to the
‘ strong hold of my protection. Up! for God will destroy
‘ this Sodom, the wicked world where thou lingerest.—
‘ Up! for the great and terrible day of the Lord approaches.
‘ As I live, there is but one step between thee
‘ and death, and another between death and hell.’

‘ Let my love even constrain thee to arise, and to follow
‘ me ; that I may receive thee unto myself, and complain
‘ no longer, that, with respect to thee, I have laboured in
‘ vain, and spent my strength for nought. Surely sinner,
‘ I deserve thy grateful love, for I have fought thy fiercest
‘ enemies. Dreadful was the battle ! my flesh was torn,
‘ my blood spilt, my life lost in the obstinate combat : But

‘ I have slain the lion and the bear, I have vanquished
 ‘ death and the grave, and rescued thy poor, helpless
 ‘ soul: and now let thy good Shepherd rejoice over his
 ‘ lost sheep: Let gratitude compel thee to come into the
 ‘ fold of my church, and join the little flock of my faithful
 ‘ followers. And if thou canst not come, do but look
 ‘ wishfully at me, and I will lay thee on my shoulders re-
 ‘ joicing, and carry thee in triumph into the richest pas-
 ‘ tures of my grace.’

‘ Once more I turn supplicant; once more I stand at
 ‘ the door and knock—Saul! Saul! It is hard for thee to
 ‘ kick against the sharp goads of my love—Martha! Mar-
 ‘ tha! one thing is needful, chuse the good part, chuse
 ‘ me—O Absalom, my son! my son! give me thy heart;
 ‘ I have died for thee, do not crucify me afresh—Lay
 ‘ down the spear of unbelief, and thine is my grace, my
 ‘ glory, my kingdom, the kingdom of heaven.’

‘ Be not afraid to surrender; rebelious as thou art, I
 ‘ love thee still—Can a woman forget her sucking child,
 ‘ that she should not have compassion on the son of her
 ‘ womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget
 ‘ thee. If thou wilt not take my word, believe my oath:
 ‘ Because I can swear by no greater, I swear by myself:
 ‘ *As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked,*
 ‘ but that the wicked turn from his way and live: Turn
 ‘ then, turn unto me, for I have redeemed thee: I have
 ‘ cast all thy sins into the depth of the sea, and will sub-
 ‘ due all thy iniquities.’

‘ And if thou canst not believe my oath, credit these
 ‘ scars—See! I have graved thee upon the palms of my
 ‘ hands. Long—too long have I waited for thy return,
 ‘ thou poor, wandering, weary prodigal. Let me see in
 ‘ thee the travail of my soul and be satisfied. By the mys-
 ‘ tery of my holy incarnation and dreadful temptation, by
 ‘ my agony and bloody sweat, by my infamous death and
 ‘ glorious resurrection, I beseech thee, come to the par-

' doning God by me. If thou hast nothing to pay, I for-
 ' give thee all the debt: Whether it be fifty or five hun-
 ' dred pence, or ten thousand talents, I frankly forgive
 ' thee all. Only let me heal thy backslidings, and love
 ' thee freely; let my left hand be under thy head, and let
 ' my right hand embrace thee. See the wounds which I
 ' have received for thee in the house of my friends!
 ' Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach
 ' hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not
 ' faithless, but believing. Cleave to me with full purpose
 ' of heart, follow me through the regeneration, and thou
 ' shalt not only be one of my jewels, but a crown of glory,
 ' and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God: Yea, as
 ' the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so will I re-
 ' joice over thee, and give thee a name better than that of
 ' son and daughter—I, the Holy One of Israel, will be thy
 ' life and glory—I, thy Maker, will be thy husband, and
 ' thy all.'

And are these, O sinner, the gracious sayings of God
 to thee? The compassionate expostulations of God, be-
 come incarnate for thee? Did God so love thee, as to set
 forth his only begotten Son, as a propitiation through faith
 in his blood, thus to declare his righteousness, for the re-
 mission of sins that are past? May the Almighty now be
 just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus?
 Is there no difference, no respect of persons with him?
 And is the same Lord over all, rich unto all that call upon
 him? Then shout ye heavens! triumph thou earth! and
 thou, happy sinner, know the day of thy visitation, be wise,
 ponder these things, and thou shalt understand the loving-
 kindness of the Lord.

Be no longer afraid, that it will be presumption in thee
 to believe, and that God will be offended with thee, if thou
 makest so free with Jesus, as to wash instantly in the
 fountain of his atoning blood. He not only gives thee

LEAVE to believe, but he INVITES thee to *do it freely*. Nay, he COMMANDS thee to believe, for *This is his COMMANDMENT, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*. He even enforces the precept by a double PROMISE, that if thou believest thou *shalt not perish but have everlasting life*. And that nothing may be wanting to stir thee up to this important business, he is gracious enough to threaten the neglect of it with the most dreadful PUNISHMENT; for *he that believeth not, shall not enter into his rest, and shall be damned*; and he that to the end remains *fearful and unbelieving, shall be cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*. How canst thou doubt then, whether thou art welcome to receive *the Son given*, by believing on his name?

Come to him just as thou art, and he will make thee what thou shouldst be. When he counsels thee to buy of him the gold of faith, and the garment of salvation, take him at his gospel-word: Come without regarding thy stuff: The poorer thou art the better: The oil of his grace flows most abundantly into empty vessels: His charity is most glorified in the relief of the most miserable objects: His royal bounty scorns the vile compensation of thy wretched merits: He sells like a king, like the King of kings without money and without price. *Ask and have*, and *Take freely*, are the encouraging mottos written upon all the unsearchable treasures of his grace.

Be of good comfort then, rise, he calleth thee: Stretch out thy withered hand, and he will restore it: Open thy mouth wide, and he will fill it: bring an empty vessel, a poor hungry heart, and he will give into thy bosom good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.

And now what meanest thou, Sleeper? Why, tarriest thou? Arise, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. Lose not time in conferring with flesh and

blood ; much less in parleying with satan, or consulting thy unbelieving heart : Here delays lead to ruin : The Philistines are upon thee, instantly shake thyself ; if thou art not altogether blinded by the god of this world, and led captive by him at his will ; this moment, in the powerful name of JESUS, burst the bonds of spiritual sloth ; break, like a desperate soul, out of the prison of unbelief ; escape for thy life ; look not behind thee ; stay not in all the plain. This one thing do, leaving the things that are behind, Sodom and her ways, press forwards towards Zoar, and escape to the mount of God, lest thou be consumed. By the new and living way consecrated for us, in full assurance of faith, fly to the Father of mercies, pass through the croud of Laodicean professors, press through the opening door of hope, take the kingdom of heaven by violence.

With halting, yet wrestling Jacob, say to the Friend of sinners, *I will not let thee go unless thou bless me.* If he makes as if he would go farther ; with the two mournful disciples, *constrain him to stay ;* or rather with the distressed woman of Canaan, *follow him whithersoever he goeth,* take no denial, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, torn from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet ; through this mysterious veil, rent from the top to the bottom, rush into the blood-besprinkled sanctuary ; embrace the horns of the golden altar, lay all thy guilt on the head of the sin-atonement victim ; read thy name on the breast of thy merciful high priest ; claim the safety, demand the blessings, receive the consolations bestowed on all that fly to him for refuge ; and begin a new, delightful life, under the healing and peaceful shadow of his wings.

But perhaps thou art now devoid of active power, and broken in spirit. The hurry of thy self-righteous nature subsides. Wounded and half-dead, thou liest in the way of misery, waiting for the passing by of thy heavenly deliverer. Thou hadst set thy heart upon being blessed in

one particular manner, and God in his wisdom thinks it best to bless thee in another. Thou wouldst scale the new Jerusalem and storm heaven ; but he chuses it should come down into thy soul as a fruitful shower descends into a fleece of wool. Be still then, and know that he is God. Let him break thy self-will, which hides itself under godly appearances ; and let him practically teach thee, that salvation is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth ; but of God who sheweth mercy.

Meekly dive into the amazing depth of these words, *In quietness and rest shall be your strength. Stand still and see the salvation of God.* The fire, the earthquake, and the rending of the rocks are over ; silence takes place ; the still small voice will soon follow. Thou art for a time taken from the foaming billows of self-agitation, and led by the still waters ; a calm succeeds the impetuous storm, and a passive waiting thy restless, fruitless endeavours. Thou art in the case of one fallen into the sea, who having struggled long and hard to escape drowning is obliged to yield at last. Yield then, weary sinner, yield to thy happy fate. Fully surrender to the God of thy life. Entirely abandon thyself to Jesus. Freely trust him with thy present and eternal salvation. Whether thou swim or sink, let thyself go into the ocean of mercy. Catch at no broken reed by the way, but calmly venture into the unfathomable depth of redeeming love. Lose thus thy life, and thou shalt find it. The *power* of God will soon be *made perfect in thy weakness* ; and when thy strength is renewed, earnestly wrestle again. Thus go on, alternately striving and waiting, according to the leadings of the Holy Spirit, till, having passed through all the inferior dispensations of divine grace, thou enter by faith into the rest that remains for the people of God, and take possession of that kingdom of God, which consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

VII. In that kingdom, happy believer, the times of refreshing fully come from the presence of the Lord ; mercy and love embrace thee on every side ; and thy sprinkled conscience enjoys the peace of a sin-pardoning God. Then smiling justice, more than satisfied by the meritorious death of Christ, sheathes her flaming sword, and declares, *There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus : They are justified from all things, and freely forgiven all trespasses.* And now thou art more than conqueror through him that loved thee. Standing by humble faith in his omnipotence, thou canst do all things, through his grace strengthening thee. Sin has no dominion over thee : The cruel and bloody tyrant, that reigned unto death, is dethroned ; and grace, rich grace, sweetly reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. Triumphant in Christ over thy fiercest enemies, and putting thy victorious foot upon the neck of the *last*, thou challengest his utmost rage, and shoutest, “ O Death, where is thy sting ? O Grave, where is thy victory ? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ ! ”

Now thou seest and feelest that God is LOVE. Thou dwellest in him, and he in thee. *Love*, the fulfilling of the law, diffusing itself through all the heart, influences thy looks, words and actions, and makes thee spring after Jesus into the chariot of cheerful obedience : Thy heart is as his heart ; and while active grace draws thy willing soul along, God’s free Spirit pours the oil of gladness upon the fervid wheels of thy affections : Supported, and animated by the Lord’s presence, thou swiftly movest, thou delightfully fliest in all the ways of duty : Mountains of difficulties sink into plains before thee ; wisdom’s roughest ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

Now thou rejoicest to be thought worthy to suffer shame for Christ’s name, and countest it all joy, when thou fallest into divers trials. With Him the cross loses its dreadful aspect, and enormous weight : When thou findest it in the

high-way of holiness, instead of consulting with flesh and blood, how thou shalt go aside to avoid it, thou immediately takest it up, and it proves a comforting staff, a never failing prop.

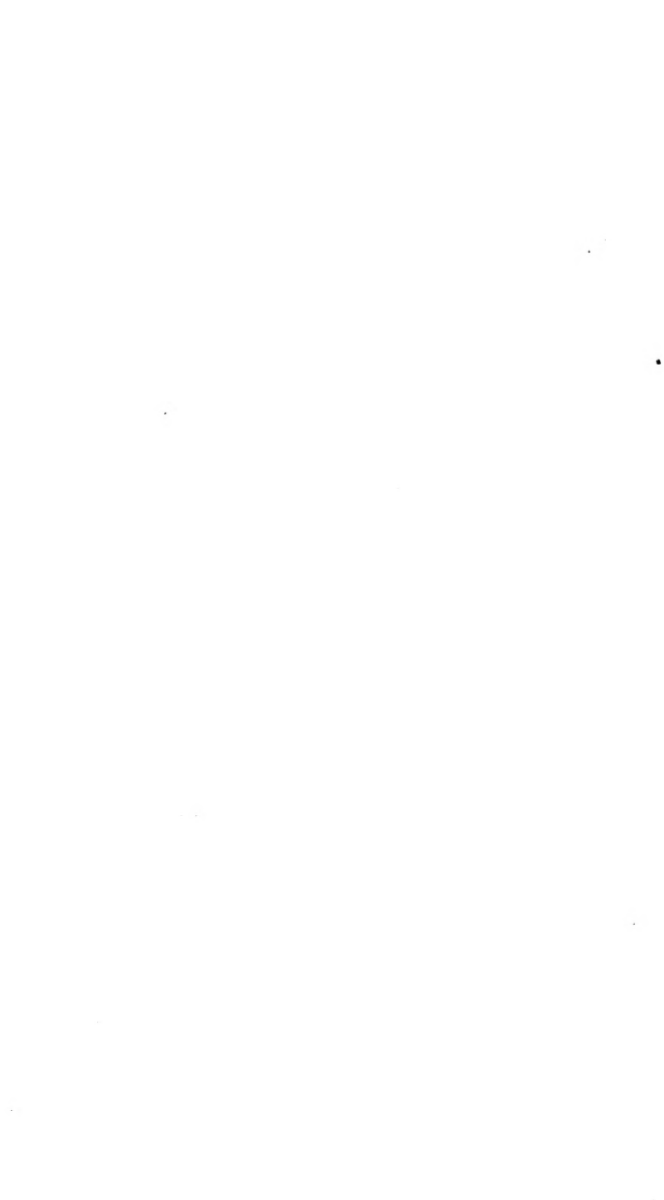
Christ crucified works this miracle of grace, for Him thou receivest with every cross; and the moment thou dost so in the power of his Spirit, God, even thy own God, gives thee his choicest blessing. He crowns thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; and with the inexpressible complacence of a Father, who receives a lost son; with the triumphant joy of a Saviour, who embraces a raised Lazarus; He says to the myriads that surround his throne; ‘ One more sinner repenteth unto life! Hallelujah! He hath escaped the avenger of blood—he hath passed the gate of the city of refuge! Hallelujah! Shout ye sons of the morning! My angels, strike your golden harps! Dance every heart for joy, through the realms of heaven! Let bursts of triumphant mirth—let peals of raving praise roll along the transporting news. Let all your exulting breasts reverberate, let all your harmonious tongues echo back our glorious joy! For this my son was dead, and is alive again! This your brother was lost, and is found again?’

And irradiating thy soul with the light of his reconciled countenance, he says to *thee* from a throne blazing with grace and glory: ‘ Penitent believer, receive the adoption of a son. Because thou receivest my Son, my only begotten Son, into thy heart, I admit thee into the family of the first born: Be thou blameless and harmless, a Son of God with rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom I allow thee to shine, as a burning light in a benighted world. Son, all that I have is thine, be ever with me, and thou shalt inherit all things. Yes, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas; whether my first apostles, or my choice ministers; or the world, or life or death, or things present, or things to

‘ come ; all is thine, for thou art Christ’s, and Christ is
‘ mine. As thou hast received him, so abide and walk in
‘ him worthy of me unto all pleasing ; being fruitful in
‘ every good work, and increasing in his knowledge, till
‘ thy faith is turned to sight, and I am all in all.’

Start not, believing Reader, at these sayings, as if they were too glorious to be credited. They are the true sayings of God. The Lord himself spoke them for thy comfort. They are the precious pearls, which I promised thee out of the unsearchable treasures of Christ: If swine trample them under their feet, wear thou them on thy breast. Instead of being offended at their transcendent excellence, magnify the God of all consolation, who, having *delivered up his own Son for us all, with him also freely gives us all things*, consequently the richest mines of gospel grace. And giving vent to the just transports of thy grateful heart, cry out with the beloved disciple, *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God!—Unto Him who thus loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.* Amen.

END OF THE ADDRESS.



APPENDIX,

Concerning the evangelical harmony that subsists between living faith and loving obedience.

THE mystery of our salvation is thus opened by St. Paul. *By GRACE are ye saved, through faith which WORKETH by love.* This apostolic declaration subdivides itself into the following propositions, which, on account of their clearness and importance, may, with propriety, be called GOSPEL AXIOMS. (1.) *Ye are saved by GRACE.* (2.) *Ye are saved through a faith which WORKS by love.* These propositions, like two adamantine pillars, support the whole doctrine of Christ, concerning *faith and works; grace and rewardableness; or mercy on God's part, and obedience on our own*:—A doctrine, which, though clear as the day, has nevertheless been so obscured by endless controversies, that thousands of protestants and papists know it in its purity no more.

According to the *first* of these axioms, all that go to heaven, give divine *grace* the glory of their salvation; because they are all saved by mere favour, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. And according to the *second* axiom, all that go to hell, are obliged to clear divine *justice*, because they are condemned merely for their avoidable unbelief, and obstinate disobedience. Upon the evangelical plan, the righteous are *graciously* rewarded, and the unrighteous *justly* punished: The doctrines of God's *mercy*, in giving grace for Christ's sake, and of man's *faithfulness* in using it by Christ's help, sweetly coincide; and from their blessed union springs the just proportion of every part of the gospel.

These axioms are so strongly maintained, and so frequently alluded to by the sacred writers, that whoever rejects either the one or the other, might as well reject one half of the bible. Attentively consider them asunder, and your unprejudiced reason will perceive their *equity*. Impartially compare them together, and instead of finding them incompatible, (as some prepossessed persons would persuade us they are) you will see, that they *harmonized* in so exquisite a manner, as to answer the most excellent ends in the world.

To give you an idea of their working in the breast of believers, permit me to compare them to those two opposite, and yet consentaneous motions of the heart, which anatomists call *diastole* and *systole*. The one forcibly dilates, the other powerfully contracts, that noble part of the human body; and both together, by means seemingly contrary, cause the circulation of the blood, and diffuse vital powers through all the animal frame.—Just so passive *faith*, and active *love*.—The one per-

perpetually *receives* favours from God, the other perpetually *bestows* them upon man; and thus, by continually performing their contrary (not contradictory) offices, they make spiritual life circulate through the believer's soul, and enable him to diffuse kindness and good works, throughout the social body of which he is a member.

From the animal, pass we to the planetary world; and we shall see another striking emblem of the harmonious opposition, which subsists between the two gospel-axioms. There we eminently discover the *centripetal* and the *centrifugal* force. Though opposed to each other, they are nevertheless so admirably joined together, that from their exquisite combination, results the harmonious dance of the spheres; I mean, the circular motions of the planets around the sun, and around each other.—Such is the wonderful effects of *evangelical promises*, and *legal precepts*, when they meet in a due proportion, in an upright heart. The *promises* which are all wrapped up in the *first* gospel-axiom, powerfully *draw* believers to Christ, who is the Sun of Righteousness, and the centre of the christian system: The *precepts*, which the *second* axiom necessarily supposes, drive them forward in the strait line of *duty*. Being thus delightfully attracted, and powerfully impelled, like planets of a different magnitude, in the firmament of the church, believers rapidly move in the orb of evangelical obedience, where the *original* light of Christ warmly shines into their own souls, and their *borrowed* light mildly gleams upon their fellow-mortals.

If ever you saw a person, thus swiftly and evenly moving in the immense circle of a religious and social duty; freely receiving all from his God, and freely imparting all to his neighbour; you have seen one of the *stars in the Lord's right-hand*—you have seen one, who practically holds the two gospel-axioms—one, who *believes* as a sinner, and *works* as a believer—one, in whose heart the doctrines of *faith* and *works*, *free grace* and *free obedience*, *divine faithfulness* and *human fidelity*, are justly balanced—one, who keeps at an equal distance from the dreadful rocks, upon which *antinomian believers*, and *anti-christian workers*, are daily cast away.—In a word, you have seen an adult christian, a man who *adorns the doctrine of Christ our Saviour in ALL things*.

If the two gospel-axioms are of such importance, that the health and vigour of every christian flow from the proper union of their power in his heart; is it not deplorable to see so many people every where rising against them? *Self-conceited moralists* violently attack the *first* axiom; and *self-humbled solifidians* will give the *second* no quarter.—Those opposed assailants have all, I grant, a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; for the *former* know not, that they rob God of *his glory*; and the *latter* do not consider, that they pour upon him *our shame*. The *one* refuse to acknowledge him the *grand author* of our *salvè*: the *other*, to mend the matter, represent him as the *grand con-*

river of our ruin. Both, nevertheless, have truth on their side ; but, alas ! it is only a part of the truth as it is in Jesus ; and truth divided, like an animal cut through the middle, is dreadfully mangled, if not entirely destroyed.

You are also desired to observe, judicious reader, that as a just proportion of sail and ballast, next to a favourable wind, makes a ship sail with speed and safety ; so the just balance of the two gospel-axioms, next to the Spirit of God, makes a believer run swiftly and safely the race that is set before him. He does not properly *run*, he merely *hops* in the way of truth, who discarding one of the gospel-axioms, moves only upon the other. *Antinomian Luodiceans* therefore, and *anti-christian pharisees*, are equally blameable. For the picy of the *former* stands only upon the *first* axiom ; and the devotion of the *latter* has no other basis than the *second*. The *one* will hear of nothing but *faith* ; the *other* will be told of nothing but *works*. But the *sound* believer is for a *faith* that *works* righteousness.

Faith unfeigned and *obedient love*, are of equal importance to the true christian. Those precious graces, which answer to the gospel-axioms, like a well-proportioned pair of heavenly steeds, mutually draw the steady chariot of his profession across the valleys of discouragement, and over the hills of difficulty, which he meets with in his way to heaven. If I might carry on the allegory, I would observe, that all the advantage, which the right-hand steed has over the other, is, that it is *first* put in the traces : But this is no proof of his superiority, for he will be taken off at the gate of heaven ; and *obedient love* alone, shall have the honour of drawing the christian's triumphal car through the realms of glory.

Reader, if in the theory and practice you maintain both gospel-axioms ; if, instead of setting up the one in opposition to the other, you stand upon the scriptural line in which they harmonize ; you have surmounted the greatest difficulty there is in the Christian religion ; you hold *the faith once delivered unto the saints*. And now prepare to *contend for it* : Arm yourself for the fight ; for *antinomian believers* will attack you on the *left* hand, and *pharisaic unbelievers* on the right.— But be not afraid of their number ; patiently receive their double fire. They may gall one *another*, but they cannot hurt *you*. *Truth* is great, and *Love* powerful ; if you fight under their glorious banners, though the arrows of contempt, and the brands of calumny, will fly thick around you, you shall not be dangerously wounded. Only *take the shield of faith* with this motto, “ *By grace I am saved through faith ;*” and *quench with it the fiery darts* of self-conceited legalists. *Put on the breast-plate of righteousness*, with this description, “ *Faith works by righteous love, the mother of good works ;*” This piece of celestial armour, will keep off the heaviest strokes of *self-humbled gossellers*. And

animated by the Captain of your salvation, through the opposite forces of those adversaries, urge your evangelically-legal way, till you exchange *the sword of the Spirit* for a *golden harp*, and your daily cross for an heavenly crown.

Such is the happy medium, that the author of this book desires to recommend. Sometime ago, he thought himself obliged to oppose good mistaken men, who, in their zeal for the *first* gospel-axiom, wanted to represent the *second* as a "dreadful heresy." And now he lets these papers see the light, not only to prove to the free-thinkers of his parish, that the *first* axiom is highly rational; but to convince the enemies of the *second* axiom, that though he has exposed their mistakes with regard to *works*, he receives the *genuine* doctrines of grace as cordially as they; and is ready scripturally, and rationally, to defend salvation by *faith*, against the most plausible objections of self-righteous moralists.

He just begs leave to observe, that the preceding pages guard the *first* gospel-axiom; that the *Four Checks to Antinomianism*, guard chiefly the second; that *the Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism*, guards both at once; and that those tracts contain a little system of practical and polemical divinity, which it is hoped, stands at an equal distance from the errors of moral disbelievers, and immoral believers.

This book is chiefly recommended to disbelieving moralists, who deride the doctrine of salvation by grace *through faith* in the day of conversion, merely because they are not properly acquainted with our fallen and lost estate. And the *Checks* are chiefly designed for disbelieving antinomians, who rise against the doctrine of a believer's salvation by grace *through the works* of faith in the great day, merely because they do not consider the indispensable necessity of evangelical obedience, and the nature of the day of judgment.

In the *Appeal*, the careless, self-conceited sinner is awakened, and humbled. In the *Address* the serious, humbled sinner, is raised up, and comforted. And in the *Checks*, the foolish virgin is re-awakened, the Laodicean believer reprov'd, the prodigal son lashed back to his Father's house, and the upright believer animated to mend his pace in the way of *faith working by love*, and to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*.

THE END.





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