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SIX LETTERS  
ON THE  
SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATION  
OF THE  
SON OF GOD.

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SIX LETTERS  
ON THE  
**Spiritual Manifestation**  
OF  
THE SON OF GOD.

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## First Letter.

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WHEN I had the pleasure of seeing you last, you seemed surprised to hear me say, That the Son of God, for purposes worthy of his wisdom, manifests himself, sooner or later, to all his sincere followers, in a spiritual manner, which the world knows not of. The assertion appeared to you unscriptural, enthusiastical, and dangerous. What I then advanced to prove, that it was *scriptural, rational,* and of the *greatest importance,* made you desire I would write to you on the mysterious subject. I declined it, as being unequal to the task; but having since considered, that a mistake here may endanger your soul or mine, I sit down to comply with your request: And the end I propose by it, is either to give you a fair opportunity of pointing out my error, if I am wrong; or to engage you, if I am right, to seek what I esteem the most invaluable of all blessings,—revelations of Christ to your own soul, productive of the experimental knowledge of him, and the present enjoyment of his salvation.

As an architect cannot build a palace, unless he is allowed a proper spot to erect it upon, so I shall not be able to establish the doctrine I maintain, unless you allow me the existence of the proper senses, to which our Lord manifests

himself. The manifestation I contend for, being of a spiritual nature, must be made to spiritual senses; and that such senses exist, and are opened in, and exercised by regenerate souls, is what I design to prove in this letter, by the joint testimony of *Scripture*, our *Church*, and *Reason*.

I. The *Scriptures* inform us, that Adam lost the experimental knowledge of God by the fall. His foolish attempt to hide himself from his Creator, whose eyes are in every place, evidences the total blindness of his understanding. The same veil of unbelief, which hid God from his mind, was drawn over his heart and all his spiritual senses. He died the death, the moral spiritual death, in consequence of which the corruptible body sinks into the grave, and the unregenerate soul into hell.

In this deplorable state Adam begat his children. We, like him, are not only void of the life of God, but alienated from it, through the ignorance that is in us. Hence it is, that though we are possessed of such an animal and rational life, as he retained after the commission of his sin, yet we are, by nature, utter strangers to the holiness and bliss he enjoyed in a state of innocence. Though we have, in common with beasts, bodily organs of sight, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling, adapted to outward objects; though we enjoy, in common with devils, the faculty of reasoning upon natural truths, and mathematical propositions, yet we do not understand supernatural and divine things. Notwithstanding all our speculations about them, we can neither see, nor taste them truly, unless we are risen with

Christ, and taught of God. We may, indeed, speak and write about them, as the blind may speak of colours, and the deaf dispute of sounds, but it is all guess-work, hearsay, and mere conjecture. The things of the Spirit of God cannot be discovered, but by spiritual, internal senses, which are, with regard to the spiritual world, what our bodily, external senses, are with regard to the material world. They are the only medium, by which an intercourse between Christ and our souls can be opened and maintained.

The exercise of these senses is peculiar to those, who are born of God. They belong to what the Apostles call "the new man, the inward man, the new creature, the hidden man of the heart." In believers, this hidden man is awakened and raised from the dead, by the power of Christ's resurrection. Christ is his life, the Spirit of God is his spirit, prayer or praise his breath, holiness his health, and love his element. We read of his hunger, thirst, food and drink, garment and habitation, armour and conflicts, pain and pleasure, fainting and reviving, growing, walking, and working. All this supposes senses, and the more these senses are quickened by God, and exercised by the new born soul, the clearer and stronger is his perception of divine things.

On the other hand, in unbelievers, the inward man is deaf; blind, naked, asleep, past feeling; yea, dead in trespasses and sins; and of course, as incapable of perceiving spiritual things, as a person in a deep sleep, or a dead man, discovering outward objects. St. Paul's language to him is, "Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." He calls him



a *natural man*, one who hath no higher life than that his parents conveyed to him by natural generation,—one who follows the dictates of his own sensual soul, and is neither born of God, nor led by the Spirit of God. “The natural man,” says the Apostle, “receiveth not the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” He has no sense properly exercised for this kind of discernment, his “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into his heart, the things, which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

The reverse of the natural man is the *spiritual*, so called, because God hath revealed spiritual things to him by his Spirit, who is now in him a principle of spiritual and eternal life. “The spiritual man,” says the Apostle, “judgeth,” i. e. discerneth “all things, yet he himself is discerned of no man.” The high state he is in can no more be discerned by the natural man, than the condition of the natural man can be discerned by a brute.<sup>1</sup>

St. Paul not only describes the spiritual man, but speaks particularly of his internal, moral senses. Christians, says he, of full age, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.<sup>2</sup> He prays, that the love of the Philippians “may abound more and more in knowledge, and in all *sense* or *feeling*,” (*en pasē aisthēsei.*)<sup>3</sup> The scriptures constantly mention, or allude to one or other of these spiritual senses. Give me leave to produce some instances.

1. To begin with the SIGHT. St. Paul prays, that the *eyes* of his converts being enlightened,

(1.) 1 Cor. ii, 10—15. (2.) Heb. v, 14. (3.) Phil. i, 9.

they might know what is the hope of their calling. He reminds them, that Christ had been evidently set forth crucified before their *eyes*. He assures them, that the God of this world hath blinded the *eyes* of them that believe not the gospel; and declares that his commission was to open the *eyes* of the Gentiles, and turn them from darkness to light. Abraham *saw* Christ's day, and was glad. Moses persevered, as *seeing* him who is invisible. David prayed, Open my *eyes* that I may see wonders out of thy Law. Our Lord complains, that the heart of unbelievers is waxed gross; that their ears are dull of hearing, and that they have closed their *eyes*, lest they should *see with their eyes*, understand with their hearts, and be converted. He counsels the Laodiceans, to anoint their *eyes* with eye-salve, that they might see. He declares, that the world cannot receive the Spirit of truth, because it *sees* him not; that the things, which belong to the peace of obstinate unbelievers, are, at last, judicially hid from their *eyes*; and, that the pure in heart shall *see* God. St. John testifies, that he, who does evil, hath not *seen* God; and that darkness hath blinded the *eyes* of him, that loves not his brother. The Holy Ghost informs us, that believers look at the things which are not *seen*, and behold the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ. These are the eyes, with which believers see the salvation of God. They are so distinct from those of the body, that when our Lord opened them in St Paul's soul, he suffered scales to grow over his bodily eyes. And no doubt, when Christ gave outward sight to the blind, it was chiefly to convince the world,

that it is he who can say to blind sinners, Receive your sight ; see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living ; look unto me and be saved.

2. If you do not admit of a spiritual HEARING, what can you make of our Lord's repeated caution, He that hath an *ear* to hear, let him hear ? And what can be the meaning of the following scriptures. Hear, O foolish people, who have *ears* and hear not. Ye uncircumcised in heart and *ears*. Ye cannot *hear* my words ; ye are of your father the devil. He, that is of God *heareth* God's word ; ye, therefore, *hear* them not, because ye are not of God ? Can it be supposed, that our Lord spake of outward hearing, when he said, The hour cometh, and now is, that the dead shall *hear* the voice of the Son of God, and live. My sheep *hear* my voice. He that hath *heard* and learned of the Father, cometh unto me ? Do not all sinners stand spiritually in need of Christ's powerful Ephphatha, Be thou opened ? Is that man truly converted, who cannot witness with Isaiah, The Lord hath awakened my *ear* to hear as the learned ; and with the Psalmist : Mine *ears* hath thou opened ? Had not the believers at Ephesus *heard* Christ, and been taught of him ? When St. Paul was caught up into the third heaven, did he not *hear* words unspeakable ? And far from thinking spiritual hearing absurd, or impossible, did he not question, whether he was not then out of the body ? And does not St. John positively declare, that he was in the Spirit, when he heard Jesus say, I am the first and the last ?

3. How void of meaning are the following passages, if they do not allude to that SENSE,

which is calculated for the reception of, what the barrenness of human language compels me to call spiritual perfumes? The *smell* of thy ointments is better than all spices. The *smell* of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon, all thy garments *smell* of myrrh, aloes, and cassia; and because of the *savour* of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth.

4. If believers have not a spiritual faculty of TASTING divine things, what delusion must they be under, when they say, Christ's *fruit is sweet* to their *taste*; and cry out, How sweet are thy words to my *taste*! they are sweeter than honey to my mouth! But how justly can they speak thus, if they have *tasted* the heavenly gift, and the good word of God, and, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of it! Surely, if they *eat* the flesh of the Son of God, *drink* his blood, and *taste* that the Lord is gracious, they have a right to testify that "his love is better than wine;" and to invite those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, to *taste* that the Lord is good, that they also may be satisfied with his goodness and mercy, as with marrow and fatness.

5. If we are not to be perfect Stoics in Religion, if we should have one degree more of devotion than the marble statues which adorn our churches, we should have, I think, some FEELING of our unworthiness, some SENSE of God's majesty. Christ's tender heart was pierced to atone for, and remove the hardness of ours. God promises to take from us the *heart of stone*, and to give us a heart of flesh, *a broken and contrite heart*, the sacrifice of which he will not despise. Good king Josiah was praised, because his heart

was *tender*. The conversion of the three thousand, on the day of pentecost, began by their being *pricked* in their heart. We are directed to *feel* after God, if haply we might find him. Our Lord himself is not ashamed to be *touched*, in heaven, with a *feeling* of our infirmities. And St. Paul intimates, that the highest degree of obduracy and apostacy, is to be *past feeling*, and to have our conscience *seared* as with a hot iron.

I hope, Sir, you will not attempt to set aside so many plain passages, by saying, they are unfit to support a doctrine, as containing empty metaphors, which amount just to nothing. This would be pouring the greatest contempt on the perspicuity of the oracles of God, the integrity of the sacred writers, and the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, who inspired them. As certainly as there is a spiritual life, there are senses calculated for the display and enjoyment of it. And these senses exist no more in metaphor, than the life, that exerts itself by them. Our Lord settled the point, when he declared to Nicodemus, that no man can see the kingdom of God, the kingdom of grace here, and of glory hereafter, except he is first born of God, born of the Spirit; just as no child can see this world, except he is first born of a woman, born of the flesh. Hence it appears, that a regenerate soul hath its spiritual senses opened, and made capable of discerning what belongs to the spiritual world; as a new born infant hath his natural senses unlocked, and begins to see, hear, and taste, what belongs to the material world into which he enters.

II. These declarations of the Lord, his prophets, and apostles, need no confirmation.

Nevertheless, to show you, Sir, that I do not mistake their meaning, I shall add the testimony of our own excellent *Church*. As she strictly agrees with the scripture, she makes also frequent mention of spiritual sensations, and you know, Sir, that *sensations* necessarily suppose *senses*. She prays, that God would, "Give us a *due* sense of his inestimable love in the redemption of the world, by our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> She begs, that he would "make us know and *feel* there is no other name than that of Jesus, whereby we must be saved."<sup>2</sup> She affirms, that, true penitents feel "the burden of their sins intolerable;"<sup>3</sup> that godly persons "*feel* in themselves the workings of Christ's Spirit;"<sup>4</sup> that, "the Lord speaks presently to us in the scriptures, to the great and endless comfort of all that have any *feeling* of God in them at all;" that, "godly men *felt*, inwardly, the Holy Ghost inflaming their hearts with the fear and love of God, and that they are miserable wretches, who have no *feeling* of God within them at all."<sup>5</sup> And, that, "if we *feel* the heavy burden of all our sins pressing our souls, and tormenting us with the fear of death, hell, and damnation, we must *steadfastly behold* Christ crucified, with the eyes of our heart."<sup>6</sup>

Our Church further declares, that, "true faith is not in the mouth and outward profession only, but liveth and *stirreth* inwardly in the heart, and that if we *feel* and perceive such a faith in us, we must rejoice."<sup>7</sup> That, "correction though painful, bringeth with it a *taste* of God's

(1.) Thanksgiving. (2.) Office for the Sick. (3.) Communion. (4.) 17 Article. (5.) Hom. on certain places of Scripture. (6.) 2nd. Hom. on the Passion. (7.) Hom. on Faith, 1st. and 3rd part.

goodness." That, "if after contrition, we *feel* our consciences at peace with God, through the remission of our sin, it is God, who worketh that great miracle in us ;" and she prays, that, "as this knowledge and *feeling* is not in ourselves, and, as by ourselves, it is not possible to come by it, the Lord would give us grace to know these things, and *feel* them in our hearts."<sup>1</sup> She begs, that "God would assist us with his Holy Spirit, that we may *hearken* to the voice of the Good Shepherd."<sup>2</sup> She sets us upon asking continually, that the Lord would "lighten our darkness," and deliver us from the two heaviest plagues of Pharaoh, "blindness and hardness of heart."<sup>3</sup> And, she affirms, that, "if we will be profitable hearers of the scriptures, we must keep under our *carnal senses*, taken by the outward words, search the inward meaning, and give place to the Holy Ghost," whose peculiar office it is to open our spiritual senses, as he opened Lydia's heart.<sup>4</sup>

If I did not think the testimony of our blessed Reformers, founded upon that of the sacred writers, of sufficient weight to turn the scale of your sentiments, I could throw in the declarations of many ancient and modern divines. To instance in two or three only. St. Cyril, in the xiii Book of his Treasure, affirms, that, "men know Jesus is the Lord, by the Holy Ghost, no otherwise than they, who *taste* honey, know it is sweet, even by its proper quality." Dr. Smith of Queen's College, Cambridge, in his select

(1.) Hom. on the fear of death, 2nd part. (2.) Hom. for Rogation week 3rd part. (3.) Hom. on repent. 2nd part. (4.) Evening prayer and Litany. Hom. on certain places of scripture.

discourses, observes after Plotinus, that "God is best discerned (*noera tē aphē*) by an *intellectual touch* of him." We must, says he, *see with our eyes, to use St. John's words, we must hear with our ears, and our hands must handle the Word of life, (esti gar psuchēs aisthēsis tis)* for the soul hath its *sense* as well as the body." And Bishop Hopkins, in his treatise on the new birth, accounts for the papists denying the knowledge of salvation, by saying, "It is no wonder, that they who will not trust their *natural senses*, in the doctrine of transubstantiation, should not trust their *spiritual ones* in the doctrine of assurance."

III. But instead of proving the point by multiplying quotations, let me intreat you, Sir, to weigh the following observations in the balance of *Reason*.

1. Do not all grant, there is such a thing as moral sense in the world, and that to be utterly void of it, is to be altogether unfit for social life? If you had given a friend the greatest proofs of your love, would not he be inexcusable, if he *felt* no gratitude, and had absolutely no *sense* of your kindness? Now, if moral sense and *feeling* are universally allowed, between man and man, in civil life, why should it appear incredible, or irrational, that there should be such a thing, between God and man, in the divine Life?

2. To conclude, if material objects cannot be perceived by man in his present state, but through the medium of one or other of his bodily senses, by a parity of reason, spiritual objects cannot be discovered, but through one or other of the senses, which belong to the inward



man. God being a Spirit, cannot be worshipped in truth, unless he is known in Spirit. You may as soon imagine, how a blind man, by reasoning on what he feels or tastes, can get true ideas of light and colours, as how one, who has no spiritual senses opened, can, by all his reasoning and guessing, attain an experimental knowledge of the invisible God.

Thus from the joint testimony of SCRIPTURE, of our CHURCH, and of REASON, it appears, that spiritual senses are a blessed reality. I have dwelt so long on the proof of their existence for two reasons. Firstly, They are of infinite use in religion. Saving faith cannot subsist and act without them. If St. Paul's definition of that grace be just, if it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," it must be a principle of spiritual life, more or less, attended with the exercise of these senses; according to the poetic and evangelical lines of Dr. Young :

"My heart awake,  
FEEL the great truths : TO FEEL is to be fired,  
And to believe, LORENZO, is to FEEL."

Till professors see the necessity of believing, in this manner, they rest in a refined form of godliness. To the confidence of the Antinomians, they may, indeed, join the high profession of the foolish virgins. They may even crown their partial assent to the truths of the gospel with the zeal of Pharisees, and the regularity of moralists : but still they stop short of the *new creation*, the *new birth*, the *life of God* in the soul of man. Nay more, they stumble at some of the most important truths of Christianity, and

think the discoveries, that sound believers have of Christ and the spiritual world, are enthusiastical delusions, or, at least, extraordinary favours, which they can very well do without. Thus, even while they allow the power of godliness to others, they rest satisfied without experiencing it in themselves.

Secondly, What I shall write will depend very much on the existence of spiritual senses; and if this letter convinces you, that they are opened in every new-born soul, you will more easily believe, Christ can and does manifest himself by that proper medium; and my letters on Divine manifestations will meet with a less prejudiced reader.

That Emmanuel, *the Light of the world*, may direct me to write with soberness and truth, and you to read with attention and candour, is the sincere prayer of, Sir, Yours, &c.

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## Second Letter.

HAVING proved, in my first letter, the existence of the spiritual senses, to which the Lord manifests himself, I shall now enter upon that subject, by letting you know, as far as my pen can do it, I. What is the *nature* of that manifestation, which makes the believer more than conqueror over sin and death.

1. Mistake me not, for the pleasure of calling me enthusiast. I do not insist, as you may imagine, upon a manifestation of the voice, body, or blood of our Lord, to our external senses. Pilate heard Christ's voice, the Jews saw his

body, the soldiers handled it, and some of them were literally sprinkled with his blood ; but this answered no spiritual end. They knew not God manifest in the flesh.

2. Nor do I understand such a knowledge of our Redeemer's doctrine, offices, promises, and performances, as the natural man can attain, by the force of his understanding and memory. All carnal professors, all foolish virgins, by conversing with true Christians, hearing gospel sermons, and reading evangelical books, attain to the historical, and doctrinal knowledge of Jesus Christ. Their understandings are informed ; but, alas ! their hearts remain unchanged, Acquainted with the letter, they continue ignorant of the Spirit ; boasting, perhaps, of the greatness of Christ's salvation, they remain altogether unsaved ; and full of talk about what he hath done for them, they know nothing of " Christ in them, the hope of glory."

3. Much less do I mean such a representation of our Lord's person and sufferings, as the natural man can form to himself, by the force of a warm imagination. Many, by seeing a striking picture of Jesus bleeding on the cross, or hearing a pathetic discourse on his agony in the garden, are deeply affected and melted into tears. They raise in themselves, a lively idea of a great and good man unjustly tortured to death ; their soft passions are wrought upon, and pity fills their heaving breasts. But, alas ! they remain strangers to the revelation of the Son of God by the Holy Ghost. The murder of Julius Cæsar, pathetically described, would have the same effect upon them, as the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. A deep play

would touch them as easily as a deep sermon, and much to the same purpose ; for in either case, their impressions, and their tears are generally wiped away together.

4. Nor yet do I understand good desires, meltings of heart, victories over particular corruptions, a confidence that the Lord can and will save us, power to stay ourselves on some promises, gleams of joy, rays of comfort, enlivening hopes, touches of love ; no, not even foretastes of Christian liberty, and of the good of God. These are rather the delightful drawings of the Father, than the powerful revelations of the Son. These, like the star, than led the wise men for a time, then disappeared, and appeared again, are helps and encouragements, to come to Christ ; and not a divine union with him, by the revelation of himself.

I can more easily tell you, Sir, what this revelation is not, than what it is. The tongues of men and angels want proper words to express the sweetness and glory with which the Son of God visits the souls that cannot rest without him. This blessing is not to be described, but enjoyed. It is to be "written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on paper, or tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart." May the Lord himself explain the mystery, by giving you to eat of the hidden manna, and bestowing upon you the new name, which no man knows, save he that receives it ! In the mean time, take a view of the following rough draft of this mercy ; and, if it is agreeable to the letter of the word, pray that it may be engraved on your heart, by the power of the Spirit.

The revelation of Christ, by which a carnal professor becomes a holy and happy possessor of the faith, is a supernatural, spiritual, experimental manifestation of the Spirit, power, and love, and sometimes of the Person of God manifest in the flesh, whereby he is known and enjoyed in a manner altogether new—as new as the knowledge of a man, who never tasted any thing but bread and water, would have of honey and wine, suppose, being dissatisfied with the best descriptions of those rich productions of nature, he actually tasted them for himself.

This manifestation is, sooner or later, in a higher or lower degree, vouchsafed to every sincere seeker, through the medium of one or more of the spiritual senses opened in his soul, in a gradual or instantaneous manner, as it pleases God. No sooner is the veil of unbelief which covers the heart rent, through the agency of the Spirit, and the efforts of the soul struggling into a living belief of the word—no sooner, I say, is the door of faith opened, than Christ, who stood at the door and knocked, comes in, and discovers himself full of grace and truth. Then the tabernacle of God is with man. His kingdom comes with power. Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost spread through the new-born soul; eternal life begins; heaven is open on earth; the conscious heir of glory cries, Abba, Father; and from blessed experience can witness, that he is come to “Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all,

and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.”

If this manifestation is duly improved, the effects of it are admirable. The believer's heart, now set at liberty from the guilt and dominion of sin, and drawn by the love of Jesus, pants after greater conformity to his holy will, and mounts up to him in prayer and praise. His life is a course of cheerful, evangelical obedience, and his most common actions become good works, done to the glory of God. If he walks up to his privileges, outward objects entangle him no more. Having found the great I AM, the eternal substance, he looks upon all created things as shadows. Man, the most excellent of all, appears to him altogether lighter than vanity. Yea, doubtless he counts all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord; esteeming them but dung that he may win Christ, and to the last, be found in him, not having his own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ. That, by new discoveries of himself, he may know him and the power of his resurrection, every day more clearly. In the mean time, he casts his sins and miseries upon Jesus, and Jesus bestows his righteousness and happiness upon him. He puts on Christ, and becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Thus, they are mutually interested in each other; and to use St. Paul's endearing expressions, they are espoused and married. Joined by the double band of redeeming love and saving faith, they are one spirit, as Adam and Eve, by matrimony,

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were one flesh. "This is a great *mystery*," says the Apostle, but, thanks be to God, it is made manifest to his saints.<sup>1</sup>

II. If you ask, sir, How can these things be? Describe to me the particular *manner* of these manifestations? I reply in our Lord's words to Nicodemus, "Art thou a master in Israel," nay more, a Christian, "and knowest not these things?" Verily, I say unto you, though we cannot fix the exact mode, and precise manner of the breathing of the Spirit, yet we speak what we do know, and testify what we have seen, but you receive not our witness. Marvel not, however, if we find it impossible to tell you all the particulars of a divine manifestation. You yourself, though you feel the wind, see its amazing effects, and hear the sound of it, cannot tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; much less could you describe it to the satisfaction of one who never heard or felt it himself. Many earthly things cannot be conceived by earthly men. The blind, for example, can never conceive the difference of colours; what wonder, then, if natural men do not understand us, when we tell them of heavenly things.

Nevertheless, I would in general, observe, that the manner in which the manifestation of the Son of God is vouchsafed, is not the same in all persons, nor in the same person at all times. The wind bloweth where it listeth; much more the Spirit of the living God. His thoughts are not as our thoughts: he dispenseth his blessings, not as we expect them, but as it pleases him. Most commonly, however, the sinner, driven out

(1.) Eph. v. 32.

of all his refuges of lies, feels an aching void in his soul. Unable to satisfy himself any longer with the husks of empty vanity, dry morality, and speculative christianity; and tired with the best form of godliness which is not attended with the power of it, he is brought to a spiritual famine, and hungers after heavenly food. Convinced of unbelief, he feels the want of the *faith of God's operation*. He sees that nothing short of an immediate display of the Lord's arm can bring his soul into *the kingdom of God*, and fill it with righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost. Sometimes, encouraged by lively hopes, he struggles into liberty of heart, and prays with groanings which cannot be uttered. At other times, almost sinking under a burden of guilty fear, or stupid unbelief, he is violently tempted to throw away his hope, and go back to Egypt; but an invisible hand supports him, and, far from yielding to the base suggestion, he resumes courage, and determines to follow on to know the Lord, or to die seeking him. Thus he continues wandering up and down in a spiritual wilderness, until the Lord gives him the rest of faith, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

This evidence comes in various ways. Sometimes the spiritual eye is first opened, and chiefly wrought upon. Then the believer, in a divine, transformed light, discovers God in the man Christ, perceives unspeakable glories in his despised person, and admires infinite wisdom, power, justice, and mercy, and in the blood of the cross. He reads the scriptures with new eyes. The mysterious book is unsealed, and everywhere



testifies of him whom his soul loves. He views experimentally, as well as doctrinally, the suitability of the Redeemer's offices, the firmness of his promises, the sufficiency of his righteousness, the preciousness of his atonement, and the completeness of his salvation. He sees, and feels his interest in all. Thus he beholds, believes, wonders, and adores. Sight being the noblest sense, this sort of manifestation is generally the brightest.

Perhaps his spiritual ear is first opened, and that voice which raises the dead "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee," passes with power through his waiting soul. He knows, by the *gracious effect*, it is the voice of Him, who said once, "Let there be light, and there was light." He is sensible of a new creation, and can say, by the testimony of God's Spirit, bearing witness with his spirit,—This is my beloved's voice; he is mine, and I am his, I have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of my sins. And having much forgiven, he loves much, and obeys in proportion.

Frequently also Christ manifests himself, first and chiefly to the spiritual feeling. He takes the burden of guilt, dejection, and sin, from the heavy-laden soul; and in the room of it, imparts a strong sense of liberty, peace, love, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The ransomed sinner, enabled to overcome racking doubts or dull insensibility, believes now with the heart unto righteousness, and makes confession with the mouth unto salvation. Surely, says he, In the Lord, I have righteousness and strength. This is the finger of God. This day has salvation come to my soul. None but Jesus could do this for me. The Lord

he is God ; he is my Lord and my God. This manifestation is generally the lowest, as being made to a lower sense ; therefore great care ought to be taken, not to confound it with the strong drawings of the Father, on which it borders. Some babes in Christ, who, like young Samuel, have not yet their senses properly exercised to know the things freely given to them of God, are often made uneasy on this very account. Nor can they be fully satisfied, until they find the effects of this manifestation are lasting, or they obtain clearer ones by means of the nobler senses,—the sight or hearing of the heart.

III. Though I contend only for those discoveries of Christ, which are made to the *internal* senses, because such only are promised to *all* ; yet I cannot without contradicting scripture, deny, that the *external senses* have been wrought upon in some manifestations. When Abraham saw his Saviour's day he was, it seems, allowed to wash his feet with water, Gen xviii. 3. as afterwards the penitent harlot did with her tears. And Saul, in his way to Damascus, saw Jesus's glory and heard his voice both externally and internally, for they, "that journeyed with him, saw the light, and heard a voice," though they could not distinguish the words which were spoken.

Sometimes also manifestations, though merely internal, have appeared external to those, who were favoured with them. When the Lord called Samuel, in Shiloh, the pious youth supposed the call was outward, and ran to Eli, saying, Thou callest me. But it seems the voice had struck his spiritual ear only ; otherwise the high

priest, who was within hearing, would have heard it, as well as the young prophet. And though Stephen stedfastly looked up to heaven, as if he really saw Christ there with his bodily eyes, it is plain he discovered him only with those of his faith, for the roof of the house where the court was held, bounded his outward sight ; and that if Christ had appeared in the room, so as to be visible to common eyes, the council of the Jews would have seen him, as well as the pious prisoner at the bar.

Hence we learn,—Firstly, That the knowledge of spiritual things, received by spiritual sense, is as clear, as the knowledge of natural things, obtained by bodily sense. Secondly, That it is sometimes possible to be doubtful, whether the outward eye or ear is not concerned in particular revelations ; since this was not only the case of Samuel, but of St. Paul himself, who could not tell, whether the unspeakable words, he heard in paradise, struck his bodily ears, or only those of his soul. Thirdly, That no stress is to be laid upon the external circumstances, which have sometimes accompanied the revelation of Christ. If aged Simeon had been as blind as old Isaac, and as much disabled from taking the child Jesus in his arms as the paralytic, the internal revelation he had of Christ could have made him say with the same assurance, Now Lord, let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. If the Apostle had not been struck to the ground, and his eyes dazzled by outward light, his conversion would not have been less real, provided he had been inwardly humbled and enlightened. And, if Thomas,

waiving the carnal demonstration he insisted upon, had experienced only in his inner man, that Christ is the resurrection and the life, he could have confessed him, with as great a consciousness he was not mistaken, as when he cried out, My Lord, and my God!

I am, Sir, Yours, &c.

### Third Letter.

IV. **W**HY the Lord manifests himself to the children of men is an important question, which I now come to consider. It is not, we may easily think, for the gratification of their curiosity, but for purposes worthy of his wisdom: and what these are, we shall soon learn, if we reduce divine manifestations to three general classes, *Extraordinary*, *Ordinary*, and *Mixed Ones*; and then consider the design and use of each, as it may be collected from scripture.

I. To begin with manifestations of the *Extraordinary kind*: they are such as are either merely external, or vouchsafed to a few only on particular occasions, and are by no means essential to salvation.

1. Some of these are calculated to rouse the thoughtless into consideration. Of this kind was the manifestation some were favoured with, a little before our Lord's passion. "As he prayed, there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have glorified my name, and will glorify it again. The people that stood by, and heard it, said, it thundered;" they looked upon the extraordinary call as something common and natural. "Others

said, An angel spake to him. But Jesus said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes."

2. Others are intended as a last warning to notorious sinners. Of this nature was the terrifying sight Nebuchadnezzar had, in his second dream of "a Watcher and Holy One coming down from heaven, and crying aloud, Cut down the tree." And that of the mysterious hand, which wrote Belshazzar's doom on the wall, while he profaned the sacred vessels in his night revels.

3. Some are designed for the protection of God's people, and the destruction or humiliation of their proud enemies. As when the "Lord looked to the Egyptians, through the pillar of fire, and troubled their host." When "he cast down great stones from heaven" upon the armies of the five kings, who fought against Israel. Or when he manifested his presence in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, to quench the violence of the flame, preserve the three confessors, and convince the raging tyrant, that God's kingdom ruleth over all.

4. The design of others is to encourage the children of God in dangerous enterprises, or direct them in important steps. Of this kind was that to Joshua, before he began the conquest of Canaan; and that to St. Paul, when the Lord stood by him in the prison, and informed him he must bear witness to him also at Rome.

5. Some are calculated to appoint some persons to uncommon services and trials, or to the prophetic and ministerial office. As that in which Noah was commissioned to build the ark,

Abraham to offer up Isaac, Moses to deliver Israel, Nathan to reprove David, Balaam to bless Israel, and Jeremiah to preach to the Jews.

6. Others again are designed to answer providential ends for the deliverance of the people of God, as those of Gideon ; or spiritual ends of reproof, instruction, and consolation to the church throughout all ages, as most of the revelations vouchsafed to the Prophets, and to St. John.

II. The manifestations essential either to the conversion of sinners, or edification of saints, and which the word of God, and the experiences of Christians show to be common to all believers, in all ages of the church, are of the *Ordinary kind*, and their use or design is,

1. To make the word, spirit and life, "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder soul and spirit," that the gospel may not come to sinners "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

2. To ease an anguished conscience, and impart the peace of God to a troubled mind : as in the case of broken-hearted David, mourning Hezekiah, weeping Peter, and Paul agonizing in prayer.

3. To reveal Christ to us, and in us, so as to make us savingly believe, and know, in whom we have believed, according to the experiences of Peter, Lydia, Cornelius, and every living member of Christ.

4. To open a blessed intercourse, and keep up a delightful communion with Christ ; as appears from the experiences of believers illustrated in the Canticles.

5. To silence the remains of self-righteousness, and deepen the humiliation of our souls ; as in the case of Job. To make us grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To bruise satan under our feet, yea to bruise the serpent's head in our hearts, and seal the exceeding great and precious promises given to us, that we might be partakers of the divine nature, and continue immoveable, always abounding in the work of faith, the patience of hope, and the labour of love. In a word, to "strengthen us with might, by God's Spirit, in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and we may be filled with all the fulness of God."

6. To prepare us for great trials, support us under them, and comfort us after them. This was our Lord's experience before his temptation, after he had overcome the tempter, and when he was in the height of his agony. This was also the case of David, St. Paul, and of all the apostles, when they had been scourged for the name of Jesus ; and it is still the case of all true and deep mourners in Sion.

7. And lastly, to make us depart in peace, as Simeon ; or die in perfect love with our enemies, and in the full triumph of faith, as St. Stephen. All, who live and die in the Lord, partake, more or less, of these ordinary displays of his powerful presence ; and I desire you, Sir, to remember, that it is *chiefly*, if not only, in support of these important manifestations I take up the pen.

III. The third class of manifestations is that of *Mixed Ones* ; so called, because they are partly extraordinary, and partly ordinary. Some are ordinary in their design, and extraordinary in

their circumstances. Of this sort was the manifestation to the apostles, Acts iv. 31. The design of it was merely common, i. e. to comfort them under contempt, and encourage them to do good and suffer evil; but the *shaking of the place where they were assembled*, was an uncommon circumstance. The same thing may be said of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the hundred and twenty who were assembled in the upper room on the day of Pentecost; and some time after upon Cornelius and his soldiers. That they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost and spiritual fire was not extraordinary, since it is the common blessing, which can alone make a man a Christian, or confirm him in the faith; but that the sound of a rushing wind should be heard, and luminous appearances seen resting upon them, and that they should have been enabled to speak the wonderful works of God in other tongues, were uncommon circumstances attending their spiritual baptism.

Some manifestations are mixed, both as to their design and circumstances. That the iniquity of Isaiah should be put away, and St. Paul converted, were not uncommon things; they are the common effects of ordinary manifestations. But that the prophet should be commissioned to preach to the Jews, and the apostle to open the eyes of the Gentiles, were extraordinary circumstances; as also, a flying cherub appearing to the one, and a light brighter than the sun, blinding the other.

For want of distinguishing properly between what is ordinary and extraordinary in mixed manifestations, persons who are not possessed of a clear head, or what is worse, of an honest heart,



conclude, that none but enthusiasts speak now of divine manifestations. If they hear it affirmed, they must be converted as well as St. Paul, they pertly ask, Whether they are Jews, and whether they must be struck to the earth by a voice from heaven? They willingly forget, that our Lord spake to his hearers as sinful men, and not as bigoted Jews, when he said "Except ye be converted, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." They obstinately refuse to see, that the circumstances of the apostle's falling to the ground, &c., were not essential to his conversion, and had no other use, than to make his call more remarkable for the conversion of the Jews, and comfort of the Christians. When the same prejudiced persons are told, that they must be born of the Spirit, and receive the Holy Ghost, as well as Cornelius and his servants, overlooking the ordinary baptism of the Spirit, they pitch upon the extraordinary circumstance of the gift of tongues, imparted for a season, to remove the prejudices of the Jews, and to draw the attention of the Gentiles; and think, with a sneer, and a charge of enthusiasm, to overturn the apostolic saying, "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Be not deceived, sir, by these persons. Acknowledge that, so sure as you want the regenerating knowledge of Christ, you want the manifestations of his Spirit, without which he can never be known savingly. To return,

Though I contend only for the *ordinary* manifestations of Christ, I am far from supposing, that all *extraordinary* or *mixed* manifestations have ceased. Such a concession would savour

too much of the spirit of infidelity, which prevails in the Church. They are more frequent than many imagine. To instance in one particular, how far I am from acquiescing with that infidel spirit,—I am so attached to that old book the Bible, as to say of many, who pass for ministers of Christ, “Woe to the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing ; that say, the Lord says, and the Lord hath not sent them.” I think the desire of being styled Reverend, or Right Reverend, and the prospect of a living or a mitre, are very improper motives for assuming the sacred character. And I am such an enthusiast as to believe our church in the right for requiring that all her ministers should not only be called, but even *MOVED* by the Holy Ghost to take the office of Ambassador for Christ upon themselves.<sup>1</sup>

IV. Having mentioned the design and use of ordinary manifestations, it may not be improper, to touch upon the *abuse* of them. Their genuine tendency is to humble to the dust. The language of those, who are favoured with them, is,—Will God indeed dwell on the earth ! Lord what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him ! Now, that I see thee, I abhor myself. I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies. I am dust and ashes.—But as there is nothing, which the heart of man cannot be tempted to corrupt and pervert, so, as soon as the power attending the manifestation is a little abated, satan begins to shoot his fiery darts of spiritual pride. “You are a peculiar favourite of heaven,” whispers that old serpent,

(1) Ordination.

"few are so highly blessed. All your enemies are scattered ; you need not be so watchful in prayer, and so strict in self-denial : you shall never fall." If the believer is not upon his guard, and quenches not these fiery darts with his shield, as fast as the enemy throws them, he is soon wounded, and pride kindles again upon him.

St. Paul himself was in danger from this quarter, "There was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations." Aaron and Miriam fell into this snare, when they spake against Moses, saying, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses ? Hath not he spoken by us also ?" David likewise acknowledges his error in this respect. "In my prosperity, I said, I shall never be moved, thou, Lord, of thy goodness hast made my hill so strong ;" but my heart was lifted up, and my confidence partly carnal, therefore, "thou didst turn thy face from me, and I was troubled." The way to avoid the danger is to foresee it ; to look much to the lowly Jesus, and upon the first approach of a temptation to pride, to give, with double diligence, all the glory to him that graciously bestowed all, and to take, with double care, all the shame of our sins to ourselves. St. Paul's direction in this case is excellent. "Because of unbelief some were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear."

Another genuine effect of divine manifestations is an increase of confidence in the Lord, and of activity in his service. What holy boldness filled the souls of those worthies, who through faith, wrought righteousness, and turned to flight

the armies of the aliens? How did the love of Christ constrain the disciples to speak and act for God after the day of Pentecost? Nothing could exceed their fortitude and diligence. Nevertheless, if the temptation to pride is yielded to, the Comforter is grieved, and carnal security, indolence of spirit, and indulgence of the flesh, insensibly prevail. The deluded professor though shorn of his strength, like Sampson, fancies himself the same. Soul, says he, thou hast goods laid up for many years, even for ever; though the Lord manifest himself to thee no more, be neither uneasy nor afraid; he changes not. Sometimes the delusion grows to that height, that the farther he goes from the kingdom of God, the stronger he imagines his faith. He even speaks contemptuously of that kingdom. He calls righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, a *frame of sensible feeling*, a low dispensation, beyond which he has happily got. He thanks God he can now rest upon the bare word, without an application of it to his heart; that is to say, he can be fully satisfied with the letter without the Spirit, he can feed upon the empty husks of notions and opinions, as if they were power and life.

The end of this dreadful mistake is generally a relapse into gross sin; witness the falls of David and Solomon; or what is not much better, a settling in a form, without the power of godliness, as the Laodiceans of old, and too many now, who have a name to live and are dead. The only way to avoid this precipice, is to follow the light of the first manifestation, and look daily for new visits from Christ, till he makes his abode with

us, and we walk in the light, as he is in the light. A manifestation of the Spirit last year will no more support a soul this year, than air breathed yesterday will nourish the flame of life to day. The sun, which, warmed us last week, must shine again this week. Old light is dead light. A notion of old warmth is a very cold notion. We must have fresh food daily, and though we need not a new Christ, we need perpetually, new displays of his eternal love and power. The Lord taught us this important lesson, by making the manna, he gave Israel in the wilderness, to disappear every day, and causing that which was not gathered fresh, to breed worms and stink. Nevertheless, as the mysterious food kept sweet in the golden pot in the ark, so does the heavenly power in Christ, to whom every true Israelite will come daily for new supplies of hidden manna, for fresh manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Thousands, by not considering this, seek the living among the dead, fancying that a living Saviour is to be found in dead experiences, and that all is well though they live after the flesh, and are, perhaps, led captive by the devil at his will. But when their souls awake out of this dangerous dream they will be sensible of their mistake, and frankly acknowledge, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living;" and that, "if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning."

Leaving these lukewarm, formal, Laodicean professors to the mercy of God, I subscribe myself,  
Sir, Yours, &c.

## Fourth Letter.

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VI. **T**HAT some persons are blessed with clearer, stronger, or earlier manifestations than others, is undeniable ; and why it is so, is one of the mysteries of God's kingdom, that shall not be explained until the day of Judgment. In the meantime, the following reflections may possibly cast some light on that dark subject, and help us to say, He does all things well.

1. Our Lord suits the manifestations of himself to the various states of the church. Under the Mosaic dispensation, which consisted much in externals, divine manifestations had, generally, some external circumstances ; but the Christian Church, being formed upon a more spiritual plan, is favoured with revelations of a more spiritual, and internal nature.

2. The Lord considers us as rational creatures, in a state of probation. Were he to indulge us with powerful, incessant, overwhelming discoveries of himself, he would rather violently force, than gently lead us to repentance and obedience. Every day is not a day of Pentecost. Soon after the Son of God had seen the heavens open, he was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil ; and so is his spouse after him.<sup>1</sup> St. Paul, by observing that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, and that he kept his body under, lest he should become a castaway, intimates his

(1) Hos. ii. 14.

bright manifestation was not of such continuance and force, but he might have disobeyed, as Jonah did in a similar case. Some have, in fact, resisted bright manifestations in their day : witness Cain, Judas, Balaam, Saul, Nebuchadnezzar, and the Israelites who perished in the wilderness ; and too many backsliders are resisting them now. So sure, then, as there is a time of trial for faith, hope, and patience, there is also an abatement of the power which attends divine manifestations.

3. Our wise Redeemer proportions the means to the end. If the effect of a manifestation of his love is to be exceeding great, the manifestation must be exceeding bright. Suppose the burden of guilt and hardness, temptation and sorrow, under which one groans, is ten times greater than that which oppresses another, it is plain the manifestation which is to remove the tenfold weight is to be ten times stronger. The same rule holds also with regard to sufferings and labours. The hotter the fight of afflictions God's children are to go through, the stronger and the brighter also is the celestial armour put upon them at the revelation of the Captain of their Salvation.

4. Neither can it be doubted, but that our good God, in fixing the degree of divine manifestations, hath a particular respect to the state and capacity of the souls to whom he discovers himself. The deeper sinners mourn for him, the deeper he makes them drink of the cup of salvation at his appearing. Blessed are they that greatly hunger and thirst after righteousness ; their souls are thereby greatly enlarged to receive the oil of gladness, and the wine of the kingdom.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, those whose souls are empty as the vessels of the desolate widow, in the days of Elisha. When the heavenly Prophet shall visit them, the streams of his fulness shall certainly flow according to the degree of their emptiness.

5. A skilful physician prescribes weaker or stronger medicines, according to the state of his patients. So does the physician of souls; he weighs, if I may so speak, every drachm of the heavenly power in the scales of goodness and wisdom. He knows what quantity of the heavenly cordial our spirits can bear; and will not, without the greatest care, put the strong wine of his powerful love into a weak vessel. He sees, that as some persons can stand for a time the sight of the meridian sun, when others are hurt by the first appearance of a taper; so some Christians can bear the strong beams of his gracious presence, while others are almost overpowered by his fainter rays.

6. If some live and die without any manifestations of the Redeemer's love and glory, the reasons of it may possibly be found in the abysses of his justice and goodness. They grieve and quench the Spirit that convinces the world of sin; and it is very fit they should not have him as a Comforter, whom they obstinately reject as a Reprover. Add to this, that as our Lord foresees that if such people were favoured with tokens of his more distinguishing condescension, they would only abuse them, as Cain and the Pharisees did, he puts them not to the trial, nor suffers them to enhance their guilt by trampling richer mercy and love under foot: so that this seeming severity is, in fact, real benignity.



7. The Lord not only proportions the degree of his powerful appearance to the weakness of our souls, but also to that of our bodies. He knoweth whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but flesh. If the natural sun, that glorious emblem of our Emmanuel, was to approach as near our earth, and shine as bright as possible, the insufferable blaze and heat would instantly blind and consume us. By a parity of reason, were our bright sun of Righteousness to manifest his unclouded glory, or appear without the tempering medium of his manhood, no flesh could support the sight. The brain, unable to bear the high operations of the soul, would turn the heart of the wicked, swelled with intolerable pangs of fear; and that of the righteous, dilated by overwhelming transports of joy, would instantly burst. God therefore says, "No man can see my face," without some dimming veil, "and live." Hence arose likewise the grateful exclamations of Manoah and others, when the Lord had manifested himself to them, concealed under human appearances, "We have seen God, and live! We have beheld him, and are not consumed!"

8. This may, perhaps, help us to account why the Lord still hides his face from some of his sincere seekers. They sit begging by the wayside of his ordinances, and yet he does not pass by, so as to restore to them their spiritual sight, that they might know him. In all probability, he designs them such a bright manifestation as they are not able to bear. When their hearts are strengthened for the heavenly vision, it shall speak. Let them only wait for it. Let patience have its perfect work, and faith in the word be

tried to the uttermost ; and he that cometh, will come, and will not tarry. He will bring his reward with him, and a moment of his presence will make them abundant amends for the waiting of an age. Were he to appear, before they are prepared by the humiliation of repentance and the patience of hope, they would be in the case of those carnal Israelites, who far from being able to commune with God, could not so much as speak to Moses, when he came down from the mount, without first obliging him to put a veil over his shining face.

Peter, James, and John, were, it seems, the foremost of the apostles in spiritual strength and boldness ; nevertheless, the manifestation they had of Christ on the mount almost overwhelmed them. Their bodies sunk under the weight of his glory, and when they came out of their sleep or trance, they could not recover themselves. " they knew not what they said." This had been before the case of Daniel, and was once more that of St. John. The comeliness of the man greatly beloved was turned to corruption ; he retained no strength. And the beloved Apostle, when he saw his Saviour with some additional beams of glory, *fell at his feet as dead*. St. Paul not only lost his sight on such an occasion, but was near losing his life, being unable to take any refreshment for three days and three nights. And it is also generally supposed, that Moses actually died under the overpowering displays of the Redeemer's love. Hence we learn that God's way and time are best, and that we are to leave both to his gracious wisdom ; using the means in which he has promised to manifest himself to those that diligently seek him.

VII. What those means are is what I come in the last place to consider. The agent or author of every divine manifestation is the eternal God, One in Three, and Three in One. The Father reveals, the Son freely discovers himself, and the Holy Ghost freely testifies of him. Nevertheless, the scriptures, in general, attribute this wonder of grace to the blessed Spirit. "No man can," experimentally, "say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." It is his peculiar office to convince the world of righteousness, by giving us to know savingly the Lord our righteousness. "He shall glorify me," says Christ, "for he shall take of mine and shew it unto you." And this he does, without any merit of ours, in the means which God hath appointed, and which he enables us to use aright.

These means are both outward and inward. The outward are what our church calls "the means of grace," particularly hearing or reading the word, partaking of the sacraments, and praying together with one accord for the manifestation of the Spirit, as the primitive Christians did, Acts, ii. 1. These means are to be used with the greatest diligence, but not to be trusted to; the only proper object of our confidence is God, who works all in all. It was not Moses' rod which parted the Red Sea, but that Almighty Arm which once divided the water from the water without a rod. Nevertheless, as Moses was not to throw his rod away, under pretence of trusting in God alone, neither was he to rely on the weak instrument, as if the divine power resided in it.

Though the Lord in general works by means,

he ties himself to none, and sometimes works without any. The same Spirit which fell upon Cornelius, while Peter preached, fell upon Peter on the day of Pentecost, without any preaching. And the same Lord who opened Lydia's heart, by the ministry of St. Paul, opened the heart of St. Paul by the sole exertion of his power. We hence learn, that as on the one hand, we ought not with the profane and enthusiasts, to tempt the Lord by neglecting the use of any of the means he hath appointed; so, on the other hand, we must beware of confining God to particular means, times, and places, as the bigoted and superstitious do; remembering, that when we are cut off from all outward means, it is our privilege to wait for the immediate display of God's arm, in the use of the inward means.

Of these, the first is a believing there will be a performance of the Lord's promise, and that he is willing and able to manifest himself to us as he does not to the world: this is the very root of prayer, fervency, hope, and expectation. Without the actings of this preparatory faith, the soul droops, and becomes an easy prey to despondency, vanity, or sloth. Where this talent is buried, the Lord seldom works. "Believest thou that I am able to do this for thee?" is generally the first question that he puts to the seeker's heart. If it is answered in the negative, he can do no great miracle, because of this unbelief. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that St. Paul was blessed with the revelation of the Son of God, without any previous desire or expectation of it. In him, and in others, was this scripture fulfilled, "I was found of them that sought me not, I was

manifested unto them that asked not after me." But, in general where the gospel is preached, the Lord will be enquired of the house of Israel to do this ; and if he visits any with conviction, as he did St. Paul, it is only to make them pray, as that apostle did, until he manifests himself, by the Holy Ghost, in a way of consolation and love.

The second inward means of the manifestation of Christ is resignation, as to the particular manner, time, and place of it. Through patience, as well as faith and prayer, we inherit this promised blessing. Some, according to their carnal wisdom and forward imagination, mark out the way in which salvation is to come to their hearts ; but the Lord generally disappoints those unhumiliated seekers ; though, as in the case of Gideon, he may gratify one in a thousand : for believers are not "born of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The Jews expected the Messiah, and there they were right ; but they expected him in their own way, and there they stumbled and fell. While they looked for a mighty conqueror, another Alexander, to make them great, they overlooked the lowly Prince of Peace, who came to make them good ; and at last they crucified him as a base impostor. This Jewish disposition is in all by nature. Hence Christ is commonly rejected by Christians, as he was in the flesh by the Jews. We would have him come to give us an idle rest, but he appears to teach us to deny ungodliness, and fight the good fight of faith : this we do not like. Our nature wants to step at once into a throne ; but he offers first to nail us to the tree, and to

crucify our flesh with its affections and lusts : and from this we shrink as from the grave. We expect to be carried at once to the top of Mount Tabor, to see unutterable glory ; but he leads us to Gethsemane, to watch and pray, or to Calvary, to suffer and die with him : here we recoil, and do not choose to know him. Our forward impatience dictates that he shall instantaneously turn our midnight into noonday ; but instead of manifesting himself at once as the meridian sun, he will perhaps, appear only as the morning star, that our light may shine more and more unto the perfect day. This defeats our counsel, we despise the day of small things, and do not think so low an appearance worth our notice and thanks. If you, sir, ever seek the saving knowledge of Jesus, never stop till you can witness your sun goes down no more ; but in the meantime, never slight the least ray of heavenly light. The least may open into the broad day of eternity. Cease from your own false wisdom, and become as a little child, or you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, and see the King in his beauty.

The third and last inward means I would recommend to mourners in Zion, is a tender regard for the reproofs of the Spirit, a constant attention to the drawings of the Father, obedience to the calls they have to secret prayer, and a fear of depending upon their duties, and not solely upon the faithfulness of Jesus. Whoever follows these directions according to the grace given him, will of course cease from outward evil, and do as he can, the little good his hand finds to do. This is a better way of waiting for the revelation of Christ, than to lie down in dejection and

hopeless unbelief. All those who sullenly bury their one talent, and wilfully retain the accursed thing, complain in vain that their Lord makes long tarrying. They obstinately grieve his convincing Spirit, and then absurdly clamour because he does not reward them for it, by the comforts of his heavenly presence. Let us not be so unreasonable. Let us "strive to enter in at the strait gate," remembering that "many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." But let us strive lawfully, not making ourselves a righteousness of our own seeking, knocking, and striving. The sun shines not because we deserve it, by undrawing our curtains, but because it is its nature. Jesus visits us, not because of any merit in our prayers, etc., but for his own sake, because his truth and compassion fail not. Free grace opens the door of mercy, not to works and merit, but to want and misery. That you and I may knock and press in, with all needy, penitent, believing sinners, is the earnest wish of a heart, which prompts me to subscribe myself,

Sir, Yours, &c.

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### *Fifth Letter.*

**W**HEN I told you, that in all ages, Jehovah Jesus manifests himself in a peculiar manner to his people, you exclaimed against the assertion as altogether new and unscriptural. It lies upon me therefore to prove that antiquity and scripture are on my side. I shall then in this letter appeal to the manifestations recorded in the Old Testament. You cannot expect all the revelations of

any child of God, much less those of every one, to be mentioned in so short a history as that of the Bible. Nevertheless, enough is said on the point to convince us, that, in every age of the Church, God hath favoured the sons of men with peculiar displays of his presence.

Let us go back as far as Adam himself. Did not the Lord familiarly converse with him before the fall, both when he presented him with a partner, and when he brought every beast of the field before him, to see what he would call them? Did he not visit him after the fall, to pronounce his sentence, and to promise that he would become the woman's seed, and bruise the serpent's head? Was not this manifestation granted to Abel, when the Lord had respect to his sacrifice, the very cause of Cain's envy, wrath, and murder? Did not Enoch's walking with God imply a constant union and communion with Emmanuel? And how could this union have taken place, if the Lord had not first revealed himself to the Patriarch? Must not two persons meet and agree, before they can walk and converse together?

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and, in consequence of it, was made acquainted with his righteous designs, and received directions how to escape from a perishing world. The history of Abraham is full of accounts of such manifestations. In one of them, the Lord called him out of his sins, and from his kindred, to go both the heavenly and earthly Canaan. In others, he promised him Isaac, and Isaac's mysterious Seed. Several years after, for the trial of his faith, he commanded him to sacrifice that favourite son;



and when the trial was over he testified his approbation of Abraham's conduct. He went farther. Read Gen. xviii, and you will see how the divine Philanthropy, or the love of God towards man appeared, in condescending to clothe himself before-hand, with the nature he was to assume in the virgin's womb, and to converse in this undress with the father of the faithful, as a prince with his favourite, or a friend with his confidant.

Sarah and Agar, Isaac and Rebekah, had their divine manifestations ; but those of Jacob deserve our particular attention. When he fled to Syria from the face of his brother Esau, and lay desolate in a field, having only a heap of stones for his pillow, the God of all consolation appeared to him ; "and behold, the Lord stood above the mysterious ladder, on which the angels of God ascended and descended, and said, I am the Lord—behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest. And Jacob called that place Bethel, the house of God, and the gate of heaven." As if he had wanted to intimate no one ever found the gate of heaven, but by a manifestation of Christ, who is alone the way to the Father, and the door into glory. When the same patriarch returned to Canaan, and was left alone one night, there wrestled a man with him till the breaking of the day. And when this extraordinary person said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh," he replied, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me ;" and he blessed him there, acknowledging that he had power with man and God, even with him whose name is Emmanuel, God with us. "And Jacob

called the name of the place Peniel [the face of God,] for he said, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." The design of this manifestation was merely to strengthen his faith, and we learn from it, that the children of faithful Abraham wrestle in prayer with the God-man, as Jacob did, till they prevail, and are blessed as he was.

Moses was favoured with numberless manifestations, sometimes as prime minister of the King of the Jews, and at other times only as a common believer. "There appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, the angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush ; and when Moses saw it, he drew near, and the voice of the Lord came unto him saying, I am the God of thy fathers," etc.<sup>1</sup> Many partook of a sight equally glorious : "Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, went up and saw the God of Israel, and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were of the body of heaven in his clearness ; and upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand ; also they saw God, and did eat and drink."<sup>2</sup> "Behold," said Moses upon the occasion, "the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire, and we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth."<sup>3</sup> All Israel shared sometimes in the glorious manifestation. "They all drank of that spiritual rock that followed them," says St. Paul, "and that rock was Christ." The cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, says the Jewish historian, and fire was

(1) Acts, vii. 30. (2) Ex. xxiv. 10. (3) Deut. v. 24.

upon it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel. "It came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses, and all the people saw the cloudy pillar, and rose up and worshipped, every man in the door of his tent. And the Lord spake to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend."<sup>1</sup> So indulgent was Emmanuel to him, that when he said, "I beseech thee shew me thy glory," the Lord answered, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee ; but thou canst not see my face"—without some veil—"and live." And (oh, astonishing condescension !) "the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him, and proclaimed the name of the Lord." Jehovah Jesus passed before him, and proclaimed Jehovah, Jehovah, i. e., revealed to him the Father and the Holy Ghost, one merciful God together with himself. And Moses made haste, bowed his head towards the earth, and worshipped. These displays of divine goodness and glory left a divine impression on the countenance of the man of God ; his face shone so transcendently glorious, that the children of Israel were afraid to come nigh him ; and he was obliged to put a veil upon it, before he could converse with them. Though this appears very extraordinary, the apostles inform us that what happened to the countenance of Moses, happens to the souls of all believers. By faith they behold the Lord through the glass of gospel promises, and beholding him they are made partakers of the divine nature—they are changed into the same image from glory to glory.

(1) Exodus, xxxiii. 9.

Joshua, Moses' successor, was blessed with many such manifestations, each of which conveyed to him new degrees of courage and wisdom. To instance in one only :—"When he was by Jericho, he lift up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him, with his sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went to him, and said, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said Nay, but as Captain of the Lord's host am I come. And Joshua [sensible it was Jehovah,] fell on his face to the earth, worshipped, and said to him, What says my Lord to his servant? And the Captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground; and Joshua did so."<sup>1</sup> Every true discovery of Christ hath a similar effect. It humbles the sinner, and makes him worship in the dust. He sees holiness to the Lord written upon every surrounding object; he is loosed from earth and earthly things, and the towering walls of sin fall before him, as those of Jericho, soon after this manifestation, did before Joshua.

When that Chief was dead, the same heavenly Person, called the Angel of the Lord, came from Gilgal to Bochim, and spake such words to all the Children of Israel, that the people were universally melted; "They lift up their voice, wept, and sacrificed."<sup>2</sup> Nothing can so effectually make sinners relent as a sight of him whom they have pierced. When they have it, whatever place they are in becomes a Bochim, a valley of tears and adoration.

Not long after, the Lord manifested himself to

(1) Josh. v. 18. (2) Judges, ii. 1.

Deborah, and by the wisdom and fortitude communicated to her in that revelation, she was enabled to judge Israel, and to lead desponding Barak to certain victory through nine hundred chariots of iron.

The condescension of our Emmanuel appears in a still more striking light, in the manifestation which he vouchsafed to Gideon. This mysterious "Angel of the Lord [again and again called Jehovah,] came and sat under an oak in Ophrah, appeared to Gideon and said, The Lord is with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. And the Lord looked upon him, [what a courage inspiring look was this! as powerful, no doubt, as that which met cursing Peter's eye, and darted repentance to his heart!] and he said, Go in this thy might; have not I sent thee? And Gideon said Alas! oh Lord God, for because I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee, fear not, thou shalt not die." Thus strengthened and comforted, he built an altar to Jehovah-Shalom, and threw down the altar of Baal.<sup>1</sup> Hence we learn that when Jesus manifests himself to a sinner, he fills him with a noble contempt of Baal, an effectual resolution to break down his altars, and a divine courage to shake off the yoke of the spiritual Midianites. He imparts to him a comfortable assurance that the bitterness of death is past, and that Jehovah-Shalom, the God of peace, even Christ our peace is with him; and the sinner, constrained by the love of Christ, gives him his believing heart, and offers sacrifices of thanksgiving on that best of altars.

(1) Judges, vi. 12.

Here begins such a free intercourse between the Redeemer and the redeemed, as we find began between the Lord and Gideon, only of a far more spiritual and delightful nature.

Some years after, the same Angel of God appeared to Manoah's wife, and promised her a son. Her husband prayed for the same manifestation. God hearkened to his voice. The heavenly Personage manifested himself a second time. Manoah asked him his name, and the "Angel said to him. Why askest thou after my name, seeing it is secret :?" I am not yet called JESUS. Manoah offered a burnt-offering, the Angel received it at his hands; and, while he ascended in the flame of the altar, Manoah fell on his face to the ground, knew that he was the Angel Jehovah, and said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God." She comforted him under his fears; and the birth of Sampson, instead of their death, was the consequence of this twofold manifestation.

There was a time when Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord, that Word, which was afterwards made flesh, yet revealed unto him. The devoted youth worshipped in the dark, till "the Lord appeared again in Shiloh, came, stood, and called Samuel, Samuel; for the Lord revealed himself to him there, by the Word of the Lord." From that memorable time, "the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." The intercourse between God, and his prophet, soon grew to so great a degree, that the sacred historian says, "the Lord told him in his ear," what he wanted him to be informed of.<sup>1</sup>

(1) Sam. iii. 7. ix. 17.

David had many manifestations of Christ, and his pardoning love; and, far from supposing this blessing peculiar to himself as a prophet, he declares, that "for this every one that is godly, shall pray to God, when he may be found."<sup>1</sup> He knew his Shepherd's voice so well, that, without it no outward message, though ever so comfortable, could restore peace to his troubled mind. When he had been convinced of his crimes of adultery and murder, by the close application of Nathan's parable, the prophet assured him the Lord had put away his sin, he should not die. This report would have contented many of our modern penitents; but nothing short of an immediate manifestation of the forgiving God could comfort the royal mourner. "Wash thou me," says he, "and I shall be clean." Nathan's words, though ever so true, cannot do this; speak thyself, merciful Lord, "make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice."

Exceeding remarkable was the revelation his son Solomon was favoured with. In Gibeon, where he was gone to sacrifice, the Lord appeared unto him, in a dream by night, "and God said, Ask what I shall give thee." Conscious of his greatest want, he asked an understanding heart. The speech pleased the Lord, "and God said, Because thou hast asked this thing, I have done according to thy word; lo, I have given it thee; and that also which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour." Though this promise was made to him in a dream, he knew by the change, which he found in himself, when he awaked, and by the powerful evidence, which accompanies

(1) Psalm xxxii. 6.

divine manifestations, that it was a glorious reality. Fully persuaded of it, he scrupled not to offer peace-offerings, and made a feast to all his servants on the occasion.<sup>1</sup> Nor was this the only time Solomon was thus favoured. When he had built the temple, and prayed for a blessing upon it, "the Lord appeared to him a second time in Gibeon, and said, I have heard thy prayer."<sup>2</sup>

Elijah is so famous for the power he had to obtain divine manifestations by the prayer of faith, that, St James, who had seen him on the mount with Christ and Moses, proposed him to the church for a pattern of successful wrestling with God. And who is the Lord God of Elijah, but the God that manifests himself to his worshippers, in opposition to Baal and other false Gods, from whom neither visits nor answers can be obtained? The Lord answered him by fire at the foot of Mount Carmel, and by showers on the top; and "when he lodged in Mount Horeb in a cave, behold, the Word of the Lord, [Jehovah Jesus] came to him and said, What doest thou here Elijah? Go forth, stand upon the mount before the Lord. And behold the Lord passeth by;" and in his still, small voice comforted, supported, and directed him.<sup>3</sup>

Micaiah, another man of God, "saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left."<sup>4</sup> Elisha was not only blessed with frequent manifestations of the Lord and his power, but of his heavenly retinue also. He saw in an hour of danger "the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire," ready to protect him; and at his request,

(1) 1 Kings iii. (2) 1 Kings ix. 2 (3) 1 Kings xix. 9 (4) 1 Kings xxii. 19.



the Lord condescended to open his servant's eyes, that his drooping spirits might revive at the sight.<sup>1</sup>

Eliphaz, one of Job's friends, related to him, that in thoughts from visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear and trembling came upon him. Then a Spirit passed before his face ; it stood still, but he could not discern, i. e. clearly distinguish, the form thereof. An image was before his face, and he heard a voice saying, Shall mortal man be more pure than God? As for Job when he had long contended with his friends, the Lord answered him out of the whirlwind, and manifested himself in a manner to which that good man was before a stranger. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."<sup>2</sup> Hence we learn, that nothing but a discovery of the Lord can silence the vain reasonings of self-righteous pleas and unbelieving fears: this alone makes us to lie in deep prostration at our Maker's feet.

St John informs us, that Isaiah *saw* Christ's glory, and spake of him, when he described the glorious manifestation, in which he received a new seal of pardoning and sanctifying love. "I saw also the Lord," says he, "sitting upon his throne, high and lifted up; his train filled the temple." The Seraphim covering their faces with their wings, cried one to another, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts. "Then said I, woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord

(1) 2 Kings vi. 17. (2) Job xxxviii. 1., and xlii. 5.

of Hosts. Then flew one of the Seraphim, and touching me with a live coal from off the altar, he said, Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."<sup>1</sup> Many never witness the forgiveness of their sins, till they see by faith, the Lord of hosts, and are melted into repentance, and inflamed with love at the glorious sight. Isaiah not only beheld Christ's glory, but was blessed with the clearest views of his sufferings. He saw him as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs," and asked him, why he was "red in his apparel, and his garments like him that treadeth the wine fat?" These revelations were not only calculated for the good of the church, but also for the establishment of the prophet's faith.

I shall not mention those of Exekiel: they are so numerous, that a particular account of them would alone fill a letter. I refer you to the book itself. Jeremiah speaking of God's people says, in express terms, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee."<sup>2</sup> Daniel enjoyed the same favour. He saw "the Ancient of Days, and One like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven." We may naturally suppose, that Daniel's three companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, were sensible of their heavenly Deliverer's presence. They were more concerned in the discovery that Nebuchadnezzar, who cried out "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire . . . and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

(1) Isaiah vi. 1. &c. (2) Jeremiah xxxi. 3.

It would be absurd to suppose, that the lesser prophets, and other men of God, to whom the word of the Lord came, had no discovery of the Lord himself, the essential Word. If some display of his presence had not attended their every revelation, might they not have said, Thus says, my warm imagination—thus says my enthusiastic brain, as well as, Thus says the Lord?

From the variety and authenticity of these manifestations left upon sacred record, I conclude, that the doctrine I maintain, far from being new and unscriptural, is supported by the experiences of God's children for 3600 years, viz—from the creation of the world, till the close of the Old Testament.

With respect to what is extraordinary, as to the design, and bare external, as to the circumstances of some of these manifestations, I refer you to the distinctions I made on that subject in my second letter. Should you object, that the contents of this prove only, that God favoured the Patriarchs and Jews with immediate revelations of himself, because they had neither the gospel nor the scriptures: I answer,

1. The gospel was preached to them, as well as to us. The Patriarchs had tradition, which answered the end of the scriptures in their day. The Jews, in the time of the judges, had not only tradition, but a considerable part of the scriptures, even all the writings of Moses. Under the kings, they had the Psalms, Job, Ecclesiastes, the Proverbs, and a thousand and five Songs of Solomon, one of which only has been handed down to our times. They had also the book of Nathan the prophet, the prophecy of Ahijah the

Shilonite, and the visions of Iddo the seer, which are now lost. These contained the substance of the Bible.

2. When the Lord answered Saul no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams, the reason assigned for it by the Holy Ghost is, not that the canon of scripture was filled, and there was no more occasion for immediate revelations; but that the Lord was departed from him, and was become his enemy.

3. David who had the honour of being a sacred writer himself, after his relapse into sin could not be satisfied with the Psalms he had penned down, but mourned, prayed, and watered his bed with his tears, inconsolable till the Lord immediately revealed his pardoning love, and said to his soul "I am thy salvation."

4. If because we have the letter of scripture, we must be deprived of all immediate manifestations of Christ and his Spirit, we are great losers by that blessed book, and we might reasonably say,—“Lord bring us back to the dispensation of Moses. Thy Jewish servants could formerly converse with thee face to face, but now we can know nothing of thee, but by their writings. They viewed thy glory in various wonderful appearances, but we are indulged only with black lines telling us of thy glory. They had the bright Shekinah, and we have only obscure descriptions of it. They were blessed with lively oracles, and we only with a dead letter. The ark of the covenant went before them, and struck terror into all their adversaries; but a book, of which our enemies make daily sport, is the only revelation of thy power among us. They made their boast

of Urim and Thummim, and received particular, immediate answers from between the Cherubim; but we have only general ones, by means of Hebrew and Greek writings, which many do not understand. They conversed familiarly with Moses, their Mediator, with Aaron their high-priest, and Samuel their prophet; these holy men gave them unerring directions in doubtful cases; but, alas! the apostles and inspired men are all dead, and thou Jesus, our Mediator, Priest, and Prophet, canst not be consulted to any purpose, for thou manifests thyself no more. As for thy sacred book, thou knowest that sometimes the want of money to purchase it, the want of learning to consult the original, the want of wisdom to understand the translation, the want of skill or sight to read it, prevent our improving it to the best advantage, and keep some from reaping any benefit from it at all. O Lord, if, because we have this blessed picture of thee, we must have no discovery of the glorious original, have compassion on us, take back thy precious book, and impart thy more precious self to us, as thou didst to thy ancient people."

5. St Paul declares, that though the Mosaic dispensation was glorious, that of Christ exceeds it in glory. But if Christ revealed himself immediately to the Jews, and to Christians only mediately, by the letter of a book, it is plain, the apostle was mistaken; for no one can deny, it is far more glorious to see the light of God's countenance and hear his voice, than merely to read something about them in a book.

6. That particular manifestations of Christ, far from ceasing with the Jewish, have increased in

brightness and spirituality under the Christian dispensation, I shall endeavour to prove in my next. I am, Sir, &c.

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### Sixth Letter.

ACCORDING to my promise, I shall now prove that the New Testament abounds, as well as the Old, with accounts of particular revelations of the Son of God.

Before his birth, he manifested himself to the blessed virgin, by the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost. She rejoiced in God her Saviour, and gloried more, in having him revealed as God in her soul, than in finding him conceived as man in her womb. Soon after, Joseph her husband, was assured in a heavenly dream, that the child she bore was Emmanuel, God with us. He revealed himself next to Elizabeth. When she heard the salutation of Mary, she was filled with the Holy Ghost, and made sensible, that the virgin was the mother of her Lord. So powerful was this manifestation, that her unborn son was affected by it.—The babe leaped in her womb for joy, and was filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb.

So important is a particular knowledge of Jesus, that an angel directed the shepherds, and a miraculous star the wise men, to the place where he was born: And there the Holy Ghost so revealed him to their hearts, that they hesitated not to worship the seemingly despicable infant, as the majestic God, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain.

Simeon, who waited for the consolation of Israel, had it revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. The promise was fulfilled; and while his bodily eyes discovered nothing but a poor infant, presented without pomp in the temple, his spiritual eyes perceived him to be the Light of Israel, and the Salvation of God. Nor was this extraordinary favour granted only to Simeon, for it is written, all flesh shall see the Salvation of God; and St Luke informs us, that Anna partook the sight with the old Israelite, gave thanks to her new-born Lord, and spake of him to all that waited for redemption in Jerusalem.

When he entered upon his ministry, he first manifested himself to his forerunner. "I knew him not" personally, said John; "but he that sent me to baptize with water, said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he, who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bear record, that this is the Son of God, the Lamb, that taketh away the sins of the world."

Jesus had manifested himself spiritually to Nathaniel under the fig tree; and the honest Israelite, being reminded of that divine favour, confessed the author of it: "Rabbi," said he, "thou art the son of God, thou art the King of Israel." Our Lord pleased with his ready confession, promised that he should see greater things, enjoy brighter manifestations, than these; that he should even see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

The bare outward sight of our Saviour's person and miracles rather confounded than converted

the beholders. What glorious beams of his Godhead pierced through the veil of his mean appearance, when, with supreme authority, he turned the buyers and sellers out of the temple : When he entered Jerusalem in triumph, and all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this;" And when he said to those, who apprehended him, "I am He, and they went backward, and fell to the ground!" Nevertheless, we do not find, that one person was blessed with the saving knowledge of him, on any of these solemn occasions. The people of Galilee saw most of him, and yet believed least in him. "What wisdom is this, which is given to this man," said they, "that such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary? And they were offended at him."—Some went even so far as to ascribe his miracles to a diabolical power, affirming, that he cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Hence it appears that if he had not in some degree, revealed himself to the hearts of his disciples, when he said to them, "Follow me," they would never have forsaken all immediately and followed him. He manifested forth his glory, says St John, and his disciples belived on him; and yet when the manifestation was chiefly external, how weak was the effect it produced even upon them! How was our Lord, after all, obliged to upbraid them with their *unbelief*, their *little faith*, and, on a particular occasion, with their *having no faith!* If we know, savingly, that Jesus is God with us,—flesh and blood, i. e. mere man, with all his best powers, hath not revealed this to us, but our Father, who is in heaven. As no man



knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him ; so no man knoweth the Son but the Father, and he to whom the Spirit proceeding from the Father does reveal him. For no man can savingly say, that Jesus is Jehovah, the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost ; “and he, that hath seen me,” by this divine revelation, says Jesus, “hath seen the Father also ; for I and the Father are one.”

Had not our Lord revealed himself in a peculiar manner to sinners, no one would have suspected him to be God manifest in the flesh. Till he discovers himself, as he does not unto the world, he hath no form or comeliness, says Isaiah, and when we see him, there is no beauty in him, that we should desire him ; we hide as it were our faces from him ; he is despised, and we esteem him not. He was obliged to say to the woman of Samaria, “I that speak to thee am He ;” and to say it with a power that penetrated her heart, before she could believe with her heart unto righteousness. Then, indeed, divinely wrought upon, she ran, and invited her neighbours to draw living water, out of the well of salvation she had so happily found.

If our Lord had not called Zaccheus inwardly as well as outwardly ; if he had not made him come down from the pinnacle of proud nature, as well as from the sycamore tree ; if he had not honoured his heart with his spiritual, as he did his house with his bodily presence ; the rich publican would never have received him gladly, nor would the Lord have said, “This day is salvation come to thy house, forasmuch as thou art a son of faithful Abraham.”

Salvation did not enter into the heart of Simon, who admitted our Lord to his house and table, as well as Zaccheus. The penitent woman, who kissed his feet, and washed them with her tears, obtained the blessing, which the self-righteous Pharisee despised. It was to her contrite spirit, and not to his callous heart, that the Lord revealed himself, as the pardoning God.

The blind man restored to his bodily sight, knew not his heavenly benefactor, till a second and greater miracle was wrought upon the eyes of his blind understanding. When Jesus found him, some time after he was cured, he said to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered, Who is he Lord, that I might believe on him?" And Jesus, opening the eye of his mind, and manifesting himself to him, as he does not unto the world, said, "Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that talketh with thee." Then, and not till then, he could say from the heart, "Lord I believe; and he worshipped him."

Both the thieves, who were crucified with him, heard his prayers and strong cries; both saw his patience and his meekness, his wounds and his blood. One continued to make sport of his sufferings, as though he had been a worse malefactor than himself; while the other blessed with an internal revelation of his godhead, implored his mercy, trusted him with his soul, and confessed him to be the King of glory, at the very moment, when he hung tortured and dying as the basest of slaves.

St Peter speaks so highly of the manifestation, with which he and the two sons of Zebedee were

favoured on Mount Tabor, that we ought not to pass over it in silence. They saw the kingdom of God coming with power; they beheld the King in his beauty. "His face did shine like the sun, and his raiment became white as light; a bright cloud overshadowed him, and behold a voice out of the cloud which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

Nor did our Lord reveal himself less after his resurrection. Mary sought him at the grave with tears. "As she turned herself, she saw him standing, but knew not that it was Jesus. He said unto her, Why weepest thou? Whom seeketh thou?" "She, supposing him to be the gardener, enquired after the object of her love; until Jesus, calling her by her name, manifested himself to her as alive from the dead. Then she cried out Master! and in her transport, would have taken her old place at his feet.

With equal condescension he appeared to Simon, that he might not be swallowed up with over much sorrow. True mourners in Sion weep, some for an absent God, as Mary, others for their sins, as Peter; and they will not be comforted, no not by angels; but only by him, who is nigh to all that call upon him, and is health to those that are broken in heart. He that appeared first to weeping Mary, and next to sorrowing Peter, will shortly visit them with his salvation. He is already with them, as he was with Mary, though they know it not; and he will soon be in them, the sure and comfortable hope of glory.

This observation is farther confirmed by the experience of the two disciples, who walked to

Emmaus, and were sad. Jesus drew near, joined, and comforted them. He made their hearts to burn within them while he talked with them by the way and opened to them the scriptures. But still their eyes were held, that they should not know him, before they were prepared for the overwhelming favour. And it was not until he sat at meat with them, that their eyes were opened, and they knew him in the breaking of bread. By a fatal mistake, many professors in our day rest satisfied with what did not satisfy the two disciples. They understood the scriptures, their hearts burned with love and joy; Jesus was with them, but they knew him not, until the happy moment, when he fully opened the eye of their faith, and poured the light of his countenance on their ravished spirits. Happy those, who, like them, constrain an unknown Jesus by mighty prayer to tarry with them, until the veil is taken away from their hearts, and they know in whom they have believed.

Frequent were the manifestations of Jesus to his disciples before his ascension. An angel appeared to two of the holy mourners, and said to them, "Fear not; for I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is risen from the dead." As they ran with fear and great joy to tell his disciples, Jesus met them, saying, "All hail! and they came, held him by the feet, and worshipped him." The same day in the evening, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst. They were terrified, but with his wonted goodness he said, "Peace be unto you!" He shewed them his hands and his feet;

ate with them, as he had done of old with Abraham; and to testify an inward manifestation of the Holy Ghost, which he imparted to them, breathed upon them, as his Spirit breathed upon their minds; and thus he opened their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures. Out of condescension to Thomas he shewed himself to them a second time, in the like manner; and a third time at the sea of Tiberias: and afterwards he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.

You will perhaps say, Sir, that these manifestations ceased, when Christ was ascended to heaven. This is true with respect to the manifestation of a body of such gross flesh and blood, as may be touched with material hands. In this sense believers know Christ after the flesh no more. Our Lord, by his gentle reproof to Thomas, discountenanced our looking for carnal manifestations of his person, and I have declared again and again, that they are not what I contend for.

But, that spiritual manifestations of Christ ceased at his ascension, is what I must deny, if I receive the scripture. On the contrary, they became more frequent. "Three thousand were pricked to the heart," on the day of Pentecost, and felt their need of a visit from the heavenly Physician. He then came, revealed in the power of his Spirit, with whom he is one. They received the Gift of the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to manifest the Son. For the promise was unto them and their children, and to as many, as the Lord our God shall call: witness the last words of Christ in St Matthew's gospel, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Time would fail me to tell of the five thousand converted some days after, of Cornelius and his household, Lydia and her household; in a word, of all who were truly brought to Christ in the first age of Christianity. The Lord opened their hearts. The Holy Ghost fell upon them; and they walked in his comforts. Christ was evidently set forth crucified before their spiritual eyes. He dwelt in their hearts by faith: they lived not, but Christ lived in them. They agreed in saying, with St Paul; If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, by whom he is savingly known, he is none of his.

Stephen's experience is alone sufficient to decide the point. When brought before the council, they all saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel. Being full of the Holy Ghost, he wrought no miracle, he spake no new tongue; but "looked steadfastly up into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." This manifestation was calculated only for the private encouragement and comfort of the pious Deacon. It answered no other end, but to enrage the Jews and make them account him a greater blasphemer and a wilder enthusiast, than they did before. Accordingly they cried aloud, stopped their ears, ran upon him, cast him out of the city, and stoned him; while Stephen, under the powerful influence of the manifestation, kneeled down, called upon God, saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit, and lay not this sin to their charge. Hence we learn, first, that nothing appears so absurd and wicked

to Pharisees, and formalists, as the doctrine I maintain. They lose all patience, when they hear that Christ really manifests himself to his servants. No blasphemy like this in the account of those, who are wise, learned, and prudent in their own eyes. Secondly, that the most exalted saints need a fresh manifestation of the glory, love, and presence of Christ, that they may depart this life in the triumph of faith.

If you object, that Stephen was thus favoured, because he was about to suffer for Christ, and, that it would be great presumption to expect the like support, I reply, in the five following observations. (1) We are called to suffer for Christ, as well as Stephen, though perhaps not in the same manner and degree. (2) We often need as much support from Christ, to stand against the children of men that are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongues a sharp sword; and to quench the fiery darts of the devil, as the martyr did to stand a shower of stones. (3) It is perhaps as hard to be racked with the gout, or to burn several days in a fever on a sick bed, as you or I may be forced to do, as to be for a few minutes with Shadrach and his companions in a burning furnace, or to feel for a fleeting moment the anguish of bruised flesh and a fractured skull, with our triumphant martyr. No one knows, what pangs of body and agonies of soul may accompany him through the valley of the shadow of death. If our Lord himself was not above being strengthened by an angel that appeared to him from heaven, surely it is no enthusiasm to say, that such feeble creatures as we are, stand in need of a divine manifestation, to

enable us to fight our last battle manfully, and to come off more than conquerors. (4) We betray unbelief, if we suppose, that Christ cannot do for us what he did for Stephen; and we betray our presumption, if we say, we want not the assistance, which this bold champion stood in need of. (5) The language of our Church is far different: "Grant" says she, in her collect for that Saint's day, "O Lord, that in all our sufferings here on earth for the testimony of thy truth, we may steadfastly look up to heaven, and, by faith, behold the glory that shall be revealed; and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love and bless our persecutors, by the example of thy first martyr, St Stephen, who prayed for his murderers, to thee, O blessed Jesus, who standest at the right hand of God, to succour all those who suffer for thee."

You see, Sir, that I have the suffrage of the Church of England; and yours too, if you do not renounce our excellent liturgy: so that, If I am an enthusiast for expecting to be *filled with the Holy Ghost*, and by faith to behold the glory that shall be revealed, as well as St Stephen, I am countenanced by a multitude of the best and greatest men in the world.

But suppose you reject the testimony of St Stephen and of all our Clergy, when in the desk, touching the reality and the necessity too of our Lord's manifesting himself on earth, after his ascension into heaven, receive at least that of St Luke and St Paul. They both inform us, that "as Saul of Tarsus went to Damascus, the Lord even Jesus, appeared to him in the way. Suddenly there shone a light from heaven above the



brightness of the sun, so that he fell to the earth, and heard a voice, saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." So powerful was the effect of this manifestation of Christ, that the sinner was turned into a saint, and the fierce, blaspheming persecutor into a weeping, praying apostle.

Methinks I hear you say, True, into an apostle; but are we called to be apostles? No, Sir, but we are called to be Christians—to be converted from sin to holiness, and from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son. St Paul's call to the apostleship is nothing to his being made a child of God. Judas was a Christian by profession, an apostle by call, and a *devil* by nature. And what is Judas in his own place to the meanest of God's children?—to poor Lazarus in Abraham's bosom? All, who go to heaven, are first turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. This turning sometimes begins by a manifestation of Christ; witness the authentic account of Colonel Gardner's conversion, published by his judicious friend Dr Doddridge; and the more authentic one of our apostle's conversion, recorded three times by St Luke. And I dare advance upon the authority of one greater than Luke, that no one's conversion ever was completed without the revelation of the Son of God to his heart. "I am the way and the door," says Jesus, "no man cometh to the Father but by me." "Look unto me, and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth." Our looking to him for salvation would be to as little purpose, were he not to manifest himself to us, as our

looking towards the east for light, if the sun were not to rise upon us.

The revelation of Christ, productive of St Paul's conversion, was not the only one with which the Apostle was favoured. At Corinth the Lord encouraged and spake to him in the night by a vision. "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall hurt thee." On another occasion, to wean him more from earth, Christ favoured him with the nearest views of heaven. "I knew a man in Christ," says he, "whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, who was caught up into the third heaven, into paradise, and heard words which it is not possible for man to utter." And he informs us farther, that lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, a messenger of Satan was suffered to buffet him. When he had been brought before the Sanhedrim for preaching the gospel, St Luke informs us, that "the night following, the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." The ship, in which he sailed, being endangered by a storm, there stood by him "the angel of God, whose he was, and whom he served, saying, Fear not, Paul, &c."

St Paul was not the only one, to whom Christ manifested himself in this familiar manner. Ananias of Damascus, was neither an apostle, nor a deacon, nevertheless, to him "said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here Lord; and the Lord said, Arise and go into the street, which is called Straight, and enquire in

the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for behold he prayeth." In like manner Philip was directed to go near and join himself to the Enoch's chariot. And St Peter being informed that three men sought him, "Arise, said the Lord, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them."

Whether we place these manifestations in the class of the extraordinary, or of the mixed ones, we equally learn from them, (1st) That the Lord Jesus revealed himself as much after his ascension as he did before. (2nd) That if he does it to send his servants with a gospel message to particular persons, he will do it much more to make that message effectual, and to bring salvation to those who wait for him.

As for the revelations of Christ to St John, they were so many, that the last book of the New Testament is called the Revelation, as containing chiefly an account of them. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," says the apostle; "and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am the first and the last. I turned to see the voice, that spake with me, and I saw one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt with a golden girdle. His head and hair were white as snow, and his eyes as a flame of fire, his feet like unto fine brass burning in a furnace, his voice as the sound of many waters, and his countenance as the sun shining in his strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead; and he laid his hand upon me, saying, Fear not, I am the first and the last. I am he, that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell

and death. Write the things, which are and shall be." One of the things, which our Lord commanded John to write, is a most glorious promise, that he stands at the door of the human heart, ready to manifest himself even to poor lukewarm Laodiceans; and that, if any man hear his voice and open,—if they are made conscious of their need of him, so as to open their hearts by the prayer of faith, he will come in, and feast them with his gracious presence, and the delicious fruits of his blessed Spirit. Therefore the most extraordinary of all the revelations, that of St John in Patmos, not only shows, that the manifestations of Christ run parallel to the canon of scripture, but also gives a particular sanction to the ordinary revelations of him, for which I contend.

Having thus lead you from Genesis to Revelation, I conclude by two inferences, which appear to me undeniable. The first, that it is evident our Lord, before his iucarnation, during his stay on earth, and after his ascension into heaven, hath been pleased, in a variety of manners, to manifest himself to the children of men, both for the benefit of the Church in general, and for the conversion of sinners and the establishment of saints in particular. Secondly, that the doctrine I maintain, is as old as Adam, as modern as St John, the last of the inspired writers, and as scriptural as the Old and New Testament; which is what I wanted to demonstrate.

I am Sir, &c.





