Kninghame

CARDIPHONIA:

OR, THE

UTTERANCE

OF THE

HEART;

IN THE COURSE OF

A REAL CORRESPONDENCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

OMICRON'S LETTERS.

THE SECOND EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

Hæc res et jungit, junctos et ſervat amicos.

HOR. Lib. i. Sat. 3.

As in water face anſwereth to face, ſo the heart of man to man.

PROV. xxvii. 19.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE deference due to the Public, ſeems to require an apology for committing letters of private correſpondence to the Preſs, while the Writer is yet living. He is ſenſible that ſending them abroad without his name prefixed, will not of itſelf be ſufficient to obviate the charge of egotiſm. The manner of expreſſion and thinking, where an author has been repeatedly in print, will mark him out to good judges when they ſee him again, ſo as to render any farther deſcription unneceſſary.

The ſolicitation of friends, though a trite, is not always an improper plea, and would probably in the preſent caſe be admitted, if he had not determined to conceal the names of his correſpondents likewiſe, and to ſuppreſs, as far as poſſible, every circumſtance which might lead to diſcover them. For

they certainly did recommend the publication, and return him their letters purpoſely that a ſelection might be made. But as he does not think himſelf at liberty to declare them, he muſt forego the advantage of ſcreening himſelf under the ſanction of their judgment.

Poſthumous Letters are uſually publiſhed to a diſadvantage. If it be ſuppoſed that the Author has friends whoſe regard to his memory will make them willing to purchaſe what appears under his name, that circumſtance has ſometimes given occaſion to an indiſcriminate and injudicious publication of Letters collected from all quarters, in which more attention is paid to the bulk than the value. For amongſt a number of letters written to intimate friends, ſome will be too trivial to deſerve notice, and others may be ſo intermingled with details of private or domeſtic concerns, as perhaps to give pain to thoſe who are intereſted in them, when they ſee them in print. The writer of the following Letters thought himſelf

more competent to decide at preſent, which and how much of the papers before him, might be not utterly unworthy of being preſerved, than a ſtranger could be after his deceaſe.

Farther, he finds that between an increaſe of engagements on the one hand, and the unavoidable effects of advancing years on the other, he can expect but little leiſure or ability for writing letters in future, except upon neceſſary buſineſs. By this method of ſending to each of his correſpondents many letters at once, he takes leave of them, with the leſs regret, perſuaded that he thus communicates the ſubſtance of all he could offer, if he was able to write to them ſeverally as often and as much at large as in times paſt.

Though ſome attention has been paid to variety, it was not practicable wholly to avoid what may be thought repetition, without deſtroying the texture and connection of many letters; particularly in thoſe which treat of affliction. But where the ſame ſubject recurs, it is uſually placed in ſomething

of

of a different point of view, or illuſtrated in a different manner.

Thus much to beſpeak the Reader's favorable and candid peruſal of what is now put into his hands. But the Writer ſtands before a higher tribunal; and would be much to be pitied if he were not conſcious that in this publication he has no allowed aims, but to be ſubſervient to the gracious deſigns of God by the Goſpel, and to promote the good of his fellow creatures.

November 29, 1780.

CON-

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TWENTY-SIX

LETTERS

TO A

NOBLEMAN.

Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt
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LETTERS

TO A

NOBLEMAN.

LETTER I.

MY LORD, *March* — 1765.

I Remember when I once had the pleaſure of waiting on you, you were pleaſed to begin an intereſting converſation, which to my concern was ſoon interrupted. The ſubject was concerning the cauſes, nature and marks of a decline in grace; how it happens that we loſe that warm impreſſion of divine things, which in ſome favored moments we think it almoſt impoſſible to forget; how far this change of frame is conſiſtent with a ſpiritual growth in other reſpects; how to form a comparative judgment of our proficiency upon the whole; and by what ſteps the loſſes we ſuſtain from our neceſſary connection with a ſinful nature and a ſinful world may be retrieved from time to time. I beg your Lordſhip's permiſſion to fill up the paper with a view to theſe enquiries. I do not

mean to offer a labored eſſay on them, but ſuch thoughts as ſhall occur while the pen is in my hand.

The awakened ſoul (eſpecially when after a ſeaſon of diſtreſs and terror it begins to taſte that the Lord is gracious) finds itſelf as in a new world. No change in outward life can be ſo ſenſible, ſo affecting. No wonder then that at ſuch a time little elſe can be thought of—the tranſition from darkneſs to light, from a ſenſe of wrath to a hope of glory, is the greateſt that can be imagined, and is oftentimes as ſudden as wonderful. Hence the general characteriſtics of young converts are zeal, and love. Like Iſrael at the red ſea, they have juſt ſeen the wonderful works of the Lord, and they cannot but ſing his praiſe; they are deeply affected with the danger they haye lately eſcaped, and with the caſe of multitudes around them who are ſecure and careleſs in the ſame alarming ſituation; and a ſenſe of their own mercies, and a compaſſion for the ſouls of others, is ſo tranſporting that they can hardly forbear preaching to every one they meet.

This emotion is highly juſt and reaſonable, with reſpect to the cauſes from whence it ſprings, and it is doubtleſs a proof not only of the imperfection, but the depravity of our nature, that we are not always thus affected—yet it is not entirely genuine. If we examine this character cloſely, which ſeems at firſt ſight a pattern and a reproof to Chriſtians of longer ſtanding, we ſhall for the moſt part find it attended with conſiderable defects.

1. Such perſons are very weak in faith. Their confidence ariſes rather from the lively impreſſions of

of joy within, than from a distinct and clear apprehension of the work of God in Christ. The comforts which are intended as *cordials* to animate them against the opposition of an unbelieving world, they mistake and rest in as the *proper evidences* of their hope. And hence it comes to pass that when the Lord varies his dispensations and hides his face, they are soon troubled and at their wits end.

2. They who are in this state of their first love are seldom free from something of a censorious spirit. They have not yet felt all the deceitfulness of their own hearts, they are not well acquainted with the devices or temptations of Satan, and therefore know not how to sympathize or make allowances where allowances are necessary and due, and can hardly bear with any who do not discover the same earnestness as themselves.

3. They are likewise more or less under the influence of self-righteousness and self-will. They mean well, but not being as yet well acquainted with the spiritual meaning and proper use of the law, nor established in the life of faith, a part (oftentimes a very considerable part) of their zeal spends itself in externals and non-essentials, prompts them to practice what is not commanded, to refrain from what is lawful, and to observe various and needless austerities and singularities, as their tempers and circumstances differ.

However with all their faults, methinks there is something very beautiful and engaging in the honest vehemence of a young convert. Some cold and rigid judges are ready to reject these promising appearances on account of incidental blemishes.

But would a gardener throw away a fine nectarine, becauſe it is *green*, and has not yet attained all that beauty and flavour which a few more ſhowers and ſuns will impart? Perhaps it will hold for the moſt part in grace as in nature (ſome exceptions there are). If there is not ſome *fire* in youth, we can hardly expect a proper warmth in *old* age.

But the great and good Huſbandman watches over what his own hand has planted, and carries on his work by a variety of different and even contrary diſpenſations. While their mountain ſtands thus ſtrong they think they ſhall never be moved, but at length they find a change. Sometimes it comes on by inſenſible degrees. That part of their affection which was purely natural will abate of courſe when the power of novelty ceaſes; they will begin in ſome inſtances to perceive their own indiſcretions, and an endeavor to correct the exceſſes of imprudent zeal will often draw them towards the contrary extreme of remiſſneſs; the evils of their hearts, which though overpowered were not eradicated, will revive again—the enemy will watch his occaſions to meet them with ſuitable temptations, and as it is the Lord's deſign that they ſhould experimentally learn and feel their own weakneſs, he will in ſome inſtances be permitted to ſucceed. When guilt is thus brought upon the conſcience, the heart grows hard, the hands feeble, and the knees weak; then confidence is ſhaken, the ſpirit of prayer interrupted, the armour gone, and thus things grow worſe and worſe, till the Lord is pleaſed to interpoſe. For though we can fall of ourſelves, we cannot riſe without his help. Indeed

every

every sin in its own nature has a tendency towards a final apostacy; but there is a provision in the covenant of grace, and the Lord in his own time returns to convince, humble, pardon, comfort and renew the soul. He touches the rock and the waters flow. By repeated experiments and exercises of this sort (for this wisdom is seldom acquired by one or a few lessons) we begin at length to learn, that we are nothing, have nothing, can do nothing but sin. And thus we are gradually prepared to live more out of ourselves, and to derive all our sufficiency of every kind from Jesus the fountain of grace. We learn to tread more warily, to trust less to our own strength, to have lower thoughts of ourselves and higher thoughts of *him*; in which two last particulars I apprehend what the scripture means by a growth of grace does properly consist. Both are increasing in the lively Christian—every day shews him more of his own heart, and more of the power, sufficiency, compassion and grace of his adorable Redeemer, but neither will be complete till we get to heaven.

I apprehend therefore that though we find an abatement of that sensible warmth of affection which we felt at first setting out—yet if our views are more evangelical, our judgment more ripened, our hearts more habitually humbled under a sense of inward depravity, our tempers more softened into sympathy and tenderness, if our prevailing desires are spiritual, and we practically esteem the precepts, ordinances and people of God, we may warrantably conclude, that his good work of grace in us, is upon the whole on an increase.

But ſtill it is to be lamented that an increaſe of knowledge and experience ſhould be ſo generally attended with a decline of fervor. If it was not for what has paſſed in my own heart, I ſhould be ready to think it impoſſible. But this very circumſtance gives me a ſtill more emphatical conviction of my own vileneſs and depravity. The want of humiliation humbles me, and my very indifference rouſes and awakens me to earneſtneſs. There are however ſeaſons of refreſhment, ineffable glances of light and power upon the ſoul, which as they are derived from clearer diſplays of divine grace —if not ſo tumultuous as the firſt joys, are more penetrating, transforming and animating. A glance of theſe, when compared with our ſluggiſh ſtupidity when they are withheld, weans the heart from this wretched ſtate of ſin and temptation, and makes the thoughts of death and eternity deſirable. Then this conflict ſhall ceaſe—I ſhall ſin and wander no more, ſee him as he is, and be like him for ever.

If the queſtion is, how are theſe bright moments to be prolonged, renewed or retrieved? We are directed to faith and diligence—A careful uſe of the appointed means of grace, a watchful endeavor to avoid the occaſions and appearances of evil, and eſpecially aſſiduity in ſecret prayer, will bring us as much of them as the Lord ſees good for us. He knows beſt why we are not to be truſted with them continually. Here we are to walk by faith, to be exerciſed and tried; by and by we ſhall be crowned, and the deſires he has given ſhall be abundantly ſatisfied. I am,

My Lord, &c.

LET-

LETTER II.

MY LORD, *April* — 1766.

I Shall embrace your permiſſion to fill my paper —as to ſubject, that which has been a frequent theme of my heart of late, I ſhall venture to lay before your Lordſhip—I mean the remarkable and humbling difference which I ſuppoſe all who know themſelves may obſerve, between their acquired and their experimental knowledge, or in other words, between their judgment and their practice. To hear a believer ſpeak his apprehenſions of the evil of ſin, the vanity of the world, the love of Chriſt, the beauty of holineſs, or the importance of eternity, who would not ſuppoſe him proof againſt temptation? To hear with what ſtrong arguments he can recommend watchfulneſs, prayer, forbearance and ſubmiſſion, when he is teaching or adviſing others, who would not ſuppoſe but he could alſo teach himſelf and influence his own conduct. Yet alas, *Quam diſpar ſibi.* The erſon who roſe from his knees before he left his chamber a poor indigent, fallible, dependent creature, who ſaw and acknowledged that he was unworthy to breathe the air or to ſee the light, may meet with many occaſions before the day is cloſed, to diſcover the corruptions of his heart, and to ſhew how weak and faint his beſt principles and cleareſt convictions are in their actual exerciſe. And in this view how vain is man, what a contradiction

is a believer to himself. He is called a *Believer* emphatically, because he cordially assents to the word of God, but alas, how often unworthy of the name! If I was to describe him from the scripture character, I should say, he is one whose heart is athirst for God, for his glory, his image, his presence; his affections are fixed upon an unseen Savior, his treasures and consequently his thoughts are on high, beyond the bounds of sense. Having experienced much forgiveness, he is full of bowels of mercy to all around, and having been often deceived by his own heart, he dares trust it no more, but lives by faith in the Son of God, for wisdom, righteousness and sanctification, and derives from him grace for grace, sensible that without him he has not sufficiency even to think a good thought. In short—He is dead to the world, to sin, to self, but alive to God, and lively in his service. Prayer is his breath, the word of God his food, and the ordinances more precious to him than the light of the sun. Such is a believer—in his judgment and prevailing desires.

But was I to describe him from experience, especially at some times, how different would the picture be. Though he knows that communion with God is his highest privilege, he too seldom finds it so; on the contrary, if duty, conscience and necessity did not compel, he would leave the throne of grace unvisited from day to day. He takes up the Bible, conscious that it is the fountain of life and true comfort, yet perhaps while he is making the reflection, he feels a secret distaste which prompts him to lay it down, and give his preference

to a News-paper. He needs not to be told of the vanity and uncertainty of all beneath the ſun, and yet is almoſt as much elated or caſt down by a trifle, as thoſe who have their portion in this world. He believes that all things ſhall work together for his good, and that the moſt high God appoints, adjuſts and over-rules all his concerns, yet he feels the riſings of fear, anxiety and diſpleaſure, as though the contrary was true. He owns himſelf ignorant and liable to be deceived by a thouſand fallacies, yet is eaſily betrayed into poſitiveneſs and ſelf-conceit. He feels himſelf an unprofitable unfaithful unthankful ſervant, and therefore bluſhes to harbor a thought of deſiring the eſteem and commendation of men, yet he cannot ſuppreſs it. Finally, (for I muſt obſerve ſome bounds) on account of theſe and many other inconſiſtencies he is ſtruck dumb before the Lord, ſtripped of every hope and plea, but what is provided in the free grace of God, and yet his heart is continually leaning and returning to a covenant of works.

Two queſtions naturally ariſe from ſuch a view of ourſelves. Firſt—How can theſe things be, or why are they permitted? Since the Lord hates ſin, teaches his people to hate it and cry againſt it, and has promiſed to hear their prayers, how is it that they go thus burdened? Surely if he could not or would not over-rule evil for good, he would not permit it to continue. By theſe exerciſes he teaches us more truly to know and feel the utter depravity and corruption of our whole nature, that we are indeed defiled in every part. His method of ſalvation is likewiſe hereby exceedingly endeared to us;

we see that it is and must be of grace, wholly of grace; and that the Lord Jesus Christ and his perfect righteousness is and must be our all in all. His power likewise in maintaining his own work, notwithstanding our infirmities, temptations, and enemies, is hereby displayed in the clearest light, his strength is manifested in our weakness. Satan likewise is more remarkably disappointed and put to shame, when he finds bounds set to his rage and policy, beyond which he cannot pass; and that those in whom he finds so much to work upon, and over whom he so often prevails for a season, escape at last out of his hands. He casts them down, but they are raised again, he wounds them, but they are healed, he obtains his desire to sift them as wheat, but the prayer of their great advocate prevails for the maintenance of their faith. Farther, by what Believers feel in themselves they learn by degrees, how to warn, pity, and bear with others. A soft, patient and compassionate spirit, and a readiness and skill in comforting those who are cast down, is not perhaps attainable in any other way. And lastly, I believe nothing more habitually reconciles a child of God to the thought of death, than the weariſomness of this warfare. Death is unwelcome to nature—but then and not till then the conflict will cease. Then we shall sin no more. The flesh with all its attendant evils will be laid in the grave — then the soul which has been partaker of a new and heavenly birth, shall be freed from every incumbrance, and stand perfect in the Redeemer's righteousness before God in Glory.

But

But though these evils cannot be wholly removed, it is worth while to enquire, Secondly, how they may be mitigated. This we are encouraged to hope for. The word of God directs and animates to a growth in grace. And though we can do nothing spiritually of ourselves, yet there is a part assigned us. We cannot conquer the obstacles in our way by our own strength, yet we *can* give way to them, and if we do, it is our sin, and will be our sorrow. The disputes concerning inherent power in the creature, have been carried to inconvenient lengths; for my own part I think it safe to use scriptural language—the Apostles exhort us to give all diligence, to resist the devil, to purge ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit—to give ourselves to reading, meditation and prayer, to watch, to put on the whole armour of God, and to abstain from all appearance of evil. Faithfulness to light received, and a sincere endeavor to conform to the means prescribed in the word of God, with an humble application to the blood of sprinkling, and the promised Spirit, will undoubtedly be answered by increasing measures of light, faith, strength, and comfort, and we shall know, if we follow on to know the Lord.

I need not tell your Lordship that I am an extempore writer. I dropt the consideration of whom I was addressing from the first paragraph; but I now return and subscribe myself, with the greatest deference,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's, &c.

LET-

LETTER III.

MY LORD, *April* — 1770.

I Have a desire to fill the paper, and must therefore betake myself to the expedient I lately mentioned. Glorious things are spoken of the city of God, or (as I suppose) the state of glory, in Rev. xxi. from verse 10 ad finem. The description is doubtless mystical, and perhaps nothing short of a happy experience and participation, will furnish an adequate exposition. One expression in particular, has I believe puzzled wiser heads than mine to explain. *The street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.* The construction likewise in the Greek is difficult. Some render it *pure gold transparent as glass*; this is the sense, but then it should be neuter διαφανες to agree with χρυσιον. If our reading is right, we must understand it either of *gold pure* bright and perspicuous as the finest transparent glass (for all glass is not transparent), or else, as two distinct comparisons, splendid and durable as the purest gold, clear and transparent as the finest glass. In that happy world the beauties and advantages, which here are divided and incompatible, will unite and agree. Our glass is clear but brittle, our gold is shining and solid, but it is opaque, and discovers only a surface. And thus it is with our minds. The powers of the imagination are lively and extensive, but transient and uncertain. The powers of the understanding are more solid

and

and regular, but at the same time more slow and limited, and confined to the outside properties of the few objects around us. But when we arrive within the vail, the perfections of the glass and the gold will be combined, and the imperfections of each will entirely cease. Then we shall *know* more than we can now imagine. *The glass will be all gold.* And then we shall apprehend Truth in its relations and consequences, not (as at present) by that tedious and fallible process which we call, Reasoning, but by a single glance of thought, as the sight pierces in an instant through the largest transparent body. *The gold will be all glass.*

I do not offer this as the sense of the passage, but as a thought which once occurred to me while reading it. I daily groan under a desultory ungovernable imagination, and a palpable darkness of understanding, which greatly impede me in my attempts to contemplate the truths of God. Perhaps these complaints, in a greater or less degree, are common to all our fallen race, and exhibit mournful proofs that our nature is essentially depraved: the grace of God affords some assistance for correcting the wildness of the fancy, and enlarging the capacity of the mind, yet the cure at present is but palliative. But ere long it shall be perfect, and our complaints shall cease for ever. Now it costs us much pains to acquire a *pittance* of solid and useful knowledge, and the ideas we have collected are far from being at the disposal of judgment; and like men in a crowd, are perpetually clashing and interfering with each other. But it will not be so, when we are completely freed from the

the effects of sin. Confusion and darkness will not follow us into the world where light and order reign. Then, and not till then, our knowledge will be perfect, and our possession of it uninterrupted and secure.

Since the radical powers of the soul are thus enfeebled and disordered, it is not to be wondered at that the best of men, and under their highest attainments, have found cause to make the acknowledgment of the Apostle, *When I would do good, evil is present with me.* But, blessed be God, tho' we must feel hourly cause for shame and humiliation, for what we are in ourselves, we have cause to rejoice continually in Christ Jesus, who, as he is revealed unto us under the various names, characters, relations and offices, which he bears in the scripture, holds out to our faith a balm for every wound, a cordial for every discouragement, and a sufficient answer to every objection which sin or Satan can suggest against our peace. If we are guilty, he is our righteousness; if we are sick, he is our infallible physician; if we are weak, helpless and defenceless, he is the compassionate and faithful Shepherd who has taken charge of us, and will not suffer any thing to disappoint our hopes, or to separate us from his love. He knows our frame, he remembers that we are but dust, and has engaged to guide us by his counsel, support us by his power, and at length to receive us to his glory, that we may be with him for ever.

I am, with the greatest deference,
My Lord,
Your Lordship's, &c.

LET-

LETTER IV.

My Lord, *February* — 1772.

I HAVE been ſitting perhaps a quarter of an hour with my pen in my hand, and my finger upon my upper lip, contriving how I ſhould begin my letter—a detail of the confuſed incoherent thoughts which have ſucceſſively paſſed through my mind, would have more than filled the ſheet, but your Lordſhip's patience and even your charity for the writer, would have been tried to the uttermoſt, if I could have penned them all down. At length my ſuſpence reminded me of the Apoſtle's words, *Gal.* v. 17. Ye cannot do the things that ye would. This is an humbling but a juſt account of a Chriſtian's attainments in the preſent life, and is equally applicable to the ſtrongeſt and to the weakeſt. The weakeſt need not ſay *leſs*, the ſtrongeſt will hardly venture to ſay *more*. The Lord has given his people a deſire and will aiming at great things, without this they would be unworthy the name of Chriſtians, but they cannot do as they would, their beſt deſires are weak and ineffectual, not abſolutely ſo, (for he who works in them to will, enables them in a meaſure to do likewiſe) but in compariſon with the mark at which they aim. So that while they have great cauſe to be thankful for the deſire he has given them, and for the degree in which it is anſwered, they have equal reaſon to be aſhamed and abaſed under a ſenſe of their continual defects, and the

the evil mixtures which taint and debaſe their beſt endeavors. It would be eaſy to make out a long liſt of particulars which a believer would do if he could, but in which from firſt to laſt he finds a mortifying inability. Permit me to mention a few, which I need not tranſcribe from books, for they are always preſent to my mind.

He would willingly enjoy God in prayer—he knows that prayer is his duty, but in his judgment he conſiders it likewiſe as his greateſt honor and privilege. In this light he can recommend it to others, and can tell them of the wonderful condeſcenſion of the great God, who humbles himſelf to behold the things that are in heaven, that he ſhould ſtoop ſo much lower, to afford his gracious ear to the ſupplications of ſinful worms upon earth. He can bid them expect a pleaſure in waiting upon the Lord, different in kind and greater in degree, than all that the world can afford. By prayer he can ſay, you have liberty to caſt all your cares upon him that careth for you. By one hour's intimate acceſs to the throne of grace, where the Lord cauſes his glory to paſs before the ſoul that ſeeks him, you may acquire more true ſpiritual knowledge and comfort, than by a day or a week's converſe with the beſt of men, or the moſt ſtudious peruſal of many folios. And in this light he would conſider it and improve it for himſelf. But, alas, how ſeldom can he do as he would. How often does he find this privilege a mere taſk, which he would be glad of a juſt excuſe to omit, and the chief pleaſure he derives from the performance is to think that his taſk is finiſhed—he has been drawing near to God with his

his lips, while his heart was far from him; surely this is not doing as he would, when (to borrow the expression of an old woman here) he is dragged before God like a slave, and comes away like a thief.

The like may be said of reading the scripture. He believes it to be the word of God; he admires the wisdom and grace of the doctrines, the beauty of the precepts, the richness and suitableness of the promises. And therefore, with David, he accounts it preferable to thousands of gold and silver, and sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. Yet while he thus thinks of it, and desires that it may dwell in him richly, and be his meditation night and day, he cannot do as he would. It will require some resolution to persist in reading a portion of it every day, and even then his heart is often less engaged than when reading a pamphlet. Here again his privilege frequently dwindles into a task. His appetite is vitiated so that he has but little relish for the food of his soul.

He would willingly have abiding, admiring thoughts of the person and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Glad he is indeed of those occasions which recall the Savior to his mind, and with this view, notwithstanding all discouragements, he perseveres in attempting to pray and read, and waits upon the ordinances. Yet he cannot do as he would. Whatever claims he may have to the exercise of gratitude and sensibility towards his fellow-creatures, he must confess himself mournfully ungrateful and insensible towards his best Friend and Benefactor. Ah, what trifles are capable of shutting *him* out of our thoughts, of whom we say, He is the Beloved

of

of our ſouls, who loved us and gave himſelf for us, and whom we have deliberately choſen as our chief good and portion. What can make us amends for the loſs we ſuffer here? Yet ſurely if we *could*, we *would* ſet him always before us, his love ſhould be the delightful theme of our hearts

From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve.

But though we aim at this good, evil is preſent with us; we find we are renewed but in part, and have ſtill cauſe to plead the Lord's promiſe, to take away the heart of ſtone, and give us a heart of fleſh.

He would willingly acquieſce in all the diſpenſations of divine providence. He believes that all events are under the direction of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, and ſhall ſurely iſſue in the glory of God and the good of thoſe who fear him. He doubts not but the hairs of his head are all numbered, that the bleſſings of every kind which he poſſeſſes, were beſtowed upon him and are preſerved to him, by the bounty and ſpecial favor of the Lord whom he ſerves—that afflictions ſpring not out of the ground, but are fruits and tokens of Divine love no leſs than his comforts—that there is a need be, whenever for a ſeaſon he is in heavineſs. Of theſe principles he can no more doubt, than of what he ſees with his eyes, and there are ſeaſons when he thinks they will prove ſufficient to reconcile him to the ſharpeſt trials. But often when he aims to apply them in an hour of *preſent* diſtreſs, he cannot do what he would. He feels a law in his members warring againſt the law in his mind, ſo that in defiance of the cleareſt convictions, ſeeing as though he

he perceived not, he is ready to complain, murmur and despond. Alas, how vain is man in his best estate! How much weakness and inconsistency, even in those whose hearts are right with the Lord, and what reason have we to confess that we are unworthy, unprofitable servants.

It were easy to enlarge in this way, would paper and time permit; but, blessed be God, we are not under the law, but under grace. And even these distressing effects of the remnants of indwelling sin, are over-ruled for good. By these experiences the believer is weaned more from self, and taught more highly to prize and more absolutely to rely on him, who is appointed unto us of God, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption. The more vile we are in our own eyes, the more precious he will be to us, and a deep repeated sense of the evil of our hearts, is necessary to preclude all boasting, and to make us willing to give the whole glory of our Salvation where it is due. Again, a sense of these evils will (when hardly any thing else can do it) reconcile us to the thoughts of death, yea make us desirous to depart that we may sin no more, since we find depravity so deep rooted in our nature that (like the leprous house) the whole fabric must be taken down, before we can be freed from its defilement. Then and not till then we shall be able to do the thing that we would: when we see Jesus, we shall be transformed into his image, and have done with sin and sorrow for ever.

I am, with great deference,
My Lord, &c,

LET-

LETTER V.

MY LORD, *March* — 1772.

I THINK my laſt letter turned upon the Apoſtle's thought, *Gal.* v. 17. Ye cannot do the things that ye would. In the parallel place, *Rom.* vii. 19. there is another clauſe ſubjoined, The evil which I would not, that I do. This, added to the former, would compleat the dark ſide of my experience. Permit me to tell your Lordſhip a little part (for ſome things muſt not, cannot be told) not of what I have read, but of what I have felt, in illuſtration of this paſſage.

I *would not* be the ſport and prey of wild, vain, fooliſh and worſe imaginations; but this evil is preſent with me: my heart is like a highway, like a city without walls or gates. Nothing ſo falſe, ſo frivolous, ſo abſurd, ſo impoſſible, or ſo horrid, but it can obtain acceſs, and that at any time or in any place: neither the ſtudy, the pulpit, or even the Lord's table exempt me from their intruſion. I ſometimes compare my *words* to the treble of an inſtrument, which my *thoughts* accompany with a kind of baſe, or rather anti-baſe, in which every rule of harmony is broken, every poſſible combination of diſcord and confuſion is introduced, utterly inconſiſtent with, and contradictory to, the intended melody. Ah, what muſic would my praying and preaching often make in the ears of the Lord of Hoſts, if he liſtened to them as they are *mine* only.

By

By men, the upper part only (if I may ſo ſpeak) is heard, and ſmall cauſe there is for ſelf-gratulation if *they* ſhould happen to commend, when conſcience tells me, they would be ſtruck with aſtoniſhment and abhorrence could they hear the whole.

But if this awful effect of heart depravity, cannot be wholly avoided in the preſent ſtate of human nature, yet at leaſt I would not allow and indulge it; yet this I find I do. In defiance of my beſt judgment and beſt wiſhes, I find ſomething within me which cheriſhes and cleaves to thoſe evils, from which I ought to ſtart and flee, as I ſhould if a toad or a ſerpent was put in my food or in my bed. Ah, how vile muſt the heart (at leaſt my heart) be, that can hold a parley with ſuch abominations, when I ſo well know their nature and their tendency. Surely he who finds himſelf capable of this, may without the leaſt affectation of humility (however fair his outward conduct appears) ſubſcribe himſelf leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints, and of ſinners the very chief.

I would not be influenced by a principle of ſelf on any occaſion, yet this evil I often do. I ſee the baſeneſs and abſurdity of ſuch a conduct, as clearly as I ſee the light of the day. I do not affect to be thought ten feet high: and I know that a deſire of being thought wiſe or good, is equally contrary to reaſon and truth. I ſhould be grieved or angry if my fellow-creatures ſuppoſed I had ſuch a deſire, and therefore I fear the very principle of ſelf, of which I complain, has a conſiderable ſhare in prompting my deſires to conceal it. The pride of others often offends me, and makes me

ſtudious

ſtudious to hide my own, becauſe their good opinion of me depends much upon their not perceiving it. But the Lord knows how this dead fly taints and ſpoils my beſt ſervices, and makes them no better than ſpecious ſins.

I would not indulge vain reaſonings concerning the counſels, ways and providences of God. Yet I am prone to do it. That the judge of all the earth will do right, is to me as evident and neceſſary as that two and two make four. I believe that he has a ſovereign right to do what he will with his own, and that this ſovereignty is but another name for the unlimited exerciſe of wiſdom and goodneſs. But my reaſonings are often ſuch, as if I had never heard of theſe principles, or had formally renounced them. I feel the workings of a preſumptuous ſpirit that would account for every thing, and venture to diſpute whatever it cannot comprehend. What an evil is this, for a potſherd of the earth to contend with its Maker! I do not act thus towards my fellow-creatures; I do not find fault with the deciſions of a judge, or the diſpoſitions of a general, becauſe though I know they are fallible, yet I ſuppoſe they are wiſer in their reſpective departments than myſelf. But I am often ready to take this liberty when it is moſt unreaſonable and inexcuſable.

I would not cleave to a covenant of works: it ſhould ſeem from the foregoing particulars and many others which I could mention, that I have reaſons enough to deter me from this. Yet even this I do. Not but that I ſay, and I hope from my heart, Enter not into judgment with thy ſervant, O Lord,

Lord, I embrace it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and it is the main pleasure and business of my life, to set forth the necessity and all-sufficiency of the Mediator between God and Man, and to make mention of his righteousness, even of his only. But here, as in every thing else, I find a vast difference between my judgment and my experience. I am invited to take the water of life *freely*, yet often discouraged because I have nothing wherewith to pay for it. If I am at times favored with some liberty from the above-mentioned evils, it rather gives me a more favorable opinion of myself, than increases my admiration of the Lord's goodness to so unworthy a creature; and when the returning tide of my corruptions convinces me that *I am still the same*, an unbelieving legal spirit would urge me to conclude that the Lord is changed. At least I feel a weariness of being beholden to him for such continued, multiplied forgiveness, and I fear that some part of my striving against sin, and my desires after an increase of sanctification, arises from a secret wish that I might not be so absolutely and intirely indebted to him.

This, my Lord, is only a faint sketch of my heart, but it is taken from the life; it would require a volume rather than a letter to fill up the outlines. But I believe you will not regret that I chuse to say no more upon such a subject. But though my disease is grievous, it is not desperate; I have a gracious and infallible Physician. I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord.

I remain, my Lord, &c.

LETTER VI.

My Lord, *April*—1772.

MY two last letters turned upon a mournful subject, the depravity of the heart, which impedes us when we would do good, and pollutes our best intended services with evil. We have cause upon this account to go softly all our days, yet we need not sorrow as they who have no hope. The Lord has provided his people relief under those complaints, and teaches us to draw improvement from them. If the evils we feel were not capable of being over-ruled for good, he would not permit them to remain in us; this we may infer from his hatred to sin, and the love which he bears to his people.

As to the remedy, neither our state nor his honor are affected by the workings of indwelling sin, in the hearts of those whom he has taught to wrestle, strive and mourn on account of what they feel. Though sin wars, it shall not reign; and though it breaks our peace, it cannot separate from his love. Nor is it inconsistent with his holiness and perfection to manifest his favor to such poor defiled creatures, or to admit them to communion with himself. For they are not considered as in themselves, but as one with Jesus, to whom they have fled for refuge, and by whom they live a life of faith. They are accepted in the Beloved, they have an advocate with the Father, who once made an

an atonement for their ſins, and ever lives to make interceſſion for their perſons. Though they cannot fulfil the law, he has fulfilled it for them. Though the obedience of the members is defiled and imperfect, the obedience of the head is ſpotleſs and complete. And though there is much evil in them, there is ſomething good, the fruit of his own gracious Spirit. They act from a principle of love, they aim at no leſs than his glory, and their habitual deſires are ſupremely fixed upon himſelf. There is a difference in kind between the feebleſt efforts of faith in a real believer, while he is covered with ſhame at the thoughts of his miſcarriages, and the higheſt and moſt ſpecious attainments of thoſe who are wiſe in their own eyes and prudent in their own ſight. Nor ſhall this conflict remain long, or the enemy finally prevail over them. They are ſupported by almighty power, and led on to certain victory. They ſhall not always be as they are now; yet a little while and they ſhall be freed from this vile body, which like the leprous houſe is incurably contaminated, and muſt be entirely taken down. Then they ſhall ſee Jeſus as he is, and be like him and with him for ever.

The gracious purpoſes to which the Lord makes the ſenſe and feeling of our depravity ſubſervient, are manifold. Hereby his own power, wiſdom, faithfulneſs and love are more ſignally diſplayed. His power in maintaining his own work in the midſt of ſo much oppoſition, like a ſpark burning in the water, or a buſh unconſumed in the flames. His wiſdom in defeating and controling all the

devices which Satan, from his knowledge of the evil of our nature, is encouraged to practiſe againſt us. He has overthrown many a fair profeſſor, and, like Goliath, he challenges the whole army of Iſrael, yet he finds there are ſome againſt whom, though he thruſts ſorely, he cannot prevail; notwithſtanding any ſeeming advantage he gains at ſome ſeaſons, they are ſtill delivered, for the Lord is on their ſide. The unchangeableneſs of the Lord's love, and the riches of his mercy are likewiſe more illuſtrated by the multiplied pardons he beſtows upon his people, than if they needed no forgiveneſs at all.

Hereby the Lord Jeſus Chriſt is more endeared to the ſoul; all boaſting is effectually excluded, and the glory of a full and free ſalvation is aſcribed to him alone. If a mariner is ſurprized by a ſtorm, and after one night ſpent in jeopardy is preſently brought ſafe into port, though he may rejoice in his deliverance, it will not affect him ſo ſenſibly as if, after being tempeſt-toſſed for a long ſeaſon, and experiencing a great number and variety of hair-breadth eſcapes, he at laſt gains the deſired haven. The righteous are ſaid to be ſcarcely ſaved, not with reſpect to the certainty of the event, for the purpoſe of God in their favor cannot be diſappointed, but in reſpect to their own apprehenſions and the great difficulties they are brought through. But when after a long experience of their own deceitful hearts, after repeated proofs of their weakneſs, wilfulneſs, ingratitude and inſenſibility, they find that none of theſe things can ſeparate them from the love of God in Chriſt, Jeſus

becomes

becomes more and more precious to their ſouls. They love much, becauſe much has been forgiven them. They dare not, they will not aſcribe any thing to themſelves, but are glad to acknowledge that they muſt have periſhed (if poſſible) a thouſand times over, if Jeſus had not been their Savior, their Shepherd and their Shield. When they were wandering he brought them back, when fallen he raiſed them, when wounded he healed them, when fainting he revived them. By him out of weakneſs they have been made ſtrong, he has taught their hands to war, and covered their heads in the day of battle. In a word, ſome of the cleareſt proofs they have had of his excellence, have been occaſioned by the mortifying proofs they have had of their own vileneſs. They would not have known ſo much of him, if they had not known ſo much of themſelves.

Farther, a ſpirit of humiliation, which is both the *Decus et Tutamen*, the ſtrength and beauty of our profeſſion, is greatly promoted by our feeling as well as reading that when we would do good evil is preſent with us. A broken and contrite ſpirit is pleaſing to the Lord, he has promiſed to dwell with thoſe who have it, and experience ſhews that the exerciſe of all our graces is in proportion to the humbling ſenſe we have of the depravity of our nature. But that we are ſo totally depraved is a truth which no one ever truly learnt by being only told it. Indeed if we could receive and habitually maintain a right judgment of ourſelves, by what is plainly declared in ſcripture, it would probably ſave us many a mournful hour; but experience is

the Lord's ſchool, and they who are taught by him uſually learn that they have no wiſdom by the miſtakes they make, and that they have no ſtrength by the ſlips and falls they meet with. Every day draws forth ſome new corruption which before was little obſerved, or at leaſt diſcovers it in a ſtronger light than before. Thus by degrees they are weaned from leaning to any ſuppoſed wiſdom, power or goodneſs in themſelves, they feel the truth of our Lord's words, without me ye can do nothing—and the neceſſity of crying with David, O lead me and guide me for thy name's ſake. It is chiefly by this frame of mind that one Chriſtian is differenced from another. For though it is an inward feeling, it has very obſervable outward effects, which are expreſſively intimated, *Ezek.* xvi. 63. Thou ſhalt be dumb and not open thy mouth, in the day when I am pacified towards thee, ſaith the Lord God. The knowledge of my full and free forgiveneſs, of thy innumerable backſlidings and tranſgreſſions, ſhall make thee aſhamed, and ſilence the unruly workings of thine heart. Thou ſhalt open thy mouth in praiſe, but thou ſhalt no more boaſt in thyſelf, or cenſure others, or repine at my diſpenſations. In theſe reſpects we are exceedingly prone to ſpeak unadviſedly with our lips. But a ſenſe of great unworthineſs and much forgiveneſs checks theſe evils. Whoever is truly humbled will not be eaſily angry, will not be poſitive and raſh, will be compaſſionate and tender to the infirmities of his fellow-ſinners, knowing that if there be a difference it is grace that has made it, and that he has the ſeeds of every evil in his own heart.

heart. And under all trials and afflictions he will look to the hand of the Lord, and lay his mouth in the duſt, acknowledging that he ſuffers much leſs than his iniquities have deſerved. Theſe are ſome of the advantages, and good fruits, which the Lord enables us to obtain from that bitter root, indwelling ſin.

I am, with great deference,

My Lord, &c.

LETTER VII.

MY LORD, *September* — 1772.

WEAK, unskilful and unfaithful as I am in practice, the Lord has been pleased to give me some idea of what a Christian ought to be, and of what is actually attainable in the present life, by those whom he enables earnestly to aspire towards the prize of their high calling. They who are versed in Mechanics can, from a knowledge of the combined powers of a complicated machine, make an exact calculation of what it is able to perform, and what resistance it can counteract; but who can compute the possible effects of that combination of principles and motives revealed in the gospel, upon a heart duly impressed with a sense of their importance and glory? When I was lately at Mr. Cox's Museum, while I was fixing my attention upon some curious movements, imagining that I saw the whole of the Artist's design, the person who shewed it touched a little spring, and suddenly a thousand new and unexpected motions took place, and the whole piece seemed animated from the top to the bottom. I should have formed but a very imperfect judgment of it, had I seen no more than what I saw at first. I thought it might in some measure illustrate the vast difference that is observable amongst professors, even amongst those who are it is to be hoped sincere. There are persons who appear to have a true

true knowledge (in part) of the nature of the gospel religion, but seem not to be apprized of its properties in their comprehension and extent. If they have attained to some hope of their acceptance, if they find at seasons some communion with God in the means of grace, if they are in measure delivered from the prevailing and corrupt customs of the world, they seem to be satisfied as if they were possessed of all. These are indeed great things, *Sed meliora latent.* The profession of too many, whose sincerity Charity would be unwilling to impeach, is greatly blemished notwithstanding their hopes and their occasional comforts, by the breakings forth of unsanctified tempers, and the indulgence of vain hopes, anxious cares and selfish pursuits. Far, very far am I from that unscriptural sentiment of sinless perfection in fallen man. To those who have a due sense of the spirituality and ground of the divine precepts, and of what passes in their own hearts, there will never be wanting causes of humiliation and self-abasement on the account of sin; yet still there is a liberty and privilege attainable by the gospel beyond what is ordinarily thought of. Permit me to mention two or three particulars, in which those who have a holy ambition of aspiring to them shall not be altogether disappointed.

A delight in the Lord's all-sufficiency. To be satisfied in him as our present and eternal portion. This, in the sense in which I understand it, is not the effect of a present warm frame, but of a deeply rooted and abiding principle. The habitual exercise of which is to be estimated by the compara-

rative indifference with which other things are regarded. The ſoul thus principled is not at leiſure to take or to ſeek ſatisfaction, in any thing but what has a known ſubſerviency to this leading taſte. Either the Lord is preſent, and then he is to be rejoiced in, or elſe he is abſent, and then he is to be ſought and waited for. They are to be pitied who, if they are at ſome times happy in the Lord, can at other times be happy without him, and rejoice in broken ciſterns when their ſpirits are at a diſtance from the fountain of living waters. I do not plead for an abſolute indifference to temporal bleſſings, he gives us all things richly to *enjoy*, and a capacity of reliſhing them is his gift likewiſe; but then the conſideration of his love in beſtowing ſhould exceedingly enhance the value, and a regard to his will ſhould regulate their uſe. Nor can they all ſupply the want of *that* which we can only receive immediately from himſelf. This principle likewiſe moderates that inordinate fear and ſorrow to which we are liable upon the proſpect or the occurrence of great trials, for which there is a ſure ſupport and reſource provided in the all-ſufficiency of infinite goodneſs and grace. What a privilege is this to poſſeſs God *in all things* while we have them, and all things in God, when they are taken from us.

An acquieſcence in the Lord's will, founded in a perſuaſion of his wiſdom, holineſs, ſovereignty and goodneſs. This is one of the greateſt privileges and brighteſt ornaments of our profeſſion. So far as we attain to this we are ſecure from diſappointment. Our own limited views and ſhort-

ſighted

ſighted purpoſes and deſires may be and will be often over-ruled, but then our main and leading deſire, that the will of the Lord may be done, muſt be accompliſhed. How highly does it become us, both as creatures and as ſinners, to ſubmit to the appointments of our Maker, and how neceſſary is it to our peace! This great attainment is too often unthought of and overlooked; we are prone to fix our attention upon the ſecond cauſes and immediate inſtruments of events, forgetting that whatever befalls us is according to his purpoſe, and therefore muſt be right and ſeaſonable in itſelf, and ſhall in the iſſue be productive of good. From hence ariſe impatience, reſentment and ſecret repinings, which are not only ſinful but tormenting. Whereas if all things are in his hand, if the very hairs of our head are numbered, if every event great and ſmall is under the direction of his providence and purpoſe; and if he has a wiſe, holy and gracious end in view, to which every thing that happens is ſubordinate and ſubſervient—then we have nothing to do but with patience and humility to follow as he leads, and chearfully to expect a happy iſſue. The path of preſent duty is marked out, and the concerns of the next and every ſucceeding hour are in his hands. How happy are they who can reſign all to him, ſee his hand in every diſpenſation, and believe that he chuſes better for them than they poſſibly could for themſelves.

A ſingle eye to his glory as the ultimate ſcope of all our undertakings. The Lord can deſign nothing ſhort of his own glory, nor ſhould we. The

conſtraining love of Chriſt has a direct and marvellous tendency, in proportion to the meaſure of faith, to mortify the corrupt principle, *Self*, which for a ſeaſon is the grand ſpring of our conduct, and by which we are too much biaſſed after we know the Lord. But as grace prevails, ſelf is renounced. We feel that we are not our own, that we are bought with a price, and that it is our duty, our honour and our happineſs, to be the ſervants of God and of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. To devote ſoul and body, every talent, power and faculty, to the ſervice of his cauſe and will; to let our light ſhine (in our ſeveral ſituations) to the praiſe of his grace; to place our higheſt joy in the contemplation of his adorable perfections; to rejoice even in tribulations and diſtreſſes, in reproaches and infirmities, if thereby the power of Chriſt may reſt upon us and be magnified in us; to be content, yea glad to be nothing, that he may be all in all;—to obey *him*, in oppoſition to the threats or ſolicitations of men; to truſt *him*, though all outward appearances ſeem againſt us; to rejoice in *him*, though we ſhould (as will ſooner or later be the caſe) have nothing elſe to rejoice in—to live above the world, and to have our converſation in heaven, to be like the Angels, finding our own pleaſure in performing his: This, my Lord, is the prize—the mark of our high calling, to which we are encouraged with a holy ambition continually to aſpire. It is true we ſhall ſtill fall ſhort, we ſhall find that when we would do good, evil will be preſent with us. But the attempt is glorious, and ſhall not be wholly in vain. He that gives us thus *to will*, will enable

enable us to perform with growing ſucceſs, and teach us to profit even by our miſtakes and imperfections.

O bleſſed man! that thus fears the Lord, that delights in his word, and derives his principles, motives, maxims and conſolations, from that unfailing ſource of light and ſtrength. He ſhall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, whoſe leaf is always green and fruit abundant. The wiſdom that is above ſhall direct his plans, inſpire his counſels, and the power of God ſhall guard him on every ſide, and prepare his way through every difficulty; he ſhall ſee mountains ſink into plains, and ſtreams ſpring up in the dry wilderneſs. The Lord's enemies will be his, and they may be permitted to fight againſt him, but they ſhall not prevail, for the Lord is with him to deliver him. The conduct of ſuch a one, though in a narrow and retired ſphere of life, is of more real excellence and importance, than the moſt ſplendid actions of kings and conquerors, which fill the annals of hiſtory. *Prov.* xvi. 32. And if the God whom he ſerves is pleaſed to place him in a more public light, his labors and cares will be amply compenſated, by the ſuperior opportunities afforded him, of manifeſting the power and reality of true religion, and promoting the good of mankind.

I hope I *may* ſay that I *deſire* to be thus intirely given up to the Lord; I am ſure I *muſt* ſay, that what I have written, is far from being my actual experience. Alas, I might be condemned out of my own mouth, were the Lord ſtrict to mark what is amiſs. But O the comfort, we are not under

the law but under grace. The gospel is a dispensation for sinners, and we have an advocate with the Father. *There* is the unshaken ground of hope. A reconciled Father, a prevailing Advocate, a powerful Shepherd, a compassionate Friend; a Savior who is able and willing to save to the uttermost. He knows our frame, he remembers that we are but dust, and has opened for us a new and blood-besprinkled way of access to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need. I am,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's, &c.

LET-

LETTER VIII.

MY LORD, *April*—1773.

FOR five or six weeks past I have been a good deal indisposed. The ground of my complaint was a cold, attended with a slight fever, and for some time with a cough, which made me feel some inconvenience in preaching; to this succeeded a deafness, so great as to cut me off from conversation, for I could not hear the sound of a voice unless it was spoken loud in my ear. But the Lord has mercifully removed the fever and cough, opened my ears, and I am now nearly as well as usual. I had cause to be thankful especially for two things under this dispensation; first, that I was enabled, though sometimes with a little difficulty, to go on with my public work. It is a singular favor I have to acknowledge, that for the space of almost nine years, since I have been in the Ministry, our sabbath and weekly opportunities have not been once suspended: whereas I have seen many of the Lord's servants laid by for a considerable space, within that time. My other great mercy was, that the Lord was pleased to preserve me in a peaceful resigned frame, so that when I was deaf, and could not be certain that I should recover my hearing any more, I was in general as chearful and easy as at other times. This was the effect of his goodness—for though I know enough of his sovereignty, wisdom and faithfulness, of his right

to

to do what he pleaſes, and the certainty that he does all things well, to furniſh me with arguments enough to prove that ſubmiſſion to his will is our abſolute duty, yet I am ſenſible that when the trial actually comes, notwithſtanding all the advice I may have offered to others, I ſhould myſelf toſs like a wild bull in a net, rebel and repine, forget that I am a ſinner and that he is ſovereign; this I ſay would always and invariably be the caſe, unleſs he was graciouſly pleaſed to fulfil his word, that ſtrength ſhall be according to the day. I hope my deafneſs has been inſtructive to me. The exerciſe of our ſenſes is ſo eaſily and conſtantly performed, that it ſeems a thing of courſe; but I was then reminded how precarious the tenure is by which we hold thoſe bleſſings which ſeem moſt our own, and which are moſt immediately neceſſary to the comfortable enjoyment of life. Outward ſenſes, mental faculties, health of body and peace of mind, are extremely valuable, but the continuance of them for a ſingle moment depends upon him who if he opens none can ſhut, and when he ſhuts none can open. A minute is more than ſufficient to deprive us of what we hold moſt dear, or to prevent us from deriving the leaſt comfort from it if it is not taken away. I am not preſuming to give your Lordſhip information, but only mentioning the thoughts that were much upon my mind, while I was incapable of converſation. Theſe are indeed plain and obvious truths, which I have long acknowledged as indiſputable; but I have reaſon to be thankful when the Lord impreſſes them with freſh power upon my heart, even though

he

he sees fit to do it by the medium of afflictions. I have seen of late something of the weight and importance of that admonition, *Jer.* ix. 23, 24. A passage which, though addressed to the wise, the mighty and the rich, is of universal application—for self, unless corrected and mortified by grace, will find something whereof to glory, in the meanest characters and the lowest situation. And indeed when things come to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, the Lunatics in Bedlam, some of whom glory in their straw or their chains, as marks of splendor, or ensigns of royalty, have as much reason on their side, as any persons upon earth who glory in themselves. This alone is the proper ground of glory and joy, if we know the Lord—then all is safe at present, and all will be happy for ever. Then, whatever changes may affect our temporal concernments, our best interests and hopes are secured beyond the reach of change. And whatever we may lose or suffer during this little span of time, will be abundantly compensated in that glorious state of eternity, which is just at hand. I am, my Lord,

Your Lordship's, &c.

LETTER IX.

MY LORD, *Dec.* — 1772.

I Lately employed ſome of my leiſure hours, (which when I am not indolent are but few) in reading the Memoirs of the Duke of Sully, which occaſionally came in my way. It afforded me matter for variety of reflections. I pity the Duke of Sully, whoſe attachment to the name of a Proteſtant ſeems to have been little more than a point of honor, who drew all his reſources from himſelf, and whoſe chief aim ſeems to have been to approve himſelf faithful to an earthly Maſter. He acted as well as could be expected from natural principles; and the Lord, who employed him as an inſtrument of his providence, rewarded his fidelity with ſucceſs, honor and riches. A reward which though in itſelf a poor one, is ſuited to the deſires of men who place their happineſs in worldly things, and is ſo far a compenſation of their ſervices. It is given to your Lordſhip to act from nobler principles, and with more enlarged views. You ſerve a Maſter of whoſe favor, protection and aſſiſtance you cannot be deprived, who will not overlook or miſconſtrue the ſmalleſt ſervice you attempt for him, who will liſten to no inſinuations againſt you, who is always near to comfort, direct and ſtrengthen you, and who is preparing for you ſuch honors and bleſſings as he only can give, an inheritance (the reverſe

reverse of all earthly good) αφθαρτον και αμιαντον και αμαραντον *. Thus animated and thus supported, assisted likewise by the prayers of thousands, may we not warrantably hope that your Lordship will be an instrument of great good, and that both church and state will be benefited by your example, counsels and care.

In another view the Duke of Sully's History exhibits a comment upon the Psalmist's words, Surely man in his best estate is altogether vanity. View him in one light he seems to have possessed all that the most aspiring mind could aim at—The favor and confidence of his prince, accumulated wealth, great honors, and such power by his offices and influence with the king, that he could almost do what he pleased. Yet he had so much to suffer from the fatigues and difficulties of his station, and the cabals and malice of his enemies, that in the midst of all his grandeur a dispassionate mind would rather pity than envy him. And how suddenly were his schemes broken by the death of the king. Then he lost his friend, his protector, his influence. The remainder of his days were imbittered by many inquietudes; he lived indeed (if that could afford any consolation) in much state and pageantry afterwards, but after having toiled through more than fourscore years, died at last almost of a broken heart from domestic uneasinesses. And is this all that the world can do for those who are accounted most successful! Alas,

Too low they build who build below the skies.

* Incorruptible, undefiled, unfading.

And

And what a picture of the inſtability of human things have we in his Maſter Henry! Admired, beloved, dreaded. Full of vaſt deſigns, fondly ſuppoſing himſelf born to be the arbitor of Europe, in an awful moment, and in the midſt of his friends, ſuddenly ſtruck from the height of his grandeur, and ſnatched into the inviſible, unchangeable world. In that moment all his thoughts periſhed.

How unſpeakably awful ſuch a tranſition! How remarkable were his own forebodings of the approaching hour! O Lord, how doſt thou pour contempt upon princes, and teach us that the great and the mean are equally in thy hands and at thy diſpoſal, as clay in the hands of the Potter. Poor king! while he expected obedience to his own commands, he lived in habitual defiance of the commands of God. Men may reſpect his memory, for his ſincerity, benevolence and other amiable qualities; but beſides that he was engroſſed by a round of ſenſual pleaſure, (when buſineſs of ſtate did not interfere) his life was ſtained with adultery. Happy, if in the hours he ſpent in retirement, when the preintimation of his death hung heavy upon his mind, the Lord humbled and ſoftened his heart, and gave him repentance unto life. I wiſh the hiſtory afforded a proof of this. However, in his death, we ſee an affecting proof, that no human dignity or power can ward off the ſtroke of the Almighty, who by ſuch ſudden and unexpected diſpenſations often ſhews himſelf terrible to the princes and great men of the earth. O that they could

could see his hand, and wisely consider his doing in them.

But happy is the man who fears the Lord and delights in his commandments; who sets God always before him, and acts under the constraining influence of redeeming love. *He* is the real friend and the best champion of his country, who makes, not the vague notions of human wisdom and honor, but the precepts and example of the blessed Jesus, the model and the motive of his conduct. He inculcates (as occasion offers) the great truths of religion in his conversation, and demonstrates them by his practice; yet the best part of his life is known only to God and himself. His time is divided between serving his country in public, and wrestling for it in private. Nor shall his labors or his prayers be lost. Either he shall have the desire of his heart, and shall see the religion and the liberty he so highly values transmitted to posterity; or, if he should live when wrath is decreed and there is no remedy, the promise and the providence of God shall seal him as the peculiar charge of Angels, in the midst of public calamity. And when all things are involved in confusion, when the hearts of the wicked shall shake like the leaves of the forest, he shall be kept in perfect peace trusting in the Lord. I am,

With the greatest deference,

My Lord, &c.

LET-

LETTER X.

MY LORD, *March*—1773.

USUALLY for ſome days before I purpoſe writing to your Lordſhip, my thoughts are upon the ſtretch for a ſubject; I do not mean all day long, but it is ſo more or leſs; but I might as well ſpare my enquiries, I can come to no determination, and for the moſt part begin to write at an abſolute uncertainty how I am to proceed. Since I cannot premeditate, my heart prays that it may be given me in the ſame hour what I ſhall offer. A ſimple dependance upon the teaching and influence of the good Spirit of God, ſo as not to ſuperſede the uſe of appointed means, would, if it could be uniformly maintained, make every part of duty eaſy and ſucceſsful. It would free us from much ſolicitude, and prevent many miſtakes.—Methinks I have a ſubject in view already, a ſubject of great importance to myſelf, and which perhaps will not be diſpleaſing to your Lordſhip: How to walk with God in the daily occurrences of life, ſo as to do every thing for his ſake, and by his ſtrength.

When we are juſtified by faith and accepted in the Beloved, we become heirs of everlaſting life, but we cannot know the full value of our privileges till we enter upon the ſtate of glory. For this, moſt who are converted have to wait ſome time after they are partakers of grace. Though the Lord

Lord loves them, hates ſin, and teaches them to hate it, he appoints them to remain a while in a ſinful world, and to groan under the burden of a depraved nature. He could put them in immediate poſſeſſion of the heaven for which he has given them a meetneſs, but he does not. He has a ſervice for them here, an honor which is worth all they can ſuffer, and for which eternity will not afford an opportunity, namely, to be inſtruments of promoting his deſigns, and manifeſting his grace in the world. Strictly ſpeaking, this is the whole of our buſineſs here, the only reaſon why life is prolonged, or for which it is truly deſirable, that we may fill up our connections and ſituations, improve our comforts and our croſſes in ſuch a manner, as that God may be glorified in us and by us. As he is a bountiful Maſter and a kind Father, he is pleaſed to afford a variety of temporal bleſſings, which ſweeten our ſervice, and as coming from his hand are very valuable, but are by no means worth living for conſidered in themſelves, as they can neither ſatisfy our deſires, preſerve us from trouble, or ſupport us under it. That light of God's countenance which can pervade the walls and diſſipate the gloom of a dungeon, is unſpeakably preferable to all that can be enjoyed in a palace without it. The true end of life is to live not to ourſelves but to him who died for us, and while we devote ourſelves to his ſervice upon earth, to rejoice in the proſpect of being happy with him for ever in heaven. Theſe things are generally known and acknowledged by Profeſſors, but they are a *favored few* who act conſiſtently with their avowed principles,

ciples, who honeſtly, diligently and without reſerve endeavor to make the moſt of their talents and ſtrength in promoting the Lord's ſervice, and allow themſelves in no views or deſigns but what are plainly ſubordinate and ſubſervient to it. Yea, I believe the beſt of the Lord's ſervants ſee cauſe enough to confeſs, that they are not only unprofitable in compariſon of what they wiſh to be, but in many inſtances unfaithful likewiſe. They find ſo many ſnares, hindrances and temptations ariſing from without, and ſo much embarraſſment from ſin which dwells within, that they have more cauſe for humiliation than ſelf-complacence, when they ſeem moſt earneſt and moſt uſeful. However, we have no ſcriptural evidence that we ſerve the Lord at all, any farther than we find an habitual deſire and aim to ſerve him wholly. He is gracious to our imperfections and weakneſs, yet he requires all the heart, and will not be ſerved by halves, nor accept what is performed by a divided ſpirit. I lately met with ſome profane ſcoffs of Voltaire upon the ſentiment of doing all to the glory of God; (ſuch as might be expected from ſuch a man) however, *this* is the true alchimy which turns every thing to gold, and ennobles the common actions of life into acts of religion. 1 *Cor.* x. 31. Nor is there a grain of real goodneſs in the moſt ſpecious actions which are performed without a reference to God's glory. This the world cannot underſtand, but it will appear highly reaſonable to thoſe who take their ideas of God from the ſcripture, and who have felt the neceſſity and found the benefits of redemption — we are debtors many ways. The

Lord

Lord has a right to us by creation, by redemption, by conqueſt, when he freed us from Satan's power, and took poſſeſſion of our hearts by his grace; and laſtly, by our own voluntary ſurrender in the day when he enabled us to fix our choice on himſelf as our Lord and our portion. Then we felt the force of our obligations, we ſaw the beauty and honour of his ſervice, and that nothing was worthy to ſtand in the leaſt degree of competition with it. This is always equally true, though our perceptions of it are not always equally ſtrong. But where it has been once really known, it cannot be wholly forgotten, or ceaſe to be the governing principle of life; and the Lord has promiſed to revive the impreſſion in thoſe who wait upon him, and thereby to renew their ſtrength. For in proportion as we feel by what ties we are his, we ſhall embrace his ſervice as perfect freedom.

Again, when the eye is thus ſingle the whole body will be full of light. The principle of acting ſimply for God, will in general make the path of duty plain, ſolve a thouſand otherwiſe dubious queſtions, lead to the moſt proper and obvious means, and preclude that painful anxiety about events, which upon no other plan can be avoided. The love of God is the beſt caſuiſt, eſpecially as it leads us to a careful attendance to his precepts, a reliance on his promiſes, and a ſubmiſſion to his will. Moſt of our perplexities ariſe from an undue, though perhaps unperceived attachment to ſelf. Either we have ſome ſcheme of our own too cloſely connected with our general view of ſerving the Lord, or lay ſome ſtreſs upon our own manage-

ment, which, though we ſuſpect it may poſſibly fail us, we cannot entirely help truſting to. In theſe reſpects the Lord permits his ſervants occaſionally to feel their own weakneſs; but if they are ſincerely devoted to him, he will teach them to profit by it, and bring them by degrees to a ſimplicity of dependance, as well as of intention. Then all things are eaſy. Acting from love and walking by faith, they can neither be diſappointed or diſcouraged. Duty is their part, care is his, and they are enabled to caſt it upon him. They know that when their expedients ſeem to fail, He is ſtill all-ſufficient. They know that being engaged in his cauſe they cannot miſcarry, and that though in ſome things they may ſeem to fall ſhort of ſucceſs, they are ſure of meeting acceptance, and that he will eſtimate their ſervices not by their actual effects, but according to the gracious principle and deſire he has put into their hearts. 2 *Chron.* vi. 7, 8.

I am, with the greateſt reſpect,

My Lord, &c.

LET-

LETTER XI.

MY LORD, *June* — 1773.

MY old cast-off acquaintance, Horace, occasionally came in my way this morning. —I opened it upon lib. 3. od. 29. Did I not know the proposal to be utterly impracticable, how gladly should I imitate it, and send your Lordship in honest prose, if not in elegant verse, an invitation. But I must content myself with the idea of the pleasure it would give me to sit with you half a day under my favorite great tree, and converse with you, not concerning the comparatively petty affairs of human governments, but of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. How many delightful subjects would suggest themselves in a free and retired conversation. The excellency of our King, the permanency and glory of his kingdom, the beauty of his administration, the privileges of his subjects, the review of what he has done for us, and the prospect of what he has prepared for us in future; —and if while we were conversing, he should be pleased to join us (as he did the Disciples when walking to Emmaus) how would our hearts burn within us. Indeed, whether we are alone or in company, the most interesting topics strike us but faintly, unless he is pleased to afford his gracious influence; but when he is present, light, love, liberty and joy spring up in the hearts that know

him.—This reminds me (as I have mentioned Horace) to reſtore ſome beautiful lines to their proper application. They are impious and idolatrous as he uſes them, but have an expreſſive propriety in the mouth of a believer——

Lucem redde tuæ, Dux bone, patriæ,
Inſtar veris enim vultus ubi tuus
Affulſit populo, gratior it Dies
Et Soles melius nitent.

But we cannot meet. All that is left for me, is to uſe the liberty you allow me of offering a few hints upon theſe ſubjects by letter, not becauſe you know them not, but becauſe you love them. The hour is coming, when all impediments ſhall be removed—All diſtinctions ſhall ceaſe that are founded upon ſublunary things, and the earth and all its works ſhall be burnt up. Glorious day! May our ſouls be filled with the thought, and learn to eſtimate all things around us *now*, by the view in which they will appear to us *then*. Then it will be of ſmall moment who was the Prince and who was the Beggar in this life—but who in their ſeveral ſituations ſought, and loved, and feared, and honored the Lord. Alas! how many of the kings of the earth, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, will then ſay (in vain) to the mountains and the rocks, fall on us and hide us! In this world they are for the moſt part too buſy to regard the commands of God, or too happy to ſeek his favor; they have their good things here; they pleaſe themſelves for a while, and in a moment they go down to the grave: in that moment their thoughts

thoughts periſh, their ſchemes are left unfiniſhed, they are torn from their poſſeſſions, and enter upon a new, an untried, an unchangeable, a never ending ſtate of exiſtence. Alas, is this all the world can afford! I congratulate you, my Lord, not becauſe God has appointed you to appear in an elevated rank (this, abſtracted from the opportunity it affords you of greater uſefulneſs, would perhaps be a more proper ſubject for condolance) but that he has admitted you to thoſe honors and privileges which come *from him only*, and which ſo few in the ſuperior ranks of life think worthy of their attention. I doubt not but you are often affected with a ſenſe of this diſtinguiſhing mercy. But though we know that we are debtors, great debtors to the grace of God, which alone has made us to differ, we know it but imperfectly at preſent. It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be, nor can we form a juſt conception of the miſery from which we are redeemed; much leſs of the price paid for our redemption. How little do we know of the Redeemer's dignity, and of the unutterable diſtreſs he endured when his ſoul was made an offering for ſin, and it pleaſed the Father to bruiſe him, that by his ſtripes we might be healed. Theſe things will ſtrike us quite in another manner when we view them in the light of eternity. Then, to return to the thought from which I have rambled, then and there I truſt we ſhall meet to the higheſt advantage, and ſpend an everlaſting day together in happineſs and praiſe. With this thought I endeavor to comfort myſelf under the regret I ſometimes feel that I can have ſo little intercourſe with you in this life.

May the chearing contemplation of the hope ſet before us, ſupport and animate us to improve the interval, and fill us with an holy ambition of ſhining as lights in the world, to the praiſe and glory of his grace who has called us out of darkneſs. Encompaſſed as we are with ſnares, temptations and infirmities, it is poſſible (by his promiſed aſſiſtance) to live in ſome good meaſure above the world while we are in it; above the influence of its cares, its ſmiles, or its frowns. Our converſation πολιτευμα, our citizenſhip is in heaven. We are not at home, but only reſident here for a ſeaſon, to fulfil an appointed ſervice. And the Lord, whom we ſerve, has encouraged us to hope that he will guide us by his wiſdom, ſtrengthen us by his power, and comfort us with the light of his countenance, which is better than life. Every bleſſing we receive from him is a token of his favor, and a pledge of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which he has reſerved for us. O, to hear him ſay at laſt, Well done good and faithful ſervant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord! will be a rich amends for all that we can loſe, ſuffer or forbear, for his ſake.

I ſubſcribe myſelf, with great ſincerity,

My Lord, &c.

LET-

LETTER XII.

MY LORD, *February* — 1774.

THE first line of Horace's epistle to Augustus, when rightly applied, suggests a grand and chearing idea. As addressed by the Poet, nothing can be more blasphemous, idolatrous and absurd; but with what comfort and propriety may a Christian look up to him, to whom all power is committed in heaven and earth, and say, *Cum tot sustineas et tanta negotia Solus!* Surely a more weighty and comprehensive sentence never dropped from an uninspired pen. And how beautifully and expressively is it closed by the word *Solus!* The government is upon his shoulders, and though he is concealed by a veil of second causes, from common eyes, so that they can perceive only the means, instruments and contingencies by which he works, and therefore think he does nothing, yet in reality he does *all*, according to his own counsel and pleasure, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.

Who can enumerate the *Tot et tanta negotia*, which are incessantly before his eye, adjusted by his wisdom, dependent on his will, and regulated by his power in his kingdoms of providence and grace? If we consider the heavens, the work of his fingers, the moon and the stars which he has ordained—If we call in the assistance of Astronomers and glasses, to help us in forming a conception of the number,

distances, magnitudes and motions of the heavenly bodies; the more we search, the more we shall be confirmed, that these are but a portion of his ways — But he calls them all by their names, upholds them by his power, and without his continual energy they would rush into confusion, or sink into nothing. If we speak of intelligences, he is the life, the joy, the sun of all that are capable of happiness. Whatever may be signified by the thrones, principalities and powers in the world of light, they are all dependant upon his power and obedient to his command; it is equally true of angels as of men, that without him they can do nothing. The powers of darkness are likewise under his subjection and control. Though but little is said of them in scripture, we read enough to assure us that their number must be immensely great, and that their strength, subtlety and malice are such, as we may tremble to think of them as our enemies, and probably should, but for our strange insensibility to whatever does not fall under the cognizance of our outward senses. But he holds them all in a chain, so that they can do or attempt nothing but by his permission, and whatever he permits them to do (though they mean nothing less) has its appointed subserviency in accomplishing his designs.

But to come nearer home, and to speak of what seems more suited to our scanty apprehensions—still we may be lost in wonder—Before this blessed and only Potentate, all the nations of the earth are but as the dust upon the ballance and the small drop of a bucket—and might be thought (if compared

pared with the immensity of his works) scarcely worthy of his notice. Yet here he presides, pervades, provides, protects and rules. In him his creatures live, move, and have their being—from him is their food and preservation. The eyes of all are upon him; what he gives they gather, and can gather no more; and at his word they sink into the dust—There is not a worm that crawls upon the ground, or a flower that grows in the pathless wilderness, or a shell upon the sea shore, but bears the impress of his wisdom, power and goodness. With respect to men he reigns with uncontrolled dominion over every kingdom, family and individual. Here we may be astonished at his wisdom, in employing Free Agents, the greater part of whom are his enemies, to accomplish his purposes. But, however reluctant, they all serve him. His patience likewise is wonderful. Multitudes, yea nearly our whole species, spend the life and strength which he affords them, and abuse all the bounties he heaps upon them, in the ways of sin. His commands are disregarded, his name blasphemed, his mercy disdained, his power defied, yet still he spares. It is an eminent part of his government to restrain the depravity of human nature, and in various ways to check its effects, which if left to itself without his providential control, would presently make earth the very image of hell. For the vilest men are not suffered to perpetrate a thousandth part of the evil which their hearts would prompt them to. The earth, though lying in the wicked-one, is filled with the goodness of the Lord—He preserveth man and beast, sustains the young lion in the forest, feeds

the birds of the air which have neither ſtore-houſe or barn, and adorns the inſects and the flowers of the field with a beauty and elegance beyond all that can be found in the courts of kings.

Still more wonderful is his adminiſtration in his kingdom of grace. He is preſent with all his creatures, but in a peculiar manner with his own people. Each of theſe are monuments of a more illuſtrious diſplay of power than that which ſpread abroad the heavens like a curtain and laid the foundations of the earth. For he finds them all in a ſtate of rebellion and enmity, and makes them a willing people. And from the moment he reveals his love to them, he eſpouſes their cauſe and takes all their concerns into his own hands. He is near and attentive to every one of them, as if there was only that one. This high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, before whom the angels veil their faces, condeſcends to hold communion with thoſe whom men deſpiſe, He ſees not as man ſeeth——

Rides on a cloud diſdainful by a Sultan or a Czar, to manifeſt himſelf to an humble ſoul in a mud-walled cottage. He comforts them when in trouble, ſtrengthens them when weak, makes their beds in ſickneſs, revives them when fainting, upholds them when falling, and ſo feaſonably and effectually manages for them, that though they are perſecuted and tempted, though their enemies are many and mighty, nothing that they feel or fear is able to ſeparate them from his love.

And all this He does *Solus*. All the abilities, powers and inſtincts that are found amongſt creatures, are emanations from his fulneſs. All changes,

ſucceſſes, diſappointments—all that is memorable in the annals of hiſtory, all the riſings and falls of empires, all the turns in human life, take place according to his plan. In vain men contrive and combine to accompliſh their own counſels, unleſs they are parts of his counſel likewiſe—the efforts of their utmoſt ſtrength and wiſdom are croſſed and reverſed by the feebleſt and moſt unthought of circumſtances. But when he has a work to accompliſh, and his time is come, however inadequate and weak the means he employs may ſeem to a carnal eye, the ſucceſs is infallibly ſecured. For all things ſerve him, and are in his hands as clay in the hands of the potter. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, juſt and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints.

This is the God whom we adore. This is he who invites us to lean upon his almighty arm, and promiſes to guide us with his unerring eye. He ſays to you, My Lord, and even to me, Fear not, I am with thee; be not diſmayed, I am thy God; I will ſtrengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee, with the right-hand of my righteouſneſs. Therefore while in the path of duty, and following his call, we may chearfully paſs on regardleſs of apparent difficulties, for the Lord, whoſe we are, and who has taught us to make his glory our higheſt end, will go before us, and at his word crooked things become ſtraight, light ſhines out of darkneſs, and mountains ſink into plains. Faith may and muſt be exerciſed, experience muſt and will confirm what his word declares, that the heart is deceitful, and that man in

his beſt eſtate is vanity. But his promiſes to them that fear him ſhall be confirmed likewiſe, and they ſhall find him, in all ſituations, a ſun, a ſhield, and an exceeding great reward.

I have loſt another of my people. A Mother in our Iſrael. A perſon of much experience, eminent grace, wiſdom, and uſefulneſs. She walked with God forty years. She was one of the Lord's poor, but her poverty was decent, ſanctified and honorable. She lived reſpected, and her death is conſidered as a public loſs. It is a great loſs to me; I ſhall miſs her advice and example, by which I have been often edified and animated. But Jeſus ſtill lives. Almoſt her laſt words were, The Lord is my portion, ſaith my ſoul.

I am, my Lord,

Your Lordſhip's, &c.

LETTER XIII.

MY LORD, *March* 10, 1774.

FOR about six weeks past I have had occasion to spend several hours of almost every day, with the sick and the dying. These scenes are to a Minister like walking the Hospitals to a young Surgeon. The various cases which occur exemplify, illustrate and explain, with a commanding energy, many truths which may be learnt indeed at home, but cannot be so well understood, or their force so sensibly felt, without the advantage of experience and observation. As Physicians, besides that competent general knowledge of their profession which should be common to them all, have usually their several favorite branches of study, some applying themselves more to Botany, others to Chemistry, others to Anatomy. So Ministers, as their inclinations and gifts differ, are led more closely to consider some particular branch of the system of Divine Truth. Some are directed to state and defend the doctrines of the Gospel, some have a talent for elucidating difficult texts of scripture; some have a turn for explaining the prophetical parts, and so of the rest. For myself, if it be lawful to speak of myself, and so far as I can judge, Anatomy is my favorite branch, I mean the study of the human heart, with its workings and counter-workings, as it is differently affected in a state of nature or of grace, in the different seasons

ſeaſons of proſperity, adverſity, conviction, temptation, ſickneſs, and the approach of death. The Lord, by ſending me hither, provided me a good ſchool for theſe purpoſes. I know not where I could have had a better, or affording a greater variety of characters in proportion to the number of people; and as they are moſtly a poor people, and ſtrangers to that addreſs which is the reſult of education and converſe with the world, there is a ſimplicity in what they ſay or do, which gives me a peculiar advantage in judging of their caſes.

But I was about to ſpeak of death. Though the grand evidence of thoſe truths upon which our hopes are built ariſes from the authority of God ſpeaking them in his word, and revealing them by his Spirit, to the awakened heart (for till the heart is awakened it is incapable of receiving this evidence) yet ſome of theſe truths are ſo myſterious, ſo utterly repugnant to the judgment of depraved nature, that through the remaining influence of unbelief and vain reaſoning, the temptations of Satan, and the ſubtle arguments with which ſome men reputed wiſe attack the foundations of our faith, the minds even of believers are ſometimes capable of being ſhaken. I know no better corroborating evidence for the relief of the mind under ſuch aſſaults than the teſtimony of dying perſons, eſpecially of ſuch as have lived out of the noiſe of controverſy, and who perhaps never heard a ſyllable of what has been ſtarted in theſe evil days, againſt the Deity of Chriſt, his atonement, and other important articles. Permit me, my Lord, to relate, upon this occaſion, ſome things which

exceedingly

exceedingly ſtruck me in the converſation I had with a young woman whom I viſited in her laſt illneſs about two years ago. She was a ſober prudent perſon, of plain ſenſe, could read her bible, but had read little beſide; her knowledge of the world was nearly confined to the pariſh, for I ſuppoſe ſhe was ſeldom if ever twelve miles from home in her life. She had known the goſpel about ſeven years before the Lord viſited her with a lingering conſumption, which at length removed her to a better world. A few days before her death, I had been praying by her bedſide, and in my prayer I thanked the Lord, that he gave her now to ſee that ſhe had not followed cunningly deviſed fables! When I had finiſhed ſhe repeated that word, "No, ſhe ſaid, not cunningly deviſed fables, theſe are realities indeed, I feel their truth, I feel their comfort. O tell my friends, tell my acquaintance, tell enquiring ſouls, tell poor ſinners, tell all the daughters of Jeruſalem (alluding to Solom. Song, v. 16, from which ſhe had juſt before deſired me to preach at her funeral) what Jeſus has done for my ſoul. Tell them that now in the time of need, I find him my beloved and my friend, and as ſuch I commend him to them." She then fixed her eyes ſtedfaſtly upon me, and proceeded as well as I can recollect as follows: "Sir, you are highly favored in being called to preach the Goſpel. I have often heard you with pleaſure, but give me leave to tell you, that I now ſee all you have ſaid, or can ſay, is comparatively but little. Nor till you come into my ſituation, and have death and eternity full in your view, will it be poſſible for you

you to conceive the vaſt weight and importance of the truths you declare. Oh Sir, it is a ſerious thing to die, no words can expreſs what is needful to ſupport the ſoul, in the ſolemnity of a dying hour."

I believe it was the next day when I viſited her again; after ſome diſcourſe as uſual, ſhe ſaid, with a remarkable vehemence of ſpeech, are you ſure I cannot be miſtaken? I anſwered without heſitation, yes, I am ſure—I am not afraid to ſay, my ſoul for your's that you are right. She pauſed a little and then replied, "You ſay true, I know I am right. I feel that my hope is fixed upon the rock of ages, I know in whom I have believed. Yet if you could ſee with my eyes you would not wonder at my queſtion. But the approach of death preſents a proſpect, which is till then hidden from us, and which cannot be deſcribed." She ſaid much more to the ſame purpoſe, and in all ſhe ſpoke there was a dignity, weight, and evidence, which I ſuppoſe few profeſſors of divinity when lecturing from the chair, have at any time equalled. We may well ſay with Elihu, Who teacheth like him? Many inſtances of the like kind I have met with here. I have a poor girl near me who looks like an Ideot, and her natural capacity is indeed very ſmall; but the Lord has been pleaſed to make her acquainted alternately with great temptations, and proportionably great diſcoveries of his love and truth; ſometimes when her heart is enlarged, I liſten to her with aſtoniſhment. I think no books or miniſters I ever met with, have given me ſuch an impreſſion

and

and understanding of what the Apostle stiles τα βαθη του θεου, as I have upon some occasions received from her conversation.

But I am rambling again. My attendance upon the sick is not always equally comfortable, but could I learn aright it might be equally instructive. Some confirm the preciousness of a Savior to me, by the chearfulness with which, through faith in his name, they meet the king of terrors. Others no less confirm it, by the terror and reluctance they discover when they find they must die. For though there are too many who sadly slight the blessed Gospel while they are in health, yet in this place most are too far enlightened to be quite thoughtless about their souls, if they retain their senses in their last illness. Then, like the foolish virgins, they say, Give us of your oil: Then they are willing that ministers and professors should pray with them and speak to them. Through the Lord's goodness several whom I have visited in these circumstances, have afforded me good hope; they have been savingly changed by his blessing upon what has passed at the eleventh hour. I have seen a marvellous and blessed change take place in their language, views and tempers, in a few days. I now visit a young person who is cut short in her 19th year by a consumption, and I think cannot live many days. I found her very ignorant and insensible, and she remained so a good while, but of late I hope her heart is touched—She feels her lost state, she seems to have some right desires, she begins to pray, and in such a manner as I cannot but hope the Lord is teaching her, and will reveal himself

himself to her before she departs—but it is sometimes otherwise. I saw a young woman die last week; I had been often with her, but the night she was removed she could only say, O, I cannot live, I cannot live! She repeated this mournful complaint as long as she could speak, for as the vital powers were more oppressed, her voice was changed into groans; her groans grew fainter and fainter, and in about a quarter of an hour after she had done speaking she expired. Poor thing, I thought, as I stood by her bedside, if you were a Duchess, in this situation, what could the world do for you now! I thought likewise, how many things are there, that now give us pleasure or pain, and assume a mighty importance in our view, which, in a dying hour, will be no more to us than the clouds which fly unnoticed over our heads. Then the truth of our Lord's *aphorism* will be seen, felt and acknowledged, *One thing is needful.* And we shall be ready to apply Grotius's dying confession to (alas!) a great part of our lives—*Ah vitam perdidi, nihil agendo laborioſe.*

Your Lordship allows me to send unpremeditated letters—I need not assure you this is one.

I am, my Lord,

Your Lordship's, &c.

LET-

LETTER XIV.

My Lord,

WHAT a mercy is it to be ſeparated in ſpirit, converſation and intereſt from the world that knows not God! where all are alike by nature. Grace makes a happy and unſpeakable difference. Believers were once under the ſame influence of that ſpirit who ſtill worketh in the children of diſobedience, purſuing different paths, but all equally remote from truth and peace. Some hatching cockatrice eggs, others weaving ſpiders webs. Theſe two general heads of miſchief and vanity, include all the ſchemes, aims and atchievments of which man is capable, till God is pleaſed to viſit the heart with his grace. The buſy part of mankind are employed in multiplying evils and miſeries; the more retired, ſpeculative and curious are amuſing themſelves with what will hereafter appear as unſubſtantial, unſtable and uſeleſs as a cobweb. Death will ſoon ſweep away all that the philoſophers, the virtuoſi, the mathematicians, the antiquarians and other learned triflers are now weaving with ſo much ſelf-applauded addreſs. Nor will the fine ſpun dreſſes, in which the moraliſt and the ſelf-righteous clothe themſelves, be of more advantage to them either for ornament or defence than the produce of a ſpider. But it is given to a few to know their preſent ſtate and future deſtination—Theſe build upon the immoveable rock of ages,

for

for eternity. These are trees springing from a living root, and bear the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. These only are awake while the rest of the world are in a sleep, indulging in vain dreams from which likewise they will shortly awake; but O, with what consternation, when they shall find themselves irrecoverably divorced from all their delusive attachments, and compelled to appear before that God to whom they have lived strangers, and to whom they must give an account. O for a thousand tongues to proclaim in the ears of thoughtless mortals, that important aphorism of our Lord, One thing is needful. Yet a thousand tongues would be and are employed in vain, unless so far as the Lord is pleased to send the watchman's warning, by the power and agency of his own Spirit. I think the Poet tells us that Cassandra had the gift of truly foretelling future events, but she was afterwards laid under a painful embarrassment, that nobody should believe her words. Such, with respect to the bulk of their auditories, is the lot of Gospel Ministers; they are enlightened to see, and sent forth to declare, the awful consequences of sin, but alas, how few believe their report. To illustrate our grief and disappointment, I sometimes suppose there was a dangerous water in the way of travellers, over which there is a bridge, which those who can be prevailed upon may pass with safety. By the side of this bridge watchmen are placed, to warn passengers of the danger of the waters, to assure them that all who attempt to go through them inevitably perish, to invite, intreat and beseech them,

if

if they value their lives, to croſs the bridge. Methinks this ſhould be an eaſy taſk. Yet if we ſhould ſee in fact the greater part ſtopping their ears to the friendly importunity, many ſo much offended by it, as to account the watchman's care impertinent, and only deſerving of ſcorn and ill-treatment, hardly one in fifty betaking themſelves to the friendly bridge, the reſt eagerly plunging into the waters, from which none return, as if they were determined to try who ſhould be drowned firſt. This ſpectacle would be no unfit emblem of the reception the goſpel meets with from a blinded world. The Miniſters are rejected, oppoſed, vilified; they are accounted troublers of the world, becauſe they dare not, cannot ſtand ſilent, while ſinners are periſhing before their eyes; and if in the courſe of many ſermons they can prevail but on one ſoul to take timely warning, and to ſeek to Jeſus, who is the way, the truth and the life, they may account it a mercy and an honor, ſufficient to overballance all the labor and reproaches they are called to endure. From the moſt they muſt expect no better reception than the Jews gave to Jeremiah, who told the Prophet to his face, As to the word thou haſt ſpoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken to thee at all, but we will certainly do whatſoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth. Surely, if the Lord has given us any ſenſe of the worth of our ſouls, any compaſſion towards them, this muſt be a painful exerciſe, and experience muſt teach us ſomething of the meaning of Jeremiah's pathetic exclamation, O that my head were waters, and

mine

mine eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night for the ſlain of the daughters of my people. It is our *duty* to be thus affected. Our relief lies in the wiſdom and ſovereignty of God. He reveals his ſalvation to whom he pleaſes, for the moſt part to babes; from the bulk of the wiſe and the prudent it is hidden. Thus it hath pleaſed him, and therefore it muſt be right. Yea, he will one day condeſcend to juſtify the propriety and equity of his proceedings to his creatures; then every mouth will be ſtopped, and none will be able to reply againſt their judge. Light is come into the world, but men prefer darkneſs. They hate the light, reſiſt it, and rebel againſt it. It is true all do ſo, and therefore if all were to periſh under the condemnation, their ruin would be their own act. It is of grace that any are ſaved, and in the diſtribution of that grace, he does what he will with his own. A right which moſt are ready enough to claim in their own concerns, though they are ſo unwilling to allow it to the Lord of all. Many perplexing and acrimonious diſputes have been ſtarted upon this ſubject; but the redeemed of the Lord are called not to diſpute, but to admire and rejoice; to love, adore and obey. To know that he loved us, and gave himſelf for us, is the conſtraining argument and motive to love him, and ſurrender ourſelves to him, to conſider ourſelves as no longer our own, but to devote ourſelves, with every faculty, power and talent, to his ſervice and glory. He deſerves our all, for he parted with all for us. He made himſelf poor—

He

He endured ſhame, torture, death and the curſe for us, that we through him might inherit everlaſting life. Ah, the hardneſs of my heart, that I am no more affected, aſtoniſhed, overpowered with this thought.

I am, my Lord,

Your Lordſhip's moſt obedient,

and obliged Servant.

May 24th, 1774.

LET-

LETTER XV.

MY LORD,

I Have been pondering a good while, for a ſubject, and at laſt I begin without one, hoping that (as it has often happened) while I am writing one line, ſomething will occur to fill up another. Indeed I have an inexhauſtible fund at hand, but it is to me often like a prize in the hand of a fool, I want ſkill to improve it. O for a warm, a ſuitable, a ſeaſonable train of thought, that might enliven my own heart, and not be unworthy your Lordſhip's peruſal. Methinks the Poets can have but cold comfort, when they invocate a fabled muſe; but we have a warrant, a right to look up for the influence of the Holy Spirit, who ordains ſtrength for us, and has promiſed to work in us. What a comfort, what an honor is this, that worms have liberty to look up to God, and that He, the high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity, is pleaſed to look down upon us, to maintain our peace, to ſupply our wants, to guide us with his eye, and to inſpire us with wiſdom and grace, ſuitable to our occaſions. They who profeſs to know ſomething of this intercourſe, and to depend upon it, are by the world accounted enthuſiaſts, who know not what they mean, or perhaps hypocrites, who pretend to what they have not, in order to cover ſome baſe deſigns—But we have reaſon to

bear their reproaches with patience. Could the miſer ſay

———Populus me ſibilat, at mihi plaudo
Ipſe domi, ſimul ac nummos contemplor in arca.

Well then, may the believer ſay, Let them laugh, let them rage, let them, if they pleaſe, point at me for a fool as I walk the ſtreets, if I do but take up the Bible, or run over in my mind the inventory of the bleſſings with which the Lord has enriched me, I have ſufficient amends. Jeſus is mine; in him I have wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification and redemption, an intereſt in all the promiſes and in all the perfections of God; he will guide me by his counſel, ſupport me by his power, comfort me with his preſence, while I am here, and afterwards, when fleſh and heart fail, he will receive me to his glory.

Let them ſay what they will, they ſhall not diſpute or laugh us out of our ſpiritual ſenſes. If all the blind men in the kingdom ſhould endeavor to bear me down, that the Sun is not bright, or that the Rainbow has no colors, I would ſtill believe my own eyes. I have ſeen them both, they have not; I cannot prove to their ſatisfaction what I aſſert, becauſe they are deſtitute of ſight the neceſſary medium; yet their exceptions produce no uncertainty in my mind; they would not, they could not heſitate a moment if they were not blind. Juſt ſo, they who have been taught of God, who have taſted that the Lord is gracious, have an experimental perception of the truth, which renders them proof againſt all the ſophiſtry of Infidels. I

am perſuaded we have many plain people here, who if a wiſe man of the world was to ſuggeſt that the Bible is a human invention, would be quite at a loſs how to anſwer him, by arguments drawn from external evidences; yet they have found ſuch effects from this bleſſed book, that they would be no more moved by the inſinuation, than if they were told that a cunning-man, or ſet of men, invented the Sun and placed it in the firmament. So if a wiſe Socinian was to tell them that the Savior was only a man like themſelves, they would conceive juſt ſuch an opinion of his ſkill in divinity, as a philoſopher would do of a clown's ſkill in aſtronomy, who ſhould affirm that the Sun was no bigger than a cart wheel.

It remains therefore a truth, in defiance of all the cavils of the ignorant, that the holy Spirit does influence the hearts of all the children of God, or in other words, they are inſpired, not with new revelations, but with grace and wiſdom to underſtand, apply and feed upon the great things already revealed in the ſcriptures, without which the ſcriptures are as uſeleſs as ſpectacles to the blind. Were it not ſo, when we become acquainted with the poverty, ignorance and wickedneſs of our hearts, we muſt ſit down in utter deſpair of being ever able to think a good thought, to offer a ſingle petition aright in prayer, or to take one ſafe ſtep in the path of life. But now we may be content with our proper weakneſs, ſince the power and ſpirit of Chriſt are engaged to reſt upon us; and while we are preſerved in a ſimple dependance upon this help, though unable of ourſelves to do any thing,

thing, we ſhall find an ability to do every thing that our circumſtances and duty call for. What is weaker than a worm? Yet the Lord's worms ſhall, in his ſtrength, threſh the mountains, and make the hills as chaff. But this life of faith, this living and acting by a power above our own, is an inexplicable myſtery, till experience makes it plain. I have often wondered that St. Paul has obtained ſo much quarter at the hands of ſome people, as to paſs with them for a man of ſenſe. For ſurely the greateſt part of his writings, muſt be to the laſt degree abſurd and unintelligible upon their principles. How many contradictions muſt they find, for inſtance, if they give any attention to what they read, in that one paſſage, *Gal.* ii. 20. I am crucified with Chriſt, nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himſelf for me.

And as believers are thus inſpired by the holy Spirit, who furniſhes them with deſires, motives and abilities, to perform what is agreeable to his will—ſo I apprehend, that they who live without God in the world, whom the Apoſtle ſtiles *ſenſual, not having the ſpirit*, are in a greater or leſs degree, *ad captum recipientis*, under what I may call a *black inſpiration*. After making the beſt allowances I can, both for the extent of human genius, and the deplorable evil of the human heart, I cannot ſuppoſe that one half of the wicked wit, of which ſome perſons are ſo proud, is properly their own. Perhaps ſuch a one as Voltaire, would neither have

written, or have been read or admired ſo much, if he had not been the Amanuenſis of an abler hand in his own way. Satan is always near, when the heart is diſpoſed to receive him, and the Lord withdraws his reſtraints, to heighten the ſinners ability of ſinning with an *eclat*, and aſſiſting him with ſuch ſtrokes of blaſphemy, malice and falſehood, as perhaps he could not otherwiſe have attained. Therefore, I do not wonder that they are clever and ſmart, that they raiſe a laugh, and are received with applauſe among thoſe who are like minded with themſelves. But unleſs the Lord is pleaſed to grant them repentance, (though it is rather to be feared ſome of them are given up to judicial hardneſs of heart) how much better would it have been for them, had they been born Idiots or Lunatics, than to be diſtinguiſhed as the willing, induſtrious and ſucceſsful inſtruments of the powers of darkneſs, in beguiling, perverting and ruining the ſouls of men. Alas, what are parts and talents, or any diſtinctions which give pre-eminence in life, unleſs they are ſanctified by the grace of God, and directed to the accompliſhment of his will and glory. From the expreſſion, *Bind them in bundles and burn them*, I have been led to think, that the deceivers and the deceived, they who have proſtituted their gifts or influence to encourage others in ſin, and they who have periſhed by their means, may in another world have ſome peculiar and inſeparable connection, and ſpend an eternity in fruitleſs lamentations, that ever they were connected here.

Your Lordſhip, I doubt not, feels the force of that line,

O to grace how great a debtor——

Had not the Lord ſeparated you for himſelf—— Your rank, your abilities, your influence, which now you chiefly value, as enlarging your opportunities of uſefulneſs, might, nay certainly would have been diverted into the oppoſite channel.

I am, my Lord,

Your Lordſhip's,

April 20, 1774.

Moſt obedient and obliged Servant,

LETTER XVI.

MY LORD,

I HAVE not very lately had recourſe to the expedient of deſcanting upon a text, but I believe it the beſt method I can take to avoid ringing changes upon a few obvious topics, which I ſuppoſe uniformly preſent themſelves to my mind, when I am about to write to your Lordſhip. Juſt now that ſweet expreſſion of David occurred to my thoughts, *The Lord is my Shepherd!* Permit me, without plan or premeditation, to make a few obſervations upon it; and may your Lordſhip feel the peace, the confidence, the bleſſedneſs, which a believing application of the words is ſuited to inſpire.

The Socinians and others, in their unhappy labored attempts to darken the principal glory and foundation comfort of the Goſpel, employ their critical ſophiſtry againſt thoſe texts which expreſsly and doctrinally declare the Redeemer's character, and affect to triumph, if in any manuſcript or ancient verſion they can find a variation from the received copies, which ſeems to favor their cauſe. But we may venture to wave the authority of every diſputed or diſputable text, and maintain the truth againſt their cavils, from the current language and tenor of the whole ſcripture. David's words, in *Pſal.* xxiii. are alone a deciſive proof that Jeſus is Jehovah. If they will but allow two things, which I think they cannot deny—1. That our Savior aſſumes

assumes to himself the character of the Shepherd of his people—and 2. That he did not come into the world to abridge those advantages which the servants of God enjoyed before his incarnation. Upon these premisses, which cannot be gainsaid without setting aside the whole New Testament, the conclusion is undeniable: for if Jehovah was David's Shepherd, unless Jesus be Jehovah, we who live under the gospel have an unspeakable disadvantage, in being entrusted to the care of one, who, according to the Socinians, is a mere man; and upon the Arian scheme, is at the most a creature, and infinitely short of possessing those perfections which David contemplated in his Shepherd. He had a Shepherd whose wisdom and power were infinite, and might therefore warrantably conclude he should not want, and need not fear. And we also may conclude the same, if our Shepherd be the LORD or Jehovah, but not otherwise. Besides, the very nature of the Shepherd's office respecting the state of such frail creatures as we are, requires those attributes for the due discharge of it, which are incommunicably divine. He must intimately know every individual of the flock—His eye must be upon them every one, and his ear open to their prayers, and his arm stretched out for their relief, in all places and in all ages—Every thought of every heart must be open to his view, and his wisdom must penetrate and his arm control and over-rule all the hidden and complicated machinations of the powers of darkness—He must have the administration of universal providence over all the nations, families and persons uponearth, or he could not effectually

manage for those who put their trust in him, in that immense variety of cases and circumstances in which they are found. Reason as well as scripture may convince us, that he who gathereth the outcasts of Israel, who healeth the broken in heart, who upholdeth all that fall, raiseth up all that are bowed down, and upon whom the eyes of all wait for their support, can be no other than he who telleth the number of the stars and calleth them all by their names, who is great in power, and whose understanding is infinite. To this purpose, likewise, the prophet Isaiah describes this mighty Shepherd, ch. xl. 9—17. both as to his person and office.

But is not this indeed the great mystery of Godliness! How just is the Apostle's observation, that no man can say Jesus Christ is Lord but by the Holy Ghost! How astonishing the thought—that the Maker of heaven and earth, the Holy One of Israel, before whose presence the earth shook, the heavens dropped, when he displayed a faint emblem of his majesty upon Sinai, should afterwards appear in the form of a servant, and hang upon a cross, the sport and scorn of wicked men. I cannot wonder that to the wise men of the world this appears absurd, unreasonable and impossible! Yet to right reason, to reason enlightened and sanctified, however amazing the proposition be, yet it appears true and necessary—upon a supposition that a holy God is pleased to pardon sinners, in a way suited to display the awful glories of his justice. The same arguments which prove the blood of bulls and goats insufficient to take away sin, will conclude against the utmost doings or sufferings of men or angels. The

Redeemer

Redeemer of ſinners muſt be mighty—He muſt have a perſonal dignity to ſtamp ſuch a value upon his undertakings as that thereby God may appear juſt as well as merciful, in juſtifying the ungodly for his ſake. And he muſt be all-ſufficient to bleſs, and almighty to protect thoſe who come unto him for ſafety and life.

Such a one is our Shepherd. This is he of whom we through grace are enabled to ſay, we are *his* people, and the ſheep of *his* paſture. We are his by every tie and right; he made us, he redeemed us, he reclaimed us from the hand of our enemies, and we are his by our own voluntary ſurrender of ourſelves; for though we once ſlighted, deſpiſed and oppoſed him, he made us willing in the day of his power. He knocked at the door of our hearts, but we (at leaſt I) barred and faſtened it againſt him as much and as long as poſſible. But when he revealed his love, we could ſtand out no longer. Like ſheep we are weak, deſtitute, defenceleſs, prone to wander, unable to return, and always ſurrounded with wolves. But all is made up in the fulneſs, ability, wiſdom, compaſſion, care and faithfulneſs of our great Shepherd. He guides, protects, feeds, heals and reſtores, and will be our guide and our God even until death. Then he will meet us, receive us and preſent us unto himſelf, and we ſhall be near him, and like him, and with him for ever.

Ah, my Lord, what a ſubject is this! I truſt it is the joy of your heart. Placed as you are by his hand in a ſuperior rank, you ſee and feel that the higheſt honors, and the moſt important concern-

ments that terminate with the preſent life, are trivial as the ſports of children, in compariſon with the views and the privileges you derive from the glorious goſpel. And your ſituation in life renders the grace beſtowed upon you the more conſpicuous and diſtinguiſhing. I have ſomewhere met with a ſimilar reflection of Henry the Fourth of France to this purpoſe, that though many came into the world the ſame day with him, he was probably the only one among them that was born to be a King. Your Lordſhip is acquainted with many, who if not born on the ſame day with you, were born to titles, eſtates and honors. But how few of them were born to the honor of making a public and conſiſtent profeſſion of the glorious goſpel. The hour is coming, when all honors and poſſeſſions but this which cometh of God only, will be eclipſed and vaniſh, and like the baſeleſs fabric of a viſion leave not a wreck behind. How miſerable will they then be, who muſt leave their *all!* What a mortifying thought does Horace put in the way of thoſe who diſdain to read the ſcripture—

Linquenda tellus, et domus et placens
Uxor: neque harum, quas colis, arborum
Te, præter inviſas cupreſſos,
Ulla brevem dominum ſequetur.

But grace and faith can make the loweſt ſtate of life ſupportable, and make a diſmiſſion from the higheſt deſirable. Of the former I have many living proofs and witneſſes around me. Your Lordſhip I truſt will have ſweet experience of the latter, when, after having fulfilled the will of God in your gene-

generation, you shall be called (I hope in some yet distant day) to enter into your Master's joy. In the mean time, how valuable are life, talents, influence and opportunities of every kind, if we are enabled to improve and lay out all for him, who has thus loved us, thus provided for us. As to myself, I would hope there are few who have so clear a sense of their obligations to him, who make such unsuitable and languid returns as I do. I think I have a desire to serve him better; but alas, evil is present with me. Surely I shall feel something like shame and regret for my coldness, even in heaven—for I find I am never happier than when I am most ashamed of myself upon this account, here.

I am, my Lord, &c.

Nov. 5, 1774.

LETTER XVII.

My Lord,

HOW wonderful is the patience of God towards ſinful men! In him they live and move and have their being; and if he were to withdraw his ſupport for a ſingle moment, they muſt periſh. He maintains their lives, guards their perſons, ſupplies their wants, while they employ the powers and faculties they receive from him, in a ſettled courſe of oppoſition to his will. They trample upon his laws, affront his government and deſpiſe his grace; yet ſtill he ſpares. To ſilence all his adverſaries in a moment, would require no extraordinary exertion of his power; but his forbearance towards them manifeſts his glory, and gives us cauſe to ſay, Who is a God like unto thee!

Sometimes, however, there are ſtriking inſtances of his diſpleaſure againſt ſin. When ſuch events take place immediately upon a public and premeditated contempt, offered to Him that ſitteth in the heavens; I own they remind me of the danger of ſtanding, if I may ſo ſpeak, in the Lord's way; for though his long-ſuffering is aſtoniſhing, and many dare him to his face daily with ſeeming impunity, yet he ſometimes ſtrikes an awful and unexpected blow, and gives an illuſtration of that ſolemn word, Who ever hardened himſelf againſt the Lord and proſpered? But who am I to make this

this obſervation? I ought to do it with the deepeſt humiliation, remembering that I once ſtood (according to my years and ability) in the foremoſt rank of his avowed oppoſers, and with a determined and unwearied enmity renounced, defied and blaſphemed him. But he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and therefore I was ſpared and reſerved to ſpeak of his goodneſs.

Joſephus, when ſpeaking of the death of Herod Agrippa, aſcribes it to a natural cauſe, and ſays, he was ſeized with excruciating pains in his bowels; but Luke informs us of the *true* cauſe. An Angel of the Lord ſmote him. Had we a modern hiſtory, written by an inſpired pen, we ſhould probably often be reminded of ſuch an interpoſition where we are not ordinarily aware of it. For though the ſprings of actions and events are concealed from us for the moſt part, and vain men carry on their ſchemes with confidence, as though the Lord had forſaken the earth, yet they are under his eye and control, and faith in ſome meaſure, inſtructed by the ſpecimens of his government, recorded in the ſcripture, can trace and admire his hand, and can ſee how he takes the wiſe in their own craftineſs, ſtains the pride of human glory, and that when ſinners ſpeak proudly he is above them, and makes every thing bend or break before him.

While we lament the growth and pernicious effects of Infidelity, and ſee how wicked men and ſeducers wax worſe and worſe, deceiving, and being deceived; what gratitude ſhould fill our hearts to him, who has been pleaſed to call us out of the horrid darkneſs in which multitudes are bewildered

and

and loſt, into the glorious light of his goſpel? Faint are our warmeſt conceptions of this mercy. In order to underſtand it fully, we ſhould have a full and adequate ſenſe of the evil from which we are delivered, the glory to which we are called, and eſpecially of the aſtoniſhing means to which we owe our life and hope, the humiliation, ſufferings and death of the Son of God. But our views of theſe points, while in our preſent ſtate, are and muſt be exceedingly weak and diſproportionate. We know them but in part, we ſee them δι' ἐσοπτρου by *reflection*, rather the images than the things themſelves, and though they are faithfully repreſented in the mirror of God's word, to us they appear indiſtinct, becauſe we ſee them through a groſs medium of ignorance and unbelief. Hereafter every vail ſhall be removed; we ſhall know, in another manner than we do now, the unſpeakable evil of ſin, and the inſupportable dreadfulneſs of God's diſpleaſure againſt it, when we ſee the world in flames, and hear the final ſentence denounced upon the ungodly. We ſhall have far other thoughts of Jeſus when we ſee him as he is, and ſhall then be able to make a more affecting eſtimate of the love which moved him to be made a ſubſtitute and a curſe for us, and we ſhall then know what great things God has prepared for them that love him. Then with tranſport we ſhall adopt the Queen of Sheba's language, It was a true report we heard in yonder dark world, but behold the half, the thouſandth part, was not told us! In the mean time may ſuch conceptions as we are enabled to form of theſe great truths fill our hearts, and be mingled

with

with all our thoughts and all our concerns. May the Lord, by faith, give us an abiding evidence of the reality and importance of the things which cannot yet be seen; so shall we be enabled to live above the world while we are in it, uninfluenced either by its blandishments or its frowns, and with a noble simplicity and singularity, avow and maintain the cause of God in truth, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. He whom we serve is able to support and protect us, and he well deserves at our hands that we should be willing to endure, for his sake, much more than he will ever permit us to be exercised with. The believers call, duty and privilege, is beautifully and forcibly set forth in Milton's character of Abdiel, at the end of the fifth Book—

——— Faithful found
Among the faithless, faithful only he:
Among innumerable false, unmov'd,
Unshaken, unseduc'd, unterrify'd,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
Tho' single——— ———

Methinks your Lordship's situation, particularly resembles that in which the Poet has placed Abdiel. You are not indeed called to serve God quite alone. But amongst those of your own rank, and with whom the station in which he has placed you necessitates you to converse, how few are there, who can understand, second, or approve, the principles upon which you act, or easily bear a conduct which

must impress conviction, or reflect dishonour upon themselves! But you are not alone; the Lord's people (many of whom you will not know till you meet them in glory) are helping you here with their prayers, his angels are commissioned to guard and guide your steps—Yea, the Lord himself fixes his eye of mercy upon your private and your public path, and is near you at your right hand, that you may not be moved! That he may comfort you with the light of his countenance, and uphold you with the arm of his power, is my frequent prayer.

I am, my Lord, &c.

Dec. 8. 1774.

LETTER XVIII.

MY LORD, *Jan.* 20, 1775.

WE have entered upon another year!—So have thouſands, perhaps millions, who will not ſee it cloſe! an alarming thought to the worldling, at leaſt it ſhould be ſo. I have an imperfect remembrance of an account I read when I was a boy, of an ice palace, built one winter at Peterſburg; the walls, the roof, the floors, the furniture, were all of ice, but finiſhed with taſte, and every thing that might be expected in a royal palace was to be found there; the ice while in the ſtate of water being previouſly coloured, ſo that to the eye all ſeemed formed of proper materials, but all was cold, uſeleſs, and tranſient. Had the froſt continued till now, the palace might have been ſtanding, but with the returning ſpring it melted away like the baſeleſs fabrick of a viſion. Methinks there ſhould have been one ſtone in the building, to have retained the inſcription *Sic tranſit gloria mundi*, for no contrivance could exhibit a fitter illuſtration of the vanity of human life. Men build and plan as if their work were to endure for ever, but the wind paſſes over them and they are gone. In the midſt of all their preparations, or at fartheſt, when they think they have juſt compleated their deſigns, their breath goeth forth, they return to their earth, in that very day their thoughts periſh.

How many ſleep who kept the world awake!

Yet

Yet this ice-houſe had ſomething of a leiſurely diſſolution, though when it began to decay all the art of man was unable to prop it; but often death comes haſtily, and like the ſpringing of a mine, deſtroys to the very foundations without previous notice. Then all we have been concerned in here, (all but the conſequences of our conduct, which will abide to eternity) will be no more to us than the remembrance of a dream. This truth is too plain to be denied, but the greater part of mankind act as if they were convinced it was falſe; they ſpend their days in vanity, and in a moment they go down to the grave. What cauſe of thankfulneſs have they who are delivered from this deluſion, and who by the knowledge of the glorious goſpel, have learned their true ſtate and end, are ſaved from the love of the preſent world, from the heart-diſtreſſing fear of death, and know that if their earthly houſe were *diſſolved*, like the ice-palace, they have a houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Yet even theſe are much concerned to realize the brevity and uncertainty of their preſent ſtate, that they may be ſtimulated to make the moſt and the beſt of it, to redeem their time, and manage their precarious opportunities ſo, as may moſt tend to the praiſe and glory of him, who has called them out of darkneſs into marvellous light. Why ſhould any that have taſted that the Lord is gracious, wiſh to live another day, but that they may have the honor to be fellow-workers with him, inſtrumental in promoting his deſigns, and of laying themſelves out to the utmoſt of their abilities and influence in his ſervice! To enjoy a ſenſe of his loving kind-

neſs,

neſs, and to have the light of his countenance lifted up upon our ſouls, is indeed, reſpecting ourſelves, the beſt part of life, yea better than life itſelf; but this we ſhall have to unſpeakably greater advantage, when we have finiſhed our courſe, and ſhall be wholly freed from the body of ſin. And therefore, the *great deſirable* while here, ſeems to be Grace, that we may *ſerve* him and *ſuffer* for him in the world. Though our firſt wiſh immediately upon our own accounts might be, to depart and be with Jeſus, which is πολλω μαλλον κρεισσον, yet a lively thought of our immenſe obligations to his redeeming love, may reconcile us to a much longer continuance here, if we may by any means be ſubſervient to diffuſe the glory of his name, and the bleſſings of his ſalvation, which is God's great and principal end in preſerving the world itſelf. When hiſtorians and politicians deſcant upon the riſe and fall of empires, with all their profeſſed ſagacity, in tracing the connection between cauſes and effects, they are totally unacquainted with the great maſter wheel which manages the whole movement; that is, the Lord's deſign in favor of his church and kingdom; to this every event is ſubordinate, to this every interfering intereſt muſt ſtoop. How eaſily might this poſition be proved, by reviewing the hiſtory of the period about the Reformation. Whether Dr. Robertſon conſiders things in this light, in his hiſtory of Charles the Vth, I know not, as I have not ſeen his books, but if not, however elaborate his performance may be in other reſpects, I muſt venture to ſay, it is eſſentially defective, and cannot give that light and pleaſure

to

to a ſpiritual reader of which the ſubject is capable. And I doubt not but ſome who are yet unborn, will hereafter clearly ſee and remark, that the preſent unhappy diſputes between Great Britain and America, with their conſequences, whatever they may be, are part of a ſeries of events, of which the extention and intereſts of the church of Chriſt, were the principal final cauſes. In a word, that Jeſus may be known, truſted and adored, and ſinners by the power of his goſpel be reſcued from ſin and Satan, is comparatively the Το εν—the one great buſineſs for the ſake of which the ſucceſſion of day and night, ſummer and winter is ſtill maintained; and when the plan of redemption is conſummated, ſin, which now almoſt fills the earth, will then ſet it on fire, and the united intereſt of all the reſt of mankind, when detached from that of the people of God, will not plead for its preſervation a ſingle day. In this view I congratulate your Lordſhip, that however your beſt endeavors to ſerve the temporal intereſts of the nation may fall ſhort of your wiſhes, yet ſo far as your ſituation gives you opportunity of ſupporting the goſpel cauſe, and facilitating its progreſs, you have a proſpect both of a more certain, and more important ſucceſs. For inſtance, it was, under God, your Lordſhip's favor and influence, that brought me into the miniſtry. And though I be nothing, yet He who put it into your heart to patronize me, has been pleaſed not to ſuffer, what you then did for his ſake, to be wholly in vain. He has been pleaſed in a courſe of years, by ſo unworthy an inſtrument as I am, to awaken a number of perſons, who were at that time dead

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in treſpaſſes and ſins; but now ſome of them are preſſing on to the prize of their high calling in Chriſt Jeſus, and ſome of them are already before the throne. Should I ſuggeſt in ſome companies, that the converſion of a hundred ſinners (more or leſs) to God, is an event of more real importance, than the *temporal* proſperity of the greateſt nation upon earth; I ſhould be charged with ignorance and arrogance; but your Lordſhip is ſkilled in ſcriptural arithmetic, which alone can teach us to eſtimate the value of ſouls, and will agree with me that one ſoul is worth more than the whole world, on account of its redemption price, its vaſt capacities and its duration. Should we ſuppoſe a nation to conſiſt of forty millions, the whole and each individual to enjoy as much good as this life can afford, without abatement, for a term of 50 years each—all this good, or an equal quantity, might be exhauſted by a ſingle perſon in two thouſand million of years; which would be but a moment, in compariſon of the eternity which would ſtill follow—And if this good were merely temporal good, the whole aggregate of it would be evil and miſery, if compared with that happineſs in God, of which only they who are made partakers of a divine life are capable. On the other hand, were a whole nation to be deſtroyed by ſuch accumulated miſeries as attended the ſiege of Jeruſalem, the ſum total of theſe calamities would be but trifling, if ſet in competition with what every ſingle perſon that dies in ſin, has to expect, when the ſentence of everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence

preſence of the Lord and the glory of his power ſhall be executed.

What an unexpected round have my thoughts taken ſince I ſet out from the ice-palace. It is time to relieve your Lordſhip, and to ſubſcribe myſelf,

My Lord, &c.

LETTER XIX.

MY LORD, *February 23d. 1775.*

I ASSENT to our Lord's declaration, Without me ye can do nothing; not only upon the authority of the ſpeaker, but from the ſame irreſiſtible and experimental evidence, as if he had told me, that I cannot make the ſun to ſhine, or change the courſe of the ſeaſons. Though my pen and my tongue ſometimes move freely, yet the total incapacity and ſtagnation of thought I labor under at other times, convinces me, that in myſelf I have not ſufficiency to think a good thought, and I believe the caſe would be the ſame, if that little meaſure of knowledge and abilities, which I am too prone to look upon as my own, were a thouſand times greater than it is. For every new ſervice I ſtand in need of a new ſupply, and can bring forth nothing of my ſuppoſed ſtore into actual exerciſe, but by his immediate aſſiſtance. His gracious influence is that to thoſe who are beſt furniſhed with gifts, which the water is to the mill, or the wind to the ſhip, without which the whole apparatus is motionleſs and uſeleſs. I apprehend that we loſe much of the comfort which might ariſe from a ſenſe of our continual dependance upon him, and of courſe fall ſhort of acknowledging, as we ought, what we receive from him, by miſtaking the manner of his operation. Perhaps we take it too much for granted, that communications from himſelf, muſt bear

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ſome kind of ſenſible impreſſion that they are *his*, and therefore are ready to give our own induſtry or ingenuity credit, for thoſe performances in which we can perceive no ſuch impreſſion; yet it is very poſſible that we may be under his influence when we are leaſt aware; and though what we ſay, or write, or do, may ſeem no way extraordinary, yet that we ſhould be led to ſuch a particular turn of thought at one time rather than at another, has, in my own concerns, often appeared to me remarkable, from the circumſtances which have attended, or the conſequences which have followed. How often in the choice of a text, or in the courſe of a ſermon, or in a letter to a friend, have I been led to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon; and what I have expreſſed at large, and in general, has been ſo exactly ſuited to ſome caſe which I was utterly unacquainted with, that I could hardly have hit it ſo well, had I been previouſly informed of it. Some inſtances of this kind have been ſo ſtriking as hardly to admit a doubt of ſuperior agency. And, indeed, if believers in Jeſus, however unworthy in themſelves, are the temples of the Holy Ghoſt; if the Lord lives, dwells and walks in them; if he is their life and their light; if he has promiſed to guide them with his eye, and to work in them to will and to do of his own good pleaſure; methinks what I have mentioned, and more, may be reaſonably expected. That line in the hymn,

Help I ev'ry moment need,

is not an hyperbolical expreſſion, but ſtrictly and literally true, not only in great emergencies, but in

in our ſmoother hours, and moſt familiar paths. This gracious aſſiſtance is afforded in a way imperceptible to ourſelves, to hide pride from us, and to prevent us from being indolent and careleſs with reſpect to the uſe of appointed means. And it would be likewiſe more abundantly, and perhaps more ſenſibly afforded, were our ſpirits more ſimple in waiting upon the Lord. But, alas, a divided heart, an undue attachment to ſome temporal object, ſadly deadens *our* ſpirits (I ſpeak for myſelf) and grieves the Lord's Spirit; ſo that we walk in darkneſs and at a diſtance, and though called to great privileges live far below them. But methinks the thought of him who is always near, and upon whom we do and muſt inceſſantly depend, ſhould ſuggeſt a powerful motive for the cloſeſt attention to his revealed will, and the moſt punctual compliance with it. For ſo far as the Lord withdraws we become as blind men, and with the cleareſt light, and upon the plaineſt ground, we are liable, or rather ſure, to ſtumble at every ſtep.

Though there is a principle of conſciouſneſs, and a determination of the will, ſufficient to denominate our thoughts and performances our own, yet I believe mankind in general, are more under an inviſible agency than they apprehend. The Lord, immediately from himſelf, and perhaps by the miniſtry of his holy Angels, guides, prompts, reſtrains or warns his people. So there undoubtedly is what I may call a *black inſpiration*, the influence of the evil ſpirits who work in the hearts of the diſobedient, and not only excite their wills, but aſſiſt their faculties, and qualify as well as incline them to be

more assiduously wicked, and more extensively mischievous, than they could be of themselves. I consider Voltaire, for instance, and many writers of the same stamp, to be little more than secretaries and amanuenses of one who has unspeakably more wit and adroitness in promoting infidelity and immorality, than they of themselves can justly pretend to. They have, for a while, the credit (if I may so call it) of the fund from whence they draw; but the world little imagines who is the real and original author of that philosophy and poetry, of those fine turns and sprightly inventions, which are so generally admired. Perhaps many, now applauded for their genius, would have been comparatively dolts, had they not been engaged in a cause which Satan has so much interest in supporting.

But to return to the more pleasing subject.—How great and honorable is the privilege of a true believer! That he has neither wisdom or strength in himself is no disadvantage, for he is connected with infinite wisdom, and almighty power. Though weak as a worm, his arms are strengthened by the mighty God of Jacob, and all things become possible, yea easy to him, that occur within the compass of his proper duty and calling. The Lord whom he serves, engages to proportion his strength to his day, whether it be a day of service or of suffering. And though he be fallible and shortsighted, exceeding liable to mistake and imposition, yet, while he retains a sense that he is so, and with the simplicity of a child asks counsel and direction of the Lord, he seldom takes a wrong step, at least not in matters of consequence; and even his inadver-

inadvertencies are over-ruled for good. If he forgets his true ſtate, and thinks himſelf to be ſomething, he preſently finds he is indeed nothing. But if he is content to be nothing, and to have nothing, he is ſure to find a ſeaſonable and abundant communication of all that he wants. Thus he lives like Iſrael in the wilderneſs, upon mere bounty; but then it is a bounty unchangeable, unwearied, inexhauſtible and all-ſufficient. Moſes, when ſpeaking of the methods the Lord took to humble Iſrael, mentions his feeding them with manna, as one method. I could not underſtand this for a time. I thought they were rather in danger of being proud, when they ſaw themſelves provided for in ſuch an extraordinary way—But the manna would not keep; they could not hoard it up, and were therefore in a ſtate of abſolute dependance from day to day: this appointment was well ſuited to humble them.—Thus it is with us in ſpirituals. We ſhould be better pleaſed, perhaps, to be ſet up with a ſtock, or ſufficiency at once—Such an inherent portion of wiſdom and power, as we might depend upon, at leaſt for common occaſions, without being conſtrained by a ſenſe of indigence, to have continual recourſe to the Lord for every thing we want. But his way is beſt. His own glory is moſt diſplayed, and our ſafety beſt ſecured, by keeping us quite poor and empty in ourſelves, and ſupplying us from one minute to another, according to our need. This, if any thing, will prevent boaſting, and keep a ſenſe of gratitude awake in our hearts. This is well adapted to quicken us to prayer, and furniſhes

us with a thouſand occaſions for praiſe, which would otherwiſe eſcape our notice.

But who or what are we, that the Moſt High ſhould thus notice us! Should viſit us every morning, and water us every moment. It is an aſtoniſhing thought, that God ſhould thus dwell with men! That he, before whom the mightieſt earthly potentates are leſs than nothing and vanity, ſhould thus ſtoop and accommodate himſelf to the ſituation, wants and capacities of the weakeſt, meaneſt and pooreſt of his children! But ſo it hath pleaſed him. He ſeeth not as man ſeeth.

I am, my Lord, &c.

LETTER XX.

MY LORD,

I HAVE no apt preface or introduction at hand, and as I have made it almoſt a rule not to ſtudy for what I ſhould offer your Lordſhip; I therefore beg leave to begin abruptly. It is the future promiſed privilege of believers in Jeſus, that they ſhall be as the Angels; and there is a ſenſe in which we ſhould endeavor to be as the Angels now. This is intimated to us where we are taught to pray, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. I have ſometimes amuſed myſelf with ſuppoſing an Angel ſhould be appointed to reſide awhile upon earth, in a human body; not in ſinful fleſh like ours, but in a body free from infirmity, and ſtill preſerving an unabated ſenſe of his own happineſs in the favor of God, and of his unſpeakable obligation to his goodneſs—And then I have tried to judge, as well as I could, how ſuch an Angel would comport himſelf in ſuch a ſituation. I know not that I ever enlarged upon the thought, either in preaching or writing. Permit me to follow it a little in this paper.

Were I acquainted with this heavenly viſitant, I am willing to hope I ſhould greatly reverence him; and, if permitted, be glad, in ſome caſes, to conſult him. In ſome, but not in all, for I think my fear would be equal to my love. Methinks I could never venture to open my heart freely to him,

and unfold to him my numberleſs complaints and infirmities; for, as he could have no experience of the like things himſelf, I ſhould ſuppoſe he would not know how fully to pity me, indeed hardly how to bear with me, if I told him all. Alas, what a prepoſterous, ſtrange, vile creature ſhould I appear to an Angel, if he knew me as I am. It is well for me that Jeſus was made lower than the Angels, and that the human nature he aſſumed was not diſtinct from the common nature of mankind, though ſecured from the common depravity; and becauſe he ſubmitted to be under the law in our name and ſtead, though he was free from ſin himſelf, yet ſin, and its conſequences, being (for our ſakes) charged upon him, he acquired, in the days of his humiliation, an experimental ſympathy with his poor people. He knows the effects of ſin and temptation upon us, by that knowledge whereby he knows all things; but he knows them likewiſe in a way more ſuitable for our comfort and relief, by the ſufferings and exerciſes he paſſed through for us. Hence ariſes encouragement. We have not an High Prieſt who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted even as we are. When I add to this, the conſideration of his power, promiſes and grace, and that he is exalted on purpoſe to pity, relieve and ſave, I gather courage; with him I dare be free, and am not ſorry, but glad, that he knows me perfectly; that not a thought of my heart is hidden from him. For without this infinite and exact knowlege of my diſeaſe, how could he effectually adminiſter to my cure? But whither am I rambling? I ſeem to have loſt ſight of the Angel already.

already. I am now coming back, that if he cannot effectually pity me, he may at leaſt animate and teach me.

In the firſt place, I take it for granted this Angel would think himſelf a ſtranger and pilgrim upon earth. He would not forget that his πολιτευμα was in heaven. Surely he would look upon all the buſtle of human life (farther than the deſign of his miſſion might connect him with it) with more indifference than we look upon the ſports of children, or the amuſements of idiots and lunatics, which give us an uneaſineſs, rather than excite a deſire of joining in them. He would judge of every thing around him, by the reference and tendency it had to promote the will of him that ſent him; and the moſt ſpecious or ſplendid appearances, conſidered in any other view, would make no impreſſion upon him.

Conſequently, as to his own concernment, all his aim and deſire would be to fulfil the will of God. All ſituations would be alike to him; whether he was commanded, as in the caſe of Sennacherib, to deſtroy a mighty army with a ſtroke; or, as in the caſe of Hagar, to attend upon a woman, a ſervant, a ſlave; both ſervices would be to him equally honorable and important, becauſe he was in both equally pleaſing his Lord; which would be his element and his joy, whether he was appointed to guide the reins of empire, or to ſweep the ſtreets.

Again, the Angel would doubtleſs exhibit a ſtriking example of benevolence, for being free from ſelfiſh biaſs, filled with a ſenſe of the love of God, and a knowledge of his adorable perfections; his whole heart, and ſoul, and ſtrength would be

engaged and exerted, both from duty and inclination, to relieve the miſeries and advance the happineſs of all around him. And in this he would follow the pattern of him, who doth good to all, commanding his ſun to riſe and his rain to fall upon the juſt and the unjuſt.—Though from the ſame pattern, he would ſhew an eſpecial regard to the houſhold of faith. An Angel would take but little part in the controverſies, contentions, and broils, which might happen in the time of his ſojourning here, but would be a friend to all, ſo far as conſiſtent with the general good.

The will and glory of God being the Angel's great view, and having a more lively ſenſe of the realities of an unſeen world, than we can at preſent conceive, he would certainly, in the firſt and chief place, have the ſucceſs and ſpread of the glorious goſpel at heart. Angels, though not redeemed with blood, yet feel themſelves nearly concerned in the work of redemption. They admire its myſteries. We may ſuppoſe them well informed in the works of creation and providence. But (unlike too many men, who are ſatisfied with the knowledge of aſtronomy, mathematics or hiſtory) they ſearch and pry into the counſels of redeeming love, rejoice at the converſion of a ſinner, and think themſelves well employed to be miniſtring ſpirits, to miniſter to the heirs of ſalvation. It would therefore be his chief delight to eſpouſe and promote their cauſe, and to employ all his talents and influence in ſpreading the ſavor and knowledge of the name of Jeſus, which is the only and effectual means of bringing

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ſinners out of bondage and darkneſs, into the glorious liberty of the ſons of God.

Laſtly, though his zeal for the glory of his Lord, would make him willing to continue here, till he had finiſhed the work given him to do; he would, I am perſuaded, look forward with deſire to the appointed moment of his recall, that he might be freed from beholding and mixing with the ſin and vanity of thoſe who know not God, render his account with joy, and be welcomed to heaven, with a Well done good and faithful ſervant. Surely he would long for this, as a laborer for the ſetting ſun, and would not form any connection with the things of time, which ſhould prompt him to wiſh his removal protracted for a ſingle hour beyond the period of his preſcribed ſervice.

Alas, why am not I more like an angel! My views in my better judgment are the ſame. My motives and obligations are even ſtronger; an angel is not ſo deeply indebted to the grace of God, as a believing ſinner, who was once upon the brink of deſtruction, has been redeemed with blood, and might juſtly have been, before now, ſhut up with the powers of darkneſs without hope! Yet the meereſt trifles are ſufficient to debaſe my views, damp my activity, and impede my endeavors in the Lord's ſervice, though I profeſs to have no other end or deſire, which can make a continuance in life worthy my wiſh.

I am, &c.

Aug. — 1775.

LETTER XXI.

MY LORD,

DUM loquimur tempus fugit. In the midſt of the hurries and changes of this unſettled ſtate, we glide along ſwiftly towards an unchangeable world, and ſhall ſoon have as little connection with the ſcenes we are now paſſing through, as we have with what happened before the flood. All that appears great and intereſting in the preſent life, abſtracted from its influence upon our internal character, and our everlaſting allotment, will ſoon be as unreal as the viſions of the night. This we know and confeſs, but though our judgments are convinced, it is ſeldom our hearts are duly affected by the thought. And while I find it eaſy to write in this moralizing ſtrain, I feel myſelf diſpoſed to be ſeriouſly engaged about trifles, and trifling in the moſt ſerious concerns, as if I believed the very contrary. It is with good reaſon the Lord challenges, as his own prerogative, the full knowledge of the deceitfulneſs, deſperate wickedneſs and latent depths of the human heart, which is capable of making even his own people ſo ſhamefully inconſiſtent with themſelves, and with their acknowledged principles.

I find that when I have ſomething agreeable in expectation (ſuppoſe for inſtance it were a few hours converſation with your Lordſhip) my imagination paints and prepares the ſcene before-hand;

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hurries me over the intervening ſpace of time, as though it were a uſeleſs blank, and anticipates the pleaſure I propoſe. Many of my thoughts of this kind are mere waking dreams, for perhaps the opportunity I am eagerly waiting for never happens, but is ſwallowed up by ſome unforeſeen diſappointment; or if not, ſomething from within or without prevents its anſwering the idea I had formed of it. Nor does my fancy confine itſelf within the narrow limits of probabilities, it can buſy itſelf as eagerly in ranging after chimæras and impoſſibilities, and engage my attention to the ideal purſuit of things which are never likely to happen. In theſe reſpects my imagination travels with wings, ſo that if the wildneſs, the multiplicity, the variety of the phantoms which paſs through my mind in the ſpace of a winter's day, were known to my fellow-creatures, they would probably deem me, as I am often ready to deem myſelf, but a more ſober and harmleſs kind of lunatic. But if I endeavor to put this active roving power in a right track, and to repreſent to myſelf thoſe ſcenes, which though not yet preſent, I know will ſoon be realized, and have a greatneſs, which the moſt enlarged exerciſe of my powers cannot comprehend: if I would fix my thoughts upon the hour of death, the end of the world, the coming of the Judge, or ſimilar ſubjects; then my imagination is preſently tame, cold, and jaded, travels very ſlowly, and is ſoon wearied in the road of truth, though in the fairy fields of uncertainty and folly it can ſkip from mountain to mountain. Mr. Addiſon ſuppoſes that the imagination alone, as it can be differently af-

fected, is capable of making us either inconceivably happy or miserable. I am sure it is capable of making us miserable, though I believe it seldom gives us much pleasure, but such as is to be found in a fool's paradise. But I am sure, were my outward life and conduct perfectly free from blame, the disorders and defilement of my imagination, are sufficient to constitute me a chief sinner, in the sight of him to whom the thoughts and intents of the heart are continually open, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

Upon this head I cannot but lament how universally almost, education is suited, and as it were designed, to add to the stimulus of depraved nature. A cultivated imagination is commended and sought after as a very desirable talent, though it seldom means more than the possession of a large stock of other people's dreams and fables, with a certain quickness in compounding them, enlarging upon them, and exceeding them by inventions of our own. Poets, painters and even historians, are employed to assist us from our early years, in forming an habitual relish for shadows and colorings, which both indispose for the search of truth, and even unfit us for its reception, unless proposed just in our own way. The best effect of the Belles Lettres upon the imagination seems generally expressed by the word Taste. And what is this taste, but a certain disposition which loves to be humored, soothed and flattered, and which can hardly receive or bear the most important truths, if they be not decorated and set off with such a delicacy and address as taste requires. I say *the most important truths:* because

becauſe truths of a ſecular importance ſtrike ſo cloſely upon the ſenſes, that the deciſion of taſte perhaps is not waited for. Thus, if a man be informed of the birth of his child, or that his houſe is on fire, the meſſage takes up his thoughts, and he is ſeldom much diſguſted with the manner in which it is delivered. But what an inſuperable bar is the refined taſte of many, to their profiting by the preaching of the goſpel, or even to their hearing it. Though the ſubject of a diſcourſe be weighty, and ſome juſt repreſentation given of the evil of ſin, the worth of the ſoul, and the love of Chriſt; yet, if there be ſomething amiſs in the elocution, language or manner of the preacher, people of taſte muſt be poſſeſſed, in a good meaſure, of grace likewiſe, if they can hear him with tolerable patience. And perhaps three fourths of thoſe who are accounted the moſt ſenſible and judicious in the auditory, will remember little about the ſermon, but the tone of the voice, the awkwardneſs of the attitude, the obſolete expreſſions and the like; while the poor and ſimple, not being encumbered with this hurtful accompliſhment, receive the meſſenger as the Lord's ſervant, and the truth as the Lord's word, and are comforted and edified. But I ſtop. Some people would ſay, that I muſt ſuppoſe your Lordſhip to have but little taſte, or elſe much grace, or I ſhould not venture to trouble you with ſuch letters as mine. I am,

With the greateſt ſincerity and deference,
My Lord,
Your Lordſhip's, &c.

November — 1775.

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LETTER XXII.

MY LORD,

THE Apoſtle ſpeaks of a *bleſſedneſs*, which it is the deſign of the goſpel to impart to thoſe who receive it. The Galatians once had it, and ſpoke of it. The Apoſtle reminds them of their loſs, which is left upon record as a warning to us. His expreſſion has led me ſometimes to conſider, wherein a Chriſtian's preſent bleſſedneſs conſiſts.—I mean that which is attainable in this ſtate of trial, and the ſenſe and exerciſe of which may be, and too often is, ſuſpended and taken from us. It is a bleſſedneſs which, if we ſpeak of man in a natural ſtate, his eye hath not ſeen, nor his ear heard ſo as to underſtand it, nor can the idea of it ariſe in his heart. It is no way dependant upon outward circumſtances. Proſperity cannot impart it, preſerve or ſupply the want of it. Nor can adverſity put it out of our reach. The wiſe cannot acquire it by dint of ſuperior abilities, nor ſhall the ſimple miſs it for want of capacity.

The ſtate of true believers, compared with that of others, is always *bleſſed*. If they are born from above and united to Jeſus, they are delivered from condemnation, and are heirs of eternal life, and may therefore well be accounted happy. But I conſider now, not their harveſt but their firſt fruits, not their portion in reverſion, but the *earneſt* attainable in this life; not what they *ſhall* be in heaven, but

but what, in an humble attendance upon the Lord, they *may be* while upon earth. There is even at preſent a prize of our high calling ſet before us. It is much to be deſired that we had ſuch a ſenſe of its value, as might prompt us ſo to run, that we might obtain. I have thought this bleſſedneſs may be compriſed in five particulars, though in order to take a ſuccinct view of the ſubject, ſome of theſe might be branched out into ſeveral others; but I would not by too many ſub-diviſions give my letter the air of a ſermon.

In the firſt place, a clear, well-grounded, habitual perſuaſion of our acceptance in the Beloved, is attainable; and though we may be ſafe, we cannot be ſaid to enjoy bleſſedneſs without it. To be in a ſtate of ſuſpence and uncertainty, in a point of ſo great importance, is painful; and the Lord has accordingly provided, that his people may have ſtrong conſolation on this head. They are bleſſed, therefore, who have ſuch views of the power, grace and ſuitableneſs of Jeſus, and the certainty and ſecurity of redemption in him, together with ſuch a conſciouſneſs that they have anchored their hopes, and ventured their all upon his perſon, work and promiſe, as furniſhes them with a ready anſwer to all the cavils of unbelief and Satan in the Apoſtle's manner, *Rom.* viii. 31—37. That Paul could thus challenge and triumph over all charges and enemies, was not an appendage of his office as an Apoſtle, but a part of his experience as a believer, and it lies equally open to us. For we have the ſame goſpel and the ſame promiſes as he had; nor is the efficacy of the holy Spirit's teaching,

ing, a whit weakened by length of time. But many ſtop ſhort of this. They have a hope, but it rather ſprings from their frames and feelings, than from a ſpiritual apprehenſion of the Redeemer's engagements and fulneſs, and therefore fluctuates and changes like the weather. Could they be perſuaded to pray with earneſtneſs and importunity, as the Apoſtle prays for them, *Epheſ.* i. 17, 18. and iii. 16, 19; they would find a bleſſedneſs which they have not yet known, for it is ſaid, Aſk and ye ſhall receive—And it is ſaid likewiſe, Ye receive not becauſe ye aſk not.

Could this privilege be enjoyed ſingly, the natural man would have no objection to it. He would (as he thinks) be pleaſed to know he ſhould be ſaved at laſt, provided that while here he might live in his ſins. But the believer will not, cannot think himſelf bleſſed, unleſs he has likewiſe a conſcience void of offence. This was the Apoſtle's daily exerciſe, though no one was farther from a legal ſpirit, or more dependant upon Jeſus for acceptance. But if we live in any known ſin, or allow ourſelves in the cuſtomary omiſſion of any known duty, ſuppoſing it poſſible in ſuch a caſe to preſerve a ſenſe of our acceptance, (which can hardly be ſuppoſed, for if the Spirit be grieved, our evidences decline of courſe), yet we could not be eaſy. If a traveller was abſolutely ſure of reaching his journey's end in ſafety, yet if he walked with a thorn in his foot, he muſt take every ſtep in pain. Such a thorn will be felt in the conſcience, till we are favored with a ſimplicity of heart, and made willing in all things, great or ſmall, to yield obedience

dience to the authority of the Lord's precepts, and make them the ſtanding rule of our conduct, without wilfully admitting a ſingle exception. At the beſt, we ſhall be conſcious of innumerable ſhortcomings, and ſhameful defilement, but theſe things will not break our peace, if our hearts are upright. But if we trifle with light, and connive at what we know to be wrong, we ſhall be weak, reſtleſs and uncomfortable. How many, who we would hope are the children of the King, are lean from day to day, becauſe ſome right-hand or right-eye evil, which they cannot perſuade themſelves to part with, keeps them halting between two opinions, and they are as diſtant from happineſs, as they are from the poſſibility of reconciling the incompatible ſervices of God and the world. But happy indeed is he, who condemneth not himſelf in that thing which he alloweth.

Real communion with the Lord, in his appointed means of grace, is likewiſe an important branch of this bleſſedneſs. They were inſtituted for this end, and are ſufficient, by virtue of his power and Spirit, to anſwer it. I do not believe this enjoyment will be always equal. But I believe a comfortable ſenſe of it in ſome meaſure, is generally attainable. To read the ſcripture, not as an attorney may read a will, merely to know the ſenſe, but as the heir reads it, as a deſcription and proof of his intereſt. To hear the goſpel, as the voice of our Beloved, ſo as to have little leiſure either for admiring the abilities, or cenſuring the defects of the preacher; and in prayer to feel a liberty of pouring out our hearts before the Lord, to behold ſome glances of

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his goodneſs paſſing before us, and to breathe forth before him the tempers of a child, the ſpirit of adoption: And thus, by beholding his glory, to be conformed more and more to his image, and to renew our ſtrength, by drawing water out of the wells of ſalvation: Herein is bleſſedneſs. They who have taſted it can ſay, it is good for me to draw nigh to God. The ſoul thus refreſhed by the water of life, is preſerved from thirſting after the vanities of the world; thus inſtructed in the ſanctuary, comes down from the mount filled with heavenly wiſdom, anointed with a holy unction, and thereby qualified to judge, ſpeak and act in character, in all the relations and occaſions of ſecular life. In this way, beſides the pleaſure, a ſpiritual taſte is acquired, ſomething analagous to the meaning of the word taſte, when applied to muſic or good breeding, by which diſcords and improprieties are obſerved and avoided, as it were by inſtinct, and what is right is felt and followed, not ſo much by the force of rules, as by a habit inſenſibly acquired, and in which the ſubſtance of all neceſſary rules are, if I may ſo ſay, digeſted. O that I knew more of this bleſſedneſs, and more of its effects.

Another branch of bleſſedneſs, is a power of repoſing ourſelves and our concerns upon the Lord's faithfulneſs and care. And may be conſidered in two reſpects. A reliance upon him that he will ſurely provide for us, guide us, protect us, be our help in trouble, our ſhield in danger; ſo that however poor, weak and defenceleſs in ourſelves, we may rejoice in his all-ſufficiency as our own—and

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farther, in consequence of this, a peaceful, humble submission to his will, under all events, which upon their first impression are contrary to our own views and desires. Surely in a world like this, where every thing is uncertain, where we are exposed to trials on every hand, and know not but a single hour may bring forth something painful, yea dreadful to our natural sensations, there can be no blessedness, but so far as we are thus enabled to entrust and resign all to the direction and faithfulness of the Lord our shepherd. For want of more of this spirit, multitudes of professing Christians, perplex and wound themselves, and dishonor their high calling, by continual anxieties, alarms and complaints. They think nothing safe under the Lord's keeping, unless their own eye is likewise upon it, and are seldom satisfied with any of his dispensations. For though he gratify their desires in nine instances, a refusal in the tenth, spoils the relish of all, and they shew the truths of the gospel can afford them little comfort, if self is crossed. But blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. He shall not be afraid of evil-tidings, he shall be kept in perfect peace, though the earth be moved, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea.

The paper admonishes me it is time to relieve your Lordship—And I have not room to detain you long upon the fifth particular. It belongs to a believer's blessedness, to feel his spirit chearful and active for the Lord's service, in the world. For to what other end should he wish to live? If he thought of himself only, it would be better to depart and

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be with Jesus immediately. But he is a debtor to his grace and love; and though strictly he can make no returns—yet he longs to shew his thankfulness; and if the Lord give him a heart to redeem his time, to devote his strength and influence, and lay himself out for his service—that he may be instrumental in promoting his cause, in comforting his people—or enable him to let his light shine before men, that his God and Father may be honored—he will account it blessedness. This is indeed the great end of life, and he knows it will evidently appear so at the approach of death. And therefore while others are cumbered about many things, he esteems this the one thing needful.

I remain, my Lord,

Your Lordship's, &c.

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LETTER XXIII.

MY LORD,

THAT I may not weary you by a preamble, I oblige myself to take the turn of my letter from some passage of scripture, and I fix upon that which just now occurred to my thoughts, a clause in that pattern of prayer, which he who best knows our state, has been pleased to leave for the instruction of his people, in their great concern of waiting at his throne of grace, *Matt.* vi. 13.—*And lead us not into temptation.* This petition is seasonable at all times, and to all persons, who have any right knowledge of themselves or their spiritual calling.

The word *temptation*, taken at large, includes every kind of trial. To tempt is to try or prove. In this sense, it is said, the Lord tempted Abraham; that is, he tried him, for God cannot tempt to evil. He proposed such an act of obedience to him, as was a test of his faith, love, dependance and integrity. Thus all our afflictions under his gracious management are appointed to prove, manifest, exercise and purify the graces of his children. And not afflictions only, prosperity likewise is a state of temptation, and many who have endured sharp sufferings and came off honorably, have been afterwards greatly hurt and ensnared by prosperity. To this purpose the histories of David and Hezekiah are in point. But by temptation we more frequently understand the wiles and force which Satan employs

employs in assaulting our peace, or spreading snares for our feet. He is always practising against us, either directly and from himself, by the access he has to our hearts, or immediately by the influence he has over the men and the things of this world. The words which follow confirm this sense—Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, απο του πονηρου from the *evil one*, as it might be properly rendered here, and in 1 *John*, v. 18. The subtilty and power of this adversary are very great; he is an over-match for us, and we have no hope of safety but in the Lord's protection. Satan's action upon the heart may be illustrated by the action of the wind upon the sea. The sea sometimes appears smooth, but it is always disposed to swell and rage, and to obey the impulse of every storm. Thus the heart may be sometimes quiet, but the wind of temptation will awaken and rouse it in a moment; for it is essential to our depraved nature to be unstable and yielding as the water; and when it is under the impression of the enemy, its violence can only be controlled by him who says to the raging sea, Be still, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed. The branches of temptation are almost innumerable, but the principal may be reduced to the several faculties of the soul (as we commonly speak) to which they are more directly suited.

He has temptations for the understanding. He can blind the mind with prejudices and false reasonings, and ply it with arguments for infidelity, till the most obvious truths become questionable. Even where the gospel has been received, he can insinuate error, which for the suddeness and malig-

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nity of its effects may be properly compared to poiſon. A healthy man may be poiſoned in a moment, and if he be, the baneful drug is uſually mixed with his food. Many who for a while ſeemed to be ſound in the faith, have had their judgments ſtrongly and ſtrangely perverted, and prevailed upon to renounce and oppoſe the truths they once prized and defended. Such inſtances are ſtriking proofs of human weakneſs, and loud calls to watchfulneſs and dependance, and to beware of leaning to our own underſtandings. For theſe purpoſes he employs both preachers and authors, who by fine words and fair ſpeeches beguile the hearts of the unwary. And by his immediate influence upon the mind, he is able, (if the Lord permits him) to entangle thoſe who are providentially placed out of the reach of corrupt and deſigning men.

He tempts the conſcience. By working upon the unbelief of our hearts, and darkening the glory of the goſpel, he can hold down the ſoul to the number, weight and aggravation of its ſins, ſo that it ſhall not be able to look up to Jeſus, nor draw any comfort from his blood, promiſes and grace. How many go burdened in this manner, ſeeking relief from duties, and perhaps ſpending their ſtrength in things not commanded, though they hear, and perhaps acknowledge the goſpel? Nor are the wiſeſt and moſt eſtabliſhed able to withſtand his aſſaults, if the Lord withdraw and give him leave to employ his power and ſubtilty unreſtrained. The goſpel affords ſufficient ground for an abiding aſſurance of hope, nor ſhould we reſt ſatisfied without it. However, the poſſeſſion and preſervation

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of this privilege depends upon the Lord's preſence with the ſoul, and his ſhielding us from Satan's attacks, for I am perſuaded he is able to ſift and ſhake the ſtrongeſt believer upon earth.

He has likewiſe temptations ſuited to the will. Jeſus makes his people willing in the day of his power; yet there is a contrary principle remaining within them, of which Satan knows how to avail himſelf. There are occaſions in which he almoſt prevails to ſet ſelf again upon the throne, as Dagon was raiſed after he had fallen before the ark. How elſe ſhould any, who have taſted that the Lord is gracious, give way to a repining ſpirit, account his diſpenſations hard, or his precepts too ſtrict, ſo as to ſhrink from their obſervance through the fear of men, or a regard to their worldly intereſt.

Farther, he has ſnares for the affections. In managing theſe he gains a great advantage from our ſituation in a world that knows not God. The ſcripture gives Satan the title of God of this world; and believers learn, by painful experience, how great his power is in and over the perſons and things of it. So that to be ſtedfaſt in wiſdom's ways, requires unremitted efforts, like preſſing through a crowd, or ſwimming againſt a ſtream. How hard is it to live in the midſt of pitch and not be defiled. The air of the world is infectious. Our buſineſs and unavoidable connections are ſo interwoven with occaſions of ſin, and there is ſo much in our hearts ſuited to them, that unleſs we are inceſſantly upheld by almighty ſtrength, we cannot ſtand a day or an hour. Paſt victories afford us no greater ſecurity than they did Samſon, who was ſhamefully

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surprized by enemies whom he had formerly conquered. Nor are we only tempted by compliances that are evil in themselves. With respect to these, perhaps, conscience may be awake, and we stand upon our guard. But we are still upon Satan's ground, and while he may seem to allow himself defeated, he can dexterously change his method, and come upon us where we do not suspect him. For *Perimus in licitis*. Perhaps our greatest danger arises from things in themselves lawful. He can tempt us by our nearest and dearest friend, and pervert every blessing of a kind Providence into an occasion of drawing our hearts from the Giver; yea, spiritual blessings, gifts, comforts, and even graces are sometimes the engines by which he practises against us, to fill us with vain confidence and self-sufficiency, or to lull us into formality and indolence.

That wonderful power, which we call the imagination, is, I suppose, rather the medium of the soul's perceptions during its present state of union with the body, than a spiritual faculty, strictly speaking; but it partakes largely of that depravity which sin has brought upon our whole frame, and affords Satan an avenue for assaulting us with the most terrifying, if not the most dangerous of his temptations. At the best we have but an indifferent command over it. We cannot, by an act of our own will, exclude a thousand painful, wild, inconsistent and hurtful ideas, which are ever ready to obtrude themselves upon our minds; and a slight alteration in the animal system, in the motion of the blood or nervous spirits, is sufficient to withdraw it

wholly from our dominion, and to leave us like a city without walls or gates, expoſed to the incurſion of our enemy. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, and with all our boaſted knowledge of other things can form no conception of what is ſo vaſtly intereſting to us, the myſterious connection between ſoul and body, and the manner in which they are mutually affected by each other. The effects we too ſenſibly feel. The wiſeſt of men would be accounted fools or mad, were they to expreſs in words a ſmall part of what paſſes within them; and it would appear that much of the ſobereſt life, is little better than a waking dream: but how dreadful are the conſequences when the Lord permits ſome hidden pin in the human machine to be altered. Immediately a door flies open, which no hand but his can ſhut, and the enemy pours in like a flood; falſhood and horror and the blackneſs of darkneſs, the judgment is borne down and diſabled, and the moſt diſtreſſing illuſions ſeize us with all the apparent force of evidence and demonſtration. When this is the caſe in a certain degree, we call it diſtraction; but there are various degrees of it, which leave a perſon in the poſſeſſion of his ſenſes, as to the things of common life, and yet are ſufficient, with reſpect to his ſpiritual concerns, to ſhake the very foundations of his hope, and deprive him of all peace and comfort, and make him a terror to himſelf. All the Lord's people are not called to navigate in theſe deep waters of ſoul diſtreſs, but all are liable. Ah, if we knew what ſome ſuffer, the *Horribilia de Deo, et Terribilia de Fide*, which excruciate the minds of thoſe over whom Satan

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is permitted to tyrannize in this way; ſurely we ſhould be more earneſt and frequent in praying, Lead us not into temptation. From ſome little ſenſe I have of the malice and ſubtilty of our ſpiritual enemies, and the weakneſs of thoſe barriers which we have to prevent their aſſaults, I am fully perſuaded that nothing leſs than the continual exertion of that almighty power which preſerves the ſtars in their orbits, can maintain our peace of mind for an hour or a minute. In this view, all comparative difference in external ſituation ſeems to be annihilated; for as the Lord's preſence can make his people happy in a dungeon, ſo there are temptations which, if we felt them, would inſtantly render us incapable of receiving a moment's ſatisfaction from an aſſemblage of all earthly bleſſings, and make the company of our deareſt friends taſteleſs, if not inſupportable.

Ah, how little do the gay and the buſy think of theſe things! How little indeed do they think of them who profeſs to believe them! How faint is the ſenſe of our obligations to *him*, who freely ſubmitted to the fierceſt onſets of the powers of darkneſs, to free us from the puniſhment due to our ſins; otherwiſe we muſt have been for ever ſhut up with thoſe miſerable and mercileſs ſpirits, who delight in our torment, and who, even in the preſent ſtate, if they get acceſs to our minds, can make our exiſtence a burden!

But our Lord, who knows and conſiders our weakneſs, of which we are ſo little aware, allows and directs us to pray, Lead us not into temptation. We are not to expect an abſolute freedom

from temptation; we are called to be ſoldiers, and muſt ſometimes meet with enemies, and perhaps with wounds. Yet conſidering this prayer as provided by him who knows what we are, and where we are, it may afford us both inſtruction and conſolation.

It calls to a conſtant reflection upon our own weakneſs. Believers, eſpecially young ones, are prone to reſt too much in grace received. They feel their hearts warm, and like Peter are ready to pleaſe themſelves with thinking how they would act in ſuch or ſuch a ſtate of trial. It is as if the Lord had ſaid, Poor worms, be not high-minded, but fear and pray that, if it may be, you may be kept from learning, by bitter experience, how weak your ſuppoſed ſtrength is. It ſweetly intimates that all our ways, and all our enemies are in the hands of our great Shepherd. He knows our path. We are ſhort-ſighted, and cannot tell what an hour may bring forth; but we are under his protection, and if we depend upon him we need not be anxiouſly afraid. He will be faithful to the truſt we repoſe in him, and will ſuffer no temptation to overtake us, but what he will ſupport us under and bring us through. But it becomes us to beware of ſecurity and preſumption, to keep our eyes upon him, and not to think ourſelves ſafe a moment longer than our ſpirits feel and breathe the meaning of this petition.

It implies, likewiſe, the duty of watchfulneſs on our part. As our Lord joins them elſewhere, Watch and pray. If we deſire not to be led into temptation, ſurely we are not to run into it. If we

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wiſh to be preſerved from error, we are to guard againſt a curious and reaſoning ſpirit. If we would preſerve peace of conſcience, we muſt beware of trifling with the light and motions of the Holy Spirit, for without his aſſiſtance we cannot maintain faith in exerciſe. If we would not be enſnared by the men of the world, we are to keep at a proper diſtance from them. The leſs we have to do with them the better, excepting ſo far as the providence of God makes it our duty in the diſcharge of our callings and relations, and taking opportunities of doing them good. And though we cannot wholly ſhut Satan out of our imaginations, we ſhould be cautious that we do not wilfully provide fuel for his flame, but intreat the Lord to ſet a watch upon our eyes and our ears, and to teach us to reject the firſt motions and the ſmalleſt appearances of evil.

I have been ſo intent upon my ſubject, that I have once and again forgot I was writing to your Lordſhip. Otherwiſe I ſhould not have let my lucubration run to ſo great a length, which I certainly did not intend when I began. I ſhall not add to this fault by making an apology. I have touched upon a topic of great importance to myſelf. I am one among many who have ſuffered greatly for want of paying more attention to my need of this prayer. O that I could be wiſer hereafter, and always act and ſpeak as knowing that I am always upon a field of battle, and beſet by legions.

I am, with great reſpect,

My Lord, &c.

July — 1776.

LETTER XXIV.

The Christian is the highest style of Man!
Young.

MY LORD,

WITHOUT any preamble, I purpose now to wait on your Lordship, with a few thoughts on the meaning of that name which first obtained at Antioch, in other words, what it is to be a Christian? What are the effects, which (making allowance for the unavoidable infirmities attending upon the present state of mortality) may be expected from a real experimental knowledge of the gospel. I would not insinuate that none are Christians, who do not come up to the character I would describe, for then I fear I should unchristian myself, but only to consider what the scripture encourages us to aim at, as the prize of our high calling in this life. It is generally allowed and lamented, that we are too apt to live below our privileges, and to stop short of what the spirit and the promises of the gospel point out to us as attainable.

Mr. Pope's admired line, An honest man's the noblest work of God, may be admitted as a truth, when rightly explained. A Christian is the noblest work of God in this visible world, and bears a much brighter impression of his glory and goodness, than the sun in the firmament; and none but a Christian can be strictly and properly honest; all others are too much under the power of self, to do universally to others, as they would others should

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do unto them, and nothing but an uniform conduct upon this principle deserves the name of honesty.

The Christian is a new creature, born and taught from above. He has been convinced of his guilt and misery as a sinner, has fled for refuge to the hope set before him, has seen the Son and believed on him. His natural prejudices against the glory and grace of God's salvation, have been subdued and silenced by almighty power, he has accepted the Beloved, and is made acceptable in him. He now knows the Lord, has renounced the confused, distant, uncomfortable notions, he once formed of God; and beholds him in Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life; the only door by which we can enter to any true, satisfying knowledge of God, or communion with him. But he sees God in Christ, reconciled, a Father, a Savior and a Friend, who has freely forgiven him all his sins, and given him the spirit of adoption; he is now no longer a servant, much less a stranger, but a son; and because a son, an heir already interested in all the promises, admitted to the throne of grace, and an assured expectant of eternal glory. The gospel is designed to give us not only a peradventure or a probability, but a certainty both of our acceptance and our perseverance, till death shall be swallowed up in life. And though many are sadly fluctuating and perplexed upon this head, and perhaps all are so for a season, yet there are those who can say, we know that we are of God, and therefore they are stedfast and unmoveable in his way; because they are confident that their labor shall not be in vain, but that when they shall be

abſent from the body, they ſhall be preſent with their Lord. This is the ſtate of the advanced, experienced Chriſtian, who being enabled to make his profeſſion the chief buſineſs of his life, is ſtrong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Every one who has this hope in Chriſt, purifieth himſelf even as he is pure. I would now attempt a ſketch of the Chriſtian's temper, formed upon theſe principles and hopes, under the leading branches of its exerciſe, reſpecting God, himſelf and his fellow-creatures.

The Chriſtian's temper Godward, is evidenced by *Humility*. He has received from Gethſemane and Golgotha, ſuch a ſenſe of the evil of ſin and of the holineſs of God, combined with his matchleſs love to ſinners, as has deeply penetrated his heart; he has an effecting remembrance of the ſtate of rebellion and enmity, in which he once lived againſt this holy and good God; and he has a quick perception of the defilements and defects which ſtill debaſe his beſt ſervices. His mouth is therefore ſtopped as to boaſting, he is vile in his own eyes, and is filled with wonder, that the Lord ſhould viſit ſuch a ſinner with ſuch a ſalvation. He ſees ſo vaſt a diſproportion between the obligations he is under to grace, and the returns he makes, that he is diſpoſed, yea, conſtrained, to adopt the Apoſtle's words without affectation, and to account himſelf leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints; and knowing his own *heart*, while he ſees only the outſide of others, he is not eaſily perſuaded there can be a believer upon earth ſo faint, ſo unfruitful, ſo unworthy as himſelf. Yet, though abaſed, he is not diſcouraged,

discouraged, for he enjoys *peace*. The dignity, offices, blood, righteousness, faithfulness and compassion of the Redeemer, in whom he rests, trusts and lives, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, are adequate to all his wants and wishes, provide him with an answer to every objection, and give him no less confidence in God, than if he were sinless as an angel. For he sees that though sin has abounded in him, grace has much more abounded in Jesus. With respect to the past, all things are become new; with respect to the present and future, he leans upon an Almighty arm, and relies upon the word and power, which made and upholds the heavens and the earth. Though he feels himself unworthy of the smallest mercies, he claims and expects the greatest blessings that God can bestow. And being rooted and grounded in the knowledge and love of Christ, his peace abides, and is not greatly affected, either by the variation of his own frames, or the changes of God's dispensations towards him while here. With such a sense of himself, such a heart-felt peace and heavenly hope, how can his spirit but breathe *Love* to his God and Savior. It is indeed the perfection of his character and happiness, that his soul is united by love to the chief good. The love of Christ is the joy of his heart, and the spring of his obedience. With his Savior's presence, he finds a heaven begun upon earth, and without it, all the other glories of the heavenly state would not content him. The excellence of Christ, his love to sinners, especially his dying love, his love to himself in seeking and saving him when lost,

ſaving him to the uttermoſt—but I muſt ſtop—Your Lordſhip can better conceive than I can deſcribe, how and why Jeſus is dear to the heart that knows him. That part of the Chriſtian's life which is not employed in the active ſervice of his Lord, is chiefly ſpent in ſeeking and maintaining communion with him; for this he plies the throne, and ſtudies the word of grace, and frequents the ordinances where the Lord has promiſed to meet with his people. Theſe are his golden hours; and when thus employed—how poor and trivial does all that the world calls great and important appear in his eyes! Yea he is ſolicitous to keep up an intercourſe of heart with his Beloved, in his buſieſt ſcenes, and ſo far as he can ſucceed, it alleviates all his labors, and ſweetens all his troubles. And when he is neither communing with his Lord, nor acting for him, he accounts his time loſt, and is aſhamed and grieved. The truth of his love is manifeſted by *Submiſſion:* this is two-fold, and abſolute, and without reſerve in each—He ſubmits to his revealed will, as made known to him by precept and by his own example. He aims to tread in his Savior's footſteps, and makes conſcience of *all* his commandments, without exception and without heſitation. Again, he ſubmits to his providential will. He yields to his ſovereignty, acquieſces in his wiſdom; he knows he has no *right* to complain of any thing, becauſe he is a ſinner; and he has no *reaſon*, becauſe he is ſure the Lord does all things well. Therefore this ſubmiſſion is not forced, but is an act of *Truſt*. He knows he is not more unworthy than he is unable to chuſe for himſelf, and

therefore

therefore rejoices that the Lord has undertaken to manage for him; and were he compelled to make his own choice, he could only chuſe, that all his concerns ſhould remain in that hand to which he has already committed them. And thus he judges of *public* as well as of his perſonal affairs. He cannot be an unaffected ſpectator of national ſins, nor without apprehenſion of their deſerved conſequences, he feels, and almoſt trembles, for others, but he himſelf dwells under the ſhadow of the Almighty, in a ſanctuary that cannot be forced, and therefore ſhould he ſee the earth ſhaken, and the mountains caſt into the midſt of the ſea, his heart would not be greatly moved, for God is his refuge. The Lord reigns. He ſees his Savior's hands directing every dark appearance, and over-ruling all, to the accompliſhment of his own great purpoſes; this ſatisfies him; and though the winds and waves ſhould be high, he can venture his own little bark in the ſtorm, for he has an infallible and almighty pilot on board with him. And indeed why ſhould he fear, when he has nothing to loſe? His beſt concerns are ſafe, and other things he holds as gifts from his Lord, to whoſe call he is ready to reſign them, in whatever way he pleaſes, well knowing that creatures and inſtruments cannot, of themſelves, touch a hair of his head without the Lord's permiſſion, and that if he does permit them, it muſt be for the beſt.

I might enlarge farther—but I ſhall proceed to conſider the Chriſtian's temper reſpecting himſelf. He lives godly and *ſoberly*. By ſobriety we mean more than that he is not a drunkard. His tempers

toward God of courſe form him to a moderation in all temporal things. He is not ſcrupulous or ſuperſtitious; he underſtands the liberty of the goſpel, that every creature of God is good, if it be received with thankſgiving: he does not aim at being needleſsly ſingular, nor practice ſelf-deviſed auſterities. The Chriſtian is neither a Stoic nor a Cynic, yet he finds daily cauſe for watchfulneſs and reſtraint. Satan will not often tempt a believer to groſs crimes; our greateſt ſnares, and ſoreſt conflicts are uſually found in things lawful in themſelves, but hurtful to us by their abuſe, engroſſing too much of our time, or of our hearts, or ſomehow indiſpoſing us for communion with the Lord.—The Chriſtian will be jealous of any thing that might entangle his affections, damp his zeal, or ſtraiten him in his opportunities of ſerving his Savior. He is likewiſe content with his ſituation, becauſe the Lord chuſes it for him; his ſpirit is not eager for additions and alterations in his circumſtances. If divine providence points out and leads to a change, he is ready to follow, though it ſhould be what the world would call from a better to a worſe. For he is a pilgrim and a ſtranger here, and a citizen of heaven. As people of fortune ſometimes, in travelling, ſubmit chearfully to inconvenient accommodations, very different from their homes, and comfort themſelves with thinking they are not always to live ſo; ſo the Chriſtian is not greatly ſolicitous about externals. If he has them, he will uſe them moderately—If he has but little of them, he can make a good ſhift without them, he is but upon a journey, and will ſoon be at home.

If he be rich, experience confirms our Lord's words, *Luke* xii. 15. and ſatisfies him that a large room, a crowd of ſervants, and twenty diſhes upon his table, add nothing to the real happineſs of life. Therefore he will not have his heart ſet upon ſuch things. If he be in a humbler ſtate, he is more diſpoſed to pity than to envy thoſe above him, for he judges they muſt have many incumbrances from which he is freed: however the will of God and the light of his countenance, are the chief things the Chriſtian whether rich or poor regards, and therefore his moderation is made known unto all men.

A third branch of the Chriſtian's temper reſpects his fellow-creatures. And here, methinks, if I had not filled a ſheet already, I could enlarge with pleaſure. We have in this degenerate day, among thoſe who claim and are allowed the name of Chriſtian, too many of a narrow, ſelfiſh, mercenary ſpirit, but in the beginning it was not ſo. The goſpel is deſigned to cure ſuch a ſpirit, but gives no indulgence to it. A Chriſtian has the mind of Chriſt, who went about doing good, who makes his ſun to ſhine upon the good and the evil, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and the unjuſt. His Lord's example forms him to the habit of diffuſive Benevolence; he breathes a ſpirit of good-will to mankind, and rejoices in every opportunity of being uſeful to the ſouls and bodies of others, without reſpect to parties or intereſts. He commiſerates, and would if poſſible alleviate the miſeries of all around him: and if his actual ſervices are reſtrained by want of ability, yet all ſhare in his ſympathy and prayers. Acting in the ſpirit of his maſter, he frequently meets with a meaſure

measure of the like treatment; but if his good is requited with evil, he labors to overcome evil with good. He feels himself a sinner, and needs much forgiveness; this makes him ready to forgive. He is not haughty, captious, easily offended, or hard to be reconciled, for at the feet of Jesus he has learned Meekness; and when he meets with unkindness or injustice, he considers that though he has not deserved such things from men, they are instruments employed by his Heavenly Father, (from whom he has deserved to suffer much more) for his humiliation and chastisement; and is therefore more concerned for their sins than for his own sufferings, and prays, after the pattern of his Savior, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do. He knows he is fallible, therefore cannot be positive. He knows he is frail, and therefore dares not be censorious. As a member of society he is Just, punctual in the discharge of every relative duty, faithful to his engagements and promises, rendering to all their dues, obedient to lawful authority, and acting to all men according to the golden rule of doing as he would be done by. His conduct is Simple, devoid of artifice and consistent, attending to every branch of duty; and in the closet, the family, the church, and in the transactions of common life he is the same man, for in every circumstance he serves the Lord, and aims to maintain a conscience void of offence in his sight. No small part of the beauty of his profession in the sight of men, consists in the due government of his tongue. The law of truth and kindness and purity is upon his lips. He abhors lying, and is so far from inventing

venting a ſlander, that he will not repeat a report to the diſadvantage of his neighbor, however true, without a proper call. His converſe is chearful, but inoffenſive, and he will no more wound another with his wit (if he has a talent that way) than with a knife. His ſpeech is with grace, ſeaſoned with ſalt, and ſuited to promote the peace and edification of all around him.

Such is the Chriſtian in civil life, but though he loves all mankind, he ſtands in a nearer relation, and bears an eſpecial Brotherly Love, to all who are partakers of the faith and hope of the gopſel. This regard is not confined within the pale of a denomination, but extended to all who love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity. He calls no man Maſter himſelf, nor does he wiſh to impoſe a Shibboleth of his own upon others. He rejoices in the image of God wherever he ſees it, and in the work of God wherever it is carried on. Though tenacious of the truths which the Lord has taught him, his heart is open to thoſe who differ from him in leſs eſſential points, and allows to others that right of private judgment which he claims for himſelf, and is diſpoſed to hold communion in love, with all who hold the head. He cannot indeed countenance thoſe, who ſet aſide the one foundation which God has laid in Zion, and maintain errors derogatory to the honor of his Savior, or ſubverſive of the faith and experience of his people; yet he wiſhes well to their perſons, pities and prays for them, and is ready in meekneſs to inſtruct them that oppoſe; but there is no bitterneſs in his zeal,

being

being ſenſible that raillery and invective are diſhonorable to the cauſe of truth, and quite unſuitable in the mouth of a ſinner, who owes all that diſtinguiſhes him from the vileſt of men, to the free grace of God. In a word, he is influenced by the wiſdom from above, which as it is pure, is likewiſe peaceable, gentle and eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good works, without partiality and without hypocriſy.

I muſt juſt recur to my firſt head, and obſerve that with this ſpirit and deportment, the Chriſtian, while he is enabled to maintain a conſcience void of offence towards God and man, is ſtill ſenſible and mindful of indwelling ſin, he has his eye more upon his rule than upon his attainments, and therefore finds and confeſſes that in every thing he comes exceedingly ſhort, and that his beſt ſervices are not only defective but defiled. He accounts himſelf an unprofitable ſervant, is abaſed in his own eyes, and derives all his hope and comfort, as well as his ſtrength from Jeſus, whom he has known, received and truſted, to whom he has committed his ſoul, in whom he rejoices, and worſhips God in the ſpirit, renouncing all confidence in the fleſh, and eſteeming all things as loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus his Lord.

If I have lately been rather tardy in making my payments to your Lordſhip, I have proportionably increaſed the quantity. It is high time I ſhould now relieve your patience. I hope I long to be a Chriſtian indeed. And I hope this haſty exemplification of my wiſhes, will anſwer to your Lordſhip's

Lordship's experience better than I fear it does to my own. May I beg a remembrance in your prayers, that he who has given me to will and desire, may work in me to be and to do according to his own good pleasure.

I am,

Sept. — 1776.

My Lord, &c.

LET-

LETTER XXV.

My Lord,

MY London journey, which prevented my writing in October, made me amends by an opportunity of waiting upon your Lordſhip in perſon; ſuch ſeaſons are not only pleaſant at the time, but afford me pleaſure in the review—I could have wiſhed the half hour we were together by ourſelves prolonged to half a day. The ſubject your Lordſhip was pleaſed to ſuggeſt has been often upon my mind, and glad ſhould I be were I able to offer you any thing ſatisfactory upon it. There is no doubt but firſt religious impreſſions are uſually mingled with much of a legal ſpirit, and that conſcience at ſuch a time is not only tender but miſinformed and ſcrupulous: and I believe, as your Lordſhip intimated, that when the mind is more enlightened, and we feel a liberty from many fetters we had impoſed upon ourſelves, we are in danger of verging too far towards the other extreme. It ſeems to me that no one perſon can adjuſt the medium, and draw the line exactly for another. There are ſo many particulars in every ſituation, of which a ſtranger cannot be a competent judge, and the beſt human advices and models are mixed with ſuch defects, that it is not *right* to expect others to be abſolutely guided by our rules, nor is it *ſafe* for us implicitly to adopt the deciſions or practices of others. But the ſcripture undoubtedly furniſhes ſufficient

ſufficient and infallible rules for every perſon, however circumſtanced; and the throne of grace is appointed for us to wait upon the Lord for the beſt expoſition of his precepts. Thus David often prays to be led in the right way, in the path of judgment. By frequent prayer and cloſe acquaintance with the ſcripture, and an habitual attention to the frame of our hearts; there is a certain delicacy of ſpiritual taſte and diſcernment to be acquired, which renders a nice diſquiſition concerning the nature and limits of the Adiaphora as they are called, or how near we may go to the utmoſt bounds of what is right, without being wrong, quite unneceſſary. Love is the cleareſt and moſt perſuaſive caſuiſt, and when our love to the Lord is in lively exerciſe, and the rule of his word is in our eye, we ſeldom make great miſtakes. And I believe the overdoings of a young convert, proceeding from an honeſt ſimplicity of heart, and a deſire of pleaſing the Lord, are more acceptable in his ſight, than a certain coolneſs of conduct which frequently takes place afterward, when we are apt to look back with pity upon our former weakneſs, and ſecretly to applaud ourſelves for our preſent greater attainments in knowledge, though perhaps (alas that it ſhould ever be ſo) we may have loſt as much in warmth as we have gained in light.

From the time we know the Lord, and are bound to him by the cords of love and gratitude, the two chief points we ſhould have in our view, I apprehend are to maintain communion with him in our own ſouls, and to glorify him in the ſight of men. Agreeable to theſe views, though the ſcripture does

does not enumerate or decide, *totidem verbis*, for or againſt many things which ſome plead for and others condemn, yet it furniſhes us with ſome general canons, which, if rightly applied, will perhaps go a good way towards ſettling the debate, at leaſt to the ſatisfaction of thoſe who would rather pleaſe God than man. Some of theſe canons I will juſt mark to your Lordſhip—*Rom.* xii. 1, 2. 1 *Cor.* viii. 13, and x. 31. 2 *Cor.* vi. 17. *Epheſ.* iv. 30. *Epheſ.* v. 11, 15, 16. 1 *Theſ.* v. 22. *Epheſ.* vi. 18. To which I may add, as ſuitable to the preſent times, *Iſa.* xxii. 12. *Luke* xxi. 34. I apprehend the ſpirit of theſe and ſimilar paſſages of ſcripture (for it would be eaſy to adduce a larger number) will bring a Chriſtian under ſuch reſtrictions as follow.

To avoid and forbear, for his own ſake, whatever has a tendency to damp and indiſpoſe his ſpirit in attendance upon the means of grace, for ſuch things, if they be not condemned as ſinful *per ſe*, if they be not abſolutely unlawful, yea though they be, when duly regulated, lawful and right (for often our chief ſnares are entwined with our bleſſings); yet if they have a repeated and evident tendency to deaden our hearts to divine things, of which each perſon's experience muſt determine; there muſt be ſomething in them, either in ſeaſon, meaſure or circumſtance, wrong to us, and let them promiſe what they will, they do but rob us of our gold to pay us with counters. For the light of God's countenance, and an open chearfulneſs of ſpirit in walking with him in private is our chief joy; and we muſt be already greatly hurt, if any thing can be purſued,

purſued, allowed or reſted in as a tolerable ſubſtitute for it.

For the ſake of the church, and the influence example may have upon his fellow-chriſtians, the law of charity and prudence will often require a believer to abſtain from ſome things not becauſe they are unlawful, but inexpedient. Thus the Apoſtle, though ſtrenuous for the *right* of his chriſtian liberty, would have abridged himſelf of the *uſe*, ſo as to eat no meat, rather than offend a weak brother, rather than miſlead him to act againſt the preſent light of his conſcience. Upon this principle, if I could, without hurt to myſelf, attend ſome public amuſements, as a concert or oratorio, and return from thence with a warm heart to my cloſet (the poſſibility of which in my own caſe I greatly queſtion) yet I ſhould think it my duty to forbear, leſt ſome weaker than myſelf ſhould be encouraged by me to make the like experiment, though in their own minds they might fear it was wrong, and have no other reaſon to think it lawful but becauſe I did it: in which caſe I ſhould ſuſpect that though I received no harm they would. And I have known and converſed with ſome who I fear have made ſhipwreck of their profeſſion; who have dated their firſt decline from imitating others, whom they thought wiſer and better than themſelves, in ſuch kind of compliances. And it ſeems that an obligation to this ſort of ſelf-denial riſes and is ſtrengthened in proportion to the weight and influence of our characters. Were I in private life, I do not know that I ſhould think it ſinful to kill a partridge or a hare; but as a Miniſter I no more

dare

dare do it than I dare join in a drunken frolic, because I know it would give offence to some, and be pleaded for as a licence by others.

There is a duty and a charity likewise which we owe to the world at large, as well as a faithfulness to God and his grace, in our necessary converse among them. This seems to require, that though we should not be needlessly singular, yet for their instruction, and for the honor of our Lord and Master, we should keep up a certain kind of singularity, and shew ourselves called to be a separated people. That though the providence of God has given us callings and relations to fill up (in which we cannot be too exact) yet we are not of the world, but belong to another community, and act from other principles, by other rules and to other ends than the generality of those about us. I have observed that the world will often leave professors in quiet possession of their notions and sentiments and places of worship, provided they will not be too stiff in the matter of conformity with their more general customs and amusements —But I fear many of them have had their prejudices strengthened against our holy religion by such compliances, and have thought that if there were such joy and comfort to be found in the ways of God, as they hear from our pulpits, professors would not, in such numbers and so often, run amongst them to beg a relief from the burden of time hanging upon their hands. As our Lord Jesus is the great representative of his people in heaven, he does them the honor to continue a succession of them as his representatives upon earth. Happy are they who are favored with most

most of the holy unction, and best enabled to manifest to all around them, by their spirit, tempers and conversation, what is the proper design and genuine effect of his gospel upon the hearts of sinners.

In our way of little life in the country, serious people often complain of the snares they meet with from worldly people, and yet they must mix with them to get a livelihood. I advise them, if they can, to do their business with the world, as they do it in the rain. If their business calls them abroad, they will not leave it undone for fear of being a little wet; but then, when it is done, they presently seek shelter, and will not stand in the rain for pleasure. So providential and necessary calls of duty, that lead us into the world, will not hurt us if we find the spirit of the world unpleasant, and are glad to retire from it, and keep out of it as much as our relative duties will permit. That which is our cross is not so likely to be our snare; but if that spirit which we should always watch and pray against, infects and assimilates our minds to itself, then we are sure to suffer loss, and act below the dignity of our profession.

The value of time is likewise to be taken into the account.—It is a precious talent, and our Christian profession opens a wide field for the due improvement of it. Much of it has been already lost, and therefore we are exhorted to redeem it. I think many things which custom pleads for will be excluded from a suitableness to a Christian, for this one reason, that they are not consistent with the simplest notion of the redemption of time. It

is generally said we need relaxation, I allow it in a sense; the Lord himself has provided it; and because our spirits are too weak to be always upon the wing in meditation and prayer, he has appointed to all men, from the king downwards, something to do in a secular way. The poor are to labor, the rich are not exempted from something equivalent. And when every thing of this sort in each person's situation is properly attended to, I apprehend, if the heart be alive and in a right state, spiritual concernments will present themselves, as affording the noblest, sweetest and most interesting relaxation from the cares and business of life; as, on the other hand, that business will be the best relaxation, and unbending of the mind from religious exercises; and between the two, perhaps there ought to be but little mere leisure time. A life *in this sense*, divided between God and the world, is desirable— When one part of it is spent in retirement, seeking after and conversing with him whom our souls love, and the other part of it employed in active services for the good of our family, friends, the church and society, for his sake. Every hour which does not fall in with one or other of these views, I apprehend is lost time.

The day in which we live, seems likewise to call for something of a peculiar spirit in the Lord's people. It is a day of abounding sin, and I fear a day of impending judgment. The world, as it was in the days of Noah and Lot, is secure. We are soon to have a day of apparent humiliation. But the just causes for it are not confined to one day,

day, but will subsist and too probably increase every day. If I am not mistaken in the signs of the times, there never was, within the annals of the English history, a period in which the spirit and employment described *Ezek.* ix. 4. could be more suitable than the present. The Lord calls for mourning and weeping, but the words of many are stout against him; new species of dissipation are invented almost daily, and the language of those who bear the greatest sway in what is called the polite circle, I mean the interpretative language of their hearts, is like that of the rebellious Jews, *Jer.* xliv. 16, 17, &c. As for the word which thou hast spoken, we will not hearken unto thee at all.—In short, things are coming to a point, and it seems to be almost putting to the vote whether the Lord or Baal be God. In this state of affairs, methinks, we cannot be too explicit in avowing our attachment to the Lord, nor too careful in avoiding an improper correspondence with those who are in confederacy against him. We know not how soon we may greatly need that mark of providential protection which is restrained to those who sigh and cry for our abominations. Upon the whole, it appears to me, that it is more honorable, comfortable and safe (if we cannot exactly hit the golden mean) to be thought by some too scrupulous and precise, than actually to be found too compliant with those things, which, if not absolutely contrary to a divine commandment, are hardly compatible with the genius of the gospel, or conformable to the mind that was in Christ Jesus, which ought also to be in his people. The places and amusements which the world frequent and admire, where occa-

sions and temptations to sin are cultivated, where the law of what is called good-breeding, is the only law which may not be violated with impunity, where sinful passions are provoked and indulged, where the fear of God is so little known or regarded, that those who do fear him must hold their tongues though they should hear his name blasphemed, can hardly be a Christian's voluntary chosen ground. Yet I fear these characters will apply to every kind of polite amusement or assembly in the kingdom.

As to family connections, I cannot think we are bound to break or slight them. But as believers and their friends often live as it were in two elements, there is a mutual awkwardness which makes their interviews rather dry and tedious.—But upon that account they are less frequent than they would otherwise be, which seems an advantage. Both sides keep up returns of civility and affection, but as they cannot unite in sentiment and leading inclination, they will not contrive to be very often together, except there is something considerable given up by one or the other. And I think Christians ought to be very cautious what concessions they make upon this account. But, as I said at the beginning, no general positive rules can be laid down.

I have simply given your Lordship such thoughts as have occurred to me while writing, without study and without coherence. I dare not be dogmatical, but I think what I have written is agreeable both to particular texts and to the general tenor of scripture. I submit it to your judgment.

Nov. — 1776. I am, my Lord, &c.

LET-

LETTER XXVI.

MY LORD,

I OWE your Lordship a quire of letters, for the favor and pleasure of your late visit—and therefore I must begin and write away.

I have lately read Robertson's History of Charles V. which, like most other histories, I consider as a comment upon those passages of scripture, which teach us, the depravity of man, the deceitfulness of the heart, the ruinous effects of sin, and the powerful though secret rule of Divine Providence, moving, directing, controlling the designs and actions of men, with an unerring hand, to the accomplishment of his own purposes, both of mercy and judgment. Without the clue and the light which the word of God affords, the history of mankind, of any, of every age, only presents to view a labyrinth and a chaos; a detail of wickedness and misery to make us tremble, and a confused jumble of interfering incidents, as destitute of stability, connection or order, as the clouds which fly over our heads. In this view, *Delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi*, may serve as a motto to all the histories I have seen. But with the scripture key, all is plain, all is instructive. Then I see, verily there is a God who governs the earth, who pours contempt upon princes, takes the wise in their own craftiness, over-rules the wrath and pride of man, to bring his own designs to pass;

and reſtrains all that is not neceſſary to that end, blaſting the beſt concerted enterprizes at one time, by means apparently ſlight, and altogether unexpected, and at other times producing the moſt important events, from inſtruments and circumſtances, which are at firſt thought too feeble and trivial to deſerve notice. I ſhould like to ſee a writer of Dr. Robertſon's abilities give us a hiſtory upon this plan, but I think his reflections of this ſort, are too general, too cold and too few——What an empty Phantom, do the great men of the world purſue—while they wage war with the peace of mankind, and butcher (in the courſe of their lives) perhaps hundreds of thouſands, to maintain the ſhadow of authority over diſtant nations, whom they can reach with no other influence than that of oppreſſion and devaſtation. But when we conſider thoſe, who are ſacrificed to their ambition, as juſtly ſuffering for their ſins, then Heroes and Conquerors appear in their proper light, and worthy to be claſſed with earthquakes and peſtilences, as inſtruments of Divine Vengeance. So many cares, ſo much pains, ſo many miſchiefs—merely to ſupport the idea a worm has formed of his own grandeur, is a proof that man by nature is not only depraved, but infatuated. Permit me to preſent my thoughts to more advantage in the words of M. Nicole:——

" Un Grand dans ſon idée n'eſt pas un ſeul homme; c'eſt un homme environné de tous ceux qui ſont à lui, & qui s'imagine avoir autant de bras qu'ils en ont tous enſemble, parce qu'il en diſpoſe & qu'il les remue. Un General d'armée ſe repreſente

preſente toujours à lui-même, au milieu de tous ſes ſoldats. Ainſi chacun tâche d'occuper le plus de place qu'il peut dans ſon imagination, & l'on ne ſe pouſſe, & ne s'agrandit dans le monde, que pour augmentir l'idée que chacun ſe forme de ſoi-même. Voilà le but de tous les deſſeins ambitieux des hommes! Alexandre & Ceſar n'ont point eu d'autre vûe dans toutes leurs batailles que celle-là. Et ſi l'on demande pourquoi le Grand Seigneur a fait depuis peu perir cent mille hommes devant Candie, on peut repondre ſurement, que ce n'eſt que pour attacher encore à cette image interieure qu'il a de lui-même, le titre de Conquerant." *

How awful is the caſe of thoſe who live and die in ſuch a ſpirit, and who have multiplied miſeries upon their fellow-creatures in order to ſupport and feed it. Perhaps they may, upon their entrance on another ſtate, be accoſted by multitudes, to the purport of that ſarcaſtical language in the Prophet's ſublime ode of triumph over the King of Babylon, *Iſa.* xiv. 5—17.

Hic eſt, quem Fuga, quem Pavor
Præceſſit? hic, quem terricolis gravem
Strages ſecuta eſt, Vaſtitas que? hic
Attoniti ſpoliator orbis?

But though the effects of this principle of ſelf, are more extenſive and calamitous, in proportion as thoſe who are governed by it are more elevated; the principle itſelf is deep-rooted in every heart, and is the ſpring of every action, till grace infuſes

* Eſſais de Morale, Vol. I.

a new principle, and ſelf, like Dagon, falls before the Lord of Hoſts. Great and ſmall are but relative terms, and the paſſions of diſcontent, pride and envy, which, in the breaſt of a Potentate, are ſeverely felt by one half of Europe, exert themſelves with equal ſtrength in the heart of a peaſant, though for want of materials and opportunities, their operations are confined within narrow bounds. We are fallen into a ſtate of groſs idolatry, and ſelf is the idol we worſhip.

I am, &c.

July — 1777.

EIGHT

EIGHT

LETTERS

TO THE

REVEREND MR. S——.

Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt
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LETTERS

TO

The Rev. Mr. S——.

LETTER I.

Dear Sir,

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

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

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

think it too early, as yet, to prescribe to yourself rules and determinations for the government of your future life. Should the will of God appoint you a new path for service, he may, sooner than you are aware, quiet your mind, and enable you to subscribe with as full a persuasion of mind, as you now object to subscription. If it depended upon me, I could be content that the Creed should rest at the bottom of the sea, rather than embarras a single person of *your* disposition. Nor am I a warm stickler for subscription in itself, but something of this kind seems necessary upon the supposition of an establishment.

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

allowed to put their own ſenſe upon the terms) though the ſenſe they maintain be utterly inconſiſtent with what thoſe who are enlightened by the Holy Spirit learn from the ſame expreſſions.

I acknowledge, indeed, that the end is not anſwered by the preſent method; ſince there are too many like the perſon you mention, who would eaſily ſubſcribe 900 articles, rather than baulk his preferment: yet the profligacy of ſome ſeems to be no juſt reaſon why the Church, why any Church, ſhould not be at liberty to define the terms upon which they will accept members or teachers, or why conſcientious perſons ſhould object to theſe terms (if they think them agreeable to the truth) merely becauſe they are not expreſſed in the preciſe words of ſcripture. If allowance may be made for human infirmity in the *Liturgy*, I ſee not why the *Articles* may not be intitled to the ſame priviledge. For it ſeems requiſite, that we ſhould be as well ſatisfied with the expreſſions we uſe with our lips, in frequent ſolemn prayer to God, as in what we ſubſcribe with our hands. I am perſuaded that the leaders of the Aſſociation at the Feathers Tavern, ſome of them at leaſt, though they begin with the affair of ſubſcription, would not (if they might have their wiſh) ſtop there, but would go on with their projected reform, till they had overturned the Liturgy alſo, or at leaſt weeded it from every expreſſion that bears teſtimony to the Deity of the Savior, and the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit. I bleſs God that you are far otherwiſe minded.

I hope however, though you ſhould not think yourſelf at liberty to repeat your ſubſcription, the

Lord

Lord will make you comfortable and useful in your present rank as a Curate. Preferment is not necessary either to our peace or usefulness. We may live and die contentedly, without the honors and emoluments, which aspiring men thirst after, if he be pleased to honor us with a dispensation to preach *his* gospel, and to crown our endeavours with a blessing. He that winneth souls is wise. Wise in the choice of the highest end he can propose to himself in this life, wise in the improvement of the only means, by which this desirable end can be attained. Wherever we cast our eyes, the bulk of the people are ignorant, immoral, careless. They live without God in the world. They are neither awed by his authority, or affected by his goodness, or enabled to trust to his promises, or disposed to aim at his glory. If perhaps they have a serious interval, or some comparative sobriety of character, they ground their hopes upon their own doings, endeavors or purposes, and treat the inexpressible love of God revealed in Christ, and the gospel method of salvation by faith in his name, with neglect, often with contempt. They have preachers whom perhaps they hear with some pleasure, because they neither alarm their consciences by insisting on the spirituality and sanction of the Divine Law, nor offend their pride by publishing the humiliating doctrines of that gospel, which is the power of God through faith unto salvation. Therefore what they do speak, they speak in vain; the world grows worse and worse under their instructions, infidelity and profligacy abound more and more, for God will own no other doctrine but

what

what the Apoſtle calls the truth as it is in Jeſus. That doctrine which drives the ſinner from all his vain pleas, and points out the Lord Jeſus Chriſt as the only ground of hope, the ſupreme object of deſire, as appointed of God, to be wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification and redemption, to all who believe in his name. When miniſters themſelves are convinced of ſin, and feel the neceſſity of an Almighty Savior, they preſently account their former gain but loſs, and determine, with the Apoſtle, to know nothing but Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified. In proportion as they do this, they are ſure to be wondered at, laughed at, and railed at, if the providence of God and the conſtitution of their country ſecure them from ſeverer treatment.—But they have this invaluable compenſation, that they no longer ſpeak without effect. In a greater or leſs degree a change takes place in their auditories—the blind receive their ſight, the deaf hear, the lepers are cleanſed—ſinners are turned from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan to God. Sinful practices are forſaken, and a new courſe of life in the converts, evidences that they have not followed cunningly deviſed fables, or taken up with uncertain notions, but that God has indeed quickened them by his Spirit, and given them an underſtanding to know him that is true. The preachers likewiſe, while they attempt to teach others, are taught themſelves. A bleſſing deſcends upon their ſtudies and labors, upon their peruſal of the ſcripture, upon their attention to what paſſes within them and around them. The events of every day contribute to throw light upon the word of God,

their

their views of divine truth grow more enlarged, connected and comprehensive. Many difficulties, which perplexed them at their first setting out, trouble them no more. The God whom they serve, and on whom they wait, reveals to them those great things, which, though plainly expressed in the letter of the scripture, cannot be understood and realized without divine teaching, 1 *Cor.* ii. v. 9—15. Thus they go on from strength to strength, hard things become easy, and a divine light shines upon their paths. Opposition from men perhaps may increase, they may expect to be represented as those who turn the world upside down. The cry μεγαλη η Αρτεμις * will be raised against them, the gates of the temple of preferment will be seldom open to them, but they will have the unspeakable consolation of applying to themselves those lively words of the Apostle, ὡς λυπουμενοι, αει δε χαιροντες· ὡς πτωχοι, πολλους δε πλουτιζοντες· ὡς μηδεν εχοντες, και παντα κατεχοντες. †

It is the strain of evident sincerity which runs through your letters, that gives me a pleasing confidence the Lord is with you. A disinterested desire of knowing the truth, with a willingness to follow it through all disadvantages, is a preparation of the heart which only God can give. He has directed you to the right method, searching the scripture with prayer. Go on, and may his blessing attend you; you may see from what I have written above, what is the desire of my heart for you. But I am

* Great is Diana. † 2 Cor. vi. 10.

not

not impatient. Follow your heavenly leader, and in his own time and manner he will make your way plain. I have travelled the path before you, I see what you yet want, I cannot impart it to you, but he can and I trust he will. It will rejoice my soul to be any way assistant to you, but I am afraid I should not afford you much, either profit or satisfaction, by entering upon a dry defence of Creeds and Articles.

The truths of scripture are not like mathematical theorems, which present exactly the same ideas to every person who understands the terms. The word of God is compared to a mirror, 2 *Cor.* iii. 18. But it is a mirror in which the longer we look the more we see; the view will be still growing upon us, and still we shall see but in part, while on this side eternity. When our Lord pronounced Peter blessed, declaring he had learnt that which flesh and blood could not have taught him, yet Peter was at that time much in the dark. The sufferings and death of Jesus, though the only and necessary means of his salvation, were an offence to him. But he lived to glory in what he once could not bear to hear of. Peter had received grace to love the Lord Jesus, to follow him, to venture all, and to forsake all for him: these first good dispositions were of God, and they led to further advances. So it is still. By nature Self rules in the heart; when this idol is brought low, and we are truly willing to be the Lord's, and to apply to him for strength and direction, that we may serve him, the good work is begun; for it is a truth that holds universally and without exception, a man can receive nothing except

cept it be *given* him from heaven. The Lord firſt *finds* us when we are thinking of ſomething elſe, *Iſaiah* lxv. 1. And then we begin to ſeek him in good earneſt, and he has promiſed to be *found* of us. People may, by induſtry and natural abilities, make themſelves maſters of the external evidences of Chriſtianity, and have much to ſay for and againſt different ſchemes and ſyſtems of ſentiments; but all this while the heart remains untouched. True religion is not a ſcience of the head, ſo much as an inward and heart-felt perception, which caſts down imaginations, and every υψωμα that exalteth itſelf in the mind, and brings every thought into a ſweet and willing ſubjection to Chriſt by *faith*. Here the learned have no real advantage above the ignorant, both ſee when the eyes of the underſtanding are enlightened, till then both are equally blind. And the firſt leſſon in the ſchool of Chriſt, is to become a little child, ſitting ſimply at his feet, that we may be made wiſe unto ſalvation.

I was not only prevented beginning my letter ſo ſoon as I wiſhed, but have been unuſually interrupted ſince I began it. Often as ſoon as I could well take the pen in hand, I have been called away to attend company and intervening buſineſs. Though I perſuade myſelf, after what I have formerly ſaid, you will put a favorable conſtruction upon my delay, yet it has given me ſome pain. I ſet a great value upon your offer of friendſhip, which I truſt will not be interrupted on either ſide, by the freedom with which we mutually expreſs our difference of ſentiments, when we are conſtrained to differ. You pleaſe me with entruſting me with the

the first rough draught of your thoughts, and you may easily perceive by my manner of writing, that I place equal confidence in your candor. I shall be glad to exchange letters as often as it suits us, without constraint, ceremony or apology; and may he who is always present with our hearts make our correspondence useful. I pray God to be your sun and shield, your light and strength, to guide you with his eye, to comfort you with his gracious presence in your own soul, and to make you an happy instrument of comforting many.

I am, with great sincerity,

Dear Sir, &c.

June 23. 1775.

LET-

LETTER II.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I Gladly adopt your addreſs, and can aſſure you that the interchange of every letter unites my heart more cloſely to you. I am glad to find that your views of Articles and Creeds are not likely to hinder you from going forward in your preſent ſituation; and if, without contracting your uſefulneſs, they only prove a bar to your preferment, I am ſure it will be no grief of mind to you at the hour of death or the day of judgment, that you were enabled to follow the dictates of conſcience, in oppoſition to all the pleas of cuſtom or intereſt. Since, therefore, I have no deſire of ſhaking your reſolves, may we not drop this ſubject entirely? For indeed I act but an aukward part in it, being by no means myſelf an admirer of Articles and Creeds, or diſpoſed to be a warm advocate for Church Power. The propriety of our national eſtabliſhment, or of any other, is what I have not much to do with; I found it as it is, nor have I influence to alter it, were I willing. The queſtion in which I was concerned, was ſimply, Whether I, *rebus ſic ſtantibus*, could ſubmit to it, ſo as conſcientiouſly to take a deſignation to the miniſtry under it? I thought I could, I accordingly did, and I am thankful that I never have ſeen cauſe to repent it.

You ſeem gently to charge me with a want of candor in what I obſerved or apprehended, concerning

ing the Gentlemen of the Feathers Tavern. If I miſtake not (for I retain no copies of my letters) I expreſſed myſelf with a double reſtriction, by firſt ſaying the *leaders* of that ſociety, and then adding, or *ſome of them at leaſt.* I apprehend your candor will hardly lead you to ſuppoſe that there are *none* amongſt them who would pull down the whole fabric (that is I mean ſo far as it croſſes the Socinian ſcheme) if it was left to their choice. I apprehend I may, without the leaſt breach of candor, ſuppoſe that the exceptions which Mr. Lindſay has made to the Liturgy, are not peculiar to himſelf. It ſeems plain in his caſe, and from his own writings, that the mere removal of ſubſcriptions, which is the immediate and oſtenſible object of the clerical petition, could not have ſatisfied *him.* And it is paſt a doubt with me, that there are others of the clergy like-minded with him. Indeed I could wiſh to be thought candid by *you.* Though I confeſs I am not a friend to that lukewarmneſs and indifference for truth, which bears the name of candor among many in the preſent day. I deſire to maintain a ſpirit of candor and benevolence to all men, to wiſh them well, to do them every good office in my power, and to commend what appears to me commendable in a Socinian, as readily as in a Calviniſt. But with ſome people I can only go *uſque ad aras.* I muſt judge of principles by the word of God, and of the tree by its fruit. I meddle with no man's final ſtate, becauſe I know that he who is exalted to give repentance and remiſſion of ſins, can do it whenever and to whomſoever he is pleaſed. Yet I firmly believe, and I make no ſcruple of proclaiming it, that

ſwearers,

ſwearers, drunkards, adulterers, *continuing ſuch*, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. And I look with no leſs compaſſion upon ſome perſons whoſe characters in common life may be reſpectable, when I ſee them unhappily blinded by their own wiſdom, and while they account themſelves, and are accounted by many others maſter-builders in Zion, rejecting the only foundation upon which a ſinner's hope can be ſafely built.

I am far from thinking the Socinians all hypocrites, but I think they are all in a moſt dangerous error; nor do their principles exhibit to my view, a whit more of the genuine fruits of Chriſtianity than Deiſm itſelf. You ſay, "If they be ſincere, and fail not for want of diligence in ſearching, I cannot help thinking that God will not condemn them for an inevitable defect in their underſtandings." Indeed, my friend, I have ſuch a low opinion of man in his depraved ſtate, that I believe no one has real ſincerity in religious matters till God beſtows it. And when *he* makes a perſon ſincere in his deſires after truth, he will aſſuredly guide him to the poſſeſſion of it in due time, as our Lord ſpeaks, *John* vi. 44, 45. To ſuppoſe that any perſons can ſincerely ſeek the way of ſalvation, and yet miſs it through an inevitable defect of their underſtandings, would contradict the plain promiſes of the goſpel, ſuch as *Matt.* vii. 7, 8. *John* vii. 16, 17. But to ſuppoſe that nothing is neceſſary to be known, which ſome perſons who profeſs ſincerity cannot receive, would be in effect to make the ſcripture a noſe of wax, and open a wide door for ſcepticiſm. I am not a judge of the heart, but I may be ſure that whoever

ever makes the foundation ſtone a rock of offence, cannot be ſincere in his enquiries. He may ſtudy the ſcripture accurately, but he brings his own preconceived ſentiments with him, and inſtead of ſubmitting them to the touchſtone of truth, he makes them a rule by which he interprets. That they who lean to their own underſtandings ſhould ſtumble and miſcarry I cannot wonder, for the ſame God who has promiſed to fill the hungry with good things, has threatened to ſend the rich empty away. So *Matt.* xi. 25. It is not through defect of underſtanding, but a want of ſimplicity and humility, that ſo many ſtumble like the blind at noon-day, and can ſee nothing of thoſe great truths which are written in the goſpel as with a ſun beam.

You wiſh me to explain myſelf concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. I will try, yet I know I cannot, any farther than as he who taught me, ſhall be pleaſed to bear witneſs in your heart to what I ſay. My firſt principle in Religion is what the ſcripture teaches me of the utter depravity of human nature, in connection with the ſpirituality and ſanction of the law of God. I believe we are by nature ſinners, by practice univerſally tranſgreſſors; that we are dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, and that the bent of our natural ſpirit is enmity againſt the holineſs, government and grace of God. Upon this ground, I ſee, feel and acknowledge the neceſſity of ſuch a ſalvation as the goſpel propoſes, which at the ſame time that it precludes boaſting, and ſtains the pride of all human glory, affords encouragement to thoſe who may be thought, or who may think themſelves, the weakeſt or the vileſt of mankind. I

believe that whatever notions a person may take up from education or system, no one ever did or ever will feel himself and own himself to be such a lost, miserable, hateful sinner, unless he be powerfully and supernaturally convinced by the Spirit of God.— There is, when God pleases, a certain light thrown into the soul, which differs not merely in degree, but in kind, *toto genere*, from any thing that can be effected or produced by moral suasion or argument. But (to take in another of your queries) the Holy Spirit teaches or reveals no new truths either of doctrine or precept, but only enables us to understand what is already revealed in the scripture. Here a change takes place, the person that was spiritually blind begins to see. The sinner's character, as described in the word of God, he finds to be a description of himself, that he is afar off, a stranger, a rebel, that he has hitherto lived in vain. Now he begins to see the necessity of an atonement, an advocate, a shepherd, a comforter: he can no more trust to his own wisdom, strength and goodness; but, accounting all his former gain but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, he renounces every other refuge, and ventures his all upon the person, work and promise of the Redeemer. In this way, I say, he will find the doctrine of the Trinity not only a proposition, but a principle; that is, from his own wants and situation he will have an abiding conviction, that the Son and Holy Spirit are God, and must be possessed of the attributes and powers of Deity, to support the offices the scriptures assign them, and to deserve the confidence and worship, the scriptures require to be placed in them,

them, and paid to them. Without this awakened ſtate of mind, a Divine, reputed orthodox, will blunder wretchedly even in defending his own opinions. I have ſeen labored defences of the Trinity, which have given me not much more ſatisfaction, than I ſhould probably receive from a diſſertation upon the rainbow, compoſed by a man blind from his birth. In effect, the knowledge of God cannot be attained by ſtudious diſcuſſion on our parts; it muſt be by a revelation on his part, *Matt.* xi. 27. and ch. xvi. 17. A revelation, not objectively of new truth, but ſubjectively of new light in us. Then he that runs may read. Perhaps you may not quite underſtand my meaning, or not accede to my ſentiment at preſent; I have little doubt however but the time is coming when you will. I believe the Lord God has given *you* that ſincerity, which he never diſappoints.

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

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

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

The Enquiry concerning Regeneration and Justification, which stands last in the book, I do not desire or even wish you to read. But if you should, and then think that you have read a specu-

lation more curious than useful, I shall not contradict you. I think it must appear to you in that light—but it was bound up with the rest, and therefore could not stay behind; but I hope the Essay on Faith will please you.

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

July 14. 1775.

LET-

LETTER III.

My dear Friend,

NEXT week I go to London, where I purpose (if nothing unforeseen prevents) to stay a month. Many things, which must necessarily be attended to before my departure, abridge me of that leisure which I could wish to employ in answering your last. However I will spare you what I can. I thank you for yours. Your objections neither displease nor weary me.—While truth is the object of your enquiry, the more freedom you use with me the better. Nor do they surprise me, for I have formerly made the like objections myself. I have stood upon your ground, and I continue to hope you will one day stand upon mine. As I have told you more than once I do not mean to dictate to you, or to wish you to receive any thing upon my *ipse dixit*, but in the simplicity of friendship, I will give you my thoughts from time to time upon the points you propose, and leave the event to the divine blessing.

I am glad you do not account the Socinians master-builders. However they esteem themselves so, and are so esteemed, not only by a few (as you think) but by many. I fear Socinianism spreads rapidly amongst us, and bids fair to be the prevailing scheme in this land, especially with those who profess to be the thinking part. The term *Arminian*, as at present applied, is very indiscriminate, and takes in a

great variety of persons and sentiments, amongst whom, I believe, there are many who hold the fundamental truths of the gospel, and live a life of faith in the Son of God. I am far from supposing that God will guide every *sincere* person exactly to adopt *all* my sentiments. But there are *some* sentiments which I believe essential to the very state and character of a true Christian—And these make him a Christian, not merely by being his acknowledged sentiments, but by a certain peculiar manner in which he possesses them. There is a certain important change takes place in the heart, by the operation of the Spirit of God, before the soundest and most orthodox sentiments can have their proper influence upon us. This work, or change, the scripture describes by various names, each of which is designed to teach us the marvellous effects it produces, and the almighty power by which it is produced. It is sometimes called a new-birth, *John* iii. 3. Sometimes a new-creature or new creation, as 2 *Cor.* v. 17. Sometimes the causing light to shine out of darkness, 2 *Cor.* iv. 6. Sometimes the opening the eyes of the blind, *Acts* xxvi. 18. Sometimes the raising the dead to life, *Ephes.* ii. 5. Till a person has experienced this change, he will be at a loss to form a right conception of it. But it means, not being proselyted to an opinion, but receiving a principle of divine life and light in the soul. And till this is received, the things of God, the truths of the gospel cannot be rightly discerned or understood by the utmost powers of fallen man, who with all his wisdom, reason and talents, is still but what the Apostle calls the natural man, till the

power of God visits his heart, 1 *Cor.* ii. 14. This work is sometimes wrought suddenly, as in the case of Lydia, *Acts* xvi. 14. At other times very gradually. A person who before was a stranger even to the form of godliness, or at best content with a mere form—finds new thoughts arising in his mind, feels some concern about his sins, some desire to please God, some suspicions that all is not right.—He examines his views of religion, hopes the best of them, and yet cannot rest satisfied in them. To-day, perhaps, he thinks himself fixed; to-morrow he will be all uncertainty. He enquires of others, weighs, measures, considers, meets with sentiments which he had not attended to, thinks them plausible, but is presently shocked with objections or supposed consequences, which he finds himself unable to remove. As he goes on in his enquiry, his difficulties increase. New doubts arise in his mind, even the scriptures perplex him, and appear to assert contrary things. He would sound the depths of truth by the plummet of his reason, but he finds his line is too short. Yet even now the man is under a guidance, which will at length lead him right. The importance of the subject takes up his thoughts, and takes off the relish he once had for the things of the world. He reads, he prays, he strives, he resolves; sometimes inward embarassments and outward temptations bring him to his wit's-end. He almost wishes to stand where he is, and enquire no more. But he cannot stop—At length he begins to *feel* the inward depravity, which he had before owned as an opinion; a sense of sin and guilt cut him out new work. Here rea-

ſoning will ſtand him in no ſtead. This is a painful change of mind, but it prepares the way for a bleſſing. It ſilences ſome objections better than a thouſand arguments, it cuts the comb of his own wiſdom and attainments, it makes him weary of working for life, and teaches him, in God's due time, the meaning of that text, To him that worketh not, but believeth in him who juſtifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteouſneſs. Then he learns, that ſcriptural faith is a very different thing from a *rational aſſent* to the goſpel—that it is the immediate gift of God, *Epheſ.* ii. 8. The operation of God, *Col.* ii. 12. That Chriſt is not only the object, but the author and finiſher of faith, *Heb.* xii. 2. And that faith is not ſo properly a part of that obedience we *owe to God*, as an ineſtimable benefit we *receive from him* for Chriſt's ſake, *Phil.* i. 29. which is the medium of our juſtification, *Rom.* v. 1. and the principle by which we are united to Chriſt (as the branch to the vine) *John* xvii. 21. I am well aware of the pains taken to put a different ſenſe upon theſe and other ſeemingly myſterious paſſages of ſcripture. But thus far we ſpeak that which we know, and teſtify that which we have ſeen. I have deſcribed a path in which I have known many led, and in which I have walked myſelf.

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

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

Though we have not exactly the ſame view of human depravity, yet as we both agree to take our meaſure of it from the word of God, I truſt we

ſhall not always differ about it. Adam was created in the image of God, in righteouſneſs and true holineſs, *Epheſ.* iv. 24. This moral image, I believe, was totally loſt by ſin. In that ſenſe he died the day, the moment he eat the forbidden fruit. God was no longer his joy and delight, he was averſe from the thoughts of his preſence, and would (if poſſible) have hid himſelf from him. His natural powers, though doubtleſs impaired, were not deſtroyed. Man by nature is ſtill capable of great things. His underſtanding, reaſon, memory, imagination, &c. ſufficiently proclaim that the hand that made him is divine. He is, as Milton ſays of Beelzebub, majeſtic though in ruins. He can reaſon, invent, and by application attain a conſiderable knowledge in natural things. The exertions of human genius, as ſpecified in the characters of ſome philoſophers, poets, orators, &c. are wonderful. But man cannot know, love, truſt or ſerve his Maker, unleſs he be renewed in the ſpirit of his mind. God has preſerved in him likewiſe ſome feelings of benevolence, pity, ſome ſenſe of natural juſtice and truth, &c. without which there could be no ſociety; but theſe I apprehend are little more than inſtincts, by which the world is kept in ſome ſmall degree of order; but being under the direction of pride and ſelf, do not deſerve the name of virtue and goodneſs, becauſe the exerciſe of them does not ſpring from a principle of love to God, nor is directed to his glory, or regulated by the rule of his word, till a principle of grace is ſuperadded. You think, I will not ſay, "that God judicially in puniſhment of one man's ſin, added theſe corruptions to all his poſterity."

posterity." Let us suppose, that the punishment annexed to eating the forbidden fruit, had been the loss of Adam's rational powers, and that he should be degraded to the state and capacity of a brute. In this condition, had he begotten children after the fall in his own likeness, his nature being previously changed, they must have been of course brutes like himself; for he could not convey to them those original powers which he had lost. Will this illustrate my meaning? Sin did not deprive him of rationality but of spirituality. His nature became earthly, sensual, yea devilish; and this fallen nature, this carnal mind, which is enmity against God, which is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be, *Rom.* viii. 7. we universally derive from him. Look upon children, they presently shew themselves averse from good, but exceedingly propense to evil. This they can learn even without a master, but ten thousand instructors and instructions cannot instil good into them, so as to teach them to love their Creator, unless a divine power co-operates. Just as it is with the earth, which produces weeds spontaneously; but if you only see a cabbage or an apple-tree, you are sure it was planted or sown there, and did not spring from the soil. I know many hard questions may be started upon this subject, but the Lord in due time will clear his own cause, and vindicate his own ways. I leave all difficulties with him. It is sufficient for me that scripture asserts and experience proves that it is thus in fact, *Rom.* iii. 9—21. *Job* xiv. 4. Thus we have not only forfeited our happiness by transgression, but are by our depravity incapable of it, and

have no more desire or taste for such a state as the scripture describes heaven to be, than a man born deaf can have for a concert of music. And therefore our Lord declares, that except a man be born again, he not only *shall not*, but *cannot* see the kingdom of God. Hence a two-fold necessity of a Savior—his blood for the pardon of our sins—his life, spirit and grace to quicken our souls, and form us anew for himself, that we may feel his love and shew forth his praise.

St. Paul, before his conversion, was not sincere in the sense I hope you to be: he thought himself in the right, without doubt, as many have done when they killed God's servants, *John* xvi. 2. He was blindly and obstinately zealous: I think he did not enter into the merits of the cause, or enquire into facts with that attention which sincerity would have put him upon. You think that his sincerity and zeal were the very things that made him a chosen instrument; he himself speaks of them as the very things that made him peculiarly unworthy of that honor, 1 *Cor.* xv. 9. And he tells us that he was set forth as a pattern of the Lord's long-suffering and mercy, that the very chief of sinners might be encouraged, 1 *Tim.* i. 15, 16. Had he been sincerely desirous to know whether Jesus was the Messiah, there was enough in his character, doctrines, miracles, and the prophecies concerning him, to have cleared up the point. But he took it for granted he was right in his opinion, and hurried blindly on, and was (as he said himself) exceedingly mad against them. Such a kind of sincerity is common enough. People believe themselves

themſelves right, and therefore treat others with ſcorn or rage; appeal to the ſcriptures, but firſt lay down their own pre-conceived ſentiments for truths, and then examine what ſcriptures they can find to countenance them. Surely a perſon's thinking himſelf right, will not give a ſanction to all that he does under that perſuaſion.

Ignorance and obſtinacy are in themſelves ſinful, and no plea of ſincerity will exempt from the danger of being under their influence, *Iſa.* xxvii. 11. *Luke* vi. 39. It appears to me, that though you will not follow any man implicitly, you are deſirous of diſcovering your miſtakes, ſuppoſing you are miſtaken in any point of importance. You read and examine the word of God, not to find arms wherewith to defend your ſentiments at all events, but to know whether they are defenſible or not. You pray for God's light and teaching, and in this ſearch you are willing to riſque what men are commonly much afraid of hazarding—character, intereſt, preferment, favor, &c. A ſincerity of this kind I too ſeldom meet with; when I do I account it a token for good, and am ready to ſay, "No man can do this, except God be with him." However, ſincerity is not converſion. But I believe it is always a forerunner of it.

I would not be uncharitable and cenſorious, haſty and peremptory in judging my fellow-creatures. But if I acknowledge the word of God, I cannot avoid forming my judgment upon it. It is true, I cannot look into people's hearts; but hearts and principles are delineated to my hand in the ſcripture. I read that no murderer has eternal life in

him; I read, likewise, if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema—And therefore I conclude, that there are *speculative errors* as heinous in their guilt, as destructive in their effects as murder; and that the most moral regular man, as to social life, if he loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, is in the sight of God, the Judge of all, as displeasing as a murderer. It has pleased God, for the peace and support of society, to put a black mark upon those sins which affect the peace and welfare of our neighbor, such as adultery and murder. But undoubtedly the sins committed immediately against himself, must be more heinous than any which offend our fellow-creatures. The second commandment, *Matt.* xxii. 39. is like the first, but it depends upon it, and is therefore inferior to it—Men ordinarily judge otherwise. To live regardless of God and the gospel, is looked upon as a peccadillo in comparison with offences against society. But sooner or later it will appear otherwise to all. A parcel of robbers may pique themselves upon the justice, honor and truth they observe towards one another; but because they set up a petty interest, which is inconsistent with the public good, they are deservedly accounted villains and treated as such, notwithstanding their petty morality among themselves. Now such a company of robbers bears a much greater proportion to a whole nation, than a nation or all the nations of the earth bears to the great God. Our dependance upon him is absolute, our obligations to him infinite. In vain shall men plead their moral discharge of relative duties to each other, if they fail in the

unspeakable

unſpeakable greater relation, under which they ſtand to God. And therefore, when I ſee people living without God in the world, as all do till they are converted; I cannot but judge them in a dangerous ſtate—not becauſe I take pleaſure in cenſuring, or think myſelf authorized to paſs ſentence upon my fellow-creature, but becauſe the ſcripture decides expreſsly on the caſe, and I am bound to take my ſentiments from thence.

The jailor was certainly a Chriſtian when baptized, as you obſerve. He trembled; he cried out, What muſt I do to be ſaved? Paul did not bid him amend his life, but believe in the Lord Jeſus—He believed and rejoiced. But the Lord bleſſed the Apoſtle's words to produce in him that ſaving faith, which filled him with joy and peace. It was, as I obſerved before, ſomething more than an aſſent to the propoſition that Jeſus is the Chriſt; a reſting in him for forgiveneſs and acceptance, and a cleaving to him in love. No other faith will purify the heart, work by love and overcome the world.

I need not have pleaded want of leiſure as an excuſe for a ſhort letter, for I have written a long one. I feel myſelf much intereſted in your concerns—And your unexpected frank application to me (though you well know the light in which I appear to ſome people) I conſider as a providential call, which binds me to your ſervice. I hope our correſpondence will be productive of happy effects, and that we ſhall both one day rejoice in it. I am, Dear Sir,

Aug. 11, 1775. Your ſincere friend and ſervant.

LET-

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

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

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

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

I have not brought your ſermons with me, for I thought I ſhould not have time to read them attentively, while in this hurrying place. I purpoſe to conſider them with care, and to give you my thoughts with frankneſs, when I return. However, if they are upon the plan intimated in your letter, I will venture to ſay one thing beforehand, that they will not anſwer your deſired end. I am perſuaded you wiſh to be uſeful—to reclaim ſinners from their evil ways, to inſpire them with a love to God, and a ſincere aim to walk in obedience to his will. May I not venture to appeal to yourſelf, that you meet with little ſucceſs? That the people to whom you preach, though they perhaps give you a patient hearing, yet remain as they were, unchanged and unholy. It muſt be ſo—there is

but

but one sort of preaching, which God blesses to these purposes—that which makes all the world guilty before God, and sets forth Jesus Christ, (as the brazen serpent was proposed by Moses) that guilty and condemned sinners, by looking to him and believing on his name, may be healed and saved. The most pressing exhortations to repentance and amendment of life, unless they are enforced in a certain way, which only God can teach, will leave our hearers much as they find them. When we meet, or when I have leisure to write from home, I will trouble you with my thoughts more at large. Till then, permit me to assure you of my sincere regard and best wishes, and that I am,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend, &c.

Sept. 6, 1775.

LET-

LETTER V.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE calls and engagements, which I told you engroſſed and anticipated my time, when I wrote laſt, have continued without any intermiſſion hitherto, and I am ſtill far behind-hand with my buſineſs. I am willing to hope, that the caſe has been much the ſame with you, and that want of leiſure has been the only cauſe of my not having been pleaſured with ſo much as a note from you, ſince my return from London.

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

I now

I now return your Sermons; I thank you for the perusal; I see much in them that I approve, and nothing in them but what I formerly espoused. But in a course of years, a considerable alteration has taken place in my judgment and experience. I hope, yea, I may boldly say, I am sure, not for the worse. Then I was seeking, and now through mercy I have found, the pearl of great price. It is both the prayer and the hope of my heart, that a day is coming when you shall make the same acknowledgment; from your Letters and Sermons, I am encouraged to address you in our Lord's words, "*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.*" I am persuaded the views you have received, will not suffer you to remain where you are. But fidelity obliges me to add, "*Yet one thing thou lackest.*" "*That one thing*" I trust the Lord will both shew you, and bestow upon you, in his due time. You speak somewhere of "*Atoning for disobedience by repentance.*"—Ah, my dear Sir, when we are brought to estimate our disobedience, by comparing it with such a sense of the majesty, holiness and authority of God, and the spirituality, extent and sanction of his holy law, as he and he only can impress upon the heart of a sinner, we shall be convinced that nothing but the blood of the Son of God can atone for the smallest instance of disobedience.

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

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

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

October 21, 1775.

LET-

LETTER VI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IT never entered my pericranium, that you expected I ſhould fully and directly anſwer your Letter, while I was in London, and yet you reaſonably might, as you knew nothing of my engagements; but indeed it was impracticable, I could only ſend you a haſty line, as a token that I remembered you; I informed you when I returned that I was juſt going out again; ſince I came home the ſecond time, I have been engroſſed by things that would admit of no delay, and at length, not having ſo much as a note from you, I thought I would wait till I heard farther. But from firſt to laſt it was my intention, and I think my promiſe, to anſwer in the manner you propoſed, as ſoon as I could. And even now I muſt beg a little longer time.—Believe me, that as the wiſe and good providence of God brought us together, without any expectation of mine, I will do all in my power to preſerve the connection, and particularly by giving my thoughts on ſuch queſtions as you propoſe. And though to conſider your queſtions in the manner you wiſh, and to point out the agreement of detached texts (as they occur) with my views, ſeems in proſpect to require a volume rather than a ſheet, yet I am not diſcouraged; only I beg you to make allowances for other things, and to be aſſured

that

that *before* I had the pleasure of corresponding with you, I had very little spare time. Expect then the best satisfaction I am able to give you, as soon as possible. To prepare the way I will try hard for a little leisure, to give you a few thoughts upon yours, which came last night.

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

You quite misunderstood what I spoke of the light and influence of the Spirit of God. He reveals to me no new truths, but has only shewn me the meaning of his own written word; nor is this light a particular revelation, it is common to all who are born again. And thus though you and I cannot

fully

fully agree about it, yet I almoſt daily meet with perſons from the Eaſt, Weſt, North and South, whom, though I never ſaw them before, I find we underſtand each other at once. This (as you bid me be explicit) is the one thing which I think you at preſent lack. And I limited my expreſſion *to one thing*, becauſe it is our Lord's expreſſion, and becauſe that *one thing* includes many. As I ſaid before, I cannot give it you, but the Lord can; and from the deſire he has raiſed in your heart, I have a warm hope that he will. You place the whole ſtreſs of your enquiries upon reaſon; I am far from diſcarding reaſon, when it is enlightened and ſanctified, but *ſpiritual things muſt be ſpiritually* diſcerned, and can be received and diſcerned no other way, for to our natural reaſon they are fooliſhneſs. 1 *Cor.* ii. 14, 15. *Matt.* xi. 25. This certain ſomething, I can no more deſcribe to thoſe who have not experienced it, than I could deſcribe the taſte of a Pine Apple to a perſon who had never ſeen one. But ſcriptural proofs might be adduced in abundance, yet not ſo as to give a ſolid conviction of it, 'till we actually experience it. Thus it was with my friend—whoſe caſe I ſent you. When God gave him the key (as he expreſſed it) then the ſcriptures were unlocked. His wiſhing himſelf a Deiſt ſome time before, was not from any libertine exceptions he made to the precepts of the goſpel—but from the perplexing embarraſſments he had found, by endeavouring to underſtand the doctrines, by dint of reaſon, though reaſon in him was as ſtrong and penetrating, as in moſt men I ever met with.

with. Upon your present plan, how can I hope to satisfy you, though even St. Paul asserts it, that the carnal mind is enmity against God; you will readily agree with me to the proposition as it stands in St. Paul's words, but I think will not so readily assent to what I have no more doubt than of my own existence, is the sense of it. That the heart of man, of any man, every man, however apparently amiable in his outward conduct, however benevolent to his fellow-creatures, however abundant and zealous in his devotions, is by nature enmity against God. Not indeed against the idea he himself forms of God, but against the character which God has revealed of himself in the scripture. Man is an enemy to the justice, sovereignty and law of God, and to the alone method of salvation he has appointed in the gospel by faith only; by such a faith, as it is no more in his power to contribute to the production of in himself, than he can contribute to raising the dead, or making a world. Whatever is of the flesh is flesh, and can rise no higher than its principle; but the Lord could convince you of this by a glance of thought.

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

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

I am ſincerely your's.

October 28.

LET-

LETTER VII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

AT length I take up your favor of Auguſt 14, with deſign to give a more explicit anſwer. My delaying hitherto has been unavoidable; I am ſorry to have your patience put to ſo long a trial, and ſhould be more ſorry, but that I conſider that in my former papers, ſermons, Omicron's letters, &c. you already poſſeſs the whole (in ſubſtance) of what I have to offer. My preſent part is but *actum agere*, to repeat what I have elſewhere expreſſed, only with ſome variety and enlargement —You yourſelf well ſtate the ſituation of our debate when you ſay, "Nor in truth do you offer any arguments to convince me, *nor does it ſeem very conſiſtent on your grounds ſo to do.* And if this important change is to be brought about by the intervention of ſome extraordinary impulſe of the Holy Spirit, and cannot be brought about without it, I do not ſee any thing farther that I have to do than to keep my mind as much unbiaſſed as I can, and to wait and pray for it." I think my letter from London was to the purport of theſe your own words, though you ſeemed diſſatisfied with it.— While we ſee through a different medium, it will be eaſy for you to anſwer every text I might adduce in ſupport of my ſentiments, as you have thoſe I have already brought, "That you underſtand them otherwiſe." In order to ſupport my

ſenſe of one text, I ſhould perhaps quote and argue from twenty more, and ſtill "You would underſtand them otherwiſe." The life of man, yea, of Methuſelah, would hardly ſuffice to prove, object and defend all that might be alledged on both ſides in this way; and at laſt we ſhould leave off as we began, more fully confirmed in our own opinions, unleſs the Lord, by his Holy Spirit, ſhould be pleaſed to ſhew the perſon who maintained the wrong ſide of the argument where his miſtake lay. However, I mean to take ſome notice of your queries as they offer themſelves.

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

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

the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith. *Phil.* iii. 4, 7, 8, 9, 10. For, as you tell me, you never remember a time, when you were not conſcious before God of great unworthineſs—and intervals of earneſt endeavors to ſerve him, though not with the ſame ſucceſs, yet ſomething in the ſame way as at preſent; this is but ſaying in other words, you never remember a time when old things paſſed away, and all things became new; and yet, the Apoſtle inſiſts much upon this, 2 *Cor.* iv. 6. and v. 17. The convictions of natural conſcience, and thoſe which are wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, are different, not only in degree, but in kind; the light of a glow-worm and of the ſun do not more eſſentially differ. The former are partial and ſuperficial, leave us in poſſeſſion of a ſuppoſed power of our own, are pacified by ſome appearances of an outward change, and make us no further ſenſible of the neceſſity of a Savior, than to make our doings and duties (if I may ſo expreſs myſelf) full weight, which perhaps might otherwiſe be a little deficient, when brought to the balances of the ſanctuary. But *truly ſpiritual* convictions give us far other views of ſin; they lead us to a deep and awful conſideration of the *root*, our total abſolute depravity, and our utter apoſtacy from God, by which we are incapable of doing good, as a dead man is of performing the functions of life. They lead us to the *rule* and *ſtandard*, the ſtrict, holy, inflexible law of God, which reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart, requires perfect, univerſal, perſevering obedience, denounces a curſe upon every failure,

failure, (*Gal.* iii. 10.) and affords neither place, or ſtrength for repentance. Thus they ſweep away every hope and refuge we had before, and fix upon us a ſenſe of guilt and condemnation, from which there is no relief, till we can look to Jeſus, as the wounded Iſraelites did to the brazen ſerpent, which was not to give efficacy to medicines and plaiſters of their own application, but to heal them compleatly of itſelf by looking at it. *John* iii. 14, 15. and vi. 40. *Iſaiah* xliii. 22.

You wiſh me to explain my diſtinction between faith and rational aſſent. And though I know no two things in the world more clearly diſtinct in themſelves, or more expreſsly diſtinguiſhed in ſcripture, yet I fear I may not eaſily make it appear to you: you allow faith, in your ſenſe, to be the gift of God; but in my ſenſe, it is likewiſe wrought by the operation of God, *Col.* ii. 12. το υπερβαλλον μεγεθος της δυναμεως αυτου—κατα την ενεργειαν του κρατους της ισχυος αυτου; * that ſame energy of the power of his ſtrength, by which the dead body of Jeſus was raiſed from the dead; can theſe ſtrong expreſſions intend no more than a rational aſſent, ſuch as we give to a propoſition in Euclid? I believe fallen reaſon is, of itſelf, utterly incapable even of aſſenting to the great truths of revelation; it may aſſent to the terms in which they are propoſed, but it muſt put its own interpretation upon them, or it would deſpiſe them. The natural man can neither receive, or diſcern the things of God; and if any one would be wiſe, the Apoſtle's firſt

* Epheſ. i. 19.

advice to him is, Let him become a fool, that he may be wise, for the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God.

Indeed when the heart is changed and the mind enlightened, then reason is sanctified, and if I may so say, baptized, renounces its curious disquisitions, and is content humbly to tread in the path of revelation. This is one difference, assent may be the act of our natural reason; faith is the effect of immediate almighty power. Another difference is, faith is always efficacious, "it worketh by love;" whereas assent is often given where it has little or no influence upon the conduct. Thus for instance, every one will assent to this truth, all men are mortal. Yet the greatest part of mankind, though they readily assent to the proposition, and it would be highly irrational to do otherwise, yet live as they might do, if the reverse were true. But they who have divine faith feel as well as say, they are pilgrims and sojourners upon earth. Again, faith gives peace of conscience, access to God, and a sure evidence and subsistence of things not seen, *Rom.* v. 1, 2. *Heb.* xi. 1. Whereas a calm dispassionate reasoner may be compelled to assent to the external arguments in favor of Christianity, and yet remain a total stranger to that communion with God, that spirit of adoption, that foretaste of glory which is the privilege and portion of believers. So likewise faith overcomes the world, which rational assent will not do—Witness the lives and tempers of thousands, who yet would be affronted if their assent to the gospel should be questioned. To sum up all in a word, "He that believes shall

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be saved." But surely many who give a rational assent to the gospel, live and die in those sins which exclude from the kingdom of God, *Gal.* v. 19—21. Faith is the effect of a principle of new life implanted in the soul, that was before dead in trespasses and sins; and it qualifies not only for obeying the Savior's precepts, but chiefly and primarily for receiving from and rejoicing in his fulness, admiring his love, his work, his person, his glory, his advocacy. It makes Christ precious, enthrones him in the heart, presents him as the most delightful object to our meditations, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and strength; our root, head, life, shepherd and husband. These are all scriptural expressions and images setting forth, so far as words can declare, what Jesus is in himself and to his believing people. But how cold is the comment which rational assent puts upon very many passages wherein the Apostle Paul endeavors (but in vain) to express the fulness of his heart upon this subject. A most valued friend of mine, a clergyman now living, had for many years given a rational assent to the gospel. He labored with much earnestness upon your plan, was very exemplary in his whole conduct, preached almost incessantly (two or three times every day in the week for years) having a parish in the remote parts of *Yorkshire* of great extent, and containing five or six different hamlets at some distance from each other. He succeeded likewise with his people, so far as to break them off from outward irregularities, and was mentioned in a letter to the Society for propagating the Gospel (which I have seen in print)

as the moſt perfect example of a pariſh prieſt, which this nation, or perhaps this age has produced. Thus he went on for many years teaching his people what he knew, for he could teach them no more. He lived in ſuch retirement and receſs, that he was unacquainted with the perſons and principles of any who are now branded as enthuſiaſts and methodiſts. One day reading *Epheſ.* iii. in his Greek teſtament, his thoughts were ſtopped by the word ανεξιχνιαστον in verſe 8. He was ſtruck, and led to think with himſelf to this purpoſe, "The Apoſtle, when ſpeaking of the love and riches of Chriſt, uſes remarkable expreſſions; he ſpeaks of heights, depths, and lengths, and breadths, and unſearchables, where I ſeem to find every thing plain, eaſy and rational. He finds myſteries where I can perceive none. Surely, though I uſe the words goſpel, faith and grace with him, my ideas of them muſt be different from his." This led him to a cloſe examination of all his epiſtles, and, by the bleſſing of God, brought on a total change in his views and preaching. He no longer ſet his people to keep a law of faith, to truſt in their ſincerity and endeavors, upon ſome general hope that Chriſt would help them out where they came ſhort—but he preached Chriſt himſelf as the end of the law for righteouſneſs, to every one that believeth. He felt himſelf, and labored to convince others, that there is no hope for a ſinner, but merely in the blood of Jeſus, and no poſſibility of his doing any works acceptable to God, till he himſelf be firſt made accepted in the Beloved. Nor did he labor in vain. Now his preaching effected not only an outward reformation,

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but a real change of heart in very many of his hearers. The word was received, as Paul expreſſes it, not with a rational aſſent only, but with demonſtration and power, in the Holy Ghoſt, and in much aſſurance, and their endeavors to obſerve the goſpel precepts, were abundantly more extenſive, uniform and ſucceſsful, when they were brought to ſay with the Apoſtle—I am crucified with Chriſt, nevertheleſs I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me, and the life I live in the fleſh, I live by faith in the Son of God.

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

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

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

have been more becoming his goodneſs to have done ſo.

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

things, the violence of sinful appetites, their prejudices, pride and self-righteousness, either prevent the reception, or choak the growth of the good seed: thus their own sin and obstinacy is the proper cause of their destruction; they *will* not come to Christ that they may have life. At the same time it is true that they cannot, unless they are supernaturally drawn of God, *John* v. 40. vi. 44. They will not, and they cannot come, both are equally true, and they are consistent. For a man's *cannot* is not a natural but a moral inability. Not an impossibility in the nature of things, as it is for me to walk upon the water, or to fly in the air; but such an inability as instead of extenuating, does exceedingly inhance and aggravate his guilt. He is so blinded by Satan, so alienated from God by nature and wicked works, so given up to sin, so averse from that way of salvation, which is contrary to his pride and natural wisdom, that he will not embrace it or seek after it. And therefore he cannot, till the grace of God powerfully enlightens his mind and overcomes his obstacles—But this brings me to your second query.

II. Do I think that God, in the ordinary course of his providence, grants this assistance in an irresistible manner, or effects faith and conversion without the sinners own hearty consent and concurrence? I rather chose to term grace *invincible* than *irresistible*. For it is too often resisted even by those who believe; but because it is invincible it triumphs over all resistance, when he is pleased to bestow it. For the rest, I believe no sinner is converted without his own hearty will and concurrence. But he is not

willing till he is made so. Why does he at all refuse? Because he is insensible of his state, because he knows not the evil of sin, the strictness of the law, the majesty of God whom he has offended, nor the total apostacy of his heart. Because he is blind to eternity, and ignorant of the excellency of Christ. Because he is comparatively whole, and sees not his need of this great physician. Because he relies upon his own wisdom, power and supposed righteousness. Now in this state of things, when God comes with a purpose of mercy, he begins by convincing the person of sin, judgment and righteousness, causes him to feel and know that he is a lost, condemned, helpless creature, and then discovers to him the necessity, sufficiency and willingness of Christ to save them that are ready to perish, without money or price, without doings or deservings.—Then he sees faith to be very different from a rational assent, finds that nothing but the power of God can produce a well-grounded hope in the heart of a convinced sinner; therefore looks to Jesus, who is the author and finisher of faith, to enable him to believe. For this he waits in what we call the means of grace, he prays, he reads the word, he thirsts for God, as the hart pants for the water-brooks; and though perhaps for a while he is distressed with many doubts and fears, he is encouraged to wait on, because Jesus has said, "*Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.*" The obstinacy of the will remains, while the understanding is dark, and ceases when that is enlightened. Suppose a man walking in the dark, where there are pits and precipices of which he is not aware:

You are ſenſible of his danger, and call after him, but he thinks he knows better than you, refuſes your advice, and is perhaps angry with you for your importunity. He ſees no danger, therefore will not be perſuaded there is any. But if you go with a light, get before him and ſhew him plainly, that if he takes another ſtep, he falls beyond the power of recovery—then he will ſtop of his own accord, blame himſelf for not minding you before, and be ready to comply with your farther directions. In either caſe man's will acts with equal freedom, the difference of his conduct ariſes from conviction. Something like this is the caſe of our ſpiritual concerns. Sinners are called and warned by the word, but they are wiſe in their own eyes, and take but little notice till the Lord gives them light, which he is not bound to give to *any*, and therefore cannot be bound to give to *all*. They who have it have reaſon to be thankful, and ſubſcribe to the Apoſtle's words: By grace are ye ſaved, through faith, and that not of yourſelves, it is the gift of God.

I have not yet half done with the firſt ſheet: ſhall conſider the reſt at leiſure, but ſend this as a ſpecimen of my willingneſs to clear my ſentiments to you as far as I can. Unleſs it ſhould pleaſe God to make what I offer ſatisfactory, I well know beforehand what objections and anſwers will occur to you, for theſe points have been often debated; and after a courſe of twenty-ſeven years, in which religion has been the chief object of my thoughts and enquiries, I am not entirely a ſtranger to what can be offered on either ſide. What I write, I write ſimply and in love, beſeeching him, who alone can

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ſet a ſeal to his own truth, to guide you and bleſs you. This letter has been more than a week in hand; I have been called from it I ſuppoſe ten times, frequently in the middle of a period or a line. My leiſure, which before was ſmall, is now reduced almoſt to a nothing. But I am deſirous to keep up my correſpondence with you, becauſe I feel an affectionate intereſt in you, and becauſe it pleaſed God to put it into your heart to apply to me. You cannot think how your firſt letter ſtruck me: it was ſo unexpected, and ſeemed ſo improbable that you ſhould open your mind to me, I immediately conceived a hope that it would prove for good. Nor am I yet diſcouraged.

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

I recommend you to the bleſſing and care of the great Shepherd; and remain

Your ſincere friend and ſervant.

November 17, 1775.

LETTER VIII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

ARE you willing I ſhould ſtill call you ſo, or are you quite weary of me. Your ſilence makes me ſuſpect the latter. However, it is my part to fulfil my promiſe, and then leave the event to God. As I have but an imperfect remembrance of what I have already written, I may be liable to ſome repetitions; I cannot ſtay to comment upon every line in your Letter, but I proceed to notice ſuch paſſages as ſeem moſt to affect the ſubject in debate. When you ſpeak of the ſcripture's maintaining one conſiſtent ſenſe, which, if the word of God, it certainly muſt do, you ſay, you read and underſtand it in this one conſiſtent ſenſe, nay, you cannot remember the time when you did not. It is otherwiſe with me and with multitudes; we remember when it was a ſealed book, and we are ſure it would have been ſo ſtill, had not the Holy Spirit opened our underſtandings. But when you add, though I pretend not to underſtand the whole, yet what I do underſtand appears perfectly conſiſtent; I know not how far this exception may extend, for perhaps the reaſon why you allow you do not underſtand ſome parts, is becauſe you cannot make them conſiſtent with the ſenſe you put upon other parts. You quote my words, "That when we are conſcious of our depravity, reaſoning ſtands us in no ſtead;" undoubtedly reaſon always will

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ſtand rational creatures in ſome ſtead; but my meaning is, that when we are deeply convinced of ſin, all our former reaſonings upon the ways of God, while we made *our* conceptions the ſtandard by which we judge what is befitting him to do, as if he were altogether ſuch an one as ourſelves—all thoſe cobweb reaſonings are ſwept away, and we ſubmit to his αυτος εφη without *reaſoning*, though not without *reaſon*. For we have the ſtrongeſt reaſon imaginable to acknowledge ourſelves vile and loſt, without righteouſneſs and ſtrength, when we actually feel ourſelves to be ſo.—You ſpeak of the goſpel terms of juſtification.—This term is *faith*. *Mark* xvi. 16. *Acts* xiii. 39. The goſpel propounds, admits no other term. But this *faith*, as I endeavored to ſhew in my former Letter, is very different from rational aſſent. You ſpeak likewiſe of the law of *faith*; by which, if you mean what ſome call the remedial law, which we are to obey as well as we can, and ſuch obedience together with our faith, will entitle us to acceptance with God, I am perſuaded the ſcripture ſpeaks of no ſuch thing. Grace and works of any kind, in the point of acceptance with God, are mentioned by the Apoſtle, not only as oppoſites, or contraries, but as abſolutely contradictory to each other, like fire and water, light and darkneſs—ſo that the affirmation of one, is the denial of the other. *Rom.* iv. 5, and xi. 6. God juſtifies freely, juſtifies the ungodly and him that worketh not. Though juſtifying faith be indeed an active principle, it worketh by *love*, yet not for acceptance. Thoſe whom the Apoſtle exhorts "to work out their own ſalvation with

with *fear* and *trembling*," he conſiders as juſtified already, for he conſiders them as believers, in whom he ſuppoſed God had already begun a good work, and if ſo was confident he would accompliſh it. *Phil.* i. 6. To them, the conſideration that God (who dwells in the hearts of believers) wrought in them to will and to do, was a powerful motive and encouragement to them to work; that is, to give all diligence in his appointed means; as a right ſenſe of the ſin that dwelleth in us, and the ſnares and temptations around us, will teach us ſtill to work with fear and trembling. You ſuppoſe a difference between Chriſtians (ſo called) who are devoted to God in baptiſm, and thoſe who in the firſt ages were converted from abominable ſuperſtitions and idolatrous vices.—It is true, in Chriſtian countries we do not worſhip heathen divinities *Eo nomine*. And this is the principal difference I can find. Neither reaſon or obſervation will allow me to think, that human nature is a whit better now, than it was in the Apoſtle's time. I know no kinds or degrees of wickedneſs which prevailed among heathens, which are not prevalent among nominal Chriſtians, who have perhaps been baptized in their infancy; and therefore, as the ſtreams in the life are equally worldly, ſenſual, deviliſh, I doubt not but the fountain in the heart is equally polluted and poiſonous. And that it is as true, as in the days of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, that unleſs a man be born again he cannot ſee the kingdom of God. You ſent me a Sermon upon the new birth, or regeneration, and you have ſeveral of mine on the ſame ſubject. I wiſh you to compare them with each

each other, and with the ſcripture, and I pray God to ſhew you wherein the difference conſiſts, and on which ſide the truth lies.

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

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

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

I cannot but wonder, that while you profess to believe the depravity of human nature, you should speak of good qualities inherent in it. The word of God describes it as *evil*, *only evil*, and that *continually*. That there are such qualities as Stoics and infidels call virtue, I allow. God has not left man destitute of such dispositions as are necessary

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to the peace of ſociety, but I deny there is any moral goodneſs in them, unleſs they are founded in a ſupreme love to God, have his glory for their aim, and are produced by faith in Jeſus Chriſt. A man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned in zeal for the truth, and yet be a mere nothing, a tinkling cymbal in the ſight of him who ſeeth not as man ſeeth, but judgeth the heart. Many infidels and avowed enemies to the grace and goſpel of Chriſt, have made a fair ſhew of what the world call virtue, but Chriſtian *virtue* is *grace*, the effect of a new nature, and new life; and works thus wrought in God, are as different from the faint partial imitations of them which fallen nature is capable of producing, as a living man is from a ſtatue. A ſtatue may expreſs the features and lineaments of the perſon whom it repreſents, but there is no life.

Your comment on the ſeventh to the Romans, latter part, contradicts my feelings. You are either of a different make and nature from me, or elſe you are not rightly apprized of your own ſtate, if you do not find the Apoſtle's complaints very ſuitable to yourſelf. I believe it applicable to the moſt holy Chriſtian upon earth. But controverſies of this kind are worn thread-bare. When you ſpeak of the ſpiritual part of a natural man, it ſounds to me like the living part of a dead man, or the ſeeing part of a blind man. Paul tells me, that the natural man (whatever his ſpiritual part may be) can neither receive or diſcern the things of God. What the Apoſtle ſpeaks of himſelf, *Rom.* vii. is no more, when rightly underſtood, than what he affirms of all who

who are partakers of a ſpiritual life, or who are true believers, *Gal.* v. 17. The carnal natural mind is enmity againſt God, not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can be—When you ſubjoin, *till it be ſet at liberty from the law of ſin*, you do not comment upon the text, but make an addition of your own, which the text will by no means bear. The carnal mind is enmity. An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity itſelf is incurable. This carnal mind, natural man, old man, fleſh, for the expreſſions are all equivalent, and denote and include the heart of man as he is by nature, may be *crucified*, *muſt* be *mortified*, but cannot be *ſanctified*. *All* that is *good* or *gracious* is the effect of a *new creation*, a *ſupernatural principle*, wrought in the heart by the goſpel of Chriſt, and the agency of his Spirit; and till that is effected, the το υψηλον, the higheſt attainment, the fineſt qualifications in man, however they may exalt him in his own eyes, or recommend him to the notice of his fellow worms, are but abomination in the ſight of God, *Luke* xvi. 15. The goſpel is calculated and deſigned to ſtain the pride of human glory. It is provided, not for the wiſe and the righteous, for thoſe who think they have good diſpoſitions and good works to plead, but for the guilty, the helpleſs, the wretched, for thoſe, who are ready to periſh; it fills the hungry with good things, but it ſends the rich empty away. See *Rev.* iii. 17, 18.

You aſk, if man can do nothing without an extraordinary impulſe from on high, is he to ſit ſtill and careleſs? By no means—I am far from ſaying man can do nothing—Though I believe he cannot

cannot open his own eyes, or give himself faith—I wish every man to abstain carefully from sinful company, and sinful actions, to read the Bible, to pray to God for his heavenly teaching—For this waiting upon God he has a moral ability; and if he persevere thus in seeking, the promise is sure, that he shall not seek in vain. But I would not have him mistake the means for the end, think himself good because he is preserved from gross vices and follies—or trust to his religious course of duties for acceptance, nor be satisfied till Christ be revealed in him, formed within him, dwell in his heart by faith, and till he can say upon good grounds, *I am crucified with Christ*, nevertheless, *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*—I need not tell you these are scriptural expressions. I am persuaded, if they were not, they would be exploded by many as unintelligible jargon. True faith, my dear Sir, unites the soul to Christ, and thereby gives access to God, and fills it with a peace passing understanding, a hope, a joy unspeakable and full of glory; teaches us that we are weak in ourselves, but enables us to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. To those who thus believe Christ is precious, their beloved, they hear and know his voice; the very sound of his name gladdens their hearts, and *he manifests himself* to *them* as *he does not* to the *world*. Thus the scriptures speak, thus the first Christians experienced, and this is precisely the language which in our days is despised as enthusiasm and folly. For it is now as it was then, though *these things* are *revealed* to *babes*, and they are as sure of them as that they see the noon-day

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ſun; they are hidden from the wiſe and prudent, till the Lord makes them willing to renounce their own wiſdom, and to become fools that they may be truly wiſe, 1 *Cor.* i. 18, 19. chap. iii. 8. chap. viii. 2. Attention to the education of children is an undoubted duty, and it is a mercy when it ſo far ſucceeds as to preſerve them from groſs wickedneſs, but will not change the heart. They who receive Chriſt are born not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God. *John* i. 13.

If a man profeſſes to love the Lord Jeſus, I am willing to believe him, if he does not give me proof to the contrary. But I am ſure, at the ſame time, no one can love him in the ſcriptural ſenſe who does not know the need and the worth of a Savior: in other words, who is not brought, as a ruined helpleſs ſinner, to live upon him for wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification, and redemption. They who love him thus will ſpeak highly of him, and acknowledge that he is their all in all. And they who thus love him and ſpeak of him, will get little thanks for their pains in ſuch a world as this—"*All that live godly in Chriſt Jeſus muſt ſuffer perſecution; the world that hated him, will hate them.*" And though it is poſſible by his grace to put to ſilence, in ſome meaſure, the ignorance of fooliſh men; and though his providence can protect his people, ſo that not a hair of their heads can be hurt without his permiſſion, yet the world will *ſhew their teeth*, if they are not *ſuffered* to *bite*. The Apoſtles were accounted bablers, ως περικαθαρματα του κοσμου και παντων περιψημα. I need

not point out to you the force of these expressions. We are no better than the Apostles, nor have we reason to expect much better treatment, so far as we walk in their steps. On the other hand, there is a sober, decent way of speaking of God, and goodness, and benevolence and sobriety, which the world will bear well enough—nay, we may say a little about Jesus Christ, as ready to make up the deficiencies of our honest and good endeavors, and this will not displease them. But if we preach him as the only foundation—lay open the horrid evils of the human heart, tell our hearers that they are dead in trespasses and sins, and have no better ground of hope in themselves than the vilest malefactors, in order to exalt the glory of Jesus, as saving those who are saved, wholly and freely for his own name's sake; if we tell the *virtuous* and *decent*, as well as the *profligate*, that unless they are *born again*, and made *partakers* of *living faith*, and *count all things loss* for *the excellency of the knowledge of Christ*, they cannot be saved, this the world cannot bear. We shall be called knaves or fools, uncharitable bigots, and twenty hard names. If you have met with nothing like this; I wish it may lead you to suspect whether you have yet received the right key to the doctrines of Christ, for depend upon it, the offence of the cross is not ceased.

I am grieved and surprized that you seem to take little notice of any thing in the account of my deceased friend, but his wishing himself to be a Deist, and his having play books about him in his illness. As to the plays, they were *Shakespeare*'s, which, as a man of taste, it is no great wonder he should

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

reſt, if you could ſee nothing admirable and wonderful in the clearneſs, the dignity, the ſpirituality of his expreſſions, after the Lord revealed the goſpel to him; I can only ſay, I am ſorry for it. This I know, that ſome perſons of ſenſe, taſte, learning and reaſon, and far enough from *my ſentiments*, have been greatly ſtruck with them. You ſay, a death-bed repentance is what you would be ſorry to give any hope of. My dear friend, it is well for poor ſinners that God's thoughts and ways are as much above men's as the heavens are higher than the earth. We agreed to communicate our ſentiments freely, and promiſed not to be offended with each other's freedom if we could help it. I am afraid of offending you by a thought juſt now upon my mind, and yet I dare not in conſcience ſuppreſs it—I muſt therefore venture to ſay, that I hope they who depend upon ſuch a repentance as your ſcheme points out, will repent of their repentance itſelf upon their death-bed at leaſt, if not ſooner. You and I, perhaps, ſhould have encouraged the fair-ſpoken young man, who ſaid he had kept all the commandments from his youth, and rather have left the thief upon the croſs to periſh like a villain, as he lived. But Jeſus thought differently. I do not encourage ſinners to defer their repentance to their death-beds—I preſs the neceſſity of a repentance this moment. But then I take care to tell them that repentance is the gift of God, that Jeſus is exalted to beſtow it, and that all their endeavors that way, unleſs they ſeek to him for grace, will be vain as waſhing a Blackmoor, and tranſient as waſhing a ſwine, which will ſoon return to the mire again. I know

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the evil heart will abuſe the grace of God; the Apoſtle knew this likewiſe, *Rom.* iii. 8. and vi. 3. But this did not tempt him to ſuppreſs the glorious grace of the goſpel, the power of Jeſus to ſave to the uttermoſt, and his merciful promiſe, that whoſoever cometh unto him he will in no wiſe caſt out. The repentance of a natural heart, proceeding wholly from fear, like that of ſome malefactors, who are ſorry, not that they have committed robbery or murder, but that they muſt be hanged for it; this undoubtedly is nothing worth, whether in time of health, or in a dying hour. But that μετανοια, that gracious change of heart, views and diſpoſitions which always takes place, when Jeſus is made known to the ſoul as having died that the ſinner might live, and been wounded that he might be healed. This, at whatever period God is pleaſed to afford and effect it by his Spirit, brings a ſure and everlaſting ſalvation with it.

Still I find I have not done: you aſk my expoſition of the parables of the Talents and Pounds: but at preſent I can write no more. I have only juſt time to tell you, that when I begged your acceptance of Omicron, nothing was farther from my expectation than a correſpondence with you. The frank and kind manner in which you wrote preſently won upon my heart. In the courſe of our letters upon Subſcription, I obſerved an integrity and diſintereſtedneſs in you, which endeared you to me ſtill more. Since that, our debates have taken a much more intereſting turn; I have conſidered it as a call, and an opportunity put in my hand, by the eſpecial providence of him who ruleth

over all. I have embraced the occaſion to lay before you ſimply, and rather in a way of teſtimony than argumentation, what (in the main) I am ſure is truth. I have done enough to diſcharge my conſcience, but ſhall never think I do enough to anſwer the affection I bear you. I have done enough likewiſe to make you weary of my correſpondence, unleſs it ſhould pleaſe God to fix the ſubject deeply upon your mind, and make you attentive to the poſſibility and vaſt importance of a miſtake in matters of everlaſting concernment. I pray that the good Spirit of God may guide you into all truths. He only is the effectual teacher. I ſtill retain a chearful hope that ſome things you cannot at preſent receive, will hereafter be the joy and comfort of your heart: but I know it cannot be till the Lord's own time. I cannot promiſe to give ſuch long anſwers as your letters require, to clear up every text that may be propoſed, and to anſwer every objection that may be ſtarted. Yet I ſhall be glad to change a letter now and then. At preſent it remains with you, whether our correſpondence continues or not, as this is the third letter I have written ſince I heard from you, and therefore muſt be the laſt till I do. I ſhould think what remains might be better ſettled *viva voce*, for which purpoſe I ſhall be glad to ſee you, or ready to wait on you when leiſure will permit, and when I know it will be agreeable. But if (as life and all its affairs are precarious) we ſhould never meet in this world, I pray God we may meet at the right hand of Jeſus, in the great day, when he ſhall come to gather up his jewels and to judge the

the world. There is an endleſs diverſity of opinions in matters of religion, which of them are right and ſafe, and will lead to eternal glory, *Dies iſte indicabit.* I am ſtill in a manner loſt amidſt more engagements than I have time to comply with; but I feel and know that I am,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend and ſervant.

December 8, 1775.

ELEVEN

LETTERS

TO

MR. B——, &c.

Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt
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LETTERS

TO

MR. B———, &c.

LETTER I.

MY DEAREST SIR, *Sept.* 28, 1774.

I SEE the neceſſity of having, if poſſible, my principles at my fingers ends, that I may apply them as occaſions ariſe every hour. Certainly if my ability was equal to my inclination, I would remove your tumor with a word or a touch, I would exempt you inſtantly and conſtantly, from every inconvenience and pain. But you are in the hands of One who could do all this and more, and who loves you infinitely better than I can do, and yet he is pleaſed to permit you to ſuffer. What is the plain inference? Certainly, that at the preſent juncture, he to whom all the concatenations and conſequences of events are preſent in one view, ſees it better for you to have this tumor than to be without it. For I have no more idea of a tumor riſing (or any other incidental trial befalling you) without

a cauſe, without a need be, without a deſigned advantage to reſult from it, than I have of a mountain or pyramid riſing up of its own accord, in the middle of Saliſbury-Plain. The promiſe is expreſs and literally true, that all things univerſally and without exception, ſhall work together for good to them that love God. But they work *together*—the ſmalleſt as well as the greateſt events, have their place and uſe—like the ſeveral ſtones in the arch of a bridge, where no one would ſingly be uſeful, but every one in its place is neceſſary to the ſtructure and ſupport of the arch—or rather like the movement of a watch, where though there is an evident ſubordination of parts, and ſome pieces have a greater comparative importance than others, yet the ſmalleſt pieces have their place and uſe, and are ſo far equally important, that the whole deſign of the machine would be obſtructed for want of them. Some diſpenſations and turns of Divine Providence, may be compared to the main ſpring or capital wheels, which have a more viſible, ſenſible, and determining influence upon the whole tenor of our lives; but the more ordinary occurrences of every day, are at leaſt pins and pivots adjuſted, timed and ſuited, with equal accuracy, by the hand of the ſame great Artiſt, who planned and executes the whole; and we are ſometimes ſurprized to ſee how much more depends and turns upon them, than we were aware of. Then we admire his ſkill, and ſay he has done all things well. Indeed, with reſpect to his works of providence, as well as of creation, he well deſerves the title of *Maximus in Minimis*. Such thoughts as theſe, when I am en-

abled to realize them, in some measure reconcile me to what he allots for myself or my friends, and convince me of the propriety of that expostulation, which speaks the language of love as well as authority, Be still, and know that I am God. I sympathize with you in your trial, and pray and trust that your Shepherd will be your Physician; will superintend and bless the use of means; will give you in his good time health and cure, and at all times reveal unto you abundance of peace. His promises and power are necessary for our preservation in the smoother scenes he has allotted for us, and they are likewise sufficient for the roughest. We are always equally in danger in ourselves, and always equally safe under the shadow of his wings. No storms, assaults, sieges, or pestilences can hurt us till we have filled up his appointed measure of service; and when our work is done, and he has ripened us for glory, it is no great matter by what means he is pleased to call us home to himself.

I have only room to present our joint and sincerest respects. The Lord bless you all.

I am your much obliged,

LETTER II.

My dearest Sir, *Oct.* 15, 1774.

I THINK the greatneſs of trials is to be eſtimated, rather by the impreſſion they make upon our ſpirits, than by their outward appearance. The ſmalleſt will be too heavy for us if we are left to grapple with it in our own ſtrength, or rather weakneſs, and if the Lord is pleaſed to put forth his power in us, he can make the heavieſt light. A lively impreſſion of his love, or of his ſufferings for us, or of the glories within the vail, accompanied with a due ſenſe of the miſery from which we are redeemed; theſe thoughts will enable us to be not only ſubmiſſive, but even joyful in tribulations. When faith is in exerciſe, though the fleſh will have its feelings, the ſpirit will triumph over them. But it is needful we ſhould know that we have no ſufficiency in ourſelves, and in order to know it we muſt feel it. And therefore the Lord ſometimes withdraws his ſenſible influence, and then the buzzing of a fly will be an overmatch for our patience. At other times he will ſhew us what he can do in us and for us; then we can adopt the Apoſtle's words, and ſay, I can do or ſuffer all things through Chriſt ſtrengthening me. He has ſaid, My grace is ſufficient for thee. It is obſervable, that the children of God ſeldom diſappoint our expectations under great trials; if they ſhew a wrongneſs of ſpirit, it is uſually in ſuch little incidents that we

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are ready to wonder at them. For which, two reasons may be principally assigned: when great trials are in view, we run simply and immediately to our all-sufficient friend, feel our dependance, and cry in good earnest for help. But if the occasion seems small, we are too apt secretly to lean to our own wisdom and strength, as if in such slight matters we could make shift without him. Therefore in these we often fail. Again, the Lord deals with us as we sometimes see mothers with their children—when a child begins to walk, he is often very self-important; he thinks he needs no help, and can hardly bear to be supported by the finger of another. Now in such a case, if there is no danger of harm from a fall, as if he is on a plain carpet, the mother will let him alone to try how he *can* walk. He is pleased at first, but presently down he comes, and a few experiments of this kind convince him he is not so strong and able as he thought, and make him willing to be led. But was he upon the brink of a river or a precipice, from whence a fall might be fatal, the tender mother would not trust him to himself, no not for a moment. I have not room to make the application, nor is it needful. It requires the same grace to bear with a right spirit a cross word, as a gross injury; or the breaking of a china-plate, as the death of an only son.

I am, dearest Sir,

Yours, &c.

LET-

LETTER III.

MY DEAR SIR, *Nov.* 23, 1774.

I HOPE to be informed in due time, that the Lord has given you full health and cure. He has preſerved me hitherto from the hands of ſurgeons, but I feel as if my fleſh would prove, as you ſay, a very coward, were it needful to ſubmit to a painful operation. Yet I obſerve, when ſuch operations are neceſſary, if people are ſatisfied of a ſurgeon's ſkill and prudence, they will not only yield to be cut at his pleaſure, without pretending to direct him where, or how long he ſhall make the inciſion; but will thank and pay him for putting them to pain, becauſe they believe it for their advantage. I wiſh I could be more like them in my concerns. My body, as I ſaid, is, through mercy, free from conſiderable ailments, but I have a ſoul that requires ſurgeon's work continually—there is ſome tumor to be diſcuſſed or laid open, ſome diſlocation to be reduced, ſome fracture to be healed almoſt daily. It is my great mercy, that One who is infallible in ſkill, who exerciſes inceſſant care and boundleſs compaſſion towards all his patients, has undertaken my caſe; and complicated as it is, I dare not doubt his making a perfect cure. Yet, alas! I too often diſcover ſuch impatience, diſtruſt and complaining, when under his hand, am

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so apt to find fault with the *instruments* he is pleased to make use of, so ready to think the salutary wounds he makes unnecessary, or too large; in a word, I shew such a promptness to control, were I able, or to direct his operations, that were not his patience beyond expression, he would before now have given me up. I am persuaded, no money would induce Mr. ——, to attend upon a patient who should act towards him, as I have towards my best physician. Sometimes I indulge a hope that I am growing wiser, and think surely, after such innumerable proofs as I have had, that he does all things well, I shall now be satisfied to leave myself quietly and without reserve to his disposal. A thousand such surrenders I have made, and a thousand times I have interpretatively retracted them. Yet still he is gracious. O, how shall I praise him at last!

I thank you for your letter; I never receive one from you without pleasure, and I believe, seldom without profit, at least, for the time. I believe with you, that there is much of the proper and designed efficacy of the gospel mystery which I have not yet experienced—And I suppose, they who are advanced far beyond me in the divine life, judge the same of their utmost present attainments. Yet I have no idea of any *permanent* state in this life, that shall make my experience cease to be a state of warfare and humiliation. At my first setting out, indeed, I thought to be better, and to feel myself better from year to year; I expected by degrees to attain every thing, which I *then* comprized *in*

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my idea of a ſaint. I thought my grain of grace, by much diligence and careful improvement, would in time amount to a pound, that pound in a farther ſpace of time to a talent, and then I hoped to increaſe from one talent to many, ſo that ſuppoſing the Lord ſhould ſpare me a competent number of years, I pleaſed myſelf with the thought of dying rich—But alas, theſe my golden expectations have been like South-Sea dreams, I have lived hitherto a poor ſinner, and I believe I ſhall die one. Have I then gained nothing by waiting upon the Lord? Yes, I have gained that, which I once would rather have been without, ſuch accumulated proofs of the deceitfulneſs and deſperate wickedneſs of my heart, as I hope, by the Lord's bleſſing, has in ſome meaſure taught me to know what I mean, when I ſay, Behold, I am vile! And in connection with this, I have gained ſuch experience of the wiſdom, power and compaſſion of my Redeemer, the need, the worth of his blood, righteouſneſs, attention and interceſſion—the glory that he diſplays, in pardoning iniquity and ſin, and paſſing by the tranſgreſſion of the remnant of his heritage, that my ſoul cannot but cry out, Who is a God like unto thee!—Thus if I have any meaner thoughts of myſelf, *Ezek.* xvi. 63. and any higher thoughts of him than I had twenty years ago, I have reaſon to be thankful; every grain of this experience is worth mountains of gold. And if, by his mercy, I ſhall yet ſink more in my own eſteem, and he will be pleaſed to riſe ſtill more glorious to my eyes, and more precious to my heart; I expect it will

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be much in the ſame way—I was aſhamed when I began to ſeek him, I am more aſhamed now, and I expect to be moſt of all aſhamed, when he ſhall appear to deſtroy my laſt enemy. But O, I may rejoice in him, to think that he will not be aſhamed of me.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours, &c.

LET-

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR SIR, *May* 19, 1775.

I HOPE you will find the Lord preſent at all times, and in all places. When it is ſo, we are at home every where, when it is otherwiſe, *home* is a priſon and *abroad* a wilderneſs. I know what I ought to deſire, and what I do deſire. I point him out to others as the all in all; I eſteem him as ſuch in my own judgement—but alas! my experience abounds with complaints. He is my ſun, but clouds, and ſometimes walls, intercept him from my view.—He is my ſtrength, yet I am prone to lean upon reeds. He is my friend, but on my part there is ſuch coldneſs and ingratitude, as no other friend could bear. But ſtill he is gracious, and ſhames me with his repeated multiplied goodneſs. O, for a warmer heart, a more ſimple dependance, a more active zeal! a more ſenſible deliverance from the effects of this body of ſin and death. He helps me in my endeavors, to keep the vineyards of others; but alas, my own does not ſeem to flouriſh as ſome do around me. However, though I cannot ſay I labor more abundantly than they all, I have reaſon to ſay with thankfulneſs, by the grace of God I am what I am. My poor ſtory would ſoon be much worſe, did not he ſupport, reſtrain and watch over me every minute. Let me intreat your praiſes and prayers, on the behalf of me and mine; and may the Lord bleſs you and yours with an increaſe in every good. I am, deareſt Sir,

Your moſt affectionate,
and obliged ſervant.

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LETTER V.

MY DEAR SIR, *September* 2, 1776.

THE young woman I ſpoke of is ſtill living, and not much weaker than when I left her. The Lord was pleaſed to relieve her on Tueſday evening, and ſhe was comfortable the remainder of the week. But yeſterday her conflicts returned, and ſhe was in great diſtreſs. The enemy, who always fights againſt the peace of the Lord's children, finds great advantage againſt them when their ſpirits are weakened and worn down by long illneſs, and is often permitted to aſſault them. The reaſons are hidden from us, but they are doubtleſs worthy of his wiſdom and love, and they terminate in victory to the praiſe of his glorious grace, which is more ſignally manifeſted by his leading them ſafely through fire and water, than if their path was always ſmooth. He is ſovereign in his diſpenſations, and appoints ſome of his people to trials and exerciſes, to which others, perhaps, are ſtrangers all their days. Believers are ſoldiers; all ſoldiers by their profeſſion are engaged to fight, if called upon; but who ſhall be called to ſuſtain the hotteſt ſervice, and be moſt frequently expoſed upon the field of battle, depends upon the will of the general or king. Some of our ſoldiers are now upon hard ſervice in America, while others are ſtationed round the palace, ſee the king's face daily, and have no dangers or hardſhips to encounter. Theſe, however,

ever, are as liable to a call as the others; but if not called upon, they may enjoy with thankfulneſs the more eaſy poſt aſſigned them. Thus, the Captain of our Salvation allots to his ſoldiers ſuch ſtations as he thinks proper. He has a right to employ whom he will, and where he will. Some are comparatively at eaſe. They are not expoſed to the fierceſt onſets, but live near his preſence; others are, to appearance, preſſed above meaſure, beyond ſtrength, ſo that they deſpair even of life; yet they are ſupported, and in the end made more than conquerors through him who hath loved them. Long obſervation convinces me, that the temptations which ſome endure, are not chaſtiſements brought upon them by unfaithfulneſs, or for any thing remarkably wrong in their ſpirit or walk; I often rather conſider that in *his* warfare, as in worldly wars, the poſt of danger and difficulty is the poſt of honor, and as ſuch aſſigned to thoſe whom he has favored with a peculiar meaſure of his grace. This young woman, in particular, was always from her firſt awakening remarkably humble and ſpiritual, and poſſeſſed of a broken and contrite ſpirit. I never ſaw her in a wrong ſpirit, or heard her ſpeak an unadviſed word. Yet I believe it is impoſſible to expreſs the agonies ſhe has endured. The effect of them is viſible. Her animal frame was unable to ſuſtain the burden. I believe they were the immediate cauſe of that illneſs which is now bringing her down to the grave. I doubt not but theſe caſes depend, in a great meaſure, upon conſtitution; but then the temperament of our bodies depends upon his pleaſure; for if the very

hairs

hairs of our head are numbered, it is impoſſible that thoſe circumſtances of our frame, which, by the near connection between body and ſoul, have a powerful influence upon the ſtate of our minds, can eſcape his notice. He could cure ſuch bodily diſorders as affect the peace of his people in a moment, yet he does not, though he loves them. There muſt be, therefore, wiſe reaſons why he does not, and though we know them not now, we ſhall know them hereafter. Poſſibly ſome ſuffer for the inſtruction of the reſt, that we may learn to be more thankful to him for the peace we enjoy, and to be more humbly dependant upon him for the continuance of it. The Lord's way is in the deep, and his path in the great waters, untraceable by our feeble reaſonings, but faith brings in a good report. We need not doubt but he does all things well, and in due time we ſhall ſee it. In the mean while he checks our vain enquiries, and calls upon us to be ſtill and know that he is God.

I brought home with me a thankful ſenſe of the kindneſs and friendſhip I am favored with from you and all yours. I account this connection one of the great comforts of my life, and I hope it has been, and will be, not only pleaſant but profitable to me. Though I am but an unapt ſcholar, I hope I am not unwilling to learn, and the Lord in his merciful providence appoints me many teachers. There is little praiſe due to us, if we either communicate or receive benefit in our intercourſe with our fellow-diſciples. In both we are but inſtruments under the influence of a higher hand. Were Chriſtians to meet together without their Lord, they would

would either trifle or quarrel their time away. But as he has ſaid, where two or three are met, there am I in the midſt of them, we may well be glad of opportunities of coming together. And though, for my own part, I am ſo poor an improver of ſuch ſeaſons, that the recollection of them, when paſt, is generally accompanied with ſhame and regret; yet he is gracious and merciful, and ſeldom leaves me to complain that they were wholly in vain.

I am, deareſt Sir,

Your's, &c.

LETTER VI.

MY DEAR SIR, *July* 22, 1777.

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THE complaints you make of what paſſes *within*, encourage me under what I feel myſelf. Indeed, if thoſe whom I have reaſon to believe are more ſpiritual and humble than I am, did not give ſome teſtimony that they find their hearts made of the ſame materials as mine is, I ſhould be ſometimes hard put to it to believe that I have any part or lot in the matter, or any real knowledge of the life of faith. But this concurrent teſtimony of many witneſſes, confirms me in what I think the ſcripture plainly teaches, that the ſoil of human nature, though many ſpots are certainly better weeded, planted and manured than others, is every where the ſame, univerſally bad; ſo bad that it cannot be worſe, and of itſelf is only capable of producing noxious weeds, and nouriſhing venomous creatures. We often ſee the effects of culture, ſkill and expence will make a garden where all was deſart before. When Jeſus the good huſbandman encloſes a ſoil, and ſeparates it from the waſte of the world, to make it a reſidence for himſelf, a change preſently takes place; it is planted and watered from above, and viſited with beams infinitely more chearing and fertilizing than thoſe of the material ſun—But its natural propenſity to bring forth weeds ſtill con-

tinues, and one half of his dispensations may be compared to a company of weeders, whom he sends forth into his garden to pluck up all which he has not planted with his own hand, and which, if left to grow, would quickly overpower and overtop the rest. But, alas! the ground is so impregnated with evil seeds, and they shoot in such quick succession, that if this weeding work were not constantly repeated, all former labor would be lost, *hinc illæ lachrymæ*. Hence arises the necessity of daily crosses and disappointments, daily changes of frame, and such multiplied convictions, that we are nothing and can do nothing of ourselves; all are needful and barely sufficient to prevent our hearts from being over-run with pride, self-dependance and security.

Your much-indebted

And affectionate servant.

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LETTER VII.

My dear Sir, *Nov.* 6, 1777.

YOU say you are more disposed to cry *miserere* than *hallelujah*—Why not both together? When the treble is praise, and heart-humiliation for the base, the melody is pleasant, and the harmony good. However, if not both together, we must have them alternately; not all singing, not all sighing, but an interchange and balance, that we may be neither lifted too high, nor cast down too low, which would be the case if we were very comfortable or very sorrowful for a long continuance. But though we change, the Savior changes not. All our concerns are in his hands, and therefore safe. His path is in the deep waters, his thoughts and methods of conduct are as high above ours, as the heavens are high above the earth, and he often takes a course for accomplishing his purposes, directly contrary to what our narrow views would prescribe. He wounds in order to heal, kills that he may make alive, casts down when he designs to raise, brings a death upon our feelings, wishes and prospects, when he is about to give us the desire of our hearts—these things he does to *prove* us, but he himself knows and has determined before-hand what he will do! The proof indeed usually turns out to our shame; impatience and unbelief shew their heads, and prompt us to suppose this and the other thing, yea,

perhaps all things are againſt us, to queſtion whether he be with us and for us, or not. But it iſſues likewiſe in the praiſe of his goodneſs, when we find that, maugre all our unkind complaints and ſuſpicions, he is ſtill working wonderfully for us, cauſing light to ſhine out of darkneſs, and doing us good in defiance of ourſelves.

I am, my dear Sir,

Moſt affectionately your's.

LET-

LETTER VIII.

To Mr. B——, Jun.

Dear Sir, *Aug.* 24, 1774.

THE lowneſs of your voice, and a blameable abſence of mind on my part, prevented me from underſtanding what you ſaid when you took your leave of me; nor did I juſt at that inſtant recollect that you were ſo ſoon going away. I could not otherwiſe have parted with you, without a particular expreſſion of my warmeſt wiſhes for your welfare, and commending you with an emotion, which my heart always feels for you, to our God, and the word of his grace. Permit me therefore, by writing to aſſure you, ſo far as I can anſwer for myſelf, that the requeſt you were pleaſed to make for my remembrance, will not be forgotten by me.

You are going abroad; you will carry with you, I doubt not, the beſt advice, ſtrengthened by the authority and affection of parents, whom you greatly love and greatly reverence. This may ſeem to make any thing a ſtranger can offer unneceſſary, if not impertinent. Yet confiding in your candor, and in your good opinion of my intention, I ſhall venture to let my pen run on a little longer. Not only my wiſhes, but my hopes are ſtrong in your behalf. Perhaps there is hardly a young man in the kingdom, born to a fortune, who is ſetting out in life upon equal advantages with yourſelf. How

many at your years, who have been brought up in affluence, are unprincipled, uninſtructed, and have already entered upon a courſe of diſſipation and folly, in which it is impoſſible they themſelves can find ſatisfaction, and which (unleſs they are reclaimed from it by an Almighty arm) will infallibly preclude them from uſefulneſs or eſteem! Whereas your early years have been ſucceſsfully employed in the purſuit of knowledge, and your education formed under the moſt animating and endearing influence; and the Lord has furniſhed you with every natural ability of body and mind, which may qualify you to ſerve him in that ſituation of life, which his providence has allotted you.

What may I not then further hope from theſe beginnings, eſpecially as it is eaſy to obſerve that he has given you an amiable and promiſing diſpoſition of ſpirit, and has not only preſerved you from being hurried down the ſtream of a giddy world, but enabled you to account the tender reſtraint under which you have been educated, not a yoke, but a privilege.

I ſympathize with you at what you will feel, when you are firſt ſeparated from your happy family: But the Lord God, who is the ſun and ſhield of thoſe who fear him, will be always near you! His favor is the one thing needful, which no outward advantages can compenſate the want of; and the right knowledge of him is the one thing needful, which no human teaching can communicate.

Were I more intimate with you, I could have aſked the queſtion, and perhaps received the ſatisfaction to know that you have already begun to

conſider

consider him in this light; that you feel a vanity in science, an emptiness in creatures, and find that you have desires, which only *He* who gave them can satisfy. I trust it either is, or will be thus. As to learning, though it is useful when we know how to make a right use of it, yet considered as in our own power, and to those who trust to it, without seeking a superior guidance, it is usually the source of perplexity, strife, scepticism and infidelity. It is indeed like a sword in a madman's hands, which gives him the more opportunity of hurting himself and others. As to what the world calls pleasure, there is so little in it, that even the philosophers of old, or many of them, though they had little of value to substitute in its room, could despise it. You will perhaps meet with some, who will talk another language, who will pretend to be too wise to submit to the Bible, and too happy in worldly things, to expect or desire any happiness beside. But I trust you have seen enough to enable you to treat such persons with the pity, and such pretensions with the contempt they deserve.

Should we set our concerns with an *eternal world* aside for a moment, it would be easy to demonstrate that religion is necessary, in order to make the most of this life, and to enjoy temporal good with the highest relish. In such a world as this, where we are every moment liable to so many unforeseen and unavoidable contingencies, a man without religion, may be compared to a ship in a storm, without either rudder, anchor, or pilot. But then, the religion which *only* deserves the name, must come from above; it must be suited to the state and wants of a

ſinner, it muſt be capable of comforting the heart, it muſt take away the ſting and dread of death, and fix our confidence upon one who is always able to help us. Such is the religion of Jeſus, ſuch are its effects, and ſuch are the criteria, whereby we are to judge of the various forms and ſchemes under which it is propoſed to us. But I forbear; I am only reminding you of what you know, and what you have known to be verified by *living* and *dying* examples. This happineſs, my dear Sir, is open to you, to all who ſeek. He is enthroned in heaven, but prayer will bring him down to the heart. Indeed he is always beforehand with us, and if we feel one deſire towards him, we may accept it as a token that he gave it us, to encourage us to aſk for more.

May he be your guide and guard, be with you at all times, and in all places, and bring you back to your father's houſe in peace. Should I live to ſee that day, you have few friends whoſe congratulations would be warmer or more ſincere than mine. And if when you are ſettled and at leiſure, you will afford me a letter, it will be both a pleaſure and a favor to, dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend and ſervant.

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LETTER IX.

To Miss M—— B——.

My dear Miss M——, *Nov.* 11, 1775.

OUR late visit to —— was very pleasant to myself; if any thing that passed was of service to you, we know to whom the thanks are due. For we can neither communicate or receive any thing, but so far as he is pleased to enable us. One reason why he often disappoints us is, that we may learn to depend on him alone. We are prone, as you observe, to rest too much upon sensible comforts, yet they are very desirable; only as to the measure and seasons, it is well to be submissive to his will, to be thankful for them when we have them, and humbly waiting for them when we have them not. They are not, however, the proper ground of our hope; a good hope springs from such a sense of our wants, and such a persuasion of his power and grace, as engages the heart to venture upon the warrant of his promises, to trust in him for salvation. In a sense, we are often hindering him by our impatience and unbelief; but strictly speaking, when he really begins the good work, and gives us a desire which will be satisfied with nothing short of himself, *he will not be hindered from carrying it on*, for he has said, I will work and none shall let it. Ah, had it depended upon myself, upon my wisdom or faithfulness, I should have hindered him to purpose, and ruined myself long

ago. How often have I grieved and reſiſted his Spirit! But hereby I have learned more of his patience and tenderneſs than I could otherwiſe have known. He knows our frame, and what effects our evil nature fomented by the artifices of Satan will have; he ſees us from firſt to laſt. A thouſand evils ariſe in our hearts, a thouſand wrongneſſes in our conduct, which as they do ariſe are new to ourſelves, and perhaps at ſometimes we were ready to think we were incapable of ſuch things; but none of them are new to him, to whom paſt, preſent and future are the ſame. The foreſight of them did not prevent his calling us by his grace.—Though he knew we were vile, and ſhould prove ungrateful and unfaithful, yet he would be found of us, he would knock at the door of our hearts and gain himſelf an entrance. Nor ſhall they prevent his accompliſhing his gracious purpoſe. It is our part to be abaſed before him, and quietly to hope and wait for his ſalvation in the uſe of his appointed means. The power, ſucceſs and bleſſing are wholly from himſelf. To make us more ſenſible of this, he often withdraws from our perceptions, and as in the abſence of the ſun the wild beaſts of the foreſt roam abroad; ſo when Jeſus hides himſelf, we preſently perceive what is in our hearts, and what a poor ſhift we can make without him. When he returns, his light chaſes the evils away, and we are well again. However, they are not dead when moſt controlled by his preſence.

It is your great and ſingular mercy, my dear Miſs, that he has taught you to ſeek him ſo early in life. You are entered in the way of ſalvation, but you muſt not expect all at once. The work

of

of grace is compared to the corn and to a building; the growth of the one, and the carrying forward of the other, are gradual. In a building, for inſtance, if it be large, there is much to be done in preparing and laying the foundation, before the walls appear above ground; much is doing within when the work does not ſeem perhaps to advance without, and when it is conſiderably forward, yet being encumbered with ſcaffolds and rubbiſh, a bye-ſtander ſees it at a great diſadvantage, and can form but an imperfect judgment of it. But all this while the architect himſelf, even from the laying of the firſt ſtone, conceives of it according to the plan and deſign he has formed; he prepares and adjuſts the materials, diſpoſing each in its proper time and place, and views it in idea as already finiſhed. In due ſeaſon it is compleated, but not in a day. The top-ſtone is fixed, and then the ſcaffolds and rubbiſh being removed, it appears to others as he intended it ſhould be. Men, indeed, often plan what for want of ſkill or ability, or from unforeſeen diſappointments, they are unable to execute. But nothing can diſappoint the heavenly Builder, nor will he ever be reproached with forſaking the work of his own hands, or beginning that which he could not, or would not accompliſh, *Phil.* i. 6. Let us therefore be thankful for beginnings, and patiently wait the event. His enemies ſtrive to retard the work, as they did when the Jews, by his order, ſet about re-building the temple. Yet it was finiſhed in defiance of them all.

Believe me to be

Your affectionate and obliged ſervant.

LETTER X.

MY DEAR MISS M——, *April* 29, 1776.

I THANK you for your laſt: and I rejoice in the Lord's goodneſs to you. To be drawn by love, exempted from thoſe diſtreſſing terrors and temptations which ſome are beſet with; to be favored with the ordinances and means of grace, and connected with thoſe, and with thoſe only, who are diſpoſed and qualified to aſſiſt and encourage you in ſeeking the Savior; theſe are peculiar privileges, which all concur in your caſe; he loves you, he deals gently with you, he provides well for you, and accompanies every outward privilege with his ſpecial bleſſing. And I truſt he will lead you on from ſtrength to ſtrength, and ſhew you ſtill greater things than you have yet ſeen. They whom he teaches, are always increaſing in knowledge both of themſelves and of him. The heart is deep, and like Ezekiel's viſion, preſents ſo many chambers of imagery one within another, that it requires time to get a conſiderable acquaintance with it, and we ſhall never know it thoroughly. It is now more than 28 years ſince the Lord began to open mine to my own view, and from that time to this, almoſt every day has diſcovered to me ſomething, which till then was unobſerved; and the farther I go, the more I ſeem convinced that I have entered but a little way. A perſon that travels in ſome parts of Derbyſhire, may eaſily be ſatisfied that the country

is

is cavernous—but how large, how deep, how numerous the caverns may be, which are hidden from us by the ſurface of the ground, and what is contained in them, are queſtions, which our niceſt enquirers cannot fully anſwer—Thus I judge of my heart, that it is very deep and dark, and full of evil, but as to particulars, I know not one of a thouſand.

And if our own hearts are beyond our comprehenſion, how much more incomprehenſible is the heart of Jeſus. If ſin abounds in us, grace and love ſuperabound in him; his ways and thoughts are higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth. His love has a height, and depth, and length, and breadth, that paſſeth all knowledge, and his riches of grace are unſearchable riches. *Epheſ.* iii. 8, 18, 19. All that we have received, or can receive from him, or know of him in this life, compared with what he *is* in himſelf, or what he *has* for us, is but as the drop of a bucket compared with the ocean, or a ſingle ray of light in reſpect of the ſun. The waters of the ſanctuary flow to us at firſt almoſt upon a level, ankle deep, ſo graciouſly does the Lord condeſcend to our weakneſs; but they riſe as we advance, and conſtrain us to cry out with the Apoſtle, O the depth! We find before us, as Dr. Watts beautifully expreſſes it,

> A ſea of love and grace unknown,
> Without a bottom or a ſhore.

O the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt. It will be growing upon us through time, yea, I believe through eternity. What an aſtoniſhing and

what a chearing thought, that this high and lofty One ſhould unite himſelf to our nature, that ſo in a way worthy of his adorable perfections, he might by his Spirit unite us to himſelf. Could ſuch a thought have ariſen in our hearts, without the warrant of his word, (but it is a thought which no created mind was capable of conceiving, till he revealed it), it would have been preſumption and blaſphemy; but now he has made it known, it is the foundation of our hope, and an inexhauſtible ſpring of life and joy. Well may we ſay, Lord what is man, that thou ſhouldſt thus viſit him!

I am, ſincerely,

Your obliged and affectionate ſervant.

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LETTER XI.

MY DEAR MISS M——, *Sept.* 3, 1776.

WE saw no danger upon the road homeward, but my judgment tells me we are always upon the brink of danger, though we see it not, and that without the immediate protection and care of him who preserveth the stars in their courses, there could be no travelling safely a few miles, nor even sitting in safety by the fire-side. But with him we are safe in all places and circumstances, till our race is done, and his gracious purposes concerning us, in the present life, are compleatly answered—then he will call us home that we may see his face, and be with him for ever, and then it will not much signify what messenger he shall be pleased to send for us.

While he took care of us abroad, he watched over our concerns at home likewise, so that we found all well upon our return, and met with nothing to grieve us. Many go out and return home no more, and many find distressing things have happened in their absence; but we have to set up our Ebenezar, and to say, Hitherto he has helped us. Assist me to praise him.—The Lord is leading you in the good old way, in which you may perceive the footsteps of his flock who have gone before you. They had in their day the same difficulties, fears and complaints as we have, and through mercy we partake of the same consolation which

which ſupported and refreſhed them. And the promiſes which they truſted and found faithful, are equally ſure to us. It is ſtill true that they who believe ſhall never be confounded. If left to ourſelves we ſhould have built upon ſand, but he has provided and revealed a ſure foundation, removed our natural prejudices againſt it, and now, though rains and floods and ſtorms aſſault our building, it cannot fall, for it is founded upon a rock. The ſuſpicions and fears which ariſe in an awakened mind, proceed, in a good meaſure, from remaining unbelief, but not wholly ſo; for there is a jealouſy and diffidence of ourſelves, a warineſs owing to a ſenſe of the deceitfulneſs of our hearts, which is a grace and a gift of the Lord. Some people who have much zeal, but are deſtitute of this jealous fear, may be compared to a ſhip that ſpreads a great deal of ſail, but is not properly ballaſted, and is therefore in danger of being overſet whenever a ſtorm comes. A ſincere perſon has many reaſons for diſtruſting his own judgment; is ſenſible of the vaſt importance of the caſe, and afraid of too haſtily concluding in his own favor, and therefore not eaſily ſatisfied. However, this fear, though uſeful, eſpecially to young beginners, is not comfortable; and they who ſimply wait upon Jeſus, are gradually freed from it, in proportion as their knowledge of him, and their experience of his goodneſs, increaſes. He has a time for ſettling and eſtabliſhing them in himſelf, and his time is beſt. We are haſty, and would be ſatisfied at once, but his word is, Tarry thou the Lord's leiſure. The work of grace is not like Jonah's gourd, which

ſprang

ſprang up and flouriſhed in a night, and as quickly withered, but rather like the oak, which, from a little acorn and a tender plant, advances with an almoſt imperceptible growth from year to year, till it becomes a broad, ſpreading and deep-rooted tree, and then it ſtands for ages. The Chriſtian oak ſhall grow and flouriſh for ever. When I ſee any ſoon after they appear to be awakened, making a ſpeedy profeſſion of great joy, before they have a due acquaintance with their own hearts, I am in pain for them. I am not ſorry to hear them afterwards complain that their joys are gone, and they are almoſt at their wit's end, for without ſome ſuch check, to make them feel their weakneſs and dependance, I ſeldom find them turn out well—either their fervor inſenſibly abates, till they become quite cold, and ſink into the world again (of which I have ſeen many inſtances) or, if they do not give up all, their walk is uneven, and their ſpirit has not that ſavor of brokenneſs and true humility which is a chief ornament of our holy profeſſion. If they do not feel the plague of their hearts at firſt, they find it out afterwards, and too often manifeſt it to others. Therefore, though I know the Spirit of the Lord is free, and will not be confined to our rules, and there may be excepted caſes, yet, in general, I believe the old proverb, *Soft and fair goes far*, will hold good in Chriſtian experience. Let us be thankful for the beginnings of grace, and wait upon our Savior patiently for the increaſe. And as we have choſen him for our phyſician, let us commit ourſelves to his management, and not

preſcribe

preſcribe to him what he ſhall preſcribe for us. He knows us, and he loves us better than we do ourſelves, and will do all things well.

You ſay, "It never came with power and life to my ſoul, that he died for me." If you mean, you never had any extraordinary ſudden manifeſtation, ſomething like a viſion or a voice from heaven, confirming it to you, I can ſay the ſame. But I know he died for ſinners; I know I am a ſinner: I know he invites them that are ready to periſh; I am ſuch a one: I know, upon his own invitation, I have committed myſelf to him; and I know, by the effects, that he has been with me hitherto, otherwiſe I ſhould have been an apoſtate long ago. And therefore I know that he died for me; for had he been pleaſed to kill me (as he juſtly might have done) he would not have ſhewn me ſuch things as theſe.

If I muſt periſh, would the Lord
Have taught my heart to love his word?
Would he have giv'n me eyes to ſee
My danger and my remedy?
Reveal'd his name, and bid me pray,
Had he reſolv'd to ſay me nay?

I know that I am a child, becauſe he teaches me to ſay Abba, Father. I know that I am *his*, becauſe he has enabled me to chuſe him for *mine*. For ſuch a choice and deſire could never have taken place in my heart, if he had not placed it there himſelf. By nature I was too blind to know him, too proud to truſt him, too obſtinate to ſerve him,

too

too baſe-minded to love him. The enmity I was filled with againſt his government, righteouſneſs and grace, was too ſtrong to be ſubdued by any power but his own. The love I bear him is but a faint and feeble ſpark, but it is an emanation from himſelf. He kindled it, and he keeps it alive; and becauſe it is his work, I truſt many waters ſhall not quench it.

I have only room to aſſure you, that I am

Your obliged,

And affectionate friend.

FOUR

FOUR

LETTERS

TO THE

REV. MR. R——.

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LETTERS

TO THE

REV. MR. R——.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR SIR, *April* 15, 1776.

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I OFTEN rejoice on your behalf. Your call out of the world, was a ſingular comfortable inſtance of the power of grace. And when I conſider the difficulties and ſnares of your ſituation, and that you have been kept in the middle path, preſerved from undue compliances on the one hand, and unneceſſary ſingularities on the other, I cannot doubt but the Lord has hitherto helped and guided you. Indeed you have need of his guidance. At your years, and with your expectations in life, your health firm, and your natural ſpirits lively, you are expoſed to many ſnares. Yet if the Lord keeps you ſenſible of your danger, and dependant upon him, you will walk ſafely. Your ſecurity, ſucceſs and comfort, depend upon him; and in the

the way of means, chiefly upon your being preſerved in an humble ſenſe of your own weakneſs. It is written, Fear not, I am with thee. It is written again, Bleſſed is the man who feareth always. There is a perfect harmony in thoſe ſeemingly different texts. May the wiſdom that cometh from above, teach you and me to keep them both united in our view. If the Lord be with us, we have no cauſe of fear. His eye is upon us, his arm over us, his ear open to our prayer. His grace ſufficient, his promiſe unchangeable. Under his protection, though the path of duty ſhould lie through fire and water, we may chearfully and confidently purſue it. On the other hand, our hearts are ſo deceitful, fallible and frail, our ſpiritual enemies ſo ſubtle, watchful and powerful, and they derive ſo many advantages from the occaſions of every day, in which we are unavoidably and unexpectedly concerned; there is ſo much combuſtible within, and ſo many temptations ariſing from without, capable of ſetting all in a flame; that we cannot be too jealous of ourſelves and our circumſtances. The Duke of Devonſhire's motto (if I miſtake not) well ſuits the Chriſtian, *Cavendo tutus.* When we can ſay in the Pſalmiſt's ſpirit, *Hold thou me up*, we may warrantably draw his concluſion, *and I ſhall be ſafe*; but the moment we lean to our own underſtanding, we are in imminent danger of falling. The enemy who wars againſt our ſouls, is a conſummate maſter in his way, fertile in ſtratagems, and equally ſkilful in carrying on his aſſaults by ſap, or by ſtorm. He ſtudies us, if I may ſo ſay, all round, to diſcover our weak ſides, and he is a

very

very Proteus for changing his appearances, and can appear as a fly ſerpent, a roaring lion, or an Angel of light, as beſt ſuits his purpoſe. It is a great mercy, to be in ſome meaſure acquainted with his devices, and aware of them. They who wait humbly upon the Lord, and conſult carefully at his word and throne of grace, are made wiſer than their enemy, and enabled to eſcape and withſtand his wiles. I know you will not expect me to apologize for putting you in mind of theſe things, though you know them. I have a double warrant, the love I bear you, and the Lord's command, *Heb.* iii. 13. Uſe the like freedom with me, I need it, and hope to be thankful for it, and accept it as one of the beſt proofs of friendſhip.

The Lord bleſs and keep you. Pray for us, and believe me to be,

Sincerely yours.

LETTER II.

My dear Sir, *July* 13, 1776.

THE Lord, who mercifully called you out of a ſtate of thoughtleſs diſſipation, and has hitherto been with you, will I truſt ſweeten all your trials, and cauſe his light to ſhine upon your paths. It ſeems probable, that if you pay a juſt regard to your father's negative, which I really think he has a right to expect from you, and at the ſame time make a ſteady and conſcientious uſe of that negative, which he generouſly allows you to put upon his propoſals, to which I think you have an equal right; I ſay, while things remain in this ſituation, and you continue to think differently, it ſeems probable, that the hour of your exchanging a ſingle for the marriage ſtate, is yet at ſome diſtance. But let not this grieve you. The Lord is all-ſufficient —a lively ſenſe of his love, a deep impreſſion of eternity, a heart filled with zeal for his cauſe, and a thirſt for the good of ſouls, will I hope enable you to make a chearful ſacrifice, of whatever has no neceſſary connexion with your peace and his ſervice. And you may reſt aſſured, that whenever he, who loves you better than you do yourſelf, ſees it beſt for you upon the whole to change your condition, he will bring it about, he will point out the perſon, prepare the means, and ſecure the ſucceſs, by his providence and the power he has over every heart. And you ſhall ſee that all previous difficul-

difficulties were either gracious preventions which he threw in the way, to prevent your taking a wrong ſtep, or temporary bars, which, by his removing them afterwards, ſhould give you opportunity of more clearly perceiving his care and interpoſition in your favour. In the mean time remember your high calling—You are a miniſter and ambaſſador of Chriſt, your are intruſted with the moſt honorable and important employment, that can engage and animate the heart of man. ταῦτα μελετα, ἐν τυτοις ἴσθι, επιμενε αὐτοῖς.*

Filled and fired with a conſtraining ſenſe of the love of Jeſus, and the worth of ſouls, impreſſed with an ardor to carry war into Satan's kingdom, to ſtorm his ſtrongholds, and reſcue his captives; you will have little leiſure to think of any thing elſe. How does the love of glory ſtimulate the ſoldier, make him forget and forego a thouſand perſonal tenderneſſes, and prompt him to croſs oceans, to traverſe deſarts, to ſcale mountains, and plunge into the greateſt hardſhips and the thickeſt dangers. They do it for a corruptible crown, a puff of breath, an empty fame; their higheſt proſpect is the applauſe and favor of their prince. We likewiſe are ſoldiers, we have a prince and captain who deſerves our all. They who know him, and have hearts to conceive of his excellence, and to feel their obligations to him, cannot indeed ſeek their own glory, but his glory is dearer to them than a thouſand lives. They owe him their ſouls, for he redeemed them with blood, his own blood;

* 1 Tim. iv. 15.

and by his grace he ſubdued and pardoned them when they were rebels, and in arms againſt him. Therefore they are not their own, they would not be their own. When his ſtandard is raiſed, when his enemies are in motion, when his people are to be reſcued—they go forth clothed with his panoply, they fight under his eye, they are ſure of his ſupport, and he ſhews them the conqueror's crown. O when they think of that ευ δ᾽ϰλε αγαθε,* with which he has promiſed to welcome them home, when the campaign is over, hard things ſeem eaſy, and bitter things ſweet, they count nothing, not even their own lives dear, ſo that they may finiſh their courſe with joy. May the Lord make us thus minded. Give us a hearty concern for *his* buſineſs, and he has engaged to take care of *ours*, and nothing that can conduce to our real comfort and uſefulneſs, ſhall be with-held.

Believe me to be ſincerely your's.

* Well done good ſervant.

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LETTER III.

MY DEAR FRIEND, *Dec.* 21, 1776.

YOUR letter brought me tidings of joy, and then furnished me with materials for a bonfire upon the occasion. It was an act of passive obedience to burn it, but I did obey. I congratulate you upon the happy issue to which the Lord has brought your affairs. I see that his good Spirit and good providence have been and are with you. I doubt not but your union with Miss ——, will be a mutual blessing, and, on your part, heightened by being connected with such a family. I could enlarge upon this head, if *my* letter likewise was to be burnt as soon as you have read it. I look upon the friendship the Lord has given me there, as one of my prime privileges, and I hope I shall always be thankful that it proved a means of introducing you into it.

I congratulate you likewise upon your accession to ——, not because it is a good living, in a genteel neighbourhood, and a fine country; but because I believe the Lord sends you there for fulfilling the desires he has given you, of being useful to souls. Church preferment, in any other view, is dreadful, and I would as soon congratulate a man upon seeing a mill-stone tied about his neck, to sink him into the depths of the sea, as upon his obtaining what is called a good living, except I thought him determined to spend and be spent in

the cauſe of the goſpel. A pariſh is an awful mill-ſtone indeed, to thoſe who ſee nothing valuable in the flock, but the fleece. But the Lord has impreſſed your heart with a ſenſe of the glory and importance of his truth, and the worth of ſouls, and animated your zeal by the moſt powerful motive, the knowledge of his conſtraining love. Your caſe is extraordinary. Perhaps, when you review in your mind the circle of your former gay acquaintance, you may ſay with Job's ſervant, I only am eſcaped alive—The reſt are either removed into an eternal ſtate, or are ſtill hurrying down the ſtream of diſſipation, and living without God in the world. Yet there was a time when there ſeemed no more probability on your ſide than on theirs, that you ſhould obtain mercy, and be called to the honor of preaching the glorious goſpel. You are ſetting out with every poſſible advantage—In early life, with a chearful flow of ſpirits, affluent circumſtances, and now, to crown all, the Lord gives you the very choice of your heart in a partner; one, who beſides deſerving and meeting your affection, will, I am perſuaded, be a real helpmeet to you in your ſpiritual walk. How much is here to be thankful for.

I truſt the Lord has given you, and will maintain in you a right ſpirit, ſo as not to reſt in his gifts, but to hold them in connection with the love and favor of the giver. It is a low time with us, when the greateſt aſſemblage of earthly bleſſings, can ſeem to ſatisfy us without a real communion with him. His grace is ſufficient for you; but undoubtedly ſuch a ſcene of proſperity as ſeems to lie before you, is full of ſnares, and calls for a double effort

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of watchfulneſs and prayer. Your ſituation will fix many eyes upon you, and Satan will doubtleſs watch you, and examine every corner of the hedge around you, to ſee if he can find a gap by which to enter. We have but few rich goſpel miniſters; but it is too evident that he has found a way to damp the zeal and hurt the ſpirits of ſome of thoſe few, who for a time acted nobly, and ſeemed to walk out of the reach of the allurements of the world. I am not jealous of you. I feel a comfortable perſuaſion, that the Lord has taken a faſt hold of your heart, and given you a faſt hold of his almighty arm. Yet I believe you will not be diſpleaſed with me for dropping a hint of this kind, and at this time.

You have heard of the trial with which the Lord has been pleaſed to viſit us; it ſtill continues, though conſiderably alleviated. It is tempered with many mercies, and I hope he diſpoſes us in a meaſure to ſubmiſſion. I truſt it will be for good. My dear friend, you are now coming into my ſchool, where you will learn, as occaſions offer, to feel more in the perſon of another than in your own. But be not diſcouraged; the Lord only afflicts for our good. It is neceſſary that our ſharpeſt trials ſhould ſometimes ſpring from our deareſt comforts, elſe we ſhould be in danger of forgetting ourſelves, and ſetting up our reſt here. In ſuch a world, and with ſuch hearts as we have, we ſhall often need ſomething to prevent our cleaving to the duſt, to quicken us to prayer, and to make us feel that our dependance for one hour's peace, is upon the Lord alone. I am ready to think I have known as much of the good and happineſs which

this world can afford, as moſt people who live in it. I never ſaw the perſon with whom I wiſhed to exchange in temporals. And for many years paſt I have thought my trials have been light and few, compared with what many, or moſt of the Lord's people have endured. And yet, though in the main poſſeſſed of my own wiſhes, when I look back upon the twenty-ſeven years paſt, I am ready to ſtile them, with Jacob, few and evil; and to give the ſum total of their contents in Solomon's words —all is vanity. If I take theſe years to pieces, I ſee a great part of them was filled up with ſins, ſorrows and inquietudes. The pleaſures too are gone, and have no more real exiſtence than the baſeleſs fabric of a dream. The ſhadows of the evening will ſoon begin to come over us, and if our lives are prolonged, a thouſand pains and infirmities, from which the Lord has in a remarkable meaſure exempted us hitherto, will probably overtake us; and at laſt we muſt feel the parting pang. *Sic tranſit gloria Mundi.* Sin has ſo envenomed the ſoil of this earth, that the Amaranth will not grow upon it. But we are haſting to a better world, and bright unclouded ſkies, where our ſun will go down no more, and all tears ſhall be wiped from our eyes.

I am, very ſincerely and affectionately,

Your's, &c.

LET-

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR FRIEND, *Sept.* 27, 1777.

MR. —— called on us Thurſday evening, and from that hour my thoughts, when awake, have ſeldom been abſent from ———. Few people are better qualified to feel for *you*, yourſelf and the family excepted; perhaps there is no perſon living more nearly intereſted in what concerns Mrs. —— than myſelf. I could not, therefore, at ſuch a time as this, refrain from writing. And glad ſhould I be, if the Lord may help me to drop a ſuitable word, and accompany it with a bleſſing to you in the reading.

I am glad to be aſſured (though I expected no leſs) that Mrs. —— happily feels herſelf ſafe in the Lord's hand, and under the care of the Good Shepherd and Savior, to whom ſhe has often committed herſelf, and finds him faithful to his promiſe, giving her ſtrength in her ſoul according to her day, and enabling her quietly to ſubmit to his holy, wiſe and gracious will. And it is my prayer, that he may ſtrengthen you likewiſe, and reveal his own all-ſufficiency ſo clearly and powerfully to your heart, that you may not be afraid of any event, but chearfully rely upon him, to be all that to you in every circumſtance and change, which his promiſe warrants you to expect.

I am willing to hope, that this is but a ſhort ſeaſon of anxiety, appointed for the exerciſe of your faith and patience, and to give you, in his good time, a ſignal proof of his power and goodneſs in anſwering prayer. He ſometimes brings us into ſuch a ſituation that the help of creatures is utterly unavailing, that we may afterwards be more clearly ſenſible of his interpoſition. Then we experimentally learn the vanity of all things here below, and are brought to a more immediate and abſolute dependance upon himſelf. We have need of having theſe leſſons frequently inculcated upon us; but when his end is anſwered, how often after he has cauſed grief, does he ſhew his great compaſſions, and ſave us from our fears by an outſtretched arm, and ſuch a ſeaſonable and almoſt unexpected relief, as conſtrains us to cry out, What has God wrought? and who is a God like unto thee? Such, I hope, will be the iſſue of your preſent trial. And that he who gave her to you at firſt, will reſtore her to you again. I ſee you in the furnace, but the Lord is ſitting by it as a refiner of ſilver, to moderate the fire, and manage the proceſs, ſo that you ſhall loſe nothing but droſs, and be brought forth refined as gold to praiſe his name. Apparent difficulties, however great, are nothing to him. If he ſpeaks it is done, for to God the Lord belong the iſſues from death. Should his pleaſure be otherwiſe, and ſhould he call your dear partner to a ſtate of glory before you—ſtill I know he is able to ſupport you. What he does, however painful to the fleſh, muſt be right, becauſe he does it. Having

bought

bought us with his blood, and ſaved our ſouls from hell, he has every kind of right to diſpoſe of us and ours as he pleaſes, and this we are ſure of, he will not lay ſo much upon us as he freely endured for us; and he can make us amends for all we ſuffer, and for all we loſe, by the light of his countenance. A few years will ſet all to rights, and they who love him and are beloved by him, though they may ſuffer as others, ſhall not ſorrow as others, for the Lord will be with them here, and he will ſoon have them with him: there all tears ſhall be wiped from their eyes.

Perhaps I know as well how to calculate the pain of ſuch a ſeparation, as any one who has not actually experienced it. Many a time the deſire of my eyes has been threatened, many a time my heart has been brought low, but from what I have known at ſuch ſeaſons, I have reaſon to hope, that had it been his pleaſure to bring upon me the thing that I feared, his everlaſting arm would have upheld me from ſinking under the ſtroke. As miniſters, we are called to comfort the Lord's afflicted people, and to tell them the knowledge of his love is a cordial able to keep the ſoul alive under the ſharpeſt trials; we muſt not wonder that he ſometimes puts us in a way of ſhewing, that we do not deal in unfelt truths, but that we find ourſelves that ſolid conſolation in the goſpel, which we encourage others to expect from it. You have now ſuch an occaſion of glorifying the Lord; I pray he may enable you to improve it, and that all around you may ſee that he is with you, and that his good

word is the support and anchor of your soul. Then I am sure, if it upon the whole is best for you, he will give you the desire of your heart, and you shall yet live to praise him together.

I am your obliged,

and affectionate servant.

A LET-

A

LETTER

TO THE

REV. MR. O——,

LETTER

TO THE

REV. MR. O——.

DEAR SIR,

YOU ſee I have prevented you in your promiſe of writing firſt; and having found a pretext for troubling Mr. ———, I was willing to venture upon you without any, unleſs you will let me plead a deſire of ſhewing you, how welcome your correſpondence would be to me. I know not if my heart was ever more united to any perſon, in ſo ſhort a ſpace of time, than to you, and what engaged me ſo much was, the ſpirit of meekneſs and of love (that peculiar and inimitable mark of true Chriſtianity) which I obſerved in you. I mean it not to your praiſe. May all the praiſe be to him, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh, who alone maketh the beſt to differ from the worſt: but I think I may well mention, to your encouragement, that all who converſed with you, greatly regret your ſpeedy departure; and I am perſuaded, the ſame temper, the ſame candor, will make you acceptable, honorable and uſeful, wherever you go.

Bleſſed

Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit, the meek, the merciful, and the peace-makers, they ſhall obtain the mercy they want, and poſſeſs the peace they love. They ſhall inherit the earth. The earth, ſinful and miſerable as it is, ſhall be worthy to be called an inheritance to them, for they ſhall enjoy a comparative heaven in it. They ſhall be called the children of God, though dignified with no title among men. Alas, how much are theſe things overlooked, even by many, who, I would hope, are real believers. Methinks a very different ſpirit from that of the church of Laodicea, is to be ſeen amongſt us, though perhaps it is not eaſy to ſay which is the beſt of the two. That was neither cold nor hot, this *(mirabile dictu)* is both cold and hot at once, and both to the extreme. Hot, haſty and arbitrary, in thoſe few things where mediocrity is a virttue; but cool and remiſs in thoſe great points, where the application of the whole heart and ſoul and mind and ſtrength is ſo abſolutely neceſſary, and ſo poſitively enjoined. Surely there is too much room for this obſervation, and I perhaps ſtand ſelf-condemned in making it.

I hope you will take opportunity to improve your intereſt in Mr. ———, by letter. He expreſſed much ſatisfaction in the hour he ſpent with you before you ſailed, and a great regard for you; therefore would, I doubt not, give you a fair hearing; and the phraſe *litera ſcripta manet* is true, in more ſenſes than one. He makes ſuch large conceſſions ſometimes, that I am apt to think he is conſcious of the weakneſs of his own argument, and then he is as ſoon angry with himſelf, for complying ſo far, and

and flies off to the other extreme. Yet for the moſt part, when he ſpeaks plain, and is not reſtrained by complaiſance for particular perſons, he appears not only a ſtranger to experimental religion, but averſe to the notion, and generally inclined to treat it with levity. His obſtacles are very many and very great, his reputation as a learned man, his years, his regular life, and perhaps above all, his performances in print, eſpecially his laſt book, are ſo many barriers, that muſt be broke through before conviction can reach him. But the grace of God can do all this and more; and indeed when I think of the many truly valuable parts of his character, and the indefatigable pains he has taken in his reſearches after truth, I am willing to hope, that the Lord will at length teach him the true wiſdom, and enable him (however hard it may ſeem) to give up his own attainments, and ſit down like a little child at the feet of Jeſus.

I hope to hear ſoon and often from you. I number my Chriſtian correſpondents among my principal bleſſings, a few judicious, pious friends, to whom, when I can get leiſure to write, I ſend my heart by turns. I can truſt them with my inmoſt ſentiments, and can write with no more diſguiſe than I think. I ſhall rejoice to add you to the number, if you can agree to take me as I am, (as I think you will) and ſuffer me to commit my whole ſelf to paper, without reſpect to names, parties and ſentiments. I endeavor to obſerve my Lord's commands, to call no man maſter upon earth, yet I deſire to own and honor the image of God, wherever I find it. I dare not ſay I have no bigotry, for I know not myſelf, and remember to my ſhame,

that

that formerly, when I ignorantly profeſſed myſelf free from it, I was indeed over-run with it; but this I can ſay, I allow it not, I ſtrive and pray againſt it, and thus far, by the grace of God, I have attained; that I find my heart as much united to many, who differ from me in ſome points, as to any who agree with me in all. I ſet no value upon any doctrinal truth, farther than it has a tendency to promote practical holineſs. If others ſhould think thoſe things hindrances, which I judge to be helps in this reſpect, I am content they ſhould go on in their own way, according to the light God has given them, provided they will agree with me ἐν τῷ Επάναγκες. If it ſhould be aſked, Which are the neceſſary things? I anſwer, Thoſe in which the ſpiritual worſhippers of all ages and countries have been agreed. Thoſe on the contrary are mere ſubordinate matters, in which the beſt men, thoſe who have been the moſt eminent for faith, prayer, humility and nearneſs to God, always have been, and ſtill are, divided in their judgments. Upon this plan, I ſhould think it no hard matter to draw up a form of ſound words, (whether dignified with the name of a creed or no, I care not) to which true believers, of all ſorts and ſizes, would unanimouſly ſubſcribe. Suppoſe it ran ſomething in the following manner. I believe that ſin is the moſt hateful thing in the world; that I and all men are by nature in a ſtate of wrath and depravity, utterly unable to ſuſtain the penalty, or to fulfil the commands of God's holy law; and that we have no ſufficiency of ourſelves to think a good thought. I believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the chief among ten thouſands; that he came into the world

world to save the chief of sinners, by making a propitiation for sin by his death, by paying a perfect obedience to the law, in our behalf; and that he is now exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sins to all that believe, and that he ever liveth to make intercession for us. I believe that the Holy Spirit, (the gift of God, through Jesus Christ) is the sure and only guide into all truth, and the common privilege of all believers; and under his influence, I believe the holy scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, and to furnish us thoroughly for every good work. I believe that love to God, and to man for God's sake, is the essence of religion, and the fulfilling of the law; that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; that those who by a patient course in well doing, seek glory, honor and immortality, shall receive eternal life; and I believe that this reward is not of debt, but of grace, even to the praise and glory of that grace, whereby he has made us accepted in the Beloved. Amen.

I pretend not to accuracy in this hasty draught, they are only outlines, which if you please to retouch, and fill up at your leisure, I hope you will favor me with a sight of it. I fear I have tired you. Shall only add my prayers, that the Lord may be with you, and crown your labors of love with success, that you may hereafter shine among those who have been instrumental in turning many to righteousness.

I am, dear Sir,

Your's in the Lord.

April 3, 1759.

SEVEN

SEVEN

LETTERS

TO THE

REV. MR. P——.

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LETTERS

TO THE

REV. MR. P——.

LETTER I.

DEAR SIR,

THE account which I received by Mr. C——, and by the letter which he brought from you, of your welfare and the welfare of your people was very pleasing. Though, indeed, no more than I expected. I believed, from the first of your going to S——, that you would like the people, and I believed the Lord had given you that frame of spirit which he has promised to bless. What reason have we to praise him for the knowledge of his gospel, and for the honor of being called to preach it to others; and likewise that he has been pleased to cast your lot and mine amongst a people who value it, and to crown our poor labors with some measure of acceptance and usefulness. How little did we think, in the unawakened part of our life, to what it was his good pleasure to reserve us!

The Lord is pleaſed, in a meaſure, to ſhew me the ſuitableneſs and neceſſity of an humble dependant frame of heart, a ceaſing from ſelf, and a reliance upon him in the due uſe of appointed means; I am far from having attained, but I hope I am preſſing, at leaſt ſeeking after it. I wiſh to ſpeak the word ſimply and experimentally, and to be ſo engaged with the importance of the ſubject, the worth of ſouls, and the thought that I am ſpeaking in the name and preſence of the Moſt High God, as that I might, if poſſible, forget every thing elſe. This would be an attainment indeed!—More good might be expected from a broken diſcourſe, delivered in ſuch a frame, than from the moſt advantageous diſplay of knowledge and gifts without it. Not that I would undervalue propriety and pertinence of expreſſion—It is our duty to ſtudy to find out acceptable words, and to endeavor to appear as workmen that need not be aſhamed; but thoſe who have moſt ability in this way, have need of a double guard of grace and wiſdom, leſt they be tempted to truſt in it, or to value themſelves upon it. They that truſt in the Lord ſhall never be moved, and they that abaſe themſelves before him he will exalt. I am well perſuaded that your conduct and views have been agreeable to theſe ſentiments, and therefore the Lord has ſupported, encouraged and owned you, and I truſt he will ſtill bleſs you, and make you a bleſſing to many. He that walketh humbly walketh ſurely.

Believe me to be, dear Sir,

Your's, &c.

LET-

LETTER II.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOUR letter did me good when I received it, at leaſt gave me much pleaſure; and I think it has given me a lift while I have been juſt now reading it. I know not that I ever had thoſe awful views of ſin which you ſpeak of, and though I believe I ſhould be better for them, I dare not ſeriouſly wiſh for them. There is a petition which I have heard in public prayer, Lord ſhew us the evil of our hearts. To this petition I cannot venture to ſet my Amen, at leaſt not without a qualification—Shew me enough of thyſelf to ballance the view, and then ſhew me what thou pleaſeſt. I think I have a very clear and ſtrong conviction in my *judgment* that I am vile and worthleſs, that my heart is full of evil, only evil, and that continually. I know ſomething of it too experimentally, and therefore judging of the whole by the ſample, though I am not ſuitably affected with what I do ſee, I tremble at the thought of ſeeing more. A man may look with ſome pleaſure upon the ſea in a ſtorm, provided he ſtands ſafe upon the land himſelf, but to be *upon* the ſea in a ſtorm is quite another thing. And yet, ſurely, the coldneſs, worldlineſs, pride and twenty other evils under which I groan, owe much of their ſtrength to the want of that feeling ſenſe of my own abominations with which you have been favored, I ſay favored—for I doubt not but

the Lord gave it you in mercy, and that it has proved and will prove a mercy to you, to make you more humble, ſpiritual and dependant, as well as to increaſe your ability for preaching the goſpel of his grace. Upon theſe accounts I can aſſure you, that upon a firſt reading, and till I ſtopped a moment to count the coſt, I was ready to envy you all that you had felt. I often ſeem to know what the ſcripture teaches both of ſin and grace, as if I knew them not; ſo faint and languid are my perceptions. I often ſeem to think and talk of ſin without any ſorrow, and of grace without any joy.

I have had ſome people awakened by dreams, as you had by ſtreamers; but for ought I know, we are no leſs inſtrumental to the good of theſe, than to any other perſon, upon whom when we look, our hearts are ready to exult and ſay, See what the Lord has done by me. I do not think that, ſtrictly ſpeaking, all the ſtreamers of the North are able to awaken a dead ſoul. I ſuppoſe people may be terrified by them, and made thoughtful, but awakened only by the *word*. The ſtreamers either ſent them to hear the goſpel, or rouſed them to attend to it, but it was the knowledge of the truth brought home to the heart, that did the buſineſs. Perhaps the ſtreamers reminded them of what they had heard from you before. Two perſons here, who lived like heathens and never came to church, were alarmed by ſome terrifying dreams, and came out to hearing forthwith; there the Lord was pleaſed to meet with them. One of them died triumphing; the other, I hope, will do ſo when her time comes.

Whatever means, inſtruments or occaſions he is pleaſed to employ, the work is all his own, and I truſt you and I are made willing to give him all the glory, and to ſink into the duſt at the thought that he ſhould ever permit us to take his holy name upon our polluted lips.

I am, dear Sir,

Auguſt 14, 1770.

Your's, &c.

LETTER III.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOU ſay that your experience agrees with mine. It muſt be ſo, becauſe our hearts are alike. The heart is deceitful and deſperately wicked, deſtitute of good and prone to evil. This is the character of mankind univerſally, and thoſe who are made partakers of grace are renewed but in part; the evil nature ſtill cleaves to them, and the root of ſin, though mortified, is far from being dead.—While the cauſe remains it will have effects, and while we are burdened with the body of this death, we muſt groan under it. But we need not be ſwallowed up with overmuch ſorrow, ſince we have in Jeſus, a Savior, a Righteouſneſs, an Advocate, a Shepherd. He knows our frame, and remembers that we are but duſt. If ſin abounds in us, grace abounds much more in him; nor would he ſuffer ſin to remain in his people, if he did not know how to over-rule it, and make it an occaſion of endearing his love and grace ſo much the more to their ſouls. The Lord forbid that we ſhould plead his goodneſs as an encouragement to ſloth and indifference. Humiliation, godly ſorrow and ſelf-abaſement become us—but at the ſame time we may rejoice in the Lord. Though ſin remains, it ſhall not have dominion over us; though it wars in us, it ſhall not prevail againſt us. We have a mercy-ſeat ſprinkled with blood, we have an advocate

cate with the Father, we are called to this warfare, and we fight under the eye of the Captain of our Salvation, who is always near to renew our ſtrength, to heal our wounds, and to cover our heads in the heat of battle. As miniſters, we preach to thoſe who have like paſſions and infirmities with ourſelves, and by our own feelings, fears and changes, we learn to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to them that are weary, to warn thoſe who ſtand, and to ſtretch out a hand of compaſſion towards them that are fallen, and to commend it to others, from our own experience, as a faithful ſaying, that Jeſus came to ſave the chief of ſinners. Beſides, if the Lord is pleaſed to give us ſome liberty, acceptance and ſucceſs in preaching the goſpel, we ſhould be in great danger of running mad with ſpiritual pride, if the Lord did not permit us to feel the depravity and vileneſs of our hearts, and thereby keep us from forgetting *what we are in ourſelves.*

With regard to your young people, you muſt expect to meet with ſome diſappointment. Perhaps not every one of whom you have conceived hopes will ſtand, and ſome who do belong to the Lord are permitted to make ſad miſtakes for their future humiliation. It is our part to watch, warn and admoniſh, and we ought likewiſe to be concerned for thoſe ſlips and miſcarriages which we cannot prevent. A miniſter, if faithful and of a right ſpirit, can have no greater joy than to ſee his people walking honorably and ſteadily in the truth; and hardly any thing will give him more ſenſible grief, than to ſee any of them taken in Satan's wiles. Yet ſtill the goſpel brings relief here. He is wiſer than we

are, and knows how to make those things subservient to promote his work, which we ought to guard against as evils and hindrances. We are to use the means—He is to rule the whole. If the faults of some are made warnings to others, and prove in the end occasions of illustrating the riches of Divine Grace, this should reconcile us to what we cannot help, though such considerations should not slacken our diligence in sounding an alarm, and reminding our hearers of their continual danger.

I am, dear Sir,

Affectionately your's.

June 13, 1772.

LETTER IV.

DEAR SIR,

I LATELY read a ſermon of Mr. Baxter's (in the fifth volume of the morning exerciſes) on *Matt.* v. 16. My mind is ſomething impreſſed with the ſubject, and with his manner of treating it. Some of Mr. Baxter's ſentiments in divinity are rather cloudy, and he ſometimes upon that account met with but poor quarter from the ſtaunch Calviniſts of his day. But by what I have read of him, where he is quiet and not ruffled by controverſy, he appears to me, notwithſtanding ſome miſtakes, to have been one of the greateſt men of his age, and perhaps in fervor, ſpirituality and ſucceſs, more than equal both as a miniſter and a chriſtian, to ſome twenty taken together, of thoſe who affect to undervalue him in this preſent day. There is a ſpirit in ſome paſſages of his Saint's Reſt, his Dying Thoughts, and other of his practical treatiſes, compared with which, many modern compoſitions, though well written and well meant, appear to me to a great diſadvantage. But I was ſpeaking of his ſermon. He points out the way at which we ſhould aim to let our light ſhine in the world, for the glory of God, and the conviction and edification of men. I have mentioned where it is to be found, that, if you have the Morning Exerciſes, or they ſhould come in your way, you may look at it. I think you would like it. The

perusal suggested to me some instruction, and much reproof. Alas, my friend, are we not too often chargeable with a sad, shameful selfishness and narrowness of spirit, far, very far different from that activity, enlargement and generosity of soul, which such a gospel as we have received might be expected to produce? For myself, I must plead guilty. It seems as if my heart was always awake, and keenly sensible to my *own* concernments, while those of my Lord and Master affect me much less forcibly, at least only by intervals. Were a stranger to judge of me by what I sometimes say in the pulpit, he might think that, like the Angels, I had but two things in view—to do the will of God, and to behold his face. But, alas, would he not be almost as much mistaken, as if, seeing Mr. G——k in the character of a tragedy hero, he should suppose him to be the very person whom he only represents. I hope Satan will never be able to persuade me that I am a *mere hypocrite* and *stage player*; but sure I am, that there is so much hypocrisy in me, so many littlenesses and self-seekings insinuating into my plan of conduct, that I have humbling cause to account myself unworthy and unprofitable, and to say, Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord. I have some tolerable idea of what a Christian ought to be, and it is, I hope, what I desire to be. A Christian should be conformable to Christ in his spirit, and in his practice—That is, he should be spiritually-minded, dead to the world, filled with zeal for the glory of God, the spread of the gospel and the good of souls. He should be humble, patient, meek, chearful, thankful

thankful under all events and changes.—He ſhould account it the buſineſs and honor of his life, to imitate him who pleaſed not himſelf, who went about doing good, and has expreſſed to us the very feelings of his heart, in that divine aphoriſm, which ſurpaſſes all the fine admired ſayings of the philoſophers, as much as the ſun outſhines a candle; It is more bleſſed to give than to receive. The whole deportment of a Chriſtian ſhould ſhew that the knowledge of Jeſus, which he has received from the goſpel, affords him all he could expect from it—A balm for every grief, an amends for every loſs, a motive for every duty, a reſtraint from every evil, a pattern for every thing which he is called to do or ſuffer, and a principle ſufficient to conſtitute the actions of every day, even in common life, acts of religion. He ſhould (as the children of this world are wiſe to do in their generation) make every occurrence through which he paſſes ſubſervient and ſubordinate to his main deſign. Gold is the worldly man's god, and his worſhip and ſervice are uniform and conſiſtent, not by fits and ſtarts, but from morning to night, from the beginning to the end of the year, he is the ſame man. He will not ſlip an opportunity of adding to his pelf to-day, becauſe he may have another to-morrow, but he heartily and eagerly embraces both. And ſo far as he carries his point, though his perſeverance may expoſe him to the ridicule or reproach of his neighbors, he thinks himſelf well paid, and ſays,

Populus me ſibilat; at mihi plaudo
Ipſe domi, ſimul nummos contemplor in arca.

I am ſincerely your's.

January 26, 1775.

LETTER V.

DEAR SIR,

I MAY learn (only I am a ſad dunce) by ſmall and common incidents, as well as by ſome more ſtriking and important turns in life, that it is not in man that walketh to direct his ſteps. It is not for me to ſay, to-day or to-morrow I will do this or that. I cannot write a letter to a friend without leave or without help, for neither opportunity or ability are at my own diſpoſal. It is not needful that the Lord ſhould raiſe a mountain in my way, to ſtop my purpoſe; if he only withdraw a certain kind of imperceptible ſupport, which in general I have, and uſe without duly conſidering whoſe it is—then, in a moment, I feel myſelf unſtrung and diſabled, like a ſhip that has loſt her maſts, and cannot proceed till he is pleaſed to refit me and renew my ſtrength. My pride and propenſity to ſelf-dependance render frequent changes of this kind neceſſary to me, or I ſhould ſoon forget what I am, and ſacrifice to my own drag. Therefore, upon the whole, I am ſatisfied, and ſee it beſt that I ſhould be abſolutely poor and pennyleſs in myſelf, and forced to depend upon the Lord for the ſmalleſt things as well as the greateſt. And if, by his bleſſing, my experience ſhould at length tally with my judgment in this point, that without him I can do nothing; then I know I ſhall find it eaſy, through him,

him, to do all things; for the door of his mercy is always open, and it is but ask and have. But, alas, a secret persuasion (though contrary to repeated convictions) that I have something at home, too often prevents me going to him for it, and then no wonder I am disappointed. The life of faith seems so simple and easy in theory, that I can point it out to others in few words; but in practice it is very difficult, and my advances are so slow that I hardly dare say I get forward at all. It is a great thing indeed to have the spirit of a little child, so as to be habitually afraid of taking a single step without leading.

I have heard of you more than once since I heard from you, and am glad to know the Lord is still with you: I trust he has not withdrawn wholly from us. We have much call for thankfulness, and much for humiliation. Some have been removed, some are evidently ripening for glory, and now and then we have a new enquirer—But the progress of wickedness amongst the unconverted here is awful. Convictions repeatedly stifled in many, have issued in a hardness and boldness in sinning, which, I believe, is seldom found but in those places where the light of the gospel has been long resisted and abused. If my eyes suitably affected my heart, I should weep day and night upon this account; but, alas, I am too indifferent. I feel a woeful defect in my zeal for God, and compassion for souls; and when Satan and conscience charge me with cowardice, treachery and stupidity, I know not what to reply. I am generally carried through my public work with some

liberty, and becauſe I am not put to ſhame before the people I ſeem content and ſatisfied. I wiſh to be more thankful for what the Lord is pleaſed to do amongſt us; but, at the ſame time, to be more earneſt with him for a farther out-pouring of his Spirit. Aſſiſt me herein with your prayers.

As to my own private experience, the enemy is not ſuffered to touch the foundation of my faith and hope; thus far I have peace—but my conflicts and exerciſes, with the effects of indwelling ſin, are very diſtreſſing. I cannot doubt of my ſtate and acceptance, and yet it ſeems no one can have more cauſe for doubts and fears than myſelf, if ſuch doubtings were at all encouraged by the goſpel—but I ſee they are not. I ſee that what I want and hope for, the Lord promiſes to do for his own name ſake, and with a *non obſtante* to all my vileneſs and perverſeneſs; and I cannot queſtion but he has given me (for how elſe could I have it) a thirſt for that communion with him in love and conformity to his image, of which, as yet, I have experienced but very faint and imperfect beginnnings. But if he has begun, I venture, upon his word, that he will not forſake the work of his own hands.

On public affairs I ſay but little—Many are cenſuring men and meaſures, but I would lay all the blame upon ſin. It appears plain to me, that the Lord has a controverſy with us, and therefore I fear what we have yet ſeen is but the beginning of ſorrows. I am ready to dread the event of this ſummer, but I remember the Lord reigns. He has his own glory and the good of his church in view,

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and will not be disappointed. He knows how likewise to take care of those who fear him. I wish there was more sighing and mourning amongst professors, for the sins of the nation and the churches. But I must conclude,

And am, sincerely,

Your affectionate friend.

January — 1776.

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LETTER VI.

DEAR SIR,

NO very considerable alteration has taken place since I wrote, except the death of Mrs. L——, who was removed to a better world in September last. The latter part of her course was very painful, but the Lord made her more than conqueror, and she had good cause to apply the Apostle's words, 2 *Tim.* iv. 7, 8. She repeated that passage in her last illness, and chose it for her funeral text. She was a Christian indeed. Her faith was great, and so were her trials. Now she is above them all. Now she is before the throne. The good Lord help us to be followers of those, who through faith and patience have attained to the hope set before them.

The number of professors still increases with us, and a greater number of persons affords a greater variety of cases, and gives greater scope to observe the workings of the heart and Satan. For seven years I had to say, that I had not seen a person of whom I had conceived a good hope go back, but I have met with a few disappointments since. However, upon the whole, I trust the Lord is still with us. The enemy tries to disturb and defile us, and if the Lord did not keep the city, the poor watchman would wake in vain. But the eye, that never slumbereth nor sleepeth, has been upon us for good. And though we have cause of humiliation and complaint,

complaint, we have likewiſe much cauſe of thankfulneſs. My health is ſtill preſerved, and I hope that the Lord does not ſuffer my deſires of perſonal communion with him, and of uſefulneſs in the miniſtry, to decline. He ſupplies me with freſh ſtrength and matter in my public work; I hear now and then of one brought to enquire the way, and his preſence is at times made known to many in the ordinances.

To combine zeal with prudence, is indeed difficult. There is often too much ſelf in our zeal, and too much of the fear of man in our prudence. However, what we cannot *attain* by any ſkill or reſolution of our own, we may hope in meaſure to *receive* from him who giveth liberally to thoſe who ſeek him, and deſire to ſerve him. Prudence is a word much abuſed, but there is a heavenly wiſdom, which the Lord has promiſed to give to thoſe who humbly wait upon him for it. It does not conſiſt in forming a bundle of rules and maxims, but in a ſpiritual taſte and diſcernment, derived from an experimental knowledge of the truth, and of the heart of man, as deſcribed in the word of God; and its exerciſe conſiſts much in a ſimple dependance upon the Lord, to guide and prompt us in every action. We ſeldom act wrong, when we truly depend upon him, and can ceaſe from leaning to our own underſtanding. When the heart is thus in a right tune and frame, and his word dwells richly in us, there is a kind of immediate perception of what is proper for us to do, in preſent circumſtances, without much painful enquiry; a light ſhines before us upon the path of duty, and if he permits us in ſuch a

ſpirit

ſpirit to make ſome miſtakes, he will likewiſe teach us to profit by them; and our reflections upon what was wrong one day, will make us to act more wiſely the next. At the beſt, we muſt always expect to meet with new proofs of our own weakneſs and inſufficiency; otherwiſe, how ſhould we be kept humble, or know how to prize the liberty he allows us of coming to the throne of grace, for freſh forgiveneſs and direction every day? But if he enables us to walk before him with a ſingle eye, he will graciouſly accept our deſire of ſerving him better if we could, and his bleſſing will make our feeble endeavors in ſome degree ſucceſsful, at the ſame time that we ſee defects and evils attending our beſt ſervices, ſufficient to make us aſhamed of them.

I am, ſincerely,

Your affectionate friend.

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LETTER VII.

DEAR SIR,

WE all need, and at the seasons the Lord sees best, we all receive chastisement. I hope you likewise have reason to praise him, for supporting, sanctifying and delivering mercy. The coward flesh presently shrinks under the rod, but faith need not fear it, for it is in the hand of one who loves us better than we do ourselves, and who knows our frame that we are but dust, and therefore will not suffer us to be over-done and overwhelmed.

I feel, as a friend should feel, for Mr. B——; were I able, I would soon send him health. If the Lord, who is able to remove his illness in a minute, permits it to continue, we may be sure upon the whole it will be better for him. It is, however, very lawful to pray that his health may be restored, and his usefulness prolonged. I beg you to give my love to him, and tell him that my heart bears him an affectionate remembrance; and I know the God whom he serves, will make every dispensation supportable and profitable to him.

If, as you observe, the Song of Solomon describes the experience of his church, it shews the dark as well as the bright side. No one part of it is the experience of every individual at any particular time. Some are in his banquetting-house, others upon their beds. Some sit under his banner,

ſupported by his arm, while others have a faint perception of him at a diſtance, with many a hill and mountain between. In one thing, however, they all agree, that he is the leading object of their deſires, and that they have had ſuch a diſcovery of his perſon, work and love, as makes him precious to their hearts. Their judgment of him is always the ſame, but their ſenſibility varies. The love they bear him, though rooted and grounded in their hearts, is not always equally in exerciſe, nor can it be ſo.—We are like trees, which, though alive, cannot put forth their leaves and fruit without the influence of the ſun. They are alive in winter as well as in ſummer, but how different is their appearance in theſe different ſeaſons. Were we always alike, could we always believe, love and rejoice, we ſhould think the power inherent and our own; but it is more for the Lord's glory, and more ſuited to form us to a temper becoming the goſpel, that we ſhould be made deeply ſenſible of our own inability and dependance, than that we ſhould be always in a lively frame. I am perſuaded a broken and a contrite ſpirit, a conviction of our vileneſs and nothingneſs, connected with a cordial acceptance of Jeſus, as revealed in the goſpel, is the higheſt attainment we can reach in this life. Senſible comforts are deſireable, and we muſt be ſadly declined when they do not appear ſo to us; but I believe there may be a real exerciſe of faith and growth in grace, when our ſenſible feelings are faint and low. A ſoul may be in as thriving a ſtate when thirſting, ſeeking and mourning after the Lord, as when actually rejoicing in him—as much

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in earneſt when fighting in the valley, as when ſinging upon the mount; nay, dark ſeaſons afford the ſureſt and ſtrongeſt manifeſtations of the power of faith. To hold faſt the word of promiſe, to maintain a hatred of ſin, to go on ſtedfaſtly in the path of duty, in defiance both of the frowns and the ſmiles of the world, when we have but little comfort, is a more certain evidence of grace, than a thouſand things which we may do or forbear when our ſpirits are warm and lively. I have ſeen many who have been upon the whole but uneven walkers, though at times they have ſeemed to enjoy, at leaſt have talked of great comforts. I have ſeen others, for the moſt part, complain of much darkneſs and coldneſs, who have been remarkably humble, tender and exemplary in their ſpirit and conduct. Surely were I to chuſe my lot, it ſhould be with the latter.

I am, ſincerely and affectionately, your's.

Jan. 11, 1777.

THREE

THREE

LETTERS

TO

MRS. G———.

LETTERS

TO

MRS. G———.

LETTER I.

MADAM,

IT would be both unkind and ungrateful in me, to avail myſelf of any plea of buſineſs, for delaying the acknowledgment I owe you for your acceptable favor from ——, which though dated the 6th inſtant, I did not receive till the 10th.

Could I have known in time, that you was at Mr ——, I ſhould have endeavored to have called upon you while there, and very glad ſhould I have been to have ſeen you with us. But they who fear the Lord may be ſure, that whatever is not practicable, is not neceſſary. He could have over-ruled every difficulty in your way, had he ſeen it expedient. But he is pleaſed to ſhew you that you depend not upon men, but upon himſelf, and that, notwithſtanding your connections may exclude you from ſome advantages in point of outward means, he who has began a good work in you, is able to carry

carry it on, in defiance of all seeming hindrances, and make all things (even those which have the most unfavorable appearances) work together for your good.

A sure effect of his grace, is a desire and longing for gospel ordinances, and when they are afforded, they cannot be neglected without loss. But the Lord sees many souls who are dear to him, and whom he is training up in a growing meetness for his kingdom, who are by his providence so situated, that it is not in their power to attend upon gospel preaching; and perhaps they have seldom either Christian minister or Christian friend to assist or comfort them. Such a situation is a state of trial; but Jesus is all-sufficient, and he is always near. They cannot be debarred from his word of grace, which is every where at hand, nor from his throne of grace, for they who feel their need of him, and whose hearts are drawn towards him, are always at the foot of it. Every room in the house, yea every spot they stand on, fields, lanes and hedgerows, all is holy ground to them, for the Lord is there. The chief difference between us, and the disciples, when our Savior was upon earth, is in this: They then walked by sight, and we are called to walk by faith. They could see him with their bodily eyes, we cannot; but he said before he left them, "It is expedient for you that I go away." How could this be, unless that spiritual communion which he promised to maintain with his people, after his ascension, were preferable to that intercourse he allowed them whilst he was visibly with them? But we are sure it is preferable, and they who had tried both,

were

were well satisfied he had made good his promise; so that though they had known him after the flesh, they were content not to know him so any more. Yes, Madam, though we cannot see him, he sees us, he is nearer to us than we are to ourselves. In a natural state, we have very dark, and indeed dishonorable thoughts of God. We conceive of him as at a distance. But when the heart is awakened, we begin to make Jacob's reflection, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And when we receive faith, we begin to know that this ever-present God is in Christ, that the government of heaven and earth, the dispensations of the kingdom of nature, providence and grace, are in the hands of Jesus, that it is he with whom we have to do, who once suffered agony and death for our redemption, and whose compassion and tenderness are the same, now he reigns over all blessed for ever, as when he conversed amongst men in the days of his humiliation. Thus God is made known to us by the gospel, in the endearing views of a Savior, a Shepherd, a Husband, a Friend, and a way of access is opened for us through the veil, that is, the human nature of our Redeemer, to enter with humble confidence into the holiest of all; and to repose all our cares and concerns upon the strength of that everlasting arm, which upholds heaven and earth, and upon that infinite love which submitted to the shame, pain and death of the cross, to redeem sinners from wrath and misery.

Though there is a height, a breadth, a length and a depth, in this mystery of redeeming love, exceeding the comprehension of all finite minds, yet

the great and leading principles, which are neceſſary for the ſupport and comfort of our ſouls, may be ſummed up in a very few words. Such a ſummary we are favored with in *Titus* ii. 11—14. where the whole of ſalvation, all that is needful to be known, experienced, practiſed and hoped for, is comprized within the compaſs of four verſes. If many books, much ſtudy and great diſcernment were neceſſary in order to be happy, what muſt the poor and ſimple do? Yet for them eſpecially is the goſpel deſigned, and few but ſuch as theſe attain the knowledge and comfort of it. The Bible is a ſealed book till the heart be awakened, and then he that runs may read. The propoſitions are few; I am a ſinner, therefore I need a Savior. One who is able and wlling to ſave to the uttermoſt, ſuch a one is Jeſus. He is all that I want, wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification and redemption. But will he receive me? Can I anſwer a previous queſtion? Am I willing to receive him? If ſo, and if his word may be taken, if he meant what he ſaid, and promiſed no more than he can perform, I may be ſure of a welcome; he knew long before the doubts, fears and ſuſpicions, which would ariſe in my mind when I ſhould come to know what I am, what I have done, and what I have deſerved; and therefore he declared, before he left the earth, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wiſe caſt out." I have no money or price in my hand, no worthineſs to recommend me, and I need none, for he ſaveth freely for his own name ſake. I have only to be thankful for what he has already ſhewn me, and to wait upon him for more. It is my part

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to commit myſelf to him as the phyſician of ſin-ſick ſouls, not to preſcribe to him how he ſhall treat me—To begin, carry on and perfect the cure is his part.

The doubts and fears you ſpeak of, are, in a greater or leſs degree, the common experience of all the Lord's people, at leaſt for a time; whilſt any unbelief remains in the heart, and Satan is permitted to tempt, we ſhall feel theſe things. In themſelves, they are groundleſs and evil, yet the Lord permits and over-rules them for good. They tend to make us know more of the plague of our own hearts, and feel more ſenſibly the need of a Savior, and make his reſt (when we attain it) doubly ſweet and ſure. And they likewiſe qualify us for pitying and comforting others. Fear not, only believe, wait and pray. Expect not all at once. A Chriſtian is not of haſty growth, like a muſhroom, but rather like the oak, the progreſs of which is hardly perceptible, but in time becomes a great deep-rooted tree. If my writings have been uſeful to you, may the Lord have the praiſe. To adminiſter any comfort to his children, is the greateſt honor and pleaſure I can receive in this life. I cannot promiſe to be a very punctual correſpondent, having many engagements, but I hope to do all in my power to ſhew myſelf, Madam,

Your, &c. &c.

June 20, 1776.

LETTER II.

MADAM,

THOUGH in general I think myſelf tolerably punctual when I can anſwer a letter in ſix or ſeven weeks after the receipt, yet I feel ſome pain for not having acknowledged your's ſooner. A caſe like that which you have favored me with an account of, deſerved an immediate attention, and when I read it, I propoſed writing within a poſt or two, and I can hardly allow any plea of buſineſs to be ſufficient excuſe for delaying it ſo long; but our times are in the Lord's hands, may he now enable me to ſend you what may prove a word in ſeaſon.

Your exerciſes have been by no means ſingular, though they may appear ſo to yourſelf, becauſe in your retired ſituation, you have not (as you obſerve) had much opportunity of knowing the experience of other Chriſtians; nor has the guilt with which your mind has been ſo greatly burdened been properly your own. It was a temptation forced upon you by the enemy, and he ſhall anſwer for it. Undoubtedly it is a mournful proof of the depravity of our nature, that there is that within us which renders us ſo eaſily ſuſceptive of his ſuggeſtions; a proof of our extreme weakneſs, that after the cleareſt and moſt ſatisfying evidences of the truth, we are not able to hold faſt our confidence, if the Lord permits Satan to ſift and ſhake us. But I can aſſure you

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these changes are not uncommon. I have known persons, who, after walking with God comfortably in the main for forty years, have been at their wit's end from such assaults as you mention, and been brought to doubt, not only of the reality of their own hopes, but of the very ground and foundation upon which their hopes were built. Had you remained, as it seems you once were, attached to the vanities of a gay and dissipated life, or could you have been content with a form of godliness, destitute of the power, it is probable you would have remained a stranger to these troubles. Satan would have employed his arts in a different and less perceptible way, to have soothed you into a false peace, and prevented any thought or suspicion of danger from arising in your mind. But when he could no longer detain you in his bondage, or seduce you back again into the world, then of course he would change his method, and declare open war against you. A specimen of his power and malice you have experienced, and the Lord whom you loved, because he first loved you, permitted it, not to gratify Satan, but for your benefit—to humble and prove you, to shew you what is in your heart, and to do you good in the issue. These things, for the present, are not joyous but grievous; yet in the end they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. In the mean time his eye is upon you; he has appointed bounds both to the degree and the duration of the trial; and he does and will afford you such supports, that you shall not be tried beyond what you are enabled to bear. I doubt not but your conflicts and sorrows will in due time terminate in

praiſe and victory, and be ſanctified to your fuller eſtabliſhment in the truth.

I greatly rejoice in the Lord's goodneſs to your dying parent. How wiſely timed and how exactly ſuited was that affecting diſpenſation, to break the force of thoſe ſuggeſtions with which the enemy was aiming to overwhelm your ſpirit. He could not ſtand againſt ſuch an illuſtrious demonſtrative atteſtation, that the doctrines you had embraced were not cunningly deviſed fables. He could proceed no farther in that way; but he is fruitful in reſources. His next attempt of courſe was to fix guilt upon your conſcience, as if you had yourſelf formed and willingly entertained thoſe thoughts, which, indeed, you ſuffered with extreme reluctance and pain. Here, likewiſe, I find, he ſucceeded for a time, but he who broke the former ſnare, will deliver you from this likewiſe.

The dark and diſhonorable thoughts of God, which I hinted at, as belonging to a natural ſtate, are very different from the thoughts of your heart concerning him. You do not conceive of him as a hard maſter, or think you could be more happy in the breach than in the obſervance of his precepts. You do not prefer the world to his favor, or think you can pleaſe him, and make amends for your ſins by an obedience of your own. Theſe, and ſuch as theſe, are the thoughts of the natural heart—the very reverſe of your's. One thought, however, I confeſs you have indulged, which is no leſs diſhonorable to the Lord than uncomfortable to yourſelf. You ſay, "I dare not believe that God will not impute to me as ſin, the admiſſion of thoughts which my

my ſoul ever abhorred, and to which my will never conſented." Nay, you fear leaſt they ſhould no only be imputed, but unpardonable. But how can this be poſſible! Indeed I will not call it your *thought*, it is your *temptation*. You tell me you have children. Then you will eaſily feel a plain illuſtration, which juſt now occurs to me—Let me ſuppoſe a caſe which has ſometimes happened; a child, three or four years of age we will ſay, while playing incautiouſly at a little diſtance from home, ſhould be ſuddenly ſeized and carried away by a Gipſey. Poor thing! how terrified, how diſtreſſed muſt it be? Methinks I hear its cries. The ſight and violence of the ſtranger, the recollection of its dear parents, the loſs of its pleaſing home, the dread and uncertainty of what is yet to befall it—Is it not a wonder that it does not die in agonies? But ſee, help is at hand! The Gipſey is purſued, and the child recovered. Now, my dear Madam, permit me to aſk you, if this were your child, how would you receive it? Perhaps, when the firſt tranſports of your joy for its ſafety would permit you, you might gently chide it for leaving your door—But would you diſinherit it? Would you diſown it? Would you deliver it up again to the Gipſey with your own hands, becauſe it had ſuffered a violence which it could not withſtand, *which it abhorred, and to which its will never conſented?* And yet what is the tenderneſs of a mother, of ten thouſand mothers, to that which our compaſſionate Savior bears to every poor ſoul that has been enabled to flee to him for ſalvation? Let us be far from charging that to

him, of which we think we are utterly incapable ourſelves. Take courage, Madam; reſiſt the devil and he will flee from you. If he were to tempt you to any thing criminal, you would ſtart at the thought, and renounce it with abhorrence. Do the ſame when he tempts you to queſtion the Lord's compaſſion and goodneſs. But there he impoſes upon us with a ſhew of humility, and perſuades us, that we do well to oppoſe our unworthineſs as a ſufficient exception to the many expreſs promiſes of the word. It is ſaid, the blood of Jeſus cleanſeth from all ſin; that all manner of ſin ſhall be forgiven for his ſake; that whoever cometh he will in no wiſe caſt out, and that he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt. Believe his word, and Satan ſhall be found a liar. If the child had deliberately gone away with the Gipſey; had preferred that wretched way of life; had refuſed to return, though frequently and tenderly invited home; perhaps a parent's love might, in time, be too weak to plead for the pardon of ſuch continued obſtinacy. But, indeed, in this manner we have all dealt with the Lord, and yet whenever we are willing to return, he is willing to receive us with open arms, and without an upbraiding word, *Luke* xv. 20—22. Though our ſins have been deep-dyed like ſcarlet and crimſon, enormous as mountains, and countleſs as the ſands, the ſum total is but *ſin has abounded*; but where ſin hath abounded, grace has much more abounded. After all, I know the Lord keeps the key of comfort in his own hands, yet he has commanded us to attempt comforting one another. I

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ſhould rejoice to be his inſtrument of adminiſtering comfort to you. I ſhall hope to hear from you ſoon, and that you will then be able to inform me, he has reſtored to you the joys of his ſalvation. But if not yet, wait for him, and you ſhall not wait in vain.

I am, Madam,

Auguſt 20, 1776.

Your's, &c.

LETTER III.

MY DEAR MADAM,

TEmptations may be compared to the wind, which, when it has ceaſed raging from one point, after a ſhort calm, frequently renews its violence from another quarter. The Lord ſilenced Satan's former aſſaults againſt you, but he is permitted to try you again in another way. Be of good courage, Madam, wait upon the Lord, and the preſent ſtorm ſhall likewiſe ſubſide in good time. You have an infallible pilot, and are embarked in a bottom againſt which the winds and waves cannot prevail. You may be toſſed about and think yourſelf in apparent jeopardy, but ſink you ſhall not, except the promiſes and faithfulneſs of God can fail. Upon an attentive conſideration of your complaint, it ſeems to me to amount only to this, that though the Lord has done great things for you, he has not yet brought you to a ſtate of independance on himſelf, nor releaſed you from that impoſſibility which all his people feel of doing any thing without him. And is this indeed a matter of complaint? Is it not every way better, more for his glory, and more ſuited to keep us mindful of our obligations to him, and in the event more for our ſafety, that we ſhould be reduced to a happy neceſſity of receiving daily out of his fulneſs (as the Iſraelites received the manna) than to be ſet up with ſomething of a ſtock of wiſdom, power and goodneſs of

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our own? Adam was thus furnished at the beginning with strength to stand, yet mutability being essential to a creature, he quickly fell and lost all. We who are by nature sinners, are not left to so hazardous an experiment. He has himself engaged to keep us, and treasured up all fulness of grace for our support, in a head who cannot fail. Our gracious Savior will communicate all needful supplies to his members, yet in such a manner that they shall feel their need and weakness, and have nothing to boast of from first to last but his wisdom, compassion and care. We are in no worse circumstances than the Apostle Paul, who, though eminent and exemplary in the Christian life, found and freely confessed that he had no sufficiency in himself to think a good thought. Nor did he wish it otherwise, he even gloried in his infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Unbelief and a thousand evils are still in our hearts, though their reign and dominion is at an end, they are not slain or eradicated; their effects will be felt more or less sensibly as the Lord is pleased more or less to afford or abate his gracious influence. When they are kept down we are no better in ourselves, for they are not kept down by us; but we are very prone to think better of ourselves at such a time, and therefore he is pleased to permit us at seasons to feel a difference, that we may never forget how weak and how vile we are. We cannot absolutely conquer these evils, but it becomes us to be humbled for them, and we are to fight and strive and pray against them. Our great duty is to be at his footstool, and to cry to him who has

promiſed to perform all things for us. Why are we called ſoldiers but becauſe we are called to a warfare? And how could we fight if there were no enemies to reſiſt? The Lord's ſoldiers are not merely for ſhew, to make an empty parade in a uniform, and to brandiſh their arms when none but friends and ſpectators are around them. No, we muſt ſtand upon the field of battle; we muſt face the fiery darts; we muſt wreſtle (which is the cloſeſt and moſt arduous kind of fighting) with our foes; nor can we well expect wholly to eſcape wounds: but the leaves of the tree of life are provided for their healing. The Captain of our Salvation is at hand, and leads us on with an aſſurance, which might make even a coward bold—that in the end we ſhall be more than conquerors through him who has loved us.

I am ready to think, that ſome of the ſentiments in your letters are not properly your's, ſuch as you yourſelf have derived from the ſcriptures, but rather borrowed from authors or preachers, whoſe judgment your humility has led you to prefer to your own. At leaſt, I am ſure the ſcripture does not authorize the concluſion which diſtreſſes you, that if you were a child of God, you ſhould not feel ſuch changes and oppoſitions. Were I to define a Chriſtian, or rather to deſcribe him at large, I know no text I would chuſe ſooner, as a ground for the ſubject, than *Gal.* v. 17. A Chriſtian has noble aims, which diſtinguiſh him from the bulk of mankind. His leading principles, motives and deſires are all ſupernatural and divine. Could he do as he would, there is not a ſpirit before the throne

ſhould excel him in holineſs, love and obedience. He would tread in the very footſteps of his Savior, fill up every moment in his ſervice, and employ every breath in his praiſe. This he would do, but alas! he cannot. Againſt this deſire of the ſpirit, there is a contrary deſire and working of a corrupt nature, which meets him at every turn. He has a beautiful copy ſet before him; he is enamored with it, and tho' he does not expect to equal it, he writes carefully after it, and longs to attain to the neareſt poſſible imitation. But indwelling ſin and Satan continually jog his hand and ſpoil his ſtrokes. You cannot, Madam, form a right judgment of yourſelf, except you make due allowance for thoſe things, which are not peculiar to yourſelf, but common to all who have ſpiritual perception, and are indeed the inſeparable appendages of this mortal ſtate. If it were not ſo, why ſhould the moſt ſpiritual and gracious people be ſo ready to confeſs themſelves vile and worthleſs? One eminent branch of our holineſs is a ſenſe of ſhame and humiliation for thoſe evils which are only known to ourſelves, and to him who ſearches our hearts, joined with an acquieſcence in Jeſus, who is appointed of God, wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification and redemption. I will venture to aſſure you, that though you will poſſeſs a more ſtable peace, in proportion as the Lord enables you to live more ſimply upon the blood, righteouſneſs and grace of the Mediator, you will never grow into a better opinion of yourſelf than you have at preſent. The nearer you are brought to him, the quicker ſenſe you will have of your continual need of him, and thereby your admiration

miration of his power, love and compaſſion will increaſe likewiſe from year to year.

I would obſerve farther, that our ſpiritual exerciſes are not a little influenced by our conſtitutional temperament. As you are only an ideal correſpondent, I can but conjecture about you upon this head. If your frame is delicate, and your nervous ſyſtem very ſenſible and tender, I ſhould probably aſcribe ſome of your appprehenſions to this cauſe. It is an abſtruſe ſubject, and I will not enter into it; but according to the obſervations I have made, perſons of this habit, ſeem to live more upon the confines of the inviſible world, if I may ſo ſpeak, and to be more ſuſceptive of impreſſions from it, than others. That complaint, which for want of a better name, we call lowneſs of ſpirits, may probably afford the enemy ſome peculiar advantages and occaſions of diſtreſſing you. The mind then perceives objects, as through a tinctured medium, which gives them a dark and diſcouraging appearance. And I believe Satan has more influence and addreſs than we are aware of, in managing the glaſs. And when this is not the caſe at all times, it may be ſo occaſionally from ſickneſs or other circumſtances. You tell me that you have lately been ill, which, together with your preſent ſituation, and the proſpect of your approaching hour, may probably have ſuch an effect as I have hinted. You may be charging yourſelf with guilt, for what ſprings from indiſpoſition, in which you are merely paſſive, and which may be no more properly ſinful, than the head-ach, or any of the thouſand natural ſhocks the fleſh is heir to. The enemy can take no

advantage

advantage but what the Lord permits him, and he will permit him none, but what he deſigns to overrule for your greater advantage in the end. He delights in your proſperity, and you ſhould not be in heavineſs for an hour, were there not a need-be for it. Notwithſtanding your fears, I have a good hope that he, who, you ſay, has helped you in ſix troubles, will appear for you in the ſeventh, that you will not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord, and come forth to teſtify to his praiſe, that he has turned your mourning into joy.

I am your's, &c.

June—1777.

TWO

TWO

LETTERS

TO

MISS F———.

Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt
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LETTERS

TO

MISS F——.

LETTER I.

DEAR MADAM,

YOU would have me tell you what are the beſt means to be uſed by a young perſon, to prevent the world, with all its opening and enſnaring ſcenes, from drawing the heart aſide from God? It is an important queſtion; but I apprehend your own heart will tell you, that you are already poſſeſſed of all the information concerning it which you can well expect from me. I could only attempt to anſwer it from the Bible, which lies open to you likewiſe. If your heart is like mine, it muſt confeſs, that when it turns aſide from God, it is ſeldom through ignorance of the proper means or motives which ſhould have kept us near him, but rather from an evil principle within, which prevails againſt our better judgment, and renders us unfaithful to light already received.

I could

I could offer you rules, cautions and advices in abundance; for I find it comparatively easy to preach to others—but if you should farther ask me, How you shall effectually reduce them to practice? I feel that I am so deficient, and so much at a loss in this matter *myself*, that I know not well what to say to *you*—Yet something must be said.

In the first place, then, I would observe, that though it be our bounden duty, and the highest privilege we can propose to ourselves, to have our hearts kept close to the Lord, yet we must not expect it absolutely or perfectly, much less all at once: we shall keep close to him, in proportion as we are solidly convinced of the infinite disparity between him, and the things which would presume to stand in competition with him, and the folly as well as ingratitude of departing from him. But these points are only to be learned by experience, and by smarting under a series of painful disappointments in our expectations from creatures. Our judgments may be quickly satisfied that his favor is better than life, while yet it is in the power of a mere trifle to turn us aside. The Lord permits us to feel our weakness, that we may be sensible of it; for though we are ready in words, to confess that we are weak, we do not so properly know it, till that secret though unallowed dependance we have upon some strength in ourselves is brought to the trial and fails us. To be humble and like a little child, afraid of taking a step alone, and so conscious of snares and dangers around us, as to cry to him continually to hold us up that we may be safe, is the sure, the infallible, the only secret of walking closely with him.

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But how shall we attain this humble frame of spirit? It must be, as I said, from a real and sensible conviction of our weakness and vileness, which we cannot learn (at least I have not been able to learn it) merely from books or preachers. The providence of God concurs with his Holy Spirit in his merciful design of making us acquainted with ourselves. It is indeed a great mercy to be preserved from such declensions as might fall under the notice of our fellow-creatures; but when *they* can observe nothing of consequence to object to us, things may be far from right with us in the sight of him who judges not only actions but the thoughts and first motions of the heart. And, indeed, could we for a season so cleave to God as to find little or nothing in ourselves to be ashamed of, we are such poor creatures that we should presently grow vain and self-sufficient, and expose ourselves to the greatest danger of falling.

There are, however, means to be observed on our part, and though you know them, I will repeat the principal, because you desire me. The first is prayer; and here above all things we should pray for humility. It may be called both the guard of all other graces and the soil in which they grow. The second, attention to the scripture.—Your question is directly answered in *Psalm* cxix. 9. The precepts are our rule and delight. The promises our strength and encouragement. The good recorded of the saints is proposed for our encouragement: their miscarriages are as land-marks set up to warn us of the rocks and shoals which lie in the way of our passage. The study of the whole scheme

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of gospel salvation, respecting the person, life, doctrine, death and glory of our Redeemer, is appointed to form our souls to a spiritual and divine taste; and, so far as this prevails and grows in us, the trifles that would draw us from the Lord, will lose their influence, and appear, divested of the glare with which they strike the senses, mere vanity and nothing. The third grand means is consideration or recollection; a careful regard to those temptations and snares, to which from our tempers, situations or connections, we are more immediately exposed, and by which we have been formerly hindered. It may be well in the morning, ere we leave our chambers, to forecast, as far as we are able, the probable circumstances of the day before us. Yet the observance of this, as well as of every rule that can be offered, may dwindle into a mere form. However, I trust the Lord, who has given you a desire to live to him, will be your guard and teacher. There is none teacheth like him. I am,

Your affectionate friend and servant.

October 3, 1778.

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LETTER II.

DEAR MADAM,

OUR experiences pretty much tally; they may be drawn out into ſheets and quires, but the ſum total may be comprized in a ſhort ſentence, *Our life is a warfare.* For our encouragement, the Apoſtle calls it a *good* warfare. We are engaged in a good cauſe, fight under a good Captain, the victory is ſure beforehand, and the prize is a crown, a crown of life. Such conſiderations might make even a coward bold. But then we muſt be content to fight, and conſidering the nature, number, ſituation and ſubtilty of our enemies, we may expect ſometimes to receive a wound; but there is a medicinal tree, the leaves of which are always at hand to heal us. We cannot be too attentive to the evil, which is always working in us, or to the ſtratagems which are employed againſt us, yet our attention ſhould not be wholly confined to theſe things. We are to look upwards likewiſe to him, who is our head, our life, our ſtrength. One glance of Jeſus, will convey more effectual aſſiſtance than poring upon our own hearts for a month. The one is to be done, but the other ſhould upon no account be omitted. It was not by counting their wounds, but by beholding the brazen ſerpent, the Lord's inſtituted means of cure, that the Iſraelites were healed. That was an emblem for our inſtruction. One great cauſe of our frequent conflicts,

flicts, is, that *we* have a ſecret deſire to be rich, and it is the Lord's deſign to make us poor: *We* want to gain an ability of doing ſomething; and he ſuits his diſpenſations, to convince us that we can do nothing. *We* want a ſtock in ourſelves, and he would have us abſolutely dependant upon him. So far as we are content to be weak, that his power may be magnified in us, ſo far we ſhall make our enemies know that we are ſtrong, though we ourſelves ſhall never be directly ſenſible that we are ſo; only by comparing what we are, with the oppoſition we ſtand againſt, we may come to a comfortable concluſion, that the Lord worketh mightily in us. *Pſalm* xli. 11.

If our views are ſimple, and our deſires towards the Lord, it may be of uſe to conſider ſome of your faults and mine, not as the faults of you and me in particular, but as the fault of that depraved nature, which is common with us to all the Lord's people, and which made Paul groan as feelingly and as heartily as we can do. But this conſideration, though true and ſcriptural, can only be ſafely applied, when the mind is ſincerely and in good earneſt devoted to the Lord. There are too many unſound and half-profeſſors, who eagerly catch at it, as an excuſe for thoſe evils they are unwilling to part with. But I truſt I may ſafely recommend it to you. This evil nature, this indwelling ſin, is a living principle, an active, powerful cauſe, and a cauſe that is active will neceſſarily produce an effect. Sin is the ſame thing in believers, as in the unregenerate; they have indeed a contrary principle of grace, which counteracts and reſiſts

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it, which can prevent its out-breakings, but will not ſuppreſs its riſings. As grace reſiſts ſin, ſo ſin reſiſts grace. *Gal.* v. 17. The proper tendency of each, is mutually weakened on both ſides; and between the two, the poor believer, however blameleſs and exemplary in the ſight of men, appears in his own view the moſt inconſiſtent character under the ſun. He can hardly think it is ſo with others, and judging of *them* by what he *ſees*, and of *himſelf* by what he *feels*, in lowlineſs of heart, he eſteems others better than himſelf. This proves him to be right, for it is the will of God concerning him. *Phil.* ii. 3. This is the warfare. But it ſhall not always be ſo. Grace ſhall prevail. The evil nature is already enervated, and ere long it ſhall die the death. Jeſus will make us more than conquerors.

I am your's, &c.

March — 1779.

TWO
LETTERS
TO
MR. A—— B——.

LETTERS

TO

MR. A—— B——.

LETTER I.

DEAR SIR,

I Suppose you will receive many congratulations on your recovery from your late dangerous illness; most of them perhaps more sprightly and better turned, but none, I persuade myself, more sincere and affectionate than mine. I beg you would prepare yourself by this good opinion of me, before you read further; and let the reality of my regard excuse what you may dislike in my manner of expressing it.

When a person is returned from a doubtful distant voyage, we are naturally led to inquire into the incidents he has met with, and the discoveries he has made. Indulge me in a curiosity of this kind, especially as my affection gives me an interest and concern in the event. You have been, my friend, upon the brink, the very edge of an eternal state, but God has restored you back to the world again.

Did you meet with, or have you brought back, nothing *new?* Did nothing occur to ſtop or turn your uſual train of thought? Were your apprehenſions of inviſible things exactly the ſame in the height of your diſorder, when you were cut off from the world and all its engagements, as when you were in perfect health and in the higheſt enjoyment of your own inclinations? If you anſwer me, "Yes, all things are juſt the ſame as formerly, the difference between ſickneſs and health only excepted;" I am at a loſs how to reply, I can only ſigh and wonder; *ſigh*, that it ſhould be thus with any, that it ſhould be thus with you whom I dearly love; and *wonder*, ſince this unhappy caſe, ſtrange as it ſeems in one view, is yet ſo frequent, why it was not always thus with myſelf; for long and often it was juſt ſo. Many a time, when ſickneſs had brought me, as we ſay, to death's door, I was as eaſy and inſenſible as the ſailor, who in the height of a ſtorm ſhould preſume to ſleep upon the top of the maſt, quite regardleſs that the next toſſing wave might plunge him into the raging ocean, beyond all poſſibility of relief. But at length a day came, which, though the moſt terrible day I ever ſaw, I can now look back upon with thankfulneſs and pleaſure: I ſay the time came, when in ſuch a helpleſs extremity, and under the expectation of immediate death, it pleaſed God to command the veil from my eyes, and I ſaw things in ſome meaſure as they really were. Imagine with yourſelf, a perſon trembling upon the point of a dreadful precipice, a powerful and inexorable enemy eager to puſh him down, and an aſſemblage of all that is horrible

horrible waiting at the bottom for his fall; even this will give you but a faint repreſentation of the ſtate of my mind at that time. Believe me, it was not a whim or a dream, which changed my ſentiments and conduct, but a powerful conviction which will not admit the leaſt doubt; an evidence which, like that I have of my own exiſtence, I cannot call in queſtion without contradicting all my ſenſes. And though my caſe was in ſome reſpects uncommon, yet ſomething like it is known by one and another every day: and I have myſelf converſed with many, who, after a courſe of years ſpent in defending deiſtical principles, or indulging libertine practices, when they have thought themſelves confirmed in their ſchemes by the cool aſſent of what they then deemed Impartial Reaſon, have been like me brought to glory in the croſs of Chriſt, and to live by that faith which they had before ſlighted and oppoſed. By theſe inſtances I know that nothing is too hard for the Almighty. The ſame power which humbled me, can undoubtedly bring down the moſt haughty infidel upon earth. And as I likewiſe know, that, to ſhew his power, he is often pleaſed to make uſe of weak inſtruments, I am encouraged, notwithſtanding the apparent difficulty of ſucceeding, to warn thoſe over whom friendſhip or affection gives me any influence, of the evil and the danger of a courſe of life formed upon the prevailing maxims of the world. So far as I neglect this, I am unfaithful in my profeſſions both to God and man.

I ſhall not at preſent trouble you in an argumentative way. If by dint of reaſoning I could

effect some change in your notions, my arguments, unless applied by a superior power, would still leave your heart unchanged and untouched. A man may give his assent to the gospel, and be able to defend it against others, and yet not have his own spirit truly influenced by it. This thought I shall leave with you, that if your scheme be not true to a demonstration, it must necessarily be false; for the issue is too important to make a doubt on the dangerous side tolerable. If the Christian could possibly be mistaken, he is still upon equal terms with those who pronounce him to be so: but if the Deist be wrong (that is, if we are in the right) the consequence to him must be unavoidable and intolerable. This, you will say, is a trite argument: I own it; but beaten as it is, it will never be worn out or answered.

'Permit me to remind you, that the points in debate between us are already settled in themselves, and that our talking cannot alter or affect the nature of things, for they will be as they are, whatever apprehensions we may form of them: and remember likewise, that we must all, each one for himself, experience on which side the truth lies. I used a wrong word when I spoke of your *recovery*; my dear friend, look upon it only as a *reprieve*, for you carry the sentence of death about with you still, and unless you should be cut off (which God of his mercy forbid!) by a sudden stroke, you will as surely lie upon a death-bed, as you have been now raised from a bed of sickness. And remember likewise (how can I bear to write it?) that, should you neglect my admonitions, they will notwithstanding

withſtanding have an effect upon you, though not ſuch an effect as I could wiſh. They will render you more inexcuſable. I have delivered my own ſoul by faithfully warning you: but if you will not examine the matter with that ſerioufneſs it calls for, if you will not look up to God, the former of your body, and the preſerver of your ſpirit, for direction and aſſiſtance how to pleaſe him; if you will have your reading and converſation only on one ſide of the queſtion; if you determine to let afflictions and dangers, mercies and deliverances, all paſs without reflection and improvement; if you will ſpend your life as though you thought you were ſent into the world only to eat, ſleep and play, and, after a courſe of years, be extinguiſhed like the ſnuff of a candle—why then, you muſt abide the conſequences. But aſſuredly, ſooner or later, God will meet you. My hearty daily prayer is, that it may be in a way of mercy, and that you may be added to the number of the trophies of his invincible grace. I am,

Your ſincerely affectionate friend.

1758.

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LETTER II.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH I truly love you, and have no reason to doubt of the reality of your friendſhip to me; yet I cannot but apprehend that, notwithſtanding our mutual regard, and my frequent attempts to be witty (if I could) for your diverſion, there is ſomething in moſt of my letters (which I cannot, dare not, wholly ſuppreſs) that diſguſts and wearies you, and makes you leſs inclined to keep up a frequent intercourſe, than you would otherwiſe be. Rather than loſe you quite, I will in general ſpare you as much as I can; but at preſent you muſt bear with me, and allow me full ſcope. You have given me a challenge which I know not how to paſs over; and ſince you ſo far juſtify my preaching, as to condeſcend to preach (in your way) yourſelf, permit me for this time to preach again, and to take ſome paſſages in your letter for my text.

In the preſent debate, I will accept your compliment, and ſuppoſe myſelf to be, as you ſay, a Man of Senſe. You allow, then, that *all* the ſenſe is not on your ſide. This indeed you cannot deny; for whatever becomes of me, it is needleſs to tell you, that Hale, Boyle, and other great names I could mention, were men of as great penetration and judgment, had as good opportunities, and took as much pains to be informed of the truth, as any

of

of the advocates for infidelity can pretend to. And you cannot, with any modeſty or conſiſtence, abſolutely determine, that they had not as good grounds for thinking themſelves right, as you can have for concluding they were wrong.

But declining the advantage of human authority, I am content the point ſhall reſt between you and me. And here I beg you to obſerve, that I have one evident advantage over you in judging, namely, that I have experienced the good and evil on *both* ſides, and you only on *one*. If you were to ſend me an inventory of your pleaſures, how charmingly your time runs on, and how dexterouſly it is divided between the coffee-houſes, play-houſe, the card-table and tavern, with intervals of balls, concerts, &c.; I could anſwer, that moſt of theſe I have tried and tried again, and know the utmoſt they can yield, and have ſeen enough of the reſt, moſt heartily to deſpiſe them all. Setting religion entirely out of the queſtion, I profeſs I had rather be a worm to crawl upon the ground, than to bear the name of MAN upon the poor terms of whiling away my life in an inſipid round of ſuch inſignificant and unmanly trifles. I will return your own expreſſion—I believe you to be a perſon of ſenſe; but alas! how do you proſtitute your talents and capacity, how far do you act below yourſelf, if you know no higher purpoſe of life than theſe childiſh diſſipations, together with the more ſerious buſineſs of riſing early and ſitting up late, to amaſs money, that you may be able to enlarge your expences! I am ſure, while I lived in theſe things, I found them unſatisfying and empty to the laſt degree; and the only

only advantage they afforded (miſerable are they who are forced to *deem* it an advantage) was, that they often relieved me from the trouble and burden of thinking. If you have any other pleaſures than theſe, they are ſuch as muſt be evil and inconvenient even upon your own plan; and therefore my friendſhip will not allow me to bring them into the account. I am willing to hope you do not ſtoop ſtill lower in purſuit of ſatisfaction. Thus far we ſtand upon even ground. You know all that a life of pleaſure can give, and I know it likewiſe.

On the other hand, if I ſhould attempt to explain to you the ſource and ſtreams of *my* beſt pleaſures, ſuch as a comfortable aſſurance of the pardon of my ſins, an habitual communion with the God who made heaven and earth, a calm reliance on the Divine Providence, the chearing proſpect of a better life in a better world, with the pleaſing foretaſtes of heaven in my own ſoul; ſhould I, or could I, tell you the pleaſure I often find in reading the ſcripture, in the exerciſe of prayer, and in that ſort of preaching and converſation which you deſpiſe; I doubt not but you would think as meanly of my happineſs as I do of your's. But here lies the difference (my dear friend); you condemn that which you have never tried. You know no more of theſe things than a blind man does of colors; and, notwithſtanding all your flouriſhes, I defy you to be at all times able to ſatisfy yourſelf, that things may not poſſibly be as I have repreſented them.

Beſides, what do I loſe upon my plan, that ſhould make me ſo worthy of your pity? Have you a quicker reliſh in the prudent uſe of temporal comforts?

comforts? Do you think I do not eat my food with as much pleaſure as you can do, though perhaps with leſs coſt and variety? Is your ſleep ſounder than mine? Have not I as much ſatisfaction in ſocial life? It is true, to join much with the gay fluttering tribe, who ſpend their days in laugh and ſing-ſong, is equally contrary to my duty and inclination. But I have friends and acquaintance as well as you. Among the many who favor me with their eſteem and friendſhip, there are ſome who are perſons of ſenſe, learning, wit, and (what perhaps may weigh as much with you) of fortune and diſtinction. And if you ſhould ſay, "Ay, but they are all enthuſiaſts like yourſelf," you would ſay nothing to the purpoſe, ſince, upon your maxim, that 'happineſs is according to opinion,' it cannot be an objection, but the contrary, to have my acquaintance to my own taſte. Thus much for the brighter ſide of your ſituation—or let me add one thing more. I know you have thoughts of marriage: do you think, if you ſhould enter into this relation, your principles are calculated to make you more happy in it than I am? You are well acquainted with our family life. Do you propoſe to know more of the peace and heart-felt joy of domeſtic union, than I have known and continue to know to this hour. I wiſh you may equal us; and if you do, we ſhall ſtill be as before, but upon even ground. I need not turn Deiſt to enjoy the beſt and the moſt that this life can afford.

But I need not tell you, that the preſent life is not made up of pleaſurable incidents only. Pain, ſickneſs, loſſes, diſappointments, injuries and affronts will

will more or less at one time or other be our lot. And can you bear these trials better than I? You will not pretend to it. Let me appeal to yourself: how often do you toss and disquiet yourself, like a wild bull in a net, when things cross your expectations? As your thoughts are more engrossed by what you see, you must be more keenly sensible of what you feel. You cannot view these trials as appointed by a wise and heavenly Father in subservience to your good; you cannot taste the sweetness of his promises, nor feel the secret supports of his strength in an hour of affliction: you cannot so cast your burden and care upon him, as to find a sensible relief to your spirit thereby, nor can you see his hand engaged and employed in effecting your deliverance. Of these things you know no more than of the art of flying; but I seriously assure you, and I believe my testimony will go farther with you than my judgment, that they are realities, and that I have found them to be so. When my worldly concerns have been most thorny and discouraging, I have once and again felt the most of that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. However, I may state the case still lower. You do pretty well among your friends, but how do you like being alone? Would you not give something for that happy secret, which could enable you to pass a rainy day pleasantly, without the assistance of business, company or amusement? Would it not mortify you greatly to travel for a week in an unfrequented road, where you shall meet with no lively incidents to recruit and raise your spirits?

Alas! what a poor ſcheme of pleaſure is your's, that will not ſupport an interval of reflection!

What you have heard is true; I have a few friends who meet at my houſe once a fortnight, and we ſpend an hour or two in worſhipping the God who made us. And can this move your indignation, or your compaſſion? Does it ſhew a much nobler ſpirit, a more refined way of thinking, to live altogether without God in the world? If I kept a card aſſembly at thoſe times, it would not diſpleaſe you. How can you, as a perſon of ſenſe, avoid being ſhocked at your own unhappy prejudice? But I remember how it was once with myſelf, and forbear to wonder. May he who has opened my eyes, open your's. He only can do it. I do not expect to convince you by any thing I can ſay as of myſelf; but if he be pleaſed to make uſe of me as his inſtrument, then you will be convinced. How ſhould I then rejoice! I ſhould rejoice to be uſeful to any one, but eſpecially to you, whom I dearly love. May God ſhew you your true ſelf, and your true ſtate, then you will attentively liſten to what you now diſdain to hear of; his goodneſs in providing redemption and pardon for the chief of ſinners, through him who died upon the croſs for ſins not his own. Keep this letter by you at my requeſt; and when you write, tell me that you receive it in good part, and that you ſtill believe me to be

Your ſincere and affectionate friend.

1760.

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