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The force of truth

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THE
FORCE OF TRUTH:

AN
AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE.

✓
BY REV. THOMAS SCOTT, D. D.

WITH A RECOMMENDATORY LETTER,
BY REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
EIGHT LETTERS ADDRESSED TO DR. SCOTT, BY REV.
JOHN NEWTON.

PHILADELPHIA:
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P R E F A C E .

IF a book do not apologize for itself, it is in vain for the author to attempt it by a preface ; I shall, therefore, only declare the nature and intent of this publication.

Indeed, it contains little more than the history of my heart, that forge of iniquity; and my conscience, that friendly, but too often neglected monitor. By men in general, this latter is hated, because, as far as informed, it boldly tells the truth: and their grand endeavour seems to be, to lay it asleep, or to render it as insensible as if seared with a hot iron. Through the deceitfulness of the human heart, the allurements of the world, and the artifices of Satan, this, at length, is commonly accomplished; and in the meantime, they deafen themselves to its

remonstrances, by living in a continual noise and bustle. The conflict in my soul between these two is here related; and some account given of the artifices which Satan, in confederacy with my heart, made use of to keep my conscience quiet, and silence its remonstrances; and also of the means which the Lord employed to defeat this conspiracy, to give conscience its due ascendancy, and to incline my before unwilling heart to become obedient to its friendly admonitions; with the effect thereof upon my religious views and conduct.

As to the effect of this publication respecting my character and worldly interest, myself, and all that is dear to me, I would leave in his hands, who causeth all to work together for good, to them that love him, whom he hath called according to his purpose. And he hath so evinced his care over me, and goodness to me, in all the concerns of my past life, that it were shameful, if

I did not most willingly cast all my care upon him for the future. But, reader, the effect of it respecting thee, I have much at heart; and have had, and shall, I trust, continue to have it much in my prayers.

If thou art a believing servant of God, I hope thou wilt see cause to bless God in me, and wilt be established and comforted thereby; according to the fervent desire of my soul, for all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. If thou art one, whose experience answers in many things to what is related in the former part of this narrative, as face answers to face in the water, may the Lord, the Spirit who convinceth of sin, alarm thy drowsy conscience, and bring thee under a serious concern for thy precious soul, and its eternal interests: may he incline thine heart diligently to use the means here spoken of, as far as conscience evidences it to be thy duty; and may he bless the means for enlightening

thy mind with the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus; and guiding thy wandering feet into the ways of peace. This, be assured, is my hearty prayer for thee; and with this prayer I commend this work unto the Lord, that if it be his blessed will, he may employ it as an instrument for advancing his glory, and the salvation of souls.

THOMAS SCOTT.

Weston, Underwood, Feb. 26, 1779.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

ABOUT ten years have elapsed since the first publication of the ensuing narrative. In that space I have had much opportunity of re-examining the Scriptures, and of making observations, both in the world and in the professing church; as well as of getting a further measure of self-knowledge. But I bless God, that upon a revisal of **THE FORCE OF TRUTH**, in order to a second edition, I see no cause to retract a single sentence, or to propose any matter differently than before. If any one should bestow the pains to compare this with the former edition, he will indeed find several *verbal* alterations, in which brevity, perspicuity, and precision alone have been consulted: but he will not meet with a single variation, which in any measure changes the meaning of the passage. Had I mate-

rially altered my sentiments, I would either have refused to concur in publishing a second edition, or have fairly avowed that alteration: but, on the contrary, I deem it incumbent upon me to declare, that I am more than ever established in the belief of all those doctrines that I before proposed, as the leading truths of Christianity.

THOMAS SCOTT.

London, Chapel-street, March 31, 1789.

RECOMMENDATORY LETTER.

To the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board of Publication of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States:

REVEREND AND DEAR BROTHER,

It is extensively known that the pious and eminently useful Dr. *Thomas Scott*, the Commentator, who for a number of years, occupied so high a place in the confidence and affections of the friends of evangelical truth and of vital piety, entered the sacred office, without any practical acquaintance with the religion of which he undertook to be a teacher. For several years after his ordination, and after he had made the solemn subscription to the thirty-nine Articles, &c., required of those who are received into the Ministry of the Church of England, he was, in spirit and in creed, a *Unitarian* and *Pelagian*, and deliberately acting upon the most selfish and worldly principles in all his studies and pursuits. From this dream of proud self-

confidence it pleased God to awaken him, by a series of events apparently accidental; to lead him to renounce his errors one after another, and eventually to enable him to repose and rejoice in that precious system of free and sovereign grace, which once he despised.

With the account which he has himself given of this change in his views under the title of "The Force of Truth," you have been long acquainted; and, if I mistake not, more than one edition of this account has, within the last twenty years, been given to the American public. Still the work has not that general circulation which its deeply interesting character renders desirable. I could earnestly wish to see it take a place among the volumes issued by our Board of Publication, and finding its way to every Presbyterian family in the land. I am persuaded it is in your power greatly to extend its circulation; and, in my opinion, it is hardly possible unduly to multiply the copies of a work so eminently adapted to illustrate and magnify the grace of God.

What though the venerable Author of this narrative belonged to a different ecclesiasti-

cal pale from that in which it is our happiness to find ourselves, and to labour? This circumstance does not, with me, form the least deduction from its value. Perhaps it may be said to be one of the chief glories of that system which *we* adopt, as Presbyterians, that it turns away the minds of men from an undue regard to the external forms of the Gospel, to that simple purity of evangelical truth, which is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;” that it guards us against the miserable worship of heartless rites and genealogies, as a ground of hope towards God, and teaches us to place all our confidence on the atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness of “Him who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” May it ever be so! I regard every man as my brother in Christ, however he may differ from me in other respects, who teaches me to “glory in nothing save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ;” and who represents salvation, in its beginning, its sum, and its completion, as wholly of free, rich, and sovereign grace “abounding, through righteousness, unto

eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord;" and who, while he unceasingly proclaims, that my *title* to heaven rests solely on the ground of the atonement and righteousness of the Redeemer as my surety, ceases not to insist that my *preparation* for heaven can be effected only by the renewal and sanctification of my heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, and inclining me to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present evil world," and to walk before God in all the ways of holy obedience.

When, therefore, I open the volumes of such men as *Scott*, and *Newton*, and *Cecil*, I entirely forget the system of Prelacy with which they happened to be connected, and drink in the precious streams of evangelical and experimental truth which they pour forth, without thinking that they belonged to a different fold from myself; or rather feeling that they and I belong, in reality, to THE SAME CHURCH, the same precious body which the Redeemer has purchased with his blood, and sanctified by his blessed Spirit. Let my soul be with the souls of such men, in whatever ecclesiastical connection they may be

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found, and by whatever name they may be called! If the inspired Apostle *Paul* preached the true Gospel, THESE MEN PREACHED IT, for their language and spirit are all as exactly his, as if he spoke by them. The remark made, many years since, in regard to their great predecessor, the celebrated *George Whitefield*, of the same ecclesiastical connection with them, applies here with equal force. More than seventy years ago, while that "prince of preachers" was daily addressing admiring crowds in the city of Philadelphia, a group of his opposers was seated in the Coffee-house in that city, listening to an animated harangue of Mr. P. who sustained an important office, and a high secular character. He was loading the person and the ministry of Mr. Whitefield with abuse, and warning his hearers against his alleged errors and fanaticism. In the midst of this harangue, Dr. *Chovet*, an eminent physician, but a bold and profane infidel, entered the Coffee-house, and, after listening for a few minutes to the violent language of the speaker, broke out upon him in the following homely but pointed style: "P. I am surprised at you! *You* profess to believe the

New Testament. Now I do not; but *you* do. I am amazed that *you* can speak as you are doing against a man who preaches as *Whitefield* does. I do not undertake to decide who is right and who is wrong, for I consider it all as a fable; but if the Apostle *Paul* was right, *Whitefield* is right, for he preaches as much like him as if Paul had spit him out of his mouth." The verdict of the coarse and blunt infidel was undoubtedly correct. I can never open the pages of *Scott*, or those of the affectionate friends, contemporary with him, already named, without feeling confident that, if the holy Apostle of the Gentiles were now to rise from the dead, and revisit our earth, he would, without hesitation, recognize them as sincere and enlightened fellow-disciples, and fellow-workers in the cause of their common Master.

It is no doubt true, that the doctrines usually denominated *Calvinistic*, which *Dr. Scott* slowly, but firmly embraced, are every where unpopular, and ever will be so as long as human nature remains what it is. All men are by nature proud and self-righteous, and whenever their minds are turned towards the great question concerning the

way of salvation, they are prone to imagine, that they can, in part, at least, if not in whole, save themselves. When, therefore, they hear doctrines proclaimed which lay the sinner in the dust before God, and ascribe all the glory of his salvation, from first to last, to the merit and power of Christ; when they hear it maintained, that "by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified," but that we are "justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," they are offended. They cannot consent utterly to renounce their own merit and strength, and to accept of salvation as a mere gift of free and sovereign grace. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Almost every where, then, the popular voice is against the genuine doctrines of the Gospel; and if the question, whether they are true or not, were put to vote before the mass of society, the decision would probably be two to one, if not three or four to one against them. If the Bible be true, the human heart is on the side of error. We are all, by nature, *Pelagians*, or *semi-Pelagians*,

until the grace of God teaches us better. This fact, however, instead of being a solid objection to the doctrines in question, obviously furnishes one out of many proofs that they are of God. For the word of God every where declares that "the truth as it is in Jesus," is distasteful to the carnal heart; that to the children of this world it is every where a "stumbling block and foolishness." Of course, if the doctrines for which we plead were generally acceptable and popular among the unrenewed and worldly, it would show conclusively that they were not such as the apostles preached.

Dr. Scott found this attestation given to his new creed, as soon as his having embraced it was made known. The great majority of his early friends and acquaintances, especially the wealthy, the refined, the honourable, almost with one voice condemned it, and considered him as a sort of degraded man. Only a small number, and those by no means among the world's favourites, felt prepared to approve the change, and to bid him "God speed." So it was in the beginning; so it is now; and so it ever will be, as long

as man is by nature an "alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger to the covenant of promise."

It is generally known that the brother in the ministry with whom *Mr. Scott* corresponded, while his mind was undergoing that conflict which issued in his conversion, was the venerable *John Newton*, whose works have been so eminently popular and useful among the friends of vital piety. This correspondence undoubtedly had no small influence among the means which were blessed to the benefit of *Mr. Scott*. In most of the editions of "The Force of Truth" which I have seen, the name of *Mr. Newton* is not given. I hope, if your committee should concur with me in judging that this work ought to be made one of the standing publications of our Board, that they will introduce that venerated name at full length in its proper place. I can think of no good reason why it should any longer be withheld.

It is an interesting fact in the history of the following "Narrative," that, in drawing it up, the author consulted *William Cowper*, the celebrated English poet, his friend, and, at that time, his neighbour. The eminent

talents, the ardent piety, and the deplorable mental sufferings of that great and good man, from a morbid physical constitution, are well known to every admirer of genius where the English language is spoken. That he gave to this work his friendly supervision; that he advised in regard to its style and arrangement; and that he gave to the whole his cordial *imprimatur*, will be regarded with interest by every intelligent reader.

One suggestion more. Allow me to recommend that the eight letters of *Mr. Newton*, addressed to *Mr. Scott*, while he was anxious and inquiring, be added at the end of the volume. They are so excellent, both in matter and manner, that they are well worthy of accompanying the narrative with which they were, historically, so closely connected. They may be, in a few cases, in a small degree abridged, if there be a fear of swelling the volume too much. I am persuaded that all its readers will thank you for the addition. Scarcely any religious letter-writer ever exceeded *Mr. Newton*. Those in question, in particular, have one excellence which renders them a model in this class of writings. Forty-nine fiftieths of all the con-

troversial writings on the subject of religion, that I have ever met with, in the course of a long life, have been by far too *polemical* in their language and spirit. That is, they too often reminded the reader, however decent, and even polite the style, of "the tug of war." Newton had the rare talent of arguing with an errorist with so much paternal benignity, as well as force, and of conducting all his controversial arguments with such constant practical appeals to the heart, as entirely to disarm the polemical spirit. This is a happy art; or rather, I should say, a precious gift of grace, which nothing but a large measure of the Spirit of Christ can enable any man with entire success to exhibit. We are never so likely to convince and win an adversary, as when we can so address him as to make him forget that we are arguing against him, and open his whole heart to our affectionate appeals. *Newton* had this talent in as great a degree as almost any man ever had.

Dr. Scott has given a very satisfactory note in regard to the popular use of the name *Methodist*, as a term of reproach in *England*. If *our* reading population were as familiar with the state of things there as here, nothing

more would be necessary; but as they cannot be supposed to be, I will take the liberty of adding one word of caution. In this country the name *Methodist* is *never* applied to any other religious denomination than that which was originally founded by the *Rev. John Wesley*. Whereas, in England, this name is applied, not merely to the *Wesleyan* body, but also to all ministers and members ever so closely connected with the established church, who hold evangelical sentiments, and contend for the reality and necessity of heart religion. *Dr. Scott* had no connection with the Wesleyan Methodists. He was as much opposed to their Arminianism as any Calvinist in the land. Still, in that country, where the name in its popular application, is *generic*, rather than *specific*, he was constantly reproached as being a *Methodist*.

Persuaded that you will concur with me in my general estimate of this work, and hoping that you will be disposed to adopt it as one in your catalogue of publications,

I am, reverend and dear sir,

Your brother in Christ,

SAMUEL MILLER.

PRINCETON, Jan. 12, 1841.

THE FORCE OF TRUTH.

PART I.

Giving an account of the state of the author's mind and conscience, previous to, and at the commencement of that change, whereof he purposes to give the history.

NOTWITHSTANDING that I was not educated in what is commonly considered as ignorance of God and religion; yet, until the sixteenth year of my age, I do not remember that I ever was under any serious conviction of my being a sinner, in danger of wrath, or in need of mercy; nor did I ever, during this part of my life, that I recollect, offer one hearty prayer to God in secret. Being alienated from God, through the ignorance that was in me, I lived without him in the world: and as utterly neglected to pay him any voluntary service, as if I had been an atheist in principle.

But about my sixteenth year I began to see that I was a sinner; a leper in every part, "there being no health in me;" out of many external indications of inward depravity, conscience discovered, and reproached me with one; and I was, for the first time, disquieted

with apprehensions of the wrath of an offended God. My attendance at the Lord's table being expected about the same time, (though I was very ignorant of the meaning and end of that sacred ordinance,) this circumstance, united with the accusations of my conscience, brought an awe upon my spirits, and interrupted my before undisturbed course of sin.

Being, however, an utter stranger to the depravity and helplessness of fallen nature, I had no doubt but I could amend my life whenever I pleased. Previous, therefore, to communicating, I set about an unwilling reformation ; and procuring a form of prayer, I attempted to pay my secret addresses to the Majesty of Heaven. In this manner having silenced my conscience, I partook of the ordinance, held my resolutions, and continued my devotions, such as they were, for a little space : but they were a weariness and a task to me ; and temptations soon returning, I relapsed ; my prayer book was thrown aside, and no more thought of, till my conscience was again alarmed by the next warning given for the celebration of the Lord's supper. Then the same ground was gone over again, and with the same issue. My goodness was like the morning dew, that passeth away ; and loving sin, and disrelishing religious duties as much as ever, I returned, as the sow that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

With little variation, this was my course

of life for nine years: but in that time I had such experience of my own weakness, and the superior force of temptation, that I secretly concluded reformation in my case to be impracticable. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" I was experimentally convinced that I was equally unable, with the feeble barrier of resolutions and endeavours, to stem the torrent of my impetuous inclinations, when swelled by welcome, suitable, and powerful temptations; and being ignorant that God had reserved this to himself as his own work, and had engaged to do it for the poor sinner, who feeling his own insufficiency, is heartily desirous to have it done by him; I stifled my convictions as well as I could, and put off my repentance to a more convenient season.

But being of a reflecting turn, and much alone, my mind was almost constantly employed. Aware of the uncertainty of life, I was disquieted with continual apprehensions, that this more convenient season would never arrive; especially, as through an unconfirmed state of health, I had many warnings, and near prospects of death and eternity. For a long time I entertained no doubt, but that impenitent sinners would be miserable forever in hell; and at some seasons such amazing reflections upon this awful subject forced themselves into my mind, that I was overpowered with them, and my fears became intolerable. At such times my extem-

pore cries for mercy were so wrestling and persevering, that I was scarcely able to give over; though at other times I lived without prayer of any sort; yet, in my darkest hours, though my conscience was awakened to discover more and more sinfulness in my whole behaviour, there remained a hope that I should one day repent and turn unto God. If this hope was from myself, it was a horrid presumption, but the event makes me willing to acknowledge a persuasion that it was from the Lord; for had it not been for this hope, I should probably have given way to temptations, which frequently assaulted me, of putting an end to my own life, in proud discontent with my lot in this world, and mad despair about another.

A hymn of Dr. Watts', in his admirable little book for children, entitled, "The All-seeing God," at this time fell in my way; I was much affected with it, and having committed it to memory, was frequently repeating it, and was thereby continually reminded of my guilt and danger. Parents may from this inconsiderable circumstance be reminded, that it is of great importance to store their children's minds with such useful matter, instead of suffering them to be furnished with such corrupting trash, as is commonly taught them. They know not what use God may make of these early rudiments of instruction in future life. At this period, though I was the slave of sin, yet as my con-

science was not pacified, nor my principles greatly corrupted, there seemed some hope concerning me; but at length Satan took a very effectual method of silencing my convictions, that I might sleep securely in my sins: and justly was I given over to a strong delusion to believe a lie, when I held the truth that I did know in unrighteousness. A Socinian comment on the Scriptures came in my way, and I greedily drank the poison because it quieted my fears, and flattered my abominable pride. The whole system coincided exactly with my inclinations, and the state of my mind, and approved itself to me. In reading this exposition, sin seemed to lose its native ugliness, and appear a very small and tolerable evil; man's imperfect obedience seemed to shine with an almost divine excellency; and God appeared so entirely and necessarily merciful, that he could not make any of his creatures miserable without contradicting his natural propensity. These things influenced my mind so powerfully, that I concluded that notwithstanding a few little blemishes, I was, upon the whole, a very worthy creature. Then further the mysteries of the Gospel being explained away, or brought down to the level of man's comprehension by such proud and corrupt, though specious reasonings; by acceding to these sentiments, I was in my own opinion, in point of understanding and discernment, exalted to a superiority above the general

run of mankind; and amused myself with looking down with contempt upon such as were weak enough to believe the orthodox doctrines. Thus I generally soothed my conscience: and if at any time I was uneasy at the apprehension that I did not thoroughly deserve, and was not entirely fit for heaven, the same book afforded me a soft pillow, on which to lull myself to sleep; it argued, and I thought it proved, that there were no *eternal* torments; and insinuated, that there were no torments except for the notorious sinners; and that such as should fall just short of heaven, would sink into their original nothing. With this welcome scheme I silenced all my fears, and told my accusing conscience, that if I fell short of heaven, I should be annihilated, and never be sensible of my loss.

By experience, I am well acquainted with Satan's intention, in employing so many of his servants to invent those pestilent errors, whether in speculation or practice, that have in all ages corrupted and enervated the pure and powerful doctrine of the Gospel; for they lead to forgetfulness of God, and security in sin, and are deadly poison to every soul that imbibes them, unless a miracle of grace prevent. Such, on one hand, are all the superstitious doctrines of popery, purgatory, penances, absolutions, indulgences, merits of good works, and the acceptableness of will-worship, and uncommanded ob-

servances; what are these but engines of the devil, to keep men quiet in their sins? Man, resolved to follow the dictates of his depraved inclination, and not to bound his pursuits and enjoyments within the limits of God's holy law, catches at any thing to soften the horrible thought of eternal misery. This is the awakening reflection, God's sword in the conscience, which 'tis Satan's business, by all his diabolical artifice, to endeavour to sheath, blunt, or turn aside; knowing, that whilst the alarming apprehension is present to the soul, he can never maintain his possession of it in peace. By such inventions, therefore, as these, he takes care to furnish the sinner with that which he seeks for, and to enable him to walk according to the course of this wicked world, and the desires of depraved nature, without being disturbed by such dreadful thoughts. The same, on the other hand, is the tendency of all those speculations of reasoning men, which sets God's attributes at variance with each other; which represent the Supreme Governor so *weakly* merciful, as neither to regard the demands of his justice, the glory of his holiness, the veracity of his word, nor the peaceable order and subordination of the universe; which explain away all the mysteries of the Gospel; and represent sin, that fruitful root of evil, that enemy of God, that favourite of Satan, as a very little thing, scarcely noticed by the Almighty; and which, contrary to Scripture,

and universal experience and observation, would persuade us, that man is not a depraved creature.

These latter sentiments I acceded to, and maintained as long as I could; and I did it, most assuredly, because they soothed my conscience, freed me from the pressing fears of damnation, and enabled me to think favourably of myself. For these reasons alone I loved, and chose this ground; I fixed myself upon it, and there I fortified myself with all the arguments and reasonings I could meet with. These things I wished to believe; and I had my wish; for at length I did most confidently believe them. Being taken captive in this snare by Satan, I should here have perished with a lie in my right hand, had not that Lord, whom I dishonoured, snatched me as a brand from the burning.

In this state of mind I attempted to obtain admission into holy orders. Wrapped up in the proud notion of the dignity of human nature, I had lost sight of the evil of sin, and thought little of my own sinfulness; I was filled with a self-important opinion of my own worth, and the depth of my understanding; I had adopted a system of religion, accommodated to that foolish pride, having almost wholly discarded mysteries from my creed, and regarding with sovereign contempt those who believed them. As far as I understood those controversies, I was nearly a Socinian, and a Pelagian, and wholly an Ar-

minian; yet, to my shame be it spoken, I sought to obtain admission into the ministry, in a church whose doctrines are diametrically opposed to all the three; without once concerning myself about those barriers, which the wisdom of our forefathers have placed about her, purposely to prevent the intrusion of such dangerous heretics as I then was.

Whilst I was preparing for this solemn office, I lived, as before, in known sin, and in utter neglect of prayer: my whole preparation consisting of nothing else but an attention to those studies which were more immediately required, for my reputably passing through the previous examination.

And thus after some difficulty, with a heart full of pride, and all manner of wickedness, my life being polluted with many unrepented, unforsaken sins, without one cry for mercy, one prayer for direction, or assistance in, or a blessing upon what I was about to do; after having concealed my real sentiments under the mask of general expressions; after having subscribed articles directly contrary to my then belief; and after having blasphemously declared in the presence of God and of the congregation, in the most solemn manner, sealing it with the Lord's supper, that I judged myself to be inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take this office upon me, (not knowing or believing that there was a Holy Ghost,) on September the 20th, 1772, I was ordained a deacon. For ever blessed

be the God of all long suffering and mercy, who had patience with such a rebel and blasphemer, such an irreverent trifler with his majesty, and such a presumptuous intruder into his sacred ministry ! I never think of this daring wickedness without being filled with amazement that I am out of hell ; without adoring that gracious God, who permitted such an atrocious sinner to live, yea, to serve him, and with acceptance, I trust, to call him Father, and as his minister to speak in his name. “ Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name ; Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits ; who forgiveth all my sins, and healeth all thy infirmities ; who saveth thy life from destruction, and crowneth me with mercy and loving kindness.” May I love much, and very humbly and devotedly serve that God who has multiplied his mercies, in abundantly pardoning my complicated provocations !

My views in entering into the ministry, as far as I can ascertain them, were these three : 1. A desire of a less laborious and more comfortable way of procuring a livelihood, than otherwise I had a prospect of.—2. The expectation of more leisure to employ in reading, of which I was inordinately fond.—And, 3. A proud conceit of my abilities, and a vain-glorious imagination, that I should some time distinguish and advance myself in the literary world. These were my ruling motives in

taking this bold step: motives as opposite to those which should have influence therein, as pride is opposite to humility; ambition to contentedness in a low estate, and a willingness to be the least of all, and the servant of all; as opposite as love of self, of the world, of filthy lucre, and slothful ease, is opposite to the love of God, and of souls, and of the laborious work of the ministry. Mine, therefore be the shame of this heinous sin; and to God be all the glory of overruling it for good, I trust both to unworthy me, and to his dear people, the church, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

My subsequent conduct was suitable to these motives. No sooner was I fixed in a curacy, than with close application I sat down to the study of the learned languages, and such other matters as I considered most needful, in order to lay the foundation of my future advancement. And would I were now as diligent in serving God, as I was then in serving self and ambition! I spared no pains; I shunned, as much as I well could, all acquaintance and diversions; and I retrenched upon my usual hours of sleep, that I might keep more closely to this business. As a minister, I attended just enough to the public duties of my station to support a decent character, which I deemed subservient to my main design: and from the same principle I aimed at morality in my outward deportment, and affected seriousness in my con-

versation. As to the rest, I still lived in the practice of what I knew to be sinful, and in the entire neglect of all secret religion : If ever inclined to pray, conscious guilt stopped my mouth, and I seldom went further than "God be merciful unto me." However, perceiving that my Socinian principles were very disreputable ; and being conscious from my own experience, that they were unfavourable to morality, I concealed them, in a great measure, both for my credit's sake, and from a desire I entertained, subservient to my main design, of successfully inculcating the practice of the moral duties upon those to whom I preached. My studies, indeed, lay very little in divinity, but this little all opposed that part of my scheme which respected the punishment of the wicked in the other world ; and, therefore, (being now removed at a distance from those authors whence I had imbibed my sentiments, and from whose reasonings I had learned to defend them,) I began gradually to be shaken in my former confidence, and once more to be under some apprehensions of eternal misery. Being also statedly employed, and with the appearance of solemnity, in the public worship of God, whilst I neglected and provoked him in secret ; my conscience clamorously reproached me with base hypocrisy, and I began to conclude, that if eternal torments were reserved for any sinners, I certainly should be one of the number. And

now again I was filled with anxious fears and terrifying alarms; especially as I was continually meditating upon what might be the awful consequence, should I be called hence by sudden death. Even my close application to study could not soothe my conscience, nor quiet my fears: under the affected air of cheerfulness, I was truly miserable.

This was my state of mind when the change I am about to relate, began to take place. How it commenced, in what manner, and by what steps it proceeded, and how it was completed, will be the subject of the second part of this work. This first part I shall conclude by observing, that though I was staggered in my favourite sentiment before mentioned, and in my views of the person of Christ, was verging toward Arianism; yet in my other opinions I was more confirmed than ever. What those opinions were, I have already in brief declared; and they will occur again, and be more fully explained, as I proceed to relate the manner in which I was constrained to renounce them, one after another, and to accede to those that were directly contrary thereto. Let it suffice to say, that I was brim full of proud self sufficiency, very positive, and very obstinate: and being situated in the neighbourhood of some of those whom the world calls Methodists,* I

* Methodists, as a stigma of reproach, was first applied to Mr. Wesley, Mr. Whitfield, and their followers; to those who, though professing an attachment to our established

joined in the prevailing sentiment, held them in sovereign contempt, spoke of them in derision, declaimed against them from the pulpit, as persons full of bigotry, enthusiasm and spiritual pride; laid heavy things to their charge, and endeavoured to prove the doctrines which I supposed them to hold, (for I had never read their books,) to be dishonourable to God, and destructive to morality. And though in some companies I chose to conceal some part of my sentiments, and in all affected to speak as a friend to universal toleration; yet scarce any person could be more proudly and violently prejudiced against both their persons and principles.

church, and disclaiming the name of Dissenters, were not conformists in point of parochial order, but had separate seasons, places, and assemblies for worship. The term has since been extended by many to all persons, whether clergy or laity, who preach or profess the doctrines of the reformation, as expressed in the articles and liturgy of our church. For this fault they must all submit to bear the reproachful name alike, especially the ministers; nor will the most regular and peaceable compliance with the injunctions of the rubric, exempt them from it, if they avow the authorized, but now exploded doctrines to which they have subscribed. My acquaintance hitherto has been only with Methodists of this latter description: and I have them only in view, whenever I use the term.

PART II.

Containing a history of this change : the manner in which, and the means by which it was at length effected.

IN January, 1774, two of my parishioners, a man and his wife, lay at the point of death. I had heard of it, but according to my general custom, not being sent for, I took no notice of it: but one evening, the woman being already dead, and the man dying, I heard that my neighbour, Mr. —, had been several times to visit them. Immediately my conscience reproached me with being shamefully negligent, in sitting at home within a few doors of dying persons, my general hearers, and never going to visit them. Directly it occurred to me, that whatever contempt I might have for Mr. —'s doctrines, I must acknowledge his practice to be more consistent with the ministerial character than mine. He must have more zeal and love for souls than I had, or he would not have walked so far to visit and supply my lack of care to those who, as far as I was concerned, might have been left to perish in their sins.

This reflection affected me so much, that earnestly, yea, with tears and without delay,

I besought the Lord to forgive my past neglect; and resolved thenceforth to be more attentive to this duty: which resolution, though at first formed in ignorant dependence on my own strength, I have by divine grace been enabled hitherto to keep. Immediately I went to visit the survivor; and the affecting sight of one person already dead, and another expiring in the same chamber, served more deeply to impress my serious convictions; and from that time I have constantly visited the sick of my parishes, as far as I had opportunity; and have endeavoured, to the best of my knowledge, to perform that essential part of a parish minister's duty.

Some time after this, a friend recommended to my perusal the conclusion of Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Times, especially that part which respects the clergy. It had the intended effect: I was considerably instructed and impressed thereby; I was convinced, that my entrance into the ministry had been the result of very wrong motives, was preceded with a very unsuitable preparation, and accompanied with a very improper conduct; some uneasiness was also excited in my mind, concerning my neglect of the important duties of that high calling.— And though I was too much the slave of sin, devoted to other studies, and in love with this present world, to relinquish my flattering pursuit of reputation and preferment, and

change the course of my life, studies, and employments: yet I experienced, by intervals, desires, and purposes, at some future period of devoting myself wholly to the work of the ministry, in the manner to which he exhorts the clergy.

All these things increased the clamorous remonstrances of my conscience; and at this time I lived without any secret religion, because, without some reformation in my conduct as a man and a minister, I did not dare to pray. My convictions would no longer be silenced or appeased; and they became so intolerably troublesome, that I resolved to make one more effort toward amendment. In good earnest, and not totally without seeking the assistance of the Lord by prayer, I attempted to break the chains wherewith Satan had hitherto held my soul in bondage. It pleased the Lord, that I at this time should obtain some advantages; part of my grosser defilements I was enabled to relinquish, and to enter upon a form of devotion. Formal enough indeed it was; for I neither knew that Mediator, through whom, nor that Spirit, by whom, prayers are offered with acceptance to God; and yet, though utterly in the dark as to the true and living way to the throne of grace, I am persuaded, there were even then seasons, when I was enabled to rise above a mere form, and to offer petitions so far *spiritual*, as to be accepted and answered.

I was now somewhat reformed in my outward conduct ; but the renewing in the spirit of my mind, if begun, was scarce discernible. As my life was, in my own judgment, less wicked, my heart grew more proud ;—the idol self was the object of my adoration and obeisance ; my worldly advancement was more eagerly sought than ever ; some flattering prospects seemed to open, and I resolved to improve my advantage to the uttermost. At the same time every thing tended to increase my good opinion of myself ; I was treated with kindness and friendship, by persons, from whom I had no reason to expect it ; my preaching was well received ; my acquaintance seemed to be courted ; my foolish heart verily believed, that all this, and much more, was due to my superior worth ; whilst conscience, which before, by its mortifying accusations was useful to preserve some sense of unworthiness in my mind, was now silenced, or seemed to authorize that pride, which before it checked. And because I had the disadvantage of conversing in general with such persons, as either favoured my sentiments ; or out of good manners, or because they saw it would be in vain, would not contradict me ; I concluded that my scheme of doctrine was the exact standard of truth, and that by my superior abilities I was capable of confuting or convincing all, who were otherwise minded. In this view of the matter, I felt an eager desire

of entering into a religious controversy, especially with a Calvinist.

It was at this time that my correspondence with Mr. ——* commenced. At the visitation, May, 1775, we exchanged a few words in an argumentative way, in the room among the clergy, which I believe drew many eyes upon us. At that time he prudently declined the discourse, but a day or two after sent me a short note, and a little book for my perusal. This was the very thing I wanted, and I gladly embraced the opportunity, which, according to my wishes, seemed now to offer. This I did, God knoweth, with no inconsiderable expectations, that my arguments would prove irresistibly convincing, and that I should have the honour of rescuing a well-meaning person from his enthusiastical delusions.

Indeed at this time I had conceived a very favourable opinion of, and sort of respect for him; because I was acquainted with the character he sustained even among some persons, who expressed a disapprobation of his doctrines; they were forward to commend him as a benevolent, disinterested and inoffensive person, and a laborious minister. On the other hand, I looked upon his religious sentiments as rank fanaticism, and entertained a very contemptuous opinion of his abilities, natural and acquired. Once I had the curiosity to hear him preach, and not understand-

* Rev. John Newton.

ing his sermon, I made a very great jest of it, where I could do it without giving offence. I had also read one of his publications; but for the same reason, I thought the greater part of it to be whimsical, paradoxical and unintelligible.

Concealing, therefore, the true motives of my conduct under the offer of friendship, and a professed desire to know the truth, (which, amidst all my self-sufficiency and prejudice, I trust the Lord had even then given me,) with the greatest affectation of candour, and a mind open to conviction, I wrote him a long letter ; purposing to draw from him such an avowal, and explanation of his sentiments, as would introduce a controversial discussion of our religious differences.

The event by no means answered my expectation; he returned me a very friendly and long answer to my letter; in which he carefully avoided the mention of those doctrines, which he knew would offend me: he declared, that he believed me to be one that feared God, and that was under the teaching of his Holy Spirit ; that he gladly accepted my offers of friendship, and was nowise inclined to dictate to me; but leaving me to the guidance of the Lord, would be glad, as occasion served, from time to time, to bear testimony to the truths of the Gospel, and to communicate his sentiments unto me, on any subject, with all the confidence of friendship.

In this manner our correspondence began, and was continued in the interchange of nine

or ten letters, until December the same year. Throughout I held my purpose, and he his. I made use of every endeavour to draw him into controversy, and filled my letters with definitions, inquiries, arguments, objections, and consequences, and required explicit answers; he, on the other hand, shunned every thing controversial, as much as possible, and filled his letters with the most useful, and least offensive instructions; except that now and then he dropped hints concerning the necessity, and the true nature and efficacy of faith, and the manner in which it was to be sought and obtained; and concerning some other matters, suited, as he judged, to help me forward in my inquiry after truth. But they much offended my prejudices, afforded me matter of disputation, and at that time were of little use to me.

This, however, is certain, that through the whole of the correspondence, I disputed with every argument I could devise against almost every thing he advanced; was very much nettled at many things he asserted: I read great part of his letters, and some books he sent me, with much indifference and contempt; construed his declining controversy into an acknowledgment of weakness; and triumphed in many companies as having confuted his arguments. And at the last, when I could not obtain my end, at my instance the correspondence was dropped.

His letters and my answers are now by me;

and on a careful perusal of them, compared with all that I can recollect concerning this matter, I give this as a faithful account of this correspondence, though different from what has been represented. His letters will, I hope, shortly be made public, being such as promise greater usefulness to others, than, through my proud, contentious spirit, I experienced from them. Mine deserve only to be forgotten, except, as they are useful to me to remind me what I was, and to mortify my pride; as they illustrate my friend's patience and candour, in so long bearing with my ignorance and arrogance; and notwithstanding my unteachable, quarrelsome temper, continuing his benevolent labours for my good; and especially as they remind me of the goodness of God, who, though he abominates and resists the proud, yet knows how to bring down the stout heart, not only by the iron rod of his wrath, but by the golden sceptre of his grace.

In this manner our correspondence and acquaintance, for the present, were almost wholly broken off; for a long time we seldom met, and then only interchanged a few words on general topics of conversation. Yet all along he perseveringly told me, to my no small offence, that I should accede one day to his religious principles; that he had stood on my ground, and that I should stand on his; and he constantly informed his friends, that, though slowly, I was surely feeling my way

to the knowledge of the truth. So clearly could he discern the dawnings of grace in my soul, amidst all the darkness of depraved nature, and obstinate rebellion to the will of God.

This expectation was principally grounded on my conduct in the following circumstances: Immediately after the commencement of our correspondence, namely, in May, 1775, whilst my thoughts were much engrossed by some hopes of preferment; one Sunday, during the time of divine service, when the psalm was named, I opened the prayer book to turn to it; but, (accidentally shall I say, or providentially?) I opened upon the articles of religion: and the eighth, respecting the authority and warrant of the Athanasian creed, immediately engaged my attention. My disbelief of the doctrine of a trinity, co-equal persons in the unity of the Godhead, and my pretensions to candour, both combined to excite my hatred to this creed; for which reasons, I had been accustomed to speak of it with contempt, and to neglect reading it officially. No sooner, therefore, did I read the words, "That it was to be thoroughly received and believed; for that it might be proved by most certain warrants of holy scripture;" than my mind was greatly impressed and affected.—The matter of subscription immediately occurred, and from that moment I conceived such scruples about it, that until my view of

the whole system of gospel doctrine was entirely changed, they remained insuperable.

'Tis wisely said by the son of Sirach, "My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation." I had twice before subscribed these articles, with the same religious sentiments I now entertained. But conscience being asleep, and the service of the Lord no part of my concern, I considered subscription as a matter of course, a necessary form, and very little troubled myself about it. But now, though full of pride, of ambition, and of the love of the world, my heart was sincerely toward the Lord, and I dared not to venture on a known sin deliberately, for the sake of temporal interest. Subscription to articles which I did not believe, paid as a price for church preferment, I looked upon as an impious lie, a heinous guilt, that could never truly be repented of without throwing back the wages of iniquity. The more I pondered it, the more strenuously my conscience protested against it. At length, after a violent conflict betwixt interest and conscience, I made known my scruples, and my determination not to subscribe: thus my views of preferment were deliberately given up, and with an increasing family I was left, as far as mere human prudence could discern, with little other prospect than that of poverty and distress. My scruple was, as I now see, a mis-

taken one; much self-sufficiency, undue warmth of temper, and obstinacy, were betrayed in the management of this affair, for which I ought to be humbled. But my adherence to the dictates of my conscience, and holding fast my integrity in such trying circumstances, I never did, nor I trust ever shall, repent of.

No sooner was my determination known, than I was much blamed by many of my friends. They all, I am sensible, did it out of kindness to me, but they used arguments of different kinds. And though I was confirmed in my resolution by the reasonings used to induce me to alter it; yet were they at length made instrumental in bringing me to this important determination: "not to believe what any man said, as to take it upon his authority, but to search the word of God with this single intention, to discover whether the articles of the church of England in general, and this creed in particular, were, or were not agreeable thereto." I had studied the Scriptures in some measure before, for the sake of becoming acquainted with the original languages, and in order to fetch thence detached texts to support my own system; and I had a tolerable acquaintance with the historical and preceptive parts of them: but I had not searched this precious repository of divine knowledge, with the express design of discovering the truth in controverted matters of doctrine. I had very rarely been troubled with suspi-

cions that I was or might be mistaken; and now rather thought of becoming better qualified upon scriptural grounds to defend my determination, than of being led to any change of sentiments.

However, I set about the inquiry; and the first passage, as I remember, which made me suspect that I might be wrong, was James i. 5. "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." On considering these words with some attention, I became conscious, that though I had thought myself wise, yet certainly I had obtained none of my wisdom in this manner; for I had never offered one prayer to that effect in my life: and I also perceived this text contained a suitable direction, and an encouraging promise in my present inquiry: and from this time, in my poor manner, I began to ask God to give me this promised wisdom.

Shortly after I meditated upon, and preached from John vii. 16, 17. "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me; if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." I was surprised that I had not before attended to such remarkable words. I discovered that they contained a direction and a promise calculated to serve as a clue in extricating the sincere inquirer after truth from that labyrinth of controversy

wherein, at his first setting out, he is likely to be bewildered. And though my mind was too much leavened with the pride of reasoning, as yet, to reap that benefit from this precious text, which it is capable of affording to the soul that is humbly willing to be taught of God; yet, being conscious that I was willing to risk every thing in doing what I thought his will; I was encouraged with the assurance, that if I were under a mistake, I should some time discover it.

I was further led to suspect that I might possibly be wrong, because I had not hitherto sought the truth in the proper manner, by attending to Proverbs iii. 5, 6. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding: in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Evidently I had not hitherto trusted in the Lord with all my heart, nor acknowledged him in all my ways, nor depended on his directions in all my paths; but in my religious speculations, had leaned wholly to my own understanding.

But though these passages, and some others, made for the present a great impression upon me, and influenced me to make it a part of my daily prayers, that I might be directed to a right understanding of the word of God; yet my pride and addictedness to controversy had, as some desperate disease, infected my whole soul, and I was not to be cured all at once. I was far from being like

a little child, sitting humbly and simply at the Lord's feet, to learn from him the very first rudiments of divine knowledge. I had yet no abiding suspicion, that all which I had heretofore accounted wisdom was foolishness, and must be unlearned, and counted loss, before I could attain to the excellency of the true knowledge of Jesus Christ: for though I began to allow it probable, that in some few matters I might have been in an error, yet in the main I still was confident my scheme of doctrine was true. When I was pressed with objections and arguments against any of my sentiments, and when doubts began to arise in my mind, to put off the uneasiness thereby occasioned, my constant practice was to recollect, as far as I could, all the reasonings and interpretations of Scripture, on the other side of the question; and when this failed of affording satisfaction, I had recourse to controversial writings.— This drew me aside from the pure word of God, occasioned my being more remiss and formal in prayer, and furnished me with defensive armour against my convictions, with fuel for my passions, and food for my pride and self sufficiency.

At this time, "Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity," together with his "vindications of it," became my favourite piece of divinity. I studied this, and many other of Mr. Locke's works, with great attention, and a sort of bigoted fondness; taking him almost

implicitly for my master, adopting almost all his conclusions, borrowing many of his arguments, and being scarcely able to endure such as would not agree with me in my partiality for him. This was of great disservice to me,* as, instead of getting forward in my inquiry after truth, I was thereby furnished with more ingenious and specious arguments wherewith to defend my mistakes.

But I read one book at this time, because mentioned with approbation by Mr. Locke, that was of singular use, namely, "Bishop Burnet's Pastoral Care." Therein I found but little that offended my prejudices, and many things, which came home to my conscience, respecting my ministerial obligations. A few short extracts I shall lay before the reader, that were most affecting to my own mind. Page 111, having mentioned the question proposed to those who are about to be ordained deacons: "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office, to serve God, for

* After having spoken so freely of Mr. Locke's divinity, which I once so highly esteemed, it seems a piece of justice to acknowledge the very great obligations, which the whole religious world is under to this great man, for his *Treatise on Toleration*, and his answers to those who wrote against it. The grounds of religious liberty, and the reasons why every one should be left to his own choice, to worship God according to his conscience, were perhaps never generally understood since the foundation of the world, until by these publications, Mr. Locke unanswerably made them manifest.

promoting his glory, and the edifying of his people?" He adds, "Certainly the answer that is made to this, ought to be well considered; for if any one says, 'I trust so,' that yet knows nothing of any such motion, and can give no account of it, he lies to the Holy Ghost, and makes his first approach to the altar with a lie in his mouth, and that not to men, but to God." And again, p. 112, "Shall not he (God) reckon with those, who dare to run without his mission, pretending that they trust they have it, when perhaps they understand not the importance of it; nay, and perhaps some laugh at it, as an enthusiastical question, who yet will go through with the office! They come to Christ for the loaves; they hope to live by the altar and the gospel, how little soever they serve at the one, or preach at the other; therefore they will say any thing that is necessary for qualifying them to this, whether true or false."

Again, page 122, having interwoven a great part of the excellent office of the ordination of priests, into his argument concerning the importance of the work and weight of the ministry; he adds, "Upon the whole matter, either this is all a piece of gross and impudent pageantry, dressed up in grave and lofty expressions, to strike upon the weaker part of mankind, and to furnish the rest with matter to their profane and impious scorn; or it must be confessed that priests come un-

der the most formal and express engagements to constant and diligent labour, that can be possibly contrived, or set forth in words." He concludes this subject of the ordination offices, with exhorting all candidates for orders, to read them frequently and attentively, during their season of preparation; that they may be aware beforehand of the obligations they are about so solemnly to enter into; and to peruse them at least four times in a year, ever after their ordination, to keep in their minds a continual remembrance of their important engagements. How necessary this counsel is, every minister, or candidate for the ministry, must determine for himself: for my part, I had never read the office over once, when I was ordained, and was in great measure a stranger to the obligations I was about to enter into, until the very season; nor did I ever afterward attend thereto, till this advice put me upon it. The shameful negligence, and extreme absurdity of my conduct in this respect, are too glaring not to be understood, and applied by every one who hath been guilty of a similar omission. I would therefore only just mention, that hearty, earnest prayer to God, for his guidance, help, and blessing, may be suitably recommended as a proper attendant on such perusal of our obligations.

Again, p. 147, he thus speaks of a wicked clergyman: "His whole life has been a course of hypocrisy in the strictest sense of the word,

which is the acting of a part, and the counterfeiting another person. His sins have in them all possible aggravations; they are against knowledge and against vows, and contrary to his character: they carry in them a deliberate contempt of all the truths and obligations of religion; and if he perishes, he doth not perish alone, but carries a shoal down with him, either of those who have perished in ignorance through his neglect, or of those who have been hardened in their sins through his ill example." Again, p. 138, having copiously discoursed of the studies befitting ministers, especially the study of the Scriptures, he adds, "But to give all these their full effect, a priest that is much in his study, ought to employ a great part of his time in secret and fervent prayer, for the direction and blessing of God in his labours, for the constant assistance of his Holy Spirit, and for a lively sense of divine matters; that so he may feel the impressions of them grow deep and strong upon his thoughts; this, and this only, will make him go on with his work without wearying, and be always rejoicing in it."

But the chief benefit that accrued to me from the perusal of this book was this: I was excited by it to an attentive consideration of those Scriptures which speak of the obligations and duties of a minister, and which hitherto I had not observed, or very loosely attended to. In particular, it is yet

fresh in my memory, that I was much affected with considering the charge of precious souls committed to me, and the awful account one day to be rendered of them; as this subject occurred to me in meditating on Ezekiel xxxiii. 7, 9. "So thou, O son of man! I have set thee as a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.—When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way, to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul." I was fully convinced with Bishop Burnet, that every minister is as much concerned in this solemn warning, as the prophet himself. Acts xx. 17—35, was another portion of Scripture, which, by means of this book was brought home to my conscience; especially ver. 26, 27, 28, which serve as an illustration of the foregoing Scripture: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God,

which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

In short, at his instance I was put upon the attentive and repeated perusal of the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, as containing the sum of a minister's duty in all ages. I searched out, and carefully considered every text I could find in the whole Scripture, which referred to this argument. I was greatly impressed by 1 Cor. ix. 16. “For necessity is laid upon me: yea, wo is me, if I preach not the Gospel.” Nor was I less struck with Colossians, iv. 17. “Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfil it.” This was brought to my conscience with power, as if the Apostle had in person spoken these words to me. But especially I was both instructed and encouraged by meditating upon 1 Peter v. 2—4. “Feed the flock of God that is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind, neither as being lords over God's heritage, but as examples to the flock: and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away.”

I hope the reader will excuse my prolixity in speaking on this subject; because in itself it is very important; and though I got no new views of gospel truth from this book,

yet I received such a deep conviction of the difficulty and importance of that work, in which I had thoughtlessly engaged, and of the imminent danger my soul was exposed to, if I neglected to devote myself wholly thereto; that therein was laid the foundation of all my subsequent conduct, and change of sentiment. Indeed, I was guilty of very criminal procrastination, after I had been thus convinced; and being engaged more than I ought in other matters, I postponed and neglected, for a time, complying with the dictates of my conscience. But I never lost sight of the instruction I had received, nor ever had any comfortable reflection, until having broken off all other engagements, I had given myself up to those studies and duties which pertain unto the work of the ministry. And I have cause to bless God, that this book ever came in my way.

Still, however, my self-confidence was very little abated, and my advance in the knowledge of the truth very small. I next read Tillotson's sermons, and Jortin's works; and my time being otherwise engaged, I gave in to the indolent custom of transcribing their discourses with some alterations, to preach to my people. This precluded free meditation on the word of God, and led me for a time to take up my opinions upon trust. My preaching was in general that smooth palatable mixture of law and gospel, which corrupts both; which, flattering the pride and

prejudice, and soothing the conscience, pleases the careless sinner, and self-righteous formalist; but does real good to none.

About this time I foolishly engaged in a course of diversion and visiting, more than I had done since my ordination: this unfitted me for secret prayer and close meditation, and rendered the Scriptures, and other religious studies, insipid and irksome to me, (a never-failing consequence of this vain compliance with the world.) For a time, therefore, my ardour was damped, my anxiety banished, and my inquiries retarded. However, I was not permitted entirely to drop my religious pursuits; generally I made it a rule to read something in the Scriptures every day, and had a task of daily devotion; but I was very formal and lifeless in both of them.

Yet not long after I was engaged in earnest meditation on our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, (John iii.) I felt an anxious desire to understand this interesting portion of Scripture; especially to know what it was to be born again, or from above, and of the Spirit; which in five verses our Saviour hath three times declared absolutely necessary to salvation. It was absurd to suppose that such strong expressions implied no more than baptism with water. Tillotson's controversial sermons on this subject, afforded me no satisfaction. Some great and total change I supposed to be intended, not only in the behaviour but also in the heart. But

having not yet clearly experienced that change, I could not understand wherein it consisted. However, having offered some poor prayers for divine teaching, I undertook to preach upon it; but I talked very darkly, employed a considerable part of my time in declaiming against visionaries and enthusiasts, and reaped very little benefit from it. Yet I was so well satisfied with my performance, that in the course of my correspondence with Mr. —, I sent him these sermons for his perusal; who, in return, sent me some of his own upon the same subject. But though sincerely desirous to understand our Lord's meaning in this important matter, I was too proud to be taught by *him*: I cast my eye, therefore, carelessly, over some of them, and returned the manuscript without attending to any thing contained in it.

Nothing material occurred after this, until the next spring, 1776; when I was induced by what I had learned from Bishop Burnet, to establish a lecture once a week in one of my parishes, for expounding the Scriptures. This brought many passages, which I had not observed, under attentive consideration, and afforded my reflecting mind abundance of employment, in attempting to reconcile them with each other, and with my scheme of doctrine.

Little progress, however, had been made when, in May, 1776, I heard a dignified

clergyman, in a visitation sermon, recommend Mr. Soame Jenyns's "Treatise on the internal evidences of Christianity." In consequence of this recommendation, I perused it, and not unprofitably. The truth and importance of the gospel revelation appeared with convincing evidence to my understanding, and came with efficacy to my heart, by reading this book: thence I received more distinct and heart-affecting views of the design of God in this revelation of himself; and I was led to much serious reflection, and earnest prayer, to be led to, or established in the truth, concerning the nature and reality of the atonement by the death of Christ, for hitherto I was a Socinian, or very little better in this respect.

But to counterbalance this advantage, Dr. Clarke's Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, and the controversy which ensued upon its publication, became a favourite part of my study. The Arian scheme seems so inconsistent with reason, that when reflecting men, in order to avoid those mysterious, and, as they imagine, unreasonable conclusions, which, according to the true meaning of words, the Scriptures contain, have been induced to become Arians; it is wonderful they do not, for the same cause, embrace the Socinian system. This is the natural progress of unhumbléd reason; from Arianism to Socinianism; from Socinianism to Deism; and then to Atheism. Many and aw-

ful have been the examples of reasoning and learned men, who, under the name of philosophers, arrogating to themselves the prerogative of superior discernment, have manifested the propriety with which they claimed this pre-eminence, by treading this downhill road, almost, if not quite, to the very bottom.

But when a man has fallen so low as Socinianism, not merely for want of information, or by blindly and implicitly adopting the sentiments of other men, but by leaning on his own understanding, and preferring the conclusions of his own reason, to the infallible dictates of the Holy Ghost; it is not common for him to return gradually by the retrograde path, first to Arianism, and then to the received doctrine of the Trinity. Yet this was my case. Dr. Clarke appeared to me so undeniably to establish his argument, by express Scripture evidences, and so plausibly defended his system on both hands, and backed his cause with so many seeming authorities, that on one side I found myself unable any longer to maintain my Socinian principles, but was constrained to relinquish them as untenable; and on the other, I was not aware of the flaw in his reasoning, and the unavoidable consequence of his middle doctrine; namely, that the Son, and Holy Ghost, however exalted, or dignified with names and titles, must either be *mere creatures*, or that otherwise there must be three Gods. Not perceiving this, and my newly

acquired reverence for Scripture, and my old self-confidence and fondness for reasoning, being, by this conciliating scheme, both humoured, I cordially acceded to his sentiments, and for a long time could not endure any other doctrine.

Nothing further, of any consequence, occurred till about December, 1776, when Mr. Law's "Serious Call," a book I had hitherto treated with contempt, was carelessly taken up by me. But I had no sooner opened it, than I was struck with the originality of the work, and the spirit and force of argument wherewith it is written. This I speak merely as to his management of the subject he treats of; for there are many things in it, that I am far from approving; and to be sure it contains as little gospel, as any book of religion I am acquainted with. But though a very uncomfortable book for a person who is duly brought under a serious concern for his soul; yet it is very useful to prepare the way, to show the need which we have of a Saviour, and to enforce the practice of that holy diligence in the use of means, which the important interests of eternity reasonably demand. This was its use to me. By the perusal of it, I was convinced that I was guilty of great remissness and negligence; that the duties of secret devotion called for far more of my time and attention than had been hitherto allotted to them; that if I hope to save my own soul, and the souls of those that heard me, I must

in this respect greatly alter my conduct, and increase my diligence in seeking and serving the Lord. From that time I began to study in what manner my devotions might be rendered more fervent and pertinent; I transcribed and laid up in my memory, Scripture petitions; I employed sometime in reading manuals of devotion, made attempts to compose prayers myself, and became more frequent and earnest, and I trust more spiritual than heretofore, in my secret addresses to the Majesty of Heaven.

About this time, after many delays, I complied with the admonitions of my conscience, and disengaged myself from all my other employments, with a solemn resolution of leaving all my temporal concerns in the hands of the Lord, and of entirely devoting myself to the work of the ministry. Being thus become master of all my time, I dropped every other study, and turned the whole current of my reflections, inquiries, and reading into another channel, and thenceforth scarce opened a book, which treated of any thing beside religion.

The first step I took after this disengagement, was to keep common-place books; one I had for noting down remarkable passages out of other authors; and another for collecting into one view every text I could meet with in Scripture, respecting the most important and controverted doctrines of the gospel.—Though I held to this but a little time, (for

when my engagements multiplied, I dropped it,) yet I found it very useful, in bringing me acquainted with many passages of the word of God, to which I had not hitherto much attended; and it prepared the way for penning my sermons on doctrinal subjects, with the scripture testimonies concerning the point in hand, in one view before me.

In January, 1777, I met with a very high commendation of Mr. Hooker's works, with the honourable distinction of *judicious* bestowed upon him. This excited my curiosity to read his book, which accordingly I did, with great profit. In his discourse upon justification, page 496, folio edition, printed 1682, I met with the following remarkable passage, which, as well for its excellency, as for the effect thereof upon my religious views, I shall, though somewhat long, transcribe. "If our hands did never offer violence to our brethren, a bloody thought doth prove us murderers before him. If we had never opened our mouth to utter any scandalous, offensive, or hurtful word, the cry of our secret cogitations is heard in the ears of God. If we did not commit the sins, which daily and hourly, in deed, word, or thoughts, we do commit; yet in the good things which we do, how many defects are there intermingled! God, in that which is done, respecteth the mind and intention of the doer; cut off then all those things, wherein we have regarded our own glory, those things

which men do to please men, and to satisfy our own liking, those things which we do for any by respect, not sincerely, and purely for the love of God; and a small score will serve for the number of our righteous deeds. Let the holiest and best things which we do, be considered: we are never better affected unto God, than when we pray; yet when we pray, how are our affections many times distracted! how little reverence do we show unto the grand Majesty of heaven, unto whom we speak! how little remorse of our own miseries! how little taste of the sweet influence of his tender mercies do we feel! Are we not as unwilling many times to begin, and as glad to make an end, as if in saying, 'Call upon me,' he had set us a very burdensome task? It may seem somewhat extreme, which I will speak; therefore let every one judge of it, even as his own heart shall tell him, and no otherwise. I will but only make a demand! if God should yield unto us, not as unto Abraham; if fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, yea, or if ten good persons could be found in a city, for their sakes, the city should not be destroyed: but, and if he should make us an offer thus large: Search all the generations of men since the fall of our father Adam; find one man, that hath done one action, which hath passed from him pure without any stain or blemish at all; and for that one man's only action, neither men nor angels shall feel the torments

which are prepared for both. Do you think that this ransom to deliver men and angels could be found among the sons of men? The best things which we do have somewhat in them to be pardoned; how then can we do any thing meritorious, or worthy to be rewarded? Indeed, God liberally promiseth whatsoever appertaineth to a blessed life to as many as sincerely keep his law, though they be not exactly able to do it. Wherefore we acknowledge a dutiful necessity of doing well, but the meritorious dignity of doing well we utterly renounce. We see how far we are from the perfect righteousness of the law; the little fruit, which we have in holiness, it is, God knoweth, corrupt and unsound; we put no confidence at all in it; we challenge nothing in the world for it; we dare not call God to reckoning, as if we had him in our debt books. Our continual suit to him is, and must be, to bear with our infirmities, and pardon our offences."

I had no sooner read this passage, than I acquired such an insight into the strictness and spirituality of the divine law, and the perfection which a just and holy God, according to that law, cannot but require in all the services of his reasonable creatures; that I clearly perceived my very best duties on which my main dependence had hitherto been placed, to be mere specious sins; and my whole life appeared to be one continued series of transgressions. I now understood

the apostle's meaning, when he affirms, "That by the works of the law can no flesh be justified before God." All my difficulties in this matter vanished; all my distinctions and reasonings about the meaning of the words law and justification, and all my borrowed criticisms about them, failed me at once. I could no longer be thus amused; for I was convinced, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that all men were so notoriously transgressors of every law of God, that they none of them could be justified in his sight, according to any law: I was sensible that if God should only call me into judgment before him, according to the strictness of his perfect law, for the best duty I ever performed, I must be condemned as a transgressor; when weighed in these exact balances, it would be found wanting. Thus was I effectually convinced, that if ever I were saved, it must be in some way of unmerited mercy and grace, though I understood not clearly in what way, till long after. Immediately, therefore, I took for my text, Galatians iii. 22. "But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise that is by faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe;" and preached from it according to Hooker's doctrine; expressing, as strongly as I could, the defilements of our best actions, and our need of mercy in every thing we did; in order the more evidently to show that salvation was

of grace, through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast. However, I had not yet attained unto the knowledge of the foulness of that fountain whence all these polluted streams flow forth so plentifully into our lives and conversations.

I was not then able to receive the following nervous passages concerning justification, (p. 495.) "But the righteousness, wherein we must be found, if we will be justified, is not our own; therefore we cannot be justified by any inherent quality; Christ hath merited righteousness for as many as are found in him. In him God findeth us if we be faithful; for by faith we are incorporated into Christ. Then, although in ourselves we be altogether sinful and unrighteous, yet even the man who is impious in himself full of iniquity, full of sin; him being found in Christ through faith, and having his sin remitted through repentance; him God upholdeth with a gracious eye, putteth away his sin by not imputing it; taketh quite away the punishment due thereunto by pardoning it; and accepteth him in Jesus Christ as perfectly righteous, as if he had fulfilled all that was commanded him in the law. Shall I say more perfectly righteous, than if himself had fulfilled the whole law? I must take heed what I say; but the apostle saith, '*God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*' Such are we in

the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God himself. Let it be counted folly, or frenzy, or fury, whatsoever; it is our comfort and our wisdom; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned, and God hath suffered; that God hath made himself the Son of man, and that men are made the righteousness of God."

Equally determinate and expressive is what he says, p. 500, "As for such as hold with the church of Rome, that we cannot be saved by Christ alone without works, they do not only by a circle of consequence, but directly, deny the foundation of faith; they hold it not; no, not so much as by a single thread." If the *judicious* Mr. Hooker's judgment may, in this important concern, be depended on, as I suppose it will not easily be proved erroneous, I fear the foundation of faith is only held by a small part of that church which has honoured her champion with this distinction.

Page 508 and 509, he thus defends his doctrine against the objections of the Papists, (for at that time none but the Papists objected to it,) "It is a childish cavil, wherewith, in the matter of justification, our adversaries do so greatly please themselves, exclaiming that we tread all Christian virtues under our feet, and require nothing of Christians but faith; because we teach that faith alone justifieth. Whereas, by this speech we never meant to exclude either hope or charity from being

always joined as inseparable mates with faith, in the man that is justified; or works from being added as necessary duties required at the hands of every justified man; but to show that faith is the only hand which putteth on Christ unto justification; and Christ the only garment, which being so put on, covereth the shame of our defiled natures—hideth the imperfection of our works—preserveth us blameless in the sight of God: before whom, otherwise, the weakness of our faith were cause sufficient to make us culpable, yea, to shut us from the kingdom of heaven, where nothing that is not absolute can enter.”

Had I at this time met with such passages in the writings of the Dissenters, or any of those modern publications, which, under the brand of methodistical, are condemned without reading, or perused with invincible prejudice, I should not have thought them worth regard, but should have rejected them as wild enthusiasm. But I knew that Hooker was deemed perfectly orthodox, and a standard writer, by the prelates of the church in his own days. I learned from his dispute with Mr. Travers, that he was put upon his defence, for making concessions in this matter to the church of Rome, which the zealous Protestants did not think warrantable; that he was judged by the more rigid, too lax in his doctrines; by none too rigid. I had never heard that it had been insinuated, that he was tinctured with enthusiasm; and the so-

lidity of his judgment, and acuteness of his reasoning faculties, needed no voucher to the attentive reader. His opinion therefore carried great weight with it; made me suspect the truth of my former sentiments, and put me upon serious inquiries, and deep meditation upon this subject, accompanied with earnest prayers for the teaching and direction of the Lord therein. The result was, that after many objections, and doubts, and much examination of the word of God, in a few months I began to accede to Mr. Hooker's sentiments. And at the present my opinion in this respect, as far as I know, coincides with these passages of this eminent author, and is supported and vindicated with the same arguments; he, therefore, who would prove our doctrine of justification by faith alone to be an error, will do well to answer in the first place these quotations from Mr. Hooker.

And, indeed, as far as I can understand him, there is scarce any doctrine, which, with no inconsiderable offence, I now preach, that is not as evidently contained in his writings, as in my sermons. Witness particularly his "Discourse of the certainty, and perpetuity of faith in the elect," in which the doctrine of the final perseverance of true believers, as far as seems worth contending for, is expressly taught and maintained: And he closes it with this noble triumph of full assurance, as resulting from that comfortable

doctrine in the hearts of confirmed and experienced Christians : (page 532.) “I know in whom I have believed ; I am not ignorant whose precious blood has been shed for me ; I have a shepherd full of kindness, full of care, full of power ; unto him I commit myself. His own finger hath engraven this sentence in the tables of my heart : *Satan hath desired to winnow thee as wheat, but I have prayed that thy faith fail not*; therefore the assurance of my hope I will labour to keep as a jewel unto the end, and by labour through the gracious mediation of his prayers, I shall keep it.” With such words in my mouth, and such assurance in my heart, I wish to live, and hope to die.

The insertion of these quotations from this old author, I hope will need no apology; many have not his works, and these extracts are worthy of their perusal; others, from these specimens, may be prevailed on to read, what perhaps hath hitherto been an unnoticed book in their studies. Especially I recommend to those who admire him as the champion of their external order and discipline of the church, and such as willingly allow him the honour of being distinguished by the epithet *judicious*; that they would attentively read, and impartially consider his doctrine. This would put an effectual stop to those declamations, that either ignorantly or maliciously are made against those very doctrines as novel inventions, which have just now

been explained and defended, in Mr. Hooker's own words. For my own part, though I acknowledge that he advances many things I should be unwilling to subscribe to; yet I heartily bless God, that at this time I read him; the first material alteration that took place in my views of the Gospel; being in consequence thereof.

One more quotation I shall produce, and so take my leave of him; (page 552,) addressing himself unto the pastors, who are appointed to feed the chosen in Israel, he says, "If there be any feeling of Christ, any drop of heavenly dew, any spark of God's good Spirit within you, stir it up: be careful to build and edify, first yourselves, and then your flocks, in his most holy faith. I say, first yourselves; for he, which will set the hearts of other men on fire with the love of Christ, must himself burn with love. It is want of faith in ourselves, my brethren, which makes us watchless, (careless,) in building others. We forsake the Lord's inheritance, and feel it not. What is the reason of this? Our own desires are settled where they should not be. We ourselves are like those women, which have a longing to eat coals, and lime, and filth; we are fed, some with honour, some with ease, some with wealth. The Gospel waxeth loathsome and unpleasant in our taste. How should we then have a care to feed others with that we cannot fancy ourselves? If faith wax

cold and slender in the heart of the prophet, it will soon perish from the ears of the people." 'Tis not needful to add any reflections upon this passage; every one will readily make them for himself; we are, however, reminded thereby of Solomon's words, (Eccl. i. 9, 10.) "There is no new thing under the sun; is there any thing whereof it may be said, see this is new? It hath been already of old time which was before us." (Eccl. iii. 15.) "That which hath been, is now, and that which is to be, hath already been."

To my shame be it spoken, though I had twice subscribed the articles which allow the book of Homilies to be sound and wholesome doctrine, I had never yet seen them, and understood not what that doctrine was. But now, being engaged in a serious inquiry after truth, and Hooker's works having given me a most favourable opinion of these old authors, I was inclined to examine them; and read part of the book with some degree of attention. And though many things seemed hard sayings, that I could not receive; yet many others were made very useful to me, especially concerning justification. In short, I perceived that that doctrine which I had hitherto despised as methodistical, was the standard doctrine of the established church, when that book was composed; and, consequently, that it was so still: for that book has lost none of its authority; though much

of its esteem with those who subscribe the thirty-nine articles. This weakened my prejudice, though it did not prove the doctrine true.

About this time a new and unexpected effect was produced by my preaching. I had hitherto been satisfied to see people regularly frequent the church, listen attentively to what was discoursed, and lead moral, decent lives. The way in which I had been led was so smooth, and the progress I had made so gradual; I had lately so little experienced distressing concern for my own soul, and had so little acquaintance with persons conversant with these matters, that though I declared the strictness, and spirituality, and sanction of the law of God in an alarming manner, yet it never occurred to me but that they who profited thereby, would proceed in the same easy gradual way. But I had scarce begun this new method of preaching, when application was made to me by persons in great distress about their souls; their conscience being awakened to a sense of their lost condition by nature and practice, they were anxious in inquiring, what they must do to be saved? I knew not well what to say to them, my views being very clouded, and my sentiments very perplexed concerning justification: but being willing to give them the best counsel I could, I exhorted them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, though I was neither capable of instructing them concerning the true na-

ture of faith, nor in what manner they were to seek for it. However, I better understood my own meaning, when I advised them to the study of the Scriptures, accompanied with prayer to God, to be led to the right understanding of them; and when I inculcated amendment of life. In this manner the Lord slowly brought them forward: and though, for want of a better instructor, they were a considerable time before they arrived at establishment in the faith, yet some of them, having their minds less leavened with prejudice and the pride of reasoning, were more apt scholars in the school of Christ than I was, and got the start of me in the knowledge both of doctrine and duty; and in their turns became, though without intending it, in some things my monitors, to my no small advantage.

This singular circumstance of being the instrument of a work of grace in others, whilst I myself so little understood the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, very much increased my perplexity. I became doubly earnest to know the truth lest I should mislead those who confided their precious souls to me, as their spiritual instructor. This added to my diligence in reading and meditating on the word of God; and made me more earnest in prayer to be guided to the knowledge of the truth. And under every difficulty I constantly had recourse unto the Lord to preserve me from ignorance and error, and to

enable me to distinguish between the doctrines of his word; and the inventions and traditions of men.

At this time I established a weekly lecture for expounding Scripture in my other parish, which occasioned my further acquaintance with the various parts of the word of God. It was my general practice in penning these lectures, to search out all the Scriptures referred to in the margin, and all others I could recollect upon the subject, and to make use of them in explaining each other. This method enabled me to store my memory with texts of Scripture, and made way for a greater exactness in discussing doctrinal subjects, than I had hitherto been acquainted with.

In the course of this winter, 1777, I was engaged in deep meditation upon Luke xi. 9. 13; concerning the Holy Spirit being given in answer to prayer. And, at length, having made a collection of all the Scriptures I could meet with which respected that important doctrine, and having diligently compared them together, and meditated upon them, and besought the Lord to fulfil the promise to my soul, I wrote two sermons upon the subject; one from Luke xi. 13.—“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” The other from James i. 16, 17.—“Do not err, my beloved brethren, every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from

above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights." By this my views of a Christian's privileges and duties in this respect, were much enlarged, and my requests were made known unto the Lord in a more full, exact, and believing manner, than heretofore.— Though much in the dark in many important matters respecting the person, offices, and work of the Holy Ghost; yet I had discovered more of what was promised concerning him, and therefore knew better what to ask for.

My obligations to Bishop Beveridge are next to be acknowledged. When I first began to peruse his sermons, I conceived a mean opinion of him, and it was sometime before I could prevail with myself to examine any further into his writings; but being now further advanced in my inquiry after truth, those singularities which at first offended me became tolerable, and I began to relish the simplicity, spirituality, and love of Christ, and affection for souls, which eminently shine forth in many places of his works. Indeed I received considerable instruction from him; but especially his sermon on the real satisfaction made by the death of Christ for the sins of believers, was the blessed means of clearing up my views, and confirming my faith respecting that fundamental doctrine of Christianity. On Good Friday, 1777, I preached a sermon upon that subject, from Isaiah liii. 6. "All we like sheep have gone astray;—

we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid, (hath caused to light,) on him the iniquities of us all." Wherein I endeavoured to prove that which hath ever since been the sole foundation of all my hopes; namely, that Christ indeed bore the sins of all who should ever truly believe in all their guilt, condemnation, and deserved punishment in his body on the tree. And I explicitly avowed my belief, that Christ, as our surety and bondsman, stood in our law place, to answer all our obligations, and to satisfy divine justice, and the demands of the law for our offences: and I publicly renounced, as erroneous and grievous perversions of Scripture, all my former explanations and interpretations of these subjects.

This was the first doctrine in which I was clearly and fully brought to acknowledge the truth, though I had with no little earnestness for two years been inquiring about it; to so astonishing a degree was my blinded understanding filled with prejudice against the doctrines of the word of God!—Hitherto they had been foolishness to me, but now, under the divine teaching, I began, though very dimly, to discern the wisdom of God in them.

I say dimly, for I was still under many and great mistakes, and in much ignorance in the most important matters. I knew sin to be a transgression of God's law; but I did not see its odious deformity, in being deliberate rebellion against God's sovereign authority,

and an express contradiction to his holy nature: in charging God foolishly, as either wanting wisdom or goodness in laying such restraints upon the inclinations of his creatures; and as tending to overturn all subordination in the universe, and to introduce anarchy, confusion, and misery, into the whole creation of God. My own best actions I perceived to be defiled; but I understood not that this was the effect of a depraved nature, and a polluted heart. The doctrine of original sin, as the fruitful root of these multiplied evils, was not yet a part of my creed. Inconsistently I was an Arian or a Clarkist in my sentiments concerning the person of Christ, and the divinity of the Holy Ghost. Some faint conception I had formed of that sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the soul; the beginnings of it I little understood. And I continued to entertain an implacable enmity to the doctrine of election, and those connected with it. But my faith was now fixed upon a crucified Saviour; (though I dishonoured his person and denied his deity,) and I had a sincere desire of being devoted to the Lord. He, therefore, in mercy accepted his own work in my heart, and pardoned all that was mine, and at length extricated me out of that labyrinth of difficulties, in which I was entangled.

About this time, in the course of my lectures, our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus came again under my consideration. Not-

withstanding much meditation and many prayers, I could not satisfy my mind about it. I was convinced some internal change must be implied in the expressions, being born from above, and being born of the Spirit; and according to what I had experienced, I endeavoured to explain it; but I was much in the dark, and had many doubts whether I was right or wrong.

Hitherto, excepting "Leland on the Deistical Writers," I had not read any book written by a dissenter, with the least degree of candour and attention; but at this crisis I met with the first volume of Doctor Evan's sermons, entitled, "The Christian Temper." I was induced to read it by the recommendation of a friend; but such was my proud, foolish heart, that I opened it with great prejudice, because I understood the author was a dissenter. However, this book came with a blessing; for by perusing it, I at length perceived, that fallen man, both body and soul, is indeed carnal, and sold under sin; that by nature, in every man living, the reasonable and immortal part is destitute of spirituality, immersed in matter, and by a dishonourable and miserable prostitution, is given up to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lust thereof; and that man must be renewed in the spirit of his mind, new created unto good works, born of the Spirit of God, made partaker of a new and divine nature, before he can possibly be made meet for, or admitted

into the kingdom of God. In a very little time all my difficulties about this matter vanished, and the truth became so exceedingly plain and evident, that until I had made the experiment, I could scarcely be persuaded, but that every person who heard it rightly explained must assent to it. This doctrine I have ever since invariably preached with good effect, I trust, in opening the eyes of sinners, and turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. (Acts xxvi. 28.)

About this time, my acquaintance with Mr. — was resumed. From the conclusion of our correspondence in December, 1775, till April, 1777, it had been almost wholly dropped. To speak plainly, I did not care for his company; I did not mean to make any use of him as an instructor, and was unwilling the world should think us any-wise connected.

But under discouraging circumstances I had occasion to call upon him; and his discourse comforted and edified me, and my heart being, by his means, relieved from its burden, became susceptible of affection to him. From that time I was inwardly pleased to have him for my friend; though not as now, rejoiced to call him so. However, I had no thoughts of learning doctrinal truth from him, and was ashamed to be detected in his company; but I sometimes stole away to spend an hour with him. About the same time I once heard him preach, but it was still

foolishness to me; his sermon being much upon the believer's experience: and, therefore, though I loved and valued him, I considered him as a person misled by enthusiastical notions, and strenuously insisted that we should never think alike, till we met in heaven.

All along, in the progress of this inquiry, I grew more and more concerned about my character; I saw myself continually verging nearer and nearer to that scheme of doctrine which the world called Methodism: nor could I help it, without doing violence to my convictions. I had, indeed, set out with the avowed, and, I trust, sincere resolution of seeking for the truth, as impartially as possible; and of embracing it wherever I found it, without respect to interest, reputation, or any worldly consideration whatsoever: I had taken patiently, and supported comfortably, the loss of my opening prospect of preferment, I trust mainly from the supports of grace, and the consciousness of having acted with integrity; but I am not sure, but there might therewith creep in some consolation to my deceitful heart, from a vain imagination that my character would be no loser. Ambitious thirst after the praise of men was much more my peculiar corruption, than covetousness; and I had been in no ordinary degree proud of my natural understanding; the people called Methodists, I had been accustomed to hear mentioned with con-

tempt, as very silly, as fools, and sometimes as madmen; with no small degree of complacency, and self-preference, I too had despised them, as weak enthusiasts. But I now began to be apprehensive, that the tables were about to be turned upon me; if I professed and taught these doctrines, I must no longer be considered as a man of sober understanding, but one of those persons, whose heads being naturally weak, had been turned by religious studies; and who, having fallen under the power of enthusiasm, are become no better than fools.

This was the sharpest trial I passed through, having not yet learned, that, "when we are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are we." Nor did I remember that the Apostles were fools for Christ's sake; were deemed to be beside themselves; went through evil report, and good report, as deceivers, and yet true; that they were every where spoken against, as the fellows that turned the world upside down; were treated as vain babblers, and accounted the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things. I did not consider that Jesus himself, the brightness of the Father's glory, the Word and Wisdom of God, who went about doing good, and spake as never man spake, was not only rejected, but despised, as not worth hearing, as one that had a devil, as in league with the devil, as a blasphemer, a Samaritan, a madman, a devil himself. I read indeed, but my under-

standing was not yet opened to understand such plain Scriptures as these, (John xv. 19, 20;) "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world; *therefore* the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you: the servant is not greater than the Lord; if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." And Matt. x. 24, 25: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of the household?" And Matt. v. 11, 12: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets, that were before you." Not being aware of these consequences, when my resolution was first formed, I was as one who hath begun to build without counting the cost, and was greatly disturbed, when I saw the favourite idol of my proud heart, my character, in such imminent danger.

It must be supposed this would make me cautious what doctrines I admitted into my creed; and unwilling to be convinced, that those things were true and important, the profession of which was sure to bring infamy on my character; and that even after the

fullest conviction, I should thereby be rendered very careful in what manner I preached them. In general, however, though the conflict was sharp, I was enabled to be faithful. The words, "necessity is laid upon me, yea, wo is me, if I preach not the gospel," were commonly upon my mind when I penned my sermons, and when I entered the pulpit; and though when a bold declaration of what I believed to be the truth, with an offensive application of it to the consciences of my hearers, drew opposition and calumny upon me, I have secretly resolved to be more circumspect the next time; yet, when that time came, my heart and conscience being both engaged, I have not dared to conceal one tittle of what appeared to me to be true, and to promise usefulness. But whilst with perturbation of mind, and with many disquieting apprehensions, I declared the message with which I supposed myself to be intrusted; to screen myself from the charge of Methodism, and to soften the offence, I was frequently throwing out slighting expressions, and bringing the charge of enthusiasm against those who preached such doctrines as I was not yet convinced of. On the other hand, my concern about my character quickened me very much in prayer, and increased my diligence in searching the Scriptures, that I might be sure I was not, at this expense, preaching cunningly devised fables, instead of feeding the souls committed

to my care, with the unadulterated milk of gospel truth.

In this state of my mind, which is easier understood by experience than description, I met with Mr. Venn's Essay on the prophecy of Zacharias. I was no stranger to the character he bore in the eye of the world, and did not begin to read his book with great alacrity, or expectation; however, the importance of the subjects therein treated of engaged my attention, and some degree of impartiality as I proceeded. I disapproved, indeed, and quarrelled with many things; but others evidenced their truth and importance to my understanding and conscience; especially, I found a word in season, respecting my weak and wicked shame and attention to character, in inquiring after divine truth, and in the performance of the important duties of a gospel minister. These solemn words in particular went home to my heart: "If the spirit of the world, pride, carelessness respecting the soul, and the neglect of Christ, be not hateful to God, and destructive to men, the gospel, (with reverence I speak it,) is an imposition. Do you abhor that thought as blasphemy? Abhor as much a fawning upon Christ from year to year in your closet, calling him there your Lord and your God: and then coming out to consult the world, how far they will allow you to obey his plain commands, without saying you are a Methodist? Cease rather

to profess any allegiance to Christ than treat him, under professions of duty, with such contempt. "I would," saith he to the Church of Laodicea, "thou wert cold or hot, so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold or hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." Rev. iii. 15, 16.

I should as easily be convinced that there was no Holy Ghost, as that he was not present with my soul when I read this passage, and the whole of what Mr. Venn has written upon the subject. It came to my heart with such power, conviction, and demonstration of the Spirit, that it lifted me up above the world, and produced that victory which faith alone can give; and that liberty, which uniformly attends the presence of the Spirit of the Lord. I became at once ashamed of my base ingratitude and foolish fears; and was filled with such consolation, and rejoicing even in the prospect of sacrificing my character, and running the risk of infamy and contempt, as made me entirely satisfied on that head; and, some few unbelieving seasons excepted, I have ever since been very little troubled about being accounted an enthusiast, or a Methodist.

But still I remained as much, and am now more afraid of enthusiasm itself, than ever; and the nearer I verged to what I had ignorantly supposed to be enthusiasm, the more apprehensive I became, lest my earnestness in such interesting inquiries, and the warmth

of my natural spirit, thus occasionally increased, should put me off my guard, and betray me into delusions and mistakes.— From this danger I could obtain no security, but by keeping close to the study of the word of God; and by being earnest and particular in praying to be preserved from enthusiasm, and to be enabled to distinguish between the pure revelations of the Holy Spirit, and the inventions of men, or the delusions of the spirit of lies.

The doctrine of a trinity of co-equal persons in the Unity of the Godhead, had been hitherto no part of my creed. I had long been accustomed to despise this great mystery of godliness. I had quarrelled with the articles of the established church about this doctrine: I had been very positive and open in my declarations against it; and my unhumbled reason still retained objections to it. But about June, 1777, I began to be troubled with doubts about it, and to suspect the truth of Dr. Clarke's hypothesis. I had just read Mr. Lindsey's Apology and Sequel. Before I saw them, I had made a jest of those who thought of confuting him on the orthodox scheme, and was not without thoughts of maintaining Dr. Clarke's system against him. But when I understood that he claimed Dr. Clarke as a Socinian, I was surprised, and engaged in much anxious consideration of the subject. The more I studied, the more I was dissatisfied; many

things now first occurred to me, as strong objections against my own sentiments upon that head: and being perplexed, and unable to make out a scheme for myself, I easily perceived that I was not qualified to dispute with another person. My pride and my convictions struggled hard for the victory; I was very unwilling to become a Trinitarian in the strict sense of the word, though in my own sense I had for some time pretended to be one; and yet the more I considered it, the more I was dissatisfied with all other systems. My esteem for Mr. —, was also now very much increased; and though I had hitherto concealed this part of my sentiments from him, yet I knew his to be very different; and though I was not willing to be taught by him in other matters, yet in this respect, finding his opinion the same which in all former ages of the church hath been accounted orthodox, while that which I held had all along been branded as heretical, my fears of a mistake were thereby exceedingly increased. In this perplexity I applied to the Lord and besought him to lead me to a settled conclusion what was the truth. After much meditation upon this subject, together with a careful examination of all the Scriptures which I then understood to relate thereto, accompanied with a hearty prayer for divine teaching, I was at length constrained to renounce, as utterly indefensible, all my former sentiments, and to accede to that doc-

trine which I had so long despised. I saw, and could no longer avoid seeing, that the offices and works attributed in Scripture to the Son and Holy Ghost, are such as none but the infinite God could perform; that it is a contradiction to believe the real, and consequently infinite satisfaction to divine justice made by the death of Christ, without believing him to be very God of very God: nor could the Holy Ghost give spiritual life unto, and dwell in the hearts of unbelievers at the same time to suit his work of convincing, enlightening, teaching, strengthening, sanctifying and comforting to the several cases of every individual, were he not the omniscient, omnipresent, infinite God. And being assured from reason, as well as from Scripture, that there is not, and cannot be more Gods than one, I was driven from my reasonings, and constrained to submit my natural understanding to divine revelation; and allowing that the incomprehensible God alone can fully know the unsearchable mysteries of his own divine nature, and manner of his own existence to adopt the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity, in order to preserve consistency in my own scheme. But it was a considerable time before I was disentangled from my embarrassments on this subject.

Hitherto my prejudices against Mr. Hervey, as a writer upon doctrinal subjects, had been very strong. I thought him a very pious man, and I had read with pleasure some

parts of his meditations; but having considered him an enthusiast, I had no curiosity to read any other of his writings. But about July, 1777, I providentially met with his dialogues and letters between Theron and Aspasio, and opening the book, I was much pleased with the first passage on which I cast my eye. This engaged me to read the whole with uncommon attention: nor did I, in twice perusing it, ever meet with any thing contrary to my own sentiments, without immediately beseeching the Lord to guide me to the truth. I trust the Lord heard and answered these my prayers: for though I could not but dissent from him, (as I still do,) in some few things, yet I was very much enlightened thereby, in every thing relative to our fallen, guilty, lost and helplessly miserable state by nature; and the way and manner in which the believer is accounted and accepted as righteous in the presence of a just, holy, and heart-searching, a faithful, and unchangeable God; especially his animated description and application of the stag-chase, cleared up this important matter to my mind, more than any thing I had hitherto met with upon the subject.

I had now acceded to most of the doctrines which at present I believe and preach; except the doctrine of personal election, and those which depend on, and are connected with it. These were still foolishness to me, and so late as August, 1777, I told my friend

Mr. —, that I was sure I never should be of his sentiments on that head; to which he answered that if I never mentioned this subject, he never should, as we were now agreed in all he judged absolutely needful; but he had not the least doubt of my very shortly becoming a Calvinist, as I should presently discover my system of doctrine to be otherwise incomplete and inconsistent with itself. And, indeed, by this time I had so repeatedly discovered myself to be mistaken where I had been very confident, that I began to suspect myself in every thing wherein I entertained sentiments different from those with whom I conversed. This did not influence me to take their opinions upon trust; but it disposed me more particularly and attentively to consider them; and in every perplexity to have recourse to the Lord, to be preserved from error, and guided to the truth.

About the same time also, I began to have more frequent applications made to me by persons under deep concern for their souls. My heart was much engaged in this new employment; I was much troubled to see their pressing anxieties, and to hear their doubts, difficulties, and objections against themselves. Being sincerely desirous to instruct them right, and to lead them on to establishment and comfort, I felt my deficiency, and seemed to have no ground to go on, nor any counsel to give them, but what

led them into greater perplexity, instead of relieving them. In this case I earnestly besought the Lord to instruct me what word in season to speak unto them.

Thus circumstanced, I read "Witsius' Economy of the Covenants," and observed what use he made of the doctrine of election for this very purpose. This convinced me that the doctrine, if true, would afford that ground of comfort which my people wanted. It would evince that their being awakened out of a careless state, to an earnest concern for, and anxiety about their souls, and to an hearty desire of cleaving unto the Lord; and their want of some security that they should not, through the deceitfulness of their own hearts, their own weakness, the entanglements of the world, and the temptations of Satan, fall back again into their former course of sin, was the work of the Holy Ghost. If this were wrought in consequence of the determinate purpose and foreknowledge of God respecting them, it would follow from the entire and undeserved freeness of this first gift, bestowed on them, when neither desiring nor seeking it, but being in a state of enmity and rebellion against, and neglect of God, and from his unchangeableness in his purposes, and faithfulness to his promises, that he would assuredly carry on, and complete this good work of his grace, and keep the believing soul as in a castle, through faith unto salvation.

Having now considered one use of this doctrine, which before I objected to as useless and pernicious, I began to consider how the other objections which I had been accustomed to urge against it might be answered. 'Tis true that I began to consider this whole matter as a mystery not to be comprehended, nor yet too curiously searched into by man's natural reason, but humbly received by faith, just as far as it is plainly revealed in God's unerring word. Many objections, therefore, I was constrained to leave unanswered, resolving them into the incomprehensible nature of God, whose judgments, and still more his counsels, are, as the great deep, unfathomable; and into the sovereignty of God, who does what he will with his own, and gives no account of any of his matters, let who will presume to find fault: and into his declarations, that his thoughts and ways are as far above our thoughts and ways, as the heavens are above the earth. Here I left this matter, conscious at length, that such knowledge was too high for me, and that if God had said it, it was not my place to cavil against it. I acknowledge this way of answering objections is not very satisfactory to man's proud curiosity, who would be as God, and know all that God knows, and even dares to dispute with him; and there are sometimes when I can hardly acquiesce in such a solution: but surely it is highly becoming the dependent state, and limited understand-

of the creature, to submit the decision of all such high points implicitly to the award of the infinitely wise Creator. And the Christian religion expressly requires it of us, for our Lord declares, that "Except we receive the kingdom of God," (not as a disputing philosopher, but) "as a little child, we shall in no-wise enter therein." The day is coming, when we shall be able to answer all objections. Here we are to walk by faith, and see in part, and as through a glass darkly; hereafter we shall see face to face, and know even as we are known.

Leaving, therefore, all difficulties of a metaphysical nature to be cleared up in that world of light and knowledge, I began to consider the abuses of this doctrine, which I had always looked upon as being a very formidable objection against it. But I soon discovered, that though ungodly men, who make profession of religion, will turn the grace of God into licentiousness; yet that we might so explain and guard these doctrines, that none could thus abuse them, without being conscious that they did so, and detecting their own hypocrisy. It still, indeed, appeared probable to me, that the preaching of them might occasion some trouble of mind at first to a few well disposed persons; but I considered that by a cautious declaration of them, and contrasting them with the general promises of the Gospel to all who believe, this might in a great measure be prevented; and

at the worst, a little personal conversation with such persons, would seldom, if ever, fail to satisfy their minds, and even enable them in general to derive encouragement from them; while the unsettling of the minds of such persons, as are carelessly living in an unconverted state, is the great end of all our preaching to them; and therefore we need not fear any bad effect of this doctrine in that respect. The great question therefore was, "are these doctrines in the Bible, or no?" Hitherto I had wilfully passed over, and neglected, or endeavoured to put some other construction upon all those Scriptures which directly speak of them: but now I began to consider, meditate, and pray over them; and I soon found that I could not support my former interpretation of them. They would teach predestination, election, final perseverance and assurance, in spite of all my twisting and expounding. It also occurred to me that though now in disgrace, they were universally believed and maintained by our venerable reformers; that they were admitted, at the beginning of the Reformation, into the creeds, catechisms, or articles of every one of the Protestant churches; that our articles and homilies expressly maintained them: and consequently, that a vast number of wise and sober-minded men, who, in their days, were burning and shining lights, upon mature deliberation, had agreed, not only that they were true, but that they

ought to be admitted as useful, or even as necessary articles of faith by every one, who deemed himself called to take upon him the office of a Christian minister.

In the course of this inquiry, I perceived that my system of doctrine was incomplete without them. I believed that men, by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, by wicked works the enemies of God, being in themselves ungodly, and without strength, were saved of free mercy and grace, without having done any thing, more or less, to deserve it, through the Redeemer's righteousness and atonement, received by faith, the gift, and operation of God; and accompanied with a new birth of the Spirit, a new creation unto good works, and to the divine image, by the power of the Holy Ghost: and now, therefore, it occurred to me, to inquire from what source these precious blessings, thus freely flowing through the channel of redemption to poor worthless sinners, could originally spring? In this inquiry, my mind being carried back from the consideration of the effects, to the consideration of their causes; and from the promises made to fallen man, to the counsels and purposes of God, which induced him to give those promises; and meditating on the divine perfections, his omniscience, unchangeableness, and eternity, and the end which the all-sufficient God had in view, in all his works, even the manifestation of the glory of his own perfections; I at

length perceived, that this great work of redemption, as planned by God, to whom were known all his works from before the foundation of the world, must be the result of his eternal purpose, of displaying the glory of his mercy and grace in harmonious consistency with his most awful justice, and glorious holiness; and thereby manifesting the inexhaustible resources of his manifold wisdom, in thus reconciling, and at one time, and in one work, unitedly glorifying these his attributes, which, considered as *perfect*, seem, to created understanding irreconcilable to each other. Especially, I was convinced of this, when I discovered, that until the fall of man made way for, and the redemption had manifested the attribute of mercy to sinners, it had, as far as we can learn, been unexercised, and undisplayed, and consequently unknown to any but God himself from all eternity; nor could he have the glory of it, but must have been considered as so perfect in justice and holiness, as to be incapable of exercising mercy, had he not chosen some objects on whom to exercise it, and devised some way wherein to exercise it, in consistency with his other perfections. Thus I perceived redemption to be the effect of a settled design formed in God's eternal councils, of manifesting himself to his reasonable creatures to be complete, and full orb'd in all conceivable perfections; that the merciful and gracious nature of God, the

fountain of goodness, alone moved him to choose any transgressors of his law, as objects of his favourable regard; that his unconstrained will and pleasure are the only assignable causes of his choosing one, rather than another; that the objections are as strong against this being understood of nations, or collective bodies, as of individuals: that the whole work being his own; his wisdom having devised the means, his love and all-sufficiency having, in the person, offices, and work of Christ, made all things ready; his providence directing absolutely to whom the word of invitation should be sent; and his holy Spirit alone inclining, and enabling the soul to embrace it by faith: therefore, that God, who knoweth the end from the beginning, and is a sovereign, and when none have deserved any thing, may do as he will with his own, did actually “choose every individual believer in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we *should* be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” (Eph. i. 4—6.)

In short, though my objections were many, my anxiety great, and my resistance long, yet by the evidence which, both from the word of God, and from my own meditation, crowded upon my mind, I was at length con-

strained to submit, and God knoweth, with fear and trembling, to allow these formerly despised doctrines a place in my creed: and accordingly, about Christmas, 1777, I began cautiously to establish the truth of them, and to make use of them for the consolation of poor, distressed, and fearful believers. This was the only use I then knew of them, though I now see their influence in every part of Gospel truth.

However, I would observe, that though I assuredly believe these doctrines, as far as here expressed; (for I am not willing to trace them any higher by reasonings or consequences into the unrevealed things of God,) and though I exceedingly need them in my view of religion, both for my own consolation and security against the consequences of my own deceitful heart, an ensnaring world, and a subtle tempter; as also for the due exercise of my pastoral office; yet I would not be understood to place the acknowledgment of them upon a level with a belief of the doctrines, that have before been spoken of. I can readily conceive the character of an humble, pious, spiritual Christian, who either is an utter stranger to these Calvinistical doctrines, or through misapprehension, or fear of abuse, cannot receive them. But I own that I find a difficulty in conceiving an humble, pious, spiritual Christian, who is a stranger to his own utterly lost condition, to the deceitfulness and depravity of his heart, to

the *natural* alienation of his affections from God, and to the defilements of his best duties; who trusts either in whole or in part, *allowedly*, to any thing for pardon and justification, but the blood and righteousness of a crucified Saviour, who is God manifested in the flesh; or who expects to be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, in any other way, than by being born again, new created, converted, and sanctified by the divine power of the Holy Ghost.

Sometime in November, 1777, I was by a then unknown friend, furnished with a considerable number of books, written in general by the old divines both of the church of England, and of the Dissenters. And to my no small surprise, I found, that those doctrines, which are now deemed novel inventions, and are called Methodistical, are in these books every where discoursed of as known and allowed truths; and that that system, which, despising to be taught by men, and unacquainted with such authors, I had for near three years together been hammering out of myself with no small labour and anxiety, was to be found ready made to my hands, in every book I opened.

I make no wonder, that the members of the church of England are generally prejudiced against the writing of Dissenters; for I have been so myself to an excess; we imbibe this prejudice with the first rudiments of instruction, and are taught by our whole edu-

cation to consider it as meritorious;—though no doubt it is a prejudice, of which every sincere inquirer after truth ought to be afraid, and every pretended inquirer 'ashamed; for how can we determine on which side truth lies, if we will not examine both sides? And indeed it is well known to all those, who are acquainted with the church histories of those times, that until the reign of James the First there were no controversies between the church established, and the Puritans, concerning doctrine; both parties being in all matters of importance of the same sentiments; they only contended about discipline and ceremonies, until the introduction of Arminianism gave occasion to the Calvinists being denominated Doctrinal Puritans. Unto this period all our church writers were Calvinistical in doctrine, and even after that time, many might be mentioned who were allowed friends of the church of England, who opposed these innovations, and agreed in doctrine with every thing that hath been mentioned. Let it suffice, out of many, to recommend Bishop Hall's works, especially his "Contemplations on the Life of Jesus," a book not easily too highly prized: and Dr. Reynolds' works. To these, no true friend to the church of England can reasonably object. And in general I believe, and teach nothing, but what they plainly taught before me, as I could easily prove, but that I have been too tedious already.

I had now got the outlines of my scheme of doctrine marked out; but I had been so taken up with these doctrinal inquiries, that hitherto I was very much a stranger to the workings of my own heart, and had little experience in my own soul, of the power of these truths. The pride of reasoning, and the conceit of my superior discernment, had all along accompanied me; and though somewhat broken, had yet considerable influence. Hitherto, therefore, I had not thought of hearing any person preach, because I did not know that any person in the circle of my acquaintance, was capable of informing me in any thing deserving attention, of which I was ignorant. But at length perceiving, that in the whole matter Mr. — had been right and that I had been mistaken, it occurred to me, that having preached these doctrines so long, he must understand many things concerning them, to which I was a stranger,—now, therefore, though not without much remaining prejudice, and not less in the character of a judge than of a scholar, I condescended to be his hearer, and occasionally to attend his preaching, and that of some other ministers. I soon perceived the benefit of this; for, from time to time, I found the secrets of my heart discovered to me, far beyond what I had hitherto noticed myself; and seldom returned from hearing a sermon, without having conceived a meaner opinion of myself; without having attained to a further

acquaintance with my deficiencies, my weakness, my corruptions, and wants; and without being supplied with fresh matter for prayer, and directed to greater watchfulness. Moreover I learned the use of experience in preaching, and was convinced that the ready way to come at other people's hearts and consciences, was to speak from my own.—In short, I gradually saw more and more of my need of instruction, and was brought to consider myself as a very novice in religious matters. I began experimentally to perceive our Lord's meaning, when he says, "Except ye receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, ye shall in no wise enter therein."—For though my proud heart is continually rebelling, and would fain build up again the former Babel of self-conceit: yet I trust from this time, in my settled judgment, I have desired, and prayed to be enabled, to consider myself as a little child, who ought simply to sit at the master's feet, to hear his words with profound submission, and wait his teaching with earnest desire and patient attention. And from this time I have been enabled to consider those persons, whose knowledge has been ripened by years, experience, and observation, as fathers and instructors, to take pleasure in their company, value their counsels, and love to attend their preaching.

Thus I trust the old building, that I had

purposed to repair, was pulled down to the ground, and the foundation of the new building of God laid aright; old things were passed away, behold all things were become new. What things were gain to me, those I have counted loss for Christ; my boasted reason I discover to be a blind guide, until humbled, enlightened, and sanctified by the Spirit of God; my former wisdom I now know to have been foolishness, and that when I thought I knew much, I knew nothing as I ought to know. Since this period, every thing I have experienced in my own heart, every thing I have heard and read, every thing I observe around me, confirms and establishes me in the assured belief of those truths, which I have received; nor do I in general any more doubt their being from God, than I doubt whether the sun shines when I see its light, and am warmed with its refreshing beams. I see the powerful effects of them continually among those to whom I preach: experience the power of them daily in my own soul; and while by meditating on, and rejoicing in the cross of Christ, I find the world crucified unto me, and I unto the world; by preaching Jesus Christ, and him crucified, I see notoriously immoral persons influenced to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, being an example to such as before they were a scandal to.

And now by this change, the consequences of which I so much dreaded, what have I lost even in respect of this present world? Indeed, I have lost some degree of favour, and escape not pity, censure, scorn, and opposition; but the Lord is introducing me to a new, and far more desirable acquaintance; even to that of those, whom the Holy Ghost hath denominated the excellent of the earth; nay, the Lord the Spirit condescends to be my comforter. In general I enjoy an established peace of conscience through the blood of sprinkling, and continual application to the heavenly Advocate, with a sweet content, and that peace of God which passeth all understanding, in casting all my cares upon him, who careth for me. And I am not utterly left without experience of that joy, which is unspeakable and full of glory. These the world could not give me, were I in favour with it; of these it cannot deprive me by its frowns. My desire henceforth, God knoweth, is to live to his glory, and by my whole conduct and conversation to adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour, and to show forth his praise, who hath called me out of darkness into his marvellous light; to be in some way or other useful to his believing people; and to invite poor sinners, who are walking in a vain shadow, and disquieting themselves in vain, to taste and see how gracious the Lord is, and how blessed they are who put their trust in him.

Now would I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found;
Would point to his redeeming blood,
And cry, behold the way to God!

Thus hath the Lord led me, a poor, blind sinner, in a way that I knew not; he hath made darkness light before me, crooked things straight, and hard things easy, and hath brought me to a place, of which I little thought when I set out; and having done these things for me, I believe, yea, I am undoubtedly sure, he will never leave me nor forsake me. To him be the glory of his undeserved, long resisted grace; to me be the shame, not only of all my other sins, but also of my proud and perverse opposition to his purposes of love toward me. But all this was permitted, that my high spirit and stout heart being at length humbled and subdued, I might remember, and be confounded, and never open my mouth more, because of my shame, now that the Lord is pacified to me for all that I have done.

And now, as in the presence of the heart-searching God, I have given without one wilful misrepresentation, addition, or material omission, a history of the great things God hath done for my soul; or if that suit not your view of it, a history of that change which hath recently taken place in my religious sentiments and conduct, to the surprise of some, and perhaps displeasure of others of my former friends. The doctrines which I

have now received, are indeed charged with being destructive of moral practice, and tending to licentiousness; but though I know that my best righteousnesses are as filthy rags, yet I trust I may return thanks to God, that by his grace he hath so upheld me, since this change took place, that I have not been permitted to disgrace the cause in which I have embarked, by any immoral conduct; my rejoicing, in this respect, is this, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I have my conversation in the world. And sincerely I may avow, that the belief of these doctrines, hath a quite contrary effect upon me. I most heartily desire, aim, endeavour, and pray to be enabled to love God and keep his commandments, without partiality and without hypocrisy, and so to demean myself, as by well doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. That I fall so very far short in every thing is not the effect of my new doctrines, but of my old depraved nature, and deceitful heart. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!

PART III.

Containing observations on the foregoing narrative.

MY design in writing this account of myself, and my religious inquiries, and change of sentiments, was as follows: I considered myself a singular instance of a very unlikely person, in an uncommon manner, being led on from one thing to another to embrace a system of doctrine which he once heartily despised. And as I do assuredly believe that this change hath been effected under the guidance and teaching of the Holy Ghost; so I verily hoped that a circumstantial relation of it might be an encouragement and comfort to those who know and love the Lord, and from them levy a tribute of gratitude and praise, to our gracious, wonder-working God: and that it also might be instrumental, by the convincing Spirit, to awaken others to a serious review of their religious sentiments; to put them upon the same earnest inquiry after the truth, as it is in Jesus; and to influence them to the diligent use of the same blessed means, in which the Lord directed me to be found. In order to forward this effect, I would offer a few observations upon what has been related, to the attentive and impartial consideration of the reader; and may the

Lord guide both the writer and reader of these sheets to the saving knowledge of himself, and of the ways of truth and peace!

Now, I. I think it must be evident to every unprejudiced reader of this narrative, that at the time this change commenced, I was, humanly speaking, a most unlikely person to embrace this system of doctrine.—This will appear from the following considerations:

1. By reason of my religious opinions at that time, which had been for many years directly contrary thereto. Being always of a reflecting turn, I had exceeding high notions of the powers of human reason, and a very favourable opinion of my own understanding: and I had, upon reasoning principles, embraced a system of religion, which, while it soothed my conscience, flattered this self-conceit. After some trivial alterations, I seemed to myself, upon mature deliberation, to have come to a settled determination, and had bestowed considerable pains in making myself acquainted with those arguments and interpretations of Scripture wherewith that system is usually defended; and I had raked together many of those plausible objections, and high charges, which are, by reasoning men, brought against the doctrines, and persons of the Calvinists. But on the other hand, I was, in a great measure, a stranger to what the Calvinists could say for themselves, because I thought the matter too

plain to bear an argument, and therefore did not think their answers worth reading. In short, I was fallen so very low, that very few have ever been recovered from that abyss of error, into which I had been permitted to sink. Full of confidence in my cause, and in the arguments with which I was preparing myself, and with the most sanguine expectation of success, I was eager to engage in controversy with the Calvinists. In this confidence I frequently harangued against them from the pulpit, and spared not to charge upon them consequences both absurd and shocking. And yet, at length, after much, very much, anxious, diligent inquiry, I have embraced, as the sacred truths of God's unerring word, every doctrine of this despised system.

2. From my natural spirit and temper, I was a most unlikely person thus to change. Few persons were ever more self-sufficient and positive in their opinions, than I was.—Fond to excess of entering into argument, I never failed on these occasions to betray this peculiarity of my character. I seldom acknowledged or suspected myself mistaken; and scarce ever dropped any argument, until either my reasonings, or obstinacy, had silenced my opponent. A certain person once said of me, that I was like a stone rolling down the hill, which could neither be stopped nor turned; this witness was true; but those things which are impossible with man, are

easy with God: I am evidently both stopped, and turned; man, I am persuaded, could not have done it; but this hath God wrought—and I am not more a wonder to others than to myself. Indeed, I carried the same obstinate, positive temper into my religious inquiries: for I never gave up one tittle of my sentiments, till I could defend them no longer, nor even submitted to conviction, till I could make no longer resistance. The strong man armed with my natural pride, and obstinacy; and having with my vain imaginations, and reasonings, and high thoughts, built himself many strong holds, kept his castle in my heart: and thus garrisoned, when the stronger than he came against him, he stood a long siege; till, being by superior force driven from one to another, and all his armour wherein he trusted being at length taken from him, he was constrained to recede.—And the Lord having made me willing in the day of his power, I was forced to confess; “O Lord, thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed.”

3. My situation in life rendered such a change improbable. I had an increasing family, no private fortune, a narrow, precarious income, and no expectations, except from such friends as my conduct might procure, or continue to me. I had unexpectedly contracted an acquaintance with some of those whose favour goes a great way toward a man's advancement in life; nor was I in-

sensible to the advantages to be hoped for, from cultivating, by a compliant behaviour, their kind and friendly regard to me; at the same time I was no stranger to the opinion, which the world entertains of those who preach these disreputable doctrines; and could not but conclude, that embracing this system of religion was a probable way of depriving myself of this prospect of preferment. Had I not, therefore, as the result of my diligent inquiries, been assuredly convinced that it was my indispensable duty to embrace, and preach them, and that by so doing alone, I could ensure to myself the favour of a better friend than any here below; I should have been destitute even of common sense, to have had any thing to do with them. And yet being aware all along, how unfavourable, *according to human probability*, it will prove, to my worldly interests, at length I have deliberately embraced them.

4. Nor was my regard to my character a trifling security against such a change of sentiment. I was ambitiously and excessively fond of that honour which cometh from man; and considered the desire of praise as allowable, nay laudable. By this motive was I urged on to a very diligent prosecution of my studies, even beyond what my natural inclination led me to; and my whole conduct was influenced by, my whole conversation tinged with, this vainglorious aim. On the other hand, with approbation and self-com-

placency, I had been accustomed to hear the most contemptuous and opprobrious epithets liberally added to the names of those persons to whom I have now joined myself; and all along, as I verged nearer and nearer to Methodism, I was painfully sensible, that I was drawing upon myself the same mortifying distinctions. I have been a vainglorious candidate for human applause; but I renounce such pretensions, and willingly submit to be considered by the world, under the mortifying character of a silly, half-witted, crack-brained enthusiast. These epithets, I am sensible, are now bestowed upon me, behind my back, and very often to my face; I bless God this doth not move me, but I can heartily thank him that I am counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake. But when I saw this trial approaching, it appeared very formidable; and I can truly affirm, that nothing but the fullest conviction, that the cause in which I was embarking was the cause of God; nothing, but not daring to act contrary to the plain dictates of my conscience, could have influenced me to make this sacrifice of my character, and bring myself under so much contempt and scorn.

But, 5. To reason with our despisers, upon their own principles; upon supposition that I am now fallen into enthusiasm, mistake, and strong delusion, I certainly was, when I first set out in this inquiry, a very unlikely person so to do. My leading resolve was to search

for the truth diligently, and to embrace it wherever I found it, whatever it might cost; no sooner had I begun this inquiry, than I was called upon to give proof of the sincerity of this resolution; and, from a principle of conscience, though a mistaken one, I renounced my only prospect of preferment; and it would be unreasonable to question my sincerity, after it had been thus evidenced. Since that time I have also deliberately sacrificed my character, and hazarded the loss of all my former friends. Giving these proofs of my integrity, I set off in dependence on those plain promises, which I have mentioned; I have sought for this desired knowledge of the truth mainly in reading the Holy Scriptures, and by prayer for the promised teaching of the Holy Ghost, after that manner which had been related; and am now led to conclusions diametrically opposite to what I expected. Now, lay all these things together, attentively consider them, and then let your own conscience determine how far it is probable, that a person, in this manner seeking for the truth, should be given over to a strong delusion to believe a pernicious lie. "Would any of you that is a father, if his son asked bread, give him a stone; or if he asked a fish, give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall our Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Can any man suppose,

that after such repeated and continued pleadings of the express promises of the Lord to this effect, in earnest prayer, according to his appointment, I should be likely to be delivered up to the teaching of the father of lies? Can any one make this conclusion without insinuating that God hath broken his promises, which is shocking to think of? In short, you may make a jest of these things; you may throw by the book without giving any attention to an argument of this kind; or you may say, what you never can prove, that it is all a contrived story; or you may argue, that these promises, though contained in the Bible, are not to be depended on by us: which is to give up the Scriptures to be scoffed at by infidels and atheists, and to render them useless to the humble, anxious inquirer after truth and salvation; but by no other means, I am assured, can you account for this single circumstance, without allowing, that the substance of those doctrines that I have now embraced, is indeed contained in the word of God; that they comprise the truth as it is in Jesus, and are not corrupted with any such delusion, as can hazard the salvation of my soul, or the souls of those who, by my ministry, receive them. On this supposition all difficulties vanish. The Lord had given me a sincere desire, to know the saving doctrine of the Gospel; and though I was exceedingly ignorant, obstinate, and prejudiced; yet this desire, having by his

providential direction led me to the word of God, and influenced me to seek his teaching by prayer; God was faithful to his own promises, and it was an example of his own words, "that every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth." My sincerity in seeking the truth, evinced by the sacrifice I made to my conscience, was sufficient to convince any person, who is conversant and experienced in the things of God, that, as my friend foretold, thither would all my inquiries lead me, in that would they all finally centre. And could I be assured, beloved reader, whoever thou art, that thou wast as sincerely desirous to know the truth, as I then was, and as heartily resolved to embrace it wherever thou didst find it, and whatever it should cost thee; had I also assurance, that in a believing dependence on these promises, thou wast diligently, and from day to day, in the study of the word of God, and by prayer, seeking the accomplishment thereof unto thy soul; I would as confidently foretell, that, as to those things which I now regard as essential to salvation, and, if thou hast the souls of others committed to thee, as to what is needful for thy usefulness in the ministry, thou wouldst be brought in time to the same conclusions, whatever thy present religious sentiments may be. May the Lord give thee true sincerity, and incline thine heart to try the experiment!

I am aware that many will object to what

I have urged under this head, as being too confident, and as urged by men of contrary religious sentiments, each in behalf of his own system; and as I would neither wish by vain controversy to be detained from more profitable employments, nor yet to have any material, and plausible objection in force against what I have asserted, I hope the reader will excuse my obviating this beforehand. In answer, therefore, to those who may deem me too confident in this argument, I would only entreat them impartially and carefully to consider the limitations with which, on every hand, it is guarded; and then to inquire, whether in any other way, than that which hath been mentioned, he can account for this circumstance: that is, supposing this narrative true, for which the appeal is to the heart-searching God; and supposing the promises mentioned, to be proposed to us, that we might embrace, depend on, and plead them in prayer; considering the glory of the divine veracity as concerned in their accomplishment to every believer, and then try, whether you possibly can evade one of the following conclusions: 1. Either God hath failed of his promise; or, 2. God hath in the main, and as far as is expressed, led the author by his Holy Spirit to the knowledge and belief of the truth. To the second argument, taken from experience, I answer, 1. That it is not fact; many pretenders to sincerity and candour, will, without

hesitation, condemn as enthusiastical, such a reliance on, and confidence in these promises, and this way of searching for truth; and it is plain they do not seek truth in that manner, which they condemn in others. Many others, perhaps, slightly mention these matters, but they will not endure to be closely questioned; they are conscious that they have not sought the truth in this manner, and therefore they evade such discourse as personal.

2. I answer that the writings of many pretended inquirers after truth, evidently show, that they expect to find it, not by trusting the Lord with all their heart, asking wisdom of him, or seeking in the word of God and by prayer, to be taught of him: but by leaning to their own understanding, by resting the argument on philosophical reasonings, by backing it with the authority of this, or that renowned name, and supporting their conclusions by bold, and perplexing criticism, and interpretations of Scripture. Hence so many daring appeals from revelation, to reason and philosophy; hence such and so many objections brought against doctrines plainly revealed in God's word; (if language hath any determinate meaning;) and so many consequences charged upon these doctrines, with a design to invalidate their divine authority; as if being made by every art of ingenuity, to have the show of unreasonableness, was sufficient to prove the plainest revelation of God's Holy Spirit a falsehood: hence such liberty, in interpretation and

criticism, taken with the word of God, as the learned would never endure in interpreting, or criticising upon Horace or Virgil. These things prove, that such persons are strangers to that earnest, hearty, sincere desire to know the truth, which brings the inquirer to an humble willingness to be taught of God, and in submission of understanding to seek wisdom from his word and Spirit. And 3. It is evident, that many pretenders to this sincere desire to know the truth, are not troubled with suspicions that they are, or can be wrong. They have made up their minds before they began their inquiries; and therefore you will not find them willing to make the least concession, but, in the management of the controversy, resolved to vindicate, and contend for every tittle, wading through thick and thin, (as it is said,) to make good their cause: and where arguments fail, to make use of the other arts of controversy, with which skill in the management of their weapons, and anger against their opponents, can supply them. Where a cause is maintained in this manner, you may easily understand, that there is none of that earnest desire of learning the truth, and that anxious fear of mistaking it, or of that distrust of self, and those doubts concerning our present knowledge and belief, which constitute that sincerity, that leads the inquirer to the word and Spirit of God for direction and teaching. Lay these things together,

and they will on scriptural grounds, cut off many confident pretenders to sincerity from their claims as entirely as they exclude Annas and Caiaphas, and the chief Priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, from being sincere inquirers into the truth of the Old Testament; when in support of their own authority and reputation, and influenced by pride and anger, they, under colour of their law, put to death him, of whom Moses and the prophets did write, even Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. And as to men of another spirit, who appear sincere, humble, and willing to be taught of God, in their inquiry after truth; but do not entirely agree with what has been laid down as my view of the truth, I would only wish them to observe the distinction established between some and others of these doctrines. Such persons do not, I dare say, materially differ from that which has been mentioned as necessary to salvation; and, therefore, as I allow that they may have been in the main taught of God; so I only require the same allowance; and that it may be supposed that the same God, who according to his promise hath led both, as far as is needful to salvation, in the same way, has in other things left us to differ, for the mutual exercise of candour and forbearance, till that time when we shall know even as we are known.

Lay these things impartially together; consider my former sentiments on religious sub-

jects; my self-sufficiency and positiveness in my opinions; my worldly interest and character, both, to appearance, at stake; my sincerity in my religious inquiries thus evidenced; and then suppose my present sentiments to be enthusiasm, and pernicious delusion, and will it not be evident to your own consciences, that I was a most unlikely person to fall into them?

II. In the second place, I would observe, that this change in my sentiments, was very gradual.

When any person suddenly changes his religious opinions, for others, very different from them, it is no inconsiderable evidence of a changeable and fickle disposition: it gives cause to suspect that he was not well established in his former sentiments; that he had taken them upon trust, and was a stranger to the arguments wherewith they might be defended, and to the objections, which might be urged against them. If worldly interest, reputation, or conveniency, seem to favour the change, there is room for a presumption, that these had an undue influence upon him; if not, it may be insinuated, that he was deluded with specious appearances, that he did not allow himself time to weigh the arguments pro and con; that he had only changed one set of notions for another, without having duly considered either side. Such objections may reasonably be made, and the consequences of such pre-

capitate changes too often justify them. But though I was always, and still am, of a headstrong, impetuous spirit in other things; and when once I have purposed, can have no rest from incessant agitation of mind till I have accomplished; yet, in this particular, I acted contrary to my natural temper. Indeed, at first, I did in some instances too much betray my impetuosity; but at that time I acted not in the character of an inquirer, but in full confidence that it was pleading the cause of truth, and had no more thought of becoming what the world calls a Methodist, than of turning Mahometan; and after the first hurry was over, though commonly in earnest, and sometimes in considerable perturbation of mind, I was outwardly calm and satisfied; being generally enabled to believe, that if I were in any thing at present mistaken, I should sometime be guided to the truth. My determination to set about this inquiry proceeded not so much from anxious fears about my own soul, as from a deep sense impressed upon my heart, of the importance of the ministry, and the worth of souls committed to my charge, and of the awful account to be given of them; and as I all along bestowed some pains in instructing them in what I believed to be the truth; I was preserved thereby from any discomposing fears, or undue disquietude of mind. I sat down very coolly to search for the truth; I proceeded very gradually, and

with extreme caution: I took up no one opinion upon trust; I gave up none of my sentiments, until the arguments wherewith I had learned to defend them, were convincingly answered; nor did I admit any new articles into my creed, till either every objection was obviated, or I was pressed on the other hand with others, still more unanswerable. Much, very much, prayer and meditation preceded every change of sentiment; and I was near three years from the beginning of my inquiry, before I came to a determination what was the truth. So long, deliberately, and step by step, I examined the premises, before I finally proceeded to draw my conclusion. I perceive much cause to be ashamed of my unteachable temper; for with such opportunities as were afforded me, if I had improved them, I might have been led to the knowledge and belief of the same truths, in much less time. But the Lord, I trust, led me in this way, and left me thus far to my own natural pride of heart; that it might more evidently appear, that I received not my doctrines from man, but that, indeed, in the first instance, I learned them from the word and Spirit of God.

III. Thirdly, I would observe, that as I changed my religious views deliberately, so I did it without any teaching from the persons to whose sentiments I have now acceded. For a considerable time after the

commencement of my inquiries, I would not so much as read what they had to urge in their own behalf. I entered, indeed, into a correspondence with Mr. —; but my intention was, not to learn from him, but to dispute with him, which, when he waived, I dropped the correspondence, and utterly neglected his letters, as not considering them worth a reperusal. From that time I avoided his company, and all the time I would not hear him preach. I would not be understood to insinuate, that Mr. — hath not been useful to me: he hath been, and continues to be, eminently so; and I continually see great cause to bless God for giving me such a friend, to be so near at hand on all occasions. But this I assuredly believe, that had I never seen him after the time that his example had put me upon considering my conduct, I should have arrived at the same views of gospel truth which I now have.— His usefulness to me hath, all along, been in those matters wherein we were in some measure agreed, not in those wherein we differed; for in these my proud heart scorned to have him for a teacher.

At the same time, though I had the offer of several books written by Dissenters and Methodists, I declined them; and did not for near two years, peruse any of them with sufficient attention, to recollect any thing of consequence in them. I say not this, as slighting these books: justice requires me to acknow-

ledge, that many of them which then I ignorantly despised, contain as solid and judicious, and excellent divinity, as hath been penned since the apostles' days. But I did not get my system from them; for that was nearly completed, before I was prevailed upon to read them. My studies, beside the Bible, were mainly confined to authors of allowed reputation in the church of England, several of which I have mentioned. Wherein they differed from each other, (as certainly 'Tillotson and Hooker, Jortin and Beveridge, Bull and Hall, do differ very much indeed,) I endeavoured to judge for myself, comparing all of them with the word of God, and with the articles, homilies, and liturgy of the church of England; and from such authors, thus compared, as far as the writings of uninspired men have been instrumental to this change, I have received the greatest part of my present opinions.

But let it be observed, that the further these streams are traced upward, toward the fountain of the blessed reformation, the purer they flow, according to my present judgment; and I have no doubt but I could, were I to go about it, with proper helps, prove undeniably, that there is nothing material preached by me, under the scandal of methodistical, which was not preached by those excellent persons, who, having laid the foundation of our church establishment, gave their bodies to be burned, in confirmation of the truths they taught. It

is much to be wished, that their lives and discourses, living and dying, and their remaining writings, were more generally known amongst us, and did not remain locked up from the world in large folios, in the learned languages, or in books out of print, or exceedingly scarce: the effect of which is, that the members of our national church are in general utterly ignorant of its standard doctrines, and ignorantly brand those as Methodists and enthusiasts, who preach zealously the very doctrines of the first reformers.

IV. In the fourth place, I would observe the great influence which the study of the Scriptures had in producing this change.

We are too apt, without careful examination, to take things for granted; and to collect our scheme of divinity from other authors, and only to fetch a few detached texts from the Scripture, which appear to countenance our preconceived opinions; neglecting, or very slightly considering such parts of the word of God, as seem incapable of being made use of to our purpose: we are too prone in availing ourselves of the labours of critics and expositors, to resign up ourselves implicitly to their guidance, and to imagine that we have proof enough of our doctrines, if we can produce the sanction of some great name, which hath espoused and maintained them; without carefully examining whether they be right or wrong: but this is to pay that deference to the human interpretation, which is

only due to the divine book commented upon. We ministers especially, though at ordination we solemnly promise to turn all our studies, as much as may be, into this channel, are very apt to suffer our time and thoughts to be engrossed with such studies and employments as are foreign thereto, interfere therewith, and leave at most but a secondary attention for the study of the word of God. Hence it comes to pass, that frequently we do not bestow so much pains in meditating upon the Bible, and in comparing spiritual things with spiritual, one Scripture with another, with what we experience in our own hearts, and what we hear and see in the world around us, as we do about matters of far less consequence. So that probably should we at any time sit down to a diligent examination of the whole word of God, we should find it a very different book from what we expected: thus at least it hath been with me, and possibly it may be so with others.

The word of God informs us that true wisdom, the saving, practical, and experimental knowledge of divine things, is not to be acquired without earnest and diligent seeking, (Prov. ii. 1, 6.) “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding: yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and lifteth up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and

searchest for her, as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” If then our wisdom has been acquired without any of that eager desire after, and painful diligence in seeking it, with which the covetous man desires, and seeks for his riches; it is a shrewd conjecture, that it is not of the genuine sort. Once I had in my own esteem a sort of wisdom, which seemed to offer itself to me spontaneously, and to be found with little seeking. But now I am persuaded it was but a counterfeit; a fair seeming, pernicious foolishness.

But that which I now esteem to be true wisdom, if I could but attain unto it, is not to be acquired in so easy a manner. When I first began to desire and seek after this wisdom, I set out with the assurance, that it was to be found in the Holy Scriptures, and nowhere else, these alone being able to make us wise unto salvation. I therefore considered myself engaged to make them my study; and as the whole was given by inspiration from God, and was all declared to be profitable for some purpose or other, according to the various ends for which the Holy Spirit designed therein; so I made the whole my study without picking and choosing. Thus I learned to look upon the Bible as my book of instructions, given me along with my ministerial trust by my Lord and Master; that from thence I was to draw all my doctrines,

instructions, and admonitions, warnings, examples, rules of duty, motives to duty, and encouragement therein: and I also considered it to be the believer's charter of privileges, containing exceeding great and precious promises, and the whole of that which God saw fit to reveal, concerning those unspeakable and inconceivable good things, which he hath of his infinite mercy prepared for them that love him. In order, therefore, faithfully to declare my message from the Lord Almighty to the souls of men, I found it indispensably needful to be well acquainted with every part, and to take the word of God myself, as well as propose it to others, as the lantern of my feet, and the light of my paths. And not only to attend to the letter, but also to the true meaning of the Spirit of God therein. This I found to be a work that required much time, great diligence, mature consideration, and an unbiassed, unprejudiced mind.

With this view of the matter partly obtained, and continually more and more unfolding itself to my mind, I studied the word of God, and have now for near four years employed a very considerable part of my time therein, neither rejecting, nor greatly depending upon the assistance of interpreters. I all along sincerely desired to know the truth, and for that end read the Scriptures, not as the word of man, but as the word of God. And though there have been

seasons of remissness, when other employments and studies too much interfered with this main business; and though at first I was very far from an unbiassed mind; being blindly and obstinately prejudiced against those doctrines, which I now believe to be the true gospel of Jesus Christ; yet, within that space I have read the Bible several times over, in every part, with the strictest attention I was capable of. There are very few passages which relate to doctrine, that I have not repeatedly and diligently examined, comparing one with another, with all the care and consideration I could; and I seldom ever ceased meditating on any portion of Scripture, until I had attained to some satisfying conclusion concerning its true meaning, and agreement with other Scriptures. I may truly say I have filled reams of paper with religious discussions, with sermons, expositions and letters, in all which I ransacked the Bible, to bring as much Scripture evidence for my direction as possible. For these last two years I have scarce opened a book except upon religious subjects, and from morning till night, nearly every day, all this while, my thoughts incessantly have been employed in meditation upon the great truths of the gospel. Every difficulty and objection, (and difficulties and objections both from my own meditations, and in the course of my reading, continually crowded upon my mind,) sent me to the word of God,

and increased my care and attention in examining and weighing every text of Scripture, respecting the point in question, before I exchanged my old opinion for a new one.

Thus I may truly say, I have sought in the word of God, (that field in which alone this precious treasure lies hid,) for wisdom, for the saving knowledge of divine things, as for silver, and searched for her as for hidden treasures. And though I am sensible, compared with many, with whom I have personal acquaintance, and still more whose works I read, my knowledge of the Scriptures is superficial, the knowledge of a child, of a mere novice in the school of Christ; yet, I trust that, as far as relates to the leading truths of the gospel, according to the promise, I am brought to understand the fear of the Lord, and have found the knowledge of God. And permit me, beloved reader, to put thee in remembrance, that until thou hast with some good measure of this diligence, studied the whole word of God, thou runnest very great hazards in passing judgment upon the men and doctrines; be cautious in what thou doest; let these men quite alone, until thou hast imitated the conduct of the noble Bereans; and hast thoroughly, and with unbiassed mind, examined and meditated upon the whole word of God, to see whether the things they believe, and teach, be so or not. Lest otherwise it should come to pass, (as probably

it will,) that in opposing and condemning them, thou shouldst be found to fight against God. And O! that the Lord would hear and grant my request, and by his Holy Spirit powerfully incline the hearts of all, who read these sheets, according to their leisure, station in life, obligations, and opportunities, thus attentively to read their Bibles; not as the word of man, but as the word of God himself, speaking from heaven, and unto them, and concerning the everlasting interest of their precious and immortal souls. Be the adviser what he will, despised, and deserving to be despised for a Methodist, the advice is undoubtedly good: advice I shall have no occasion to repent having thus given you, at the solemn hour of death, and the awful day of judgment; advice, which, at those approaching seasons, none of you will repent having followed; though it should divert you from more amusing, and at this day more reputable studies, or engross that time, that you have been accustomed to devote to more pleasurable and fashionable employments; but which, neglected, will be an additional sting in every conscience, through all the countless ages of eternity.

And O! that they to whom the chief Shepherd hath committed the care of precious souls, and at whose hands he will assuredly require every one that perishes through their default, would take in good part this expression of the very affectionate desire of my soul,

both in behalf of them, and their flocks, in dropping down these hints concerning their peculiar obligations, to devote much of their time to the attentive, unbiassed study of the word of God, that infinitely best, but often least studied of all books. What avails it, that the ministers of the everlasting Gospel should be learned classics, profound philosophers, metaphysicians, and mathematicians, expert logicians, or adorned with the knowledge of the politer sciences; if they are unacquainted, or but superficially acquainted, with the sacred Scriptures? These other branches of literature may amuse and entertain them, may procure them preferment, reputation, respect, and favour; but it is the knowledge of the Bible, which alone can enable them in such a manner to attend to themselves, and to their doctrine, as shall issue in the everlasting salvation of their own souls, and the souls committed to their care. Far be it from me to presume to lay down my opinions as the standard of doctrine, or a rule for the faith and preaching, of my brethren, in this sacred ministry. But the more obscure I am, the less objection there can reasonably be against my just hinting to them, that if any one should find this subject manifest itself to his conscience, and make him sensible, that verily he hath been faulty in this matter, and hath been attending to other employments, and studying other books more than the word of God; then, possibly, he

may be mistaken in his sentiments concerning the doctrine of the Gospel, and, being mistaken himself, may be misleading others, to the endangering of their immortal souls; for he cannot be certain, but that, should he employ some years in this single study, (which its importance well deserves,) he may find the Bible a very different book than he expected.

V. I would observe the influence which prayer appears to have had in effecting this change.

I am aware that the world, though called Christian, is come to such a pass, that the very mention of this subject, in many companies, is accounted ill manners, or even received with ridicule; and that being known to live a life of prayer and communion with God, is alone sufficient to denominate any person a Methodist. However, it is scarce needful to say, how full the word of God is, of precepts, instruction, exhortations, invitations, promises, and examples to this effect; he never read his Bible, who knows not this; nor can any man, under any pretence, make a jest of this great duty and privilege of a believer, without pouring contempt upon the Holy Scriptures, and insulting the brightest characters therein proposed to us as examples, not excepting the Lord Jesus himself.—Let men, therefore, under the profession of Christianity, be as irreligious and profane as they please; I shall not be ashamed to speak

upon so unfashionable a topic; for if the word of God be true, he never knew any thing as he ought to know, never believed, never repented, never performed one duty aright in his life, who hath not sought all his wisdom, knowledge, faith, repentance, and sufficiency for obedience, from God, by fervent, instant, and persevering prayer. Time was, even since I had souls committed to my care, that I lived in the neglect of this duty, and so without God in the world; but since, through his forbearance and mercy, I have been in earnest about the salvation of my own soul and their's, I have not been left to do so. However, it is not my intent to speak any further on this subject, than relates to the matter on hand.

The word of God promises the Holy Spirit to them that ask him; he is the Spirit of truth, leads into all truth, teaches all things, and searches and reveals the deep things of God. The leading promise to the church is, (Isaiah, liv. 13,) "That all her children shall be taught of the Lord." (John vi. 44, 45.) Referring thereto, Christ hath declared, that none can come unto him, except he be drawn of the Father, and taught of God. And St. Paul adds, (1 Cor. ii. 14,) "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned." The natural man is explained in Jude, by not having the Spirit,

which is evidently the Apostle's meaning in this passage; for in the preceding verse he declares, that he preached the gospel, not "in words, which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." On these grounds I concluded, that man's natural understanding could not spiritually, or profitably, receive the knowledge of revealed mysteries, unless it be enlightened by the Holy Spirit. I learned also that our eyes may be blinded by Satan, the God and prince of this world; and our understandings closed, and a veil upon our hearts, when we read the word of God; in which case the letter of the Scriptures, without the Spirit, only killeth. Hence the need of our understandings being opened, to understand the Scriptures; (for want of which the plainest discourses of our Lord to his disciples, concerning his sufferings, death, and resurrection, were hid from them, and they understood them not;) and of the veil being taken from our hearts; for want of which the Jews in reading the Old Testament cannot understand the plainest declarations of Moses, and the prophets, concerning their promised Saviour. I was taught also that true wisdom was the gift of God, and to be asked of him, by every one, who would be wise unto salvation, that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and that those who receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, are

given over to a strong delusion to believe a lie; that they might all be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thes. v. 10—12.)

On these grounds, and depending upon the promises and invitations so plentifully interspersed through the Scriptures; when I began to inquire after the truth, I began also to cry unto the Lord for his guidance therein; and as my mind became more and more engaged, and my difficulties, in extricating myself from the labyrinths of controversy increased, I became more and more earnest, and constant, and particular, in making my request known unto God. My constant prayer to the Lord was, to be delivered from pride and prejudice, blindness of heart, contempt of the truth, obstinacy, enthusiasm, ignorance, and error. That the Lord would give me wisdom and knowledge, guide me to the truth as it is in Jesus, open my understanding, take away the veil from my heart, and make known unto me the way of salvation, which is revealed to sinners in his holy word. Thus waiting upon the Lord, according to his own appointment, depending upon, and pleading his promises from day to day, I was led from one thing to another, until my view of religious truth was totally changed. This I most firmly believe to have been by the promised teaching of the Spirit of truth, powerfully enlightening my mind, opening the Scriptures, and, by dispelling the clouds

of error, and prejudices, enabling me to receive the truth therein contained.

But though I am not ashamed of declaring my desire of living a life of prayer, and communion with God; yet I have no intention in speaking thus publicly on such a subject, but to advance his glory, and forward the salvation of souls. As in his presence I declare, that I have prayed over many of the most interesting passages of Scripture, chapter by chapter, and often verse by verse, with the most anxious apprehensions of rejecting or mistaking the truth, or embracing a falsehood; and with the most earnest desire of knowing what that doctrine was, which Jesus and his apostles taught. In the sight of God I am sensible I have abundant cause to be humbled, and ashamed of my frequent remissness in, and the continual defilements of, my prayers: but as surely as I believe his promises to be faithful, as surely I believe him to be a God that heareth prayers; so surely do I believe that flesh and blood hath not revealed to me the doctrines I now preach, but God himself by his Holy Spirit.

Reader, whoever thou art, if thy conscience testify, that thou hast hitherto lived in the neglect of this important duty, or in the formal, lifeless, and unmeaning performance of it with thy lips, whilst thy heart hath been disengaged, and thy thoughts allowedly wandering to the ends of the earth; if thou hast not been accustomed by fervent prayer

to seek wisdom from God by his teaching Spirit; if thou knowest not what it is to exercise faith upon the promises pointed out to thee, nor to plead them in prayer to a promise-keeping God; if all thy knowledge of divine things hath been acquired by leaning to thy own understanding; if in reading the Scriptures, thou hast looked more to learned critics, commentators, and expositors, than to the illuminating Spirit of God, sought in humble prayer, to open thy understanding, to take the veil from thine heart, and to give thee that wisdom, which is from above; then be as sure as the word of God is true, and we are concerned in it, that thou art in the wrong, the light that is in thee is darkness, and thou knoweth nothing yet as thou oughtest to know. May the Lord effectually incline thine heart to take a contrary course, and to seek wisdom where alone it can be found, from the Lord, the Father of Lights, and the giver of every good and perfect gift, who hath invited thee to ask, that it may be given thee!

VI. I would observe, that there is nothing in this Narrative, which can reasonably be condemned as enthusiasm.

It is allowed, that there is such a thing as enthusiasm; that it is a frequent attendant on religious zeal; that in some of its operations it is a grievous evil, (I speak of the faulty enthusiasm;) in all, attended with many inconveniences; and that it ought very care-

fully to be guarded against by every religious professor, and zealous preacher. It would also be in vain to pretend, that the late revivals of religion, which indiscriminately have been stigmatized with the name of Methodism, have been, in opinion and practice, entirely free from enthusiasm. What revivals of religion ever were free from such scandals? Where the Lord sows his good seed, there the enemy will be sure to scatter his tares. It must be confessed, that some of the most eminent instruments in this work, whose names, when prejudice shall vanish, will be handed down with honour, as burning and shining lights, to the latest periods of the church, have, by the greatness of their zeal, through human frailty, been betrayed into sentiments, expressions, and deportment, in some instances justly to be censured as enthusiastical; of which their enemies have not failed sufficiently to avail themselves. But whatever indiscretions and mistakes particular persons, who have preached these doctrines, may have fallen into, this doth not, in the judgment of candid and impartial persons, in the least affect the general cause, or prove the doctrines erroneous. We would not contend for the credit of individuals, or the interests of a party: but for the doctrines of God's word, and of the established church of England. These will continue true and important, though many of those who have zealously and success-

fully preached them, should have justly incurred the charge of enthusiasm. All that I would intimate is this; that a man may be led to the belief of those doctrines, which are branded as Methodistical, in a way of sober, rational inquiry; and zealously preach them without being an enthusiast.

It would be very well, if some of those, who so readily accuse whole bodies of apparently religious persons of enthusiasm, would favour us with their determinate definition of an enthusiast. In its original meaning the word has a very favourable sense, and implies, that by a *divine* influence upon the soul, a man is filled with an ardour and warmth of zeal in the cause he is engaged in. Now, it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and if our ardour of soul be from the Spirit of God, according to the revealed will of God, and for the glory of God, it is the noblest, most desirable, most heavenly, and most beneficial exertion of the human mind. In every thing but religion an ardour, described by the term enthusiasm, is allowed and commended: a poetical, a military, a patriotic enthusiasm, even when they carry men beyond the strict bounds of cold reasonings, and exact prudence, fail not to meet with admirers. Our zeal may be fervent in every thing without censure, save when we are zealous for the glory of God, and the salvation of immortal souls. But there is an

enthusiasm of this sort, which forms the highest elevation, and the noblest effort of the human soul. Such an enthusiasm animated the apostle Paul, in all his self-denying labours and sufferings, and filled, (under the guidance of the Holy Ghost) his writings with such ardent zeal for the honour of his dear Saviour, and affection for the souls of men; such an enthusiasm he expresses, when he says, (2 Cor. v. 13, 14,) "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause; for the love of Christ constraineth us." Of such an enthusiasm as this I wish I were far more guilty. But on the other hand there is danger of a counterfeit, pernicious enthusiasm, and about that we are now inquiring. Now, I apprehend, that in order to constitute this culpable enthusiasm, some one or more of the following things must appear; either the ardour of the soul, which is excited, must proceed from a heated imagination, or from a delusion of Satan, instead of being produced by a divine influence; or the cause, in which this ardour is employed, must be the cause of self and error, instead of the cause of God and truth; or it must exert itself in unjustifiable measures and practices. But if our ardour of mind be warranted by the word of God; if it do not tend to the dishonour of God; and if it be confined in its exercise to the rules and precepts of the word of God, how in-

tense soever it may be, I can see no cause to censure it; unless men can be too zealous for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls.

But whatever be the distinguishing criterion of enthusiasm, I suppose it will be difficult to fix a charge upon it of any thing, for which I plead in this Narrative. I never was taught any thing by impulses, impressions, visions, dreams, or revelations; except so far as the work of the Spirit, in enlightening the understanding for the reception of those truths contained in the Holy Scriptures, is sometimes styled revelation. Other revelation I never expected or experienced, nor ever taught others to expect. Not but that the Lord is sovereign, and may do what he will with his own; and, if he pleases, may, and I suppose sometimes does, go out of the ordinary course, for the conversion of a sinner, or the guidance of a perplexed, or the comfort of a distressed soul; but I never took one step in dependence on any such extraordinary interpositions, nor encouraged any person to do so. And surely it will not be called enthusiasm, by any but avowed infidels, to believe God's word to be the rule of truth, and his promises to be faithful, and in this belief to seek for the knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel, in the manner related. In this way I have been taught no new truths, but as I believe, have been shown the meaning, use, tendency, consistency, harmony, wisdom, and glory of those truths

which are contained in the sacred volume, but which before, through pride and ignorance, I perverted, neglected, reviled, and counted foolishness. Nor do I make any pretences to infallibility; God hath not, I trust, left me so unstable, as to float about in the uncertain stream of opinion, and to be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lay in wait to deceive. As to the grand doctrines of the Gospel, which I have endeavoured to mark out as necessary to salvation, they are neither so uncertain nor so difficult, as men would persuade us; their uncertainty and difficulty arise wholly from our pride, prejudice, love of sin, and inattentive ignorance of our own hearts. There is really much difficulty in bringing vain man to cease from leaning to his own understanding; and in prevailing with him to trust in the Lord with all his heart, and to be willing, in the humble posture of a little child, to be taught of God. Nothing but a deep conviction of guilt, a fear of wrath, and a sense of our lost condition by nature and practice, can bring our minds unto this submissive frame; but this being effected, the difficulty is over, and the way of salvation is so plain, that the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. As to the other doctrines, which I believe myself, though they seem plain enough to me, I desire not to proselyte others to them, but am willing to leave them as

matters, in which fallible men may differ without danger. And as to my sufficiency for the faithful discharge of my ministry to God's glory, and the salvation of souls, he will not, I trust, deceive my expectations, which are grounded on his promises; for the rest I mistake daily, and find myself in continual danger of mixing my own imaginations with his divine truths, and following my own spirit instead of his. Whatever I preach truly, or do wisely, to God be the glory, for I am not sufficient of myself to think a good thought; whatever I speak falsely, or do foolishly, to me be the shame, for it is the natural fruit of my own deceitful heart. If this be enthusiasm, it is an enthusiasm warranted not only by the word of God, as I have endeavoured to prove, but by the whole liturgy of our church. We all at ordination profess to be moved by the Holy Ghost, to take the ministerial office upon us, and assuredly we cannot be moved by the Holy Ghost, if we have not the Holy Ghost, nor may expect his help and guidance. We agree to pray, that the Lord would lead in the way of truth all such as have erred and are deceived; that he would illuminate all bishops, priests, and deacons, with true knowledge and understanding of his holy word; that he would cleanse our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit; that he would grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit; and much more to this effect; and I

am persuaded that such a confidence as I have expressed cannot be censured as enthusiasm, without directly including our church establishment and continual public worship in the same charge.

VII. Lastly, I would observe, that our opposers and despisers will seldom give us the hearing. With all their pretensions to candour, reasoning, and free inquiry, they accuse and condemn us without so much as knowing, with any tolerable degree of accuracy, what our sentiments are; although they are furnished with such plentiful means of information, in those numerous publications, which are now extant upon these subjects.

Having imbibed strong prejudices against us, they frame so contemptuous an opinion of our understandings and our writings, that they will not bestow so much pains, or afford so much regard, as to peruse our books; and to call an author a Methodist, is with many people a sufficient reason why they should not read his works. Hence it comes to pass, that for want of information, our doctrines are grievously misrepresented; and in general the attacks made upon us, though they make our persons odious and despised, do not in the least affect the argument in debate. What most of our adversaries know of our opinions, are only scattered fragments picked up by hearsay, wherein neither the connexion, consistency, tendency, nor application of these opinions are preserved; and

therefore no wonder that we are vilified, and reproached with things to which we are utter strangers, or which we abominate and protest against from Sabbath to Sabbath, and against which we neglect not to fill our writings with reasonings, warnings, and cautions.

For my own part I freely acknowledge, that my strongest objections against this scheme of doctrine arose wholly from misapprehension and mistake. Not having read their books, my notions of the doctrines of the Methodists were received from vulgar report, and from their enemies; while my own creative imagination put the construction upon, and drew the consequences from them; so that when I preached against them, I was as one fighting with my own shadow; and in speaking evil of those things that I knew not, I only betrayed my own ignorance and pride. No better founded are the lamentable outcries, which at this day are made against us and our principles, as if we were endeavouring to banish reason, argument, sober-mindedness, and morality out of the world; and in their stead to substitute a parcel of whimsical vagaries, which are without foundation in reason, or Scripture, and have no influence, or rather a pernicious influence, on our conduct and conversation. When such a declamation is ended, (for one would not interrupt it,) ask the declaimer what a Methodist is? He can scarce give

you an answer; inquire about their doctrines, he doth not understand them; their writings, he never hath read them!

Reader, if thou desirest to know what our opinions are, and what reason there is for these heavy charges, read our books; but read them with attention, and aim at impartiality; compare them with the word of God, and with the liturgy, articles, and homilies of the church of England; and if thou hast leisure and opportunity, with the works of our first reformers. Nor do we desire thee to renounce thy reason, but only to make this *reasonable* concession; that where thy reason would determine one way, but God hath expressly determined another way, thou wouldst allow him to understand his own mysteries better than thou dost; and that therefore, thou oughtest, by faith, exercised upon the veracity of God, to receive those matters implicitly, and without reasoning, which God hath revealed, and which thy reason feels to be far above, out of its reach, and therefore out of its province. Whenever, on such inquiry, thou discoverest us to be mistaken, there dissent from us, yea blame us, as far as meekness and candour will permit; but do not condemn us in the gross; do not assert our whole scheme of doctrine to be enthusiastical and groundless, though some of our writers should be found to have advanced some questionable opinion. This were the way to drive all truth and certainty

out of the world; for what book can be mentioned, the Bible excepted, wherein there is nothing advanced, either erroneous or questionable?

And be assured, it is no argument of a sincere desire to know the truth, to read only one side of the question, and then clamorously to adopt every childish cavil, every vague report, every scandalous falsehood; and industriously to propagate them, as if these afforded a sufficient confutation of all the arguments, authorities, and Scripture testimonies wherewith we support our sentiments. Observe; that though some professors have been proved enthusiasts, and others detected to be hypocrites, this doth not prove that we are all enthusiasts and hypocrites. Such rash judgments hurt not us, but those that pass them.

For myself, I here publicly profess that I will, to the end of my days, acknowledge it, as the greatest obligation that any person can confer upon me, if, in the spirit of meekness, he will point out to me any error or enthusiastical delusion, into which I have fallen, and by sufficient arguments convince me of it. I trust, that my earnest desire to discover the truth, as it is in Jesus, has not abated in its influence, and that I retain the same disinterested resolution to embrace, and adhere to it, with which I set out. Still am I solicitously fearful of being betrayed by my warmth of spirit, and by the deceitfulness of

my heart, into erroneous opinions. But it is not clamour and reproach, or objections and arguments brought against sentiments I detest, or consequences I allow not, and do not see to be consequent from my doctrines; it is not such reasoning as sets one divine attribute at variance with another, and makes one part of the Bible contradict another, or exalts the human understanding upon the tribunal, and arraigns and condemns revealed mysteries at her presumptuous bar; I say, such a procedure will have no weight with me, or with any who ever knew the grace of God in truth.

And now, beloved reader, let me conclude, with leaving it upon thy conscience, to search for the truth of the Gospel in the study of God's word, accompanied by prayer, as thou wouldst search for hid treasure. I give thee this counsel, as expecting to meet thee at the day of judgment, that our meeting may be with joy, and not with grief; may the Lord incline thee to follow it, with that solemn season full in view! Time, how short! eternity, how long! life, how precarious and vanishing! death, how certain! the pursuits and employments of this present life, how vain, unsatisfying, trifling, and vexatious! God's favour and eternal life, how unspeakably precious! his wrath, the never-quenched fire, and the never-dying worm, how dreadful! Oh! trifle not away thy span of life, in heaping up riches, which shortly must be left for

ever, and which profit not in the day of wrath; in such pleasures and amusements, as will issue in eternal torments; or in seeking that glory which shall be swallowed up in everlasting infamy. Agree but with me in this; that it is good to redeem thy precious time, to labour for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life, and to attend principally to the one thing needful: take but thy measure of truth as well as duty from the word of God: be willing to be taught of God; meditate on his word day and night; let it be the light of thy feet and the lantern of thy paths; and in studying it, lean not to thy own understanding, trust not implicitly to expositors and commentators, but ask wisdom and teaching of God. And be not a Felix, saying to thy serious apprehensions about thy soul, "Go thy way at this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee;" lest death and judgment come before that season; be not an Agrippa, an almost Christian; but seek to be altogether such as the primitive Christians were. I say, agree but with me in these reasonable requests, and we shall at length agree in all things; in many in this world; in all, when we hear the Son of God address us in these rejoicing words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." May the Lord vouchsafe unto the writer, and to every reader of this book, that wisdom which is from above; that teaching

of his Holy Spirit which guides into the ways of peace; that faith which justifies; that peace of God which passeth understanding; and that measure of sanctifying and strengthening grace, which shall enable us to hold on, and hold out unto the end, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

APPENDIX.

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO REV. DR. SCOTT, BY THE
REV. JOHN NEWTON.

LETTER I.

JUNE 23, 1775.

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 a 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 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.

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 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 endeavour 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 nine hundred 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 entitled to the same privilege. 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 Saviour, 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 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 honours and emoluments which aspiring men thirst after, if he be pleased to honour 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, nor affected by his goodness, nor enabled to trust to his pro-

mises, nor 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, endeavours, 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 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 Saviour, 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, and 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 labours, upon their perusal of the Scriptures, 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 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 Scripture, cannot be understood and realized without divine teach-

ing, 1. Cor. ii. 9 to 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, Great is Diana, 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, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

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 Scriptures, 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 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 upholds universally and without exception, a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. The Lord first finds us

when we are thinking of something else, Isaiah lxx. 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 heartfelt perception, which casts down imaginations, and every thought 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 favourable 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 inter-

rupted 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 first rough draught of your thoughts; and you may easily perceive by my manner of writing, that I place equal confidence in your candour. 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 a happy instrument of comforting many.—I am, &c.

LETTER II.

JULY 14, 1775.

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. 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, things being as they were, 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 candour in what I observed or apprehended concerning 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 candour 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 candour, suppose that the exception swhich 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 luke-warmness and indifference for truth, which bears the name of candour among many in the present day. I desire to maintain a spirit of candour 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, 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, Matth. vii. 7, 8. John vii. 16, 17.; but to suppose that nothing is necessary to be known, which some people who possess 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 makes the foundation-stone a rock of offence, cannot be sincere in his inquiries. 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 in-

terprets. 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 Matth. 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 further 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 persuasion 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, 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 laboured 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 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, be-

cause 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, intrusted 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 ask 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 master-piece; 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 inquiries, and the accuracy

of the reasoning, will render the motive of *my request* unnecessary. I cannot style 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 Inquiry 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 speculation 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.

LETTER III.

AUGUST 11, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND:—Next week I go to London, where I purpose, if nothing unforeseen prevent, 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 inquiry, 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 a 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 inquires 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 inquiry, 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 embarrassments and outward temptations bring him to his wit's end. He almost wishes to stand where he is, and inquire 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 reasoning 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 Saviour, that we may receive redemption through 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 further 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 entrust 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 ate 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." 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 his 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 show 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 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 Scriptures describe 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 twofold necessity of a Saviour—his blood for the pardon of our sins, and his life, spirit,

and grace, to quicken our souls, and form us anew for himself, that we may feel his love, and show 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 inquire 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 honour, (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 right, and therefore treat others with scorn or rage, appeal to the Scriptures, but first lay down their own preconceived 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 risk what men are commonly much afraid of hazarding—character, interest, preferment, favour, &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 Scrip-

tures. 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 neighbour, 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 mere 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, honour, 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 dependence 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 unspeakably 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 authorised to pass sentence upon my fellow creatures, but because the Scriptures decide 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, &c.

LETTER IV.

SEPTEMBER 6, 1775.

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 thing like an answer to the letter you put into my hand the evening before I left O—; I must therefore content myself with a tender of affection and respect, and an inquiry after your welfare.

Your letter will give me an opportunity of saying something further when time shall admit; but an endeavour 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 observed 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 endeavours of your own, further 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 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, &c.

LETTER V.

OCTOBER 21, 1775.

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 pleased 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 part. For though we are not agreed in our views; yet, while our preliminary agreement to allow mutual freedom, and to exercise mutual candour, 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 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 show you, and bestow upon you, in his due time. You speak somewhat 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 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 of 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 long

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 favoured 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.

LETTER VI.

OCTOBER 28.

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 further. 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 connexion, 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 allowance for other things, and to be assured, 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 apprized 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 have seen and known. So far as you believe 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 shown 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 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 inquiries 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; Matth. 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 sometime 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. 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 you 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 Scriptures. 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 principles; 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.

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 that I could use that expression, though, perhaps, too often unguarded myself.—I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

NOVEMBER 17, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND:—At length I take up your favour of August 14, with design to give it 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 will 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 further 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 alleged 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 show 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 waived 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.

I do not offer this as a rational doctrine though it be highly so to me; but it is Scriptural, or else the Scriptures are a mere nose of wax, and without a determinate meaning. What ingenuity is needful to interpret many passages in a sense more favourable 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 Pet. 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 grounds of his arguments. However, as I said, I have chosen to waive 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 ac-

ceptance 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—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 endeavours 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 farther sensible of the necessity of a Saviour, than to make our doings and duties (if I may so ex-

press myself) full weight, which perhaps might otherwise be a little deficient when brought to the balance 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 of our total absolute depravity, and our utter apostasy from God by which we are as 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, (Gal. iii. 10,) and affords neither place nor 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 plasters of their own application, but to heal them completely 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, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Ephes. i. 19, "And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power;" the 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 nor discern the things of God; and if any one would be wise, the apostle's first 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, 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 favour 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 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 Saviour's pre-

cepts, 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 endeavours, 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 laboured 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 blessings 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 endeavours 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 laboured 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 labour in vain. Now his preaching effected not only an outward reformation, 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 endeavours 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 showing 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 era 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 fal-

lible, 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 our own 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 that 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 reason 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 was pleased to show 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 rashly 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 further, 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 willfully resist the light, and choose 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 choke 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 enhance 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:

2. 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 sinner's own hearty consent and concurrence? I rather choose 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 apostasy 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 show 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 further 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: I 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 inquiries, 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 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 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, &c.

LETTER VIII.

DECEMBER 8, 1775.

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 Scriptures 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 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 these 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 endeavoured to show 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 Scriptures speak 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 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 heart 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 by that name, and this is the principal difference I can find. Neither reason nor 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 kind 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 of the heart is equally polluted and poisonous; and that 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 other, and with Scripture; and I pray God to show 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 show 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 Scriptures teach 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 counsel 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 probably their own. Now, my friend, the arguments which satisfy you that the Scriptures do not represent God as the author of this sin in this appointment, will plead for me at the same 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 colours. 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 the 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 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 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 show 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 pro-

ducing, 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 complaint 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 nor 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 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 and 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 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 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 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; iii. 8; 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 it 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 profess 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 Saviour; 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 show their teeth, if they are

not suffered to bite. The apostles were accounted babblers, *ως περιχαθαραματα 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 endeavours, 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 surprised 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. Your remark on the other point shows 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 Scriptures speak of, and none of the influence he hoped for attending his ministry, he was led sometimes

to question the truth of the Scriptures. 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 endeavours that way, unless they seek to him for grace, will be vain as washing a blackmoor, and transient as washing a sow which will soon return to the mire again. I know 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 him 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 further 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 special 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 cheerful 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, and 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 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, that day will show. 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, &c.

THE END.

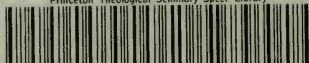
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