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A
 THIRD CHECK
 TO
 ANTINOMIANISM;
 IN A
 LETTER to the AUTHOR of
 PIETAS OXONIENSIS;

By the Vindicator of the
 Rev. Mr. WESLEY'S MINUTES.

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- “ Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and scriptural doctrine; for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.” 2 Tim. iv. 2, 3.
 - “ Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be found in the faith; but let brotherly love continue.” Tit. i. 13. Heb. xiii. 1.

B R I S T O L :

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A
T H I R D C H E C K
T O
A N T I N O M I A N I S M , & c .

Honored and dear Sir,

A CCEPT my sincere thanks for the Christian courtesy, with which you treat me in your five letters. The title-page informs me, that a concern for *mourning backsliders, and such as have been distressed by reading Mr. Wesley's minutes, or the vindication of them*, has procured me the honor of being called to a public correspondence with you. Permit me, dear Sir, to inform you in my turn, that a fear, lest Dr. Crisp's balm should be applied, instead of the *balm of Gilead*, to Laodicean loiterers, who may haply have been brought to penitential *distress*, obliges me to answer you in the same public manner, in which you have addressed me.

Some of our friends will undoubtedly blame us for not yet dropping the contested point. But others will candidly consider, that controversy, tho' not desirable in itself, yet properly managed, has an hundred times rescued truth groaning under the lash of triumphant error. We are indebted to our Lord's controversies with the Pharisees and Scribes for a considerable part of the four gospels. And to the end of the world the church will bless God, for the spirited manner in which St. Paul, in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, defended the controvert-

ed point of a believer's present justification by faith ; as well as for the steadiness with which St. James, St. John, St. Peter, and St. Jude, carried on their important controversy with the Nicolaitans, who abused St. Paul's doctrine to Antinomian purposes.

Had it not been for controversy, Romish priests would to this day feed us with Latin masses and a wafer-god. Some bold propositions, advanced by Luther against the doctrine of indulgences, unexpectedly brought on the reformation. They were so irrationally attacked by the infatuated Papists, and so scripturally defended by the resolute Protestants, that these kingdoms opened their eyes, and saw thousands of images and errors fall before the ark of evangelical truth.

From what I have advanced in my *Second Check*, it appears, if I am not mistaken, that we stand now as much in need of a reformation from Antinomianism, as our ancestors did of a reformation from Popery ; and I am not without hope, that the extraordinary attack, which has lately been made upon Mr. Wesley's Anti-crispian propositions, and the manner in which they are defended, will open the eyes of many, and check the rapid progress of so enchanting and pernicious an evil. This hope inspires me with fresh courage ; and turning from the honorable and Rev. Mr. Shirley, I presume to face (I trust, in the spirit of love and meekness) my new respectable opponent.

I thank you, Sir, for doing Mr. W. the justice in your

FIRST LETTER

to acknowledge, that "*man's faithfulness is an expression, which may be used in a sober, gospel sense of the words.*" 'Tis just in such a sense we use it ; nor have you advanced any proof to the contrary.

We never supposed, that "*the faithfulness of God, and the stability of the covenant of grace, are affected by the unfaithfulness of man*". For, we do not take the young man, whom Jesus loved to be God. His unfaithfulness

faithfulness in the mammon of unrighteousness, did not, therefore impair, in the least degree, the *divine faithfulness*. And we are persuaded, our Lord keeps his covenant, when he *spues a lukewarm, unfaithful Laodicean out of his mouth*, as well as when he says to the good and faithful servant, *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*. For the same covenant of grace which says, *He that believeth shall be saved—he that abideth in me, bringeth forth much fruit*, says also, *He that believeth not shall be damned—every branch in me that beareth not fruit is cast forth and burned*.

Thanks be to divine grace, we make our boast of *God's faithfulness* as well as you, tho' we take care not to charge him, even indirectly with our own unfaithfulness. But from the words which you quote, *My covenant shall stand fast with his seed, &c.* we see no more reason to conclude that the *obstinately unfaithful seed of Christ*, such as *Hymeneus Philetus*, and those who to the last tread under foot the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified, shall not be cast off; than to assert that many individuals of David's royal family, such as Absalom and Amnon, were not cut off on account of their flagrant and *obstinate wickedness*.

We beseech you therefore, for the sake of a thousand careless Antinomians, to remember that the apostle says to every believer, *Thou standest by faith, behold therefore the goodness of God towards thee, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off*. We intreat you to consider, that even those who admire the point of your epigram, "When e'er we say one thing we mean quite another," will not be pleased if you apply it to St. Paul, as you have done to Mr. Wesley. And when we see God's covenant with David grossly abused by Antinomians, we beg leave to put them in mind of God's covenant with the house of Eli. *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I CHOSE thy father out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest; but thou art unfaithful, thou honorest thy sons above me.—I said indeed that thy house, and the*

house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy house; and I will raise me up a FAITHFUL priest, that shall do according to that which is in my heart.

1 Sam. 2.

YOUR SECOND LETTER

respects *working for life*. You make the best of a bad subject; and really some of your arguments are so plausible, that I do not wonder so many good men should commence Calvinists, rather than be at the trouble of detecting their fallacy. I am sorry, dear Sir, I cannot do it without dwelling upon Calvinism. My design was to oppose Antinomianism alone; but the vigorous stand which you make for it upon Calvinian ground, obliges me to encounter you there, or to give up the truth which I am called to defend. I have long dreaded the alternative of displeasing my friends, or wounding my conscience; but I must yield to the injunctions of the latter, and appeal to the candor of the former. If impetuous rivers of Geneva Calvinism have so long been permitted to flow thro' England, and even deluge Scotland; have not I some reason to hope that a rivulet of Geneva Anti-calvinism will be suffered to glide thro' some of Great-Britain's plains; especially if its little murmur harmonizes with the clearest dictates of reason, and loudest declarations of scripture?

Before I weigh your arguments against *working for life*, permit me to point out the capital mistake upon which they turn. You suppose that free preventing grace does not visit all men, and that all those in whom it has not yet prevailed, are as totally dead to the things of God, as a dead body is to the things of this life: and from this unscriptural supposition you very reasonably conclude, that we can no more turn to God, than corpses can turn themselves in their graves; no more *work for life* than putrid carcases can help themselves to a resurrection.

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This main pillar of your doctrine, will appear to you built upon the sand, if you read the scripture in the light of that *mercy which is over all God's works*. There you will discover the various dispensations of the everlasting gospel; your contracted views of divine love will open into the most extensive prospects; and your exulting soul will range thro' the boundless fields of that grace, which is both richly *free IN all*, and abundantly *free FOR all*.

Let us rejoice with reverence while we read such scriptures as these: *The Son of man is come to save that which is LOST, and to call SINNERS to repentance. This is a true saying and worthy of all acceptat on—worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.—To this end he both died and rose again that he might be the Lord of the DEAD and LIVING. He came not to condemn the WORLD, but that the WORLD thro' him might be saved, and that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE should bow, and EVERY TONGUE confess that he is Lord.*

“ Bound ev'ry heart and ev'ry bosom burn” while we meditate on these ravishing declarations: *God so loved the WORLD that he gave his only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He was made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that is, all mankind; unless it can be proved that some men never came under the curse of the law. He is the friend of SINNERS; the physician of the SICK, and the Saviour of the WORLD: He died, the just for the UNJUST; He is the propiciation, not for our sins only, but for the sins of THE WHOLE WORLD. One died for ALL, because ALL were dead. As in Adam ALL die, even so in Christ, during the day of their visitation, all are blessed with quickning grace, and therefore in the last day ALL shall be made alive to give an account of their blessing or talent. He is the Saviour of ALL men, especialby of them that believe; and the news of his birth are tidings of great joy to ALL people. As by the offence of one judgment came upon ALL MEN, even so by the righteousness of one the FREE GIFT came*

came upon ALL MEN; for Christ by the grace of God tasted death for EVERY MAN; he is the lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the WORLD, therefore God commandeth ALL MEN EVERY WHERE to repent—to look unto him and be saved.

Do we not take choice jewels from Christ's crown, when we explain away these bright testimonies given to his free grace: *It pleased the Father by him to reconcile ALL THINGS to himself.*—*The kindness and pity of God our Saviour towards MAN has appeared.*—*I will draw all men unto me.*—*I came NOT to judge the WORLD but to save the WORLD.*—*He came into the world TO SAVE SINNERS, the CHIEF not excepted.*—*God was in him reconciling the WORLD unto himself.* Hence he says to the most obstinate of his opposers, *These things have I spoken unto you that you might be saved.*—*If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin in rejecting me, but now they have no cloak for their sin, no excuse for their unbelief.*

Once indeed, when the apostles were on the brink of the most dreadful trial, their compassionate Master said, *I pray for them, I pray not for the WORLD.* “As if he had said, their immediate danger makes me pray as if there were but these eleven men in the world, *holy Father keep them.*” But having given them this reasonable testimony of a just preference, he adds, *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them who shall believe:*—and he prays they may be the WORLD,—*that the WORLD may believe—and may know that thou hast sent me.*

If our Lord's *not praying* for a moment on a particular occasion *for the world*, implies that *the world* is absolutely reprobated, we should be glad of an answer to the two following queries. (1) Why did he pray the next day for Pilate and Herod, Annas and Caiaphas, the Priests and Pharisees, the Jewish mob and Roman soldiers; in a word for the countless multitude of his revilers and murderers? Were they all elect, or was this ejaculation no prayer? *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!* (2.) Why did

old the commission St. Paul to say, *I exhort first of all, that supplications, prayers, and intercessions be made for ALL MEN, for this is acceptable in the sight of God OUR SAVIOUR, who will have ALL MEN to be SAVED, and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and MEN, the MAN Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom FOR ALL?*

Without losing time in proving, that none but artful and designing men, use the word *all* to mean the *less number*; and that *all*, in some of the abovementioned passages, must absolutely mean *all mankind*, as being directly opposed to *all* that are condemned and die in Adam; and without stopping to expose the new Calvinian creation of "a whole world of elect;" upon the preceding scriptures I raise the following doctrine of free grace. *If Christ tasted death for every man*, there is undoubtedly a gospel for every man, even for those who perish by rejecting it.

St. Paul says, that *God shall judge the secrets of MEN, according to his gospel*. St. Peter asks, *What shall be the end of those, who obey not the GOSPEL of God?* And the apostle answers, *Christ revealed in flaming fire will take vengeance on them who obey not the GOSPEL*, that is, all the *ungodly who receive the grace of God in vain, or turn it into lasciviousness*. They do not perish because the gospel is a lie with respect to them; but *because they receive not the love of the TRUTH that they might be SAVED*. God, to punish their rejecting the truth, permits that they should *believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who to the last hour of their day of grace believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*.

The latitude of our Lord's commission to his ministers demonstrates the truth of this doctrine. *Go into ALL the world, and teach ALL nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Hence those gracious and general invitations, Ho EVERY ONE that thirsteth after happiness, come ye to the waters; If any man thirst after pleasure, let him come to me and drink.---Come unto me all ye that labour*

labour for want of rest, and I will give it you.—WHO SOEVER will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.—Ye adulterers,—draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you.—Behold I stand at the door and knock, if ANY MAN open, I will come in and sup with him. Go out into the highways and hedges, preach the gospel to EVERY CREATURE, and lo I am with you to the end of the world.

If you compare all the preceding scriptures, I flatter myself Hon. Sir, you will perceive that as the redemption of Christ is general, so there is a general gospel, which is more or less clearly revealed to all, according to the clearer or more obscure dispensation which they are outwardly under.

This doctrine may appear strange to those who call nothing gospel but the last dispensation of it. Such should remember that as a little seed sown in the spring is one with the large plant into which it expands in summer; so the gospel in its least appearance, is one with the gospel grown up to full maturity. Our Lord considering it both as sown in man's heart, and sown in the world, speaks of it under the name of *the kingdom of heaven*, compares it to corn, and considers first *the seed*, then *the blade*, next *the ear*, and last of all *the full corn in the ear*.

(1.) The gospel was sown in the world as a *little* but general *seed*, when God began to quicken mankind in Adam, by the precious promise of a Saviour: and when he said to Noah, the second general parent of men, *With thee will I establish my covenant; blessing him and his sons* after the deluge.

(2.) The gospel appeared as corn in *the blade*, when God renewed the promise of the Messiah to Abraham with this addition, that tho' the Redeemer should be born of his elect family, divine grace and mercy were too free to be confined within the narrow bounds of a peculiar election: therefore *in his seed, that is, in Christ the sun of righteousness ALL the families of the earth should be blessed*; as they are all cheared with the genial

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influence of the natural sun, whether he shines above or below their horizon, whether he particularly enlightens the one or the other hemisphere.

(3.) The gospel word grew much in the days of Moses, Samuel and Isaiah; for *the gospel*, says St. Paul, *was preached unto them as well as unto us*, tho' not so explicitly. But when John the Baptist a greater prophet than they all, began to preach the gospel of repentance, and point sinners to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, then the ear crowned the blade which had long been at a stand, and even seemed to be blasted.

(4.) The great Luminary of the church shining warm upon the earth, his direct beams caused a rapid growth. The favonian breathings and sighs which attended his preaching and prayers, the genial dews which distilled on Gethsemane, during his agony, the fruitful showers which descended on Calvary, while the blackest storm of divine wrath rent the rocks around, and the transcendent radiance of our sun, rising after this dreadful eclipse to his meridian glory;—all concurred to minister fertile influences to the plant of renown. And on the day of pentecost, when power came from on high, when the fire of the Holy Ghost seconded the virtue of the Redeemer's blood, the full corn was seen in the mystical ear; the most perfect of the gospel-dispensations came to maturity; and Christians began to bring forth fruit unto the perfection of their own œconomy.

As some good men overlook the gradual displays of the manifold gospel-grace of God, so others I fear, mistake the essence of the gospel itself. Few say with St. Paul *the gospel of which I am not ashamed, is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth with the heart unto righteousness*, according to the light of his dispensation: and many are afraid of his Catholic doctrine, when he sums up the general everlasting gospel in these words: *God was not the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also; because that which may be known of God, under their dispensation, is manifest*

nifest in them, God having shewed it unto them. For the grace of God which bringeth salvation, or rather *ἡ χάρις; ἡ σωτηρία;* the grace emphatically saving, hath appeared unto all men; teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, justly and godly in this present world.

“ But how does this saving grace teach us ?” By proposing to us the saving truths of our dispensation, and helping our unbelief, that we may cordially embrace them; for without faith it is impossible to please God. Even the Heathens who come to God must BELIEVE that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him: for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, the same Lord over all being rich unto all that call upon him.

Here the Apostle starts the great Calvinian objection: *But how shall they believe, and call on him of whom they have not heard, &c.?* And having observed that the Jews had heard, tho’ few had believed, he says, *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, which is nigh, even in the mouth and in the heart of all who receive the truth revealed under their dispensation.* Then resuming his answer to the Calvinian objection he cries out, *Have not they (Jews and Greeks) all heard preachers, who invite them to believe that God is good and powerful, and consequently that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him? Yes verily, replies he, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.*

“ If you ask, Who are those general heralds of free grace, whose sound goes from pole to pole ?” The scripture answers with becoming dignity: *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech or language, no country or kingdom, where their voice is not heard. Their instructing line went thro’ the earth their vast parish, and their words to the end of the world their immense diocese. For the invisible things of God, that is, his greatness and wisdom, his goodness and mercy,*
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his eternal power and godhead are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made and preserved, so that the very Heathens, who do not obey their striking speech, are without excuse; because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.

This is the gospel-alphabet, if I may be allowed the expression. The Apostle, like a wise instructor, proceeded upon the plan of this free grace when he addressed himself to the Heathens. *We preach unto you*, said he to the Lycaonians, *that ye should turn from these vanities to serve the living God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things therein; who, even when he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, left not himself without witness; that is, without preachers, according to that saying of our Lord to his disciples, Ye shall be my witnesses, and teach all nations. And these witnesses were the good which God did, the rain he gave us from heaven, fruitful seasons, and the food and gladness with which he filled our hearts.*

St. Paul preached the same gospel to the Athenians, wisely coming down to the level of their inferior dispensation. *The God that made the world dwells not, like a statue, in temples made with hands, nor hath he need of any thing; seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. He hath made of one blood all nations of men who dwell on all the face of the earth, not that they might live like Atheists, and perish like reprobates, but that they might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him. Nor is this an impossibility, as he is not far from every one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being, as certain of your own poets have taught, justly asserting that we are the offspring of God. Hence he proceeds to declare, that God calls all men every where to repent, intimating that upon their turning to him, he will receive them as his dear children, and bless them as his beloved offspring.*

These, and the like Scriptures forced Calvin himself into an happy inconsistency with Calvinism.

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“ The Lord, says he in an epistle prefixed to the French new Testament, never left himself without a witness, even towards them unto whom he has not sent any knowledge of his word. Forasmuch as all creatures, from the firmament to the center of the earth, might be witnesses and messengers of his glory unto all men, to draw them to seek him; and indeed there is no need to seek him very far, for every one might find him in his ownself.”

And no doubt some have; for altho' *the world knew not God by the wisdom that is earthly, sensual and devilish*; yet many have savingly known him by his general witnesses, that is, *the wonderful works that he doeth for the children of men*; for that which may be known of God, in the lowest œconomy of gospel grace, is manifest in them, as well as shewn unto them.

“ What! Is there something of God inwardly manifest in, as well as outwardly shewn to all men?” Undoubtedly; the grace of God is *as the wind, which bloweth where it listeth*; and it listeth to blow with more or less force successively all over the earth. You can as soon meet with a man that never felt the wind, or heard the sound thereof, as with one that never felt the divine breathings, or heard the still small voice, which we call the grace of God, and which bid us turn from sin to righteousness. To suppose the Lord gives us a thousand tokens of *his eternal power and godhead*, without giving us a capacity to consider, and grace to improve them, is not less absurd than to imagine that when he bellowed upon Adam all the trees of paradise for food, he gave him no eyes to see, no hands to gather, and no mouth to eat their delicious fruits.

We readily grant that Adam, and we in him, lost all by the fall; but Christ, *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, Christ *the repairer of the breach*, mightier to save than Adam to destroy, solemnly gave himself to Adam, and to us in him, by the free everlasting gospel which he preached in paradise. And when he preached it he undoubtedly gave Adam, and

and us in him, a capacity to receive it, that is a power to believe and repent. If he had not, he might as well have preached to stocks and stones, to beasts and devils. It is offering an insult to *the only wise God*, to suppose that he gave mankind the light, without giving them eyes to behold it; or which is the same, to suppose that he gave them the gospel, without giving them power to believe it.

As it was with Adam, so it is undoubtedly with all his posterity. By what argument or scripture will you prove, that God excluded part of Adam (or what is the same thing, part of his offspring, which was then part of his very person) from the promise and gift which he freely made him of *the seed of the woman, and the bruiser of the serpent's head*? Is it reasonable to deny the gift, because multitudes of infidels reject it, and thousands of Antinomians abuse it? May not a bounty be really given by a charitable person, tho' it is despised by a proud, or squandered by a loose beggar?

Waving the case of infants, idiots, and those who have *sinned the sin unto death*, was there ever a sinner under no obligation to repent and believe in a merciful God? O ye opposers of *free grace*, search the universe with Calvin's candle, and among your reprobated millions, find out the person that never had a merciful God: and shew us the unfortunate creature, whom a sovereign God bound over to absolute despair of his mercy from the womb. If there is no such person in the world: if all men are bound to repent and believe in a merciful God, there is an end of Calvinism. An unprejudiced man can require no stronger proof that all are redeemed from the curse of the Adamic law, which admitted of no repentance; and that the covenant of grace which admits of, and makes provision for it, freely extends to all mankind.

Out of Christ's fulness all have received grace, a little leaven of saving power, an inward monitor, a divine reprover, a ray of true heavenly light, which mani-

feels first moral, and then spiritual good and evil. St. John bears witness of that light, and declares it was the spiritual life of men, the true light, which enlighteneth not only every man that comes into the church, but every man that cometh into the world—without excepting those who are yet in darkness. For the light shineth in the darkness, even when the darkness comprehends it not. The Baptist bore also witness of that light, that all men thro' it, not thro' him, might believe. (*For light being the last antecedent, and agreeing perfectly with δι' αὐτοῦ.*)

Hence appears the sufficiency of that divine light to make all men believe in Christ the light of the world; according to Christ's own words to the Jews, *While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of the light.—Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you, even that total night of nature when no man can work.*

Those who resist this internal light generally reject the external gospel, or receive it only in the letter and history: and too many such there have been in all ages; for *Christ was in the world, even when the world knew him not: therefore he was manifest in the flesh.* The same sun which had shined as the dawn, arose with healing in his wings, and came to deliver the truth which was held in righteousness, and to help the light which was not comprehended by the darkness. But alas! when he came to his own, even then his own received him not. Why? Because they were reprobates? No: but because they were moral agents.

This is the condemnation, says he himself, that light came into the world, but MEN shut their eyes against it. They loved darkness rather than light, BECAUSE their works were evil. They would go on in the sins which the light reprov'd, and therefore they oppos'd it till it was quenched, that is, till it totally withdrew from their hearts. To the same purpose our Lord says, The heart of this people is waxed gross, their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed against the light, lest they should see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them. The same unerring teacher informs us,

us, that the devil cometh to the way-side hearers, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. And if our gospel is hid, says St. Paul, it is to them that believe not, and are lost, whose minds the God of this world hath blinded, lest the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.

From these scriptures it is evident that Calvin was mistaken, or that the devil is a fool. For if man is now totally blind why should the devil bestir himself to blind him? And why should he fear lest the gospel should shine to them that are lost, if there is absolutely no gospel for them, or they have no eyes to see, no capacity to receive it?

Whether sinners knew their gospel-day or not, they have one. Read the history of Cain, who is supposed to be the first reprobate; and see how graciously the Lord expostulated with him. Consider the old world: St. Peter speaking of them says, *The gospel was preached to them also that are dead; for Christ went by the Spirit, and preached even to those who were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited 120 years in the days of Noah.* Nor did the Lord wait with an intention of having them compleatly fattened for the day of slaughter: far be the unbecoming thought from those who worship the God of love! Instead of entertaining it, let us account that the long-suffering of our Lord is SALVATION, that is, a beginning of salvation, and a sure pledge of it: if we know and redeem the accepted time: for the Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Nor does God's long-suffering extend to the elect only. It embraces also those who treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, by despising the riches of divine goodness and forbearance and LONG-SUFFERING, not knowing that the goodness of God leads them to repentance. Of this the Jews are a remarkable instance. What could God have done more to his Jewish vineyard? He gathered the stones of it, and planted it with the choicest vine; and yet when HE LOOKED that

it should have brought forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes: when he sent his servants to receive the fruits, they were abused and sent away empty. Hence it is evident that the Jews had a day, in which they could have brought forth fruit, or the wise God would no more have looked for it, than a wise man expects to see the pine-apple grow upon the haw-thorn.

Nay, the most obstinate, pharisaic, and bloody of the Jews had a day, in which our Lord in person, would have gathered them with as much tenderdeſs, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. And when he ſaw their free-agency, abſolutely ſet againſt his loving-kindneſs, he wept over them, and deplored their not having known the things belonging unto their peace, before they were hid from their eyes.

Our gracious God freely gives one or more talents of grace to every man: nor was ever any man caſt into utter darkneſs where ſhal' be weeping and gnawing of teeth, but for the not uſing his talent aright, as our Lord ſufficiently declares, Matt. xxv. 30. Alluding to that important parable, I would obſerve, that the Chriſtian has five talents, the Jew two, and the Heathen one. If he that has two talents lays them out to advantage, he ſhall receive a reward as well as he that has five: and the one talent is as capable of a proportionable improvement as the two or the five. The equality of God's ways does not conſiſt in giving juſt the ſame number of gracious talents to all; but firſt in not deſiring to gather where he has not ſtrowed, or to reap above a proportion of his ſeed; and (2.) in graciously diſpenſing rewards according to the number of talents improved, and the degrees of that improvement: (and in juſtly inflicting puniſhments, according to the number of the talents bury'd) and the aggravations attending their unfaithfulneſs. *For unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall be much required, and to whom men have committed much, of him they will aſk the more.*

We frequently ſpeak of God's ſecret decrees, the knowledge of which is as uſeleſs as it is uncertain;
but

but seldom consider that solemn decree *so often* revealed in the gospel, *To him that has grace to purpose, more shall be given; and from him that has not, that has buried his gracious talent, and therefore in one sense, has it not, shall be taken away even that which he hath to no purpose: according to our Lord's awful command, Take the talent from him that hath buried it, and give it to him that hath ten, for the good and faithful servant shall have abundance.*† He who says, *Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,* is too just to look for an increase from those on whom he bestows no talent; and as he calls for repentance and faith, and for a daily increase of both, he has certainly bestowed upon us the seed of both, for he *gives seed to the sower, and does not desire to reap where he has not sown.*

Methinks my honored opponent cries out with amazement; What! have all men power to repent and believe? And in the mean time a Benedictine monk comes up to vouch that this doctrine is rank Pelagianism. But permit me to observe, that if Pelagius had acknowledged as we do the total fall of man, and ascribed with us to the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, all the power we have to repent and believe, none of the Fathers would have been so injudicious and uncharitable as to rank him among heretics. We maintain that altho' without Christ we can do nothing, yet so long as *the day of salvation* lasts, all men, *the chief of sinners* not excepted, can, thro' his free preventing grace, *cease to do evil, learn to do well,* and use those means which will infallibly end in the repentance, and faith peculiar to the dispensation they are under, whether it be that of the Heathens, Jews, or Christians.

If the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis*, and father Walsh deny this, they might as well charge Christ with

† I must do the Calvinists the justice to observe that as our Lord says, *ask and have; so Elisha Coles says, Use grace and have grace,* which is all that we contend for, if the inseparable counter-part of the axiom is admitted, "abuse grace and lose grace"

with the absurdity of *tasting death for every man*, in order to keep most men from the very possibility of being benefited by his death. They might as well assert that altho' *the free gift came upon ALL men*; yet it never came upon a vast majority of them; and openly maintain that Christ deserves to be called the *destroyer* rather than the *Saviour of the world*. For if the greatest part of mankind may be considered as *the world*, if repentance and faith are absolutely impossible to them, and Jesus came to denounce destruction to all who do not repent and believe, let every thinking man say whether he might not be called with greater propriety the *Destroyer* than the *Saviour of the world*; and whether preaching the Crispian gospel, is not like reading the warrant of *inevitable damnation* to millions of wretched creatures. But upon the scheme of what you call the "*Weslean orthodoxy*," Christ is really *the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe*: for he indulges all with *a day of salvation*, and if none but believers make a proper use of it, the fault is not in his partiality, but in their own obstinacy.

In what a pitiful light does your scheme place our Lord! Why did he *marvel at the unbelief of the Jews*, if they could no more believe than a stone can swim? And say not that he marvelled "*as a man*;" for the assertion absolutely *unmans* him. What *man* ever wondered that an ass does not bray with the nightingale's melodious voice? Nay, what *child* ever marvelled that the ox does not fly above the clouds with the soaring eagle?

The same observation holds with regard to repentance. Then he began, says St. Matthew, *to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, BECAUSE they repented not*. Merciful Saviour forgive us: We have insulted thy meek wisdom, by representing thee as cruelly upbraiding the lame for not running, the blind for not seeing, and the dumb for not speaking!

But this is not all, if Capernaum could not *have repented at our Lord's preaching, as well as Nineveh at*
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the preaching of Jonas; how do we reflect upon his mild equity, and adorable goodness, when we represent him as pronouncing woe upon woe over the impenitent city, and threatening to sink it into a deeper hell than Sodom *BECAUSE it repented not!* And how ill does it become us to exclaim against Deists for robbing Christ of his *divinity*, when we ourselves divest him of common *humanity!*

Suppose a school-master said to his English scholars, "Except you instantly speak Greek you shall all be severely whipped," you would wonder at the injustice of the school-tyrant. But would not the wretch be merciful, in comparison of a Saviour, (so called) who is supposed to say to myriads of men that can no more repent than ice can burn, *Except you repent you shall all perish?* I confess that when I see real Protestants calling this doctrine "the pure gospel," and extolling it as "free grace," I no more wonder that real Papists should call their bloody inquisition *the house of mercy*, and their burning of those whom they call Heretics an *auto de fe*.

Obj. At this rate our salvation or damnation turns upon the good or bad use which we make of the manifold grace of God! And we are in this world in a state of probation, and not meerly upon our passage to the rewards which everlasting love, or to the punishments which everlasting hatred has *freely* allotted us from the foundation of the world!

Ans. Undoubtedly: for what man of sense (I except those who thro' hurry and mistake have put on the veil of prejudice) could shew his face in a pulpit, to exhort a multitude of reprobates to avoid a damnation absolutely unavoidable; and invite a little flock of elect, to lose no time in *making sure* an election, surer than the pillars of heaven?

Again, who but a tyrant will make the life of his subjects turn upon a thing that is not at all at their option? When Nero was determined to put people to death, had he not humanity and honesty enough
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† An act of faith.

not to tantalize them with insulting offers of life? To whom did he ever say, "If thou pluckest one star from heaven thou shalt not die; but if thou failest in the attempt, the most dreadful and lingering torments shall punish thy obstinacy?" And shall I, shall any Christian brethren, represent the King of saints as guilty of ——— what my pen refuses to write, that which Nero himself was too merciful to contrive?

Obj. "You do not state the case fairly. If *all have sinned in Adam, and the wages of sin is death*, God did the reprobates no wrong when he condemned them to eternal torments, before they knew their right hand from their left; yea, before the foundation of the world."

Ans. The plausibility of this objection, heightened by *voluntary humility*, has misled thousands of pious souls; God give them understanding to weigh the following reflections. (1.) If an unconditional absolute decree of damnation passed upon the reprobates *BEFORE the foundation of the world*; it is absurd to account for the justice of such a decree, by appealing to a sin committed *AFTER the foundation of the world*.

(2.) If Adam sinned necessarily according to the *secret will and purpose of God*, as you intimate in your 4th letter, many do not see how he, much less his posterity, could justly be condemned to eternal torments for doing an iniquity which *God's hand and counsel determined before to be done*.

(3.) As we sinned only *feminally*, in Adam, if God had not intended our redemption, his goodness would have engaged him to destroy us *feminally*, by crushing the capital offender who contained us all: so there would have been a just proportion between the sin, and the punishment; for as we sinned in Adam without the least consciousness of *guilt*, so in him we should have been punished without the least consciousness of *pain*. This observation may be illustrated by an example. If I catch a mischievous animal, a viper for instance, I have undoubtedly a right to kill her, and destroy her dangerous brood if she is big with young. But if instead

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of dispatching her as soon as I can, I feed her on purpose to get many broods from her, and torment to death millions of her offspring, I can hardly pass for the *good man who regards the life of a beast*. Leaving to you the application of this simile, I ask: Do we honor God when we break the equal beams of his perfections; when we blacken his goodness and mercy, in order to make his justice and greatness shine with exorbitant lustre? If "a God all mercy is a God unjust," may not we say, according to the rule of proportion, that "a God all justice is a God unkind," and can never be he *whose mercy is over all his works*?

(5.) But the moment we allow that the blessing of the second Adam is as general as the curse of the first: that God sets again life and death before every individual, and that he mercifully restores to all a capacity of *choosing life*; yea and of *having it one day more abundantly than Adam himself had before the fall*, we see his goodness and justice shine with equal radiance, when he spares guilty Adam to propagate the fallen race; that they may share the blessings of a *better covenant*. For, according to the Adamic law, *judgment was by one sin to condemnation*; but the free gift of the gospel is of *many offences to justification*. For if thro' the offence of one the many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto the many.

(6.) Rational and scriptural as the preceding observations are, we could spare them, and answer your objection thus. You think God may justly decree, that millions of his unborn creatures shall be *vessels of wrath* to all eternity, overflowing with the vengeance due to Adam's pre-ordained sin; but you are not nearer the mark: for granting that he could do it as a just, good, and merciful God; yet he cannot do it as the God of *faithfulness and truth*. His word and oath are gone forth together: Hear both. *What mean ye that ye use this proverb? "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."* As PLIVE, says the Lord God, *ye shall not have occasion any more to use*
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this proverb. The soul that sinneth personally, it shall die eternally. Every one shall die for his own avoidable iniquity. Every man that eateth the sour grape, when he might have eaten the sweet, his teeth shall justly be set on edge. When God has thus made oath of his equity and impartiality before mankind, it is rather bold to charge him with contriving Calvin's election, and setting up the Protestant Madona, the great image before which a considerable part of the church continually falls down and worships.

O ye honest Shadrachs, who gaze upon it with admiration, see how some Calvinian doctors deify it, *Decreta Dei sunt ipse Deus, The decrees of God are God himself.* See Elisha Coles advancing at the head of thousands of his admirers, and hear how he exhorts them to worship: *Let us make election our all; our bread, water, munition of rocks, and whatever else we can suppose to want, that is, Let us make the great image our God.* Ye candid Mesechs, ye considerate Abednegos, follow not this mistaken multitude; before you cry with them, "*Great is the Diana of the Calvinist!*" walk once around the celebrated image: and I am persuaded that if you can make out *Free Grace* written in running hand upon her smiling face, you will see *FREE WRATH* written in black capitals upon her deformed back; and then, far from being angry at the liberty I take to expose her, you will wish speed to the *little stone* which I level at her iron-clay feet.

Think not, honored Sir, that I say about *free-wrath*, what I cannot possibly prove: for you help me yourself to a striking demonstration. I suppose you still upon your travels. You come to the borders of a great empire, and the first thing that strikes you, is a man in an easy carriage going with folded arms to take possession of an immense estate freely given him by the King of the country. As he flies along you just make out the motto of the royal chariot, in which he doses, *FREE REWARD.* Soon after you meet five of the kings carts, containing twenty wretches loaded with irons: and the motto of every cart is, *FREE PUNISHMENT.*

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NISHMENT. You enquire into the meaning of this extraordinary procession, and the sheriff attending the execution answers: Know, curious stranger, that our Monarch is *absolute*; and to shew that *sovereignty* is the prerogative of his imperial crown, and that he is *no respecter of persons*, he distributes every day *FREE rewards and FREE punishments*, to a certain number of his subjects.—“What! without any regard to merit or demerit, by mere caprice!”—Not altogether so, for he pitches upon the *worst of men, and chief of sinners, and upon such to choose*, for the subjects of his rewards. (Elisha Coles, page 62) And that his punishments may do as much honor to *free sovereign wrath*, as his bounty does to *free sovereign grace*, he pitches upon those that shall be executed, before they are born.—“What! have these poor creatures in chains done no harm?” O yes, says the sheriff, the king contrived that their parents should let them fall, and break their legs before they had any knowledge; when they came to years of discretion he commanded them to run a race with broken legs, and because they cannot do it, I am going to see them quartered. Some of them besides this have been obliged to fulfil the king’s *secret will*, and bring about his purposes; and they shall be burned in yonder deep valley called *Tophet*, for their trouble.—You are shocked at the sheriff’s account, and begin to expostulate with him about the *freeness* of the *wrath* which burns a man for doing the king’s will; but all the answer you can get from him is that which you give me in your 4th letter, page 29, where speaking of a poor reprobate you say, *Such an one is indeed accomplishing the king’s, you say God’s decree, but he carries a dreadful mark in his forehead, that such a decree is, that he shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord of the country.* You cry out, “God deliver me from the hands of a monarch, who punishes with everlasting destruction such as accomplish his decree!” and while the magistrate intimates

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that your exclamation is a *dreadful mark* if not *in your forehead*, at least upon your tongue, that you yourself, shall be apprehended against the next execution, and made a public instance of the king's *free wrath*, your blood runs cold, you bid the postillion turn the horses; they gallop for your life, and the moment you get out of the dreary land, you bless God for your narrow escape.

May reason and scripture draw your soul with equal speed from the dismal fields of Cole's sovereignty, to the smiling plains of primitive Christianity. Here you have God's *election* without Calvin's *reprobation*. Here Christ chuses the Jews without rejecting the Gentiles, and elects Peter, James and John to the enjoyment of peculiar privileges, with-reprobating Matthew Thomas and Simon. Here nobody is damned for not doing impossibilities, or for doing what he could not possibly help. Here all that are saved enjoy rewards thro' the merits of Christ, according to the degrees of evangelical obedience which the Lord enables, not forces, them to perform. Here *free wrath* never appeared; all our damnation is of ourselves, when we *neglect such great salvation*, by obstinately refusing to *work it out with fear and trembling*. But this is not all, here *free grace* does not rejoice over *stocks* but over *men*, who gladly confess that their salvation is all of God, who for Christ's sake rectifies their free-agency, helps their infirmities, and *works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure*. And from the tenor of the scripture, as well as from the consent of all nations, and the dictates of conscience, it appears that part of *God's good pleasure* towards man is, that he shall remain invested with the awful power of *chusing life or death*, that his will shall never be *forced*, and consequently that overbearing, irresistible grace shall be banished to the land of Cole's sovereignty, together with free, absolute, unavoidable wrath.

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Now; honored Sir, permit me to ask, Why does this doctrine alarm good men? Why are those divines deemed heretics who dare not divest God of his essential love, Emmanuel of his compassionate humanity, and man of his connatural free-agency? What are Dominicus and Calvin, when weighed in the balance against Moses and Jesus Christ? Hear the great Prophet of the Jews: *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, heaven and hell, therefore chuse life that you may live. And he that hath ears not yet absolutely stopped by prejudice, let him hear what the great prophet of the Christians says upon the important question. I am come that they might have life—all things are now ready—but ye will not come unto me that you might have life—I would have gathered you and ye would not.—Because I have called and ye refused, I will laugh when your destruction cometh. FOR THAT they did not CHUSE the fear of the Lord, THEREFORE shall they eat not the fruit of my decree or of Adam's sin, but of their own perverse way: they shall be filled with their own doings.*

If these words of Moses and Jesus Christ are overlooked, should not at least the experience of near six thousand years teach the world that God does not force rational beings, and that when he tries their loyalty, he does not obey for them, but gives them sufficient grace to obey for themselves? Had not all the angels sufficient grace to obey? If some kept not their first estate, was it not thro' their own unfaithfulness? What evil has our Creator done us, or what service have devils rendered us, that we should fix the blot of Calvinian reprobation upon the former, to excuse the rebellion of the latter? Did not Adam and Eve stand some time by means of God's sufficient grace, and might they not have stood for ever? Have not unconverted men sufficient grace to forsake or complain of some evil? To perform, or attempt

some good? Had not David sufficient grace to avoid the crimes into which he plunged? Have not believers sufficient power to do more good than they do? And does not the scripture address sinners (Simon Magus not excepted) as having sufficient grace to pray for more grace, if they have not yet sinned the sin unto death?

In opposition to the above-stated doctrine of *grace free FOR all*, as well as, *free IN all*, our Calvinian brethren assert that God binds his *free grace*, and keeps it from visiting millions of sinners whom they call reprobates.—They teach that man is not in a state of probation, that his lot is absolutely cast, a certain little number of souls being immoveably fixed in God's favor, in the midst of all their abominations; and a certain vast number under his eternal wrath, in the midst of their most sincere endeavours to secure his favor. And their teachers maintain that the names of the former were *written in the book of life*, without any respect to foreseen repentance, faith and obedience; while the names of the latter were put in the book of death, (so I call the decree of reprobation) merely for the sin of Adam, without any regard to personal impenitency, unbelief and disobedience. And this *narrow grace* and *free wrath* they recommend to the world under the engaging name of *free grace*.

This doctrine, dear Sir, we are in conscience bound to oppose, not only because it is the reverse of the other, which is both scriptural and rational; but because it is inseparably connected with doctrinal Antinomianism, as your fourth letter abundantly demonstrates; and above all, because it appears to us that it fixes a blot upon all the divine perfections. Please, honored, Sir, to consider the following queries.

What becomes of God's *goodness*, if the tokens of it which he gives to millions are only intended to
infringe

enhance their ruin, or cast a deceitful veil over his everlasting wrath?—What of his *mercy* which is over ALL his works, if millions were ever excluded from the least interest in it, by an *absolute* decree that constitutes them vessels of wrath from all eternity?—What becomes of his *justice*, if he sentences myriads upon myriads to everlasting fire, BECAUSE they have not believed on the name of his only begotten Son; when, if they had believed that he was their *Jesus*, their Saviour, they would have believed a monstrous lie, and claimed what they have no more right to than I have to the crown of England?—What of his *veracity*, and the oath he swears that he willet not the death of a sinner; if he never affords most sinners sufficient means of escaping eternal death? If he sends his ambassadors to every creature, declaring that all things are now ready for their salvation, when nothing but *Tophet* is prepared of old for the inevitable destruction of a vast majority of them?—What becomes of his *holiness*, if in order to condemn the reprobates with some show of justice, and secure the end of his decree of reprobation, which is that “millions shall absolutely be damned,” he absolutely fixes the means of their damnation, that is, their sins and wickedness?—What of his *wisdom* if he seriously expostulates with souls as dead as corpses, and gravely urges to repentance and faith persons that can no more repent and believe, than fifties can speak and sing?—What becomes of his *long-suffering*, if he waits to have an opportunity of sending the reprobates into a deeper hell, and not to give them a longer time to save themselves from this perverse generation?—What of his *equity*, if there was mercy for Adam and Eve, who personally breaking the edge of duty; wantonly rushed out of paradise into this howling wilderness; and yet there is no mercy for millions of their unfortunate children, who are born in a state of sin and misery without any personal choice, and consequently without any personal sin?—And what becomes of his

omniscience, if he cannot foreknow future contingencies? If to foretel without a mistake that such a thing shall happen, he must do it himself? Was not Nero as wise in this respect? Could not he foretel that Phebe should not continue a virgin, when he was bent upon ravishing her? That Seneca should not die a natural death, when he had determined to have him murdered? And that Crispus should fall into a pit, if he obliged him to run a race at midnight in a place full of pits? And what old woman in the kingdom cannot precisely foretel that a silly tale shall be told at such an hour, if she is resolved to tell it herself, or at any rate to engage a child to do it for her?

Again, What becomes of God's *loving-kindnesses*, which have been ever of old towards the children of men? And what of his *impartiality*, if most men, absolutely reprobated for the sin of Adam, are never placed in a state of personal trial and probation? Does not God use them far less kindly than devils, who were tried every one for himself, and remain in their diabolical state, because they brought it upon themselves by a *personal choice*? Astonishing! That the Son of God should have been flesh of the flesh, and bone of the bone of millions of men, whom, upon the Calvinian scheme, he never indulged so far as he did devils! What an hard hearted relation to myriads of his fellow-men, does Calvin represent our Lord? Suppose Satan had become our *kinsman* by incarnation, and had by that mean got *the right of redemption*: would he not have acted like himself, if he had not only left the majority of them in the depth of the fall, but enhanced their misery by the sight of his partiality to the little flock of the elect?

Once more, What becomes of *fair dealing*, if God every where represents sin as the dreadful evil which causes damnation, and yet the most horrid sins *work for good* to some, and as you intimate "accomplish their salvation thro' Christ?"—And what of *honesty*, if the God of truth himself promises that *all*
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the families of the earth shall be blessed in Christ, when he has cursed a vast majority of them, with a decree of absolute reprobation, which excludes them from obtaining an interest in him, even from the foundation of the world?

Nay what becomes of his *sovereignty* itself, if it is torn from the mild and gracious attributes by which it is tempered? If it is held forth in such a light as renders it more terrible to millions, than the sovereignty of Nebuchadnezzar in the plain of Dura appeared to Daniel's companions, when *the form of his visage was changed against them*, and he decreed that they should be cast into the burning fiery furnace; for they might have saved their bodily life by bowing to the golden image which was a thing in their power; but poor reprobates can escape at no rate: the *horrible decree* is gone forth; they must, in spite of their best endeavours, dwell body and soul with *everlasting burnings*.

And let none say that we wrong the Calvinian decree of reprobation, when we call it an *horrible decree*, for Calvin himself is honest enough to call it so. 'Unde factum est, tot gentes, unà cum liberis eorum infantibus æternæ morti involveret lapsus Adæ absque remedio, nisi quia Deo ita visum est?—Decretum quidem horribile, fateor: inficiare tamen nemo poterit, quin præsciverit Deus quem exitum habiturus esset homo, antequam ipsum conderet, et ideo præsciverit quia decreto suo sic ordinat.' That is, 'How comes it to pass that so many nations, together with their infant children, are by the fall of Adam involved in eternal death without remedy, unless it is because God would have it so?—An horrible decree, I confess! Nevertheless no-body can deny that God foreknew what would be man's end before he created him, and that he foreknew it because he had ordered it by his decree.' Calv. Inst. Book 3. Chap. 23. Sect. 7.

This is some of the contempt which Calvinism pours upon God's perfections: these are some of the blots

blots which it fixes upon his word.---But the moment man is considered as a candidate for heaven, a probationer for a blissful immortality--the moment you allow him what *free grace* bestows upon him, that is, *a day of salvation*, with a *talent* of living light and rectified free-agency, to enable him to *work for life* faithfully promised, as well as *from life* freely imparted--the moment I say, you allow this, all the divine perfections shine with unobscured lustre; and as reason and majesty returned to Nebuchadnezzar after his shameful degradation, so consistency and native dignity are restored to the abused oracles of God.

Having thus shewn the inconsistency of Calvinism, and the reasonableness of what you call the *Westlean*, and what we esteem the *Christian orthodox*, (so far at least as it respects the gracious power and opportunity that man, as redeemed and prevented by Christ, has to "work for life" or to *work out his own salvation*) it is but just I should consider some of the most plausible objections which are urged against our doctrine.

1. *Obj.* Your *Westlean* scheme pours more contempt upon the divine perfections than ours. What becomes of God's *wisdom*, if he gave his Son to die for all mankind, when he foreknew that most men would never be benefited by his death?

Ans. (1.) God foreknew just the contrary: all men, even those who perish, are benefited by Christ's death; for all enjoy thro' him a *day of salvation*, and a thousand blessings both spiritual and temporal; and if all do not enjoy heaven for ever, they may still thank God for his gracious offer, and take the blame upon themselves for their obstinate refusal of it. (2.) God by reinstating all mankind in a state of probation, for ever shuts the mouth of those who *chuse death in the error of their ways*, and clears himself of their blood before men and angels. If he cannot eternally benefit unbelievers, he eternally vindicates his own adorable perfections. He can
say

ay to the most obstinate of all the reprobates, *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; In me was thy help, but thou wouldest not come unto me that thou mightest have life.* Thy destruction is not from my decree, but *thine own determination.*

2. Obj. If God wills *all men to be saved*, and yet many are damned, is he not disappointed? And does not his disappointment argue that he wants either wisdom to contrive the means of some men's salvation, or power to execute his gracious design?

Ans. (1.) God's purpose is that all men shall have sufficient grace to believe according to their dispensation, that *he who believeth shall be saved, and he who believeth not shall be damned.* God cannot therefore be disappointed, even when man's free agency throws in the weight of final unbelief, and turns the scale of probation for death. (2.) Altho' Christ is the author of *a day of salvation* to all, yet he is *the author of eternal salvation* to none but to such as *obey him*, by *working out their own salvation while it is day.*

If you say that "Supposing God wills the salvation of *all*, and none can be saved but the *obedient*, he should *make all obey*:" I reply, So he does, by a variety of gracious means, which persuade but do not force them; for he says himself, *What could I have done more to my vineyard than I have done?* "Oh but he should *force all* by the sovereign power of irresistible grace." You might as well say that he should renounce his wisdom, and defeat his own purpose: for if his wisdom places men in a state of probation; the more it he forces them, he takes them out of that state and overturns his own counsel: he destroys the work of his hands; he unmans man, and saves him not as a rational creature; but as a stock or stone. Add to this, that *forced obedience* is a contradiction in terms; it is but another word for *disobedience*, at least in the account of him who says, *My son, give me thy heart: obey me with an unconstrained, free, and chearful will.* In a word, this
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many are willingly ignorant of; that when God says, he wills all MEN to be saved, he wills them to be saved as MEN, according to his own method of salvation laid down in the above-mentioned scriptures, and not in their own way of wilful disobedience, or after Calvin's scheme of irresistible grace.

3. Obj. " You may speak against *irresistible grace*, but we are persuaded that nothing short of it is sufficient to make us believe; for St. John informs us that the Jews, towards whom it was not exerted, *could not believe.*"

Ans. (1.) Joseph said to his mistress *How CAN I do this great wickedness!* But this does not prove that he was not able to comply with her request if he had been so minded. The truth was, that some of the Pharisees had *bury'd their talent*, and therefore *could not* improve it; while others had so provoked God, that he had *taken it from them*: they had *sinned unto death*. But most of them obstinately held that evil, which was an insurmountable hindrance to faith; and to them our Lord said, *How CAN ye believe, who receive honor one of another!* (2.) I wonder that modern predestinarians should make so much of this scripture, when St. Augustin their father, solves the seeming difficulty with the utmost readiness. ' If you ask me, says he, why the Jews *could not believe*: I quickly answer, *Because they would not*; for God foresaw their evil will, and foretold it by the prophet; and if he blinded their eyes, their own wills deserved this also.' They obstinately said "*we will not see,*" and God justly said at last, "*Ye shall not see.*"

4. Obj. You frequently mention the parable of the *talents*, but take care to say nothing of the parable of the *dry bones*, which shews not only the absurdity of supposing that man can work for life, but the propriety of expostulating with souls as void of all spiritual life, as the *dry bones* to which Ezekiel prophesied.

Ans.

Ans. If you read that parable without comment, you will see that it is not descriptive of the spiritual state of souls, but of the political condition of the Jews during their captivity in Babylon. They were scattered throughout Chaldea as *dry bones in a valley*; nor was there any human probability of their being collected to form again a political body. Therefore God to cheer their desponding hearts, favoured Ezekiel with the vision of the resurrection of the dry bones. (2.) This vision proves just the reverse of what some imagine. For the dry bones are thus described by God himself. *These bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say,* (this was the language of their despairing minds) *our bones are dried, our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts.* Here these Israelites compared to dry bones, even before Ezekiel prophesied, and the Spirit entered into them, knew their misery, and complained of it saying, *Our bones are dried up.* How far then were they from being as insensible as corpses? (3.) The prophecy to the dry bones did not consist in threatenings and exhortations; it was only of the declarative kind. Nor was the promise of their resurrection fulfilled in the Calvinian way, that is *irresistibly*. For altho' God had said, *I will open your graves, that is, your prisons, and bring you out of them into your own land*; we find that multitudes when their graves were opened, chose to continue in them. For when Nehemiah and Ezra breathed, under God, courage into the dry bones, the Jewish captives dispersed throughout Chaldea, many preferred the land of their captivity to their own land, and refused to return: so that after all, their political resurrection turned upon their own choice.

5. Obj. We do not altogether go by the parable of the dry bones, when we affirm there is no absurdity in preaching to souls as dead as corpses. We have the example of our Lord as well, as that of Ezekiel. Did he not say to Lazarus when he was dead and buried, *Come forth?*

Ans.

Ans. If Christ had called Lazarus out of the grave without giving him power to come forth, his friends would have had some reason to suspect that *he was besides himself*. How much more, if they had heard him call a thousand corpses out of their graves, denouncing to all, that if they did not rise they should be *cast into a lake of fire*, and eaten up by a *worm that dieth not* ! It is matter of fact that Christ never commanded but one dead man to come out of the grave ; and the instant he gave him the command, he gave him also power to obey it. Hence we conclude that as the Lord *commands all men every where to repent*, he gives them all power so to do. But some Calvinist's argue just the reverse. Christ, say they, called one corpse without using any intreaty, threatening or promise, and he gave it power to obey ; therefore when he calls an hundred dead souls, and inforces his call with the greatest variety of expostulations, threatenings and promises, he gives power to obey only to two or three. What an inference is this ! How worthy of the cause which it supports !

In how contemptible a light does our Lord appear if he says to souls as dead as Lazarus in the grave, *All the day long have I stretched out my hands unto you. Turn ye : Why will ye die ? Let the wicked forsake his way, and I will have mercy upon him : But if he will not turn, I will whet my sword, I have bent my bow and made it ready ; I have also prepared for him the instruments of death ?*

I once saw a passionate man unmercifully beating and damning a blind horse, because he did not take to the way in which he would have him go ; and I came up just when the poor animal fell a lamed victim to its driver's madness. How did I upbraid him with his cruelty, and charge him with unparalleled extravagance ! But I now ask if it is not more than paralleled by the conduct of the imaginary being, whom some recommend to the world as a wise and merciful God. For the besotted driver for some minutes

nutes expostulated in his way with a *living* tho' blind horse; but the supposed Maker of the Calvinian decrees expostulates *all the day long* with souls not only as blind as beetles, but as *dead*, as corpses. Again, the former had some hopes of prevailing with his living beast to turn; but what hopes can the latter have to prevail with dead corpses, or with souls as dead as they? What man in his senses ever attempted to make a corpse *turn*, by threatening it *sword* in hand, or by *bending the bow* and levelling an arrow at its cold and putrid heart?

But suppose the resurrection of Lazarus, and that of the dry bones, did not overthrow Calvinism, would it be reasonable to lay so much stress upon them? Is a dead soul in every respect like a dead body; and is *moral* absolutely like *natural* death? Can a parabolical vision wrested from its obvious meaning, supersede the plainest declarations of Christ, who personally addresses sinners as free agents? Should not metaphors, comparisons, and parables be suffered to walk erect like reasonable man? Is it right to make them go upon all four like the stupid ox? What loads of heterodoxy have degraded parables brought into the church! And how successfully has error carried on her trade, by dealing in figurative expressions taken in a literal sense!

This is my body, says Christ. "Therefore bread is flesh," says the Papist, and transubstantiation is true.—*These dry bones are the house of Israel*, says the Lord. "Therefore Calvinism is true," say my objector, and we can do no more towards our conversion, than dry bones towards their resurrection.—*Lost sinners* are represented in the gospel as a *lost piece of silver*: Therefore, says the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis*, they can no more seek God, than the piece could seek the woman who had lost it.—*Christ is the Son of God*, says St. Peter: "Therefore," says Arius, he is not *cœternal* with the Father, for I am not so old as my parents."

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And I, who have a right to be as wise as any of them, hearing our Lord say that *the seven churches are seven candlesticks*, prove by it that the seven churches can no more repent than three pair and half of candlesticks, or if you please, seven pair of snuffers. And shall we pretend to overthrow the general tenor of the scripture by such conclusions as these? Shall not rather unprejudiced persons of every denomination, agree to turn such arguments out of the Christian church, with as much indignation as Christ turned the oxen out of the Jewish temple!

Permit me honored Sir, to give you two or three instances more, of an undue stretching of some particular words, for the support of some Calvinian errors. According to the oriental stile a follower of wisdom is called a *son of wisdom*, and one that deviates from her paths a *son of folly*. By the same mode of speech, a wicked man, considered as wicked, is called *Satan, a son of Belial, a child of the wicked one, and a child of the devil*. On the other hand a man who turns from the devil's works, and does the works of God by believing in him, is called a *child, or a son of God*. Hence the passing from the ways of Satan to the ways of God, was naturally called *conversion* and *new birth*, as implying a turning from sin, a passing into the family of God, and being numbered among the godly.

Hence some divines, who, like Nicodemus, carnalize the expressions of *new birth, child of God, and son of God*, assert that if men who once walked in God's ways, turn back into adultery, murder and incest, they are still *God's dear people and pleasant children*, in the gospel sense of the words. They ask, "Can a man be a child of God to-day, and a child of the devil to-morrow? Can he be born this week, and unborn the next?" And with these questions they as much think they have overthrown the doctrine of holiness and one half of the bible, as honest Nicodemus supposed he had demolished

lished the doctrine of regeneration, and stopped our Lord's mouth, when he said, *Can a man enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?*

The questions of our brethren would be easily answered, if setting aside the oriental mode of speech, they simply asked, "May one who has *ceased to do evil*, and *learned to do well* to-day; cease to do well, and learn to do evil to-morrow?" To this we could directly reply: If the dying thief, the Philippian jailor, and multitudes of Jews, in one day went over from the sons of folly to the sons of wisdom; where is the absurdity of saying they could measure the same way back again in one day; and draw back into the horrid womb of sin as easily as Satan drew back into rebellion, Adam into disobedience, David into adultery, Solomon into idolatry, Judas into treason, and Ananias and Sapphira into covetousness? When Peter had shewn himself a *blissed* son of heavenly wisdom, by confessing Jesus Christ; did he even stay till the next day to become a son of folly by following the *wisdom which is earthly, sensual and devilish*? Was not our Lord directly obliged to rebuke him with the utmost severity, by saying, *Get thee behind me, SATAN?*

Multitudes, who live in open sin, build their hopes of heaven upon a similar mistake, I mean upon the unscriptural idea which they fix to the scriptural word *sheep*. "Once I heard the *shepherd's voice*, says one of these Laodicean souls; I *followed him*, and therefore I was one of his *sheep*; and now, tho' I *follow the voice of a stranger* who leads me into all manner of sins, into adultery and murder, I am undoubtedly a *sheep* still; for it was never heard that a sheep became a goat." Such persons do not observe, that our Lord calls sheep those *who hear his voice*, and goats those who follow that of the tempter. Nor do they consider that if Saul, a *grievous wolf breathing slaughter* against Christ's sheep, and *making havock of his little flock*, could in a short time be chang-

ed both into a sheep and a shepherd; David, an harmless sheep, could in as short a time commence a goat with Bathsheba, and prove a wolf in sheep's clothing to her husband.

Pardon me, honoured Sir, if to make my mistaken brethren ashamed of their argument, I dedicate to them the following soliloquy, wherein I reason upon their own plan. 'Those very Jews whom the baptist and our Lord call'd a brood of vipers, and serpents, were soon after compared to chickens, which Christ wanted to gather as a hen does her brood. What a wonderful change was here! The vipers became chickens! Now as it was never heard that chickens became vipers, I conclude that those Jews, even when they came about our Lord like fat hells of Basan, like ramping and roaring lions, were true chickens still. And indeed why should not they have been as true chickens, as David was a true Sheep when he murdered Uriah? I abhor the doctrine which maintains that a man may be a chick or a sheep to-day, and a viper or a goat to-morrow.'

'But I am a little embarrassed. If none go to hell but goats, and none to heaven but sheep, where shall the chickens go? Where the wolves in sheep's clothing? And in what limbus of heaven or hell shall we put that fox Herod, the dogs who return to their vomit, and the swine, before whom we must not cast our pearls? Are they all species of goats, or some particular kind of sheep?

'My difficulties increase. The church is call'd a dove, and Ephraim a silly dove? Shall the silly dove be admitted among the sheep? Her case seems rather doubtful. The hair of the spouse in the canticles is likewise said to be like a flock of goats, and Christ's shepherds are represented as feeding kids, or young goats besides their tents. I wonder if those young goats became young sheep, or if they were all doom'd to continue reprobates? But what puzzles me most, is that the Babylonians are in the same
verse

verse compar'd to *lambs, rams, and goats*: Were they mongrel elect, or mongrel reprobates, or some of Elisha Cole's *spiritual monsters, in whom the spirit had begotten a lump of dead flesh?*

I make this ridiculous soliloquy to shew the absurdity and danger of resting weighty doctrines upon so sandy a foundation as the particular sense which some good men give to a few scriptural expressions stretch'd and abus'd on the rack of my countryman Calvin; especially such expressions as these, a *child of God, a sheep, a goat*, and above all, the *dead in sin*.

Upon this last expression you seem, honoured Sir, chiefly to place the merit of your cause with respect to "working for life"; witness the following words: "That we are to work for life is an assertion most exceedingly self-contradictory, if it be a truth that man is *dead in trespasses and sins*." Had you given yourself the trouble of reading with any degree of attention the 42d page of the vindication, you would have seen your difficulty propos'd and solv'd: Witness the following words which conclude the solution: "In this scriptural view of free grace, what room is there for the ridiculous cavil, that Mr. W. wants the dead to work for life." Had I been in your place I confess, honoured Sir, I could not have produc'd that cavil again, without attempting at least to wipe off the ridicule put upon it. I should think truth has better weapons to defend herself than a *vail*. I grant that the reverend Divine whose second you are, has publickly cast a *vail* over all my arguments, under the name of *mistakes*: but could you possibly think that his *vail* was thick enough to cover them from the eyes of unprejudic'd readers, and palliate your answering, or seeming to answer me: without taking notice of my arguments? But if you cast a *vail* over them, I shall now endeavour to do your's justice and clear the matter a little farther.

I. Availing yourself of St. Paul's words to the Ephesians and Colossians, *You hath he quicken'd, who*

were dead in trespasses and sins, and you being dead in your sins hath he quicken'd together with him; you dwell upon the absurdity of "expecting living actions from a dead corpse," or living works from a dead soul.

(1) I wonder at the partiality of some persons. If we assert that strong believers are DEAD to sin, they tell us very properly that such are not so dead but they may commit sin if they please, or if they are off their watch: But if we say that many who are DEAD in sin, are not so dead but in the strength imparted together with the light that enlightens every man, they may leave off some of their sins if they please, we are exclaim'd against as using metaphysical distinctions, and dead must absolutely mean impotent as a corpse.

(2.) The word *dead* &c. is frequently used in the scriptures to denote a particular degree of helplessness and inactivity very short of the total helplessness of a corpse. We read of the DEADNESS of Sarah's womb, and of Abraham's body being DEAD, and he must be a strong Calvinist indeed, who, from such expressions, peremptorily asserts, that Sarah's DEAD womb was as unfit for conception, and Abraham's DEAD body for generation, as if they both had been "DEAD corpses." Christ writes to the church of Sardis, *I know thy works; thou hast a name to live, and art DEAD*: but it is evident that *dead* as they were, something remained alive in them, tho', like the smoking flax, it was ready to die: Witness the words that follow, *be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die*. Now Sir, if the dead Sardians could "work for life," by strengthening the things belonging to the Christian which remained in them; is it modest to decide e cathedrâ, that the dead Ephesians and Colossians could not as well work for life by strengthening the things that remained and were ready to die under THEIR OWN dispensation? Is it not evident that a beam of the light of the world still shone in their hearts, or that the Spirit still strove with them? If they had absolutely quenched him, would he have helped them to believe? And if they had not, was not there something

Something of the light which enlightens every man remaining in them; with which they both could, and did work for life, as well as the dead Sardians?

(3.) The absurdity of always measuring the meaning of the word *dead* by the idea of a *dead corpse*, appears from several other scriptures. St. Paul speaking of one who grows wanton against Christ, says, *she that liveth in pleasure is DEAD while she liveth*. Now if this means that she is entirely devoid of every degree of spiritual life, what becomes of Calvinism? Suppose all that *live in pleasure* are as *dead to God* as corpses; what became of the *everlasting life* of Lot, when he *liv'd in pleasure* with his daughters? Of David with Bathsheba, and Solomon with his idolatrous wives? When the same apostle observes to the Romans that their *body was DEAD because of sin*, did he really mean they were already *dead corpses*? And when he adds, *sin revived and I DIED*, did Calvinian death really pass upon him? Dead as he was, could not he complain like the *dry bones*, and ask, *who shall deliver me from this body of death*? Again, when our Lord says to Martha, *he that BELIEVETH in me, tho' he were DEAD yet shall he LIVE*, does he not intimate that there is a *work* consistent with the degree of *death* of which he speaks? A *believing* out of *death* into *life*? A *doing the work of God* for *life*, yea for *eternal life*?

(4.) From these and the like scriptures it is evident that there are different degrees of spiritual death, which you perpetually confound. (1.) Total death, or a full departure of the Holy Spirit. This pass'd upon Adam, and all mankind in him, when he lost God's moral image, fell into selfish nature, and was buried in sin, guilt, shame, and horror. (2.) Death freely visited with a seed of life in our fallen representative, and of course in all his posterity, during the day of their visitation. (3.) Death oppressing this living seed, and *holding it in unrighteousness*, which was the *death* of the Ephesians and Colossians. (4.)
Death

Death prevailing again over the living seed, after it had been *powerfully quickened*, and burying it in dirt and wickedness. This was the death of David during his apostacy, and is still that of all who once believed, but now *live in Laodicean ease or Sardian pleasure*. And (5.) the death of confirmed apostates, who, by absolutely *quenching the spirit of life in Christ Jesus* the 2d Adam, are fallen into the miserable state of nature and total helplessness in which the first Adam was, when God preached to him the gospel of his quickening grace. These are said by St. James to be *twice dead*; *dead* by Adam's total apostacy from God, and *dead* by their own personal and final apostacy from the *light of the world*.

II. The foundation of the Crispian *Babel* is literally laid in *confusion*. When you have confounded all the degrees of spiritual death, we may naturally expect to see you confound all the degrees of spiritual life, which our Lord meant when he said, *I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly*. "All that are quickened, do you say, are *"pardoned and justified."* As if a man could not be *quickened* to see his sins and reform, before he is *quickened* so to believe in Christ as to receive the pardon and justification mentioned Col. ii. 13, and Rom. v. 1.

If you read the scriptures without prejudice, you will see that there are several degrees of spiritual life or *quickening power*. (1.) The living *light* which *shines in the darkness* of every man, during the day of his visitation. (2.) The life of the returning sinner, whether he has always lived in open sin as the publican, or once walked in the ways of God as David. (3.) The life of the heathen, who like Cornelius *fears God and works righteousness* according to his light, and is accepted in his dispensation. (4.) The life of the pious Jew, who like Samuel *fears God from his youth*. This degree of life is far superior to the preceding, being *cherished* by the traditions of the patriarchs

archs, the books of the old testament, the sacraments, priests, prophets, temple, sabbaths, sacrifices, and other means of grace belonging to the Jewish œconomy. (5.) The life of the feeble Christian or disciple of John, who is *baptized with water unto repentance for the remission of sins*, and believing in the *Lamb of God* immediately pointed out to him enjoys the blessings of the primitive Christians before the day of Pentecost. And (6.) The still more abundant life, the life of the adult or perfect Christian, imparted to him when the love of God, or power from on high, is plentifully shed abroad in his believing soul, on the day that *Christ baptizes him with the Holy Ghost and with fire, to sanctify him wholly and seal him unto the day of redemption.*

III. When you have overlooked all the degrees of spiritual death and life, what wonder is it that you should confound all the degrees of *acceptance* and *divine favor*, with which God blesses the children of men. Permit me honored Sir to bring also this article of the Christian faith out of the Calvinian tower of Babel, where it has too long been detained.

(1.) I have already proved, that, in consequence of the love of benevolence and pity, with which *God loved the world*, and through the *propitiation* which *Christ made for the sins of the whole world*, the *free gift of an accepted time and a day of salvation came upon all men.* In this sense they are all *accepted*, and sent to *work in the vineyard* of their respective dispensations. This degree of acceptance, with the seed of light, life and power that accompanies it, is certainly previous to any work; and in virtue of it infants and compleat idiots go to heaven, *for of such is the kingdom of God.* As they are not capable of burying or improving their talent of inferior acceptance, they are admitted with it to an inferior degree of glory.

(2.) While many abandoned Heathens, and those who follow their abominable ways bury their talent to the last, and lose it together with the degree of acceptance, they once enjoyed *in or through the Beloved;*

loved; some, by improving it; are accepted in an higher manner, and like Cornelius receive tokens of increasing favor. The love of pity and benevolence which God bore them, is now mixed with some love of complacence and delight.

(3.) Faithful Jews, or those who are under their dispensation, improving a superior number of talents, are accepted in a superior manner, and as a token of it they are made *rulers over five cities*, they partake of greater grace here, and greater glory hereafter.

(4.) John the Baptist and his disciples, I mean, Christians who have not yet been baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, are yet, more highly accepted; for John, and the souls who live up to the height of his dispensation, are *great in the sight and favor of the Lord*. They exceed all those who attain only to the perfection of inferior æconomies.

(5.) But those Christians, who live in the kingdom of God, which was opened to believers on the day of pentecost, whose heart burns with his love, and flames with his glory, are accepted in a still higher degree; for our Lord informs us, that *great as John himself was, the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he*, and as a token of superior acceptance he shall be made *ruler over ten cities*: he shall enter more deeply into the joy and glory of his Lord.

Altho' concurrence with grace given, is *necessary* in order to these four last degrees of acceptance, none enjoys them but in and thro' *the beloved*; for as his blood is the meritorious spring of all our pardons, so his Spirit is the inexhaustible fountain of all our graces. Nor are we less indebted to him for power to be *workers together with God* in the great business of our salvation, than for all the other wonders of his unmerited goodness and redeeming love.

Let no body say that the doctrine of these degrees of acceptance is founded upon metaphysical distinctions, and exceeds the capacity of simple Christians; for a child ten years old understands that he may be
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accepted to run a race, before he is accepted to receive the prize; and that a man may be accepted as a *day-labourer*, and not as a *servant*; be as a *steward*, and not as a *child*, as a *friend* and not as a *spouse*. All these degrees of *acceptance* are very distinct, and the confusion of them evidently belongs to the Calvinian *Babel*.

IV. As we have considered three of the walls of your tower; it will not be amiss to cast a look upon the fourth, which is the utterly confounding of the four degrees that make up a glorified saint's *eternal justification*. (1.) That which passes upon all infants unversally, and is thus described by St. Paul, *As by the offence of one judgment came upon ALL men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon ALL men, unto present justification from original sin, and future justification of life upon their repenting, and believing in the light, during the day of their visitation.* In consequence of this degree of justification we may, without impeaching the veracity of God, say to every creature, *God so loved the world; that he gave his only begotten son, to reconcile them unto himself, not imputing to them original sin unto eternal death, and blotting out their personal transgressions in the moment they believe with the heart unto righteousness.*

(2.) The justification consequent upon such believing, is thus described by St. Paul. *This blessing of faith imputed for righteousness shall be ours, if we believe on him that was raised from the dead for our justification.—We have believed in Jesus Christ; that we might be JUSTIFIED by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.—Therefore being JUSTIFIED by faith we have peace with God thro' our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.*

(3.) The justification consequent upon bringing forth the fruit of a lively faith in the truths that belong to our dispensation; this justification is thus mentioned by St. James. *Rahab the harlot was justified by works.—Abraham our father was justified by works.*

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—Ye see then how by works a man is justified and not by faith only.

And (4.) final justification thus asserted by our Lord and St. Paul. *In the day of judgment by thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned. Circumcision and uncircumcision avail nothing, but the keeping of the commandments, for the doers of the law shall be justified.*†

All these degrees of justification are equally merited by Christ. We do nothing in order to the first, because it finds us in a state of total death. Towards the second *we believe* by the power freely given us in the first, and by the additional help of Christ's word and the Spirit's agency. *We work by faith* in order to the third. And *we continue believing* in Christ and *working together with God*, as we have opportunity, in order to the fourth.

The preaching distinctly these four degrees of a glorified saint's eternal justification is attended with peculiar advantages. The first justification engages the sinner's attention, encourages his hope, and draws his heart by love.—The second wounds the self-righteous Pharisee, who works without believing, while it binds up the heart of the returning publican, who has no plea but *God be merciful to me a sinner*.—The third detects the hypocrisy and blasts the vain hopes of all Antinomians, who instead of shewing their faith by their works, *deny in works the Lord that*

† These four degrees of a glorified saint's eternal justification are mentioned in the preceding Checks, tho' not so distinctly as they are here. If treating of our present justification by faith, and of justification by works in the day of judgment, I have called them our "first and second justification," it was not to exclude the other two, but to attack gradually reigning prejudice, and accommodate myself to the language of my honored opponent, who called *justification in the day of judgment a second justification*. I should have been more exact at first; but I was so intent in demonstrating the *thing*, that I did not think *then* of contending for the most proper *name*. Nor did I see then of what importance it is, to drag the monster error out of the den of *confusion* in which he hides himself.

that bought them, and put him to an open shame.—And while the fourth makes even a *Felix tremble*, it causes believers to pass the time of their sojourning here in humble fear and chearful watchfulness.

Tho' all these degrees of justification meet in glorified saints, we offer violence to scripture if we think with Dr. Crisp that they are inseparable. For all the wicked who *quench the convincing Spirit*, and are finally *given up to a reprobate mind*, fall from the first, as well as Pharaoh. All who *receive the seed among thorns*, all who do not forgive their fellow servants, all who *begin in the spirit and end in the flesh*, and all who *draw back* and become *sons or daughters of perdition*, by falling from the third, lose the second, as Hymeneus, Philetus, and Demas. And none partake of the fourth but those who bear fruit unto perfection according to one or another of the divine dispensations; some producing *thirty-fold* like Heathens, *some sixty-fold* like Jews, and *some an hundred fold* like Christians.

From the whole it appears that altho' we can absolutely do nothing towards our first justification, yet to say that neither faith nor works are required in order to the other three, is one of the boldest, most unscriptural, and most dangerous assertions in the world; which sets aside the best half of the scriptures, and lets gross Antinomianism, come in full tide upon the church.

Having thus taken a view of the confusion in which Calvin and Crisp have laid the foundation of their schemes, I return to the arguments by which you support their mistakes.

I. "If you suppose, do you say, that there are any conditional works before justification, these works must either be the works of one who is in a state of nature, or in a state of grace, either condemned by the law or absolved by the gospel."

A new sophism this! No works are previous to justification from original sin, and to the quickning

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light which enlightens every man that comes into the world. And the works that a penitent does in order to the subsequent justifications, such as ceasing to do evil, learning to do well, repenting, believing, and persevering in obedient faith, are all done in a state of initial, progressive, or perfected grace; not under the Adamic law which did not admit of repentance, but under the gospel of Christ which says, *let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord who will abundantly pardon his sins, cleanse him from all unrighteousness, and even fill him with the fulness of God.*

II. You proceed: if a man in a state of nature does works in order to justification, they "cannot please God because he is in a state of utter enmity against him." What Sir, do you think, that a man "in a state of utter enmity against God" will do any thing in order to recover his favour? When Adam was in that state, did he so much as once ask pardon? If he had, would he not have evidenced a desire of reconciliation, and consequently a degree of apostacy short of what you call *utter enmity*?

III. You quote scripture: "He that does something in order to justification cannot please God, because he is alienated from the life of God, thro' the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart." An unhappy quotation this: for the apostle did not speak these words of those honest Heathens, who, in obedience to the light of the world, did something in order to justification; but of those abandoned Pagans, who, as he observes in the next verse, *being past feeling, had given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.* Thus to prove that men have not a talent of power to work the works of God, you produce men who have buried it, that they might work all uncleanness without control, yea with greediness.

You would have avoided this mistake, if you had considered that the Heathens mentioned there by St. Paul,

Paul, were of the stamp of those whom he describes, Rom. 1. and whom he represents as given up by God to a reprobate mind, BECAUSE when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, and did not like to retain him in their knowledge. Here we may observe (1.) that those reprobate Heathens had once some knowledge of God; and of course some life; for this is eternal LIFE to KNOW God. (2.) That if they were given up, BECAUSE they did not use that talent of *divine knowledge*; it was not because they were eternally and unconditionally reprobated; whence I beg leave to conclude; that if eternal unconditional reprobation is a mere chimeræ, so is likewise eternal unconditional election.

You might have objected with much more plausibility, that when the Ephesians were in the flesh they were without hope, without Christ, and without God in the world: And if you had, I would have replied that these words cannot be taken in their full latitude, for the following reasons, which appear to me unanswerable. (1.) The Ephesians before their conversion were not totally without hope, but without a good hope. They probably had as presumptuous a hope as David in Uriah's bed, or Agag when he thought the bitterness of death was past. (2.) They were without Christ, just as a man who has buried his talent is without it. But as he may dig it up, and use it, if he sees his folly in time; so could, and so did the Ephesians. (3.) If they were in every sense without Christ, what becomes of the doctrine maintained in your fourth letter, that they "were for ever and for ever compleat in Christ?" (4.) They were not entirely without God; for in him they lived, moved, and had their being; nor were they without him as absolute reprobates, for they knew the day of their visitation before it was over. It remains then that they were without God, as the prodigal son was without his father, when he fed swine in the far country; and that they could and did return to their heavenly Father as well as he.

IV. You go on: "He who does something in order to justification, not being grafted in Christ the true vine, cannot bring forth any good fruit; he can do nothing at all." I beg, Sir, you would produce one man, who has not *funned the sin unto death*, that can absolutely do nothing, that cannot cease from one sin, and take up the practice of one duty. You will as soon find a saint in hell as such a man upon earth. Even those who in their *voluntary humility* say perpetually, that "they can do nothing," refute their own doctrine by their very confessions; for he who confesses his helplessness, undoubtedly does something. unless by some new rule in logic it can be demonstrated, that confessing our impotence, and complaining of our misery, is "doing nothing."

When our Lord says, *Without me ye can do nothing*, does he say that we are totally without him? When he declares that *no man cometh unto him unless the Father draw him*, does he insinuate that the Father does not draw all? or that he draws all irresistably? or that those who are drawn at one time may not draw back at any other? Is it right to press scripture into the service of a system, by straining its meaning so far beyond the import of the words?

Again, though a man may not be "grafted in Christ" according to the Jewish or Christian dispensation; may he not partake of his quickening sap, according to the more general dispensation of that *saving grace*, which has appeared to all men? May not the branches in which that *saving grace* appears, have some connexion with Christ the heavenly vine, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, as well as Job and his friends, Melchisedec, Plato, the wise men, Cornelius, some of his soldiers, and many more who brought forth fruits according to their dispensation? Does not the first general justification so graft all men in him, that if they bear not fruit during their *accepted time*, they are justly taken away, cast forth, and burned as barren branches?

V. Your

V. Your knowledge of the scripture made you foresee this answer, and to obviate it you say: "if you tell me that I mistake, that although we must cease from evil, repent, &c. yet you are far from supposing we can perform these things in our own natural strength, I ask then, in whose strength are they performed? You say, in the strength of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, according to these scriptures, *I can do all things through Christ strengthening me, being strengthened with might in the inner man.*"

Permit me to tell you, honored Sir, that I do not admire your quoting scripture for me. You take care to keep out of sight the passages I have quoted, and to produce those which are foreign to the question. To shew that even a sinful Heathen may work for, as well as from life, I could never be so destitute of common sense as to urge the experience of St. Paul, *a father in Christ*: and that of the Ephesians, who were *Christians sealed unto the day of redemption.*

To do justice to free grace, instead of the above-mentioned improper scriptures, you should have produced those which I have quoted in the vindication—*Christ is the light of the world, which enlightens every man that cometh into the world—I am come that they might have life—Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life. The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, God's spirit strives with man, even with those who perish. He commands all men every where to repent; nor does he desire to reap where he has not sown.*

VI. Such scriptures as these would have been to the purpose; but I excuse your producing others; for if these had appeared, you would have raised more dust in six lines, than you could have laid in 60 pages; and every attentive reader would have detected the fallacy of your grand argument: "as soon may we expect living actions from a dead corpse; light out of darkness; sight out of blindness; love

“ out of enmity; wisdom out of ignorance; fruit out of barrenness, &c. &c. &c. as look for any one good work or thought from a soul who is not” (in some degree) “ quickened by the Holy Ghost, and who has not yet found favor with God:” so far at least as to be blessed with a *day of salvation*, and to be a partaker of the *free gift* which *is come upon all men*.

But, I pray, who is guilty of these absurdities? who expects living actions from a dead corpse, &c. &c.? you or we? You who believe that the greatest part of mankind are left as graceless as devils, as helpless as corpses; and yet gravely go and preach to them repentance and faith, threatening them with an aggravated damnation if they do not turn? Or we who believe that *Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man*; and that his saving, quickening grace *hath appeared unto all men*? Who puts foolish speeches in the mouth of the only wise God? You, who make him expostulate with souls as dead as corpses, and say *ye will not come unto me that ye might have life*? Or we, who assert upon the testimony of the Holy Ghost, that God, by *working in us both to will and to do*, puts us again in a capacity of *working out our salvation with fear and trembling*? Will not our impartial readers see that the absurdity which you try to fix upon us, falls at your own door; and, if your doctrine is true, at the door of the sanctuary itself?

VII. You pursue: “ it is most clear that every soul who works in the strength of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, is already a pardoned and justified soul; he already has everlasting life.” Here is some truth and some error; let us endeavour to separate them. Every soul who works in the strength of Christ’s preventing grace, and by his *Spirit convincing the world of sin*, is undoubtedly interested in the first degree of justification: he is justified from the guilt of original sin, and from the guilt of his own actual sins; and it is absurd to suppose he is justified in the day of judgment, when that day is not

not yet come. He hath a seed of life, or else he could not work; but it is a doubt if this seed will take root; and in case it does, the heavenly plant of righteousness may be *choaked by the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, or the desire of other things*, and by that means *become unfruitful*.

As many barbarous mothers destroy the fruit of their womb, either before or after it comes to the birth; so many obstinate sinners obstruct the growth of the spiritual seed that *bruises the serpent's head*; and many flagrant apostates, in *whose heart Christ was once formed, crucify him afresh, and quench the spirit of his grace*. Hence the many miscarriages and apostacies, for which Elisha Coles is obliged to account thus. There are "monsters in spirituals, in whom there is something begotten in their wills, by the common strivings and enlightenings of the Spirit, which attains to a kind of *formality*, but proves in the end a lump of *dead flesh*." Surely that great Calvinian divine was brought to a strait when he thus fathered *formality and dead flesh* upon the Holy Ghost.

VIII. I follow you: "therefore all talk of working for life, and in order to find favor with God, is not less absurd, than if you were to suppose, that a man could at the same moment be both condemned and absolved." What, Sir! may not a man be justly condemned, and yet graciously reprieved? Nay, may not the judge give him an opportunity to make the best of his reprieve, in order to get a full pardon and a place at court? At Geneva we think that the absurdity does not consist in asserting, but in denying it.—"Awake and asleep." What, Sir, is it an absurdity to think that a man may be in the same moment *awake* in one respect, and *asleep* in another? Does not St. Paul say, *let us awake out of sleep*? But this is not all, even in Geneva people can be *drowsy*, that is, half awake and half asleep.—"Dead and alive." I hope you will not fix the charge of absurdity upon Christ, for saying that a certain man was left HALF DEAD, and

OF

of course *half alive*; and for exhorting the people of Sardis who were *dead*, to *strengthen the things that remained and were ready to die*: nor yet upon St. Paul, for saying that the *dead body* of Abraham begat Isaac, and for speaking of a woman who *was dead while she lived*.

IX. You go on and say, that "it is as absurd to talk of working for life, as to assert that we can be at the same time loved and hated of God." But you forget, Sir, that there are a thousand degrees of love and hatred; and that, in the scripture language, *loving less* is called *hating*: *Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated. Except a man hate his father, &c. he cannot be my disciple.* Yea, and we can without absurdity say, that we love the same person in one respect, and hate her in another. I may love a woman as a neighbour, and yet loath her if I consider her in the capacity of a wife. And what absurdity is there in asserting, that while the day of grace lasts, God loves, and yet hates an impenitent sinner? He loves him as his redeemed creature, yet hates him as his rebellious creature: or, in other terms, he loves him with a love of benevolence; but has no more love of complacence for him, than for the devil himself.

X. You proceed: "to talk of working for life is not less absurd, than if you were to suppose, that a man can be at the same moment one with Christ by his spirit dwelling in the heart, and yet not have redemption, peace, and reconciliation by the blood of his cross." Here is, if I mistake not, the language of Babel.

1. You confound the various degrees of *redemption*. Are not thousands of souls redeemed by the *blood* of Christ's cross, who are not yet redeemed by the *power* of his spirit? May not every rebellious sinner out of hell say, God REDEEMETH *my life from destruction*? Is it not a degree of redemption to be kept out of the enjoying the good things of this life, and called to secure the blessings of the next? Did not Cain, Esau, Pharaoh, Saul, and Judas, the five great reprobates,

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'as some account them, enjoy this degree of redemption for many years? Have not believers an higher degree of REDEMPTION, *even the forgiveness of their sins*? And do not they wait for the highest degree of it, *even the REDEMPTION of their body*, when the trump of God will sound, and wake the dead? Rom. viii. 23.

2. As you confound all the degrees of redemption, so you do all the degrees of the manifestation of the Spirit. He visits all, so as to strive with and reprove them as he did mankind in the days of Noah: but this is no mark that their peace is made, and a firm reconciliation brought about; witness the deluge, which God sent upon those with whom his Spirit had particularly striven 120 years in the days of Noah.—Again some have the spirit of bondage unto fear; but this, far from being a sign that they have full reconciliation, is a divine consciousness that they have it not. And others have had the spirit of adoption, and after having begun in him so grieve or quench him as to end in the flesh. But in the Calvinian Babel these scriptural, experimental distinctions are exploded as metaphysical, if not dreadfully heretical.

XI. You proceed: "you will not assert that a soul who is quickened together with Christ, and in whom the spirit of Jesus dwells by his gracious influences can be in a state of enmity with God." Still the same confounding of things which should be carefully distinguished! May not a sinner "be quickened" by the seed of life, and yet hold it in unrighteousness? May not a backslider crucify Christ afresh in "the gracious influences of his spirit?" And are not such persons "in a state of enmity with God?" But if by a "soul quickened together with Christ and in whom the spirit of Jesus dwells," you mean a believer compleatly baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, in whom he that once visited as a monitor now fully resides as a comforter; you

you are right; the enmity ceases, the carnal mind and body of sin are destroyed, and God is all in all to that just man made perfect in love.

XII. You add: "If a man is not in a state of enmity, then he must be in a state of pardon and reconciliation." What, Sir! Is there no medium between these extremes? There is, as surely as the morning dawn intervenes between midnight and noon-day. If the king says to some rebels, 'Lay down your arms, surrender, kiss my son, and you shall be pardoned;' the reconciliation on the king's part is undoubtedly begun. So far was God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. But can it be said that the reconciliation is begun on the part of the rebels, who have not yet laid down any of their arms? Does not the reconciliation gradually take place as they gradually comply with the king's terms? If they are long in coming to kiss the king's son, is not their full reconciliation suspended till they have fulfilled that last of the king's terms? And tho' the king made the overtures of the reconciliation, is there the least absurdity in saying that they surrender, and kiss the son, in order to find reconciliation? Nay is it either sense or truth to assert, that they are absolutely to do nothing towards it?

XIII. What you say about the 19th article of our church is answered beforehand, Vind. page 58.—But what follows deserves some notice. "Whenever God puts forth his quickning power upon a soul, it is in consequence, of his having already taken that soul in covenant with himself, and having washed it white in the blood of the Lamb slain." This is very true, if you speak of the covenant of grace, which God made with our first parent and representative after the fall; and of the washing of all mankind white in the blood of the Lamb from the guilt of original sin, so far as to remit the eternal punishment of it. But you are dreadfully mistaken, if you understand it of the three subsequent

quent degrees of justification and salvation which do not take place but as we work them out with fear and trembling, as God works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

XIV. In the next page you ask some scriptural questions, which I shall scripturally answer. "What did the expiring thief do?" Some hours before he died he obeyed this precept, *To day if you will hear his voice harden not your heart*; he confessed his sin, and believed in Jesus.—"What did Mary Magdalen do?" She forsook her lovers and followed Jesus into Simon's house. "What Lydia?" She WORSHIPPED GOD, and resorted where prayer was wont to be made.—"What the Philippian jailor?" He ceased from attempting self-murder, and falling at the apostle's feet, enquired what he must do to be saved.—"What the serpent-bitten Israelites?" They looked at the brazen serpent.—"What Paul himself?" For this cause I obtained mercy, says he, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief, 1 Tim. i. 13. But this was not all, for, he continued praying three days and three nights; and when Ananias came to him, he tarried no longer, but arose and washed away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord.—"What did the Corinthians do?" They heard and believed, Act. viii. 8.—"And what the Ephesians?" They trusted in Christ after that they heard the word of truth, Eph. i. 13.

XV. In the next paragraph (page 6, line 28.) you gravely propose the very objection which I have answered, Vind. page 58, without taking the least notice of my answer. And in the next page you advance one of Dr. Crisp's paradoxes. "Wherever God puts forth his power upon a soul (and he does so whenever he visits it with even a touch of preventing grace) pardon and reconciliation are already obtained by such an one. He shall never come into condemnation."

Young penitents, beware! If you admit this tenet, you will probably stay in the far country; vainly fancying you are in your father's house, because
you

you have felt a desire to be there. Upon this scheme of doctrine, Lot's wife might have sat down at the gate of Sodom, concluding that because the angels had taken her by the hand, she was already in Zoar. A dangerous delusion this, against which our Lord himself cautions us by crying aloud, REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE.

I would take the liberty to expostulate with you, honored Sir, about this paradox, if I had not some hope, that it is rather owing to the printer's mistake than your own. If you wrote in your manuscript, *pardon is already obtained FOR*, not *BY*, such an one, we are agreed; for "Christ made upon the cross a sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction *for* the sins of the whole world." But what he *procured FOR* us is not *obtained BY* us, till the Holy Ghost makes the application by faith. "If I had a mind, said the Rev. Mr. Whitefield, to hinder the progress of the gospel, and to establish the kingdom of darkness, I would go about telling people, they might have the Spirit of God and yet not feel it;" or, which is much the same; that the pardon which Christ procured *for* them, is already obtained *by* them, whether they enjoy a sense of it or not.

XVI. In the next paragraph, page 7, (who could believe it!) you come fully into Mr. W.'s doctrine of "doing something, in order to obtain justification." You was reminded (Vind. page 48. †) that "St. Paul and Mr. W. generally mean by justification, that wonderful transaction of the Spirit of God in a returning prodigal's conscience, by which the forgiveness of his sins is proclaimed to him thro' the blood of sprinkling." Nevertheless, speaking of the *sense of pardon*, and the *testifying of it to a sinner's conscience*, you grant that *this knowledge of our interest in Christ*, (this experienced justification) is certainly to be sought in the *use of all appointed means*; we are to seek that we may find, to ask that we may have, to knock that it may be opened unto us. In this sense, (the very sense

sense we generally fix to the word justification) *all the texts you have brought to prove that man is to do something in order to obtain justification and to find favour with God, admit of an EASY SOLUTION.*" That is, in plain English, easily demonstrate the truth of Mr. W's. proposition, which has been so loudly exclaimed against as *dreadfully heretical.*

O prejudice, thou mischievous brother of discord, why didst thou cast thy black veil in June, and the following months, over the EASY SOLUTION which has been found out in December? And what a pity is it, dear Sir, you did not see this *solution* before you had attempted to expose our grey-headed Elisha, by the publication of that weak and trifling dialogue with the Popish friar at Paris!

XVII. The next page, the 8th, is already answered, Vind. page 59, &c. and the 9th page is answered in the second check, page 22, in the note upon the Versifier's performance.

Page 10, After shewing that you confound the atonement with the application of it, the work of Christ with that of the Holy Ghost, you produce one of my arguments, (the first you have attempted to refute,) to prove that we must do something in order to justification; I had asserted that we must believe, faith being previous to justification. You say, *I deny the assertion.* Do you indeed, honored Sir! Upon what ground? "The Holy Ghost teaches, say you, that *all who believe ARE justified.*" And does this prove the point? The king says to a deserter, Bow to my Son, and thou shalt not be shot. Bow to the prince, adds an officer; all who bow to him ARE *pardoned.* Must the soldier conclude from the words ARE *pardoned,* then the pardon is previous to the bow? Again, You are sick, and your physician says, Take this medicine; all who take it ARE *cured.* Very well, answers your nurse, you need not then *distress and perplex* my Master, by making him take your remedy. The taking of it cannot possibly be previous to his recovery, for you say, all who take it ARE *cured.*

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This

This is just such an other argument as that of my honored friend. O Sir, how tottering is that system, which even such a writer as yourself cannot prop up, without putting so forced a construction upon the apostle's words, *All that believe ARE justified!*

Now we have seen upon what scriptural ground you maintain, that believing cannot be previous to justification, permit me, honored Sir, to quote some of the many scriptures which induce us to believe just the reverse. BELIEVE in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved—that is, in the lowest sense of the word, thou shalt be justified; for God justifies the ungodly that BELIEVE in Jesus.—We have BELIEVED in Jesus Christ, that we might be justify'd by the FAITH of Christ—Whom he hath set forth to be a propitiation, thro' FAITH in his blood, for the remission, of sins that are past.—As Moses lifted up the serpent even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever BELIEVETH in him should not perish, should be pardoned, &c.—Faith shall be imputed to us for righteousness, if we BELIEVE on him who raised up Jesus.—Being therefore justified by FAITH we have peace with God.—Without FAITH it is impossible to please God. He that BELIEVETH NOT, far from being justified, as is insinuated, shall be damned, the wrath of God abideth on him, he is CONDEMNED ALREADY. John iii. 18. Light cannot be more opposite to darkness, than this doctrine of Christ to that which my honored friend thinks it his duty to patronize.

XVIII. When you have endeavoured to defend your sentiment from scripture, you attempt to do it from reason. Faith, say you, can no more subsist without its object, than there can be a marriage without an husband. This is as proper an argument as you could advance, had you intended to disprove the doctrine you seem studious to defend, for it is evident that a woman must be married, before she can have an husband. So sure then as marriage is previous to hav-
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ing an husband, faith is previous to receiving Christ; for we receive him by faith. John i. 12.

However, from this extraordinary argument, you conclude that the doctrine of believing before justification is not less contrary to reason than it is to scripture; but I flatter myself that my judicious readers will draw a conclusion diametrically opposite.

XIX. A quotation from St. Augustin appears next, and secures the ruin of your scheme. For if faith is compared to a lantern, and Christ to the light in the lantern, common sense tells us, we must have the lantern before we can receive the candle which is to give us light. Or, in other words, we must have faith before we can receive Christ; for you very justly observe, that *faith receiveth Christ who is the true light.*

XX. St. Augustin's lantern makes way for the witticism with which you conclude your second epistle. "No letters says my honored friend, were sent thro' the various provinces against old Mordecai for supposing that the woman, Luke 15, lights a candle, &c. in order to find her lost piece; but because he insists upon it, that the piece lights the candle, sweeps the house, and searches diligently in order to find the woman." Permit me to ask dear Sir, whether your wit here has not for a moment got the start of your judgment? I introduced the woman seeking the piece she had lost, merely to shew that it is neither an heresy, nor an absurdity to "seek something in order to find it;" and that instance proved my point full as well, as if I had fixed upon Saul seeking his father's asses, or Jacob seeking his brethren in Dothan.

If it is as great an absurdity to say, that sinners are to seek the Lord, as it is to say that a piece seeks the woman who has lost it; let me tell you, dear Sir, that Mr. W. has the good fortune to be countenanced in his folly, first by yourself, who tell us, page 7, that the knowledge of Christ and our interest in him is certainly to be sought in the use of all the appointed means:

And secondly by Isaiah, who says *seek ye the Lord while he may be found*: by St. Paul, who tells the Athenians that *all nations of men are to seek the Lord*: and by Christ himself who says, *they that seek me early shall find me - seek that you may find &c.*

I leave you to judge, honored Sir, whether it was worth your while to impeach Mr. W's *good sense* not only by reflecting upon *your own*, but by inevitably involving Isaiah, St. Paul, and our Lord himself in the ridicule cast upon my vindicated friend! For the same sinner, who is represented by the *lost piece*, is a few verses before represented by the *lost son*: and you know Jesus Christ tells us that he came from far to seek his father's pardon and assistance. You begin your

T H I R D L E T T E R

By saying, "how God may deal with the Heathen world, is not for us to pry into." But we may believe what God has revealed. If the Holy Ghost declares, that *in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him*, we may credit what he says, without "being wise above what is written."

If you cannot set aside that apostolic part of the minutes, you try however to press it into the service of your doctrine. "There is, say you, a material difference between saying, *He that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted*, and *SHALL BE accepted*," and because "the verb is in the present tense" you conclude, there is no need of fearing God or working righteousness, in order to find acceptance. This is exactly such another argument as that which I just now refuted, "we need not believe in order to be justified, because it is said, *all that believe ARE justified*, and not *SHALL BE justified*." You can no more prove by the one, that Cornelius provoking God and working unrighteousness, was accepted of him; than by the other that unbelievers *ARE justified*, because it is said that *believers* are so.

A

A similar instance may convince you of it. *All run*, says St. Paul, *but one receiveth the prize*. I who am a stranger to refinements, immediately conclude from those words, that running is *previous* to the receiving of the prize, and *in order* to it. No, says a friend, "*there is a material difference between saying, one RECEIVETH the prize, and one SHALL RECEIVE the prize. The verb is in the present tense, and therefore the plain sense of the passage is (not that by running he does any thing to receive the prize, but) that he who runs is possessed of the prize, and proves himself to be so.*" Candid reader, if such an argument proselytes thee to Dr. Crisp's doctrine, I shall suspect there is no small difference between English and Suisse reason.

However to make up the weight of your argument you add, "*Cornelius was a chosen vessel.*" True, for *God hath chosen to himself the man that is GODLY*; and such was Cornelius; a *devout man*, says St. Luke, *and one that feared God with all his house*. But if my honored opponent speaks of an *election*, which drags after it the horrors of *absolute* reprobation, and hangs the mill-stone of *unavoidable* damnation about the neck of millions of our fellow-creatures, I must call for *proof*.

Till it comes, I follow you in your observations upon the merit or rewardableness of good works. Most of them are answered Vind. page 74, &c. and 2d check page 43. The rest I answer thus.

(1.) If you do not believe Mr. Henry when he assures us *David speaks OF HIMSELF; the Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness, &c.* Ps. 18, believe at least the sacred historian, who confirms my assertion, ii. Sam. 22. and consider the very title of the Psalm, *David spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.*

(2.) But "*when David speaks in his own person, his language is very different.*" *Enter not into judgment with thy servant*, says he, *for in thy sight shall no*

man living be justified. The psalmist does not here contradict what he says of the rewardableness of good works, Ps. 18. He only appeals from the *law of innocence* to the *law of grace*, and only disclaims all merit in point of justification and salvation, a thing which Mr. W. takes care to do when he says, even in the minutes, "not by the merit of works," but by "believing in Christ."

(3.) My honored correspondent asks next, "where is the man who has the witness of having done what God commanded? I answer, every one who walks in the light as God is in the light, and can say with St. John, *beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God; and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, BECAUSE we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.*

(4.) But Bishop Beveridge spoke just the reverse; for he said in his *Private Thoughts* "I sin in my best duties &c." That may be; for he was but a young convert when he wrote his *Private Thoughts*. I hope, before he died he enjoyed more gospel liberty. But whether he did or not, we appeal from HIS *private thoughts* to the above-mentioned *public declaration* and *evangelical experience* of St. JOHN.

(5.) If many Roman Catholics do not ascribe merit to "mere external performances," I have "done them great injustice;" and to repair that wrong, I declare my full approbation of the excellent passage upon *merit* which you quote in French from the works of the bishop of Meaux. I say in French, because your English translation represents him as looking on *all* opinion of merit as *presumptuous*, whereas he blames only *l'* opinion d' un *mérite présomptueux*, the doctrine of a presumptuous merit—of a merit which is not at all derived from Christ, and does not terminate in the glory of his grace.

The

The dying challenge of Alex. Seton is answered in the 2d Check, 1st Letter. As to your quotation from bishop Cooper, it does as little credit to his *learning*, as to his *charity*; for St. Augustin, who had no more "the spirit of Antichrist" than the bishop himself, uses perpetually the word *merit*, in speaking of man and his works.

Let us now see how you "split the hair," that is, fix the difference there is, between being rewarded *according to our works*, † *BECAUSE of our works*, and *secundum merita operum*, according to the *merit* or *rewardableness* which Christ gives to our works. "The difference, say you, by no means depends upon the "splitting of an hair; those expressions are as wide "as east from west." Are they indeed! Then it must be the *east* and the *west* of the map of the world, which meet in one common line upon the globe. This will appear if we consider the manner in which you untie the Gordian knot.

"Good works, say you, are rewarded because "God of his own meer favour, rich grace, and undeserved bounty, has promised that he will freely "give such rewards to those whom he has chosen in his dear Son." Now, Sir, simplify this sentence, and you tell us just that "good works are rewarded because God *freely promised* to reward them."

And is this the *east* of my honored opponent's orthodoxy! Surprising! It just meets the west of popish heterodoxy. You know Sir, that Thomas Aquinas and Scotus are as great divines among the Romanists, as Calvin and Luther among the Protestants: and in flying from Mr. Wesley you are just gone over to Scotus and Baxter; for Scotus and Clara his disciple maintain, that if God gives rewards to the godly, *non oritur obligatio ex natura actus, sed ex sup-*

† See 1. John iii. 22, add Vind. page 70. You have no right to throw out this middle term, till you have proved that my quotations are false.

suppositione decreti & promissi, the obligation does not arise from the nature of the action rewarded but from the decree and free promise of the rewarder. Though so much be given in scripture to good works, says the council of Trent, yet far be it from a christian to glory in himself, and not in the Lord, whose goodness is so great to all men, that he wills those things to be THEIR MERITS, which are HIS GIFTS. Can. 16, de Justif.

Most Protestants, says Baxter, will take merit to signify something which profiteth God, and which is our own, and not his GIFT and GRACE, but they are mistaken.

Some however are more candid; Bucer says, if by MERITING the holy fathers and others mean nothing but to do in faith, by the grace of God, good works which the Lord has PROMISED to reward, in this sense (which is that which Scotus, Baxter, and Mr. W. fix to merit) we shall in no wise condemn that word.

Hence it is, that whole congregations of real protestants have not scrupled at times to use the word WE MERIT in their humblest addresses to the throne of grace. "Congregations of real Protestants! says my honored friend, *Popery is about midway between Protestantism and such worshippers. Who are they?*" I answer, they are the orthodox, opposers of the minutes, the truly honorable the Countess of Huntingdon, the Rev. Mr. Shirley, the Rev. Mr. Madan, and all the congregations that use their hymns; for they all agree to sing,

"Thou hast the righteousness supply'd
By which WE MERIT heaven."

See Lady Huntingdon's Hymns. Bristol edition, page 399; and the Rev. Mr. Madan's collection which you frequently use, hymn 25, page 27, last stanza. Come then, dear Sir, while Mr. M. shakes hands with his venerable father Mr. W. permit the vindicator of the minutes to do the same with the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis*, and let us lovingly follow.

low Scotus and Baxter singing, *Christ hath the righteousness supply'd by which WE MERIT heaven.*

If you say, True, but it is of God's own *meer favour, rich grace, and undeserved bounty in his dear Son*; I answer, We are agreed, and before-hand I subscribe an hundred such clauses, being fully persuaded of the truth of Mr. W's. proposition when explained according to the analogy of faith, "*There is no original merit but in the blood and obedience of Christ*; and no derived merit, or (if you dislike that word out of the Lock-chapel) no derived *rewardableness*, but that which we are supplied with thro' the Spirit of Christ and the blood of his cross:" If Mr. W. meant any more by the saying you have quoted, he will permit me to use his own words, and say that he "leaned too much toward Calvinism."

I cannot better close the subject of *merit*, and requite your quotation from Dr. Willet, than by transcribing a third passage from the pious and judicious Mr. Baxter.

' We are agreed on the negative: (1.) That no man or angel can merit of God in proper commutative justice, giving him somewhat for his benefits that shall profit him, or to which he had no absolute right. (2.) No man can merit any thing of God upon the terms of the law of innocency, (but punishment) (3.) Nor can he merit any thing of God by the law of grace, unless it be supposed first to be a *free-gift* and merited by Christ.'

' And affirmatively we are, I think, agreed (1.) That God governs us by a *law of grace* which hath a *promise*, and gives by way of *reward*: (2.) That God calls it *his justice* to reward men according to his law of grace, Heb. xi. 6. 2 Tim. iv. 8. (3.) That this supposes, that such works as God rewards have a *moral aptitude* for that reward, which chiefly consists in these things, that they spring from the Spirit of God, that their faultiness is pardoned thro' the blood and merits of Christ, that they are done

' in

' in love and to the glory of God, and that they are
 ' presented to God by Jesus Christ. (4.) That this
 ' moral aptitude is called in scripture *αξια*, that is *wor-*
 ' *thiness* or *merit*; so that thus far *worthiness* or *merit* is
 ' a scripture phrase. And (5.) that this *worthiness* or
 ' *merit* is only in point of *paternal, governing justice*,
 ' according to the *law of grace*, ordering that which
 ' in itself is a *free gift merited by Christ*.'

' All orthodox Christians hold the fore-described
 ' doctrine of merit in *sense*, tho' not in *words*: for
 ' they that deny *merit*, confess the *rewardableness* of
 ' our obedience, and acknowledge that the scripture
 ' useth the term *worthy*, and that *αξιως* and *αξια* may
 ' be translated *meriting* and *merit*, as well as *worthy*
 ' and *worthiness*. This is the same thing, in other
 ' words, which the ancient Christians meant by *me-*
 ' *rit*. When godly persons earnestly extol holiness,
 ' saying that *the righteous is more excellent than his neigh-*
 ' *bour*, and yet deny all *merit*, reviling all that assert
 ' it, they do but shew that they understand not the
 ' word, and think others also misunderstand it: and
 ' so we are reproaching one another, where we are
 ' agreed and know it not: like the woman who turn-
 ' ed away her servant upon the controversy, Whe-
 ' ther the house should be swept with a *besom* or with
 ' a *broom*.'

' The partial teachers are the cause of this, while
 ' instead of opening the doctrine, and shewing in
 ' what sense we have or have not any *worthiness* or
 ' *merit*, they without distinction cry down *merit*, and
 ' reproach those that do otherwise. And if they
 ' do but say "Such a man, speaks for *merit* and *free*
 ' *will*," that they sufficiently rendered him odious to
 ' their followers, when yet all sober Christians in all
 ' ages have been for *merit* and *free-will* in a sound
 ' sense. And is not this to be adversaries to truth,
 ' and love, and peace?"

' I formerly thought, that tho' we agree in the
 ' thing, it is best to omit the name, because the Papists
 ' have

‘ have abused it: and I think so still in such compa-
 ‘ nies, where the use of it not understood will scan-
 ‘ dalize men, and do more harm than good. But in
 ‘ other cases, I now think it better to keep the word
 ‘ (1.) lest we seem to the ignorant to be of another
 ‘ religion than † all the ancient churches were.’ (2.)
 ‘ Lest we harden the Papists, Greeks and others, by
 ‘ denying sound doctrine in *terms*, which they will
 ‘ think we deny in *sense*. And (3.) Because our pe-
 ‘ nury of words is such, that for my part I remember
 ‘ no other word so fit to substitute instead of *merit*,
 ‘ *desert* or *worthiness*. The word *rewardableness* is long
 ‘ and harsh. But it is nothing else that we mean.’
Baxter’s end of doctrinal controversies, page 294.

I am glad that my honored opponent, in the be-
 ginning of his

FOURTH LETTER,

does Mr. W. the justice to “ admit of the explana-
 tion I have “ given of” that misunderstood assertion,
 “ All who are convinced of sin undervalue them-
 selves.” Had you done otherwise, Sir, you would
 have shewn *judgment without mercy*. Nevertheless, you
 still think that explanation *forced*; while many be-
 lieve it not only natural, and *agreeable* to Mr. W’s.
 whole plan of doctrine, but so *solid* that no argu-
 ments can overthrow it. If you turn to the second
 check, page 44, you will see more clearly, that you
 do Mr. W. no favor in “ dismissing this article of
 of the minutes.”

But you prepare to attack the next with the ut-
 most vigor. *A part of the minutes which you esteem most
 contrary to sound doctrine is*, say you, that “ We are
 every

† It is a great advantage to the Papists, says our judicious author,
 that many Protestants wholly disclaim the word *merit*, and simply
 deny the merit of gospel-obedience. For hereupon the teachers
 shew their scholars, that all the fathers speak for merit, and to tell
 them, that the Protestant doctrine is new and heretical, as being
 contrary to all the ancient doctors: and when their scholars see it
 with their eyes, no wonder if they believe it, to our dishonor.

every hour and every moment pleasing or displeasing to God according to the whole of our inward tempers and outward behaviour, &c." And it is, I own, diametrically opposite to the favorite sentiment which you thus express, "Tho' I believe that David's SIN displeased the Lord, must I therefore believe that David's PERSON was under the curse of the law?" (I suppose you mean *under God's displeasure*, for of this Mr. W. speaks, nor does he mention *the curse of the law* in all the minutes) You boldly answer, "Surely no.—Like Ephraim he was still a pleasant child: tho' he went on srowardly" *in adultery and murder*, "he did not lose the character of the man after God's own heart." My dear Sir, you might as well have advanced at once that unguarded proposition of Dr. Crisp; "God does no longer stand displeased, tho' a believer do sin often: no sin can possibly do him any hurt." Is this what you call "sound doctrine?" And is that the *work part of the minutes*, which opposes such a dangerous tenet? Then how *excellent* must the *other parts* be! Indeed, Sir, their vindicator, could say nothing stronger to demonstrate their soundness, reasonableness and importance. But let us consider your arguments; and that with such care, as the importance of the subject requires.

I. "David's SIN displeased the Lord," but not "his PERSON." This is what you must mean if you oppose Mr. W's. proposition. I like your shifting the terms; it is a sign that you are little ashamed the world should see the good Doctor's scheme without some covering. *Ervubisti, falsa res est.* (1.) Your intimation, that the Lord was not displeased at David's PERSON, bears hard upon the equity and veracity of God. David commits adultery and murder in Jerusalem, and Claudius in Rome. God sees them, and says agreeably to your scheme. "They are both guilty of the same crimes, and both impenitent: but David is a Jew, an elect, a sheep, and therefore, tho' he sins against ten times more light than the other,

other, I am not at all displeas'd at him. But Claudius is an Heathen, a reprobate, a goat, and my anger smokes against him; he shall surely die.— If this is God's method, how can he make the following appeal! *O house of Israel are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?—The soul that sinneth it shall die: wherefore turn ye, Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* See Ez. xviii. and 2d check, page 69.

(2.) Your distinction is overthrown by scripture; for we read Gen. xxxviii. 10. that *The thing which Onan did displeas'd the Lord.* "True, might you say upon your scheme, this is the very thing I assert; this mode of speech shews that God was angry at Onan's sin, and not at his person."—But this would be a great mistake, honored Sir; for the sacred historian adds immediately, *Wherefore God slew him also: He shewed his heavy displeasure at his person by punishing him with death, as well as his brother Er, who was wicked in the sight of the Lord.*

(3.) But if you will not believe Mr. W. when he declares that God is displeas'd at the persons of the righteous, the moment they do those things which displease him, believe at least the oracles of God. *God's anger was kindled against Moses, Ex. iv. 14.—The Lord was very angry against Aaron, Deut. ix. 20,* and with all Israel, witness those awful words, *let me alone, that I may consume them in a moment.* Isaiah, whom you allow to be an elect, says, *thou wast angry with me.* God himself says, *Is. xlvi. 6, I was angry with my people;* and David, who frequently deprecates God's wrath in his penitential psalms, observes that *his anger smokes against the sheep of his pasture,* when they go astray. Pf. lxxiv. 1.

(4.) The new testament inculcates this doctrine as well as the old. St Paul having reminded the believers of Ephesus, that *no whoremonger or covetous person hath an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God,* subjoins this reasonable caution: *let no man deceive*

deceive you; no not those good men, Dr. Crisp and the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis*: for because of these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.—Impossible! say those orthodox Protestants; you may be children of disobedience, not only unto whoredom and covetousness, but unto adultery and murder without fearing that the wrath of God will come upon you for those things: No, no, you will be “pleasant children still.” See *Vind.* page 89.

II. You proceed: “Shall I believe that because David was ungrateful, God (whose “gifts and callings are without repentance”) was unfaithful?” And shall I believe, that God is not as faithful when he accomplishes his *threatnings*, as when he fulfils his promises? You reply, “God’s gifts and callings are without repentance.” And does this prove that God’s warnings are without meaning, and his *threatnings* without truth? St Paul spoke those words of the election of the Jews; and it is certain God does not *repent* that he formerly called them, and gave them the land of Canaan; any more than he *repents* his having now *rejected* them, and taken from them the good land which he gave their fathers; for as he had once sufficient reasons to do the one, so he has now to do the other.

But if you will make this passage mean, that the divine favour and blessings can never be forfeited through any fall into sin; I beg you will answer these queries. Had not God given all angels a place in his favor and glory? And did not many of them lose it by their fall? Was not innocent Adam interested in the divine favor and image? And did he not lose both, together with paradise, when he fell into sin? Did not king Saul forget the crown which God had given him, and the throne to which he had called him? Were not Judas’s calling and apostleship forfeited by his unfaithfulness, as well as one of the twelve thrones which Christ had promised him? What will you say of the unprofitable servant, from whom

whom his lord took the talent unimproved? Lost he not a blessing given, and his calling to occupy with it? And can you assert, that the man who took his fellow-servant by the throat did not lose the forgiveness of a debt of ten thousand talents? Or that those apostates, who tread under foot the blood of the covenant wherewith they were SANCTIFIED, do not forfeit their SANCTIFICATION by doing despite to the spirit of grace? Is it right thus to set the author of the epistle to the Romans against the author of the epistle to the Hebrews?

III. Your bringing in backsliding EPHRAIM the pleasant child, as a witness of the truth of your doctrine, is a most unhappy proof. Rejoice not, O Israel, as other people, says the Lord, Hof. ix. 1, for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God. This whoring Israel is called Ephraim ver. 13. Ephraim, the pleasant child, is planted as a pleasant plant. Notwithstanding, Ephraim shall bring forth his children for the murderer. All their wickedness is in Gilegal; - for there I HATED them. For the wickedness of their doings, I will drive them out of mine house; I will love them NO MORE. Hence the prophet observes immediately after, Ephraim is smitten, my God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him.

IV. However, my honored friend still affirms, that "David, notwithstanding his horrible backslidings, did not lose the character of the man after God's own heart" But he will permit me to believe the contrary, (1.) Upon the testimony of the Psalmist himself, who says in your favorite psalm, thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been very wroth with thine anointed: thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant; thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground. Pf. lxxxix. 28.

(2.) Where is David called the man after God's own heart, while he continued an impenitent adulterer? How much more guarded is the scripture than your letters! David did that which was right in the

the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside, save only in the matter of Uriah, 1 Kings xv. 5. Here you see the immoral parenthesis of ten months spent in adultery and murder, expressly pointed at, and excepted by the Holy Ghost.

(3.) David himself, far from thinking that sin could never separate between God and a just man who draws back into wickedness, speaks thus in the last charge which he gave to Solomon; and thou Solomon my son, know the God of thy father; and serve him with a perfect heart. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off forever. 1 Chr. xxviii. 9. Hence it appears that the God of Solomon's father is very different from the picture which Dr. Crisp draws of David's God. The former can be so displeased at an impenitent backslider as to cast him off for ever; while the latter accounts him a pleasant child still. But let us come to matter of fact.

(4.) Displeasure, anger, or wrath in God, is not that disturbing boisterous passion so natural to fallen man; but an invariable disapprobation of sin, and a steady design to punish the sinner. Now God severely manifested this righteous displeasure at David's person, when he punished him by not restraining any longer the ambition of his rebellious son. How remarkably did his dreadful punishments answer his Heinous crimes! He wanted the fruit of his adultery to live, but inflexible justice destroys it. The crown of righteousness was fallen from his head, and his royal crown is profaned and cast to the ground.

He had not turned out the way-faring man, the hellish tempter; and he is turned out of his own palace and kingdom. He flies beyond Jordan for his life; and as he flies Shimei throws stones at him; volleys of curses accompany the stones; and the most cutting challenges follow the curses: Come out, thou bloody man, said he, thou man of Belial; the Lord hath delivered thy kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son; and

and behold thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man. To which David could answer nothing, but "Let him curse; for the Lord, by not restraining his wickedness, hath permissively said unto him, Curse David. I see the impartial justice of a sin-avenging God, through the cruel abuse of this raging man." This was not all: He had *secretly* committed adultery with Uriah's wife, and his son *publicly* commits incest with his own wives. And to complete the horror of his punishment, he leaves the most dreadful curse upon his posterity. *Thou hast slain Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon, says the Lord, now therefore the sword shall NEVER depart from thy house, and thy own children shall murder one another.* What a terrible punishment was this! And how strong must be the prejudice of those, who maintain that God was not displeased at David's person!

V. Pass we now to an argument, which you seem to consider as one of the main pillars of your doctrine. "If one believer sin by an unclean thought, say you, and another by an unclean act, does the former continue in a state of grace, and the other forfeit his sonship? Take heed lest you should be forced to go to Rome for an answer to this query." Without going even to the convent of the Benedictine monks in Paris, I answer, it is evident from scripture, that an adulterous thought delighted in is adultery. He that entertains such a thought is an adulterer, one who is absolutely unfit for the presence of an holy God. *Be not deceived, says St. Paul neither fornicators nor adulterers shall inherit the kingdom of God.* Therefore adultery of heart certainly excludes an impenitent backslider out of heaven; though it will not sink him into so deep an hell, as if he had drawn another into the commission of his intended crime. You add,

"But if David had only had an angry thought, he had still been a murderer in the sight of God."

Not so; for there is a righteous anger, which is a virtue and not a sin; or else how could Christ have looked round about on the Pharisees with anger, and continued sinless? You mean probably, that if David had only *hated* Uriah in his heart, he would have been a murderer. If so, your observation is very just, for *he that hateth his brother*, says St. John, *is a MURDERER*; and you know, adds he, *that no murderer, though he were a royal psalmist, hath eternal life abiding in him.*

But what do you get by these arguments? Nothing at all. You only make it easier to prove that your doctrine is erroneous. For if David would have forfeited heaven by *looking on Uriah's Wife, to lust after her in his heart*; or by intending in his breast to murder her husband; how much more did he forfeit it, when his mental sins fully ripened into outward enormities!—*Ye are of your father the devil whose works ye do*, said Christ to some of the chosen nation: and if adultery and murder are works of the devil, it follows from those words of our Lord, that while David continued impenitent, he was *NOT a man after God's own heart*, as my honored opponent too charitably supposes; but a man after the own heart of him, *who abode not in the truth, and is a murderer from the beginning.*

VI. But you add, "Sin did not reign in him as a king, it only for a time usurped as a tyrant." Nay Sir, sin is a tyrant wherever he reigns; and he reigns wherever he *usurps*. "Where will you draw the line" between the reign and the tyranny of Sin? Are not both included under the word *dominion*? Sin says St. Paul, *shall not have DOMINION over you that are under grace.* Had I made such a *distinction* as this, some protestants would deservedly have called it *metaphysical*; but as it comes from the orthodox author of *Pietas Oxoniensis* it will probably pass for *evangelical.*

Very

Very different however is St. Peter's orthodoxy. *Of whom a man is overcome, says he, of the same is he brought into bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. Nevertheless even such apostates, so long as the day of their visitation lasteth, may again repent and believe; for as you justly observe, they have still an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

VII. You try to prove your point by scripture. *There is, say you, no condemnation to them who are in Christ. True! but it is while they walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit; a clause which you prudently keep out of sight. And surely David walked after the flesh, when in the act of adultery and murder.—You proceed, "who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Nobody, if God's elect are penitent believers, who walk not after the flesh; but if they are impenitent adulterers and hypocritical murderers; Jews and Gentiles, Law and Gospel, Prophets and Apostles, God and their own conscience, ALL will agree to lay their crimes to their charge.—You urge that, "Christ by one offering hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified." True! but not those who are un sanctified. And certainly such are all adulterers and murderers. These ought rather to be ranked with those who tread under foot the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified.*

"It is said, however, ye (believing, loving, fruitful Colossians, see Chap. i. 4, 6,) are compleat in him." It is so; but not ye impenitent backsliders, ye unclean defilers of another's bed. Such are compleat in evil not in good, in Belial not in Christ. Alas for the prostitution of the sacred and pure word of God! Can it also be pressed into the service of profaneness and impurity! To rescue at least one sentence from such manifest abuse I might observe, the original may, with the greatest propriety be rendered

tered "*filled with (or by) him,*" instead of *compleat in him*; and I think the context fixes this sense upon it. The apostle is cautioning the Colossians against vain philosophers, whose doctrine was empty and deceitful. Now that he might do this the more effectually, he points out a more excellent teacher, whose character and qualifications he describes when he says, *in him dwelleth the fullness* πληρωμα, *of the Godhead.* He immediately adds *πεπληρωμένοι ἐν αὐτῷ.* (a verb of the same etymology with the noun and undoubtedly of a similar import) *ye are filled with (or by) him.* As if he had said "Christ is filled with the Godhead of the Father, and ye with the spirit of Christ, the spirit of wisdom, righteousness, and strength." Plenitudo Christi (says the learned and pious Bengelius on the passage) redundat in ecclesiam, "the fullness of God dwelling in the Mediator overflows upon his church." The very sense our translators have given the very same two words in Ephes. iii. 19. Why they rendered them differently here is hard to say.

VIII. You go on, "no falls or backslidings in God's children, can ever bring them again under condemnation, because *the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made them free from the law of sin and death.*" A most dangerous proposition, exposed Vind. page 88, and contrary to the very scripture by which you try to support it. (1.) To the context, where those to whom *there is no condemnation*, are said to be persons who *walk not after the flesh*, and are therefore very different from impenitent adulterers and murderers, who bring forth the most execrable fruits of the flesh. (2.) To the text itself; for if *the law, or power of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made the believer free from the law, or power of sin*; how can he be represented as the tame *servant of sin*;—as sold under sin—sold under *adultery and murder for ten months*! But you are not at a loss for an answer,

IX. "We

IX. "We are very apt, say you, to set up mountainous distinctions concerning the various degrees of sin, especially of sins after conversion:" This, together with your placing "an angry thought" upon a level with deliberate murder, seems to insinuate that you make very little difference between an atrocious crime and a sin of surprize; so that, upon your scheme, a bloody murderer may plead that he is not more guilty, than a man who has felt a motion of impatience; and the latter may be hurried out of his wits, as if he had committed murder. To remove this mistake, I need only observe, that if all are papists who make a material difference between various sins, or between the same sins variously aggravated, my worthy opponent is as sound a papist as myself: for when he acts as a magistrate, he does not promiscuously pass the same sentence upon every one. He commits one to prison, and dismisses another with a gentle reprimand. Our Lord himself sets you the pattern of this equity where he says, that the *Pharisees shall receive the GREATER damnation*, and that it shall be *MORE TOLERABLE for Sodom than for Corazin in the day of judgment*: whence we may justly infer, that the sin of some is more "mountainous" than that of others.

But as you have made choice of David's case, permit me to argue from his experience. He was once, you know, violently angry with Nabal; but as he seasonably restrained his anger, and meekly confessed his sin, God forgave him without "breaking his bones." Not so when the unrestrained evil of his heart in the matter of Uriah produced the external fruits of treachery and murder. For *then* the Lord inflicted upon him all the dreadful punishments which we have already considered. *Hear the rod therefore, and learn what vast difference the Lord makes between sins whether committed after, or before conversion.*

X. What follows is a sweet and smooth Antinomian pill, so much the more dangerous as it is gilt with

with gold taken from the sanctuary, from *the golden altar* itself. Hence it is that multitudes swallow it down as *rich grace* without the least scruple or suspicion. Lord, dart a beam of thy wisdom into the mind of thy servant, that I may separate the precious from the vile, and expose the dangerous ingredient without depreciating the gold that covers it.

“What is all sin, do you say, before the infinitely precious atoning blood of Jesus?” Nothing at all, when that blood is humbly apprehended by penitent believers who depart from all iniquity. But, when it is *accounted a common thing*, and trodden under foot by impenitent apostates; or wantonly pleaded in defence of sin by loose Nicolaitans or lukewarm Laodiceans, it does not answer its gracious design. On the contrary, *how shall we escape*, says St. Paul, *if we thus neglect such great salvation!* And of *how much sorer punishment* than others *shall they be thought worthy who do such despite to the spirit of grace!* see Heb. ii. 3, and x. 29. You go on,

“If Christ has fulfilled the whole law and borne the curse, then all debts and claims against his people, be they more or be they less, be they small or be they great, be they before, or be they after conversion, are for ever and for ever cancelled. All trespasses are forgiven them.—They are justified from all things.—They already have everlasting life.” What! before they repent and believe! A bold assertion this! which sets Jesus against Christ—our PRIEST against our PROPHET. For Christ himself teaches us that many for whom his *fatlings are killed*, and *all things are now ready*, thro’ an obstinate refusal of his *sincere* (I hope no body will say *hypocritical*) invitations, *shall never taste of his supper*. And as if this was not enough to arm us against your doctrine, he commissioned an apostle to assure his church, that some who have *tasted of his gospel-supper*, that is, who *have been enlightened*, *have tasted the heavenly gift, the good word of God, and the powe_{rs}*

of the world to come, do crucify to themselves the son of God afresh, and by that mean, so totally fall away, that it is impossible to renew them again to repentance. A clear proof this that those who once truly repented, and were even made partakers of the Holy Ghost, may quench the Spirit, and sin against the Holy Ghost, may not only fall, but fall finally, Heb. vi. 4.

(2.) Your doctrine sets also our high PRIEST against our heavenly KING, who declares, that if he who was once his faithful servant, begins to beat his fellow servants, much more to murder them, he will, as judge of all, command him to be bound hand and foot, and delivered to the tormentors. See 2d check, page 4.

(3.) Your doctrine drags after it all the absurdities of eternal, absolute justification. It sets aside the use of repentance and faith, in order to pardon and acceptance. It represents the sins of the elect as forgiven, not only before they are confessed, but even before they are committed; a notion which that strong Calvinist Dr. Owen himself could not but oppose. It supposes that all the penitents who have believed that they were once children of wrath, and that God was displeased at them when they lived in sin, have believed a lie. It makes the preaching of the gospel one of the most absurd, wicked and barbarous things in the world. For what can be more absurd than to say *repent ye and believe the gospel, he that believeth shall be damned*, if a certain number can never repent or believe, and a certain number can never be damned? And what can be more wicked, than to distress elect sinners by bidding them *fly from the wrath to come*, if there is absolutely no wrath, neither past, present, nor to come for them. if all their sins "be they more or less, be they small or great are for ever and for ever cancelled?" As for the reprobates, how barbarous is it to bid them fly, if adamant chains, eternal decrees of past wrath, perpetually bind them down, that they may never escape the repeated eternal strokes of the wrath to come?

(4.) But

(4.) But what shocks me most in your scheme, is the reproach which it unavoidably fixes upon Christ. It says, "The elect are justified from all things even before they believe." In all their sins "God views them *without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing*: they stand always compleat in the everlasting righteousness of the Redeemer." "*Black in themselves, they are comely thro' his comeliness*:" so that when they commit adultery and murder, "*He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, can nevertheless address them with, Thou art all fair, my love, my undefiled, there is no spot in thee.*"

What a prostitution of the word of God is here! We blame a wild youth for dropping some bold innuendos about Jupiter in a play composed by a poor Heathen. But I acquit thee of indecency, O Terence, if a vindicator of Christian piety, has a right to represent our holy and righteous God, as saying to a bloody adulterer in flagranti delicto, *Thou art all fair my love, my undefiled, there is no spot in thee.* And are these the fat pastures and limpid waters, where gospel-preachers "feed the sheep?" Where then! Oh where are the "barren pastures and muddled waters" in which barefaced Antinomians feed the goats? Is not this taking the children's bread to cast it to dogs? I had almost asked, *Is it not the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place?* See ye not the Lord, O ye mistaken Christians, looking down from the habitation of his holiness? And do ye not hear him thunder this exhortation from heaven? *How long will ye blaspheme mine honor, and have such pleasure in deceit? Know ye not that I have chosen to myself the man that is godly, and that him who delighteth in iniquity doth my soul abhor?*

(5.) And plead not, dear Sir, that you have quoted scripture in defence of your point. If the church says in a mystical song, "*I am black in the eyes of the world, because the sun of affliction and persecution hath looked upon me while I kept the vineyards; but I am comely in the*

the sight of God whose spirit enables me with unwearied patience to *bear the burden and heat of the day*;" you have absolutely no right, either from divinity or criticism, to make those words mean "*I am black* by the atrocious crimes which I actually commit, black by the horrors of adultery and murder; but no matter; *I am conely* by the purity and charity of my Saviour: my sins, be they small or be they great, are for ever and for ever cancelled; I am justified from all things."—Again, if God says to a penitent believer, to a soul actually *washed, walking with him as Enoch, and walking in white, as the few names in Sardis who had not defiled their garments*, "*Thou art all fair, my undefiled*:" is it right to take those gracious words, and apply them to every lukewarm Laodicean we meet with: and to every apostate, who not only *defiles his garments*, but *wallows in the mire like the sow that was washed*?

(6.) Another great, and if I am not mistaken, insurmountable difficulty attends your scheme. You tell us that "a believer's person stands absolved and always compleat in the everlasting righteousness of the Redeemer." But I ask, Was he absolved before he was a believer? If you answer, "No, he was absolved the moment he began to believe," it follows that he *does something*, that is, he *believes* towards his absolution. And thus your main pillars, "that faith is not previous to justification, that there is no wrath in God for the elect, and that all claims against his people before or after conversion are for ever cancelled," are not only broken, but ground to powder. Add to this that if the believer is justified in consequence of his faith, it is evident that his justification while he is on earth, can stand no longer than his faith, and that if he *makes shipwreck of faith and a good conscience as Hymeneus*, he must again *come into condemnation*. But supposing that to avoid these inconveniencies you boldly say, "He was justified from the time the Lamb was slain,

H

slain,

slain, that is from the beginning of the world." You point-blank contradict Christ, who says that *he who believeth not is condemned already*. Thus either the veracity of our Lord, or the truth of your doctrine must go to the bottom. A sad dilemma this, for those who confound Crispianity with Christianity!

XI. You reply, "As soon shall Satan pluck Christ's crown from his head, as his purchase from his hand." Here is a *great truth*, making way for a *palpable error*, and a *dreadful insinuation*. Let us (1.) see the *great truth*. It is most certain that no body shall ever be able to *pluck Christ's sheep*, that is, penitent believers, who *hear his voice and follow him*, out of his protecting almighty hand. But if *the minds of those penitent believers are corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*; if they wax wanton against him, turn after Satan, end in the flesh, and draw back to perdition; if growing fat and kicking like *Jeshurun*, they neigh like high-fed horses after their neighbours wives; we demand proof that they belong to the fold of Christ, and are not rather *goats and wolves in sheep's cloathing*, who cannot without conversion enter into the kingdom of heaven. (2.) The *palpable error* is, that none of those for whom Christ died can be cast away and destroyed, that no virgin's lamp can go out, no promising harvest be choked with thorns, no branch in Christ cut off for unfruitfulness, no pardon forfeited, and no name blotted out of God's book.—That no salt can lose its savour, nobody receive the grace of God in vain, bury his talent, neglect such great salvation, trifle away a day of visitation, look back after setting his hand to the plow, and grieve the spirit till he is quenched, and strives no more. This error so conducive to the Laodicean case, is expressly opposed by St. Peter, who informs us that some *deny the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction*. And Christ himself, far from desiring to keep his lukewarm purchase in HIS HAND, declares that *he will spue it out of HIS MOUTH*. Rev. iii. 16.

Pals

PAs we on (3.) to the *dreadful insinuation*. While you perpetually try to comfort a few elect, some of whom, for what I know, comfort themselves already with their neighbours wives, yea, and the wives of their fathers; please to tell us how we shall comfort millions of reprobates, who, for what you know, try to save themselves from this adulterous generation. Do ye not hear how Satan, upon a supposition of the truth of your doctrine, triumphs over those unhappy victims of what some call God's sovereignty? While that old murderer shakes his bloody hand over the myriads devoted to endless torments, methinks I hear him say to his fellow-executioners of divine vengeance, *As soon shall Christ's crown be plucked from his head as this his free gift from my hand*. Let yonder little flock of the elect commit adultery and incest without any possibility of missing heaven. I object no more. See what crowds of reprobates may pray and reform, and strive without any possibility of escaping hell. Let those gay elect shout *everlasting love! eternal justification!* and *finished salvation!* I consent! See, ye fiends, see the immense prey that awaits us, and roar with me before-hand *Everlasting wrath!* *eternal reprobation!* and *finished damnation!*

XII. "Our xiith article maintains that good works necessarily spring out of a lively faith, inso-
 " much that by them a lively faith may be as evi-
 " dently known, as a tree discerned by its fruits."
 " This you say I most firmly believe;" And nevertheless,
 to prove just the contrary, to shew that when David committed adultery and murder he had a *lively faith*, and was in a state of *justification and sanctification*, you quote a verse of an hymn, composed by the Rev. Mr. C. Wesley, which only confirms what I say of *undervaluing*, Vind. page 83. But you mistake him, if you suppose that when *Not ONE bud of grace appears* to ourselves, *many*, may not appear to others; and if you apply to outward enormities greedily committed, what the poet means of inward motions of sin cor-
 H 2 dially

dially lamented and steadily opposed. Nevertheless, as some expressions in this hymn are not properly guarded, the pious author will forgive me if I transcribe part of a letter which I lately received from him.

‘ I was once on the brink of Antinomianism, by
 ‘ unwarily reading Crisp and Saltmarsh. Just then
 ‘ warm in my first love, I was in the utmost dan-
 ‘ ger, when providence threw in my way Baxter’s
 ‘ treatise intitled, *An hundred errors of Dr. Crisp de-*
 ‘ *monstrated*. My brother was sooner apprehensive
 ‘ of the dangerous abuse which would be made of
 ‘ our unguarded hymns and expressions, than I was.
 ‘ Now I also see and feel we must all sink—unless
 ‘ we call St. James to our assistance. Yet let us still
 ‘ insist as much or more than ever on St. Paul’s jus-
 ‘ tification. What God has joined together let no
 ‘ man put asunder. The great Chillingworth saw
 ‘ clearly the danger of separating St. James from St.
 ‘ Paul. He used to wish that whenever a chapter
 ‘ of St. Paul’s justification was read, another of
 ‘ St. James might be read at the same time.’

XIII. When my honored correspondent has endeavoured to prove by the above-mentioned scriptures, arguments, and quotations, that an impenitent adulterer and murderer, instead of being under God’s displeasure, is “a pleasant child still;” to compleat his work, he proceeds to shew the good that falls into sin do to believers. Never did the pious author of *Pietas Oxoniensis* employ his pen in a work less conducive to piety!

“ God, says he, often brings about his purposes
 “ by those very means, which to the human eye
 “ would certainly defeat them. He has always the
 “ same thing in view, his own glory and the salva-
 “ tion of his elect by Jesus Christ. This Adam was
 “ accomplishing when he put the whole world un-
 “ der the curse.” Hail Adam under the fatal tree!
 Pluck and eat abundantly, for “ thou accomplishest
 the

the salvation of the elect! Oh the inconsistency of your doctrine! If we insist upon *doing the will of God* in order to *enter his kingdom*, we are boldly exclaimed against as proudly sharing the glory of our redemption with Christ. But here Adam is represented as his partner in the work of salvation, and a share of his glory, positively assigned to the fall, i. e. to his disobedience to the divine will. St. Paul asserts that *by one man (Adam) came death, and sin the sting of death; and so death with his sting passed upon all men.* But you inform us that Adam by his sin “accomplished the salvation of the elect.” If this is not plucking a jewel from Christ’s crown, to adorn the most improper head in the world next to that of Satan, I am very much mistaken.

But if God “*brought about his purpose*” concerning the *salvation of the elect* by the fall of Adam; tell us, I pray, who brought about the purpose concerning the *damnation of the reprobates*? Had the Lord “*always this thing in view*” also? On the brink of what a dreadful abyss hath your doctrine brought me!—Sir, my mind recoils; I fly from the God whose unprovoked wrath rose before the beginning of the world, against millions of his unformed, and therefore guiltless creatures! He that *tasted death for every man* bids me fly, and he points me from Dr. Crisp to God whose *mercy is over all his works*, till they personally forfeit it by obstinately trampling upon his richest grace.

XIV. As if it was not enough to have represented our salvation in part *accomplished* by the transgression of our first parents: you bring in *Herod and Pontius Pilate*, and observe, to the honor of the good which sin does to the elect, that those unrighteous judges *did whatsoever God’s hand and counsel determined before to be done.* If you quote this passage to insinuate that God pre-determined their *sin*, you reflect upon divine holiness, and apologize for the murder-

ers of our Lord, as you have for the murderer of Uriah.

I grant, that when God saw, in the light of his infinite fore-knowledge, that Pilate and Caiaphas would absolutely chuse injustice and cruelty; he *determined* that they should have the awful opportunity of exercising them against his Anointed. As a skilful pilot, without pre-determining and raising a contrary wind, foresees it will rise, and pre-determines so to manage the rudder and sails of his ship, as to make it answer a good purpose. So God over-ruled the foreseen wickedness of those men, and made it subservient to his merciful justice in offering up the true paschal Lamb. But, as it would be very absurd to ascribe to the *contrary wind* the praise due to the *pilot's skill*: so it is very unevangelical to ascribe to the sin of Pilate, or of Joseph's brethren, the good which God drew from some of it's extraordinary circumstances.

XV. "The Lord has promised to make *all things work for good to those that love him*—and if all things, then their very sins and corruptions are included "in the royal promise." A syren-song this! which you unhappily try to support by scripture. But (1.) if *this is the love of God that we keep his commandments*, how will you prove that David loved God, when he left his own wife for that of Uriah? Does not our Lord declare that those who will not *forsake husband, wife, children and all things for his sake, are not worthy of him*, either as believers or lovers? And are those *worthy of him* who break his commandments, and take their neighbours wives? Again, if St. John speaking of one who does not relieve an indigent brother, asks with indignation, *How dwelleth the love of God in him!* May not I with greater reason say, *How dwelt the love of God in DAVID!* Who, far from assisting Uriah, murdered his soul by drunkenness, and his body with the sword! And if David did *not* love God, how can you believe that a promise made

to those that love God, respected him in his state of impenitency! — (2.) When we extol free grace, and declare that *God's mercy is over ALL his works*, you directly answer, that the word ALL must be taken in a limited sense: but when you extol the profitability of sin, ALL, in ALL things working for good, must be taken universally, and include *sin and corruption*, contrary to the context.—(3.) I say, contrary to the context; for just before the apostle declares, *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die*, ye shall evidence the truth of Ezekiel's doctrine, *When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, in his sin that he hath sinned shall he die*—and at the end of the chapter the things that work for good are enumerated, and they include all tribulations and creatures, but not our own sin, unless you can prove it to be God's creature, and not the devil's production.—(4.) It is no where promised that sin shall do us good. On the contrary, God constantly represents it as the greatest evil in the world, the root of all other temporal and eternal evils: and as he makes it the object of his invariable disapprobation, so, till they repent, he levels his severest threatenings at sinners without respect of persons. But the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis* has made a new discovery. Thro' the glass of Dr. Crisp he sees that one of the choicest promises in scripture respects the commission of sin, of theft and incest, adultery and murder. So grossly are threatenings and promises, punishments and rewards, confounded together by this fashionable divinity!

(5.) I grant that in some cases the punishment inflicted upon a sinner has been over-ruled for good: but what is this to the *sin itself*? Is it reasonable to ascribe to *sin* the good that may spring from the rod with which sin is punished? Some robbers have perhaps been brought to repentance by the gallows, and others deterred from committing robbery by the terror of their punishment; but by what rule, in logic or divinity can we infer from thence either that any robbers

robbers love God, or that *all* robberies shall work together for their good.

But "Onesimus robbed Philemon his master; and flying from justice was brought under Paul's preaching and converted." Surely Sir, you do not insinuate, that Onesimus's conversion depended upon robbing his master! Or that it would not have been better for him to have served his master faithfully, and stay'd in Asia to hear the gospel with Philemon, than to have rambled to Rome for it in consequence of his crime! The Heathens said *let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die*. It will be well if some do not say upon a fairer prospect than theirs, "Let us steal and rob, for to-morrow we shall be converted."

XVII. You add, that "the royal and holy seed was continued by the incest of Judah with Tamar, and the adultery of David with Bathsheba." And do you really think, Sir, God made choice of that line to shew how incest and adultery *work together for good*? For my part, I rather think that it was because if he had chosen any other line, he would have met with *more* such blots. You know that God slew David's child conceived in adultery; and if he chose Solomon to succeed David, it was not because the adulteress Bathsheba was his mother, but because he was then the *best* of David's children: for I may say of God's choosing the son, what Samuel said of his choosing the father, *The Lord looketh on the heart*, 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

XVIII. You proceed in your enumeration of the good that sin does to the pleasant children. "How has many a poor soul who has been faithless thro' fear of man, even blessed God for Peter's denial!" Surely, Sir, you mistake: none but the fiend who desired to have Peter that he might fist him, could bless God for the apostle's crimes; nor could any one on such an horrid account bless any other God but *the god of this world*. David said, *My eyes*

eyes run down with water, because men keep not thy law; but the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis* tells us, that "many a poor soul has blessed God" for the most horrid breaches of his law! Weep no more, perfidious apostle: thou hast cast the net on the right side of the ship; thy three curses have procured God multitudes of blessings! Surely, Sir, you cannot mean this! "Many a poor soul has blessed God" for granting a pardon to Peter, but never for Peter's denial. It is extremely dangerous thus to confound a crime, with the pardon granted to a penitent criminal.

XIX. Upon the same principle you add, "How have many others been raised out of the mire, by considering the tenderness shewn to the incestuous Corinthian?" I am glad you do not say "by considering the incest of the Corinthian." The good received by many did not then spring from his horrid crime, but from the tenderness of the apostle. This instance therefore, by your own confession, does not prove that sin does any good to believers.

But as you tell us with what tenderness the apostle restored that man, when he was swallowed up in godly sorrow, you will permit me to remind you of the severity which he shewed him while he continued impenitent. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, said he, when ye are gathered together, deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. Hence it appears, the apostle thought his case so desperate, that his body must be solemnly delivered to Satan, in order if possible to bring his soul to repentance. Now if the incestuous man's sins "had been for ever and for ever cancelled;" if he had not forfeited the divine favor, and cut himself off from the general assembly of the first-born by his crime; what power could the apostle, who acted under the influence of the Spirit, have had to cut him off from the visible church as a corrupt member? What right to deliver the body of one of "God's pleasant children" to destruction?

destruction? Was this *finished salvation*? For my part, as I do not believe in a *two-fold*, I had almost said *Jesuitical* will in God, I am persuaded, he would have us consider things as they are; an impenitent adulterer as a profligate heathen, and a penitent believer as "his pleasant child."

XX. You add, (1.) a "grievous fall serves to make believers know their place." No indeed, it serves only to make them *forget* their place; witness David, who, far from *knowing* his place, wickedly took that of Uriah; and Eve, who by falling into the condemnation of the devil, took her Maker's place; in her imagination, and esteemed herself as wise as God.—(2.) "It drives them nearer to Christ." Surely you mistake, Sir; you mean nearer the devil; for a fall into pride may drive me nearer Lucifer, a fall into adultery and murder may drive me nearer Belial and Moloch; but not nearer Jesus-Christ.—(3.) "It makes them more dependent on his strength." No such thing. The genuine effect of a fall into sin, is to stupify the conscience and harden the heart, witness the state of obduracy in which God found Adam, and the state of carnal security in which Nathan found David, after their crimes.—(4.) "It keeps them more watchful for the future." Just the reverse: it prevents their watching for the future. If David had been made more watchful by falling into adultery, would he have fallen into treachery and murder? If Peter had been made more watchful by his *first* fall into perjury would he have fallen *three* times successively!—(5.) "It will cause them to sympathize with others in the like situation." By no means. A fall into sin will naturally make us desirous of drawing another into our guilty condition. Witness the Devil and Eve, Eve and Adam, David and Bathsheba. The royal adulterer was so far from sympathizing with the man who had unkindly taken his neighbour's favorite ew-lamb, that he directly swore *As the Lord*

Lord liveth the man that has done this thing shall surely die.

(6.) "It will make them sing louder to the praise of restoring grace throughout all the ages of eternity." I demand proof of this. I greatly question whether Demas, Alexander the Copper-smith, Hymeneus, Philetus, and many of the fallen believers mentioned in the epistles of our Lord to the churches of Asia, in the epistle to the Hebrews, and in those of St. Peter, St. James, and St. Jude, shall sing restoring grace at all. The apostle far from representing them all as singing *LOUDER*, gives us to understand that many of them shall be *thought worthy of a much sorer punishment* than the sinners consumed by fire from heaven; and that *there remaineth no more sacrifice for their sins*: (a sure proof that Christ's sacrifice availed for them, till they accounted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing) for, adds the apostle, *the Lord will judge his people*; and notwithstanding all that Dr. Crisp says to the contrary, *there remaineth for apostates a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. Weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, and not "louder songs," await the unprofitable servant.*

But supposing some are renewed to repentance and escape out of the snare of the devil; can you imagine they will be upon the footing of those, who standing stedfast and immoveable always abounded in the work of the Lord? Shall then the labour of these be in vain in the Lord? Are not our works to follow us? Shall the unprofitable servant, if restored, receive a crown of glory equal to his, who from the time he listed has always fought the good fight, and kept the faith? The doctrine you would inculcate at once bears hard upon the equity of the divine conduct, and strikes a fatal blow at the root of all diligence and faithfulness, so strongly recommended in the oracles of God.

You will be sensible of your error if you observe, that all the fine things which you tell us of a fall into
sin

sin, belong not to the *fall*, but to an *happy recovery from it*: and my honored correspondent is as much mistaken, when he ascribes to *sin* the effects of *repentance* and *faith*, as if he ascribed to a frost the effect of a thaw, or to sickness the consequences of a recovery.

And now that we have seen how you have done a *pious* man's strange work; permit me, Sir, to tell you that thro' the prevalence of human corruption, a word spoken for *sin* generally goes farther than ten thousand spoken against it. This I know, that if a fall, in an hour of temptation, appears only half so *profitable* as you represent it, thousands will venture after David into the whirl-pool of wickedness. But alas! *facilis descensus averni*, &c. it is easier to follow him when he plunges in, than when he struggles out with his *eyes wasted*, his *flesh dried up*, and his *bones broken*.

XXI. I gladly do you the justice, honored, Sir, to observe that you exclaim against *sin* in the next page; but does not the antidote come too late? You say, "Whatever may be God's secret will, we are to keep close to the declaration of his own written word, which binds us to resist *sin*." But alas! you make a bad matter worse by representing God as having two wills, a *secret* effectual will that we should *sin*, and a revealed will, or *written word*, commanding us to resist *sin*! If these insinuations are just, I ask, Why should we not regard God's *secret*, as much as his *revealed will*? Nay, why should we not regard it *more*, since it is the *more efficacious*, and consequently the *stronger will*?

You add, "He would be mad who should wilfully fall down, and break a leg or an arm, because he knew there was a skilful surgeon at hand to set it." But I beg leave to dissent from my honored opponent. For, supposing I had a crooked leg, appointed to be broken *for good* by God's *secret will* intimated to me: a dear friend strongly argued

urged, not only that the surgeon is a thand, but that he would render my leg straiter, handsomer, and stronger than before: must I not be a fool, or a coward, if I hesitate throwing myself down?

O Sir, if the *deceitfulness of sin* is so great, that thousands greedily commit it, when the gallows on earth and horrible torments in hell, are proposed for their just wages; how will they be able to escape in the hour of temptation, if they are encouraged to transgress the divine law, by assurances, that they shall reap eternal advantages from their sin! Oh! how highly necessary was it, that Mr. W. should warn his assistants against talking of a *state of justification and sanctification*, in so unguarded a manner as you, Sir, and the other admirers of Dr. Crisp so frequently do?

You conclude this letter by some quotations from Mr. Wesley, whom you vainly try to press into the Doctor's service, by representing him as saying of established Christians what he speaks of babes in Christ, and of the commission of adultery and murder what he only means of evil desire resisted, and evil tempers restrained: but more of this in a *Treatise on Christian Perfection*.

Your FIFTH LETTER

begins by a civil reproof, for "speaking rather in a sneering manner of that heart-cheering expression so often used by awakened divines, *the finished salvation OF CHRIST*:" an expression which, by the bye, you will not find once in all my letters. But why some divines, whom you look upon as unawakened, do not admire the unscriptural expression of *finished salvation*, you may see 2d check, page 81.

I am thankful for your second reproof, and hope it will make me more careful not to "speak as a man of the world." But the third I really cannot thank you for. "You are not very sparing of hard names against Dr. Crisp," says my honored correspondent; and again, "The hard names, and heavy
I " censures

“ censures thrown out against the Doctor, are by
 “ far more unjustifiable than what has been deliver-
 “ ed against Mr. W.” The hardest names I give to
 your favorite divine are, *the Doctor*, *the good Doctor*,
 and *the honest Doctor*, whom notwithstanding all his
 mistakes, I represent (2 check, page 24) as a good
 man shouting aloud *Salvation to the Lamb of God*.
 Now, Sir, I should be glad to know by what rule,
 either of *criticism* or *charity*, you can prove that these
 are *hard names, more unjustifiable than* the names of
 “ papist unmasked, heretic, apostate, worse than
 papists,” &c. which have been of late so liberally
 bestowed upon Mr. W.

I confess that those branches of Dr. Crisp’s doctrine
 which stand in direct opposition to the practical gos-
 pel of Christ, I have taken the liberty to call *Crispi-*
anity; for had I called them *Christianity*, my con-
 science and one half of the bible would have flown
 in my face: and had I called them *Calvinism*, Wil-
 liams, Flavel, Allein, Bishop Hopkins, and num-
 bers of *sound Calvinists*, would have proved me mis-
 taken; for they agree to represent the peculiarities
 of the Doctor, as *loose Antinomian tenets*; and if any
 man can prove them either *legal* or *evangelical*, I
 shall gladly recant those epithets, which I have some
 times given, not the good Doctor, but his unscriptu-
 ral notions.

In the mean time permit me to observe, that if
 any one judges of my letters by the 36th page of your
 book, he will readily say of them what you say of the
 Rev. Mr. Sellon’s works: “ I have never read
 “ them, and from the accounts I hear of the abu-
 “ sive unchristian spirit with which they are writ-
 “ ten, I believe I shall never give myself that trou-
 “ ble.” Now Sir, I have read Mr. Sellon’s books,
 and have therefore more right than you, who never
 read them, to give them a public character. You
 tell us you “ *have HEARD of the imbecility of the*
performance,”

†*performance*," &c. and I assure my readers I have found it a masterly mixture of the skill belonging to the sensible scholar, the good logician, and the sound anti-Crispian divine.

He is blunt, I confess, and sometimes to an excess. " Really, says he in a private letter, I cannot fet my razor; there is a roughness about me I cannot get rid of. If honest truth will not excuse me, I must bear the blame of those whom nothing will please but smooth things." But sharp (you would say *abusive*) as he is, permit me to tell you that my much admired countryman Calvin was much more so.

For my part, tho' I would no more plead for *abuse* than for *adultery and murder*, yet like a true Suisse I love *blunt honesty*; and to give you a proof of it, I shall take the liberty to observe, It is much easier to say a book is full of *hard names*, and *heavy censures*, written in an *abusive unchristian spirit*; and to inlinate it is " dangerous, or not worth reading;" than it is fairly to answer one single page of it. And how far a late publication proves the truth of this observation, I leave our candid readers to decide.

Page 38, you " assure me upon honor, that Mr. W.'s pieces against election and perseverance, (Why did you forget *reprobation*?) have greatly tended to establish your belief in those most comfortable doctrines." Hence you conclude, that Mr. W.'s pen has done much service to the Calvinistic cause," and add, that " some very experienced Christians hope, he will write again upon that subject, or publish a new edition of his former tracts."

You are too much acquainted with the world, dear Sir, not to know that most Deists declare, they were

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established

† Some of the Rev. Mr. Sellon's works are, Arguments against the doctrine of general redemption considered.—A defence of God's sovereignty and The Church of England, vindicated from the charge of Calvinism. All these are well worth the reading of every sensible and pious man.

established in their sentiments by reading the Old and New Testament. But would you argue conclusively if you inferred from thence, that the sacred writers *have done* infidelity *much service*? And if some confident infidels expressed their hopes, that our bishops *would reprint* the bible to propagate Deism; would you not see thro' their empty boast, and pity their deistical *flourish*? Permit me, honored Sir, to expose by a smile the similar wish of the persons you mention, who, if they are "very experienced Christians," will hardly pass for very modest logicians.

The gentleman of fortune you mention never read *all* Mr. W.'s tracts, nor *one* of Mr. Sellon's on the Christian orthodoxy: and I am no more surprized to see you both dissent from those divines than I should be to find you both mistaken upon the bench, if you passed a *decisive* sentence, before you had so much as heard *one* witness out. The clergyman you refer to has probably been as precipitate as the two pious magistrates; therefore you will permit me to doubt whether he, any more than my honored opponent, "has had courage enough to see for himself."

C O N C L U S I O N .

Having so long animadverted upon your letters, it is time to consider the present state of our controversy. Mr. W. privately advances among his own friends some propositions, designed to keep them from running into the fashionable errors of Dr. Crisp. These propositions are secretly procured, and publicly exposed thro' the three kingdoms, as dreadfully heretical, and subversive of the Protestant doctrine of *Justification by faith*. In Mr. W.'s absence a friend writes in defence of his propositions. The Rev. Mr. Shirley, instead of trying to defend his mistakes by argument, publicly recants his circular letter and his volume of sermons by the lump. Some of the honest

next souls, who had been carried away by the stream of fashionable error, begin to look about them, and ask whether *narratives* and *recantations* are to pass for *scriptures* and *arguments*? The worthy author of *Pietas Oxoniensis* to quiet them, enters the lists, and makes a stand against the *anti-Crispian* propositions; but what a stand!

(1.) "*Man's faithfulness*, says he, I have no objection to, in a *sober gospel sense* of the word." So Mr. W.'s first proposition, by my opponent's confession, bears a *sober gospel sense*.

(2.) He attacks the doctrine of *working for life* by proposing some of the very objections answered in the vindication, without taking the least notice of the answers—by producing scriptures quite foreign to the question, and keeping out of sight those which have been advanced—by passing over, in silence a variety of rational arguments—jumbling all the degrees of spiritual life and death, acceptance and justification mentioned in the sacred oracles—confounding all the dispensations of divine grace towards man— and levelling at Mr. W. a witticism which wounds Jesus Christ himself.

(3.) He acknowledges the truth of the doctrine that we must "*do something in order to obtain justification*;" and after this candid concession, fairly gives up the fundamental Protestant doctrine of *Justification by faith*—the very doctrine which Luther called *Articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesie*, and which our church so strongly maintains in her articles and homilies. The Rev. Mr. Shirley throws his sermon on *Justification by faith* overboard: his second comes up to mend the matter, and does it so unfortunately as to throw the handle after the ax. He renounces the doctrine itself. *I maintain*, says he, *that believing cannot be previous to justification*. As dangerous a proposition as was ever advanced by Dr. Crisp, and rebutted by all the sober Calvinists of the last century!

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(4.) He

(4.) He opposes St. Peter's, Mr. Henry's, and Mr. W.'s doctrine, that "Cornelius was accepted of God in consequence of his *fearing God and working righteousness*," and insinuates that Cornelius was accepted *before* he feared God and worked righteousness. Upon this scheme, the words of St. Peter, *he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him*, may mean, "he that DARETH God and worketh UNRIGHTEOUSNESS is accepted of him!"

(5.) He represents Mr. W. as a Papist, for having privately observed among his friends, that we have been too much afraid of the word *merit*, while he allows real Protestants, the Countess of Huntingdon, and the Rev. Mr. Shirley, to publish and sing, *We merit heaven by the righteousness which Christ has supplied*. Nay, he sings the same bold words at the Locke-Chapel. The Rev. Mr. Madan's *we merit* passes for gospel; his hymns are every where recommended as evangelical; but "Popery is about mid-way between Protestantism and Mr. Wesley." What strange prejudice! And yet, surprizing! My honored correspondent accuses *me* of betraying "no small degree of *chicanery*" upon the article of *merit*!

(6.) He attempts to "split the hair" which the Rev. Mr. Shirley is wise enough not to attempt. But how? Without ceremony he cuts off the middle term between *being rewarded according to our works*, and *as our works deserve*; he throws out of the question this proposition that "*we are rewarded BECAUSE of our works*," tho' it is supported by the plainest scriptures.

(7.) Notwithstanding this unwarrantable liberty, when he confidently soars upon the wings of orthodoxy, to find his broad passage between "*East and West*;" he directly falls into Mr. W.'s sentiment, about the *rewardableness* of works; and, before he is aware shakes hands with the good Papist Scotus, and the good Protestant Baxter.

(8.) The

(8.) The last proposition which he attacks is, that “we are continually pleasing or displeasing to God according to the whole of our inward and outward behaviour.” And what does he advance against it? Assertions and distinctions, contradicted by the general tenor of the bible.—Scriptures detached from the context, and set at variance with the clearest declarations of God, and loudest dictates of conscience.—And what is worse than all, dangerous enumerations of the good that falling into adultery, murder, perjury, and incest does to them that love God.

And now, honored Sir, let the Christian world judge, whether you have been able to fix the mark of error upon *one* of the propositions so loudly decryed as *heretical*; and whether the letters you have honored me with, do not expose the cause which you have attempted to defend, and demonstrate the absolute necessity of erecting and defending such a seasonable rampart as the minutes, to check the rapid progress of Dr. Crisp’s gospel.

Permit me, honored and dear Sir, to conclude by assuring you, that altho’ I have thought myself obliged *publicly* to shew the mistakes in the five letters which you have *publicly* directed to me, I gladly do you the justice to acknowledge, that your principles have not that effect upon your conduct, which they naturally have upon the conversation of hundreds who are *consistent* Antinomians. See 2d check, page 71.

If I have addressed my *three checks* to the Rev. Mr. Shirley and yourself, God is my witness that it was not to reflect upon two of the most eminent characters in the circle of my religious acquaintance. Forcible circumstances have over-ruled my inclination. Decipimur specie recti: Thinking to attack error, you have attacked the very truth which providence calls me to defend: and the attack appears to me so much the more dangerous as your laborious zeal and eminent piety are more worthy of public regard,

regard, than the boisterous rant and loose insinuations of twenty *practical* Antinomians. The tempter is not so great a novice in Antichristian politics, as to engage only *such* to plead for *doctrinal* Antinomianism. This would soon spoil the trade. It is his master-piece of wisdom, to get *good men* to do him that eminent service. He knows that their *good lives* will make way for their *bad* principles. Nor does he ever deceive with more decency and success than under the respectable cloak of their genuine piety.

If a wicked man pleads for sin, *scœnum habet in cornu*, he carries the mark on his forehead: we stand upon our guard. But when a good man gives us to understand that *there are no lengths God's people may not run, nor any depths they may not fall into, without losing the character of men after God's own heart—that many will praise God for our denial of Christ—that sin and corruption work for good, that a fall into adultery will drive us nearer to Christ, and make us sing louder to the praise of free grace*; when he quotes scripture too in order to support these assertions, calling them the pure gospel, and representing the opposite doctrine as the Pelagian heresy worse than Popery itself; he *casts the Antinomian net on the right side of the ship*, and is likely to enclose a great multitude of unwary men; especially if some of the *best* hands in the kingdom drive the frightened shoal into the net, and help to drag it to shore.

This is, honored Sir, what I apprehend you have done, not designedly, but thinking to do God service: and this is what every good man, who does not look at the gospel thro' Dr. Crisp's glass, must resolutely oppose. Hence the steadiness with which I have looked in the face a man of God; whose feet I should be glad to wash at any time, under a lively sense of my great inferiority.

And now, as if I were admitted to shew you that humble mark of brotherly love, I beg you would not consider the unceremonious plainness of a Suisse
(mountaineer,)

(mountaineer), as the sarcastic insolence of an incorrigible Arminian.

I beseech you to make some difference between the *wisdom* and *poison of the serpent*. If charity forbids to meddle with the latter, does not Christ recommend the former? Is every mild, well-meant irony, a bitter and cruel sarcasm? Should we directly insinuate that it is the sign of "a bad spirit," the mark of murder in the heart; and that he who uses it to sharpen the truth, † *scatters firebrands, arrows and death*? To say nothing of Elijah and the priests of Baal, did our Lord want either deep seriousness or ardent love, when coming more than conqueror from his third conflict in Gethsemane, he roused his nodding disciples by this compassionate irony, *sleep on now, and take your rest!* Did not the usefulness of a loud call, a deserved reproof, a seasonable exhortation, and a solemn warning, meet in that well-timed figure of speech? And was it not more effectual than the two awful charges, which he had given them before?

I intreat you to consider, that when the meanest of God's ministers has truth and conscience on his side, without being either *abusive* or *uncharitable*, he may say, even to one whom the Lord has exalted to the royal dignity, *Thou art the man!* God has exalted you not only among the gentlemen of fortune in this kingdom, but what is an infinitely greater blessing, among the converted men who *are translated into the kingdom of his dear Son*. Yet by a mistake, fashionable among religious people, you have unhappily paid more regard to Dr. Crisp than to St. James. And as you have pleaded the dangerous cause of the impenitent monarch, I have addressed you with the honest boldness of the exhorting prophet. I have said

† This assertion is the grand argument of an evangelical writer in the *gospel-magazine*, and of a charitable gentleman (a baptist minister I think) in a printed letter dated *Bath*. If this method of arguing is Calvinistically evangelical, my readers will easily perceive it is very far from being either legal or scripturally logical.

said to my honored opponent, "*thou art the man*"—with a commendable design of comforting "mourning backsliders, you have inadvertently given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and unscripturally assured believers, that falls even into enormous sins shall work for their good, and accomplish God's purposes for his glory and their salvation." And as I have supported my expostulations about your *doctrinal* mistakes with plain scripture, which amounts to a *thus says the Lord*; I beseech you to take them in as good part, as King David did the prophet's reproofs about his *practical* miscarriages.

I owe much respect to you, but more to truth, to conscience and to God. If in trying to discharge my duty towards them, I have inadvertently betrayed any want of respect for you; I humbly ask your pardon; and I can assure you in the face of the whole world, that notwithstanding your strong attachment to the peculiarities of Dr. Crisp, as there is no family in the world to which I am under greater obligation than yours, so there are few gentlemen for whom I have so peculiar an esteem, as for the respectable author of *Pietas Oxoniensis*. And till we come where no mistake will raise prejudice, and no prejudice will foment opposition to any part of the truth—till we meet where all that *fear God and work righteousness*, however jarring together now, will join in an eternal chorus, and with perfect harmony ascribe *a common salvation to the Lamb that was slain*; I declare in the fear of God and in the name of Jesus, that no opposite views of the same truths, no clashing diversity of contrary sentiments, no plausible insinuations of narrow-hearted bigotry, shall hinder me from remaining with the greatest sincerity,

Honored and dear Sir,

Your most obedient and obliged Servant
in the bonds of a *practical* Gospel,

MADELEY, Feb. 3, 1772.

J. F

POSTSCRIPT.

P O S T S C R I P T.

AS I have cleared my conscience with respect to *Antinomianism*, a subject which at this time appears to me of the last importance; I should be glad to employ my leisure hours in writing on subjects more suitable to my taste and private edification: it is by no means my design to obtrude my sentiments upon my Calvinian, any more than upon my Arminian brethren. I sincerely wish peace to both upon the terms of *mutual forbearance*, *Veniam petimus que, damus que vicissim*. Should therefore a fourth publication call for a fourth check; if I can help it, it shall be *short*. I shall just thank my antagonist for his *deserved* reproofs, or point out his *capital* mistakes, and quote the pages in the *three checks* where his objections are already answered. But if his performance is merely Calvinistical, I shall take the liberty of referring him to the Rev. Mr. Sellon's "imbecil performance" which, I apprehend, every unprejudiced person, who has courage to *see* and *read* for himself, will find *strong* enough to refute the *strongest* arguments of Elisha Coles, and the Synod of Dort.

Before I lay by my pen, I beg leave to address a moment the *true* believers who espouse Calvin's sentiments. Think not, honored brethren, that I have no eyes to see the eminent services which many of you render to the church of Christ; no heart to bless God for the Christian graces which shine in your exemplary conduct; no pen to testify, that by letting your light shine before men, you adorn the gospel of God our Saviour, as many of your predecessors have done before you. I am not only persuaded that your opinions are consistent with a genuine conversion, but, I take heaven to witness, how much I prefer a Calvinist who loves God, to a Remonstrant who does not. Yes, although I value Christ infinitely

nately above Calvin, and St. James above that good, well-meaning man Dr. Crisp, I had a thousand times rather be doctrinally mistaken with the latter than practically deluded with those who speak well of St. James's *perfect law of liberty*, and yet remain lukewarm Laodiceans in heart, and perhaps gross Antinomians in conduct.

This I observe to do your piety justice, and prevent the men of this world, into whose hands these sheets may fall, from *falsely accusing your good conversation in Christ*; and confounding you with *practical* Antinomians, some of whose dangerous notions you inadvertently countenance. If I have therefore taken the liberty of exposing your favorite mistakes, do me the justice to believe that it was not to pour contempt upon your respectable persons; but to set your peculiarities in such a light, as might either engage you to renounce them, or check the forwardness with which some have lately recommended them as the *only doctrines of grace*, and the *pure gospel* of Jesus Christ; unkindly representing their remonstrant brethren as enemies to free grace, and abettors of a dreadful heresy.

If you think that I have exceeded in my checks the bounds which brotherly love prescribes to a controversial writer; permit me to remind you and myself, that we are *parties*, and therefore peculiarly liable to think the worst of each others intentions and performances. By our respective publications we have appealed to the serious world; let us not then take the matter out of their hands: and while we leave to our merciful God the judging of our spirits, let us leave our serious readers to judge of our arguments, and pass sentence upon the manner in which they are proposed.

And you my remonstrant brethren, who attentively look at our controversial engagement; while a Geneva-Anticalvinist sollicitis an interest in your prayers for *meekness of wisdom*, permit him to offer you
some

some seasonable advices, which he wants to inculcate upon his own mind also.

(1.) More than ever let us confirm our love towards our calvinist brethren. If our arguments gall them, let us not envenom the sore by maliciously triumphing over them. Nothing is more likely to provoke their displeasure, and drive them from what we believe to be the truth. If we, that immediately bear the burthen and heat of this controversial day, are obliged to cut; help us to act the part of friendly opponents, by directly pouring into the wound the healing balsam of brotherly love; and if you see us carried beyond the bounds of moderation, instantly admonish us, and check our checks. Your *whispers* will go farther than the *clamors* of our opponents. The former, we know, must proceed from truth: but we are apt to suspect that the latter spring from partiality, or a mere stratagem not uncommon in controversial wars. Witness the clamors of the Jews and those of the Ephesians, when the one saw that their Idol-temple, the other, that great Diana was in danger.

(2.) Do not rejoice in the *mistakes* of our opponents, but in the *detection* of error. Desire not that *we*, but that *truth* may prevail. Let us not only be willing that our brethren should win the day, if they have *truth* on their side; but let us make it matter of solemn, earnest and constant prayer. While we decry *confined, shackled* grace, obtruded upon us as *free* grace; let not bigotry *confine* our affections, and *shackle* our hearts. Nothing would be more absurd than to fall into calvinian *narrowness* of spirit, while we oppose Calvin's *narrow* system. If we admit the *temper*, we might as well be quite consistent, and at once embrace the *doctrine*. The best method of recommending God's universal love to mankind, is to love all men universally. If absolute reprobation has no place in our principles, let it have none in our affections. If we believe that all share in the

K. divine.

divine mercy, let all be interested in our brotherly kindness. Should such *practical demonstrations* of universal love, second our *scriptural arguments* for it, by God's blessing bigotry would soon return to Rome; and narrow grace fly back to Geneva.

(3.) Let us strictly observe the rules of decency and kindness, taking care not to treat upon any provocation, any of our opponents in the same manner that they have treated Mr. Wesley. The men of the world hint sometimes that he is a papist, and a jesuit: but good, mistaken men have gone much farther in the present controversy. They have published to the world, that they *do verily believe his principles are too rotten for even a papist to rest upon*—that it may be supposed, *popery is about the midway between protestantism and him*. That he *wades through the quagmires of pelagianism, deals in inconsistencies, manifest contradictions, and strange prevarications*—That if a *contrast* was drawn from his various assertions upon the doctrine of *sinless perfection, a little piece might extend into a folio volume*—and that they are *more than ever convinced of his prevaricating disposition*. Not satisfied with going to a *benedictine monk* in Paris for help against his dreadful heresy, they have wittily extracted an argument *ad hominem*, from the comfortable dish of tea which he drinks with Mrs. Wesley; and, to compleat the demonstration of their respect for that grey-headed, laborious minister of Christ, they have brought him upon the stage of the controversy in a dress of their own contriving, and made him declare to the world, that *WHENEVER he and fifty-three of his fellow labourers say one thing, they MEAN quite ANOTHER*. And what has he done to deserve this usage at their hands? Which of them has he treated unjustly or unkindly? Even in the course of this controversy has he injured any man? May he not say to this hour, *tu pugnas: ego vapulo tantum?* Let us avoid this warmth, my brethren; remembering that personal reflections will
never

never pass for convincing arguments with the judicious and humane.

I have endeavoured to follow this advice with regard to Dr. Crisp: nevertheless, lest you should rank him with *practical* Antinomians, I once more gladly profess my belief that he was a *good* man; and desire that none of you would condemn *all* his sermons, much less his *character*, on account of his *un-guarded antinomian* propositions refuted by Williams and Baxter, some of which I have taken the liberty to produce in the preceding checks. As there are a few things exceptionable in good Bishop Hopkins, so there are many things admirable in Dr. Crisp's works: And as the glorious truths advanced by the former, should not make you receive his calvinian mistakes as gospel; so the illegal tenets of the latter, should by no means make you reject his evangelical sayings as Antinomianism. *Prove* therefore *all things*, and *hold fast that which is good*, though it should be advanced by the warmest of our opponents; but whatever unadvised step their zeal for what they believe to be the truth makes them take, *put ye on* (as the ELECT of God, holy and beloved) *bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, long-suffering, forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

(4.) If you would help us to remove the prejudices of our brethren, not only grant with a good grace, but strongly insist upon the great truths for which they make so noble a stand. Steadily assert with them, that the scraps of morality and formality, by which Pharisees and Deists pretend to merit the divine favor, are only *filthy rags* in the sight of a holy God; and that no righteousness is current in heaven but *the righteousness which is of God by faith*. If they have set their heart upon calling it *the imputed righteousness of Christ*, though the expression is not strictly scriptural, let it pass; but give them to understand, that as *divine* imputation of righteousness

is a most glorious † *reality*, so *human* imputation is a most delusive *dream*: and that of this sort is undoubtedly the *calvinian imputation* of righteousness to a man, who actually defiles his neighbour's bed, and betrays innocent blood. A dangerous contrivance this! not less subversive of common heathenish morality, than of St. James's *pure and undefiled religion*!

Again, our calvinist brethren excel in setting forth a *part* of Christ's priestly office; I mean the immaculate purity of his most holy life, and the all-atonement, all-meritorious sacrifice of his bloody death. Here imitate, and if possible surpass them. Shout a *finished atonement* louder than they. Behold with raptures of joy, and bid all around you behold with transports of gratitude, the *Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*. If they call this compleat atonement *finished salvation*, or the *finished work of Christ*, indulge them still; for peace's sake let those expressions pass: nevertheless, at proper times give them to understand, that it is absolutely contrary to reason, scripture and christian experience, to think that *all* Christ's mediatorial work is *finished*. Insinuate, you should be very miserable if he had nothing more to do for you and in you. Tell them, as they can

† God's imputation of righteousness is always *according to truth*. As all sinful men actually *partake* of Adam's sinful nature, by the defiling seed of his corruption, before God *accounts* them *guilty* together with him: so all righteous men *partake* of Christ's holy nature by the seed of divine grace, before God *accounts* them *righteous* together with Christ. This dictate of reason is confirmed by scripture. *Abraham was fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able also to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness; and it shall be imputed to us, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead.* Rom. iv. 21. &c. From this passage it is evident that faith, which unites to Christ and *purifies the heart*, is previous to God's imputation of righteousness, although not to Dr. Crisp's imputation, which by a little mistake of only 5 or 6000 years he dates from *before the foundation of the world*. One is sadly out, either the good Doctor, or the great Apostle.

can bear it, that he works *daily* as a *prophet* to enlighten you, as a *priest* to make intercession for you, as a *king* to subdue your enemies, as a *redeemer* to deliver you out of all your troubles, and as a *Saviour* to help you to work out your own salvation; and hint that in all these respects Christ's work is no more finished than the working of our own salvation is completed.

The judicious will understand you; as for bigots on all sides, you know, they are proof against scripture and good sense. Nevertheless mild irony sharply pointing a scriptural argument, may yet pass between the joints of their impenetrable armour, and make them feel—either some shame, or some weariness of contention. But this is a dangerous method, which I would recommend to very few. None should dip his pen in the wine of irony, till he has dipped it in the oil of love; and even then, he should not use it without constant prayer, and as much caution as a surgeon lances an impostume. If he goes too deep, he does mischief; if not deep enough, he loses his time; the virulent humor is not discharged, but irritated by the skin-deep operation. *And who is sufficient for these things?* Gracious God of wisdom and love! if thou callest us to this difficult and thankless office, let all our *sufficiency* be of thee; and should the operation succeed, thine and thine alone shall be all the glory.

(5.) And yet, brethren, *I show you a more excellent way* than that of mild irony sharpening a strong argument. If love is the fulfilling of the law, love after all must be the destruction of antinomianism. We shall do but little good by exposing the doctrinal antinomianism of Dr. Crisp's admirers, if our own tempers and conduct are inconsistent with our profession of evangelical legality. When our antagonists cannot shake our arguments, they will upbraid us with our practice. Let us then take care not to *hold the truth in unrighteousness*: let our moderation and evangelical

gical legality appear even to our *candid* opponents: so shall *the righteousness of the law be fulfilled in us that believe* the anti-Crispian truth: so shall our *faith establish the law* of ardent love to God and man; and wherever that *law is established*, antinomianism is no more. And if, when we truly love our antagonists, they still look upon our opposition to their errors as an abuse of their persons, and call our exposing their mistakes "sneering at the truth;" let us wrap our souls in the mantle of that *love which is not provoked*; remembering *the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord*.

(6.) Above all, while we expostulate with our brethren for going to one extreme, let us not go to another. Many in the last century so preached what Christ did FOR us in the days of his flesh, as to overlook what he does IN us in the days of his spirit. The Quakers saw their error; but while they exposed it, they ran into the opposite. They so extolled Christ *living* in us, as to say but little of Christ *dying* for us. At this time many hearing our *salvation is so finished* by Christ, that we need not *work it out with fear and trembling*, are justly shocked; and thinking they cannot fly too far from so wild a notion, they run headlong into pelagianism, focinianism, or gross infidelity. Let us, my brethren, learn wisdom by their contrary mistakes. While some run full east, and others full west, keep we under the bright meridian line of evangelical truth, at an equal distance from their dangerous extremes. By cordial faith let us daily *receive the atonement*; and making our perpetual boast of Christ crucified, let us recommend his inestimable merits to all convinced sinners, cheerfully commending our souls to him *in well doing*, and growing in his knowledge till we experience that he *is all and in all*. So shall we adorn the gospel of God our Saviour in all things; nor will our opponents have any occasion to reprove us for *pharisaic unbelief*, when we reprove them for *antinomian faith*.

F I N I S.