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A
SERIES OF LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO THE
METHODIST CONNECTION,

Explaining the important Doctrines of Justification by Faith, and the Direct Witness of the Spirit, as taught by the Preachers of that Body; and vindicating these Doctrines from the Misrepresentations and erroneous Conclusions of the Rev. MELVILLE HORNE, Minister of Christ Church, Macclesfield, in five Letters, written by that Gentleman, and entitled, "An Investigation of the Definition of Justifying Faith, the Damnable Clause under which it is enforced, and the Doctrine of a Direct Witness of the Spirit, held by Dr. COKE, and other Methodist Preachers."

—◆— K
BY THOMAS COKE, LL. D.
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

—◆—
"They know a little, presume a great deal, and so jump to
"conclusions." LOCKE.

L O N D O N :
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,
AND TO BE HAD OF THE REV. MR. BLANCHARD,
14, CITY ROAD.

—◆—
1810.
A. PARIS, Printer, Took's Court.



P R E F A C E.

IN the course of our ministry, it has been our lot to meet with much opposition; but whether this has retarded or accelerated our progress, it may be somewhat difficult to determine. The attacks which have been made upon us have assumed a variety of forms; we have been assailed from opposite quarters; and have been compelled to encounter the expostulations of those who profess to be our friends, as well as the hostilities of such as have declared themselves our foes.

If we look back to the commencement of Methodism, and trace its annals to the present time, we shall find, that there is scarcely any offence, to which the least plausibility could be annexed, with which we have not been charged. Our motives, our conduct, our doctrines, our œconomy, have all been examined with an excess of rigour, and the eye of prejudice has seen much to reprehend, and the tongue of calumny found much to condemn, in all. As to our motives, they have been deemed base, selfish,

and sinister in an extreme. Our conduct has been represented as schismatical and enthusiastic; and there is scarcely an article in the black catalogue of heresy, with which our doctrines have not been loaded. In this common cry, men of jarring sentiments have exerted their talents. It has been a central point of union among them; so that those who could agree in nothing besides, have strangely concurred in this, that Methodism must be wrong, and that every one has a right to traduce it in his own way.

But amidst the whole, Methodism has continued to prosper. The life and power of godliness are found among her converts, more so, perhaps, than among those of any other people. Thousands every year have been turned from darkness to light. Her doctrines have been blessed to the conversion of multitudes, whose experience concurs with scripture and reason, to establish their importance and authenticity. Methodism has been owned and blessed of God in a peculiar manner. And the reformation that is visible in various parts of this land, where it has been established, is so conspicuous, that every unprejudiced spectator must allow, that it has introduced a striking revolution in the morals of the community.

That Methodism, instrumental as it has been in the production of such happy effects, as its most violent opposers have scarcely the hardihood to deny, should still be the subject of opposition, may seem exceedingly strange. But strangeness in theory can never counteract fact. Hostility seems to follow it like a shadow. The animadversions, however, which are made on our conduct, are of little consequence. This is open to public inspection; and with those who have an opportunity of observing it, can suffer nothing from attack. But with our doctrines the case is widely different. Few of our opponents, comparatively speaking, have leisure to examine them in all their branches and bearings; and fewer still are inclined to take the trouble of comparing them with the standard of unerring truth. It is through the representations that are made of them by others, that they are more generally viewed; and the public mind is not unfrequently influenced by a decision which is not its own.

As nothing less than misrepresentations are to be expected from an avowed hostility towards us, we wait their arrival without much emotion, and stand upon our guard. But when, under the mask of friendship, our doctrines are placed in an inauspicious light, our ministerial labours traduced, and we are

charged with a dereliction of principle, of which we are wholly unconscious, we feel ourselves compelled by justice and duty to appear in our own defence. These traducements and charges have lately been brought both against our doctrines and ourselves, by the Rev. Melville Horne, of Macclesfield, in five Letters, the title of which has been already given.

The doctrines which are professedly investigated by Mr. H. are certainly of the last importance to mankind. They include all that can be dear to an awakened mind; pervading at once the cause, condition, and nature of our justification before God, and those qualifications which are necessary for our enjoyment of an eternal inheritance. On these momentous topics, Mr. H. conceives that Mr. Wesley, in his early days, entertained some erroneous opinions; but that after some years he totally relinquished them;—that he adopted others which were more orthodox;—and that in the belief of these he died:—That his followers, less discriminating, or more injudicious than himself, have abandoned what he reformed;—re-adopted what he discarded;—misunderstood their common creed, and continue to the present moment to propagate error, from a delusive persuasion that it is truth.

Charges so unfounded, can only hope to obtain

credit where the controverted doctrines are unknown. And even with those who partially admit these pointed accusations, success must be more indebted to the peremptory tone in which they are made, than to the keenness of the argumentation by which they are supported. In many places, Mr. Horne's charges on the Author are personal and acrimonious ; so that, if retaliation were a virtue, they would demand from him an asperity of language, which is both hostile to his inclinations, and irreconcilable with his professional character. To such conduct, therefore, he hopes he shall not descend.

These, however, are considerations which he views as unimportant, and of little weight. It is possible, nevertheless, that Mr. Horne's book may fall into the hands of some whom the specious appearance of his observations and extracts may deceive. And these extracts will be the more likely to impose on the unwary, by being taken from the writings of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher, and delivered in nearly their own words ; while the connexions from which they have been broken, have been cautiously concealed.

To pass over, in total silence, conduct so justly reprehensible, would be in a measure to plead guilty to the charges exhibited. It might be construed

into an acknowledgment that our doctrines were not defensible: it might encourage others to augment the number of false accusations, from a full persuasion that they should escape with impunity; and induce our enemies to triumph, in the discovery of heresies which never existed but in their own imaginations. On the contrary, to notice every paragraph with a specific reply;—to descend to all the minutiae of involuntary error, or inconsiderate misrepresentation, and trace each branch to its cause and consequences, would be to impose respect on a book which had forfeited all title to honourable regard.

These opposite considerations have induced the Author to pursue a middle path between these two extremes; so that, without implicitly submitting to either, he might derive an advantage from both, and turn his attention more immediately to the doctrines in question. By adopting this method, he is furnished with an opportunity of stating at large, the real sentiments of those venerable men, who honoured him with their friendship while living, and whose memory he reveres now they are dead; and of placing before the reader some of the arguments by which those doctrines are supported, and which, as Methodists, we mutually embrace. In doing this, he trusts, that while he glances obliquely at the

debate, and makes a few excursions into the field of controversy, he pursues a more important object.

To elucidate and defend the leading doctrines of the gospel, rather than to repel the charges and insinuations of Mr. Horne, has been the Author's primary motive. If, therefore, he has been successful in his efforts ; as truth, from its own nature, is immutable, these Letters, he hopes, may be perused with advantage, when he shall be able to write no more..

T. COKE.

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A
SERIES
OF
LETTERS.



LETTER I.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

THE articles of our creed, which Mr. Home has thought proper to call in question, are, Mr. Wesley's definition of justifying faith; a passage that occurs in one of his sermons, which enforces the necessity of a qualification for glory; and his opinion on the direct witness of the Spirit. Against each of these he brings many ill-directed arguments; and does not fail to scatter through his pages an abundance of illiberal epithets, which might have been spared, and from which his little volume can hope to derive few lasting honours.*

* Of these dishonourable expressions you will be able to form some idea, from the following specimens which

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On Mr. Horne's familiarity with "Moloch" it is not my design to animadvert. I have only

are selected from his book: "An execrable damnatory clause." (p. 11. preface.) "The damnatory clause I gave cordially to the devil." (p. 2.) "Great reprobating fiery Moloch of Methodism." (p. 12.) "Let the songs of assurance drown the cries of the wretched babes burning to Moloch." (ibid.) "Cursed heads of the non-assured." (p. 13.) "The God of Methodist idolatry—a very Moloch, on whose bloody altars the firstlings of the church were to be cruelly butchered." (p. 16.) "Devil-invented sin of non-assurance." (p. 31.) "Satan's brats." (p. 38.) "Definition-men, with the damnatory clause in their hands." (ibid.) "Yea, perhaps, curse me by Moloch." (p. 40.) "What you will do with your damned penitents I don't know." (p. 41.) "The devil should have his due." (ibid.) "All the damnatory clauses of Definition-men." (p. 42.) "Damnable sin of non-assurance." (p. 43.) "I loathe it as much as if the devil were to tell me, There is no God." (ibid.) "The devil will not receive these praying babies into hell." (ibid.) "You cannot thrust them into hell." (ibid.) "Devil-begotten sin of non-assurance." (p. 45.) "Dreadful vibrations of the damnatory clause, as the fiery blasts of the Simoon." (p. 46.) "Black rider of the damnatory consequence." (ibid.) "Horrible decree." (p. 51.) "Firm phalanx of the damnatory clause." (p. 53.) "They must smoke on Moloch's altars." (ibid.) "Intolerable heat of the damnatory clause." (ibid.) "The damnatory clause is mere *brutum fulmen*." (p. 58.) "Damnable non-descript sin of non-assurance." (p. 62.) "Damnatory clauses—detestable anathemas." (p. 63.) "Accursed lie of the devil." (p. 69.) "Damnable non-

quoted these expressions as proofs of indiscretion, and have endeavoured to exhibit them in such a light as may induce Mr. H. to deal out his dishonourable terms in his future publications with a more sparing hand.

The men, Mr. Horne tells us, to whom his letters are addressed, are, "The Rev. Dr. Coke, and such Methodist Preachers as, 1. Define justifying faith to be, 'A sure trust and confidence, that a man hath in God, through Christ, that his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.' 2. Who preach *that* assurance, under the pain of *damnation*, to those who are not so assured. 3. Who assert a direct witness

"assurance. (ibid.) "Satanic sword of the damnatory clause." (p. 79.) "Damnatory doctrine of assurance." (ibid.) "Damnatory rider." (ibid.) "Satanic assurance." (p. 82.) "Chimerical sin of non-assurance." (p. 84.) "Diana definition." (p. 85.) "Damned unbeliever." (ibid.) "I credit your damnatory testimony as little as Mr. Wesley's." (ibid.) "Damnatory lightnings now played innoxious." (p. 86.) "Definition and damnatory clause." (ibid.) "Methodist Diana." (p. 88.) "Damned sincere penitents." (ibid.) "You damn all non-assured men, in the name of your reprobating Moloch." (p. 89.) "Great is thy divinity, O Moloch." (p. 90.) "Damnatory sword." (p. 91.) "Damnatory rider." (p. 92.) "You stupify them with damnatory clauses." (p. 99.) "Cloven font of the damnatory clause." (p. 102.) "A damning proof." (p. 128.) &c. &c.

“ of the Spirit, testifying to those who have justifying faith, ‘ Thou art pardoned. Thou hast redemption in his blood.’ I grant, (he proceeds) the Mr. Wesleys and first Methodists preached these doctrines. The definition was adopted, and avowed by them. The damnatory clause is in Mr. J. Wesley’s sermon, *The Almost Christian*, preached at St. Mary’s, Oxford—‘ The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who now standeth in the midst of us, knoweth, that if any man die without *this* faith, good were it for him, that he had never been born.’ This direct witness is asserted in his sermon on the *Witness of the Spirit*; and, in the *Minutes of Conference*, A. D. 1747, he affirms, *The Spirit witnesses, Thou art pardoned, &c.* (p. 1.)

Nothing, I think, can be more obvious to a discerning reader, who views these subjects only through the representation of Mr. Horne, than that the Mr. Wesleys, and first Methodists, connected together the above definition of justifying faith, and what he calls the “ damnatory clause.” His letters are addressed “ to those who hold the definition, and who preach *that* assurance, under the pain of damnation, to those who are not so assured;” and he grants, “ that the Mr. Wesleys, and first Methodists, preached these doctrines.” And, finally, to prevent all mistakes in the connection, which he endeavours both to form and support, he has carefully distinguished, by Roman

and *Italic* letters, the words *that*, and *so*, and *this*, in order to cement more firmly together the various parts of that fabric which he insinuates Mr. Wesley erected, but which he is just about to demolish.

Thus far, no doubt, the language of Mr. Horne is both clear and expressive; but before we attend to the mighty ruin with which our ears are soon to be stunned, some previous questions must be determined. Did Mr. Wesley ever connect together, as Mr. H. has stated, his definition of justifying faith and the "damnatory clause?" Has Mr. H. produced, either from Mr. Wesley's writings, or the acknowledged writings of any other among us, any evidence of such a connection? Can any such evidence be produced by him, that the words used by Mr. Wesley in this definition of justifying faith, are ever connected with the "damnatory clause;" when they are exclusively confined to justification? It is upon the decision of these questions that the import and application of his arguments must depend; these are the data on which his reasonings rest. And should it appear that he has combined together, what none of those whom he opposes had ever united, his own assumptions, which are the foundation of his book, must instantly forsake him; the battery which he has erected must then immediately fall, and bury in the mighty ruins his tremendous artillery by which Methodism was to have been demolished.

To determine these points, we must apply to Mr. Wesley's own language, and works; and, by comparing what he has advanced with what Mr. Horne has asserted, examine how far his statements have been correct, his connections accurate, and his inferences just.

That Mr. Wesley did use the words which Mr. Horne has quoted, in his common definition of justifying faith, I most readily admit. They are to be found in the 95th page of his first volume of sermons, in a sermon which he entitles "Justification by faith;—in the early Minutes of Conference;—and, with some occasional variations, in many other parts of his voluminous works. But in most of these places they stand in connection with other expressions, which cannot fail to elucidate their import, but which Mr. H. perhaps, for the sake of brevity, has entirely omitted. From what portion of Mr. W.'s works he has selected the definition, it is impossible for me to say, as he has made no references to the place. But these omissions are of little consequence. The whole tenor of Mr. W.'s works requires the connections which are passed over in silence; for, without these, he might stand justly charged with defining the faith of an Antinomian.

But while Mr. H. has so evidently broken the definition from its proper connections, he has taken care that it should not stand alone. He has applied to another sermon for an expression to supply

the deficiency; linked it to the definition, by ties which he would persuade his readers are indissoluble; and then raised an exclamation at the monster, which his own indiscretion had formed. "The damnatory clause (he observes) is in Mr. J. Wesley's sermon, The Almost Christian, preached at St. Mary's, Oxford."

In this sermon on the Almost Christian, from which Mr. H. has quoted the above passage, Mr. Wesley nowhere defines "justifying faith," or particularly refers to it; much less does he enforce it by the "damnatory clause," which Mr. H. has thus introduced to mount guard upon it. Instead of this, he contrasts, through the whole, the Almost, with the Perfect Christian; and, without stopping to notice any particular doctrine so as to define it, introduces all the qualifications that are necessary to render the christian character complete. In this sermon, neither conviction, faith, justification, nor sanctification, is defined. The whole are insisted on as necessary to salvation; and what Mr. H. has denominated the "damnatory clause," amounts to no more than this—"We must be prepared for glory before we die, or good were it for us that we had never been born." But Mr. Wesley's own words will place this fact in a still more unquestionable light.

Mr. Wesley, when addressing himself to his audience, thus speaks—"Are not many of you conscious, that you never came thus far; that you

have not come up to the standard of heathen honesty? At least not to the form of Christian godliness? Much less hath God seen sincerity in you, a real design of pleasing him in all things. You never so much as intended to devote all your words, and works, your business, studies, diversions, to his glory. You never even designed or desired, that whatsoever you did, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, and, as such, should be a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Christ.

“ But supposing you had, do good designs and good desires make a Christian? By no means, unless they are brought to good effect. “ Hell is paved, saith one, with good intentions.” The great question of all then still remains, Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Can you cry out ‘ My God and my all?’ Do you desire nothing but him? Are you happy in God? Is he your glory, your delight, your crown of rejoicing? And is this commandment written in your heart, that he who loveth God love his brother also? Do you then love your neighbour as yourself? Do you love every man, even your enemies, even the enemies of God, as your own soul? As Christ loved you? Yea, dost thou believe that Christ loved thee, and gave himself for thee? Hast thou faith in his blood? Believest thou the Lamb of God hath taken away thy sins, and cast them as a stone into the depth of the sea? That he hath

blotted out the hand-writing that was against thee, taking it out of the way, nailing it to his cross? Hast thou, indeed, redemption through his blood, even the remission of thy sins; and doth his Spirit bear witness with thy spirit that thou art a child of God?

“ The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who now standeth in the midst of us, knoweth that if any man die without this faith, and this love, good were it for him that he had never been born. Awake then thou that sleepest, and call upon God: call in the day when he may be found. Let him not rest, till he make his goodness to pass before thee, till he proclaim unto thee the name of the Lord, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. Let no man persuade thee by vain words, to rest short of this prize of thy high calling. But cry unto him day and night, who, while we were without strength, died for the ungodly, until thou knowest in whom thou hast believed, and canst say, My Lord and my God. Remember always to pray, and not to faint, till thou canst lift up thy hand unto heaven, and declare to him that liveth for ever and ever, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. May we all thus experience what it is to be not almost only, but altogether Christians!”

WESLEY'S Sermons, vol. i. p. 31—33.

Permit me now to ask—Is there any thing in the whole of this long quotation, that looks like a design either to, define justification, or to enforce the definition of it? Are not several expressions indicative of the contrary? Did “the love of our enemies, even the enemies of God, as our own soul—as Christ loved us,” ever constitute any part of Mr. W.’s definition of justifying faith? And is not the acquirement of this exalted grace, that which, among others, he presses all to seek? Nay, do not the words which occur in the obnoxious passage, as it is quoted by Mr. H. corroborate the same fact? And is it not most evident that they look forward to the christian’s growth in grace;—to his having arrived at the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, instead of making the definition, which has been given of justifying faith, the infallible standard which all must reach before they can have a title to heaven? What, but this, are we to understand by these words—“If any man *die* without this faith, and this love?” The previous passages evidently describe the qualification of a mature christian; but do not at all define justifying faith, which is but one part of it. Why Mr. H. tore this passage, which he has called “the *damnatory clause*,” from its proper connection, and linked it with justifying faith, a doctrine which is no where defined in the sermon, may be

better known to himself than others. That this is done, appears most unquestionable, though the reasons for such conduct lie concealed; and Mr. H. in his turn, is called upon for a vindication of his disingenuousness, "in the face of his country, and of the church of Christ."

Whether Mr. Wesley has raised the standard of Christian experience and perfection to too great a height, is quite another question. This we may hereafter examine. The utmost for which I contend at present is, that "the damnatory clause," as Mr. H. has been pleased to term it, did not draw the line between a believer and an unbeliever, as it respects his justification, but between one that is meet for glory, and one that is not. This fact, I persuade myself, all will be able to perceive from the full quotation that I have already given from Mr. W.'s sermon, as it stands contrasted with the improper combinations which Mr. H. has made, and laid down as the foundation of his future charges.

That the standard of Christian experience and perfection has not been raised too high in the estimation of Mr. H. he more than indirectly acknowledges. Referring to the time when he acted as a preacher among us, he observes as follows: "I believed and taught every thing you believe and teach, not excepting christian perfection. On the points in question, I taught what I knew, and my hands had spiritually handled of

“ the word of life. I preached justifying faith, as
 “ the receiving the Lord Jesus as a Saviour in an
 “ humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart. I
 “ preached assurance as an inevitable consequence
 “ of faith, when the believer *did* understand that
 “ his *so* receiving Christ was justifying faith: but
 “ that so long as he did not ascertain the nature
 “ of his faith, he would not have assurance, though
 “ he felt the saving power of faith by peace with
 “ God, and victory over sin, death, and hell. I
 “ preached the witness of the Spirit, peace, love,
 “ joy, and every good fruit, abundantly shed
 “ abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given
 “ unto us, and producing the most luminous and
 “ indubitable assurance.” (p. 2.)

In these passages Mr. H. most evidently joins
 with us in supporting that standard of christian
 perfection, which Mr. W. had previously raised.
 He admits our approaches towards it as an inevi-
 table consequence of faith, in all who can under-
 stand the nature of their faith; but doubts whether
 the nature of this justifying faith, upon which
 both assurance and perfection depend, can be as-
 certained by all. He allows justification to be by
 faith in the Son of God; and that those who
 possess its saving power enjoy “ peace with God,
 and victory over sin, death, and hell;” and yet
 doubts whether we may not at the same time be
 wholly ignorant of the nature of that faith, by
 which we are united to the source from whence

these blessings flow, and totally destitute of those inward evidences by which justifying faith may be distinguished!

To prove that Mr. Wesley did actually renounce his general definition of justifying faith, together with "the damnatory clause, which," he says, "is as decently involved in it, as reprobation in Calvinistic election," (though I have proved, from Mr. W.'s own words, that it was transplanted by Mr. H. into the soil in which it now grows) he proceeds to adduce evidence. His first appeal is made to a private conversation which he had with Mr. W. about three years prior to his death, to whom he proposed his doubts on the propriety of "the definition," and the "damnatory clause," in question. "The venerable man," says Mr. H., "heard me with visible satisfaction, requested me to write my experience for the magazine, and added these memorable words, 'When, fifty years ago, my brother Charles and I, in the simplicity of our hearts, told the good people of England, that unless they knew their sins forgiven, they were under the wrath and curse of God, I marvel, Mellville, they did not stone us. The Methodists, I hope, know better now: we preach assurance as we always did, as a common privilege of the children of God; but we do not enforce it, under the pain of damnation, denounced on all who enjoy it not.'

(P. 5.)

The faithfulness of this citation it would be rude to dispute. I will admit the fact, but must still deny the inference which Mr. H. attempts to draw from it; namely, that Mr. W. had renounced his definition of justifying faith, and wholly rejected "the damnatory clause." I have already shewn, from Mr. W.'s own language, that "the damnatory clause" was not connected by him with *justifying*, but with perfect *christian* faith, as including every grace of the Spirit; and that in this light only it can hold any relation to the definition. But were I to grant Mr. H. all he could desire, namely, that the definition did apply to justifying faith, and that the obnoxious clause was by Mr. W. brought forth to enforce it, still I must contend that in Mr. W.'s verbal reply to Mr. H. there was no dereliction of principle. The utmost that can be inferred is, that Mr. W. instructed by experience, was grown more wary in his public addresses, and that he adapted the mode of his preaching to the condition of those who heard. His *manner*, he acknowledged to have altered, but not his *matter*. For he observed to Mr. H., "We preach assurance as we always did;" but this he could not have said, if this doctrine had undergone any change, in his own estimation. Is this, I would ask, the language of a man who was recanting error? Do these words convey a tacit renunciation of any principle?

I am well aware, that Mr. H. may accuse me of vindicating Mr. W.'s consistency at the expence

of his integrity. But surely he needs not be told, that the omission of many truths before unconverted and prejudiced congregations, is not a dereliction of them. It is not every thing that is lawful, which is expedient. Nay, we are expressly commanded not to cast our pearls before swine, lest they turn again and rend us. (Matt. vii. 6.) And even babes in Christ are to be fed with milk, and not with strong meat, because they are not able to bear it. (1 Cor. iii. 2.) Therefore, every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure, things new and old. (Matt. xiii. 52.)

From this extraordinary confession of Mr. W., in which he acknowledges that he had seen reason to adopt some alterations in the manner of enforcing his doctrine, while "he preached assurance as he always did," Mr. H. makes a general appeal to Mr. Fletcher's Essay on Truth, and expresses much astonishment at the discoveries which he made. "I now again read the Essay on Truth, and was surprised I had not before clearly noticed, that Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Wesley had, at least, in the year 1774, explicitly and publicly rejected the damnatory clause, and consequently the definition, which is as decently involved in it, as reprobation in calvinistic election." (p. 3.) This Essay on Truth, I shall hereafter examine, when proceeding to survey those pages in which Mr. H. professes to analyze its parts.

From these general observations on Mr. Fletcher's Essay on Truth, in which Mr. H. seems to bespeak a favourable hearing of his readers, he refers us to Dr. Whitehead's life of Mr. Wesley. In this work, he tells us, he was "amazed to find, from an authentic document, what he never had suspected: namely, that so early as the year 1747, Mr. Wesley had fairly relinquished the definition, and the damnatory consequence involved in it: and, still more so, to learn from Dr. Whitehead, that he had been earnestly requested to *suppress* that document." (p. 3.) Why this request should be made to Dr. Whitehead is obvious. It was apprehended by several, that the less discriminating, unable either to trace the analogy between the explanatory phrases of this paper and Mr. W.'s more publicly received language, or to make due allowances for its exceptive clauses, would seize it as a favourable occasion to charge him with inconsistency, and then triumph in the fancied dereliction which their want of penetration had enabled them to discover. These considerations, however, had no influence. Dr. Whitehead persisted in publishing the document; and Mr. H. has proved, that the apprehensions of those who requested him to suppress it, were not altogether unfounded.

From this document, which Dr. Whitehead has preserved, Mr. H. applies to a review of Mr. Joseph Cook's book, in the Methodist Magazine

for September 1807, and quotes from thence two definitions of justifying faith. These differ, indeed, from each other in words, but in import they are radically the same; as the reader may perceive from the following copy: "In the first Conference held by Mr. Wesley, it was asked, 'what is faith?'"

Answer. "Faith, in general, is a divine, supernatural ἔλεγχος (conviction or demonstration) of things not seen; *i. e.* of past, future, or spiritual things: it is a spiritual sight of God, and the things of God. First, a sinner is convinced by the Holy Ghost, Christ 'loved me, and gave himself for me.' This is the faith, by which he is justified, or pardoned. Immediately the same Spirit bears witness, 'Thou art pardoned. Thou hast redemption in his blood.' And this is saving faith, whereby the love of God is shed abroad in the heart." But justifying faith, he most commonly defined in the language of the church of England, 'A sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that, through the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.' (p. 6.)

To annihilate both of these definitions, Mr. H. resorts to distinct measures; the former he undertakes to overturn; and to the latter he opposes the document which Dr. Whitehead has preserved; and infers from thence, that the sentiments of these are hostile to each other; and that the definition, which is delivered in nearly the words of the church

of England, must retire before the document. "For the present," he observes, "I confine myself to the humble task of overthrowing the one definition, and of delivering the other into the hands of Mr. Wesley to grind it to powder." (p. 7.) Mr. H. then proceeds as follows: "Definitions should include whatever is essential to the subject, and exclude what is incompatible with it. Under the light of this observation, let us examine the first definition, which is stated to be 'a conviction of the Spirit, that Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.' 1. I deny that any conviction of the Spirit is an act of faith. 2. In the above definition is included nothing of the primary idea of faith, which is to *believe in Christ, to receive him, trust in him, come to him, follow him, kiss the Son, take hold on him, submit to him, &c. &c.* The definition is, therefore, radically defective." (p. 8.)

Surely Mr. H. must feel himself superior to the quibble on which his first objection is founded. No man can suppose that a conviction is an act of faith in the most literal sense. In receiving a conviction in my mind, I am nothing more than a passive subject: the active agency must reside in another; and nothing can be more absurd than to suppose, that in this sense, conviction is an act of faith. Every unprejudiced mind must certainly understand Mr. Wesley in a different manner. And the obvious import of his words is, that:

“justifying faith arises from an inward persuasion or conviction wrought in the mind by the Spirit of God.” Now if a conviction or persuasion thus wrought in the mind be not the radical ground or origin of faith, how, I would ask, can ‘faith be of the operation of God,’ as the apostle assures us that it is? (Col. ii. 12.) That any conviction wrought in the mind is “an act of faith,” the definition does not assert. This is an association of ideas of Mr. H.’s own invention; and as it affects not us, he may still continue to wage war with the chimera.

Secondly, Mr. H. observes, “in the above definition is included nothing of the primary idea of faith, which is to believe in Christ, to receive him, trust in him, come to him,” &c. How he can reconcile this stricture with the definition on which he animadverts, it is hard to say. Is there no believing in Christ included in a persuasion that “he loved me and gave himself for me?” Is there no trusting in him, no receiving him, on whom the soul places reliance, while conscious of his love? That the definition does not descend to all the minutiae of explication, I readily admit; but that it is *radically* defective, or includes any thing that is incompatible with justifying faith, are positions for which I have no other evidence than Mr. Horne’s positive assertions.

Conscious that this part of Mr. W.’s definition, in which he asserts, “Christ loved me, and gave

himself for me;" would rise above his criticisms, Mr. H. thus pursues his animadversions. "That Christ loved me with general philanthropy, and gave himself for me, I firmly believe; but how does this prove that he *now* accepts me as a believer, and that, as such, he now loves me with peculiar covenant delight?" (p. 8.) I answer, Such proof was never pretended, neither is it wanted. But how does Mr. H. prove that the "love of Christ," of which Mr. W. speaks, did mean a love of philanthropy, and not that of covenant delight? Did the premises lead him to this conclusion? By no means. On the contrary, in many places of Mr. Wesley's works, where the same expression occurs, the word "*me*" is placed in italics, that we might learn from the peculiar emphasis which he laid upon it, that not a general love of benevolence or philanthropy was meant by him, but that of covenant delight. And as such, Mr. H. might have observed it in page 95th of that very edition of Mr. W.'s sermons which he quotes. In short, Mr. W. more generally defines the faith by which a believer realizes his justification, than that by which the sinner comes to Christ for pardon; and denominates it to be "justifying faith" from the evidences which it affords. His letter to his brother, which we shall soon examine, may be considered, in part, as an exception to these observations.

Among other articles which constitute the primary idea of faith, Mr. H. tells us, we must "follow Christ, and submit to him." Surely he will not coolly assert, that to "follow Christ," does in reality constitute any part whatever of genuine faith, much less the most radical idea of it? Did the multitudes who followed Christ in order to behold his miracles, possess the radical principle of faith? Did those who sought him, not for his miracles, but because they did eat of the loaves and were filled, possess what constitutes the primary idea of faith? The idea conveyed by the term, to follow, expresses the action, but does not develop the motive; it no more implies faith, than it does unbelief; and primarily has no more connection with love, than it has with hatred. It therefore is totally inapplicable, and never can suggest to our minds the primary idea of faith. Neither does the term, "submit to him," appear to be more happily selected. Submission, indeed, acknowledges power, and the exercise of dominion, even where the right is questionable, and the yoke unpleasant. The world which lieth in the wicked one, are the willing servants of Satan, and submit to him without reluctance: but who will assert, that by so doing they prove that their obedience constitutes the primary idea of any faith whatever? But, where the principle of obedience is pure, and directed only to God, it is an effect that results from faith, rather than a branch of its

essence; and in no case can it constitute any part of its primary idea.

The second definition of justifying faith, which Mr. Wesley has given in nearly the words of the established church, Mr. H. seems disposed to treat with more tenderness. In a subsequent page, he indulges himself with an exclamation on the uses to which it has been applied; but as the soil in which it originally grew is venerable, both from antiquity and authority, it happily escapes the lashes of severity. "Alas, little did blessed Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, who quenched the violence of fire, by the faith of the Son of God, little did they dream, that their inaccurate definition, was to be made the god of Methodist idolatry, a very Moloch, on whose bloody altars, the firstlings of the church were to be cruelly butchered. When this definition, which in the face looks as meek as a lamb, opens its damnable mouth, it roars like the old dragon." (p.16.) Such are Mr. Horne's sentiments on the definition of faith which the Church of England has established, and which Mr. Wesley had adopted from her Homilies. Its final dissolution is, however, predicted to be near at hand, as it is immediately "to be delivered" into the hands of Mr. Wesley "to grind it to powder."

From these preliminary strictures, expostulations, reprehensions, and censures, Mr. H. proceeds to introduce Mr. Wesley's letter to his brother, to which

we have already alluded: not, indeed, with any design to reconcile his observations with the definitions he had previously given, to view them as bearing on another branch of faith, or to consider them in the light of exceptions to language which generally conveyed his thoughts; but to place them in direct opposition to his more voluminous works, to prove, from the apparent contrast, that he did abandon his previous principles, and from thence affording room for others to infer his inconsistency. I will not attribute this conduct to any improper motive, neither will I dispute his right to adopt this method. I am willing to admit the purity of his designs; but I must be allowed to express my own inadequacy to discover in this place either the warmth of his friendship, or his great veneration for the man whom he thus arraigns, by the conduct that he pursues.

But be these motives what they may, the fact itself is most unquestionable; and, on this ground, it is a point of importance, in the present inquiry, to know whether Mr. H. has been successful or unsuccessful in his attempts? To determine this, we must once more recur to Mr. W.'s definition of justifying faith, that we may have a fair opportunity of comparing it with the letter with which Mr. H. has contrasted it; "a letter," he says, "which evinces what I produced it to prove, that Mr. Wesley did renounce the definition as applying to justifying faith, as well as the damnatory

“ clause.” (p. 24.) That this “damnatory clause” was ever connected by Mr. W. with justifying faith, is a point, as I have already observed, which yet remains for Mr. H. to prove. From Mr. W.’s own works, in which the offensive passage occurs, it has already been made to appear, that it did not stand in connection with justifying faith; and, consequently, no room could be left for the renunciation which Mr. H. conceives he has discovered. This point will be further confirmed by some future considerations; but we now proceed to state at large Mr. Wesley’s definition.

“ Justifying faith, implies not only a divine evidence or conviction that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for *my* sins, that he loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*. And at what time soever a sinner thus believes, be it in early childhood, in the strength of his years, or when he is old and hoary-haired, God justifieth that ungodly one: God, for the sake of his Son, pardoneth and absolveth him who had in him till then no good thing. Repentance, indeed, God had given him before: but that repentance was neither more nor less than a deep sense of the want of all good, and the presence of all evil. And whatever good he hath, or doth, from that hour, faith does not *find* but *bring*. This is the fruit of faith. First the tree is good, and then the fruit is good also.

“ I cannot describe the nature of this faith better, than in the words of our own Church. ‘ The only instrument of salvation, whereof justification is one branch, is faith; that is, a sure trust and confidence that God both hath, and will forgive our sins, that he hath again accepted us into his favour, for the merits of Christ’s death and passion. But here we must take heed that we do not halt with God through an inconstant, wavering faith. Peter coming to Christ upon the water, because he fainted in faith, was in danger of drowning. So we, if we begin to waver or doubt, it is to be feared, that we should sink as Peter did, not into the water, but into the bottomless pit of heli-fire. (Second Sermon on the Passion.’)”

WESLEY’S Sermons, vol. i. p. 95.

In this definition, it must be obvious to all, that no description is expressly given of that particular act of faith through which the sinner comes to, and ventures on, Jesus Christ. It would be erroneous, however, to conclude, that this was not to be understood, because the definition descriptively applies to that act by which he receives a sense of his acceptance, and knows that he is reconciled to God through the death of his Son. The former is nevertheless evidently implied, because the greater comprehends the less, and because the completion of an action always includes its commencement and progressive stages. This must be invariably understood in Mr. W.’s definition of justifying faith.

For nothing can be more absurd, than to suppose a belief of my being accepted, can be the condition of my acceptance. And it would be offering an insult both to his memory and understanding to imagine that this was intended by him.

Indeed, the language which he uses on this occasion, clearly directs us to the previous act of faith through which we come to Christ; for he describes it to be "a sure trust and confidence that God both *hath* and *will* forgive our sins." The words, "will forgive," have plainly a future aspect, and evidently refer to a future blessing, which must be received by a future act, and never can be identified with acts and blessings that are already past. The prospective act is therefore as strongly implied as the retrospective is expressed, and nothing but the utmost violence can force upon his words an opposite meaning. Nay, in this branch of the expression, the act of faith by which we venture on Christ for salvation, is more strongly marked than the retrospective one, to which the definition more apparently applies. This may be gathered from the verb "forgive," which, though perfectly agreeing with "will," can never be made to coalesce with "hath." The quickness of Mr. Wesley's understanding introduced into all his writings a degree of brevity which was peculiar to himself; but this brevity, while it expressed much, frequently involved his observations in obscurity. The manner of his expression in the passage before us, most

undoubtedly required, in order to preserve the grammatical construction of the sentence, that it should be "hath forgiven", and "will forgive." This circumstance, I consider as decisive in favour of the prospective act of faith, and clearly proves that this is included in his definition.

From these terms which Mr. Wesley has used in his definition of justifying faith, "that God both hath and will forgive our sins," it is obvious, that in his view, when analyzed and reduced to its most simple state, it must consist of two parts; or, at least, have distinct operations. The first of these acts is, that by which we come to Christ for pardon, and the second is that by which we receive in our own souls a persuasion that we have obtained his favour. Of these acts the former may be denominated the direct, and the latter the reflex, act of justifying faith. The former is begotten by a persuasion that he will pardon, and the latter by a persuasion that he hath done it. These two modes of operation are inseparably connected together; and, taken in conjunction, fully constitute that faith which justifies. To separate the parts would be to nullify the whole, and would prevent those happy effects from taking place which purify the heart. Hence, the man who would satisfy himself with the former without the latter, represents one who seeks, but does not find,—asks, but does not receive,—knocks, but has not the door opened; and, consequently, can neither enjoy peace, feel the love

of God shed abroad in his heart, nor rejoice in the God of his salvation. And he, on the contrary, who expects the latter without the former, vainly hopes to receive without asking, to find without seeking, to realize blessings which he never desired; and, without venturing by faith on the atonement for those favours which Christ has promised to bestow, relies with a blind credulity on an unknown God. But when these parts are united together, this confusion disappears; light beams upon the subject, and the harmony of all becomes visible. We see God waiting to receive returning sinners, and actually lifting upon them the light of his reconciled countenance. These distinct operations are plainly to be inferred from Mr. W.'s definition of justifying faith. Of these, the one is prospective, and the other retrospective; the latter always presupposes the former; both are necessary to give it completion; and Mr. W. generally fixes his definition where justifying faith acquires its consummation.

With these distinctions and this harmony before us, we shall find but little difficulty in reconciling the following letter of Mr. J. Wesley to his brother, with his definition of justifying faith, which has been already given. I copy the letter, to prevent Mr. H. from charging me with a wish to suppress it. It is dated in July, 1747.

“ DEAR BROTHER,

“ Yesterday I was thinking on a *desideratum*

among us, a *Genesis Problematica* on justifying faith. A skeleton of it, (which you may fill up, or any one that has leisure,) I have roughly set down.

“ Is justifying faith a sense of pardon? *Negatur.* It is denied.

“ 1. Every one is deeply concerned to understand this question well; but preachers most of all; lest they either make them sad whom God hath not made sad; or encourage them to say peace, where there is no peace.

“ Some years ago, we heard nothing of justifying faith, or a sense of pardon; so that when we did hear of them, the theme was quite new to us; and we might easily, especially in the heat and hurry of controversy, lean too much, either to the one hand, or to the other.

“ 2. By justifying faith, I mean that faith which whosoever hath not, is under the wrath and the curse of God. By a sense of pardon, I mean a distinct, explicit assurance, that my sins are forgiven.

“ I allow, 1. That there is such an explicit assurance. 2. That it is the common privilege of real christians. 3. That it is the proper christian faith which purifies the heart, and overcometh the world.

“ But I cannot allow, that justifying faith is such an assurance, or necessarily connected therewith.

“ 3. Because, if justifying faith necessarily implies such an explicit assurance of pardon, then every

one who has it not, is under the wrath and under the curse of God. But this is a supposition contrary to Scripture, as well as to experience.

“ Contrary to Scripture : to Isaiah, l. 10. “ Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”

“ Contrary to Acts, x. 34. “ Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons ; but in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.”

“ Contrary to experience : for I. R. &c. &c. had peace with God, no doubt, no fear, before they had that sense of pardon : and so have I frequently had.

“ Again. The assertion, that justifying faith is a sense of pardon, is contrary to reason : it is flatly absurd. For how can a sense of our having received pardon, be the condition of our receiving it ?

“ 4. If you object, 1. “ I. T. St. Paul, &c. had this sense :” I grant they had ; but they were justified before they had it. 2. “ We know fifteen hundred persons who have this assurance.” Perhaps so : but this does not prove they were not justified till they received it. 3. “ We have been exceedingly blessed in preaching this doctrine.” We have been blessed in preaching the great truths of the gospel ; although we tacked to them, in the simplicity of our hearts, a proposition which was not true. 4. “ But does not our Church give this

account of justifying faith?" I am sure she does of saving Christian faith. I think she does of justifying faith too. But to the law, and to the testimony. All men may err; "but the word of the Lord shall stand for ever."

On this letter Mr. H. makes several general remarks; among which are to be found the following: "I appeal to common sense, and common honesty, whether the letter does not contain *decisive* proof that Mr. W. did change his opinion on the points in question?" (p. 10.) This is the point which he next proceeds to prove; and in order to accomplish his intention, he goes on more minutely to examine the letter in its several paragraphs, and to animadvert upon them. These animadversions I shall endeavour to follow; and, to prevent confusion, shall insert Mr. Wesley's words between double commas, and Mr. Horne's between single ones.

"Is justifying faith a sense of pardon? It is denied." 'I ask, if the definition states justifying faith to be, "A sure trust and confidence, that a man hath in God, through Christ, that his sins, are forgiven him," do not the assertors of the definition, point blank, contradict the writer of the letter?' That these latter words, which Mr. H. has here quoted from Mr. W., do not contain his full definition of justifying faith, I have already pointed out, previously to my insertion of Mr. W.'s letter; and nothing can be more unfair than to

contrast the passage from the letter with a partial extract from the definition, on purpose to infer a contradiction. But granting the quotation to have been fairly made, and that it contained the whole that Mr. W. had advanced in his definition, I answer, that no contradiction can be made to appear, unless it can be proved that "a sense of pardon" is exactly synonymous with "a sure trust and confidence in God." "A sense of pardon" is that which faith realizes—that which faith brings home, and therefore never can constitute that faith by which it is apprehended. Where then is the contradiction that was so "point blank?" The reverse indeed would have made one with a witness.

"By justifying faith, I mean that faith, without which a man is under the wrath and curse of God. By a sense of pardon, I mean a distinct, explicit assurance that my sins are forgiven." 'To this doctrine I say, as the dying patriot, Paul Diodati to his country, *Esto perpetua!* Live for ever! To the language of both I most heartily say Amen. I must, nevertheless, be permitted to observe, that in this passage Mr. W. gives no definition of faith whatever; and, consequently, can never introduce it to oppose that which Mr. H. wishes to see demolished. His words on this occasion may more properly be considered as forming a proposition which he makes to his brother, that might either be answered by him, or any other person who had leisure. The answer, filling these outlines, was one part of

the *desideratum* which he sought. As to the "sense of pardon" which he here defines, it may be necessary to observe, that he is speaking of an assurance which he expressly says is "explicit," and "distinct" from justifying faith, particularly from its prospective mode of operation;—an assurance which, on account of this invariable characteristic, can never be identified with it. To whom this faith or assurance applies, Mr. W. informs us in the next paragraph. He designates it as "the common privilege of *real* christians," and affirms it to be "the proper christian faith."

"I allow, 1. That there is such an assurance. 2. That it is the common privilege of real christians. 3. That it is the proper christian faith." 'The two first propositions I admit; the third I decline; because, no assurance can be faith, any more than the effect can be its own cause.' It ought not to pass without observation, that Mr. W. in this passage entirely changes the terms which he now introduces to our notice. He no longer confines our views to justified believers, of whom there have been multitudes under the inferior and darker dispensations of grace; but carries them to christians, "real christians," christians who are more matured in grace, and thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work. In like manner, he detaches this assurance of which he speaks, and which he had before defined to be "distinct and explicit," from justifying faith, applies it to a more finished cha-

racter, and asserts it to be "the proper christian faith." How then, it may be asked, can Mr. H. or any other man produce this letter to contradict Mr. W.'s original definition of justifying faith, and from hence infer that he abandoned his primary principles?

But no "assurance," Mr. H. contends, 'can be faith, any more than the effect can be its own cause.' This assertion entirely changes the ground on which the inquiry has hitherto stood, and gives to the question another aspect. It is now no longer a question about different degrees of assurance; but whether, in the abstract, assurance constitutes any part whatever of faith, or is only an effect which results from it. What then, I would ask, must be the nature of that faith which totally excludes every idea of assurance? And what must be the nature of that assurance which has no connection with faith but as its cause? For it must be remembered, that the question is not now about that degree of assurance which Mr. W. has defined to be "distinct and explicit," but about assurance in the abstract; for Mr. H. asserts that '*no assurance can be faith.*' A faith that totally excludes all assurance, must be a faith that is destitute of confidence (unless we may have an assurance where no confidence exists, which is a palpable contradiction); and how any operation of the mind, from which confidence is entirely excluded, can be denominated faith, I feel myself at a loss to know.

But this subject will be more minutely investigated in a future letter.

“ But I cannot allow that justifying faith is such an assurance, or necessarily connected with it.”
 ‘ Nor I, neither. A man may trust in Christ alone, with a good and honest heart, for acceptance and salvation, and found his prayers and hopes on this trust. This is justifying faith.’ By referring to Mr. W.’s letter it will evidently appear, that the assurance of which he here speaks is that which he had previously defined, and denominated “ distinct and explicit.” This, according to Mr. Wesley, is “ the proper christian faith;” and as such, it is “ the common privilege of real christians.” But what does Mr. H. mean by trusting in Christ with a good and honest heart, for acceptance and salvation? Can our hearts be good prior to acceptance? If so, what is become of justification; If not, what is become of the assertion? Is not this making the fruit good before the tree is made so!—Is not this a strange inversion of principle—an inversion, which makes goodness, which is an effect of justification, to exist prior to justification, and to be in part the condition of our acceptance with God for the attainment of it. I am aware that with this “ good and honest heart,” Mr. H. insists ‘ we must trust in Christ alone.’ But how our hearts are to be made good prior to this trust, he has not informed us. If the heart be good prior to this trust, then justification cannot be by faith, and trusting in

Christ for acceptance is both chimerical and useless: and if it be not good, the assertion vanishes into empty air.

Still Mr. H. asserts, this trust in Christ alone, with this good and honest heart, may be exercised; and 'he may yet not have assurance, and much less a full assurance; because he is not taught to consider his trust in Christ as justifying faith.' (p. 11.) Can then, I would ask, a man trust in Christ without having any assurance? If so, what are we to understand by all the alluring invitations made to penitents?—What are all the promises of the gospel?—Why are all the examples held out to us in the 11th chapter of the Hebrews?—And what are all the declarations of both Testaments? When God declares that whosoever cometh to him he will in no wise cast out, is it not a promise on his part, designed to beget an *assurance* in the mind of every seeking soul, that he shall be accepted when he ventures on Christ? When St. Paul exhorts the Hebrews (x. 22.) to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, does he mean any thing more than faith in a superlative degree? And do not his words plainly import, that assurance may exist without being, what he denominates, 'full.' If assurance admitted not of degrees, why should the Apostle denominate this a "full assurance!" The substantive itself would have been sufficient, and no adjective would have been necessary to designate its quality, because no room would have remained for any discrimination. So

far therefore does the assertion of Mr. H. appear from being true—that ‘no assurance can be faith,’ that, on the contrary, wherever there is trust there must be confidence; and where there is confidence there must be assurance, though it be in a partial degree. And while these links remain unbroken, assurance, when taken in the abstract, must necessarily enter into all our ideas of faith, and in part constitute its essence and nature.

If all assurance be the effect of faith, as Mr. H. asserts, what, I would ask, is the foundation of that faith which justifies? Should it be replied, “The promises of the gospel grounded on the blood of the covenant,”—I ask again—can these influence my mind so as to induce it to give credit to their authenticity and importance, while they bring with them no assurance of their veracity? And is not this assurance communicated to the mind,—and is not this one of the primary inducements of the soul to venture on the promises? Is assurance ever reckoned among the fruits or effects of faith, as distinct from its nature? Are we not taught to love God, because he first loved us? And can this effect be produced in our souls, while we have no assurance of his love to us? Surely this is impossible. Assurance might therefore, in some or other of its modes, with more propriety be considered as the foundation than the effect of faith; always remembering that the infinite merit of Christ is the sole meritorious cause of every blessing. The truth

seems to be, that assurance in some or other of its branches, is one of the radical ideas of faith. It reaches to its origin; accompanies it in its progressive operations; pervades its nature; but shines with the utmost splendour in its fullest consummation. But I return to Mr. Wesley's letter.

“ Besides, if justifying faith necessarily implied such an assurance, then every one who has it not, and so long as he hath it not, is under the wrath and curse of God.” ‘ Most assuredly. Make ‘ good the definition, and the damnatory clause ‘ will defy all the batteries of reason and revelation.’ Few among us, I presume, ever imagined that justifying faith “ necessarily implied such an assurance” as is full and luminous. Nevertheless, in this very passage on which Mr. H. lays such a particular emphasis, he does not exclude assurance from entering into the nature of justifying faith. On the contrary, his observations are most expressly restricted to the superlative degree of it.

“ But this supposition is contrary to scripture, as well as experience. Contrary to scripture: to Isaiah, l. 10. ‘ Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.’ Contrary to Acts, x. 34. ‘ Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but, in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh

righteousness is accepted with him." "When you have attempted an answer to the scriptures produced by Mr. Wesley, I will throw in your way a hundred more. As the assertors of this damning definition, it is incumbent on you to prove that prophets and apostles damned any who were following on to know the Lord." Before Mr. H. had drawn his hasty conclusion, he should have ascertained what "that supposition" was, which is said to be contrary to scripture and experience? This he might easily have known by referring to the preceding paragraphs. There he would have seen, that it was the same as the full assurance spoken of by St. Paul, and what was called "such an assurance" as Mr. W. had previously excluded from being "necessarily" implied in justifying faith. What then is the answer to these scriptures, which we are called upon to attempt? I see none. I heartily receive them in their most "literal import." Had we, indeed, contended for justifying faith as *necessarily* including that plenary assurance which Mr. W. here discards, as not necessarily attached to justifying faith, and Mr. H. reprobates, I do not conceive that the scriptures adduced would have been reconcileable with it. But in the present case, a removal of the foundation demolishes the superstructure.

"Contrary to experience; for I. R. &c. had peace with God, no fear, no doubt, before they

had the sense of pardon. And so have I frequently had." 'I add, so had Mr. C. Wesley, so have I, 'and thousands more.' To view this passage in its proper light, we have only to inquire—What does Mr. W. mean by "the sense of pardon?" This he has already explained in his definition of the term: and here the shadow disappears; and justifying faith is acknowledged by Mr. W. to exist without "necessarily" implying that luminous assurance spoken of above. If Mr. H. conceives that I am disposed to argue against this doctrine, it will only add to the number of his mistakes.

"Again. The assertion, that justifying faith is a sense of pardon, is contrary to reason; it is flatly absurd. For how can a sense of our having received pardon, be the condition of our receiving it?" 'If Mr. W. modestly doubted, whether he could 'split a hair, may I not ask, Can you divide this 'camel, or rather remove this mountain?' Can Mr. H. seriously suppose; that we ever imagined that justifying faith was a sense of pardon? Can he prove that we ever asserted it in the manner in which Mr. W. notices it above? I have already observed, that "a sure trust and confidence" in any given thing, or for any given thing, can never be the thing itself; in which, or for which, we trust. It is possible that "a sense of pardon" may be a stimulus to faith—an object of faith—or the reward of faith; but in no sense whatever,

can it be faith itself, nor can the ideas for which these terms stand, be rendered synonymous with one another. In addition to this, the definitions which Mr. W. has given both of "a sense of pardon," and of "justifying faith," are such as forbid us to believe, that he ever entertained a sentiment which he so justly condemns as big with absurdity. "If you object, I. T. St. Paul, &c. had this sense, I grant they had; but they were justified before they had it. We know 1500 persons who have this assurance. Perhaps so; but this does not prove they were not justified before they had it." 'It is impossible, in the nature of things, it should be otherwise.' It was an easier task for Mr. H. to drop this assertion, than to prove it true. Impossibilities, when they apply to God, are things which we ought to touch only with caution. Mr. Wesley, in the language which we have lately surveyed, has used much circumspection. He tells us, that justifying faith is not *such* "a sense of pardon", neither does justifying faith "*necessarily* imply *such* an assurance." It is easily discoverable, where most discretion is to be found, and prudence will direct us which side of the question to take.

"We have been exceedingly blessed in preaching this doctrine. We have been blessed in preaching the great truths of the gospel, although we tacked to them, in the simplicity of our hearts, a proposition which was not true." 'How manly and ingenuous is this acknowledgment! You

' who fight for the definition, will impute the ' success of your doctrine to its very errors.' What this proposition was, Mr. W. has not informed us. That it could not be his definition of justifying faith, is evident from his subsequent writings, in which it has been retained; and particularly in a letter which Mr. H. has copied, page 64, written expressly on purpose to support it, in the year 1768, and addressed to Mr. James Morgan. And what Mr. H. calls the ' damnatory ' clause,' he had no occasion to relinquish; for it does not appear that he ever connected it with justifying, but with the full christian faith.

On the concluding passages of Mr. W.'s letter, I have no occasion to make any remarks. From church and articles, he appeals to the law and to the testimony, as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and by this unerring standard all our debates must be decided.

" Here," Mr. H. observes, " I close the evidence of the letter; and it evinces what I produced it to prove—that Mr. Wesley did renounce the definition as applying to justifying faith, as well as the damnatory clause." (p. 24.) Mr. Wesley's definition of justifying faith, I have already given in a preceding page; and the letter in which he is presumed to have renounced it, together with our remarks upon it, are now before the world. This is the tribunal before which he has cited me to appear, and without solicitude I wait the public decision.

That Mr. W. has, in any clause of the letter which I have examined, renounced his definition of justifying faith, is a position which I have yet to learn. "A belief that God both *hath* and *will* forgive our sins," Mr. W. has expressly included in his definition. This directs us to distinguish between the *direct* and *reflex* act of faith,—a distinction which the tenacity of Mr. H.'s memory enables him to recollect, which, he says, I commended with much warmth some twenty years ago. (p. 20.) In this article, I hope he will give me credit for the stability of my principles. With this distinction before us, "puritanical" as it may be, I dare affirm, that there is not a passage in the letter which I have examined, that may not be fairly reconciled with the definition which Mr. H. says he has proved that Mr. W. did renounce. No man can tacitly and designedly relinquish a leading sentiment which he had previously cherished and supported, and yet be unconscious of the change that has passed in his mind. If, therefore, the conduct of our venerable Founder has been such as Mr. H. has intimated, and, in his animadversions on this letter, endeavours to support, his subsequent writings will not only prove his inconsistency; but so far impeach the integrity of his moral character, as to entitle him to an appellation which Mr. H. would hesitate to bestow. For certain it is, that he who continues to propagate doctrines which he had renounced, sentiments

which he had abandoned, and definitions which he had acknowledged to be fallacious, without being reconvinced of their propriety, (which must be precisely the case with Mr. W., if the statement of Mr. H. be correct) is unworthy the name of an honest man.

To prevent a close examination of Mr. W.'s letter (or *Genesis Problematica*), and Mr. H.'s remarks upon it, from being broken, I have hitherto passed over in silence many of Mr. H.'s detached observations. To some of these I shall now return, before I close this letter.

In p. 16. Mr. H. brings against us the following accusation. 'You lay another foundation (than Christ), even *assurance*, and preach salvation by *assurance*, justification by *assurance* alone.' To accuse Mr. H. of not understanding our principles, would be very rude; and to charge him with wilfully misrepresenting them, would still be worse. However, nothing but charity can induce me to impute this passage to a mistake. But how does he make it appear that we lay another foundation; and that we lay it in *assurance*? Thus far he has adduced no evidence, though he has assumed the fact. And from this naked assumption, not more unfounded in truth than unsupported by reason, he argues as confidently as though the fabric rested on axioms which were incontrovertible.

Mr. H., however, ought to have known, that

Christ alone is the foundation which we lay. It is to him alone that we commend sinners for acceptance; from him alone that we expect pardon; through him alone that we hope for remission of sins; and that even the assurance, of which Mr. H. speaks with so much contempt, is only sought as an evidence of the divine favour. It is by evidence alone, we contend, that we are enabled to know that our darkness is turned into light, our mourning into joy; and this must bring with it some degrees of assurance, before penitents can be persuaded to rejoice in the God of their salvation. Those characters "who bathe the feet of Jesus with tears of godly sorrow," (p. 13.) give unequivocal proofs of their distress; and those who "are actually praying for pardon in his name, who are renounced by that evil world which they have renounced," as expressly declare their want of forgiveness. These we comfort by bringing them to Jesus; by unfolding the promises to their broken and contrite hearts, and by pointing them to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world; in whose precious blood, and dying love, their wounded spirits may find the balm of consolation. It is this that will give them the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness: and nothing but this, can rationally persuade them that the divine displeasure is removed. An act of pardon must, without all doubt, in the order of things be issued

before it can be received, just as the substance which casts a shadow must move before the shadow which is dependent on it. But in the order of time, we know of no assignable priority, without descending to metaphysical distinctions, which in this case must rather injure divinity than improve it.

Can a hope of pardon, I would ask, be identified with forgiveness? Can expectation be led to realize the fact which it pursues, without losing both its name and nature? Can a man hope for a mental blessing which he possesses? Can a perception enter the mind, or take up its abode, where nothing is to be found but the evidence of its absence? Impossible! And yet, absurd as it may appear, such must be the condition of every one who is persuaded that he is in the divine favour, while labouring under a sense of God's displeasure, even admitting that the cause of his sorrow is unfounded in fact. A criminal who hopes for pardon cannot be persuaded that he has obtained it, till he really has some other evidence besides that of mere existence to induce him to believe the fact. And those who would instruct him to suspend his fears, while in this condition, would only lead him to substitute his *expectation* in the room of the *reprieve*. Job would have considered such men in the light of "miserable comforters." Can any man suppose, that the criminal, under circumstances which I have mentioned, because he refused

all consolation till he obtained some assurance of the reprieve for which he waited, would substitute his own assurance in the stead either of the reprieve itself, the monarch by whom it was issued, or the mediator by whom it was procured? Surely there can be no difficulty in answering so plain a question. And yet Mr. H., from some unaccountable principle of reasoning, when we transfer the analogy, infers, under circumstances precisely similar, that we "do virtually by our doctrine renounce Christ crucified, salvation by faith, and justification by faith," (p. 16.) and lay another foundation in assurance.

The doctrine of justification by faith Mr. H. does not hesitate to admit; but by what marks the fact is to be ascertained, he has nearly left us to conjecture, having imparted little information on the subject. Proper internal evidence he cannot allow, for this would lead him to adopt that very assurance which he so pointedly condemns. In the outward actions lies his principal resource. This, however, he finds defective, and therefore mixes up a catholicon of penitence and reformation, and infers genuine faith from this unscriptural combination. And yet, strange as it may appear, in p. 16. he charges us with "inverting the whole order of scripture and experience," because we ascertain justifying faith from the love of God shed abroad in the heart! "You substitute," he observes, "the superstructure for the founda-

tion; and a man is left to infer his faith from "the love of God shed abroad in his heart." (p. 16.) I will not now retort the expression, but content myself with asking,—Who could have thought this to be the language of a man, who but two pages before had made penitence and reformation a sufficient evidence from which justifying faith was to be inferred? That some evidence must exist, we in common admit; and the primary question now is—In what does it consist? Different degrees may undoubtedly take place in different persons; but some internal evidence there must be. Without this, the inward condition of him who has faith, and of him who has it not, must be precisely the same. And if outward conduct can alone determine, then no criterion can remain, whereby mere morality can be distinguished from evangelical piety. External reformation is to be found with both.

But, how much soever the internal evidences of justifying faith may be discarded—for faith itself Mr. H. appears a strenuous advocate. Hence, he observes, (p. 23.) that "neither assurance, nor the spirit of adoption, constitutes us children of God, but faith in Christ." That sinners are justified and saved by grace, through faith as an instrument, I admit; but cannot allow that "faith constitutes them children of God." Were this to be granted, divine mercy would be totally excluded, and Christ reduced to a mere passive ob-

ject, would have little to do in the affair. What this faith is, for which Mr. H. contends, the following passage will most amply explain: "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel. Here our church most confidently absolves *true penitents who believe the gospel*; and, by the grace of God, I will hold fast her sound doctrine." (p. 24.) Souls thus truly penitent, are most undoubtedly those whom God will justify. But, can Mr. H. seriously believe, that a mere assent to the theory of the gospel is all that is meant by believing it, in order to absolution, or justification, in the sight of God? It may, perhaps, be replied, "that a cold assent, which is without penitence, is excluded." But if this constitutes the only difference, then, abstractedly considered, the faith of the penitent and of the impenitent is the same. Penitence alone makes the distinction; and as that which alone makes the difference is entitled to pre-eminence, we are rather, according to this theory, justified by penitence than faith.

But, even granting that faith in Christ "*constitutes*" us children of God, How is the certainty and nature of this faith to be ascertained? Not by any internal evidence; for this would lead either to an assurance, which is exploded; or to a direct witness, which is equally discarded by Mr. H.:—Not by reformation; for this would give to the christian and

the moralist an equal claim :—Not by repentance; for this precedes faith. (Mark, i. 15. Acts, ii. 38.) Not by reformation and repentance blended together; “ for this would be to invert the whole order of scripture and experience.” Thus all inward and outward discriminating evidence is totally excluded. And few, perhaps, would charge me with inconclusive reasoning, were I to assert, that he who is justified by that which excludes all discriminating evidence is not justified by faith, but by credulity.

In arguing against “ a sure trust and confidence in God,” as forming any part of justifying faith, and against the “ direct witness of the Spirit,” Mr. H. adverts to the faith of Simon Magus, and that which Philip preached to the Eunuch. And from the manner in which the subject is introduced, it is evidently designed to confirm the opinion that was advanced in the last quotation; namely, that penitents are absolved who believe the gospel. In reply to the Eunuch who requested to be baptized, “ Philip said, if thou believest with *all* thine heart, thou mayest; and he answered, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* This is the grand elemental primary truth of christianity; the living rock and foundation of the church, against which, our Lord assures us, the gates of hell shall never prevail. It involves in it, or necessarily draws after it, the belief, experience, and practice, of every gospel truth.” (p. 15.) It is

only on the last sentence that I am disposed to make any remarks; and admitting the assertion which this contains to be founded in fact, I know not how any can be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, but such as doubt the incarnation and divinity of the Son of God. But are none to be found who hold these truths in unrighteousness? Are there none who believe these truths, without having their faith adulterated, either with "assurance," or "the direct witness of the Spirit?" Are none living without hope and without God in the world, who admit this important "elemental truth?" Look at the vices which prevail; hearken to the oaths and blasphemies which are uttered; and survey the multitudes who are drinking down iniquity, and wallowing in all manner of filthiness, and let fact decide upon the bold assertion. Every day, and almost every house, present us with evidence. And yet Mr. H., in the face of ten thousand witnesses, declares, without any qualification whatsoever, that "this grand, elemental, primary truth of christianity, involves in it, or necessarily draws after it, the belief, experience, and practice, of every gospel truth."

"That sinners are justified the moment they fly to Christ," is a sentiment which Mr. H., in common with ourselves, adopts as an article of his creed. "But who," he asks, "can ascertain that blessed moment?" He answers—"Not them-

“ selves, nor any human being.” (p. 25.) St. Paul has said, that “ being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. v. 1, 2.) He afterwards adds, “ There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Rom. viii. 1, 2.) Here are two evidences adduced by the Apostle, in direct opposition to what Mr. H. asserts. The one is a freedom from condemnation; the other is peace with God, as an immediate and internal effect of faith. To make a separation between them is impossible. They both partake of one common nature, and mutually confirm and corroborate each other. If condemnation can be felt, a removal of it cannot but make a similar impression. For even admitting that it left the mind in a state of vacancy, this vacancy, or absence of a disagreeable impression, must afford a decisive evidence by being compared with its reverse. But, in this condition the mind of a believer is not suffered to remain. The Father of mercies affords it a more unquestionable evidence than that which arises from the mere absence of pain and trouble, by imparting that peace which

results from faith. Can mental peace succeed to mental trouble, and leave its possessors insensible of the change? Are not peace and trouble inward sensations? Can either exist, and make no impressions? Or, can any thing be said to be either an impression, or a sensation, while it is unfelt? Whatever is a sensation must be felt; and what is felt, brings with it a knowledge of its existence; and if so, the time of its arrival may certainly be ascertained.

I shall here add, out of the sermons of Dr. Paley, a quotation which is so excellent, so clear, and so illustrative of the present subject, that my readers will, I am sure, excuse me for laying it before them. On this important point, that great man speaks as follows:

“ At this day we have not Jews and Gentiles to preach to; but persons really in as unconverted a state, as any Jew or Gentile could be in our Saviour's time. They are no more christians, as to any actual benefit of christianity to their souls, than the most hardened Jew, or the most profligate Gentile, was in the age of the gospel. As to any difference in the two cases, the difference is all against them. These must be converted, before they can be saved. The course of their thoughts must be changed, the very principle upon which they act must be changed. Considerations which never, or which hardly ever, entered into their

minds, must deeply and perpetually engage them. —Views and motives, which did not influence them at all, either as checks from doing evil, or as inducements to do good, must become the views and motives which they regularly consult, and by which they are guided: that is to say, there must be a revolution of principle; the visible conduct will follow the change; but there must be a revolution within.

“ A change so entire, so deep, so important as this, I do allow to be a conversion; and no one, who is in the situation above described, can be saved without undergoing it; and he must, necessarily, both be sensible of it at the time, and remember it all his life afterwards. It is too momentous an event ever to be forgotten. A man might as easily forget his escape from a shipwreck. Whether it was sudden, or whether it was gradual, if it was effected, (and the fruits will prove that,) it was a true conversion: and every such person may justly, both believe and say to himself, that he was converted at a particular assignable time. It may not be necessary to speak of his conversion; but he will always think of it with unbounded thankfulness to the Giver of all grace, the Author of all mercies, spiritual as well as temporal.”

(PALEY'S Sermons, p. 129. Lond. Edit. 1808.)

To language so expressive, it would be as difficult, as it is needless, to make any additions. "It is the language (says Dr. Buchanan) of the true church of Christ in all ages and nations;" yet, unfortunately, it is in direct opposition to the sentiments of Mr. H., who asserts, that "no human being can ascertain that blessed moment."

I beg leave to subscribe myself,
Dear and respected Friends,
Your truly affectionate Brother,

T COKE

L E T T E R I I.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

CLOSELY connected with the detached paragraphs of the preceding epistle, is the great doctrine of justification by faith in the Son of God. The sentiments of Mr. Wesley, on this momentous subject, and of those who have acted in connection with, and who now succeed him in his ministerial labours, Mr. Horne has designedly made the subject of his investigation. This has led him to conclusions, which are foreign to our own; and to an asperity of expression which we cannot approve, and will not retaliate. But, it is not to this inestimable blessing alone that he has confined his inquiry; the nature of that faith, through which it is received, has also engaged his attention; but, above all, the precise condition of the soul, when in the course of its spiritual progress it is united to Christ, is the primary object of his consideration. This latter, without doubt,

is a topic of serious importance; but, justification itself, and the nature and characteristics of that faith by which it is both obtained and realized, are points which demand, or appear to demand, a prior determination. To these subjects, and those views of them which have been presented to the world, both by Mr. W. and ourselves, permit me to call your attention in this letter: The veil of obscurity, which opposition has drawn over them, renders an attempt of this kind highly necessary. This veil I hope to remove, by endeavouring to trace a consistency in our doctrines, and an agreement between the sentiments of Mr. W. and our own, notwithstanding Mr. H. has exerted himself to persuade us, that this consistency and agreement have no existence.

To prevent our thoughts from being perplexed, while prosecuting this arduous task, I will *first* inquire—What is Justification?

According to the eleventh article of the Church of England, “ We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is set forth in the Homily of Justification.” In this Homily on justification, the same doctrine is presented to us in the following words: “ In our justification is not only God’s mercy and grace, but also his jus-

tice, which the Apostle calls the justice of God ; and it consisteth in paying our ransom, and fulfilling of the law ; and so the grace of God doth not shut out the justice of God in our justification ; but only shutteth out the justice (or righteousness) of man ; that is to say, the justice of our works, as to be merits of deserving our justification. And, therefore, St. Paul declareth nothing upon the behalf of man, concerning his justification, but only a true and lively faith, which, nevertheless, is the gift of God, and not man's only work without God. And yet that faith doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified, but it shutteth them out from the office of justifying." Our first Reformers were so solicitous to establish this grand point—that the justification of sinners, as such, was through the merits of Jesus Christ alone, that they further add, "nevertheless, this sentence, that we are justified by faith only is not so meant, that the said justifying faith is alone in man, without true repentance, hope, charity, dread, and the fear of God, at any time or season. But this saying is spoken to take away clearly all merit of our works, as being unable to deserve justification at God's hand—Christ himself only being the cause meritorious thereof."

That the doctrines contained in the preceding quotations are perfectly congenial with those which

Mr. Wesley uniformly taught on the same important subject, his own words will most decidedly prove. In his sermon on Justification by Faith, he delivers, without disguise, his full view of the general ground on which the whole doctrine of justification rests, and then proceeds to declare, what, in his opinion, justification is. When speaking on the former of these points, he describes man as being created in the moral image of God,—as being placed under a law which required perfect obedience,—as being in a state of perfect freedom,—as violating the precepts of that law under which he was placed,—as bringing “death into the world, and all our woe,” by that transgression—and as exposing himself, and all his posterity, to feel the bitter pains of eternal misery.

“In this state (he observes) were all mankind, when God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end we might not perish, but have everlasting life. In the fulness of time, he was made man, another common head of mankind, a second general parent and representative of the human race. And as such it was that he bore our griefs; the Lord laying on him the iniquities of us all. Then was he wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. He made his soul an offering for sin. He poured out his blood for the transgressors: he bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that by his stripes we might be healed: and, by that one oblation of

himself once offered, he hath redeemed me, and all mankind; having thereby made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.

“ In consideration of this, that the Son of God hath tasted death for every man, God hath now reconciled the world unto himself, not imputing to them their former trespasses. And thus, 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 justification. So that, for the sake of his well-beloved Son, of what he hath done and suffered for us, God now vouchsafes on one only condition (which himself also enables us to perform) both to remit the punishment due to our sins, to reinstate us in his favour, and to restore our dead souls to spiritual life, as the earnest of life eternal.

“ This, therefore, is the general ground of the whole doctrine of justification. By the sin of the first Adam, who was not only the father, but likewise the representative of us all, we all fell short of the favour of God; we all became children of wrath: or, as the Apostle expresses it, judgment came upon all men to condemnation. Even so, by the sacrifice for sin, made by the second Adam, as the representative of us all, God is so far reconciled to all the world, that he hath given them a new covenant. The plain condition

whereof being once fulfilled, there is no more condemnation for us; but we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

“ But what is it to be justified? What is justification? The plain notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins. It is that act of God the Father, whereby, for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of his Son, he sheweth forth his righteousness (or mercy) by the remission of the sins that are past. This is the easy, natural account of it given by St. Paul throughout this whole epistle to the Romans. So he explains it himself, more particularly in this fourth, and in the following chapter. Thus, in the next verses but one to the text, Blessed are they, saith he, whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. To him that is justified or forgiven, God will not impute sin to his condemnation. He will not condemn him on that account, either in this world or that which is to come. His sins, all his past sins, in thought, word, and deed, are covered, are blotted out; shall not be remembered or mentioned against him any more than if they had not been. God will not inflict on that sinner what he deserved to suffer, because the Son of his love hath suffered for him. And from the time we are accepted through the

Beloved, reconciled to God through his blood, he loves, and blesses, and watches over us for good, even as if we had never sinned.

“ Indeed, the Apostle in one place seems to extend the meaning of the word much farther; where he says, not the hearers of the law, but the doers of the law, shall be justified. Here he appears to refer our justification to the sentence of the great day. And so our Lord himself unquestionably doth, when he says, by thy words thou shalt be justified: proving thereby, that for every idle word men shall speak, they shall give an account in the day of judgment. But, perhaps, we can hardly produce another instance of St. Paul’s using the word in that distant sense. In the general tenor of his writings, it is evident he doth not: And least of all in the text before us, which undeniably speaks, not of those who have already finished their course, but of those who are just now setting out, just beginning to run the race which is set before them.”

(WESLEY’S Sermons, vol. i. p. 88—90.)

That there is between the sentiments of Mr. Wesley, and the articles and homilies of the church of England, on this point, a pleasing and striking coincidence, the extracts which have been taken from each will fully establish. The same leading features of the doctrine of justification before God are visible in all; and, so far as human authority can give weight to truth that has been obscured by

motley opinions, the light in which Mr. W. has placed this important doctrine lays claim to that of the highest respectability. But this authority would have served no other purpose than to shew the extent of error, if the sacred writings had refused to countenance what he has advanced. Happily they are in perfect unison with his views of the subject; and it was evidently with an eye to the sanction that they afforded, and not to any human authority, that he formed his creed, and avowed his belief before mankind. In the paragraphs which have been quoted from his writings, he has chiefly confined himself to the language of scripture. It is from this, rather than from his own words, that he has directed us to gather the doctrine which he has placed before us. To the scriptures which Mr. W. has produced in favour of this doctrine which he inculcated, it will be needless to make any additions, till it has been proved that these are misapplied. To do this, no attempt has been recently made; and it is totally unnecessary to vindicate what has either been already defended, or not yet called in question.

It is, nevertheless, incumbent on me to state, that the doctrines advanced by Mr. W. in the preceding paragraphs, are those which his followers have embraced, both as to the nature of justification, and the general ground on which that doctrine rests. From these we have not departed. We view them as founded on the oracles of God;

as truths which are connected with the analogy of faith, and as fundamentals in religion which it would be criminal to violate. But, with innovation, or dereliction on these points, Mr. Home has not charged either Mr. W. or ourselves. They may, therefore, be dismissed without further observation, to make way for other subjects, with which these doctrines are intimately connected, but which are more immediately the occasion of these letters.

Secondly, I proceed to inquire, What, under the gospel dispensation, is necessary on the part of man in order to justification?

As man is wholly corrupted, he cannot possibly renovate himself; the supposition would involve a palpable contradiction: and, therefore, every radical change that takes place within him must necessarily originate in another. The operative agency through which this inward change is wrought, has uniformly been ascribed by us to the Holy Spirit; for, it is he alone that is appointed by the Father to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. (John, xvi. 8.)

Agrecably to the doctrines which we both publish and defend, we believe that the Holy Spirit first awakens man, who is dead in trespasses and sins, and gives him to see his spiritual condition; presents before him his universal depravity; his moral relation to God; and his interests in another

world. The sensibility which is thus begotten, cannot but create uneasiness in the soul; and this uneasiness is heightened in proportion to the impression that is made. If the man look into eternity, the prospect is truly melancholy. Hell seems moved from beneath to meet him at his coming, and to present him with the punishment that is due to his transgressions. If he look towards heaven, the skies are as brass, and forbid his entrance: Cherubim and a flaming sword encircle the tree of life; and he feels assured that God is angry with the wicked every day continually.

The dread of punishment which these uncomfortable prospects afford, induces him to put on an external reformation. He ceases to do evil, and learns to do well; performs duties which, through life, he had neglected; forsakes companions with whom he had been accustomed to associate; and uses prayer to which he had been a perfect stranger. The arrows of the Almighty sticking fast in him, he bewails his condition with tears of unaffected sorrow; sinks beneath the burden which weighs down his spirits; and, perhaps, at times, like David, roars aloud for the disquietude of his soul. The gloomy apprehensions of his mind so far destroy his appetite for sin, that the wicked propensities of his heart no longer seek after full indulgence. The passions are arrested by a superior power; and the weakness which these manifest, negatively

favours the outward reformation which a prospect of danger, awakened by the Spirit of God, now renders visible to all.

In this situation he seeks after deliverance without knowing distinctly how or where to find it; but cries from the anguish of his heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He thus breaks off his sins by repentance; groans beneath the load which presses him intolerably; and trembles, lest, in this condition, he should be called to stand before God to give an account for the deeds done in the body. With earnest prayer he uses self-denial, takes up his cross wherever he finds occasion; examines the word of God; associates with the godly; solicits their advice; and urges his petitions with unceasing application. In addition to the discharge of these duties, he feeds the hungry, he clothes the naked, if his circumstances will allow him thus to act; he wipes the tear from the face of the distressed, and causes the widow's heart to dance for joy. "If it be objected," says Mr. Wesley, "that these are good works—the answer is easy. He may do those even before he is justified. And these are, in one sense, good works; they are good and profitable to man. But it does not follow that they are, strictly speaking, good in themselves, or good in the sight of God. All truly good works (to use the language of our church) follow after justification. And they are, therefore, good and acceptable to God in Christ, because they spring

out of a true and living faith. By a parity of reason, all works done before justification are not good, in the christian sense, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, (though, from some kind of faith in God they may spring); yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not (how strange soever it may appear to some) but they have the nature of sin.

“ Perhaps, those who doubt of this have not duly considered the weighty reason which is here assigned, why no works done before justification can be truly and properly good. The argument plainly runs thus :

“ No works are good which are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done : But no works done before justification are done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done : therefore, no works done before justification are good.

“ The first proposition is self-evident. And the second, That no works done before justification are done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, will appear equally plain and undeniable, if we only consider—God hath willed and commanded, that all our works should be done in charity—in love, in that love to God, which produces love to all mankind. But none of our works can be done in this love, while the love of the Father (of God as our Father) is not in us. And this love cannot be in us, till we receive the Spirit

of adoption, crying in our hearts, **Abba, Father.** If, therefore, God doth not justify the ungodly, and him that (in this sense) worketh not, then hath Christ died in vain; then, notwithstanding his death, can no flesh living be justified."

(WESLEY'S Sermons, vol. i. p. 93.)

Few truths can be more evident than those which Mr. Wesley has thus stated. The awakened sinner may do all, and more than all the works that I have enumerated in this letter, while his principles are entirely servile. Under their influence, he acts from fear without filial love; and though he feels gratitude towards God, if it be worthy of such an exalted name, it does not so much arise from a sense of favours actually received, as from a recollection that God has thus far preserved him from perdition.

The man who labours under this distress, and is reduced to the extremity I have thus described, learns from the sacred oracles, and from the pious with whom he converses, that "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." To this important truth, the same Spirit which awakened him bears its inward testimony, and helps to direct him to "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." At first, his views of the Saviour are confused and indistinct. He scarcely credits the evidence which he receives; and even doubts the readiness and willingness of

God to accept, through any mediation, a wretch so vile and worthless as himself. His character is minutely described in the seventh Chapter of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, from verse the 10th, to the 24th. In these verses, there are not many passages that are inapplicable to his case; and should they appear before him, he cannot but be astonished at the wonderful accuracy with which the secrets of his soul are delineated.

Through the means which I have mentioned, and others that are of a similar nature, he soon obtains an acquaintance with those promises of rest which are made to the weary and the heavy-laden, through the blood of Him who came from heaven to seek and to save those who were lost. In viewing these promises, he is persuaded that he answers the character of those to whom they are made; and catches from hence some glimmerings of faith and hope, which serve to interrupt the horrors of despair. To him this passage of scripture is peculiarly applicable: "Who is among you, that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." (Isaiah, l. 10.) He finds that the character described, is that which he answers; and he takes some encouragement from the invitation with which the passage closes.

His want of the Saviour, and the suitableness which is given of him in the various representations

that he finds in scripture,—whether he views his divine character, the actions of his life, the love which he has manifested, the occasion and design of his death, his resurrection and ascension into glory, his numerous, various, and exceeding great and precious promises, or his positive declaration, that whosoever cometh to him he will in nowise cast out,—all conspire to cherish the dawnings of his faith, which may be compared to the smoking flax, or a broken reed. Urged onward by his necessities, and allured by the promises of acceptance, Christ now becomes the only object of his hope, and rises uppermost in all his thoughts. He seeks him above all things; desires to obtain an interest in him; prays that he may find, through his atoning sacrifice, a deliverance from his fears of punishment, and the wrath of God; and feels increasing light break in upon his agonizing spirit. This is the light which shineth more and more to the perfect day. It is this light that enables him to believe that the promises of God are sure, that his mercies are from everlasting to everlasting, and that it is through the Lord's mercies that he is not consumed. With these views before him, he includes himself in the number of those sinners for whom the Saviour died, and feels disposed to part with all for Christ. Thus circumstanced, he cries in his heart, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief," and ventures upon him with an earnest expectation, and strong persuasion, that he shall

be received; and in that moment in which he ventures upon Christ, he is justified freely from all things, from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses.

That this doctrine is perfectly congenial with what Mr. Fletcher, as well as Mr. Wesley, taught on these important subjects, the following passages will abundantly prove. "From what has been observed (says Mr. Fletcher,) it follows, that before any one can believe, in the gospel sense of the word, he must be convinced of sin by the Spirit of God. He must feel himself a guilty, lost, and helpless sinner, unable to recover the favour and image of God by his own strength and righteousness. (Acts, ii. 37, 38.)

"This conviction, and sense of guilt, make the sinner come weary and heavy-laden to Christ, earnestly claiming the rest which he offers to weary souls. (Matt. xi. 28.) This rest the mourner seeks with the contrite Publican, in the constant use of all the means of grace: endeavouring to bring forth fruit meet for repentance, till the same Spirit, that had convinced him of sin, and alarmed his drowsy conscience, convinces him also of righteousness (John, xvi. 8.); that is, shews him the all-sufficiency of the Saviour's righteousness, to swallow up his unrighteousness; and the infinite value of Christ's meritorious death to atone for his unholy life; enabling him to *believe with the HEART*, and, consequently, to *feel*, under the

Christian dispensation, that he has an interest in the Redeemer's blood and righteousness, or that he is savingly interested in the merit of all that the Son of God suffered, did, and continues to do for us."

(FLETCHER'S Works, vol. iv. p. 36. Pine's edition.)

This same subject Mr. Fletcher again renews in a subsequent part of the same volume, when he thus addresses himself to a penitent mourner: "Thou deniest that loving Redeemer no longer, O thou poor mourning penitent, who art ready to sink under the burden of thy sins, and longest to find rest for thy dying soul. The Lord who pronounces thee blessed, says, Comfort ye, comfort ye, my mourning people. By whom shall I comfort thee? Oh! that it were by me! Oh! that I were so happy as to administer one drop of gospel cordial to thy fainting spirit! Thou hast received the wounding truths of the gospel, why shouldest thou reject the healing ones? Thou hast eaten the bitter herbs of repentance: yea, thou preferrest them to all the sweets of sin: Why then, oh! why should thy heart rise against the flesh and blood of the true paschal Lamb? Why shouldest thou starve when all things are now ready? Why shouldest thou not believe the whole truth as well as one part of it? Will the word of God's grace be more true ten years hence than it is now? Is not Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? If thy dull believing in God has already saved thee from

thy vain conversation, and thy outward sins ; how much more will a cheerful believing in the Lord Jesus, save thee into christian righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

(FLETCHER'S Essay on Truth. p. 144.)

Thirdly, I proceed to the next question, What must the penitent believe in order to justification ?

I have said, at the close of the last paragraph which precedes my citations from Mr. Fletcher, that "the moment in which the mourner ventures on Christ, he is justified freely from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses." But what I mean by "venturing on him," remains yet to be explained. The precise idea, which I intended to convey by that expression, it may, perhaps, be difficult to find words to communicate ; but, a simile will afford assistance in supplying that defect. By venturing on Christ, I do not mean merely a giving credit to any solitary truth of the gospel, nor even to all the truths that it contains. This, without doubt, must be included ; but by venturing on Christ, I mean something more. The force of evidence may operate on the understanding, and, finally, produce its full and unequivocal assent ; but the decisions of the judgment may be entire, without producing action, or affecting the heart. A full persuasion of any given truth may, and must produce assent, but it does not necessarily beget new resolutions. Gospel truths may be brought home, and personally applied by the proofs which support them, but

it will not follow that all who are thus convinced, have either ventured on Christ for pardon, or found redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Evidence can be received only by our reasoning faculties; but the affections must be reached by a more powerful agent, and, in the great work of conversion, this agent is the Spirit of God.

The soul of an awakened sinner, before it ventures on Christ for salvation, may be compared to a man who is in some of the upper stories of his house, when he learns that it has taken fire, and that all its nether parts are so far involved in flame as to cut off his retreat. Perhaps, he makes use of several efforts to escape impending ruin, and ineffectually attempts to gain the door; but finding the flames increase upon him, he is compelled to relinquish his hope of escaping this way, and to ascend the stairs before the pursuing fire. His friends without, who know his condition and his danger, entreat him to cast himself from the window of the attic story, into which he has been driven, as the only means through which life can be preserved. The man within hears their earnest entreaties; hesitates, attempts, retires, approaches the window, calculates upon the height, dreads to make the effort, and again recedes. His understanding is convinced that destruction must soon overtake him; and, yet, while the danger is somewhat remote, he strangely lingers, though only to

contemplate the difficulty of escaping, and to hold communion with his woes. His friends, again, encourage him to venture at the window, assuring him that they have provided for his safety, by spreading on the ground the softest materials to break the violence of his fall. Full of hesitation, he asks for sensible evidence. They desire him to look. He makes an effort; but the darkness of the night, and the injury which his sight has sustained, only permit him to view the object of his wishes obscurely and indistinctly. Belief and doubt contend for the empire of his mind, and, by preserving it in a dreadful equipoise, prevent it from making any decisive choice.

Thus far the situation of this man resembles that of him who feels his want of Christ. The understandings of both are enlightened; their judgments are equally convinced by the force of evidence; they assent to the truths which are proposed for their belief; but still, neither of them has escaped to the place of safety or city of refuge, which lies before him. Both, however, have found the way to escape impending ruin; and to him who thus spiritually seeks after Christ, it may be said—Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. But still one thing is lacking; and that is, to venture on the Saviour for salvation. My meaning in the use of these words, “venture on the Saviour,” the remaining part of the simile will help to illustrate.

Hitherto I have presumed, that the man confined within the walls of the burning house has made no effectual effort to escape the increasing fire; but the following observations will present us with a different view. While lingering here in this state of indecision, agonizing for deliverance, without using the means to obtain it, feeling confidence in his friends below, but yet fearful to venture,—the flames burst into his apartment, and scorch him in his last retreat. Alarmed at his immediate prospect of death, he concludes, If I remain here, I must die; and I can but perish if I fail in the experiment which my friends solicit me to make. Full of these persuasions he repairs once more to the window, and considers the difficulty less, and the prospect of safety greater, than what he had before imagined. Encouraged by these favourable appearances, as well as driven by terror, he commits his soul to God, and casts himself among his friends below. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, he reaches the object of his hopes, finds every thing prepared for his reception, as his friends had promised, and himself fixed in a state of safety. With tears of grateful joy, and a heart overflowing with thankfulness for his deliverance, he gives glory to God, and finds his bosom filled with peace.

Such appears to be the case with every soul, that by faith ventures on the atoning sacrifice of Christ. This is what I mean by venturing on him.

But who can find words to express the ideas conveyed in this simile? Every one can feel them; but adequate expressions are not to be found. Human language is too poor to unfold, in all their branches, the things of God; and we are under the necessity of resorting to such expedients, in order to find mediums to communicate our thoughts.

In making a transfer of the analogy now before us, should it be inquired—In what stage of its progress is the soul justified? I answer, not till it ventures on Christ for safety. For, as in the simile which I have introduced, the man in the burning apartment was not safe until he left the window, after which his friends became amenable for the circumstances of his attempt—so the soul that feels its want of the Saviour, is not in safety until it ventures on him for salvation. And, yet, if we credit the theory of Mr. Horne, if the analogy will hold good, the man must have been in safety while he stayed in his burning apartment, merely because he felt his danger, and believed that his friends had made an ample provision for his reception. What, but this, are we to understand by the following words? “Repentance is regeneration, and regeneration repentance; and to damn true penitents, is to damn those who are born of the Spirit. Well-instructed christians will have assurance; weak and ignorant christians have it not. It is not essential to salvation; but

repentance or regeneration is. Unless a man be born again—unless he be a sincere penitent, he cannot see the kingdom of God, of grace, or glory.” (p. 33.) Again, in p. 68. he renews the same sentiment, and, without the least shadow of proof in either place, assumes that very position which wanted evidence to support it: “I assume the fact, as acknowledged by all but mere sciolists in divinity, that conversion, repentance, and the new birth, substantially mean the same thing: the turning of men from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from Satan to God.”

Where Mr. Horne learned, that “repentance is regeneration, and regeneration repentance,” we do not know. Hitherto we have made no such discoveries in our bibles. And if he has been blessed with superior light, it would have been no deviation from that friendship which he professes for us, to have directed us to those sources of information which he has had the happiness to explore. The same obscurity conceals from my researches another of his observations—“That to be a sincere penitent is to be born again.” In what portion of the sacred writings these two ideas are identified, I have not yet been able to discover; and may, I hope, be permitted to retain my doubts of the fact without incurring the charge of obstinacy, till reason, or scripture, be produced in support of this naked assertion. To prevent all doubts of these bold assumptions, and to impose

silence on inquiry, Mr. H. *modestly* presumes, not merely that "conversion, repentance, and the new birth, mean substantially the same thing," but that this fact is so well known, that none but "mere sciolists in divinity can refuse their acknowledgments of it." It would, certainly, be daring to question first principles; but it would be extremely foolish to admit them as such, without either authoritative, rational, or intuitive knowledge, or evidence. Mr. H. has said, that these terms imply "the turning of men from darkness to light;" but how "repentance" means such a "turning from darkness to light," is a problem which he has not condescended to solve. We must, therefore, be content to rank among those sciolists in divinity, who refuse to subscribe to his solitary declaration, until he favours us with some glimpses of that light, by which he was "converted" to this strange article of his creed.

That repentance is distinct from faith, is evident from the following scripture, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark, i. 15.) And that it is distinct from conversion, these words inform us with equal plainness, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts, iii. 19.) Now, if "repentance and conversion mean substantially the same thing," as Mr. H. asserts, Why, I would ask, does St. Paul distinguish between them? If repentance and conversion be distinct, Mr. H.'s assertion is proved to

be erroneous; if they be not distinct, the Apostle has been guilty of an unmeaning tautology, and has used language which "mere sciolists in divinity" cannot rescue from the charge of being delusive. It would be easy here to trace the hypothesis before us to many unpleasant consequences; but this must be reserved for a future consideration. It is sufficient for us at present, to know, that repentance is not faith; and that conversion is distinct from both: that no one can be justified without venturing on the great Sacrifice for sin; and that no man can be said thus to venture, until he is willing to part with every thing for Christ, who invites the weary and heavy-laden, and promises to give them rest when they come to him; but who has nowhere informed us, that "conversion, repentance, and the new birth," either "substantially" or "unsubstantially," "mean the same thing."

But, I return again to the question under consideration—What must the penitent believe in order to justification?

Hitherto the observations which I have made, have been confined solely to the gospel dispensation, because to this alone they appear to be exclusively applicable. Nothing, however, can be farther from my thoughts than to suppose that all those must be excluded the kingdom of heaven, who, from the peculiarity of their conditions in life, have never heard the name of Jesus, and, con-

sequently, could never have an opportunity of venturing on his atoning sacrifice. On these points, permit me, in the views of Mr. Fletcher, to present you with a mirror of my own.

“ Are there not degrees of saving faith, inferior to the faith of the christian gospel? And are not those degrees of faith consistent with the most profound ignorance of the history of our Lord’s sufferings, and, consequently, with any explicit knowledge of the atonement? Although mankind in general had some consciousness of guilt, and a confused idea of propitiatory sacrifices; and, although all the Jewish sacrifices and prophecies pointed to the great atonement; yet, how few, even among the pious Jews, had a clear belief that the Messiah would put away sin by the sacrifice of himself? How unreasonable is it then to confine the gospel to the explicit knowledge of Christ’s atoning sufferings, to which both the prophets and apostles were once such strangers? Does not St. Peter intimate, that the prophets searched to little purpose, what the Spirit signified, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ; since it was revealed to them, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported in the christian gospel? (1 Peter, i. 11, 12.) And how absurd is it to suppose, that nothing is gospel, but a doctrine, which the first preachers of the christian gospel knew little or nothing of, even while they preached the

gospel under our Lord's immediate direction? Did not John the Baptist exceed, in evangelical knowledge, all that were born of woman? Were the Apostles much inferior to him, when they had been three years in Christ's school? Did not our Lord say to them—Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for, verily, many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things that you see and have not seen them; and to hear the things that ye hear, and have not heard them? Again, did he not testify that in general they had justifying faith, *i. e.* faith working by love? Did he not say, Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you—The Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me, and believed that I came forth from God? Nay, did he not send them forth two and two, to preach the gospel of the day: The kingdom of heaven is at hand: Repent, and believe the gospel? And would he have sent them to preach a gospel to which they were utter strangers? But were they not perfectly strangers to what passes now for the only gospel? Had they the least idea that their Master's blood was to be shed for them, even after he had said, This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins? When he spoke to them of his sufferings, were they not so far from believing in the atonement which he was about to make, that they were offended at the

very idea? Is not this evident from the words of Peter, their chief speaker, who began to rebuke him, saying—Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not happen unto thee: *i. e.* we do not yet see the end of thy blood? Nay, when Christ had actually shed it, and had finished the atoning work; far from having the least notion about what is called “finished salvation” and gospel in our day, did they not suppose that all their hopes were blasted, saying—We trusted that it had been he, who should have redeemed Israel? From these observations may I not conclude, (1.) That an explicit knowledge of Christ’s passion and atonement is the prerogative of the christian gospel? And (2.) that those who make it essential to the *everlasting* * gospel, doom to hell,

* On the use of the term “everlasting gospel,” as distinguished from christian gospel. Mr. Fletcher, in a preceding note, gives the following explanation: “Leaning then (about eleven years before) too much towards Calvinism, I fancied, at times at least, that the gospel was confined within the narrow limits of its last dispensation; which was as absurd as if I had conceited, that the swell of our rivers at high water is all the ocean. But turning to my bible, and reviewing the whole affair, I clearly see, that the Jewish and Christian gospels are not the *everlasting gospel*, but only two of its brightest dispensations. Should the reader ask me what I mean by the “everlasting gospel,” when I consider it in its fullest latitude: I answer, that I mean with St. Paul, The riches of God’s goodness, forbearance, and long suffering, lead-

not only all the righteous Jews, Turks, and Heathens, who may now be alive; but almost all the believers who died before our Lord's crucifixion, and some of the disciples themselves after his resurrection?"

(FLETCHER'S Works, vol. iv. p. 36, 37.)

From the various dispensations under which God, in different ages of the world, has been pleased to place mankind, it is obvious, that what may be an object of faith to one, cannot be so to others. "To establish," says Mr. Fletcher, "the doctrine of the gospel dispensations; to show that saving truth, in its various manifestations, is the object of saving faith, I need only to prove, that a man, in order to his salvation, is bound to believe at one time what he was not bound to believe at another. Take one instance, out of many. If St. Peter had died just after he had been pronounced blessed for acknowledging that our Lord was the Son of God, he could not have been cursed with a "depart from me," &c.

ing men to repentance for Christ's sake, who, in all ages, is the Saviour of the world; yea, and the severe strokes of his gracious providence driving them to it. I dare not insinuate that Jonah, one of the most successful preachers in the world, was not a gospel preacher, when he stirred up all the people of Niniveh to repentance; and that St. John, the divine, was a stranger to true divinity, when he gave us the following account; I saw another angel having the everlasting gospel," (p. 83. note.)

he would have been saved : and, in that case, he would have obtained salvation without believing one tittle about our Lord's resurrection ; and, nevertheless, St. Paul, a few years afterward, justly represented that article as essential to the salvation of those to whom it is revealed : "If thou shalt believe with thy heart that God hath raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Few people, I think, can read the Acts of the Apostles, without seeing, that the numerous conversions wrought by St. Peter's preaching, were wrought by the force of this truth, "God hath raised up that Jesus whom ye have crucified : " a victorious truth this, which would have been a gross untruth three months before the day of Pentecost. Nay, what is at one time an article of saving faith, may at another time become an article of the most confirmed unbelief. Thus, the expectation of the Messiah, which was a capital article of the faith of the ancient Israelites, is now the buttress of the Babel of modern Jews. The property of faith is then to make our hearts bow to the truth ; as it is manifested to us ; it being evident, that God never blamed the children of men for not believing what was never revealed to them."

(FLETCHER'S Works, vol. iv. p. 122.)

These extracts will serve to shew the extensiveness of our views, with respect to the various dispensations of the gospel, and the light in which

we behold the operations of saving faith. These are the doctrines which we both embrace and promulgate; notwithstanding, we are accused by Mr. Horne, of "cruelly butchering the firstlings" of the church on the bloody altars of Moloch; and of "shutting the gates of mercy on mankind."

On the manner in which penitents obtain deliverance from their burdens, Mr. Fletcher speaks as follows; and the coincidence of his observations with what I have advanced, will prove that we have neither introduced a new doctrine, nor departed from that which we are indiscreetly charged with having deserted. "The manner in which this deliverance is generally wrought, may be particularly described thus: Free grace, at sundry times, and in divers manners, speaks to our consciences; recommending and enforcing the word nigh, the commandment which is everlasting life. If it is the day of provocation, we unnecessarily begin to make excuse: we cannot come to the marriage-feast: we are either too good, too bad, or too busy to entertain the truth; and we say as civilly as Felix, go thy way for this time; when I shall be fitter, or when I shall have a more convenient season, I will call for thee. Perhaps, we perversely harden our hearts, contradicting, or blaspheming. But if our free-willing soul knows the time of her visitation; humbly bowing at the word of the Lord, and saying, as the Virgin Mary, behold the

hand-maid of the Lord, let it be done unto me according to thy word; I am a lost sinner, but there is mercy with thee that thou mayest be feared; then the seed of the kingdom is sown in an honest and good heart; for nothing is wanting to render the heart initially good and honest, but the submission of our free-will to that free-grace which courts us, and says, "Behold! I stand at the door of every heart, and knock; if any man hear my voice and open, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." He shall taste how good the Lord is; he shall taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.

"Thus opens the kingdom of God in the believing soul: thus is Christ, the truth and the life, formed in the heart by faith: thus grace begins to reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ.

"I call that faith *saving* and *operative*, because, so long as it lives, it saves; and so long as it saves, it works righteousness—it works by a righteous fear of the evil denounced against sin; by a righteous opposition to every known sin; by a righteous hope of the good promised to obedience; and by a righteous love of God. Therefore, when living faith ceases to work, it dies away, as the heart that ceases to beat; it goes out, as a candle that ceases to shine." (vol. iv. p. 117.)

The precise ideas, which Mr. Fletcher intended to convey by these terms, "faith *saving* and *oper-*

alive," he fully explains in page 112, in which he directs us to the various dispensations of the gospel. This will appear evident from the title of the section of his work, which is as follows: "Truth cordially embraced by faith, saves under every dispensation of divine grace, though in different degrees. A short view of the truths which characterize the four grand dispensations of the everlasting gospel."

"Faith is more or less operative, according to the quality of the truths which it embraces. This observation recommends itself to reason; for, as some wines are more generous, and some remedies more powerful, so some truths are more reviving and sanctifying, than others. But every evangelical truth being a beam of the Sun of Righteousness, risen upon us with healing in his wings, is of a saving nature; the saving grace of God which hath appeared unto all men, teaching us to deny ungodliness, &c. and to live soberly, &c. Thus I am saved from *Atheism*, by heartily believing there is a God who will judge the world:—from *Pharisaism*, by firmly believing, that I am a miserable sinner, and that without Christ I can do nothing:—from *Sadduceism*, by truly believing that the Spirit itself helpeth my infirmities:—from *Antinomianism*, by cordially believing that God is not a respecter of persons, but a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and a punisher of all that presumptuously break his commandments:—

and from *Despair*, by steadily believing, that God is love; that he sent his only-begotten Son into the world to save that which was lost; and that I have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (Vol. iv. p. 112.)

Not many things can be more evident, both from the title which this section bears, and the above passages with which it begins, than that Mr. F. designed, according to his own profession, to show the manner in which faith saved, and saves, under every dispensation of divine grace. Yet none, we conceive, "but mere sciolists in divinity" would conclude, that all those, who, under the christian dispensation, are saved from *Atheism*, *Pharisaism*, *Sadduceism*, *Antinomianism* and *Despair*, are actually in a state of justification before God. In what part of his writings, Mr. Fletcher has either asserted, or intimated, any such thing, it is incumbent on Mr. Horne to point out; especially, as this is one of the passages which he has quoted, to prove that Mr. Fletcher did not hold Mr. Wesley's definition of justifying faith.

That Mr. Fletcher, while encouraging awakened sinners who had renounced their ungodliness, to venture on Jesus Christ, did not consider them in a state of justification, is undeniable from his whole address to penitent mourners. One appropriate paragraph, I will transcribe. In this passage, had he espoused the doctrine which Mr. Horne maintains, he could not have avoided

an avowal of his sentiments, as it opens immediately with an objection which Mr H. charges upon us. Had the excuse, or objection, been founded in error, Mr. F. was bound to obviate it. Had it been a false surmising, he was bound to detect it. Had it been built upon a suggestion of Satan, he was bound to expose it. Nor, as an honest man, could he have avoided it, if his sentiments had been such as Mr. H. has represented them. Instead of this, he confirms the supposed error, acknowledges the fact, and directs the penitent how to obtain deliverance. But I will produce his own words.

“ Do not begin to make excuse, and say, ‘ I must not believe the joyous truths of the gospel, till they are first powerfully applied to my soul.’ It is right, very right for thee, for all, never to rest short of such an application. But how art thou to wait for it? In the way of duty, or out of it? Surely in the way of duty. And is it not thy duty, no longer to make God a liar? Is it not thy bounden duty, as it is thy glorious privilege, to set thy seal, as thou canst, to the word of God’s grace, as well as to the declaration of his justice? Does he not charge thee to believe (though it should be in hope against hope) the reviving record which he has given of his Son; that to as many as receive him, that is, to as many as believe on his name, he gives power to become the sons of God?—That God commendeth his love towards

ns, in that, when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us—That he was delivered for our offences; and raised again for our justification? And that he even now maketh intercession for us; bearing us out of hell in the arms of his mercy; and drawing all men to him who justifieth the ungodly, that renounce their ungodliness, as thou hast done, *and believe in Jesus, as I want thee to do?*" (vol. iv. p. 145.)

Is this, I would ask, in an address to penitent mourners, the language of a man who thought them already justified by grace through the redemption that is in Jesus? Could he tell them, in answer to an objection which he believed to be false, "It is right, very right for thee, for all, never to rest short of such an application?" Why did he not, while labouring to console their drooping spirits, inform them, "that to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, is the grand elemental, primary truth of Christianity; the living rock and foundation of the church, against which, our Lord assures us, the gates of hell shall never prevail?" Why did he not boldly declare, that "it involves in it, or necessarily draws after it, the belief, experience, and practice, of every gospel truth?" (Horne, p. 15.) The reason why he applied no such lenitives is obvious. He was not disposed to lull them with a syren song; and durst not presume to speak peace, where he had no reason to believe that God had spoken it. Such

promises of the gospel as he thought applicable to their condition, he has held out for their encouragement in this address, but has nowhere hinted that they were already justified, or that they had already so "believed in Jesus as he wanted them to do."

The nature of this believing, or venturing on Christ, in order to justification, I have already stated and explained in the former part of this Letter, when describing the feelings and reformation of an awakened sinner. I will now consider what objections may be advanced against it.

In the first place, it may be said—"If the progress be as I have supposed, then justification must be by works." I answer, this appears to be impossible. For though the character which I have described brought forth fruits meet for repentance, though he ceased to do evil, and learned to do well, yet none of these works were ever depended on for acceptance by a real penitent under the gospel dispensation; and if they had been, they would have been renounced when the Saviour of the world appeared. When Christ appeared, every thing would have given way before his atoning sacrifice; and faith in his blood would have finally eclipsed and swallowed up every other consideration. It is, therefore, most erroneous to urge that we make good works the ground or condition of acceptance, or that the principles which we defend lead to any such conclusions.

2dly, " But if he possessed all the qualifications which I have enumerated, " was he not justified long before I have supposed? And did not the " change which was manifested, rather result from, " than precede justification?" I answer, that this supposition appears to be equally as impossible as the former. In the sight of God, the motives from which the man's actions sprang, must be of much greater weight than the actions themselves; for as God requireth truth in the inward parts, it is from the motive that the excellence or defect of the action must be denominated. This motive, I have asserted to be servile; and, consequently, no action which resulted from it could, or can be the effect of justifying grace. Not only so, but these works preceded his view of the Saviour, and could no more result from justifying faith in him, than afford evidence of a previous justification. The supposition is, therefore, perfectly contradictory, because it makes works to result from justifying faith when they had a priority of existence.

But, if the articles which I have enumerated, are too excellent and too numerous to precede justification, which of them shall we discard? Surely repentance will not be dismissed. And nothing can be more injudicious than to retain the thing, and deny its fruits. Sincerity and earnestness are necessary to entitle either of them to respect; and all admit, that faith is necessary in order to justification. Shall we suppose that a sinner, prior

to his justification, does not cease to do evil and learn to do well? This would flatly contradict Isaiah, i. 16, 17. Shall we suppose that he does not ask for mercy with earnestness? To this Jeremiah has given a reply in these words, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." (Chap. xxix. 13.) In short, I see not a single qualification already mentioned, which is not necessary in order to justification. So that, place the important blessing wherever we please, repentance and faith must necessarily precede it, and these are all for which I contend.

3dly, "Can that faith be either pleasing to God, "or justifying, which operates without love?" It must not be forgotten that the subject of our inquiry is—What must a penitent believe in order to justification? Now, it is certain, that our love to God cannot precede his love to us, for, "we love him, because he first loved us." (1 John, iv. 19.) But we cannot love him, till by his Spirit we have obtained a manifestation of his love in our hearts; for love is one of the fruits of the Spirit. (Gal. v. 22.) Otherwise, salvation would not be of grace. Faith, therefore, cannot work by love, till the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given, which is always, more or less, the necessary consequence of justifying faith. But this, in the present case, cannot be; because, this love presupposes justification,

which is the very blessing we now seek. I grant, we may, even in this situation, feel a degree of gratitude towards God for preserving us, making such rich provision for us, giving us such encouraging promises to trust in his mercy, and keeping us from perdition. But this gratitude is founded on his prior mercy in providing for us, and revealing to us these inestimable blessings, and is distinct from that love which flows into, and from the heart, in consequence of our believing in Jesus for acceptance and justification.

4thly, "Can that prayer be acceptable to God which arises from a servile principle?" In answer to this, I would ask—Is it possible that the prayer of an unjustified person can arise from any other source? The person who seeks Christ may be desirous of a better motive; but, until he is justified, he cannot obtain it. Let us only suppose that he has a better motive, and that he acts from it in order to attain the blessing—the plain consequence from this supposition is, that he must be justified in order to obtain justification, which is a plain contradiction. To discard a servile motive, will shut the door of mercy against the human race. Servility is the best motive from which an unjustified person can act; and while he prays conscientiously, from the best that is within his reach, God, who is rich in mercy, will hearken to his petitions: for he is not an austere master, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering

where he has not strawed. Nothing can be more congenial to the tenor of the gospel, than that the tree must be made good, before the fruit can be good. If, therefore, we suppose the heart to be changed prior to justification, the uses and importance of this invaluable blessing are totally defeated, and rendered nugatory. Hence, we must join in a conclusion, which has been already quoted from Mr. Wesley, that "whatsoever good he hath, or doth, from that hour when he first believes in God through Christ, faith does not find, but bring."

5thly, "But can this account be reconciled with Mr. Wesley's definition of justifying faith?" Of this we shall see but little reason to entertain any doubts, when we consider the nature of that act of faith to which the definition is annexed. The act of which I have spoken, brings us to Christ for the blessing, and, as in the simile which I have introduced, terminates in its realization. The act by which it is realized, is distinct in the manner of its operation, from that by which we venture on the Saviour for pardon; the one being *prospective*, and the other *retrospective*. The former is that by which we venture on Christ for the blessing, and the latter is that which brings with it an evidence that the blessing is actually obtained. It is to this latter, that Mr. W. has chiefly, though not exclusively, confined his definition. The former may, perhaps, when compared with the

latter, be not improperly denominated a faith of adventure and experiment which leads to the blessing, but brings no evidence whatever of its success. Whereas, the latter estimates the attainment, and appreciates the value of the former, lays hold on the blessing which it pursued, and, in conjunction with it, claims the denomination of "justifying faith," because it receives and secures the glorious prize.

The point which is now before us, may be resolved into this question—"Does justifying faith precede, or follow justification?" I answer, that, according to my views, it does both: it begins before, and continues, and is completed after. So that justifying faith, in its most extensive acceptance, may be said to be an act of adventure on Christ for mercy, and an act of realization. Neither of these acts or operations of faith, taken separately, to the exclusion of the other, can be said to be justifying faith; but their conjunction renders it perfectly complete. Still, however, the former act, which is *personally* prospective, brings us to Christ, and is solely the condition of our acceptance with him; nevertheless the latter alone can ascertain its nature, and hail with joy the Saviour of the world. It is through the former that Christ accepts us, and through the latter that we receive him. And, as no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, so no man has a right to conclude that he has justifying faith, till he has both ventur-

ed* on Christ; and laid hold upon him. This, therefore includes both the prospective and retrospective operations; and Mr. Wesley prudently made the completion of justifying faith the chief point in his definition.

6thly, "But if a man die, while bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, and exercising on Christ the prospective, without the retrospective act of faith, will his spirit be received into glory, or be banished into eternal woe?" Before it

* Having repeatedly observed in the preceding letter, that no genuine faith can exist, from which every degree of assurance is wholly excluded, Mr. Horne, into whose hands these papers may probably fall, will be led to inquire, "How can any degree of assurance be included in that branch of faith which I have denominated an act of adventure and experiment?" To this, I beg leave to reply in the following observations: I do not consider the operative act, which is purely prospective, to be justifying faith, but only the direct branch of it. It is, therefore, unreasonable to expect, that what has been attributed only to the whole, should be included in a mode of operation which is confessedly but a part. Nevertheless, even this prospective act, unfinished as it is, is not without its degree of assurance. For as Christ is the great object on which we are called to venture, we must, before we can reasonably make the attempt, be assured of his existence---of his mediatorial character---of his veracity---of his promises---and of his readiness and willingness to save us. Nothing but this assurance can induce us to cast ourselves on his atoning sacrifice, with a full persuasion that he will in no wise cast us out; and, nothing but this persuasion can lead us to Christ for acceptance and pardon.

can become necessary to decide this question, it should be fully ascertained that the fact is possible, which is here supposed. In my view, the question itself, though apparently reasonable and important, is not more fanciful than absurd. Immediately when any soul believes in Christ for acceptance, it is received into the arms of his mercy. No assignable portion of duration can be supposed between venturing and acceptance; so that, in this circumstance, the case differs from the simile by which it was illustrated. A soul that ceases to seek, to strive, to agonize, or believe, may render its repentance ineffectual, and so perish by falling short of the mark. But, while it continues to depend on God, nothing shall hinder the work from being completed. "Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth, saith the Lord: Shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God." (Isaiah, lxvi. 9.) Nothing can be more dishonourable to God than such doubts as impeach his veracity, or question his willingness to save. Wherever a work of grace is really begun, it is God that has begun it; and his faithfulness forbids him to suffer any soul to perish while earnestly seeking after his full salvation.

7thly, "But is not this an adoption of the subterfuge to which Calvinists resort, when they tell us that David and Peter could not have died in their apostacy?" By no means. The impossi-

bility for which I contend, is not merely hypothetical, but real; and is of such a nature as to leave no portion of duration in which such an event can possibly take place. Two moments which succeed each other, can allow no interval of duration between them. No event can therefore happen where no duration exists. If an event take place, it must be in one moment or the other, but cannot be between them. When, therefore, the soul in any given moment ventures on Christ, in the next it is received; and cannot possibly perish in an interval that does not exist.

The same conclusions will hold good, if we extend the observation from moments to minutes—to hours,—weeks—months—or years. Is it possible, I would ask, for any man to die between the years 1809 and 1810? Every man must answer in the negative, and, by so doing, will decide the question which we consider. As God has promised to accept, and actually does accept, all those who repent and believe, immediately on their repentance and belief, it is as impossible that they can die in the interval, as that a man can die between the years 1809 and 1810. Of these facts the reason is obvious. Wherever one moment or year ends, that which succeeds it begins; and to suppose an event to happen between them, is to suppose that an event, to the accomplishment of which time is essentially necessary, can, and does actually take place, where no time can possibly

exist. In addition to this, both the justice and mercy of God forbid a soul to perish in such a state. If he has promised to be merciful to our unrighteousness, our sins and iniquities to remember no more, and to cast out none who come to him with broken and contrite hearts, can he be just, if when we come agreeably to his own divine appointment, he treats us with neglect, and leaves us to perish? Salvation, we are fully assured, is promised to all who believe: But where can be the ground of our confidence in the veracity of God, if he refuse to accept us when we venture by faith on the Atonement? It is needless to say that that conduct must be inconsistent with mercy, which cannot be reconciled with moral justice; and it is equally superfluous to add, that principles which lead to such conclusions want no further evidence to prove them wrong.

8thly, Finally, it may be asked—"Can an awakened sinner perish while he is earnestly seeking salvation through Christ?" This question has been, in part, already answered in reply to the preceding objection; and what remains will not require many words. On this important point the scriptures are decisive, and leave no room for the introduction of other proof. No man can be in a state of salvation until he is justified; and justification is by faith. He, therefore, who repents of his sins, and believes with his heart unto righteousness, *i. e.* ventures on the Atonement for acceptance, secures

to himself the favour of God ; but he who neglects this great salvation, excludes himself from the kingdom of heaven. Thus " he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John iii. 36.)

We proceed, fourthly, to inquire What is justifying faith ?

Mr. Wesley's definition of this important doctrine, I have already given at large, in his own words, in the preceding letter. The purport of this definition is, that " It is a sure trust and confidence, that God both hath and will forgive our sins, that he hath accepted us again into his favour for the merits of Christ's death and passion."

Mr. Fletcher, in answer to this question, " What is saving faith ?" observes as follows : " I dare not say, that it is " only believing confidently that my sins are forgiven me for Christ's sake!" for if I live in sin, that belief is a destructive conceit, and not saving faith. Neither dare I say, that " saving faith is only a sure trust and confidence that Christ loved me, and gave himself for me:" for if I did, * I should damn almost all mankind for 4000 years.

* On this passage, Mr. Fletcher has the following note, which most decidedly proves, that, instead of renouncing Mr. Wesley's definition of faith, as Mr. Horne has, in several places, peremptorily asserted, and ineffectually

“ To avoid putting the black mark of damnation upon any man, that in any nation fears God

attempted to prove, he most cordially approved of it, and embraced it as applying to the christian dispensation. These are his own words : “ When the Church of England
 “ and Mr. Wesley give us particular definitions of faith,
 “ it is plain that they consider it according to the christian
 “ dispensation, the privileges of which must be principally
 “ insisted upon among Christians ; and that our Church
 “ and Mr. Wesley guard faith against Antinomianism, is
 “ evident from their maintaining, as well as St. Paul, that
 “ by bad works we lose a good conscience, and make
 “ shipwreck of faith.” The above passages, to explain
 which Mr. Fletcher had inserted this note, have been
 quoted by Mr. Horne ; and quoted as proofs that Mr. F.
 had explicitly declined Mr. Wesley’s definition of faith.
 But this note, which must have been under his eye at
 the time when he wrote, is entirely passed over in silence.
 Indeed, to have introduced it would have baffled his intentions. Mr. Fletcher’s design was evidently this, to show
 how faith operates and saves under every dispensation of
 grace ; to all of which dispensations he has fixed particular
 marks, and distinguished the christian dispensation from
 all others. But Mr. H. regardless of these necessary distinctions,
 has broken down, or rather broken through, the barriers of separation,
 and represented Mr. F. as asserting that what was saving faith under the Heathenish,
 Gentile, or Jewish dispensation, is saving faith under the
 Christian. Thus has he unwarrantably expanded what Mr.
 F. had restricted to his own definite limits, and (I believe,
 without intention) made truth, in some instances, to become
 error, by giving to it an universality of application. It
 is from these unauthorised assumptions that he has injudiciously
 inferred, that Mr. F. did explicitly renounce Mr. W.’s

and works righteousness, I would chuse to say, that "saving faith is believing the saving truth with the heart unto internal, and, as we have opportunity, unto external righteousness, according to our light and dispensation." (vol. iv. p. 106.)

Of these dispensations Mr. F. speaks in the next section; together with the manner in which faith must be exercised on such truths as are proper to be embraced. He then concludes in the following manner: "This gospel, for example, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men, that they should seek the Lord as the gracious Author of their being, and love one another as brothers"—this everlasting gospel, I say, has in all countries leavened the hearts of pious heathens. This doctrine, Messiah will come to point out "clearly the way of salvation," added to the gospel of the Gentiles, has tintured with superior goodness the hearts of believing Jews. This truth, "Messiah is come in the flesh," superadded to the

definition; notwithstanding the note which was then before his face did recognize the definition, and assign to it its proper sphere of active operation, as being confined to the christian dispensation; while he himself was speaking of that faith which was saving under inferior lights. It is not a greater mistake to suppose that Mr. F. had renounced the definition in question, than it would be to imagine that we have abandoned his doctrine of the inferior dispensations.

Jewish gospel, has enlarged the hearts of all the disciples of John, or the babes in Christ. And these truths, " Christ died for my sins, and rose again for my justification : He has ascended up on high : He has received the gift of the Spirit for men—for me : I believe on him by the power of that Spirit : he dwells in my heart by faith : He is in me the hope of glory : the promise of the Father is fulfilled : the kingdom of God, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, is come with power : " these richer truths, I say, superadded to those which are essential to the inferior dispensations, tincture the hearts of all *adult* christians, and make them more or less intimately one with Christ, according to the degree of their faith, and the influences of his Spirit." (vol. iv. p. 114.)

Mr. Fletcher, in a preceding part of the same volume, thus minutely describes that faith which is imputed for righteousness, in the following words : " This lively faith, this faith working by love, is that which is imputed for righteousness, and that whereby the soul is born of God, according to the christian dispensation of the gospel. By this faith the believer being strongly united to Christ as a member to the body, becomes entitled to a much larger share in the benefit of all that our Lord did and suffered; and, in consequence of this vital union with him, who is the source of all goodness, he derives a degree of power till then

unknown, to do good works truly so called:" (p. 37.) In this short paragraph Mr. F. positively asserts, that the "faith which is imputed for righteousness" is a faith which "works by love." What can afford us a more decisive proof than this, that he did not renounce the definition? If our love to God is the effect of his love towards us, as St. John asserts, then his love must be first manifested in order to excite ours. And, consequently, nothing short of a "sure trust and confidence" can be sufficient for the purpose. He, therefore, who conceives that we may have justifying faith while labouring under a sense of the divine displeasure, must conceive that the faith which is imputed for righteousness is a faith which works by *terror*!

Mr. Fletcher, in his address to penitent mourners, no where represents them as having that faith which works by love, which he has declared is imputed for righteousness. But he earnestly presses them to seek it, by every motive which truth and language can suggest, without once insinuating that they have already attained the blessings which he urges them to seek. On the contrary, in his address to christian believers, he considers them as having ventured on the Saviour, and laid hold on the glorious prize. "Ye taste those powers (of the world to come), happy believers (he observes,) who see that God is love—boundless, free, redeeming, pardoning, comforting, sanc-

tifying love in Jesus Christ. The more you believe it, the more you feel it. Do then always the work of faith, and you shall always abound in the patience of hope, and the labour of love. You have believed the truth; and it has made you free: worship the God of truth; triumph in Christ, the living truth; and be daily baptized with the Spirit of truth: beware of enthusiasm: speak the words of soberness and truth: God is not the author of nonsense." (vol. iv. p. 150.)

That those who labour and are heavy-laden must come to Christ in order to obtain rest, is the plain language of scripture. (Matt. xi. 28.) It is also equally evident, that those who thus come to him, must receive him in order to their becoming the sons of God. For "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John, i. 12.) The language of these two passages plainly expresses the doctrine which Mr. Fletcher has inculcated in his addresses to penitent mourners, and to christian believers. The former, he earnestly exhorts to behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world; and the latter, he beseeches to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. To such as feel the burden of their sins, and "walk in darkness, but have no light," all those invitations and promises are applicable, which can encourage them to "trust in the name of the Lord, and

stay upon their God." They are not far from the kingdom of God, but they want to find an entrance: they are on the margin of the pool, but they want to step into it. Faith already begins to dawn in their souls, and to put forth its prospective operation. Still one thing is lacking. They want to venture on the Saviour, and to close in with the overtures of mercy. The instant this is done, God will lift upon them the light of his countenance, turn their darkness into light, and enable them to rejoice in his salvation. The prospective operation of unfinished justifying faith has already begotten in their souls "a sure trust and confidence that God, for Christ's sake, will forgive their sins." Now they rely on the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and feel the love of God shed abroad in their hearts. In the same moment justifying faith becomes mature, contemplates the blessing which it has received, and begins to work by love. "This," as Mr. Fletcher observes, "is that faith which is imputed for righteousness," and is, as Mr. Wesley has expressed himself in his definition, "a sure trust and confidence that a man hath in God, through Christ, that his sins are forgiven, and that he is reconciled to the divine favour." This is what I have in these letters denominated the retrospective, or reflex act of faith.

That both of these operations of faith are necessary to constitute justifying faith, the nature

of justification seems to require. In order to the attainment of this blessing, there must be wrought in the soul a persuasion of its own helplessness and necessities; a persuasion of Christ's power; and such a confidence in his ability and readiness to pardon, as to induce a renunciation of every thing besides, and to beget a belief that shall terminate in a venture on his mercy. But this belief is not justification, for that is the pure act of God; nor is it the evidence of justification, because that must be retrospective, and this is prospective. "What then, it may be inquired, is the nature of this prospective belief?" I answer, that it is that prospective operation of justifying faith which a penitent has when he comes to Christ for pardon. As an act of the mind, it is completely faith; but as "justifying faith," it is unfinished and indistinct. That the person who possesses it believes many gospel truths, is admitted; and so far his faith is perfect. But, though he fears God, it is from a servile principle; and, therefore, as "justifying faith," it is incomplete; and were I called on to give it a name, I should denominate it, "the direct act, or prospective operation, of justifying faith."

This "direct act," or "prospective operation of faith," is, however, the only condition which God requires of penitents in order to their acceptance with him; and when it is so far matured that the soul is enabled to venture on the atonement, and

to rely on this alone for salvation, the penitent is justified freely by divine grace through the redemption that is in Jesus. Here the retrospective operation, or reflex act of justifying faith begins: it unites with the direct act which went before; the prospective and retrospective branches meet together; the sinner is accepted through the beloved; and "justifying faith" becomes complete. Hence, when viewed in its consummation, we behold it as "a sure trust and confidence that God both hath, and will forgive our sins: that he hath accepted us again into his favour for the merits of Christ's death and passion," agreeably to Mr. Wesley's definition, and to the contents of that letter which we have already examined, in which Mr. Horne fancied that Mr. W. had renounced it.

That Mr. Wesley's *Genesis Problematica*, or letter to his brother, was never designed by him as a full explanation of his sentiments on the important topics which he there proposes for examination and discussion, is evident from his own words in the first sentence: "A skeleton of this desideratum on justifying faith (he observes) which you may fill up, or any one that has leisure, I have roughly set down." To make this, therefore, which he declares to be but "a skeleton, and that "roughly set down" for others "to fill up," a full development of his principles, in all their parts, on the subjects of justification and

justifying faith, is to violate his own express declaration, which stands at the head of the letter. And to place this incomplete delineation in opposition to principles which he had publicly avowed, afterwards inculcated, and nowhere abandoned, is such an extraordinary act of friendship in Mr. Horne toward his memory, as furnishes the means of complaint, but leaves us at a loss to discover the occasion of our obligations to him.

That the conclusions which I have drawn from premises which Mr. W. had laid down, will do more justice to his venerable memory, than those which compel us to suppose that he first advanced principles, which he afterwards relinquished on finding them erroneous, and that, finally, he re-adopted what he had at first rejected, and that too in opposition to his own positive declaration, is too evident to require proof. Yet, all this must be allowed, if we admit what Mr. Horne has advanced in his letters. We can nowhere gather from Mr. W.'s definition of justifying faith, or the uses to which he has applied it, that he ever opposed the important truths contained in his *Genesis Problematica*. Neither is it discoverable, either from the letter itself, or any thing Mr. H. has been able to draw from it, that Mr. W. had relinquished his previous definition and adopted opposite principles, as Mr. H. has supposed. We cannot, therefore, but express the deepest regret, that, under the sincerity of friendship, he should resort to such unhappy

expedients to vindicate our common Friend; and in reality, though without design, attempt to establish positions which, if generally received, would not fail to make his memory appear ridiculous. Whereas, if he had only adverted to a few simple truths, which are in themselves incontrovertible, however much we may differ as to the appropriation of names, no room could have been found for the opposition which he has made.

The few simple truths to which I allude, are those which I have already endeavoured to explain. These are, that "justifying faith" considered as complete, must have a direct and a reflex act, or, in other words, must operate in a prospective and retrospective manner:—that the former is that by which we venture on Christ for pardon, and the latter is that by which the blessing is actually received. To the former of these, Mr. Wesley's *Genesis Problematica* appears chiefly to apply, and to the latter the *general* language of his definition:—a definition which he thought more properly placed where "justifying faith" received its consummation, and could be fully embraced, than it could be any where else, while moving progressively through the distinct stages of its unfinished operations.

The definition of Mr. W. describes justifying faith to be "a sure trust and confidence that a man hath, &c.;" and by the reflex act of faith we receive Christ into our hearts. The former includes

a knowledge that " my sins are forgiven, and I am reconciled to the favour of God ;" and the latter corroborates, by realizing it, the same important truth. Of the evidences which accompany this reflex act of faith, permit me to present you with a picture drawn by Mr. Horne in a paragraph of his own book. This passage I insert with the greater pleasure, as it expresses at once both his sentiments and our own.

" If I look into the gospel glass, my looking is a figure of my faith : for unless I look, I can neither see Christ nor myself. When I look, what do I see? Christ crucified, and God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. My eyes, my soul, are fascinated with wonder and solemn delight. My heart melts, my eyes overflow, my head is as water, while I look on him whom I have pierced. The burden of guilt gently unlooses, and rolls into his quiet sepulchre, and the peace of God calms all the tumults of my breast. For a season, I am so engaged in the contemplation of the heavenly vision, that I have no leisure to consider myself; but, at length, I catch a glimpse of my own countenance and image. I recognize the same features, but how wonderfully are they changed. What a spirit is lighted up in those faded eyes. Peace is enthroned on the brow, so lately wrinkled by care. Celestial splendours play on my temples. All my gaping wounds are healed, and not a scar is left behind. My tattered filthy rags are exchanged

for a robe, made white in the blood of the Lamb. Immortal vigour braces every nerve, I feel a pinion in every limb, I tread in air, and Abba, Father! spontaneously bursts from my loving heart.—And, what is the meaning of all this? It means, that with open face I have been beholding as in a glass the glory of my Lord, and have been changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.—This is a figure of the reflex act, the faith of assurance.” (p. 20.)

“Wherein then, it may be asked, if this paragraph expresses the sentiments of Mr. Horne, does he differ from us?” Alas! I fear the picture which he has drawn is, according to his views, only ideal. It exists in his theory, but rather to amuse than edify; and is better calculated to fill up a dreary blank in his page, than to be reduced to practical utility. He allows that this experience is the privilege of christians, but a privilege which very few are permitted to enjoy; and of those who profess to have attained it, he expresses many doubts of their sincerity. Were I to assert, that the Methodists can produce thousands of living witnesses, who thus know by experience that God is true, and who thus felt his power when they were justified through faith, Mr. H. would most probably accuse me of arrogance, and repeat the language of his fortieth page—“We deny the facts you affirm, as well as your arrogant presumption.” This glorious truth, however, is not to be so easily shaken. The

evidence which supports it, is too strong to be blown away with the breath of exclamation; and I must rather submit to ungenerous imputations, than not testify what I know.

Far be it from me, however, to insinuate, that all those who, we have reason to believe, are justified freely by divine grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus, enjoy in all their fulness, the moment they are justified, the blessings which Mr. Horne has described. His description, nevertheless, though so exalted, is realized by thousands, notwithstanding it has been delivered in language so splendid and glowing, as apparently to put it out of the reach of all. Still, I say, we admit that there are multitudes, who, we believe, are in the favour of God, that come considerably short of this plenary assurance in justification. But this leads immediately to another inquiry.

Fifthly, Does justifying faith bring with it any specific evidence?

I answer, if it brought no evidence, its existence could not be ascertained; neither could we have any criterion by which faith could be distinguished from unbelief, or a state of justification from that of condemnation. And, perhaps, we cannot give a greater proof of human weakness, than to admit the existence of a fact, and yet deny the evidence by which that existence is ascertained. Yet, such must be our conduct, if we suppose that any one can be justified by faith, while he is labouring

under a sense of the divine displeasure. St. Paul says, that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 1.) Here peace is introduced as an evidence of the blessing; and those who are entire strangers to it, have no reason to believe that they are in the favour of God, or accepted by him. Again, "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Rom. viii. 6.) Here life and peace are placed before us as the evidences of spiritual mindedness, and directly opposed to that death which results from, and accompanies, the carnal mind. Again, "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. viii. 14.) Are any, I would ask, led by the Spirit of God, but those who have received Christ? And is it possible, that any can receive Christ, and be *led* (not awakened) by the Spirit of God, and yet have no knowledge or evidence of the fact? Surely this is impossible! Again, "he that believeth hath the witness in himself;" (1 John, v. 10.) and "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." (Rom. viii. 16.) What evidences can be more direct and specific, than these which are here pointed out? They all conspire to establish the important truth for which I contend, namely, that justifying faith is always accompanied with an internal and external evidence. Thus God accepts and pardons, and then communicates these proofs

of what he has done. Hence the Spirit of adoption, as Mr. H. has justly observed, does not make or constitute us the children of God, but finds us already made so by the remission of sins which had previously taken place. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." (Gal. iv. 6.)

This evidence, which invariably accompanies justifying faith, produces a change both in the heart and in the life. In the heart the principle has undergone an entire revolution. A dread of punishment gives place to love, and this becomes the great stimulus to action. The happy convert no longer obeys from an apprehension of wrath, but from a motive of grateful affection. He feels himself reconciled to God whose anger is turned away from him, and claims an interest in him through whom he had received the atonement. To others, the change which has taken place in his heart, is visible by that which is discovered in his life. In this he moves through all the paths of duty with alacrity, has power over those sins which before led him captive, and proves to all around him that the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. He no longer complains in the language of the Apostle, "when I would do good, evil is present with me," but "thanks God who giveth him the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." He takes the laws of God for his guide, and walks in all the ordinances

of the Lord blameless, does good to his fellow-creatures from pure motives, out of faith unfeigned, and so causes his light to shine before men, that others seeing his good works are led to glorify his Father who is in heaven. Here then is an internal evidence that the heart is changed, an evidence which reaches to the conversation, and influences the life, and thereby affords proof that old things are passed away.

But, sixthly, Is this evidence known?

I answer, to admit the existence of evidence is to acknowledge that it is known to all those to whom it is evidence: and so far as it is unknown, it has no existence. A change from fear to love—from sorrow to joy—from anguish to peace—and from expectation to possession, can never exist where it is wholly unknown. No man can pass through this change in his moral relation to God, a change which brings with it such decisive marks of intellectual and external evidence, and yet remain totally unconscious of the fact.

But, seventhly, “Are all those who are awakened by the Spirit of God, at the same time genuine believers in Jesus Christ?”

It is on this important question, which yet remains to be decided, that we are chiefly at issue. That repentance and faith are in their natures distinct from each other, is evident from Mark, i. 15. as I have already noticed, where the necessity of both is distinctly enforced: and that the deepest

remorse for sin is not necessarily connected with faith, is demonstrable from the case of Judas, who had the former without the latter, and from that of Simon Magus, who had the latter without the former. These cases, I think, will leave no room for dispute. And why repentance and faith should be thought by Mr. H. to be so inseparably connected together in all true penitents, that "repentance is regeneration, and regeneration is repentance; and that all true penitents are born of the Spirit," as he asserts, (p. 33.) I am not, perhaps, more at a loss to know, than he will be to prove.

St. Paul, in defining faith, tells us, that it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. xi. 1.) Now, how any thing, of which I am wholly unconscious, can be to me an evidence, is extremely problematical,—I might have said perfectly contradictory. To admit it under these circumstances, I must decide against my own convictions; acknowledge an influence which I do not feel; and be guided by the light of an intellectual evidence which is totally unperceived. In short, I must acknowledge and disown the impression of the evidence at the same time. But this faith St. Paul represents as "a substance." Can then any man possess a substance and not know it? If so, upon what grounds, I would ask, can his possession be ascertained? Can another person know those internal feelings of his soul,

of which even he himself is unconscious? Surely this is impossible.

True penitence, wherever it exists, implies a godly sorrow for sin; but faith forms no part whatever of that idea. Whenever justifying faith is realized in the heart of the penitent, he assumes a distinct character, commencing a justified believer in Christ. In the former state he is broken down, but not built up; wounded, but not healed; killed, but not made alive. But, whenever the latter character commences, he begins a life of justifying faith in the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him.

To awakened sinners and all sincere penitents, instead of terrifying them "with damnatory clauses," as Mr. Horne asserts, we endeavour to show the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. With Mr. H. we believe, "the moment sinners fly to Christ, they are justified." (p. 25.) And in order to this, "all we insist upon is, to feel our want of Christ, and to be willing to receive him on his own terms. We believe first in Christ for pardon; and then we believe, that, so trusting in Christ (*i. e.* venturing on him), we are actually pardoned by our faithful God. Without this previous trust in Christ, we insist we can have no sense of pardon, no experimental knowledge of any Holy Ghost witnessing that pardon, either directly or indirectly." (p. 16, 17.)

As Mr. H. may not be displeas'd to see me republish, in his own words, a sentiment which both of our creeds embrace, I shall conclude this long letter with subscribing myself,

Dear Brethren,

Yours

Affectionately

And faithfully,

T. COKE.

LETTER III.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

MR. Horne, in his second Letter, seems determined to enlist both the Mr. Wesleys on his side. He, therefore, observes as follows: "So far was Mr. C. Wesley from denouncing wrath on sincere penitents, that while urging them to a more luminous and explicit faith, he comforted them by insinuating that they were in a *salvable* state. He told them that they had the faith of God's servants, though they were not yet sealed as his sons by the loving spirit of adoption." (p. 28.) Unfortunately, Mr. H. has here introduced too much to serve his purpose; and had he introduced less, his naked assertions would have been falsified by fact, and rendered nearly unintelligible.

Why Mr. C. Wesley, or any other man, should "denounce wrath" on sincere penitents, it will be hard to find a reason; and still harder for Mr. H. to prove that we are guilty of the charge. We

know that God has directed his servants to preach glad tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. (Isa. lxi. 1.) But he has no more directed them to denounce wrath on such characters, than he has in the above passage commanded them to tell the broken-hearted that they are already bound up, that those who are captives are already liberated, or that those are perfectly free who are actually bound. To the former charge we plead not guilty; and of the latter crime, Mr. H. will, perhaps, be the last man to accuse us.

But Mr. C. W., it seems, urged "sincere penitents to a more luminous and explicit faith." This has an unfavourable aspect on the cause which it was produced to serve. If he had thought, as Mr. H. more than insinuates, that all sincere penitents are actually in a state of justification, what necessity could he have been under for urging them to seek after a more explicit faith? He might, indeed, have told them that a more explicit faith was their privilege; but, by relinquishing the most powerful of all motives, he could not have urged it as their indispensable duty. He might have asserted that it was profitable, but he could not have insisted that it was necessary. He might have affirmed, that neither "an explicit faith," nor "an explicit assurance was essential" to their future happiness; that they already possessed the in-

estimable passport; that "repentance is regeneration, and regeneration repentance; and that those who have it are born of the spirit." (p. 33.)

Instead, however, of holding out any such delusive doctrine, he only "comforted them by insinuating that they were in a *salvable* state," "and" not, as Mr. H. asserts, p. 38, "consequently in Christ." Surely, if Mr. H. had been aware of the import of what he has presumed Mr. C. W. to assert, he would most probably have ranked him with "greyheaded definition men," or have ransacked his writings for an expression which would not have frowned so terribly on his attempt. Are those, I ask, who are only in a "*salvable* state," people who are actually saved? If so, how can both terms be applicable to them? If not, for what purpose has Mr. H. introduced the sentiment of Mr. C. Wesley? Are the terms *salvable* and *saved* of synonymous import? If so, then possibility and accomplishment must mean the same thing. This, we presume, is what few will have the hardihood to assert, and fewer still the ingenuity to prove. Yet the synonymous import of these words must be understood and made to appear by Mr. H. in order to answer the design for which he has brought them. And in proportion as he fails in the accomplishment of this undertaking, Mr. C. W., instead of serving his purpose, becomes an evidence against him in this very

passage which is cited to prove his approbation and favor.

Few, we presume, will be inclined to doubt that Mr. H. has here produced from the views of Mr. C. W. what he thought most subservient to his own designs; for surely that which is the most pointed, must be the most impressive. If, therefore, a sentiment which professes to be selected without being specifically quoted from any part of his works, deserts the cause which it was intended to uphold, the inference is not unfair, even from his own ground—that Mr. Wesley is not friendly to the service into which he is so violently impressed. For certain it is, that the language which is brought to display his views of the subject under consideration, instead of expressing what Mr. H. intended, implies exactly the reverse, and cannot be brought to coalesce with an opinion to which it is so decidedly repugnant.

But “ he told them (it seems) that they had the faith of God’s servants, though they were not yet sealed as his sons,” &c. Are those then the sons of God, who have not the faith of sons? Or can it be supposed that Mr. C. W. imagined those penitent mourners to possess the true christian faith, because he declared that they had the faith of God’s servants? On the contrary, is not this more than a presumptive proof that he had an eye to those dispensations of the gospel, of which Mr.

H. has entirely lost sight? This is inferible from his own observations. It is the difference in the dispensations, which gives rise to this difference in character; and upon this variety is founded the appellation of servant, as distinguished from son, which Mr. C. W. has used. But of this distinction we shall soon have an occasion to speak at large. I will only observe, at present, that it could not have served Mr. Horne's purpose worse, if he had quoted the first verse in Genesis—"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This, indeed, would have been wholly inapplicable, but it would only have proved a harmless blunder. Whereas the sentiments which he has produced, and justly attributed to Mr. C. Wesley, declare war against himself while he courts an alliance with them, and without solicitation inculcate the doctrines which Mr. H. opposes, and which we espouse.

From this unsuccessful attempt on the views of Mr. C. Wesley, Mr. H. once more appeals to those of Mr. John Wesley, and refers us to a few expressions which occur in his journals. From a solitary paragraph it appears, that in his early experience he wrote some bitter things against himself, and that he entertained, at intervals, some doubts of the reality of his own conversion, though he had crossed the Atlantic to preach salvation to others:—That from this severity he afterwards relaxed, and doubted whether the severe sentence which at

a former period he had been induced to pass upon himself, was just; and in 1774, declared that when he went to America, he thought he had the faith of a servant, though not that of a son of God. But I will insert Mr. H.'s own words:

“ Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore, referring to the same circumstance, tell us in a note, “ Mr. Wesley acknowledged many years after this, that some of his expressions in the above account concerning his state when under the law, were too strong; that he was then in a state of salvation as a servant, but not as a child of God; and that he had a measure of faith, but not the proper christian faith.” Thus is this important fact, that Mr. Wesley did retract his condemnation of himself, established in the lips of his three Biographers (viz Whitehead, Moore, and Coke”*)).

* The personal reflections and aspersions which apply to myself, I consider to be of little moment. I do not pretend to infallibility; and it is not improbable, but in earnestly pressing sinners to come to Christ, I have made use of occasional expressions, which on a strict review may be found too strong. But, as Mr. H. has adduced no specific charges, it is impossible for me to give any specific answer. General censures are nearly allied to personal calumny. One instance, indeed, and only one, is brought forward to substantiate the heavy charges with which I am loaded. This is not taken from my writings, but from an extempore discourse purported to have been delivered many years since, but at an undetermined period, before a congregation at Macclesfield. Evidence, one would think,

What it is that constitutes the "importance" of this "circumstance," seems extremely obscure. It unfolds nothing more than what every day pre-

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must be extremely scarce, to compel Mr. H. to resort to such peculiar expedients.

Mr. H., however, ought to know, that the characters of individuals are not to be estimated by solitary instances, admitting them to be genuine, but by general conduct. I therefore refer him to my Commentary on the Bible, and defy him to bring, from the six quarto volumes, a single expression which will either sanction or confirm the pointed accusations of severity, which throughout his book he has brought against me. This reference I conceive to be fairer than the method to which he has resorted, of forming from the records of memory, through an undefined series of years, a general charge founded on an instance, which, if I have no right to call dubious, I have an undoubted one to denominate solitary.

What beneficial consequences can result from such a mode of proceeding, I cannot say. But few, who are acquainted with the human heart, can be at a loss to know, that it is calculated to strengthen prejudice, and throw stumbling-blocks in the way of those who are already enemies to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Mr. H. seems to have made no allowances for the imperfection or treachery of his own memory, nor for the force of his imagination. I have, however, the charity to hope, that when he coolly reflects, he will not think himself infallible, any more than those whom he opposes, though he may hesitate to follow the example we have set before him; namely, that on a strict review he may find some of his expressions too strong. These are the only remarks which I intend to make on his numerous and severe personalities.

sents to our view : and only serves to confirm us in what all acknowledge—that none are infallible but God. Is there any thing wonderful that Mr. Wesley, any more than another man, should occasionally express himself too strongly? Or, that having thus expressed himself, he should, on receiving further light, use terms to soften the force of what he had previously advanced? Does this furnish matter for triumph? Surely not; but, on the contrary, it discovers a dignified mind, ardently searching after truth, anxious to obtain it, and ready to embrace it though under the most disadvantageous circumstances. Instead, therefore, of furnishing Mr. H. with an occasion of joy at the important discovery which he has made, the case which he has adduced presents us with a source more pregnant with argument that Mr. W. did not alter his sentiments respecting justifying faith, than any thing which Mr. H. has produced, or we believe is able to produce, to prove the contrary.

In the case now before us, we behold a frankness of communication which we can but rarely find, and an unreservedness of soul which timid spirits are unable to display; and from these circumstances, as well as from his general character, we are even compelled to infer, that if he had in reality, in any subsequent period of his life, abandoned the definition of justifying faith which he had adopted from the established church, of which Mr. Horne is a minister, he would have proclaimed it as on

the house-top, in language too conspicuous to have been unnoticed, and too expressive to be misunderstood. In fact, such an entire revolution must have been thereby made in almost all his writings (for with nearly the whole is the definition interwoven), as would have given a new turn to his thoughts, and have left but little resemblance between the new and old editions of his works. Instead of this, all his sermons, amidst the numerous revisions and editions which they underwent under his own immediate inspection, continue radically the same as they originally were: and the doctrines in question, though examined by him with the most scrupulous exactness, remained during his life totally unaltered, and continue the same to the present day.

“That Mr. Wesley,” says Mr. Benson, “did not alter his sentiments, as contained in his sermons, towards the close of his life, may be most unequivocally proved, by the very remarkable legacy which he left to each of the travelling preachers who should remain in the connection six months after his decease: “I give to each of these preachers, as a little token of my love, the eight volumes of sermons.” This was the last legacy in his will, and (except the appointment of his executors) the last sentence. With his dying breath, as it were, he recognizes these sermons, some of which, it must be remembered, were written only a few years before his death, and published in our Magazine; and he leaves them all unaltered, as a token of

his love, and, modestly, as a standard of the doctrines which, he judged, ought still to be preached by his successors. Mr. Wesley had too great a mind, to perform this last act without due solemnity and deliberation. His will was dated Feb. 20, 1789, only two years before his decease. I would here recommend the consideration of the above circumstance to the writer of that unwarranted attack upon the Methodists, contained in page 609 of *The Christian Observer*, for the month of October 1803: wherein he charges them "with now generally holding doctrines, respecting the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of sins, which, he says, were distinctly opposed by Mr. Charles Wesley, Mr. Fletcher of Madeley, and in the latter part of his life by Mr. John Wesley." Let the writer of that paragraph know, that however "credibly" he may think he has been informed of this, he has been *misinformed*. The sentiments which the Methodist societies hold on this subject, are the very same that they have held from the beginning; and are so far from being opposed by the pious and well informed ministers of Christ just mentioned, that their writings are considered and appealed to by us, as the most clear elucidation and best defence which we have, next to the scriptures, of our views on that subject. And we might challenge those who make such groundless assertions to produce one single paragraph from

any part of their numerous publications in prose or verse, in proof of them. Examples to the contrary, if need were, might be produced in great abundance. I shall only add, that I myself was intimate with them all, and with the Rev. John Wesley in particular, for above thirty years, and can testify that there is not the shadow of a foundation for any such opinion. There are also many others of the brethren remaining to this present time, who can bear the same testimony." (Inspector of Methodism inspected, p. 31.)

Now, under these circumstances, I would appeal to any honest man, nay, I would appeal even to prejudice itself, whether the facts before us do not furnish a decisive proof that no such alteration did take place in Mr. Wesley's sentiments as Mr. H. has supposed! And I furthermore appeal, either to the same character or to any other, whether it is probable, or even morally possible, that Mr. W. should have revised the editions of his sermons, as well as made additions to them, and have suffered the whole to remain unaltered, if his views of these important doctrines were changed.

It may indeed be said, that "a letter written so early as 1747 might have escaped his memory." I grant the fact. But I would again ask—did the new doctrine which the letter is supposed to contain escape his memory also? This

I think will hardly be asserted. But even admitting this to be the case, must not the revision of his sermons have recalled it to his recollection? And in either case, could he, as an honest man, have omitted to introduce an account of a change so radical, as to subvert a doctrine which he had been accustomed to deem of the last importance, and to substitute one nearly the reverse in its stead? That he has not thus acted, is an undeniable fact. But that he would have done so, if the change had taken place which has been supposed, we are warranted in concluding, from the readiness with which he retracted the error that respected himself, the instant he saw his previous observations in an unfavourable light.

A solitary paper may easily be presumed to have been forgotten, and incidental thoughts may without difficulty be erased from the memory. But a doctrine which to Mr. Wesley must have been always present in view, from the first moment in which he is fancied to have embraced it, to the latest period of his life, could not thus be lost. Christianity was his constant study, his perpetual delight, and his daily care. Justification and justifying faith are some of its most leading doctrines, and are interwoven with almost every other, and therefore could not long be absent from his thoughts. And it seems equally as probable, that Sir Isaac

Newton, while in the career of his studies, should have abandoned the doctrine of attraction, without making it known in his future works; as that Mr. W. should renounce his definition of justifying faith, and express himself on the subject in such a questionable manner, that only a few solitary individuals should be able to make the discovery. And what adds to the astonishment is, that his discovery should be made in direct opposition to his own express declarations, and to the general tenor of his voluminous works.

A further evidence, that forgetfulness could not have imposed the silence which is observable in many places of Mr. W.'s writings, is, that his new ideas of these doctrines must have been founded on a discovery of the errors of his old ones. Both, therefore, must have been presented together, and have kept each other alive by the perpetual contrast which they must have exhibited to his mind. We cannot, therefore, avoid thinking, that every opportunity would have been embraced by him of exposing the fallacies, and of guarding his followers from the delusions, which had so strangely imposed upon himself. He would have erected marks, and established rules, or at least would have attempted so to do, by which deception might have been known; and would have assigned reasons for his conduct, in embracing error and then renouncing it. Indeed, his recantation would have borne some resemblance to Mr. Horne's book, if we make a proper

allowance for the coarse expressions with which it is disfigured. But instead of this, his definition stands in its original form. Not a single word has sustained any alteration. The same doctrines have been invariably inculcated from first to last; and we are even driven to conclude, that no such alteration did take place in his sentiments as Mr. Horne has asserted.

But why, it may be asked, does Mr. H. seem so solicitous to ascertain what he denominates this "important fact," namely, that Mr. W. did retract "his condemnation of himself?" The reason is obvious. It furnishes him with an opportunity for questioning Mr. W's. judgment, and for raising suspicions on the propriety of his definition of justifying faith: While, in addition to this, the rigour with which Mr. W. spoke of himself in the early periods of his experience, gives a sanction to those accusations of severity which we are charged with retaining, and to which Mr. H. has annexed the appellation of "damnatory clause." "Can we wonder (says Mr. H.) if, after this unwarrantable condemnation of himself, Mr. Wesley was prepared to adopt a definition, which, by *inevitable consequences*, obliged him to deal out the same hard measure on all his hearers? Or, that he continued thus infatuated until 1747, when, from his letter to his brother, we learn that he relinquished both? From that time, I presume, he began to entertain more favourable ideas of his

state when he went to Georgia; and to abstain from pronouncing God's curse on truly serious characters, merely for the devil-invented sin of non-assurance." (p. 31, 32.) That "the same hard measure" is an "inevitable consequence of the definition," is a position which yet remains for Mr. H. to prove, and for me to learn. It is certain, that it did not appear so to Mr. Wesley, because he partially retracted the one, but invariably retained the other. Whereas, had he perceived that "inevitable" connection of which Mr. H. has spoken, both cause and consequence must have participated in the common revision. To this conclusion I am far from expecting that Mr. H. will accede; on the contrary, I should not be surprised were he to accuse me of assuming the very position which he has been controverting. I am willing to admit the force of his observations; and will readily acknowledge them to be applicable, as soon as he has overturned the arguments which I have advanced and may advance in these letters, to secure the ground on which I now take my stand. And, before he attempts to inveigh against the "dreadful consequences" which the definition involves, he would do well to consider, whether his declamations will not set in with full tide against the word of God. There is a spurious philanthropy to which the sacred writings are a stranger, which appears extremely captivating to the carnal mind, and which rarely fails to be po-

pular in proportion as it aims to extend the empire of mercy at the expence of justice. I will not accuse Mr. H. with intentionally pleading the cause of unlicensed liberality, because I am satisfied that he had no such design. But, should he on a cool and dispassionate survey of his work, be inclined to think that he has advanced principles which may be easily made subservient to the purposes of unrestrained thinking, I can assure him that he will be by no means singular in his discovery.

But even admitting that Mr. W. might have been induced, from his own personal severity towards himself, "to deal out the same hard measure on all his hearers," as Mr. H. has asserted, still the same occasion which directed him to rectify the mistake respecting himself, must have directed him to rectify it respecting others whom he had involuntarily led into a serious error. Above all, it must have imperiously called upon him to detect the fallacy of that principle which contained the awful consequence; and have obliged him to place it in such a light, that it should be no longer the source of mischief. This he was bound in justice to do. And, admitting the statement to be correct which Mr. H. has given, we have the greater reason to expect it, since he has been so candid as to note those minute changes which took place in his views of his own experience. Instead of this, the principle remains unaltered; and

is again republished with all its circumstances; and republished by a man, remarkable for a sound understanding, and venerable for piety.

“How little (continues Mr. H.) are we authorized to believe *all* the harsh conclusions made against themselves, by humbled and ill-informed penitents, since we cannot trust even John Wesley?” (p. 31.) No one, we conceive, will be inclined to dispute this just reflection, even if Mr. Wesley had never spoken one word on the subject. But when from such partial premises Mr. H. attempts to draw a general conclusion, and endeavours to infer, that because we must not believe “*all* the harsh conclusions which penitents make against themselves,” we are, therefore, to believe *none*, I must beg leave to withhold my assent, and think that the sacred oracles will justify my conduct. St. John, speaking of the Spirit of truth, says, “ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” (John, xiv. 17.) And St. Paul assures believers, that “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” (Rom. xiv. 17.) Now, if those who are awakened by the Spirit of God, but who have no consciousness of being delivered from the guilt which occasions the burden that they feel, may conclude that they are ingrafted on Christ, and justified by his grace, what meaning shall we attach to the above passages? To such as these, the kingdom of God, instead of

being righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, must be anguish, sorrow, and tormentive fear. And should it once be granted, that an experimental knowledge of the love of God shed abroad in the heart (and of the divine love shed abroad in the heart, no knowledge can be obtained but that which is experimental), is not necessary to salvation, inward sorrow and outward reformation would constitute the essentials of religion; and christianity would be reduced to the standard of heathen morality. All beyond what is in general denominated moral virtue, would be a matter of speculation, choice, or accident, which we could be under no necessity of obtaining. Thus happiness and experimental religion would at one stroke be banished from the world.

But "must we lop or stretch their limbs, until they ply to our definitions, until their tongues pronounce our Shibboleth?" (p. 31.) An answer to this question must be dictated by the extent of our definitions. When these lie within the pale of scripture, their authors take shelter in an impregnable fortress, which human ingenuity may assault, but must assault in vain. But when these definitions lie without that pale, neither public authority, nor antiquity, nor common consent, can afford them a sufficient defence. So far as Mr. Wesley's definition of justifying faith, and what Mr. H. has denominated "the damnatory clause," are implicated in this question, their supporters

have nothing to fear. The question which Mr. H. has proposed, so far as we are concerned in its solution, the apostle Paul has already answered by an exact anticipation: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha." (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) This passage is evidently more extensive than the definition, and covers both this and "the damnatory clauses" which Mr. H. has united together. And though he had certainly no such design, the question which he has proposed, if it were just, would bear much harder against St. Paul than against ourselves. To the apostle, therefore, we will refer him for an additional defence of what we have advanced.

To feel the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, and to love him in return, are the great objects for which we contend. The definition reaches no farther than to declare what these expressions evidently imply; and the scripture I have quoted embraces every idea. This love of God, and to God, we conceive to be essential to salvation, though it may be manifested with different degrees of evidence. "We teach," as Mr. Benson has justly observed, "that those in whom the fruits of the spirit are not found, are at present destitute of regenerating grace, and, therefore, ought to despair of being saved eternally, saved into heaven, without experiencing a change of their state and character, or without being made new creatures in Christ Jesus." (Inspector

of Methodism inspected, p. 44.) And should Mr. H. on reading these words, be disposed to exclaim that this is an avowal of "the damnatory clause," and "the devil-invented sin of non-assurance," I have only to deny the fact in his sense of the terms, and would recommend him to utter his complaint to him who has pronounced an anathema on those who love not the Lord Jesus Christ.

Anxious to make penitence more important than love, to prefer doubts to realized faith, and uncertainty to assurance, Mr. H. proceeds thus to argue against the latter: "A man's assurance or non-assurance, whether true or false, may have much influence on his personal peace and piety; but I can judge of neither otherwise than by their fruits; a rule of judgment which I have the authority of our Lord to abide by. And what more fallacious or dangerous criteria can we resort to than assurance and non-assurance?" (p. 32.) Perhaps, this is the first time that ever "assurance, whether true or false," was denominated a "fallacious or dangerous criterion." If "true assurance" may prove dangerous, (and to that which is not true I can annex no idea,) can *certainly* be safe? If assurance be fallacious, can intuitive knowledge be depended on? Or if it may prove both dangerous and fallacious, can any thing be substituted in its stead, which affords more indubitable evidence? Have uncertainty

and doubt a ~~greater~~ claim upon our confidence. These questions can admit of but one reply; and this must determine, that "assurance" never can be what Mr. H. has represented it. For, though we allow that actions are more visible in the eyes of spectators, yet they can no further operate on the mind of him to whom they belong, than as they are more or less accompanied with assurance. On this account they can never be introduced to supplant assurance, or admitted in any case in the character of rivals to its claims. In short, if assurance, "whether *true* or false, be a fallacious and dangerous criterion," as Mr. H. asserts, then assurance must be something diametrically opposite to what the name imports. It must be something from which the nature of assurance is wholly excluded, though it retains the name: and in order to view it in the light in which Mr. H. has placed it, we must allow it to be assurance and not assurance at the same time, which is a palpable contradiction. And were I addressing myself to the author of the passage, I should feel no hesitation in adopting the sentence with which he concludes his paragraph, and in retorting it upon himself to terminate mine. "If, without fear of offence, I may speak the real sentiments of my heart, I should deem myself an idiot to judge of my fellow-christians upon such principles."

No assurance, we invariably assert, can be experienced by any christian, which is contradicted

by the actions of his life. By practical piety, the faith which works by love is made manifest. The tree and its fruits are alike made good. Still we contend, that the tree must first undergo the change; and we think we have no contemptible authority for our belief. (Matt. xii. 33.) The principle, we assert, must reign within, from whence those consequences flow which are visible to all. The former brings peace and joy into the soul, and the latter convinces all observers that we have been with Jesus. We do not, however, imagine that the inward assurance for which we argue, arises from the observations that we make on our own conduct; but from that spiritual Fountain which is as a well of water springing up into everlasting life. An actual possession of this is the permanent basis on which assurance rests. And to suppose that God would permit awakened penitents, that earnestly desired rest, to be deceived with what is erroneously called a false assurance, begotten by the enemy of souls, is such a reflection on his moral nature, such a contemptuous view of his justice, goodness, mercy, and love, and such a distrust of all his promises, as cannot be harboured by any souls that are acquainted with him. The instant we admit the unholy thought, must conclude that God hath given them up to strong delusions, that they may believe a lie, and sink into perdition while they are in the act of calling upon him for mercy.

Mr. H. having thus detected the "fallacy of assurance," hastens full speed to annihilate a distinction which Mr. Wesley has introduced into his writings, and introduced for reasons which will soon become apparent. The distinction of which I speak is that which divides the *servants* from the *children* of God. These are terms which repeatedly occur in many portions of scripture, where they are evidently used with distinct significations. This distinction, Mr. W. is not charged with having abandoned, as he is with having relinquished his definition; but it does not suit Mr. Horne's purpose to admit it, and hence it becomes a subject of controversy. Thus, such parts of Mr. W.'s writings as Mr. H. thinks he can make subservient to his own system, he retains and introduces with marks of veneration, especially wherever he conceives that they betray a dereliction of principle. But in other cases, where his observations are diametrically opposite to these imaginary derelictions, Mr. H. becomes an opponent, and exerts himself to make the stubborn language bow to do homage to his intentions.*

* Though this has been the ordeal through which some of Mr. Wesley's expressions have been doomed to pass, it is far from being the case with a considerable proportion, or even the thousandth part of his works. The great mass of his writings is left untouched. The general tenor of his volumes is passed over in silence. The pointed expressions of his Hymns have entirely escaped notice. ▲

But I now return to the distinction between a *servant* and a *child* of God.

The doctrine taught by Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher on this head, we acknowledge to be the same as we now embrace, and invariably inculcate. And without any distinction I shall, occasionally, appeal to the writings of either, for arguments which will tend to illustrate those views which we have of this subject, in common with one another. I will therefore introduce, from Mr. Fletcher, "a plain account of the gospel in general, and of the various dispensations into which it branches itself."

"The gospel, in general, is a divine system of truth, which, with various degrees of evidence, points out to sinners the way of eternal salvation, agreeably to the mercy and justice of a holy God; and, therefore, the gospel, in general, is an assemblage of holy doctrines of grace, and gracious doctrines of justice. This is the idea which our Lord himself gives us of it in Mark, xvi. 16. For though he speaks there of the peculiar gospel

few insulated passages alone, evidently broken from their connections, or detached from their causes and consequences, are either violently impressed, or cruelly tortured, to appear in the behalf of a sentiment which Mr. W. almost with his dying breath disowned. In much the same manner Mr. Fletcher is drawn into this strange confederacy, from which, in a subsequent letter, I shall endeavour to rescue him.

dispensation which he opened, his words may, in some sense, be applied to every gospel dispensation. Preach the gospel.—He that believeth in the light of his dispensation, supposing he doth it with the heart unto righteousness, shall be saved, according to the privileges of his dispensation: here you have a holy doctrine of grace: but he that believeth not, shall be damned: here you have a gracious doctrine of justice. For, supposing man has a gracious capacity to believe in the light of his dispensation, there is no Antinomian grace in the promise, and no free wrath in the threatening, which compose what our Lord calls the gospel; but the conditional promise exhibits a righteous doctrine of grace, and the conditional threatening displays a gracious doctrine of justice.

“The gospel, in general, branches itself out into four capital dispensations; the last of which is most eminently called the gospel, because it includes and perfects all the preceding displays of God’s grace and justice towards man. Take we a view of these four dispensations, beginning at the lowest; *viz.* Gentilism.

“I. GENTILISM; which is frequently called natural religion, and might with propriety be called the gospel of the Gentiles;—Gentilism, I say, is a dispensation of grace and justice, which St. Peter preaches and describes in these words: “In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness (according to his light) is accepted with him:” these words contain an holy doctrine of

grace, which is inseparably connected with this holy doctrine of justice : In every nation he that feareth not God, and worketh not righteousness, (according to his light) is not accepted of him.

“ II. **JUDAISM**; which is frequently called the Mosaic dispensation, or the law ; that is, according to the first meaning of the Hebrew word תורה, the doctrine, or the instruction, and which might with propriety be called the Jewish gospel ; —Judaism, I say, is that particular display of the doctrine of grace and justice, which was chiefly calculated for the meridian of Canaan, and is contained in the Old Testament, but especially in the five books of Moses. The prophet Samuel sums it all up in these words: Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your hearts (according to the law, *i. e.* doctrine, of Moses) ; for consider how great things he hath done for you (his peculiar people); but if ye shall still continue to do wickedly, ye shall be consumed. 1 Sam. xii. 24, 25. In this gospel dispensation also, the doctrine of grace goes hand in hand with the doctrine of justice. Every book in the Old Testament confirms the truth of this assertion.

“ III. The gospel of John the Baptist ; which is commonly called the Baptism of John, in connection with the gospel, or baptism which the apostles preached, before Christ opened the glorious baptism of his own Spirit on the day of Pentecost. This gospel dispensation, I say, is the Jewish gospel improved into **INFANT CHRISTA-**

ANITY. Or, if you please, it is christianity falling short of that indwelling power from on high, which is called the kingdom of God come with power. This gospel is chiefly found in the four gospels. It clearly points out the person of Christ, gives us his history, holds forth his mediatorial law; and, leading on to the perfection of christianity, displays with increasing light, (1.) The doctrines of grace, which kindly call the chief of sinners to eternal salvation, through the practicable means of repentance, faith, and obedience; and (2.) The doctrines of justice, which awfully threaten sinners with destruction, if they finally neglect to repent, believe, and obey.

“ The capital difference between the gospel dispensation, and the Jewish gospel, consists in this: The Jewish gospel holds forth Christ about to come, in types and prophecies; but this gospel displays the fulfilment of the Jewish prophecies, and, without a typical veil, points out Christ as already come. Again: The political part of the Jewish gospel admits of some temporary indulgences with respect to divorce, the plurality of wives, &c.; which indulgences are repealed in the christian institution, where morality is carried to the greatest height, and enforced by the strongest motives. But, on the other hand, the ceremonial part of the gospel of Christ, grants us many indulgences with respect to sabbaths, festivals, washings, meats, places of worship, &c. For it

binds upon us only the two unbloody significant rites, which the scriptures call baptism and the Lord's supper; freeing us from shedding human blood in circumcision, and the blood of beasts in daily sacrifices: an important freedom this, which St. Paul calls the (ceremonial) liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and for which he so strenuously contends against judaizing preachers, who would bring his Galatian converts under the bloody yoke of circumcision and Jewish bondage.

“ IV. The perfect gospel of Christ, is frequently called **THE GOSPEL** only, on account of its fulness, and because it contains whatever is excellent in the above-described gospel dispensations. We may truly say, therefore, that perfect christianity, or the complete gospel of Christ, is Gentilism, Judaism, and the baptism of John, arrived at their full maturity. This perfected gospel is found then initially in the four books which bear the name of gospel, and perfectly in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. The difference between this perfected gospel, and the gospel which was preached before the day of Pentecost, consists in this capital article: Before that day, our Lord, and his forerunner John the Baptist, foretold, that Christ should baptize with the Holy Ghost; and Christ promised the indwelling Spirit. He said, he dwelleth with you, and shall (then) be in you—Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. But the full

gospel of Christ takes in the full dispensation of Christ's Spirit, as well as the full history of Christ's life, death, and resurrection; comprehending the glad news of the descent of the Holy Ghost, as well as the joyful tidings of the ascension of the Son: and, therefore, its distinguishing character is thus laid down by St. Peter: Jesus, being by the right hand of God EXALTED, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. The promise is unto you that repent and believe. We are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God (since the day of Pentecost) hath given to them that obey him: for, before Christ's ascension, the Evangelists could say, The Holy Ghost is not yet given (in its christian fulness), because Christ is not yet GLORIFIED. Compare Acts, ii. 33, &c, with Acts, v. 32. and John, vii. 39.

“ This gospel is the richest display of divine grace, and justice, which takes place among men in the present state of things. For Christ's sake the Holy Ghost is given as an indwelling sanctifying Comforter. Here is the highest doctrine of grace. He is thus given to them that obey; and, of consequence, he is refused to the disobedient. Here is the highest doctrine of justice, so far as the purpose of God, according to the elections of grace and justice, actually takes place in this life.

before the second coming of Christ."

(FLETCHER'S Doctrines of grace and justice,
vol. iv. p. 4—8.

Of Mr. Fletcher's views on the points before us, no language can bring with it clearer evidences of decision, than this which I have quoted from his pages. The dispensations are pointedly marked, and discriminating circumstances are introduced to distinguish them from one another. To the scriptures which he has collected to support his views and observations, it will be needless to make any additions, since those produced by him are both numerous and appropriate, as well as arranged with judiciousness and care. In these scriptures, we first perceive in the Gentile dispensation the primary dawning of gospel light; under the Jewish, the clouds appear more rapidly to disperse; under that of John the Baptist, the light shineth still more and more to the perfect day; while under the christian dispensation we behold the Sun of Righteousness arisen with healing under his wings, shining in meridian splendour, and bringing life and immortality fully to light.

With these distinctions before us, it is a necessary, but not a difficult question, to determine—under what dispensation do we live? If it were under the Gentile or Heathen, then that faith which was saving to them, would be saving to us:—if under the Jewish, we need ask no higher degree of

justifying faith than that which the pious Jews had:—if under that of John, then by the light of his dispensation we might hope for mercy, and expect salvation:—but, if under the christian dispensation fully revealed, then it is only through the door which this dispensation opens, that we can hope to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Now it must be evident to all, that we are not under the Gentile, nor the Jewish gospel, nor that of John the Baptist, but under that of the christian, fully revealed. This is so obvious, as to supersede all occasion of proof; and, consequently, we have no more reason to expect that our salvation can be effected by the light of a dispensation under which we are not placed, than that we can be saved by that which has no existence. God, whose ways are according to truth, it is evident, never required of the Gentiles, either the faith or practice which he required of the Jews; nor of the Jews what he expected from those who had known the baptism of John; nor of the disciples of John, what he requires from us. For, as to suppose him to make such demands in either of these cases, is to make him an austere master, reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not strawed, which would be a direct impeachment of his justice; even so, on the contrary, it must be equally absurd for any man to expect salvation by the light, and through the conditions, of those dispensations of grace which are acknow-

ledged to be inferior to his own. For as a pious Jew must virtually despise the light of his own dispensation, when he expects salvation by that of the Gentiles, so the disciples of John must equally renounce the legislation of God, by expecting to be saved through those means which were exclusively appointed for the Jews; and, consequently, we who live under the meridian blaze of gospel light, cannot hope to enter the Kingdom of glory by either of the inferior lights, without despising the superior displays of his goodness and forbearance.

Under each of these dispensations there are certain degrees of light imparted, which are exactly suited to the people who are placed under its influence. In the same manner, there are certain degrees of faith required, and of duties enjoined, which can neither be abrogated, nor transferred from the people who live under one dispensation, to those who are placed under another. Some of these duties and degrees of faith Mr. Wesley has marked in the following passages: "Now God requireth of a heathen to believe that God is; that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and that he is to be sought by glorifying him as God, by giving him thanks for all things, and by a careful practice of moral virtue, of justice, mercy and truth, towards their fellow-creatures. A Greek, a Roman, therefore, yea, a Scythian or Indian, was without excuse if he did not believe

thus much—the being and attributes of God, a future state of rewards and punishments, and the obligatory nature of moral virtue. For this is barely the faith of a heathen.”

In describing his views of what the christian faith is not, Mr. Wesley proceeds as follows: “The faith through which we are saved, in that sense of the word which will hereafter be explained, is not barely that which the apostles themselves had while Christ was yet upon earth; though they so believed on him as to leave all and follow him; although they had then the power of working miracles, of healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease; yea, they had then power and authority over devils; and, what is beyond all this, were sent by their Master to preach the kingdom of God.

“What faith is it then, through which we are saved? It may be answered, first, in general, it is a faith in Christ; Christ, and God through Christ, are the proper object of it. Herein, therefore, it is sufficiently, absolutely distinguished from the faith either of ancient or modern heathens. And from the faith of a devil it is fully distinguished by this: It is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart. For thus saith the scripture, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” And, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe with

thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

“ And herein does it differ from that faith which the apostles themselves had while our Lord was on earth, that it acknowledges the necessity and merit of his death, and the power of his resurrection. It acknowledges his death as the only sufficient means of redeeming man from death eternal, and his resurrection as the restoration of us all to life and immortality; inasmuch as he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. Christian faith is then, not only an assent to the whole Gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ, a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life; as given for us, and living in us. It is a sure confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God; and in consequence hereof, a closing with him, and cleaving to him, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; or, in one word, our salvation.”

WESLEY'S Sermons, vol. i. 4—6.

Such were the views of Mr. John Wesley, of the degrees of faith, and the diversity of duties, which were and are required under the various dispensations. And such also is the manner in which he recognises in 1769 (the date of the edition I quote) that very definition of christian faith which

Mr. Horne has attempted to persuade us he had publicly and explicitly renounced in 1747. On his view of the dispensations his language coincides with that which I have quoted from Mr. Fletcher, so far as that of a sermon and of a dissertation can be supposed to agree. In both cases the doctrine of the dispensations is kept in sight; the condition of those who live under each, decisively marked: while that of the christian dispensation, under which we live, is placed on an eminence, that its superiority may be conspicuous to all. The practice which this dispensation inculcates is consummated in holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. And the maturity of faith which it enjoins, is thus expressed by Mr. Wesley, in that very letter to his brother, in which Mr. Horne contends that he has denied his original definition: (1.) "I allow that there is such an explicit assurance. (2.) That it is the common privilege of real christians. (3.) That it is the proper christian faith, which purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world."

But while these dispensations are admitted to be distinct, they are not supposed by us to be at variance with, or even independent one of another. Their dependence indeed is not mutual and reciprocal, but progressive and inclusive. The less cannot comprehend the greater, but the greater invariably comprehends the less. It would be absurd to suppose, that the dispensation of the Gentiles should include that of the Jews, which is acknow-

ledged to be superior; or that of John should be included in that of the Jews, for the same reason. And the same truth will appear still more conspicuously, if we apply the observations to the dispensation under which we live. Indeed, few things can be more irrational, than to suppose that the light of a superior dispensation can be included in one that is acknowledged to be its inferior both in brilliancy and extension.

On the opposite side, however, the case stands exactly reversed. The inhabitants under every dispensation, are called on to embrace, by faith, a certain portion of divine truth. Now the truths which were given to the Gentiles under their dispensation, are included in that under which the Jews were placed. For it would be ridiculous to imagine that these were called on to "fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all their heart," and yet discharged from an obligation to "believe in his existenee, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." And in like manner, it would be preposterous to think that the disciples of John the Baptist were commanded to "repent, and believe that the kingdom of heaven was at hand," or that John should "preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," (Luke, iii. 3.) and not inculcate what was essential to both of the inferior dispensations. And, if from hence we advance to the christian dispensation fully revealed, under which we have the happiness

to live, what can be more absurd than to suppose that our faith does not include all the essentials which were taught under the dispensations of John, of the Jews, and of the Gentiles or Heathens? What article as christians can we dismiss from our creed? I know of none. If we admit the being of a God, we recognise the faith of heathens. If we allow the promises of a Messiah, and our duty to fear the Lord and serve him, we recognise the faith of Jews. And if we grant repentance for the remission of sins to form a necessary part of our creed, we recognise the faith which John taught his disciples. And we cannot dispense with any one of these articles under the christian dispensation: the whole must be included, and, therefore, inculcated in our faith and practice.

These dispensations may be compared to "orbs in orbs inclosed," or, more familiarly, to four circles, where the greater always circumscribes the less. Thus the Gentile dispensation is included in the Jewish, both are included in that of John; and all three are swallowed up or included in the christian dispensation, fully revealed, under which we live. Thus every individual, under his proper dispensation, has his degree of saving light imparted, and, by attending to it, may be made wise unto salvation.

Now, it is apparent, from what has been said, that as the christian dispensation is the most ex-

tensive, and exceeds all the others in splendour, in order to receive Christ in us, the hope of glory, we must believe all the essential truths of the inferior dispensations; because these are included in christianity. Hence it is evident, that we must pass through various gradations of experimental knowledge, namely, through those of the inferior dispensations, before we can fully reach the christian. And, consequently, we must, during this spiritual progress, be entitled to an appellation somewhat distinct from that of *children of God*, and from that of *unbelievers* in the strictest sense of the word. What name then shall be given to those persons, who, living under the christian dispensation, and in order to obtain the blessings which it promises to those who embrace Christ, are now travelling through the inferior lights? *Unbelievers*, in the strictest sense of the word, they are not, because they have, what under the inferior dispensations would have been saving faith. *Justified believers* they are not, because, according to the case given, they are only now coming to Christ; but are neither engrafted on him, nor possessed of that christian faith which is imputed for righteousness. And, consequently, if in this state an appellation must be given to them, it must be one which designates a middle character. Mr. Horne informs us, (p. 33.) "that they are the children of God, and that repentance and regeneration are the same." On this, I must observe—If

they are children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; (Rom. viii. 17.) and, consequently, they must be saved by the light of a dispensation under which they are not placed. Hence, then, they are virtually invited to sit down where they are, and taught to believe that they are already in the possession of the glorious prize, though they are only now coming to Christ for pardon.

To avoid a consequence so pernicious and absurd, Mr. Wesley denominated such characters the *servants*, not the sons or *children of God*. Their peculiarity of character arises from the different dispensations of the gospel, which I have already stated; and the only question which now appears is,—Has Mr. W. any thing more than mere fancy to support him in his use of the appellation of *servants*, which he has given?

Our blessed Lord, when conversing with his disciples, and giving to them his last charge before his crucifixion, addresses them as follows: “Henceforth I call you not *servants*, for the *servant* knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you *friends*; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.” (John, xv. 15.) In this passage, it is evident, not only that the term is used, but that it stands contrasted with that of *friends*; and also, that the words apply to two distinct characters, though sustained at different times by the same individuals. “Henceforth,

"I call you not servants." Is not this a plain intimation that in days past he had thus denominated them? And as all his words are according to truth, is not this a plain acknowledgement that they were entitled to that appellation in relation to this brighter display of his more glorious dispensation? And is not the reason assigned, why they were henceforth to be called friends—namely, because the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth? The increasing light is that upon which the change of character is founded—"all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." Thus the self-same individuals were first servants, and then friends, according to their advance in that light which shone upon the respective dispensations under which they were placed.

But against these distinctions between a servant and a child of God, Mr. Home has a tremendous battery in reserve, which he thus opens in triumph: "But let us come to consider what is the meaning of this distinction? Does it mean to say, God's servants are in very deed not his children? Ridiculous. God never had a servant in his house, who was not his child. Will the devil's children serve God? Is the God who is a Spirit, to be worshipped *acceptably* otherwise than in spirit and truth? Can the old nature serve the purposes of a new and spiritual life? If Jesus was the first who made use of the figure of regeneration,

was he the first who taught that repentance which is couched under it? Repentance is regeneration, and regeneration repentance; and to damn true penitents, is to damn those who are born of the Spirit." (p. 32, 33.)

The primary point in this extraordinary passage, is comprised in these words—"Does the distinction mean to say, that God's servants are, in very deed, not his children? Ridiculous. God never had a servant in his house who was not his child." To the interrogatory part of this proposition, Mr. H. has made no exceptions, and certainly we have no right to make them for him. But we have an undoubted right, not only to prove that what he has denominated "ridiculous," is true, but that his next assertion, when taken in the abstract, is demonstrably false. In the prophecy of Jeremiah, chap. xxv. 9: Nebuchadnezzar is expressly called the "*Servant of God.*" And yet, notwithstanding this distinguishing appellation, no one, I conceive, not even Mr. H. himself, who has made the assertion, will presume to say that Nebuchadnezzar was a child of God. Similar observations might be made on the characters of "*Shepherd,*" (Isa. xlv. 28.), and "*Anointed,*" (Isa. xlv. 1.), which are given to Cyrus. For, though few princes, whose names are enrolled on the records of antiquity, have left behind them a more exalted character; yet, whoever notices the manner in which he is introduced by the prophet, must

acknowledge, that it was from his subserviency to the divine designs, and not from his personal piety, that the epithets of "Shepherd," and "Anointed," were bestowed upon him. What were the Assyrians?—What were all those nations that harassed the Israelites in the early periods of their history?—What was Titus Vespasian, by whom Jerusalem was sacked?—And what are all "those mighty troublers of the earth, who swim to sovereign rule through seas of blood?"—All are servants of the living God. But, alas! few among them, we have reason to fear, are his genuine children. Inanimate nature serves the divine purposes, and every instrument through which he acts is a servant of the living God. Nay, even Satan himself, who, at this moment, is doomed to "do his errands in the gloomy deep," is the servant of his justice, and the subject of his power. And yet Mr. H. in direct opposition to fact, to reason, and to scripture authority, declares it to be ridiculous, that any one should be the servant, without being the child of God! But let us now consider this assertion in a spiritual light.

That no one can be a *servant* without being a *child* of God, under the christian dispensation, provided the motives of action with both characters be equally good, I most readily admit. And that either Mr. W. or ourselves have asserted the contrary, under the circumstances given, is a piece of information which I have yet to learn.

We, nevertheless, contend, that those who live in the light of the christian dispensation, and yet go no further than to comply with the conditions of the Gentile or Jewish dispensations, have not that faith which is peculiar to the christian, and, consequently, cannot, as such, be denominated the children of God. And yet, in relation to this christian dispensation, since they have evidently taken some steps towards the obtaining of that degree of faith which is peculiar to it, they cannot be considered as wholly in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity. For since they have broken off their sins by repentance—have ceased to do evil, and learned to do well in a certain degree,—and are earnestly seeking after God, they cannot be justly ranked with those who are dead in trespasses and sins. They are already convinced of sin, and have what to a Heathen or a Jew, or perhaps to a disciple of John, would be saving faith; but they have not that faith which is peculiar to the christian dispensation, under which they live, and which is now revealed in all its fullness. It is to these characters that we apply the appellation of *servants*; and it is incumbent on Mr. Horne to prove that we are governed by fancy, and that we contend for error in so doing.

But “will the devil’s children serve God?” Let the wicked prophet Balaam and the traitor Judas answer this question. Both were evidently *servants*

of God, and both were as undeniably children of the devil. Whoever performs what God has commanded, serves him; and consequently, whoever serves him is his servant. But it will not from thence follow, that all who thus serve and obey him are in reality his children. It is not the act of obedience, but the principle from whence it arises, that constitutes the difference between the servants and the children of God. In the formation of the latter character, love must predominate, and be the spring of action; but in the formation of the former, though various motives may inspire to action, love never can be the ruling principle. That it is possible for men to serve God from improper motives, and on this account to render their services unacceptable in his sight, the articles of the established church more than acknowledge. The twelfth and thirteenth articles not only state the fact, but assign important reasons why this fact must be. The question, therefore, though it puts on an imposing aspect, is nothing better than mere bravado, which is better calculated to prohibit than to meet inquiry. Thus much is clear, the peculiar situation which I have been describing, must be allowed to exist; for the wild supposition of Mr. H. that "repentance and regeneration are the same," I have already refuted in the preceding letter. And if the fact be recognised, the appellation which is evidently scriptural, and used in the sacred writ-

ings in a way which sanctions the manner in which Mr. W. has applied it, will not, I conceive, be exposed to much opposition from those who primarily inquire after truth. And, perhaps, Mr. H. on a deliberate reflection, may find it not so easy to abolish the distinction, as to pronounce it "ridiculous."

Mr. H. in the question which immediately follows the preceding, with a peculiar dexterity, entirely changes the ground on which the former stood, and asks—"Is the God who is a spirit, to be worshipped *acceptably* otherwise than in spirit and truth?" The inquiry is now no longer about the distinction between servant and child, but about that worship which is acceptable to God. I most readily concur with Mr. H. that none can worship God *acceptably*, but those who worship him in spirit and in truth. Hence those whom we acknowledge as servants, we conclude do not worship him acceptably, according to the christian dispensation, because they have not that spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind, (2. Tim. i. 7.) which is necessary to beget it; but the spirit of bondage, from which they groan to be delivered.

That it is possible for believers, who are far advanced in the divine life, to receive the spirit of adoption, Mr. H. admits; but he places the blessing at an awful distance, and describes it in such a peculiar manner, as more than intimates

that none but adult christians can presume to reach it. "But God, who sent forth his Son, in the fulness or maturity of time, for the glory of his ONLY BEGOTTEN, as well as for the perfecting of his children, gave brighter and more explicit views to christians, admitted them to a nearer, more endeared, and confidential access to himself; and, as *adult* children, gave them a double portion of his Spirit. The spirit of adoption, the seal and witness of God's christian children, was reserved as the crown and glory of christianity." (p. 33.)

The tone of this passage, and of the paragraphs which follow it, bears a strong resemblance to the views of Dr. Hale, in his "Methodism Inspected." That Gentleman, amidst his curious lucubrations, strangely conceived that the first six verses of the fifth chapter to the Romans, were peculiarly addressed to "proficients in the faith, and *masters* in Christ," as well as exclusively adapted to their condition; thus making the church of Christ sustain a similitude to a free-masons' lodge. The representations before us are so much alike, that one answer may suffice for both. To show, therefore, that we are not at variance among ourselves, Mr. Benson's answer to Dr. Hale shall be mine to the observation of Mr. Horne on the present occasion.

"You know, that according to St. John, even "little children," or babes in Christ, have their

sins forgiven them; that, according to St. Paul, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus:" That, "through him is preached unto all," without exception, "the forgiveness of sins," and, that "ALL that believe in him," with a faith preceded by repentance, accompanied with love, and followed by obedience, "are justified from all things:" That, according to John the Baptist, "he that believeth on Christ," be he who he may, with such a faith, "is not condemned, but is passed from death unto life;" and that, according to our Lord, even "the weary and heavy-laden may come to him, and find rest;" and that, "whosoever cometh, he will in no wise cast out."

"The truth is, as Christ, in the days of his flesh, conferred "remission of sins," and "the knowledge of salvation" thereby, on penitent sinners who believed in him, of all descriptions; so he commissioned his apostles, and messengers of every age, to "preach the gospel," (or glad tidings of salvation,) "to every creature;" to "preach repentance and remission of sins, in his name, among all nations, beginning," among his murderers, "at Jerusalem." Accordingly, the commission given to Paul was in these words, "I send thee to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins,

and an inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in me." And their language was, "God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Hence it is, that in their epistles to the churches, they addressed all that believed in Christ, as persons that were God's "adopted children, accepted in the Beloved," and made partakers of "redemption through Christ's blood, the forgiveness of their sins."

"But how is it in this case, that the learned Rector has forgotten the liturgy, articles, and homilies of that very church of which he is a minister? Does he not recollect, that they declare, "That if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins:"—"That he hath given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent," (and, therefore, not merely to persons far advanced in grace,) "the absolution and remission of their sins:" That "he pardoneth and absolveth all that truly repent," although but awakened lately, "and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel:" That the true and christian faith is "a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that by the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God,—whereof doth follow a loving

heart to obey his commandments." In the 17th article, we are told, that "Godly persons feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of God," are "justified freely," and "made the sons of God by adoption." Hence, this church very properly puts the following words into the mouths of all her true members: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Surely then, our Rector strangely forgot himself, when he represented remission of sins, justification, and peace with God, as high and distinguished attainments in the divine life, and hardly to be expected by awakened sinners in the first stage of their conversion from the power of Satan unto God.

"It is a pity, but some one had prevented the doctor from exposing thus the imperfection of his acquaintance with genuine christianity, by reminding him of the following passages: "Thou child (the Baptist) shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his way, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins." "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema, Maranatha." "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." The reader will however observe, that although he thinks justification, * peace with God, the love of God, &c.

* It would, certainly, be very unjustifiable to suffer this citation to remain, without any qualifying or discrimi-

too high attainments for young converts to aspire to ; yet he allows, that “ in particular cases of confirmed holiness, especially at the approach of death, God may vouchsafe to grant to his faithful and long tried servants, some animating sense of

nating observations, as far only as I apply it to Mr. Horne. Nothing can be more remote from Mr. Horne’s system, than that “ justification” is among the high attainments of christians. The language which, in the course of these letters, I have had an occasion to quote from his pages, must be a convincing proof to the contrary. The man who represents “ repentance and regeneration as the same,” and contends that “ every true penitent is born of the Spirit,” can never think that justification is a distant blessing.

After making this acknowledgment, should it be inquired, —“ Why I quote from Mr. Benson’s pamphlet what I allow to be inapplicable to Mr. Horne ?” the following is my reply. Though Mr. H. allows justification in an early period, he takes care to separate it from its internal evidences ; and even doubts, or more than doubts, the necessity of ascertaining their existence. “ Well-instructed christians (he observes) will have assurance ; weak and ignorant christians have it not. It is not essential to salvation, &c.” Now, against this half-denial of experimental religion, the passages which I have quoted from Mr. Benson are pointedly directed. They tend to establish the indissoluble union between justification and its inward evidences, and to enforce the necessity of our enjoying peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. Thus far they are as applicable to Mr. Horne as to Dr. Hales, against whose pamphlet they were first written.

his approbation, to support them under their change." But if we are not to expect such a blessing as "the knowledge of salvation," (*viz.* of present salvation from the guilt and power of sin, producing a lively hope of eternal salvation,) "by the remission of sins," except in particular cases of confirmed piety, or at the approach of death, I should be glad to know, in what sense we are to understand such passages of scripture as the following: "They that are in the flesh (carnally-minded) cannot please God; but ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "Because ye are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." Ye have not received the spirit of bondage unto fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption: the self-same Spirit (*Αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα*) beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace." "We know that we are of God, by the Spirit which he hath given us." "He that believeth, hath the witness in himself." "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves; how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" "Christ in you the hope of glory,

whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," Methinks all these, and such like passages of God's holy word, imply that we may "know that we are of God," even while we see the whole world around us, lying in wickedness; and that we ought not to conclude our state is safe, while we are without this knowledge."

BENSON'S "Inspector of Methodism Inspected,"
p. 47—49.

When these scriptures, adduced by Mr. Benson in the above passages, shall be found to be inapplicable to the doctrine which they are brought to establish, and insufficient to support it; and when the arguments drawn from them, and from other sources, shall appear to be inconclusive, we shall not hesitate to review the subject. But till the former can be made to speak a language which their authors never designed them to utter, and the latter can be deprived of meaning, we have little reason to fear that the evidence will appear defective, with those who are acquainted with the subject; and, therefore, all further additions appear at present to be superfluous.

To interpret Mr. Wesley's words, who, when speaking of the early periods of his experience, was induced to use some strong expressions against himself—expressions which he afterward thought it prudent to soften,—Mr.

Horne proceeds as follows: "Mr. Wesley's calling himself a servant, rather than a child, means then, that he was a babe in Christ, whose light was obscured by dark clouds; in whose temper *servile fear* as yet predominated over *filial love*: and who did not well understand how to repose his soul on the glorious atonement. And such, in fact, are all sincere penitents, animated by a principle of godly fear, who have also a weak, general, obscure faith in Christ, on whom, alone, they present to God themselves and their services." (p. 34.)

By what authority Mr. H. has denominated any one "a babe in Christ, in whose temper *servile fear* as yet predominates over *filial love*," as he has not informed us, he has left us at a loss to discover. We may, however, rest assured, that it is not from the authority of the Bible, nor from that of any thing in concert with it; and the sanction which such an opinion may draw from human testimonies, though both numerous and otherwise respectable, can here afford little or no weight. That the assertion is contrary to scripture, may be gathered from the following consideration. St. John says, "I write unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven you." (1 John, ii. 12.) Now, whether this forgiveness be known or not, it must be allowed by all, that wherever justification is, there the forgiveness of sins must take

place, and that this forgiveness, or justification, is applied to babes or children. Now justification must be by living faith, for it would be more "ridiculous" to suppose justification to be by a dead faith, than to suppose that an individual might be a *servant* without being a *child* of God. And if this living faith be that by which we are justified, it must work by love; for it is only by working thus, that its life can be manifested. The consequence then is undeniable, that wherever the forgiveness of sins is, faith must work by love, and be totally incompatible with that temper where "servile fear predominates over filial love." And hence Mr. Horne's assertion is evidently erroneous.

But "can he (who is a sincere penitent) read the gospels, the plainest parts of scripture, and which, above all other parts, flame with the glory of Jesus, and not be charmed, drawn, and disposed to come to him who promises rest to the weary and heavy-laden? Impossible!" (p. 34.) It is really curious to develop the imposing language, and strange "impossibility" which this passage holds out. Surely, Mr. H. cannot mean that those who are only "charmed, drawn, and disposed to come to Christ," are already in a state of justification? This supposition is forbidden by his own expressions. And if these penitents are not in a state of justification, it will be difficult to

know in what manner this passage is to serve the author's purpose. Those who are only "disposed to come unto him," cannot yet have received the Saviour by faith in their hearts; because if they had, instead of being "disposed to come unto him," they must have already ventured on him. But can that person have already reached the haven of rest, which is promised to the weary and the heavy-laden, who is only "drawn" and disposed to come unto it?" Surely this must be impossible, unless it can be thought that our arrival at any given object, and our progressive movement towards it, are actually the same,—an absurdity this, which, I presume, no one will have the folly to assert, or the hardihood to patronize. If, therefore, "sincere penitents" are only "disposed to come to Christ," a clear distinction is admitted by Mr. H. himself between "repentance and regeneration." If those are actually regenerated, who are only "disposed to come to Christ," their coming to him must be useless, as their wants must be already supplied; and if they be not regenerated, Mr. H. abandons the very doctrine for which he has been contending. If my soul can be regenerated when I am only "disposed to come to the Saviour," my primary inducement to come to him is defeated by the previous reception of the blessing: but if my soul be not regenerated, repentance and regeneration are proved to be dis-

tinot, and the author's "charm" is fairly dissolved.

But let us grant the fact for which Mr. H. contends, namely, that genuine "penitents cannot possibly read the gospels without being charmed, drawn, and disposed to come to Christ;"—still his own reasonings must turn to his own disadvantage; and the consequences which result from them, will inevitably destroy, in another form, the hypothesis which he is so solicitous to establish. If every penitent mourner be actually "charmed, drawn, and disposed to come to Christ, when he reads the gospels," how can he any longer languish under a sense of the divine displeasure? Can a man feel an internal disposition of soul to come to Christ, and yet lament because he has it not? Can he be "charmed" with the love of Christ, and yet sorrow as those without hope, because he cannot experience that love by which he feels himself to be charmed? Every one who reads, must be satisfied that the case is impossible; and that the same arguments which will establish the position for which Mr. H. contends, if it have any meaning, will operate with equal force to annihilate his hypothesis, and confirm the certainty of that assurance which he "insists is not essential to salvation."

"Does he not see him whom he hath pierced, and mourn, as a man mourneth for his first-born? Is

Not this, in effect, a conviction of the damning nature of disobedient unbelief?" (p. 35.) Surely a "conviction of unbelief" is not faith. It bears no resemblance to it whatever. But it brings with it a decisive evidence in favour of what Mr. H. would probably be sorry to see proved; namely, that he who is "convinced of unbelief," must be convinced that he has not faith. "Unbelief is nothing but the negation of faith; and it is absolutely impossible that faith, and its reverse, can predominate at the same time, or that a conviction of the latter must necessarily include the former. If this were admitted to be sound reasoning, it would be easy to prove upon the same principles, that whosoever is convinced of being poor, must inevitably be rich; that he who is convinced of his being sick, must be already cured; and that he who is persuaded of his danger, must be already in a state of safety. If then a conviction of unbelief be not faith, but an indubitable evidence of its absence, he who is thus convinced, must be assured that he is destitute of faith in proportion to the strength of his opposite conviction. Consequently, while in this state of unbelief, he never can be justified by what he does not possess, neither can he enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus much seems undeniable, that where mourning is, there peace is not; and where peace is, there mourning ceases. Peace and sorrow cannot

exist together, because they are incompatible with each other. If, therefore, there be any with such characters as Mr. H. has described; namely, such as believe in Christ while they are labouring under "a conviction of unbelief;" they must have genuine faith without peace, and possess the favour of God, and a sense of condemnation, at the same time.

As a proof that assurance is not necessary to salvation, Mr. H. refers us to the case of Mr. Nathaniel Gilbert, of Antigua, who "laboured all his life under the dark cloud of non-assurance." The Methodist preacher, who stood by his death-bed, a pious definition-man, asked—"Brother, do you know your sins forgiven?" 'Alas! no; I fear it is too great a blessing to be bestowed on such a wretched sinner as I.' "On what do you trust?" 'On Christ crucified;' "Have you peace with God?" 'Unspeakable.' "Have you no fear, no doubt?" 'None.' "Can you part with your wife and children?" 'Yes, God will be their strength and portion.'" (p. 37.) Had this pious man (Mr. Gilbert) understood, or rather attended to, the import of his own words, it is more than probable, that he would have viewed his condition in a very different light, and would no more have doubted of the pardon of his sins, than he then did of the peace which he felt in his soul. What but assurance can destroy all doubts.

and fears? What but assurance can fill the soul with peace that is unspeakable? The same ideas which we attach to the term, were realized by him, but were expressed by other words. The thing was acknowledged, but acknowledged by another name.

From the case of Mr. Gilbert, Mr. H. returns again to the state of Mr. Wesley, which we have already surveyed, and asks—"What dreadful consequences will arise from your recognizing the infant John Wesley, as a brother in Christ? Did he not thrive and grow daily in grace and knowledge?" I answer, we know of no "dreadful consequences that will arise;" and, therefore, instead of "launching our anathemas on the cursed heads of (such) non-assured," as Mr. H. unjustly asserts, we view him as a babe in Christ, at the period of his embarkation for America. We do not, however, recognise him as a babe in Christ, because "servile fear predominated over filial love," but because it did not. Neither do we consider him as such, because he was in "a *salvable* state," as Mr. H. asserts, p. 38., but, because his sins were forgiven him. We hail him as such, because he had faith in Christ, a faith which worked by love, and which brought with it more evidence of its genuineness, than doubts of its illegitimacy. The clouds of rising fear compelled him in certain gloomy moments to cherish

doubts; but living faith, being more powerful, induced him to act in opposition to them. Servile fear only operated on his mind as a transient visitor, not as an habitual guest. Whereas faith working by love, instead of submitting to its influence, dispelled the shadow, and claimed, in general, the greatest share in the empire of his mind.

“ Do you, can you, (Mr. H. asks,) believe, that the new-born babes of Methodism have all clear and explicit faith in Christ, and fix immediately on his glorious atonement; that the spirit of adoption, which Jesus gave to his immediate disciples as the seal of adult sonship, is immediately shed abroad in their infant hearts; that as coheirs with their Lord, they immediately drink the generous wine of the kingdom, and rejoice in hope of the glory to be revealed, with joy full of glory? And to all this, do you add a direct witness, &c.” In reply to this, I might content myself with the words of Mr. Wesley, which I have already inserted in this letter: “ The general rule is, they who are in the favour of God know that they are so. But there may be some exceptions.” When, however, we allow that ALL may not have “ this clear and explicit assurance,” Mr. H. will only involve himself in another error, if he understand me to insinuate, that *any* can be justified by faith, who have no assurance at all;

or that the clear and explicit witness is not, in general, bestowed upon justified souls, under the gospel dispensation. Such conclusions, I have already proved to be unscriptural; and I may also assert, that they are not more unscriptural than false in fact. Thousands, and tens of thousands of living witnesses can attest the contrary to what he insinuates, and assign the happy moment when God spoke peace to their wounded spirits, and bade their broken hearts rejoice. And while we have both scripture and experience on our side, we are not solicitous about any other evidence.

In p. 40. Mr. H. observes as follows: "The men, whom your more judicious brethren recognise as babes in Christ, you treat as sincere yet damned penitents; and with the scorpion lash of the damnatory clause, are they disciplined for months, and sometimes for years, until, under the humble name of penitent, they grow in knowledge and grace." Whatever opprobrious epithets may be applied to us, we dare not recognise, as babes in Christ, any but those whose sins we have reason to believe are forgiven. If we did, we should contradict, 1 John, ii. 12, 13.; and we have no reason to believe this fact, where no exercises of living faith from proper motives are perceived, because justification, or pardon, is by this faith. And we cannot but think that we should act an

unscriptural part, were we to assert that those were babes in Christ, "in whose tempers servile fear (habitually) predominated over filial love."

As to the phrase "damned penitents," it is neither used by us, nor justly inferible from any thing we advance. It appears to be solely of Mr. Horne's own invention, for several reasons which might be assigned. Instead of intimating either by expression, or implication, that "penitents" are "damned," we view them as individuals fleeing from perdition to Christ, and through him struggling into God. The terms, therefore, confound the most opposite characteristics, according to what we teach. Even "the damnatory clause," as Mr. H. terms it, were we to adopt and apply it, as he has supposed, would not reach the present unscriptural combination. It would only represent individuals to be in a state of condemnation, as sinners, not as penitents; for so far as penitence prevails, so far have they proceeded towards the possession of another character.

"A brother, G. M. once told me (Mr. H. observes), "But we believe God will not suffer them [genuine mourners] to die in this state." "I ask, On the authority of what scriptures do you believe this?" (p. 41.) We answer, that our belief of this fact, that God will not suffer any to perish while earnestly seeking for mercy, is founded on the positive promises of God. Our Lord has said,

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Matt. v. 4—6. "Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God." Isai. lxvi. 9. * See also, Isai. lxi. 1. It is easy to multiply passages of a similar import in direct opposition to that mere assertion that we can bring none.

That we must receive Christ as well as venture on him, Mr. H. in common with ourselves admits; and this, we have good authority for asserting, can only be by that faith which works by love. And the very instant this is allowed, the assurance for which we contend, as essential to justifying faith, is recognised. "A sure trust and confidence" is viewed by us in our definition of "justifying, faith," in opposition to a false trust and confi-

* It is worthy of observation, that our Lord does not say—those who mourn are comforted; nor that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, are filled: neither does the prophet intimate, that those are born, whom God commands to come forth. In all these cases, the promises have a future aspect, and faith is taught to look forward with an earnest hope of realizing the expected deliverance. Whereas, if "repentance and regeneration were the same," this mode of expression must have been perfectly delusive, by holding out ideas which would have been falsified by fact.

dence, as well as including a strong degree of evidence; but never, as necessarily implying the utmost height to which intellectual and experimental evidence can reach. But this sure trust and confidence, whenever we receive Christ, includes a true persuasion that we are reconciled to the favor of God. This persuasion cannot exist, unless our sins are blotted out; and a consciousness of this fact is a grand source of the christian's consolation, of his peace and joy.

“ I tell them (says Mr. H., speaking of penitents) that they are not far from the kingdom.” (p. 45.) We invariably inculcate the same truth; only we do not inform those whom we assert to be near the kingdom, that they have already entered into it. We make a distinction between an approach towards, and an actual possession of, a kingdom. But we make use of every argument, which reason and scripture can suggest, to urge their flight to the city of refuge, that they may be induced not to rest till they have laid hold on Christ, and by faith received him in their souls. Yet, while directing them to fly to Christ for safety, “ lest they be consumed, we do not endeavour to persuade them, that repentance and regeneration are the same thing,” and *from thence* take occasion to bid them dismiss their fears, and no longer tremble for their condition. In short, we do not in-

struct them to believe that they have justifying faith, while a consciousness of its reverse predominates in their hearts. Were such proceedings to mark our conduct, we should expect to hear our auditors exclaim, "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph!" 2 Sam. i. 20.

I am,

My dear Brethren,


Yours

Affectionately

And faithfully,

T. COKE.

LETTER IV.



VERY DEAR BRETHREN,

ANXIOUS to support by authority, an hypothesis which has thus far made an ineffectual appeal to argument, Mr. Horne, in his third letter, endeavours to impress Mr. Fletcher into his service. In those letters which have already passed in review before us, we have seen his attempts on a few solitary expressions of the Rev. John and Charles Wesley. These attempts, I hope, I have rendered abortive; and in this letter, I intend to inquire, whether his application to the writings of the Vicar of Madely has been attended with more success.

Confident of victory in his present design, and apparently willing to convince us of what he deems our errors, in p. 50. Mr. H. begins his letter as follows: "To prove that Mr. Wesley did abide by the letter of 1747, and that he did so with increasing light and conviction, I

might produce the whole of Mr. Fletcher's Essay on Truth; and I beseech you, give it one fair reading, before you commit to the world your own honour, by impeaching me as a false witness." In compliance with this request, I have attentively perused the whole of Mr. Fletcher's Essay on Truth, prior to my writing of these lines; but the perusal has led me to a conclusion, very different from that which Mr. H. seems to have intended, and from that which appears to have reached his mind. It would, perhaps, have been fortunate for him, if he had taken to himself the hint which he so earnestly recommends to us; he would then have hesitated for a few moments, "before he committed to the world his own honour by impeaching ours."

In the first page of his letter, Mr. H. undertakes to prove, what no one among us ever attempted to deny; namely, that the writings of Mr. Fletcher were acknowledged and disseminated by Mr. Wesley—that they have been republished by Mr. Benson, and recognised by the Methodist Conference. These "important facts" we most readily admit, and shall willingly abide by the consequences of this acknowledgment. The same edition of Mr. Fletcher's works which Mr. Horne has quoted is now before me; our inquiry, therefore, lies within a narrow compass. Our present business is to examine the nature, tendency, de-

sign, and import of the "Essay on Truth;" to gather from the whole the intention of its author, and to mark the application which Mr. H. has made of the doctrines which it contains.

Mr. Fletcher, in the title page of his fourth volume, which includes his "Essay on Truth," introduces the following subjects for discussion. "I. An historical essay, on the danger of parting faith and works. II. Salvation by the covenant of grace. III. A Scriptural essay on the rewardableness of works, according to the covenant of grace. IV. An Essay on Truth, or a rational vindication of the doctrine of salvation by faith." Under each of these heads, the subject proposed is kept in view. In the first part, the danger of parting faith and works is supported by many powerful and unanswerable arguments. In the second, the extensiveness, as well as the nature, of the covenant of grace, is unfolded in a masterly manner. And in the third, the rewardableness of good works is enforced by such numerous scriptures and undeniable inferences drawn from them, as are sufficient to silence at once the specious pleas of Antinomians. In the fourth part, which is entitled "An Essay on Truth, or Salvation by Faith," to which alone Mr. Horne has resorted, Mr. Fletcher considers saving faith in its most extensive displays. He inquires how it operates under every dispensation in which the gospel has appeared, and in what manner it

leads those who diligently seek after truth, to fear God, and work righteousness, and finally obtain his great salvation.

This Essay on Truth, Mr. F. has subdivided into distinct parts, which he has arranged under the following heads: "Section I. A plain definition of saving faith, how believing is the gift of God, and whether it is in our power to believe. (p. 106.) II. Truth, cordially embraced by faith, saves under every dispensation of divine grace, though in different degrees. A short view of the truths that characterize the four grand dispensations of the gospel. (p. 112.) III. Saving faith is more particularly described by its rise and operations, and distinguished from the faith of trembling devils, immoral Antinomians, penitents sold under sin, and modish professors, who believe without frame or feeling. (p. 115.) IV. The reasonableness of the doctrine of salvation by faith is further evinced by a variety of arguments.—How much we are indebted to the Solifidians, for having firmly stood up in defence of faith; how dearly they have made us pay for that service, when they have so enforced our XIth article, which guards salvation by faith, as to make void the XIIth, which guards morality.—And why the overpowering splendor of truth is qualified by some shades. (p. 120.) V. Inferences. (p. 127.) VI. An address to baptized Heathens. (p. 129.) VII. An address to christianized Jews.

(p. 133.) VIII. An address to Antichristian moralists. (p. 140.) IX. An address to a Penitent Mourner. (p. 144.) X. An address to Christian believers. (p. 149.) An Appendix answering some objections. (p. 152.) Second Appendix, &c. (p. 164.)”

To this Essay, which is thus divided into ten sections, to which two Appendixes are added, and which runs through 74 of Mr. Fletcher's pages, Mr. Horne has repaired; and, without referring us either to section, appendix, or page, culled from the whole about 13 pages, which appeared to suit his purpose. These he has inserted in his own book, interpolated with his own comments; and then, regardless of those notes which the author had introduced as explanatory of his own sentiments, has presented the paragraphs which he has thus selected from Mr. F.'s works, as though they followed in regular succession to one another. I leave the reader to judge, if such conduct as this can be right.

In addition to the above, it ought to be observed, that Mr. F. no where, in the whole Essay, particularly defines or describes what he has elsewhere denominated “justifying faith,” which, to us, is imputed for righteousness. He does not even confine his observations to christian faith, in any of its stages under the Christian dispensation, except in a transient manner; but speaks at large of *saving faith* under its more enlarged definition, as apply-



ing to mankind, under all the inferior lights in which the gospel has appeared. This distinguishing truth, the titles of his sections and appendixes will most fully evince, in direct opposition to the carelessness which has guided Mr. H. in his observations.

Regardless of these distinctions, and these circumstances, Mr. H. has passed over Mr. F.'s views of the different dispensations in total silence; has broken down, or stepped over, the boundaries which circumscribed their respective limits, and melted the whole of Mr. F.'s observations on them into one common mass. The paragraphs of the Essay, which were designed to be applied to men under the inferior dispensations of grace in all ages of the world, Mr. H. has localized, and applied to the Christian dispensation under which we live. By these means he has given us to understand, that it was the design of Mr. F. that those who live, now while life and immortality are brought fully to light by the gospel, should consider themselves as under those dispensations which he had so carefully distinguished from our own. And from this strange misapplication of his words, Mr. H. has not only inferred a dereliction of our principles, but has imputed to Mr. F. doctrines which are grossly repugnant to those which he embraced and taught. Such are some of the contrivances to which he has resorted, to draw the Vicar of Madeley into his service. I hope I shall have re-

course to more legal methods to procure his discharge.

Mr. Fletcher begins his first section thus—
 “What is faith? It is believing heartily.—What is saving faith? I dare not say, that it is “*only* believing confidently, my sins are forgiven me for Christ’s sake;” for if I live in sin, that belief is a destructive conceit, and not saving faith. Neither dare I say, that “saving faith is only a sure trust and confidence, that Christ loved me, and gave himself for me:” for if I did, I should damn almost all mankind for 4000 years.

“To avoid putting the black mark of damnation upon any man, that in any nation fears God and works righteousness, I would chuse to say, that “saving faith is believing the saving truth, with the heart unto internal, and as we have opportunity) unto external righteousness, according to our light and dispensation.” (vol. iv. p. 106, 107.) These words Mr. H. has quoted in his book, p. 50. and has put upon them the following comment. “Do not J. W. and J. F. decline damning any man, in any nation, who fears God and works righteousness? And do they not explicitly decline the definition “*of a sure trust, &c.* and expressly on account of its damnatory conclusion?” If Mr. H. had adverted to the note which Mr. F. has inserted at the bottom of that very page from which he took the quotation, he could not but be convinced that he was acting erroneously; and if he

had inserted it with his observations above, every reader must have perceived the misrepresentation. Instead of this, the note which establishes Mr. F.'s views, in conjunction with those of Mr. W. in direct opposition to those of Mr. H. is entirely omitted by him; and Mr. F. and Mr. W. stand charged with explicitly declining the definition which the note recognizes. The former part of the note runs thus: "When the church of England and Mr. Wesley give us particular definitions of faith, it is plain that they consider it according to the Christian dispensation; the privileges of which must be principally insisted upon among Christians," &c. (vol. iv. p. 106.) Will any man dare assert, when he reads this note, that its author had *explicitly declined the definition*, which it was written on purpose to avow and restrict?

But, even granting that the note had not been inserted in Mr. F.'s page, is it fair in Mr. H. to insinuate, that J. W. and J. F. had explicitly declined their definition of justifying faith, merely, because they have admitted that it is not of universal application? Do not the words which Mr. H. has quoted, contain a most explicit recognition of that very definition which they are charged with declining? When Mr. F. says, "I dare not assert, that saving faith is *only* a sure trust and confidence, &c." nothing can be more evident, than that he explicitly acknowledges and owns, instead of *explicitly declining*, the definition

in question. He does not, indeed, assert that the definition is full and complete in point of extension, so as to embrace every dispensation. He admits, that in this view it is too contracted; but he expressly includes it, in the more general terms which he uses. He does not assert, that "saving faith," is *not* a sure trust and confidence. On the contrary, he more than intimates, that under the gospel dispensation fully revealed, it is such a trust and confidence; but tells us, that saving faith, in its most extensive application, implies something more general. It is *this*; but not confined to *this only*; for this would lead him to condemn almost all mankind for 4000 years. Instead of which, he observes, I would rather chuse to say, "that saving faith is believing the saving truth with the heart unto internal, and, as we have opportunity, unto external righteousness; according to our light and dispensation." These words, "according to our light and dispensation," Mr. H. has entirely omitted to notice in his comment, and has laid the principal stress of his interrogatories on words which have derived almost all their strength from this omission.

But "do not J. W. and J. F. (Mr. H. asks) decline damning any man, who in any nation fears God and works righteousness?" I answer, most assuredly they do thus decline damning "any man, in any nation, who fears God and works righteousness, according to his light and dispensation."

And will Mr. H. take upon him to assert, that we deviate from this path of candor, benevolence, and mercy? Will he presume to say, that we condemn any man, in any nation, who fears God and works righteousness according to his light and dispensation? If so, I call upon him to produce proof of his assertion;—if not, I call upon him to show why he has produced this quotation from Mr. F. and to point out wherein we differ from him.

To have combated our supposed errors fairly, Mr. H. should have attempted to prove, either that we were under the Heathenish or Jewish dispensation; or that Mr. F.'s endeavours to establish those distinctions, which I pointed out in my preceding letter, were fallacious. Had he succeeded in either of these undertakings, he would, at least, have constrained us to admire his ingenuity, though he might not have proselyted us to his opinion. Instead of this, he has taken no notice whatever of the words "according to our light and dispensation," which are essential to the hypothesis for which Mr. F. had been arguing; but has proposed his questions, on which he solicits his readers to decide, in language which does not at all recognize the existence of the dispensations.

But "do they not explicitly decline the definition of "a sure trust and confidence, &c?" I answer, they decline it as a definition of saving

faith that can be applicable to *all ages and dispensations*; but they do not decline it as applying to those who are under the Christian dispensation. On the contrary, they introduce and recognize the definition, as I have already shewn, and shewn in that very passage which Mr. H. had produced to prove that they had renounced it. They admit this to be a definition of Christian saving faith; but justly contend, that universal saving faith is not "this only." Our sentiments and views concur with theirs. We retain the definition, but restrict its application to those who are under the Christian dispensation; while, when speaking of faith under other inferior lights, we adopt the language of Mr. F. and say, in general terms, that it is the believing the saving truth with the heart unto righteousness, according to our light and dispensation."

From these citations Mr. H. without once hinting that he was about to pass over four pages in total silence, introduces us to the words of Mr. F. p. 110. as though they had followed in immediate succession to those which he quoted last. Mr. F. begins his paragraph by observing, that "the second cause of our mistake about the impossibility of believing now, is the confounding weak with strong faith." But this observation, which alludes to the different dispensations, Mr. H. warily avoids, and begins his paragraph with the words which follow: "Had Abraham no faith in God's promise

till Isaac was born? Was Sarah a damnable unbeliever till she felt the long-expected fruit of her womb stir there? Had the woman of Canaan no faith until our Lord granted her request, and cried out, 'O woman, great is thy faith?' Was the Centurion an infidel until Christ marvelled at his faith, and declared, 'I have not found such great faith, no, not in Israel?' And had the Apostles no faith in the promise of the Father until their heads were crowned with celestial fire?"

(FLETCHER'S Works, vol. iv. p. 110.)

On these words of Mr. F., Mr. H. observes as follows: "Of whom ask these Prophets these pointed questions? Evidently of the vindicators of the definition and damning consequence." (p. 51.) How Mr. H. could make such an assertion it is difficult to say. The words which he omitted in the beginning of the paragraph, and those which immediately follow the words he has quoted, must have informed him otherwise. These passages would have taught him, that neither the definition, nor its damning consequence, nor the vindicators of either, were in Mr. F.'s view. His design, on the contrary, was to shew, that power to believe was always given with the command, in consequence of which every plea of inability is cut off. The words of Mr. F. which precede the extract, I have already quoted; and those which succeed it, are as follows: "Can you, from Gene-

sis to Revelation, find one single instance of a soul willing to believe, and absolutely unable to do it?" (p. 110.) How then can Mr. H. assert, that the preceding questions are "evidently asked of the vindicators of the definition," &c. when neither the former nor the latter was a subject of Mr. F.'s consideration? That cause must be very defenceless which can derive support from such singular expedients.

From hence Mr. H. proceeds to another of Mr. F.'s sections, in the title of which the latter tells us, that "Truth cordially embraced by faith, saves under every dispensation of divine grace, though in different degrees." To this section, in which Mr. F. has given a short view of those truths which characterize the four grand dispensations of the gospel, as detailed in my preceding letter, Mr. H. has paid his court; but, unhappily, in the same manner as in former instances. The title of the section is passed over in total silence, and no more attention is paid to Mr. F.'s declaration, than to the tendency and design of what he has written. Of the different dispensations he evidently loses sight, though with an eye to these, Mr. F. had advanced his doctrine, as is demonstrable from the title which his section bears. Thus, without adverting to these circumstances, Mr. H. continues his quotations from Mr. F. and places him before us in a light which would induce us to believe that he had formed the design of breaking

down those very distinctions which he had been previously labouring to establish. Whereas, in reality, those truths which Mr. H. quotes from his pages, and applies to such as live under the present gospel dispensation, were only adopted by Mr. F. as being exclusively applicable to those on whom the glorious light had never shined.

To illustrate his general position, which is laid down in the title of his section, Mr. F. in p. 113, proceeds as follows: "When God fixed the bounds of the habitations of mankind, he placed some nations in warm climates and fruitful countries, where the juice of the grape is plentiful. And to others, he assigned a barren rocky soil, covered with snow half of the year; water is their cordial; nor have they any more idea of their want of wine, than St. Peter had of his want of the blood of Christ, when he made the noble confession upon which the Christian church is founded. O! says a predestinarian geographer—"the God of providence has absolutely reprobated these poor creatures." Not so, replies an unprejudiced philosopher; they may be as healthy, and as happy, over their cup of cold water, as some of our men of fortune over their bottles of claret. And some of these poor creatures, as you call them, may come from the east and from the west, to drink the wine of the kingdom of God with Abraham, when the children of the kingdom shall be thrust out."

On quoting the above passage, Mr. H. remarks

as follows: "And has this passage no bearing on the geographers of the definition? Do all drink wine in England? Have all assurance in Methodism, who fear God, work righteousness, and believe in the Son of God? &c. &c." (p. 53.) If Mr. H. had adverted to the words of Mr. F. which immediately follow the above quotation from his pages, and immediately precede another passage which Mr. H. has cited, he might have spared both himself and me the trouble of making animadversions.

"What I have said (continues Mr. F.) of water and wine, may illustrate what the scriptures say of the truths peculiar to the gospel dispensation." (p. 113.) This short sentence, which Mr. H. has omitted, would have shewn him, that the above passage, cited from Mr. F. had "no bearing whatever on the geographers of the definition." On the contrary, he would have seen in this short sentence those dispensations which it was Mr. F.'s design to illustrate, and Mr. H.'s to conceal; and have gathered from the whole but little occasion for triumph. The truths which Mr. H. has quoted from Mr. F.'s pages, we most cordially embrace; and no more imagine that the same degree of assurance, which is now required of us, was required of those who lived under the inferior dispensations, than that the inhabitants of the polar regions are outcasts from the divine protection, because they enjoy not the advantages of

the temperate or tropical regions. But at the same time, we cannot allow, that while we are placed in more prolific latitudes, we ought to neglect the cultivation of our soil, and content ourselves with such productions as the sterility of Lapland would afford.

With Mr. F. we most readily admit, that the light of the inferior dispensations was, and is, saving to all those who live under and embrace it; but it is incumbent on Mr. H. to shew, that the views of Mr. F. extended beyond this. On the contrary, his own language restricts his meaning, and secures the truths which he has advanced from every thing but violent misapplication. Whether Mr. F.'s views of these dispensations of the gospel be right or wrong, is not the question for our *present* decision. It is sufficient in this place, that we can prove our doctrines to be in unison with his; for with a deviation from them we stand charged. If, therefore, Mr. H. will take upon him to assert, that we are now under either the Heathenish, the Jewish, or any other dispensation than that of the Christian fully revealed, then that faith, and those truths which were applicable to those dispensations, must be applicable to us, and the doctrine of full Christian assurance must be given up. But if, on the contrary, the dispensation under which we live be that of the Christian revealed in all its fulness, then the faith of this dispensation is required of us, and not one of the

the passages, which Mr. H. has quoted from Mr. F. "has any bearing on the geographers of the definition."

After passing over in silence the short sentence which I have quoted from Mr. F. in which he applies his illustrations to the various dispensations of the gospel, Mr. H. quotes as follows: "God forbid, that an Antichristian zeal for the Christian gospel should make me drive into the burning lake Christ's sheep which are big with young; I mean, the sincere worshippers that wait, like pious Melchisedec, devout Lydia, and charitable Cornelius, for brighter displays of gospel grace." (F. p. 114.) On this partial quotation, Mr. H. asks, "And is this nothing to Dr. C  ke, and the firm phalanx of the damnatory clause? What were these illustrious Gentiles, in comparison to the babes in Christ, the Simon Peters and Johns? And yet, brethren, if these have not assurance, yea, and the direct witness of the Spirit, they must smoke on Moloch's altars." (p. 53.) I answer, no; this is nothing to me, nor any of my respected associates, in the light that Mr. H. has chosen to represent it. We admit the facts which Mr. F. has stated, and Mr. H. has quoted, and feel it to be our duty to defend them; but we cannot think that we are under the dispensation in which Melchisedec was blessed, the heart of Lydia opened, or pious Cornelius was accepted of God. We are taught by the sacred word, that we are under that

“ brighter display of gospel grace for which they waited;” and are called on to exercise that faith, and to embrace those truths, which are peculiar to the dispensation of the gospel under which we live.

I have said, that Mr. H. has given a partial quotation from Mr. F.’s page. The truth is, he has broken off his words at a colon, and entirely suppressed the various dispensations of which Mr. F. was particularly speaking. Had Mr. H. continued his quotation, he must have added these words: “ for there are faithful souls that follow their light under every dispensation, concerning whom our Lord kindly said—‘ other sheep I have, which are not of this Jewish and Christian fold.’” (p. 114.) Why this part of Mr. F.’s words is suppressed by Mr. H. in his citation, must be evident to every considerate reader.

From thus partially quoting Mr. F. from page 114, Mr. H., without giving the least intimation of his design, or assigning a shadow of reason for his conduct, takes a leap to page 153; and, without mentioning the page from which he quotes, introduces the following passage to the reader, as though it had followed in close connection with the preceding extract. In this silent leap, he has passed over no less than 8 of Mr. Fletcher’s sections, in which that author had fully explained his doctrines and views, and distinctly addressed himself to the different characters who lived under

the various dispensations which he had been describing. In thus addressing himself to "baptized Heathens,—to Christianized Jews,—to antichristian moralists,—to penitent mourners,—and to Christian believers," all his views and expressions are kept distinct. He preserves the boundaries of the dispensations which Mr. H. has attempted to break down, and writes to each character, according to the light which he presumed him to enjoy. In speaking to penitent mourners, he has, however, in no place told them, that they are already converted to God, nor insinuated either that "repentance is regeneration," or that "assurance," under the christian dispensation, "is not essential to salvation," or that "conversion, repentance, and the new birth, substantially mean the same thing." Neither has he instructed Christian believers, that they can be saved by the faith of Heathens or Jews. Instead of this, he has said, when addressing himself to the latter characters—"Ye taste those powers, happy believers, who see that God is love—boundless, free, redeeming, pardoning, comforting, sanctifying love in Jesus Christ." (p. 149.) Does this language reduce Christian believers to a level with Melchisedec, Lydia, and Cornelius, as Mr. H. has more than insinuated?

In p. 153. Mr. F. in order to answer some objections to which his previous observations might be thought liable, speaks as follows: "Should it

be said, I puzzle people by asserting that there can be any other saving faith but the Christian faith, and any other object of saving faith than Christ crucified; I reply, that though Christ crucified is the capital object of my faith, I dare not admit the contracted notions that the Solifidians have of faith; because, if I did, I should subscribe to the necessary damnation of three parts of my fellow-sinners out of four." On these words which Mr. H. has quoted, he sagely makes the following remarks: "Reader, if thou hast eyes to see, and ears to hear, I ask, did J. F. and J. W. allow any saving faith but that of assurance? If they did, do not Dr. Coke and his followers forsake them; when all poor non-assured souls are confidently pronounced in a damnable state?" (p. 54.)

To this question I reply, that, without all doubt, they allowed many degrees of faith to be saving, which did not partake of Christian assurance; and allowed it to all who were not under the Christian dispensation; and I call upon Mr. H. to prove, that either myself, or my followers, (as Mr. H. is pleased to term my highly-respected brethren) have deviated from this rule. At the same time, however, I must contend, that they nowhere make this faith to include all that is essential to those who live under the Christian dispensation. To all these characters additional truths and brighter lights have been revealed, and, consequently, greater improvements are required of them. To

those who are placed under the Christian dispensation, Christian faith is necessary; and when Mr. H. has shewn me, from any part of Mr. F.'s writings, that he admitted that this could exist without including any degree of assurance, or that the degree of faith which was saving to Melchisedec, Lydia, or Cornelius, included all that is essential to our salvation, I will readily admit that we have misunderstood his sentiments. But till this be done—till it can be made to appear that Mr. F. has actually demolished those boundaries of the various dispensations, which no inconsiderable portion of the present volume was written to fix,—and that the faith of Heathens, of Jews, of Moralists, of Penitent Mourners, and of Christian Believers, is the same; I have a right to think, that our views harmonize with those of Mr. F., and that those passages corroborate our doctrines, which Mr. H. has indiscreetly quoted from his pages on purpose to overturn them.

To prove that I have not misrepresented either Mr. F. or Mr. H. I must introduce the words of the former at some length, that every reader into whose hands these letters may fall, and who is not fully acquainted with Mr. Fletcher's writings, may see the scope, design, and tendency of his Essay on Truth. After having made several observations on the faith which is peculiar to the inferior dispensations, and instanced it in the case of Noah,

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Rahab, Mr F. proceeds as follows:

“ If you say, with respect to Rahab, that Joshua sent the spies whom she entertained, and that they informed her that Joshua was a type of Christ crucified; will you not render your orthodoxy as ridiculous, as if you rested it upon the frivolous difference there is between *If* and *If*? Mr. B. cannot shew that the apostle ever distinguished between a Jewish *If* and a Christian *If*; but I can quote chapter and verse, when I assert, that he clearly distinguishes between Jewish and Christian faith. For not to transcribe Heb. viii. and x. does he not say, Gal. iii. 23. Before faith (*i. e.* before Christian faith) came, we were kept under the law; *i. e.* under the Jewish dispensation, and the obscurer faith peculiar to it: Nor was this a damnable state; for St. Paul begins the next chapter, by telling us, that The Heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all; -but is under tutors and governors, till the time appointed of the Father. Even so we, when we were children (when we were under the Jewish dispensation), were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we (children differing nothing from servants) might

receive the adoption of sons; *i. e.* the privileges of sons that are of age, and are no longer under tutors and governors. For after that (Christian) faith is come, we are no longer under a school-master; for we are all the (emancipated) children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. Gal. iii. 25. and 26. Is it not evident, from the comparing of these passages, that the faith of Jews constituted them children of God, but such children as, in general, differed nothing from servants—such children as were in a state of nonage or bondage; whereas christian faith (emphatically called faith), by its superior privileges, introduces true Christians into the glorious liberty of the (adult) sons of God.

The difference between the privileges of the Jewish and those of the Christian faith and dispensation, is still more clearly described, 2 Cor. iii. There the Christian dispensation, called the ministration of the Spirit, because the promise of the Spirit is its greatest privilege, (See John, vii. 39.) is opposed to the Jewish dispensation, which the Apostle calls the ministration of condemnation; because it appointed no particular sacrifices for penitents guilty of adultery, idolatry murder, blasphemy, &c. and absolutely doomed them to die. This severe dispensation, says St. Paul, was glorious, though it is done away; much more that which remaineth (the Christian dispensation) exceedeth in glory. Again, Moses put a typical veil over his face, that the children of Israel could

not steadfastly look to the end; and until this day the veil remaineth untaken away. But we (Christians) all with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory. What a privilege! And how many nominal Christians live below it, yea, below the privileges of the very Heathens.

“ This, however, is the one faith of true christians, who have the same spirit of faith; it is one in its great object, God manifested in the flesh; one in its great promise, the promise of the Father, or the kingdom in the Holy Ghost; one in its new commandment, brotherly, universal love, that perfects believers in one, and makes them partakers of so great salvation. This is the faith which St. Paul calls the faith of God’s elect, *i. e.* the faith of Christians, who are chosen, above Jewish believers, to see the glory of the Lord with open face, when Jewish believers see it only darkly through a veil. This very faith he calls, immediately after, the faith common to all Christians, “ to Titus my own Son after the *common* faith,” Titus, i. 1—4. With an eye to this faith, he likewise names Timothy his own son, in the faith which is in Christ Jesus—A faith this, whereby Timothy, who was a Jewish believer from a child, was made partaker of Christ, the great (*i. e.* the Christian) salvation—a faith which St. Peter calls like precious faith; and St. Jude, a most holy faith, indirectly comparing it to the most holy

place in the temple—a faith which Christ calls *my* faith, Rev. ii. 13. and faith that is in me, Acts, xxvi. 18.—a faith this, far superior to the faith of the noble Jewish believers at Berea, who so candidly searched the scriptures, when they had heard St. Paul preach—and very far exceeding the candid dispositions of those sincere heathens at Corinth, concerning whom our Lord said to Paul, I have much people in this city. If the Reader divests himself of prejudices, I hope that, instead of calling the doctrine of the gospel dispensation, and the degrees of faith belonging to it, a *novel chimera*, he will embrace it as a truth which leads to a thousand others.”

(FLETCHER'S Works, vol. iv. p. 154—156.)

From the preceding paragraphs, Mr. H. has carefully selected several extracts; but he seems studiously to have avoided such passages as had the most unfavourable aspect on what he wished to establish. Mr. F. says, “I can quote chapter and verse, when I assert, that he (the Apostle) clearly distinguishes between Jewish and Christian faith;” but these words Mr. H. passes over in profound silence. Mr. F. concludes the first paragraph thus, “Christian faith (emphatically called faith), by its superior privileges, introduces true christians into the glorious liberty of the adult sons of God:” but this language has found no place in Mr. H.'s pages. Nothing, in short, seems to have been so welcome to this Gen-

Ufeman as those sentences which appeared to reduce the standard of Christian faith to a more accommodating level, to break down all distinctions between the different dispensations of the gospel, and to render applicable to Christians in our day, those promises and terms of acceptance which displayed their peculiar efficacy before life and immortality were brought fully to light. Hence mutilated extracts are introduced from Mr. F.'s work to express his entire sentiments; and the reader is taught to infer from this partial representation, that what that author had asserted on the faith which is peculiar to the inferior dispensations, was calculated by him for the meridian of the gospel, and intended to be of universal application. And, because we adhere, in conformity with his own positive declarations, to those distinctions which the preceding paragraphs express, we stand accused with deviating from those doctrines which Mr. F. taught, and which we invariably inculcate.

In commenting on the mutilated parts of Mr. F.'s words, which I have cited at length, Mr. H. strangely asks—"Did God, for 4000 years, give the Spirit of adoption to any man? And yet was he worshipped only by a set of damned servants?" (p. 56.) In reply to this harsh language, I might content myself with the observations I have already made; for a repetition of the same objection merits nothing but a repetition of the same reply.

I will, however, observe, that whatever might have been the condition of those who lived during the 4000 years past, we know that the Spirit of adoption is now given, and that we live under its blessed dispensation. To argue, therefore, that because, under a dispensation which is acknowledged to be superseded by one that is brighter, the Spirit of adoption was not clearly revealed, we who live in the glorious period may be contented without its enlivening beams——if it be not absurd, it is, to use his own expression, “worse than childish.” The doctrines of the present dispensation cannot influence those of another, neither can those of another supersede the conditions of this. And hence those arguments which are important, and even conclusive, in their proper places, become inapplicable beyond their respective confines, and lose their force by being injudiciously transferred.

In prosecuting his endeavours to guard the doctrine of the dispensations, Mr. F. supposes an opponent to start the following objection against what he had advanced: “By granting that people, who are under a dispensation inferior to Christianity in its state of perfection, may have a degree of saving faith, although they have not yet the luminous faith of Christian believers, you damp the exertion of seekers, and invite them to settle, as most Dissenters do, in a lukewarm Laodicean state, short of the inward kingdom of God, which consists not only in righteousness, but in peace and

joy in the Holy Ghost." (p. 158.) "This (Mr. H. observes), is the very objection produced by you, my brethren, against Mr. F.'s doctrine; and, if it could be substantiated, it would be a most serious one. Its bad fruit would prove its rotten principles; but God's truth, as it is essentially holy, can produce nothing that is not so." (p. 59.)

Unfortunately for Mr. H., the assertion which he has here made, is founded upon a very serious mistake. It is not an objection that can be justly urged against the doctrine of Mr. F. either by Methodists, or any other persons; but it is one which I will urge against the doctrine of Mr. H.; and if it can be substantiated, he well knows that it will be a very "serious one." To the doctrine of Mr. F. the objection cannot reach, and the subsequent passages which Mr. H. has quoted from his pages will repel its force, or rather prove that it is wholly inapplicable. It is inapplicable to Mr. F., because he makes the Christian faith, emphatically so called, to be distinct from that which belongs to the inferior dispensations, and, consequently, his doctrine can never be justly accused of inviting seekers to settle in a lukewarm Laodicean state, when he makes a higher attainment than theirs essential to salvation. But when, on the contrary, the objection is started against Mr. H., who supposes that the same degree of faith which might be saving to one, might be saving to all, without any regard to the dis-

dispensations—who tells us, that “repentance and regeneration are the same thing”—that “conversion, repentance, and the new birth, substantially mean the same things”—who quotes from Mr. F.’s pages the arguments which he had advanced in favor of those who live under the inferior dispensations, and transfers them to those who enjoy the meridian light of the gospel, revealed in all its fulness;—it readily assumes that seriousness which he anticipated, and stands forth in all its force. Mr. H. has said, that “if this objection could be substantiated, it would be a most serious one.” I join issue with him in its importance, and pause for him to repel its application to himself.

Apparently unconscious of writing his own commitment, Mr. H. proceeds to adduce those arguments by which Mr. F. has repelled the objection; without once reflecting that what secures Mr. F. can afford no protection to himself. “Mr. Baxter (says Mr. F.) by a variety of strong arguments shews, that to represent assurance, or the kingdom of God in the Holy Ghost, as essential to *all true faith*; and promiscuously to shut up in a state of damnation, all those to whom that kingdom is not yet come with power, is both cruel and unscriptural.” (p. 158.) This passage Mr. H. has quoted in his book, p. 59. but in what manner it is to serve his purpose, some future publication must inform us. We most readily adopt the wholesome doctrine, which the extract from Mr.

Baxter contains, and take his words in their most literal import. Where have we represented assurance, full Christian assurance, or joy in the Holy Ghost, as essential to *all* true faith, and promiscuously shut up in a state of damnation all those to whom the kingdom of God is not yet come with power? We concur with Mr. Baxter and Mr. Fletcher, in pronouncing such doctrine to be "both cruel and unscriptural." Almost every view which we take of the dispensations, contradicts the supposition; and the language which in these letters I have taken from the pages of the latter, and added of my own in unison with his, must convince every unprejudiced reader, that such a charge as Mr. H. brings against us, can be founded upon nothing but error,

Unhappily, Mr. H. takes a strange kind of advantage of Mr. Baxter's words; and, because he had asserted, that "assurance or joy in the Holy Ghost, was not essential to *all* true faith," Mr. H. has attempted to infer, that Mr. B. has affirmed that assurance, &c. is not essential to *any* true faith. If this mode of reasoning be admitted, it must follow, that whatsoever is inapplicable to *all*, must be applicable to none. This, to all intents and purposes, is a blending of the different dispensations together. The purport of Mr. H.'s argument is, that because the assurance which is peculiar to our dispensation, was not essential to those who lived under another, therefore it cannot

be necessary to ours. What is there that may not be proved by such a happy discovery.

That this is Mr. H.'s conclusion, is evident from his own words, which immediately follow. "Is not your doctrine here asserted by J. W. and J. F. to be unscriptural as well as cruel? And has not Baxter proved it to be so, by a variety of strong arguments?" (p. 59.) Most assuredly Mr. Baxter has proved it to be both unscriptural and cruel, to assert, that "Christian assurance is essential to all true faith." But how does this prove that these charges affect our doctrines, or that J. W. and J. F. concern in condemning them? This is the very point which should have been established. But, on the contrary, Mr. H. has adduced no proof whatever; he has assumed the very position which should have been supported by argument; seized upon a conclusion which he could not reach by induction; and put off his readers with an unmeaning interrogatory.

In continuing the quotation from Mr. F., Mr. H. proceeds as follows: "Ought we to keep from those who sincerely seek the kingdom of God, the comfort that the gospel allows them? Are not they that seek the Lord, commanded to rejoice? And how can they do it, if the wrath of God abideth on them, as it certainly does on all absolute unbelievers? Did not our Lord and St. Peter speak in a more evangelical strain, when they said to sincere seekers, Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you

the kingdom of grace, as well as that of glory. The promise of the kingdom in the Holy Ghost is unto you, and to your children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call to believe explicitly in Jesus Christ." (p. 158.)

That the characters introduced in this paragraph, are not considered by Mr. F. as already possessing that faith, which justifies under the dispensation of the gospel fully revealed, is evident from the face of the whole quotation. They are said to be those "who sincerely seek," and who, consequently, have not yet found the blessing they pursue. They are those "to whom it is the good pleasure of God, to give the kingdom of grace as well as of glory;" an expression, from which we cannot but understand, that in their present state they fully enjoy neither. They are those to whom "the kingdom of the Holy Ghost" lies only in "promise," not in possession, and who have not yet "believed explicitly in Jesus Christ." In addition to these considerations, which arise from the face of the quotation, Mr. F. has elsewhere informed us, that, according to his views, the faith which is imputed for righteousness under the Christian dispensation, is a faith which worketh by love." And hence we are compelled to conclude, that those characters of whom he here speaks, are those who have faith agreeably to the inferior dispensations only.

"But are not these characters commanded to rejoice?" Certainly they are; but it would be

absurd to suppose, that, as seekers, they are called upon to rejoice in the possession of any blessing which they have not yet attained, and which cannot be realized, but by a more exalted faith than that by which a seeker is actuated. We well know, that those who mourn are pronounced blessed, for they shall be comforted; and so are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. But, as the blessing pronounced on mourners, is with an eye to their being comforted; and on those who hunger and thirst, with an eye to their being filled; so those who seek are commanded to rejoice, with an eye to those blessings which they shall assuredly find. But as mourners are not pronounced blessed simply as mourners, so neither are seekers simply as such commanded to rejoice. The blessings on which their joy is founded, lie in prospect in each case; and those who seek, have abundant reason to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

To characters like these, the doctrines we teach "afford all the comfort which we think the gospel will allow." We more than "insinuate that they are in a salvable state." We encourage them to persevere;—we tell them that they are not far from the kingdom of God; and we point them to behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. We tell them, that now is the accepted time, that now is the day of salvation; and beseech them to harden not their hearts, as in the provocation in the day of temptation in the

wilderness. We endeavour to display the amazing love of Christ towards them ; we urge the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, and persuade them to put their trust in the mercy of God. Instead of " stupifying them with damnatory clauses," as Mr. H. has unjustly asserted, we use our utmost endeavours to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. To those whose views are still more obscure and indistinct, we say (with Mr. F.), Fear not, little flock ; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom of grace, as well as that of glory. The promise of the kingdom in the Holy Ghost is unto you, and to your children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call to believe explicitly in Jesus Christ.

On the preceding paragraph from Mr. F. and another of a similar nature, by which he has illustrated his doctrines, Mr. H. remarks as follows : " May I not ask, What answer do you give to the pertinent remarks and pointed questions of these two great Men? I hope you will not turn your back on J. W. and J. F. in contemptuous silence. The Essay cuts up your definition and consequence. It must be answered." (p. 60.)

Language which is so explicit is at all times manly, however erroneous the sentiment may be which it conveys. It leaves no room for a doubtful opinion. It is a daring push for a decisive victory, risked at the hazard of defeat. The an-

error which we give to these pertinent remarks and pointed questions, in general terms, is this: That the whole of those passages which Mr. H. has quoted from Mr. F. with some few solitary exceptions, applies to those to whom the light of the gospel has not yet displayed its meridian beams—That of this truth Mr. H. could not have been wholly ignorant, because his partial extracts, the titles of Mr. F.'s sections, and his occasional notes, will all appear as evidences against him—That viewing the whole Essay on Truth in this light, we most cordially embrace it in all its parts, and occasionally inculcate every truth which it contains—That instead of repelling the force of Mr. F.'s pertinent remarks and pointed questions, we cherish them as glorious gospel realities, and view with regret those attempts which are made to lessen their energy, by directing them to subjects to which they are acknowledged by their author to be inapplicable—That instead of turning our backs on the Essay in contemptuous silence, we rally round it as an important standard, which, in subordination to the bible; we have been taught by experience to revere—That we consider it as giving us a rational account, how God can be just, and yet the justifier of those who believe in him according to the light of their dispensations, notwithstanding the light of the glorious gospel revealed in all its fulness has not yet shined into their hearts.

But "the Essay (Mr. H. asserts) cuts up your

definition and consequence." Does it indeed? Then "it must be answered," or the definition must fall. Mr. Wesley's definition of justifying faith, the reader will recollect, was stated in my first Letter. It was said to be "a sure trust and confidence that God hath and will forgive our sins," &c. This is the definition which Mr. H. asserts is now cut up by Mr. Fletcher's Essay on Truth. I hope Mr. H. will allow Mr. F. to know the tendency and import of his own Essay, as well at least as any other man, not even excepting the minister of Christ Church, Macclesfield. Let us hear then his own words, before we decide upon those of Mr. Horne.

I have already observed, that Mr. F. at the commencement of his Essay has the following note: "When the church of England and Mr. Wesley give us particular definitions of faith, it is plain that they consider it according to the Christian dispensation; the privileges of which must be principally insisted upon among christians, &c." This note, I again assert, must have been under Mr. H.'s eye, when he quoted a passage from the very page in which it is inserted. This note, which plainly shows that Mr. F. did not think his Essay would cut up the definition, as Mr. H. affirms, is certainly decisive as to his views and intentions.

If Mr. F. had really intended to write his Essay on Truth to inculcate those doctrines for which Mr. H. pleads, for what purpose did he introduce

the above note? Was it to conceal an act of duplicity which he was ashamed to avow?—Was it to induce his readers to believe that his views were congenial with those of Mr. W., while in reality they had undergone a radical change, or were totally distinct?—Were J. W. and J. F. partners in the imposition, holding out in the same moment doctrines which they were conspiring to undermine? Surely, Mr. H. has too much respect for the memory of Mr. F. to impute to him such inherent baseness. His conduct cannot be ascribed to ignorance. His note will prevent this conclusion; and when ignorance is dismissed, nothing can remain but integrity or imposition. By integrity he never could have been actuated, if he aimed at those conclusions which Mr. H. has attempted to draw from his words; this also is forbidden by the note in question. And surely the charge of deliberate imposition is so inconsistent with his established character, that his greatest foes would blush for their own reputation, before they would presume to make it. Mr. F. could never be guilty of an action, from which his most inveterate enemies would shrink. If, therefore, none of these conclusions can be admitted, it follows, with little less than demonstrative certainty, that Mr. F.'s views in writing his Essay on Truth were such as I have pointed out—namely, to show how saving faith operates under every dispensation of divine grace. This conclusion will at once

vindicate his integrity and consistency. It will account for his frequent use of the word dispensation throughout the whole, and also for the titles of his sections. It will reconcile the Essay with the explanatory note under consideration, introduce into his writings a general harmony, cause his expressions to partake of common sense, and repel those conclusions which Mr. H. has attempted to force upon his pages.

But it is not from this note alone, nor from the arguments which it affords, that we gather Mr. F.'s design in writing his Essay on Truth; but from his own pointed, positive, and expressive declaration, in his preface to the volume in which this Essay is contained. His words are as follow :

“ The Essay on Truth will, I hope, reconcile judicious moralists to the doctrine of salvation by faith, and considerate Solifidians to the doctrine of salvation by the works of faith; reason and scripture concurring to show the constant dependence of works upon faith; and the wonderful agreement of the doctrine of present salvation by true faith, with the doctrine of eternal salvation by good works.

“ I hope that I do not dissent, in my observations upon faith, either from our church, or approved gospel ministers. In their *highest* definitions of that grace, they consider it *only* according to the fulness of the *christian* dispensation; but my subject has obliged me to consider it also according to the dispensations of John the Bap

tist, Moses, and Noah. Believers under these inferior dispensations have not always assurance, nor is the assurance they sometimes have so bright as that of adult Christians. Matt. xi. 11. But, undoubtedly, assurance is inseparably connected with the faith of the Christian dispensation, which was not fully opened till Christ opened his glorious baptism on the day of Pentecost, and till his spiritual kingdom was set up with power in the hearts of his people. Nobody, therefore, can truly believe, according to this dispensation, without being immediately conscious, both of the forgiveness of sins, and of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. This is a most important truth, derided, indeed, by fallen churchmen, and denied by Laodicean dissenters; but of late years gloriously revived by Mr. Wesley and the ministers connected with him; a truth this which cannot be too strongly, and yet too warily, insisted upon in our lukewarm and speculative age; and as I would not obscure it for the world, I particularly intreat the reader to mind the last erratum; without omitting the last but one, which guards the doctrine of initial salvation by absolute free grace."

FLETCHER'S Works, preface to vol. iv. p. 5.

Perhaps Mr. H., with this language before his eyes, will hesitate before he re-asserts that the Essay on Truth cuts up the definition and its consequence. Mr. Fletcher's language is too plain to require any comment, and too definitive to admit of any other application than that which he has

given to it. What then are we to think, when in opposition to the above paragraphs, which I have taken from Mr. F.'s preface, Mr. H. makes the following declaration, before the tribunal of the public? "Now, my brethren, I appeal to you, and to every candid reader, whether I have not proved from Mr. Wesley's letter of 1747, from his acknowledged distinction between the saving faith of the servants of God, and the still more purifying faith of God's adopted sons, from his oral testimony to myself, and from the strong and pointed evidence of the Essay, that he did deny that *a sure trust, &c.* was a proper definition of justifying faith, and, consequently, the damnatory clause involved in it?" (p. 74.)

Will Mr. H. take upon him to assert, that he understood the tendency and design of the Essay on Truth, better than Mr. F. understood it himself? If so, the world must decide upon his penetration; if not, then the doctrine of the Essay is fairly rescued from his hands, and the definition is not merely established by implication and dubious inference, but is recognized by words the most direct and expressive that language can afford. The only apology I can make, for the indiscretion of Mr. H. is, that the preface had either escaped his notice or his recollection; and that, wedded to a system which stood in need of support, he unhappily culled from Mr. F.'s Essay on Truth, a few paragraphs, which, viewed in a detached light, appeared to favor his designs; and that, without

inquiring into the Author's intention, he applied to those who are under the gospel dispensation revealed in all its fulness, the reasonings and arguments which Mr. F. had excluded from them, and restricted to such as lived under the inferior displays of grace. Mr. H. may, probably, see reason hereafter to conclude, if he regard his own reputation, that the Essay on Truth is not the only thing that must be answered.

The next passage which Mr. H. takes from Mr. F. is brought by him to accuse us of making the following assertion: "That none have any faith, but such as have the faith of assurance, and that the wrath of God actually abides on all those who have not that faith." (p. 159.) "This (adds Mr. H.) is a most serious consideration, as well as a most notorious fact." (p. 61.) How Mr. H. will make this "notorious fact" to appear, that we allow no other faith than that of assurance,* I am at a loss to say. He well knows how grossly he has treated us, for introducing a distinction between the servants and the children of God—a distinction which cannot be supposed to exist, without admitting various degrees of faith according to the different dispensations of the gospel. And yet now he asserts, that it is a most notorious fact, that we affirm, "none can have any faith,

* I here use the word *assurance* in its commonly received acceptation, as applying to faith under the Christian dispensation, and including its superlative degrees.

but those who have the faith of assurance." If Mr. H. or any other person, will look into my preceding letter, he will discover as "a most notorious fact," that we allow with Mr. F. not only the dispensations which he has distinguished, but also the degrees of faith peculiar to them. With the Vicar of Madeley we "conclude, that so long as the accepted time and the day of salvation continue, all sinners, who have not yet finally hardened themselves, may day and night, through the help and power of the general light of Christ's saving grace, receive some saving truth belonging to the everlasting gospel, though it should be only this, "There is a God, who will call us to an account for our sins, and who spares us that we may break them off by repentance." And their cordial believing of this truth will make way for their receiving the higher truths, that stand between them and the top of the mysterious ladder of truth. I grant it is impossible they should leap at once to the middle, much less to the highest round of that ladder; but if the foot of it is upon earth, in the very nature of things, the lowest step is within their reach; and by laying hold on it, they may go on from faith to faith, till they stand firmly, even in the Christian faith; if distinguishing grace has elected them to hear the Christian gospel." (vol. iv. p. 111.)

We nevertheless contend, with this great Man, that "assurance is inseparably connected with the faith of the Christian dispensation," &c. (pre-

face, p. 5.) and with Mr. W. that "this is the proper Christian faith, which purifieth the heart and overcometh the world." Thus different degrees of faith are admitted by us, according to the light of the dispensation we are under; and those who assert the contrary, as "a notorious fact," are either ignorant of what they affirm, or wilfully traduce our doctrines without any just occasion.

Equally unfounded is Mr. H.'s observation in page 62, that, though "Mr. W. did teach assurance as the only justifying faith, and, consequently, that all who had it not were under the wrath and curse of God, yet he renounced it in a letter to his brother so early as the year 1747; and that the Essay on Truth proves he did so relinquish it." To these assertions I reply, It was impossible that Mr. W. could teach assurance, as the only justifying faith, while he recognised the different dispensations of the gospel. And that he did thus recognise them, is evident from his own words, which follow: "We cannot measure the privileges of real Christians, by those formerly given to the Jews. Their ministration (or dispensation) we allow was glorious; but ours exceeds in glory. So that, whosoever would bring down the Christian dispensation to the Jewish standard, &c. doth greatly err, neither knowing the scriptures nor the power of God." (cited by Fletcher, vol. iv. p. 176.) It may, perhaps, be asserted by Mr. H. that the dispensations were not

recognised by him, until he had renounced his definition; but this will by no means serve his purpose. For, without attempting to ascertain the date of his sermon on Christian perfection, from which the above passage is taken, the dispensations are acknowledged by him in the first volume of his sermons. In the fourth and fifth pages of this volume, he speaks of the faith of Heathens, and of that of the Apostles. Both of these he characterises; each of them he distinguishes from the faith of devils; and then immediately describes the faith of Christians, under the gospel dispensation fully revealed, by that very definition which has given Mr. H. so much offence. How then can Mr. H. assert, that Mr. W. did teach assurance as the *only justifying faith*?

Secondly, it is asserted, that he did renounce these his early doctrines so early as the year 1747. "I never heard him preach either," says Mr. H. "He positively denied them to myself, a few years before his death." (p. 62.) Such is this Rev. Gentleman's affirmation; and yet, in the very next page, he produces a letter which he acknowledges to have been written by Mr. Wesley in 1768, in which his own positions are expressly contradicted by the words which he quotes from the letter. In this letter, those doctrines which Mr. W. is charged with having renounced in 1747, are not recognised by accident, but deliberately defended against attacks that are precisely similar to those which Mr. H. is now making on them!

That Mr. W. did not renounce these doctrines in his letter of 1747, I have already endeavoured to prove in my first letter. I have there attempted to show, that what he had advanced in it is not irreconcilable with his definition of justifying faith under the gospel dispensation 'fully revealed, even admitting the letter of 1747 to apply exclusively to this display of the grace of God. But if that letter be viewed with an eye to the various dispensations in which the Lord has manifested his mercy, every cloud will vanish—every shadow will disappear.

Thirdly, Mr. H. affirms, that "the Essay on Truth proves he did relinquish them." If this assertion be true, it must be founded on some observations which have escaped my notice. Such passages as Mr. H. has quoted from this Essay, I have produced Mr. Fletcher's own words to prove, have been misapplied, so far as I have proceeded; and I have no doubt that those which yet remain to be considered, will be found with marks of violence upon them. If then it can be made to appear, that Mr. W. did not teach assurance as the only justifying faith, that he did not renounce his definition in his letter to his brother in 1747, nor relinquish his doctrine in the Essay on Truth, unfounded declarations may rest in peace.

"If it is urged, (says Mr. F.) that the Spirit of God witnesses to all sincere seekers that they are in a damnable state until they feel the pardoning love of God shed abroad in their hearts, I demand proof. I deny the fact, and assert, that the divine

Spirit can no more witness to an *accepted* mourning Cornelius, that he is *not accepted* in any sense, than it can witness to a palpable contradiction. The truth is, our unbelieving fears and awakened hearts are apt to surmise the worst, and we are very apt to take these for divine impressions, even when we bring forth fruits worthy of repentance." (p. 161.) This passage Mr. H. has transcribed in his 63d page; and, losing sight of the dispensations all together, applies the whole paragraph exclusively to those who now live under the meridian light of the gospel. Apparently unconscious of the drift and tendency of the Essay, he does not hesitate to assert, that this is "a point-blank battery opened by J. W. and J. F. against the definition of justifying faith and (what he terms) its consequence." Against it, he allows that a defence stands opposed in a letter written by Mr. Wesley to Mr. James Morgan in 1768, but affirms, that "it is absolutely irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Essay." That this letter is hostile to the light in which Mr. H. views the Essay, I readily acknowledge; but that it is irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Essay itself, when understood as the author intended it, I shall not be satisfied, till I have something more convincing than naked affirmations.

The letter in question was avowedly written to Mr. Morgan, in reply to some observations of that Gentleman on the subject of the present controversy. Mr. Morgan, it appears, had adopted those

very doctrines which Mr. H. is now attempting to revive; namely, that "all penitents are in God's favor, or all who mourn after God are in the favor of God." Mr. W. objected to this doctrine, because he thought it was "unscriptural and unsafe," as well as contrary to what we have "always taught. That it is contrary (he asserts) to what we have always taught, is certain, as all our hymns and other writings testify; whether it be true or not, it is, without all question, a new doctrine among the Methodists. We have always taught, that a penitent mourned or was pained on this very account, because he felt he was not in the favor of God, but had the wrath of God abiding on him." (cited by Mr. H. p. 65.)

On comparing this passage with that which I have last quoted from the Essay, Mr. H. makes the following remark: "Now, brethren, must I not be destitute of common sense and honesty, to deny that Mr. Wesley asserts that the wrath of God abideth on sincere penitents? If so, can you read the last consideration of the Essay, and refuse to acknowledge as men of sense and honesty, that he there impugns his own doctrine and yours, that he demands proof, denies the fact, and asserts the very contrary?" (p. 65.) The design of this remark is, to prove that Mr. W. by admitting in the Essay that the divine Spirit can no more witness to an accepted mourning Cornelius, that he is not accepted in any sense, than it can witness to a palpable contradiction; and, by asserting in

this letter that "the wrath of God abideth on sincere penitents," has involved himself in a gross contradiction.

To make the contradiction apparent, the terms used in the letter and in the Essay should have been the same, as well as the situation of the characters to which they are applied; instead of this, there is a remarkable deficiency in both particulars. Hence the positions which Mr. H. has rather silently assumed than proved, wanting that very evidence which cannot be procured, defeat the conclusion, and elude his grasp. That the language of the letter applies to those who live under our Christian dispensation, I admit; and while we keep in view its fulness, it expresses the doctrines which we teach, without requiring comment or elucidation. The language of the Essay, I have already proved, refers to those various but inferior dispensations in which the gospel has been promulgated to mankind. These dispensations admit of different degrees of faith, by affording different degrees of evidence, rising higher and higher, from that given unto Heathens and required of them, to the present in which life and immortality are brought to light. Was Cornelius, I would ask, under the same dispensation with ourselves? Did the gospel, which was revealed to him, require from him the same degree of faith that it requires of us? Or was that which was necessary to his acceptance under his dispensation, all that is necessary to our acceptance

under ours? Analogy, as well as scripture, dictates that where much is given, there much is required. If, therefore, the light under which we have the happiness to live, be superior to that which was afforded to others under inferior dispensations, our faith must display a more vigorous exercise, and embrace objects which were not proposed for their belief.

Besides, if the divine Spirit could witness to an *accepted* mourning Cornelius, that he was *not accepted* in any sense, "it must bear witness to a falsehood; the thing, therefore, is totally impossible. He might, however, be accepted according to his dispensation," without being accepted according to ours; and what might be terms and evidence of acceptance to him, may be none to us. Our situations are dissimilar; our dispensations are unlike, and our terms of acceptance cannot resort to one common criterion. Hence then we may easily perceive, how under the Christian dispensation a penitent might be pained on this very account, because he felt he was not in the favor of God; while we may as easily perceive, that "the divine Spirit can no more witness to an *accepted* mourning Cornelius, that he is *not accepted* in any sense, than it can witness to a palpable contradiction.

That these were the views of Mr. F. in the preceding paragraphs of his Essay, may be gathered from his words, which almost immediately follow: "May we not," says he, "sufficiently guard the

Christian dispensation by constantly affirming, (1.) That all Christian believers have now the witness in themselves: (2.) That those who have it not, either never had Christian faith, which is emphatically called faith in the gospel; that they know only the baptism of John; or that, with the unsettled Galatians, they are actually fallen from grace, *i. e.* from the Christian dispensation, and now live under the law, *i. e.* in the darkness of the Jewish dispensation; supposing they are not quite departed from God, by indulging in known sin: (3.) That if they do not press after the faith of assurance, they are in the utmost danger of losing their talent of grace, like the young man whom Jesus loved, and who, nevertheless, went away sorrowful, when he was unwilling to give up all, and follow Jesus without reserve; or like those thousands of Israelites, whom the Lord saved out of the Land of Egypt; and whom he afterwards destroyed, when they believed not the word by which they were to be saved into the land of promise." (p. 161.)

What language can be more expressive of those doctrines which we defend, than this which Mr. F. has here placed before us? He tells us, that "all Christian believers have now the witness in themselves; that those who have it not, either never had Christian faith, which is emphatically called faith in the gospel; that they know only the baptism of John; or that, with the unsettled Galatians, they are fallen from grace."

On this paragraph, which is also quoted by Mr.

H. he asks—"Have not J. W. and J. F. made you here the most liberal concessions, and most strongly guarded the doctrine of assurance? What more can you wish for?" (p. 72.) I answer, we wish for nothing more; but cannot avoid thinking, that Mr. H. must wish for something less. For if, as Mr. F. asserts, "all Christian believers have now the witness in themselves, and that those who have it not, either never had Christian faith, or are actually fallen from grace," it would be really amusing (if the subject were not of such vast importance) to know, upon what principle he can adopt the Essay, and yet boldly "affirm, not only that men may be in the favor of God and not know it, but that, in the very nature of things, it must be so at one time with every child of God:" (p. 68.) and that "assurance is not essential to salvation." (p. 33.)

Determined, if possible, to infer a contradiction, Mr. H. while professing to venerate the name of Mr. Wesley, proceeds to quote another passage from his letter to Mr. Morgan, and to contrast it with a paragraph, which he had previously taken from Mr. F.'s Essay on Truth. In alluding to the case of Cornelius, and to St. Peter's sermon, Mr. F. had observed as follows: "It is plain from this account, that no preaching was ever attended with a more universal blessing, and that no discourse was ever more instrumental in conveying to all the power of the faith of assurance, than that very sermon which the Apostle began by intimating

that his hearers were already accepted, according to an inferior dispensation. Hence it is evident that the doctrine we maintain, if it is properly guarded, far from having a *necessary* tendency to lull people asleep, is admirably calculated to excite every penitent to faith, prayer, the improvement of their talent, and the perfecting of holiness." (p. 161.) In pointing out the impropriety of instructing penitents to believe that they may be in the favor of God and not know it, Mr. W. thus speaks in his letter: "It naturally tends to lull mourners asleep; to make them say peace to their souls, where there is no peace. It directly tends to damp and stifle their convictions, and to encourage them in sitting down contented, before Christ is revealed in them, and before his Spirit witnesses with their spirit that they are the children of God." (cited by Mr. H. p. 67.)

On placing these two passages before him, Mr. H. addresses himself to us as follows: "Now, Gentlemen, do not Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher, point-blank deny that the doctrine of the Essay has any necessary tendency to lull people asleep, as Mr. W. here asserts? Is not the contradiction palpable, and in the express terms in which Mr. Wesley had asserted the contrary? Do they not further affirm, the doctrine is admirably calculated to excite every penitent to faith, prayer, the improvement of his talent, and to the perfecting of holiness?" (p. 67.)

On the friendship and veneration which are

thus manifested for the name of Mr. Wesley, I shall say nothing. But I must beg leave to observe, that the contradiction which Mr. H. fancies he has discovered, is not at all palpable in my estimation, though it appears to be so in his. On the contrary, I can discover between these passages no small degree of harmony, which he seems to have totally overlooked.

Mr. W. in his letter asserts, that the doctrine for which Mr. H. contends, “naturally tends to lull mourners asleep—to stifle their convictions—and to encourage them in sitting down contented before Christ is revealed in them,” &c. And wherein does the language or the doctrine of the Essay contradict this? Surely not in any passage which Mr. H. has thus far quoted from it—not even in this, which is selected on purpose to confront the letter? This tells us, indeed, that “no preaching was ever attended with a more universal blessing, and that no discourse was ever more instrumental in conveying to all the faith of assurance, than that very sermon which the Apostle began by intimating, that his hearers were already accepted according to an *inferior dispensation*: And that this doctrine, *properly guarded*, far from having a *necessary* tendency to lull people asleep, is admirably calculated to excite every penitent to faith, &c. Now, the utmost that the doctrine of the Essay intimates, is, that penitents are accepted according to an *inferior dispensation*, but not ac-

ording to that, the faith and terms of acceptance of which they are urged to seek. It is against the neglect of the latter, and not of the inferior dispensations, that Mr. W. directs his letter; and nothing which bears a resemblance to what Mr. W. condemns, is inculcated in the Essay. Nay, "acceptance according to the *inferior dispensation*" is admitted to be dangerous, unless "*properly guarded*;" for it is *only* then that it is admirably calculated to excite every penitent to faith," &c.

But how is this doctrine of "acceptance according to the inferior dispensations" to be "*properly guarded*," so that it lose its tendency to lull people asleep? This Mr. F. has described in the following words, which immediately succeed those that have been last quoted from his pages: "May we not (says Mr. F.) sufficiently guard the *Christian dispensation*, by constantly affirming, that all Christian believers have now the witness in themselves; that those who have it not, either never had Christian faith, or that with the unsettled Galatians, they are actually fallen from grace," &c. (p. 161.) Here then the knot unties itself: This doctrine of the Essay, when delivered in an unguarded manner, has a tendency to lull people asleep, even though spoken only in reference to the inferior dispensations. But, "when properly guarded by constant affirmations," that all Christian believers have now the witness in themselves; and that those who have it not, either never had Christian faith, or are actually fallen from grace;

it is admirably adapted to excite every penitent to faith," &c. Here then the doctrine of the Essay, and the doctrine of the letter, are in perfect harmony with each other; in fact, it is the same doctrine, only it is viewed through different mediums.

The letter says, "we should not encourage penitents, by telling them they are in the favor of God, though they do not know it;" and the Essay on this point only declares, that "the Apostle began by intimating that his hearers were already accepted according to *an inferior dispensation*," but not according to that which he urged them to embrace. Under the glorious light of the gospel, the letter tells us, "we should never utter such a word in a congregation at the hazard of our souls;" (*i. e.* such a word as would lead penitents to believe they are accepted according to the privileges of the dispensation which they seek): and the Essay assures us, that to teach them "that they are accepted according to an inferior dispensation," is only likely to be beneficial when "properly guarded." The letter says, that to tell penitents in our day, "that they are in the favor of God, though they do not know it, tends to lull mourners asleep, and make them say peace to their souls, where there is no peace:" while the Essay affirms, that "the doctrine of acceptance according to the inferior dispensations, will be far from having any such necessary tendency, if *properly guarded*:" and that it is to be properly guarded, by constantly affirming, that ALL Christian believers have

the witness in themselves; and that those who have it not, either never had Christian faith, or are actually fallen from grace."

Such are the doctrines of the letter, and such the doctrines of the Essay. Where then are those expressions which contain the palpable contradiction? The mountain has disappeared, and harmony prevails throughout the whole. Unfortunately, Mr. H. seems to have lost sight altogether of the inferior dispensations, to which the Essay in the case before us is confined, and to have shut his eyes against the manner in which its doctrines were guarded.

In p. 68, Mr. H. observes as follows: "I assume the fact as acknowledged by all, but mere sciolists in divinity, that conversion, repentance, and the new birth, substantially mean the same thing." To investigate minutely this strange position, would certainly be a waste of time; on which account it shall be declined. If this position be genuine, it will not be difficult to prove, that our mounting a carriage, travelling in it, and arriving at our journey's end, substantially mean the same thing, *i. e.* the removing of us from one place to another; or, that commencement, progress, and termination, are the same, because they all bear some relation to action. A little improvement upon this theory would induce us to believe, that a man, a sheep, a butterfly, a horse, and a lobster, are substantially the same, because they all partake of animal life.

“ It is (says Mr. H.) because we are begotten again, and born again, and grown to some maturity of knowledge, strength, and holy obedience, that the Father and the Son more fully reveal themselves to us, and give us a more constant, confidential, and endearing communion or fellowship, by a full communication of the Spirit of adoption.” (p. 68.) According to this declaration, it appears, that God stands at a distance from us, while we struggle with our spiritual enemies, and grapple with temptation; and when we have acquired strength, without his additional aid, he favors us with unnecessary assistance. To what are we here taught to ascribe our salvation? Where are those gracious aids of God’s Holy Spirit, without which we can do nothing acceptable to God? To what purpose are further communications of his gracious assistance made, when we have “grown to some maturity of knowledge, strength, and holy obedience,” without them? Surely, Mr. H. was not aware of the import of his own assertion.

“ What sincere penitents in your societies—(Mr. H. asks) do not receive Jesus, and worship him? Is he not even to them the fairest among ten thousands, and altogether lovely?—The only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?” (p. 69.) In answer, we have no evidence that any of these sincere penitents have received Jesus agreeably to the present dispensation of the gospel, who have not the witness in themselves, though shining with

but feeble lustre ; and none can have this witness who labor under a genuine sense of God's displeasure, and act only from servile motives. If it be contended, that, though they are in this state, they certainly have faith, " it must be admitted, even by those who agree in this matter, that they cannot know in whom they have believed. Those, therefore, who do not know in whom they have believed, can have no sure trust in God." A trust that is sure, is one that is firm, confident, and certain ; for these ideas are included in the term. If then, while in the state above described, they can be said to believe in Christ, it must be with a faith of ignorance, which is neither firm, nor confident, nor certain ; and few, perhaps, would presume to assert, that such a faith as this can justify and be imputed for righteousness. But if these sincere penitents of our Societies view Christ as the fairest among ten thousands, and altogether lovely, their souls cannot be wholly destitute of peace and joy. In this case, they can no longer be the characters that were previously described, but persons who are justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

" But what particular consequences, to your *personal* knowledge, (Mr. H. asks) flow from your doctrine ? If it be preached *unguardedly*, as the *high flood* of Christianity, while in fact it is but the neap tide of the infant river, very bad ; men do, and will, stop short of the Spirit of adoption ; and, though God's real children, will live and die

in a state comparatively dark and servile. But if preached as infant christianity with clear assurance, and the adopting Spirit, rationally, scripturally, and affectionately urged, it never fails to bring God's children forward." (p. 71.) This is an inference which few among us would have expected to see drawn from our doctrines, and which fewer still will admit to be legitimate, when they peruse Mr. H.'s pages. We were not aware, that our doctrines were any way calculated to make "men stop short of the Spirit of adoption;" and the methods which are here pointed out to rectify our errors, will hardly induce us to alter our opinion. But what methods must we adopt to avoid those consequences? Will the telling of lukewarm Laodicean seekers, that their case is bad, that their situation is dangerous, incline them to sit still? Will our telling of the earnest seekers, that Christ is waiting to be gracious, make them grow weary in well-doing? The conduct of Bartimeus has taught us a different lesson. When I see a man on the brink of a precipice, alive to all the horrors of his situation, must I tell him that his fears are groundless, and that his state is safe, to induce him to find security? And will he, by listening to my instructions, act the reverse of what I teach him? If this be the case, I must do evil that good may come, by inculcating falsehoods, that penitents may act as though I spoke the truth. In short, I must tell them, that "assurance" is not

essential to salvation," as the most infallible method of urging them to attain it.

"If Simon Peter (says Mr. H.) was a Christian when he believed Jesus came out from God, loved him, and was loved of the Father, why are not all Christians, to whom the Father has revealed the same precious faith?" If Mr. H. will undertake to prove, that we are now under the same dispensation of grace that Saint Peter was, when he thus believed in Christ, I will readily grant, that on the same conditions we are constituted true believers in the Saviour. But if this cannot be made to appear, Mr. H. must pardon me, if I continue to think, with Mr. Fletcher, that "all Christian believers have now the witness in themselves," (p. 161.) and that "nobody can truly believe, according to this dispensation, without being immediately conscious both of the forgiveness of sins, and of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Preface, p. 5.)

I again subscribe myself, with great respect,

Dear Brethren,

Yours

Faithfully

And affectionately,

T. COKE.

L E T T E R V.

VERY DEAR BRETHREN,

MR. Horne in his fourth letter, which now presents itself for consideration, has given to his readers little more than a repetition of what he had previously advanced. Some branches of the hypothesis for which he had been contending, he here endeavours to strengthen by collateral evidence; but, whether in his appeals to authority, or in argument, he has been most unsuccessful, it is difficult to say. This evidence he has drawn from indefinite sources, and thrown together in a most miscellaneous manner. Hence, his observations are so detached, his digressions so numerous, and his recurrence to points which have been already discussed so frequent, that to give the reader a competent idea of what he has introduced, it would be necessary to transcribe almost the whole letter.

In those parts of his volume which we have already examined, his attacks on the writings of

the Rev. John and Charles Wesley, and the Rev. Mr. Fletcher, were more of a specific nature; so that while they involved questions, in the decision of which we were deeply interested, they admitted of a particular reply. To rescue these names, which must be always dear to every friend of vital Christianity, I found it necessary to trace the windings of error and misrepresentation more minutely than the occasion would otherwise have demanded. This I have done, to obviate those imputations which Mr. H. has thrown upon their writings,—imputations which truth and justice could never attach to the doctrines which they taught.

In the progress of his desultory remarks, Mr. H. in the letter before us, adverts to an article in the Methodist Magazine for July 1807, written by our greatly respected friend Mr. Marsden, “concerning the Witness of the Spirit, and a sense of God’s favor.” From this article, Mr. H. has taken several broken sentences, and detached parts, for the purpose of animadversion. But as he has neither given us the title which it bears, nor referred us to the place in which it is to be found, these omissions apparently intimate a desire to preclude all reply to his own remarks.

Of this little piece there is not a single argument which is fully met. And the manner in which Mr. H. has proceeded with his quotations and animadversions discovers, at one view, the nakedness of that cause which he has undertaken to defend, and the conclusiveness of those argu-

ments which he has in vain attempted to refute. Mr. Marsden begins his little article in the following manner: "When the humble mourner, under a deep conviction of his guilt, and weeping at the footstool of mercy, earnestly pleads with God for a knowledge of his pardoning love, he certainly does not at that time enjoy that testimony of the divine favor which is satisfactory to him. And yet, we cannot doubt but God is at all times equally disposed to receive returning sinners, and pardon them when they comply with the terms required in the gospel; one of which is, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. For to him gave all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins. And with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, or justification. On the other hand, it is declared, He that believeth not is condemned already, and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life. From which passages of scripture it appears, that before a person is enabled to believe on the Lord Jesus, he is a stranger to the justifying grace of God, and abides under condemnation."

On taking from this paragraph the scriptures last cited, Mr. H. asks as follows: "Were you, my dear Sir, a damned unbeliever in the Son of God, on whom you founded all your hopes? If you say, yes; I credit your damnatory testimony as little as Mr. Wesley's, but say that you had been taught by definition-men; and they, and the

devil, disturbed your calm affiance on the Beloved." (p. 85.) From these observations Mr. H. proceeds to relate his own experience;—tells us how he was terrified by the definition-men;—declares that "as his faith and repentance towards God and Christ grew, he felt no condemnation, had no fear of death or hell, enjoyed a peace unspeakable, and, before, so unknown, that he began to suspect he had justifying faith." (p. 85.) Mr. Marsden, it should be remembered, was not speaking of those who enjoyed peace, but of those who had it not;—not of those who felt no condemnation, but of such as, "under a deep conviction of their guilt, were weeping at the footstool of divine mercy." The experience of Mr. H., therefore, so far as it goes, confirms the doctrine of Mr. Marsden which it was brought to oppose, and leaves the whole of his argument without any reply.

In proceeding to lay down, what he deems, marks of a justified state, Mr. M. speaks as follows: "Another solemn declaration of St. Paul is, that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And to shew what he means by having the Spirit of Christ, he proceeds to observe, that as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God—that they have received not the spirit of bondage to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father; and that the Spirit of God beareth witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God. So that it appears, if we belong to Christ, or are the children

of God, we must have the witness of the Spirit." To this passage Mr. H. replies as follows: "Does not Mr. Marsden know that chapter (Rom. viii.) contains all the high privileges of the sons of God; and when he had begun, why did he not quote to the end, and then conclude that every believer is assured that neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" "The question in debate between us is, whether babes in Christ experience them; and whether, because they do not, they are in a state of damnation?" (p. 91.) Now, according to Mr. Horne's argument, because some small part of this chapter contains the high privileges of the sons of God, the whole must in like manner be restricted in its application. St. Paul says, "Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom. viii. 9.) Will Mr. H. affirm that this passage belongs to none but adult Christians who are matured in the divine life? If this be asserted, it will follow, that Christians may be babes in Christ without his Spirit, and, consequently, as these babes must be in the favor of God without his Spirit, that this Spirit in the believer's heart is not essential to salvation. Such doctrine must give a fatal stab to experimental religion, as well as flatly contradict the Apostle, who positively declares—"if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

But it is needless to vindicate what the meditated blow has not been able to reach. On comparing what Mr. Marsden has written, with the observations which Mr. Horne has made upon some detached parts, no propros, no elucidation, no further defence, appear necessary. Not a single argument is refuted. The scriptures adduced remain in all their force, by retaining their wonted applications. And I feel no hesitation in asserting, that, in proportion as what Mr. H. has written from page 85 to 99, stands contrasted with what Mr. Marsden has advanced, from page 309 to 311, of the Methodist Magazine for 1807, the result, I am confident, must be highly favorable to the doctrines which we teach. Such a contrast will display, in a most convincing light, the energy of Mr. Marsden's arguments, which he has fortified by pointed and unequivocal scripture testimony, and expose the futility of those attempts which Mr. H. has ineffectually made to assail them.

Hitherto, in examining Mr. Horne's book, I have chiefly acted on the defensive; and, agreeably to his request in page 45, endeavoured to "answer his arguments like an honest man." I shall proceed to bring the whole system into full view, and shall be able, I trust, to convince the reader, that it is inconsistent with the analogy of faith; that it wants conformity to the sacred scriptures; that it is hostile to experimental religion, and calculated to produce many pernicious effects and consequences.

To delineate this system with precision is a difficult task; for when, at certain times, some fixed principle appears to be laid down before us, something which renders it questionable starts into view, and snatches it from our grasp. The general design, however, of Mr. Horne's publication, so far as it tends to inculcate his doctrines, must be gathered from those declarations which form its leading features. Among these the following particulars appear conspicuous:

First. "When men bring forth fruits meet for repentance, we hesitate no longer, but consider them *bonâ fide* as Christians, though weak in faith." (p. 41.) *Secondly.* "Repentance is regeneration, and regeneration repentance," and "to be a true penitent is to be born of the Spirit." (p. 33.) *Thirdly.* "All sincere penitents have a weak, general, and obscure faith in Christ; it is impossible that a man should be a subject of genuine repentance, and yet be destitute of some grain of living faith in Christ." (p. 34.) *Fourthly.* "I am not ashamed nor afraid to affirm, not only that men may be in the favor of God and not know it; but that, in the nature of things, it must be so at one time with every child of God." (p. 68.) *Fifthly.* Mr. H. dissatisfied with Mr. Wesley's definition of justifying faith, introduces in its stead "the receiving the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, as made unto us of the Father, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, in a humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart."

(p. 83.) This definition is afterward explained, and placed in a light which the words themselves would hardly induce us to expect: "What is faith in God or Christ (Mr. H. asks), but a cordial belief of the SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY concerning the Father and the Son?" (p. 98.) *Sixthly*. "If it be replied; 'only let the person believe in Christ, and he will be happy;' I reply, no such thing." (p. 98.) *Seventhly*. He contends, that "faith may be possessed without being discerned." (p. 99.) *Eighthly*. "When, therefore, they recognise their faith in Christ, they settle in peaceable assurance." (p. 99.) *Ninthly*. "Nor do I deny a witness of the Spirit itself." (p. 48.) *Tenthly*. "I deny there is any direct witness." (p. 113.) *Eleventhly*. In answer to this question—"How does the Spirit bear witness?" Mr. H. answers thus, "By the love of God shed abroad in the heart. If I am pressed—"How does the Spirit of God shed it abroad?" I answer again, By enlightening the eyes of my understanding to discern the abundant love of God revealed to me in the word; and this love of God cordially believed; makes me abundantly to love God." (p. 124.) *Twelfthly*. "Love, and all other fruits of the Spirit, are clearly set forth in scripture; and the fruits of the Spirit in the believer exactly answer to the mould of doctrine into which he is cast, even as the wax to the seal. Thus he hath the witness in himself." (p. 124.) *Thirteenthly*. "And if our last and only satisfactory appeal lies to the

“Spirit’s holy fruits, who does not see that it is by them the Spirit truly witnesses?” (p. 124.)

Such are the general outlines of Mr. Horne’s theory, impartially taken from his own pages, and inserted nearly in his own language. To illustrate some of these positions, several of his own expressions may be produced, and the illustration will serve to discover what in many places lies concealed beneath the equivocation of words. “When the citizens of London (says Mr. H.) present to a British admiral the freedom of their city in a gold box, the freedom of the city is considered as a more valuable present than the box which contains it. But it is not so when God gives me a Saviour. All my good things are in him, as well as by him. Pardon and salvation are inseparable from him. I therefore preach Christ and eternal life in him; and instead of asking my flock, whether they have received pardon, I ask whether they have received Christ?” (p. 86.) On connecting this passage with what I have above quoted from p. 98. as an illustration of his definition of justifying faith, it will be found that vital Christianity is no longer necessary to salvation. “A cordial belief of the SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY concerning the Father and the Son,” we there learn, is genuine faith in Christ; and as “all our good things are in him,” all besides must be purely adventitious. If, therefore, by a cordial belief of the scripture testimony I “receive Christ, in whom all grace and benediction are deposited;” (p. 88.) if “all

my good things are in him, as well as by him," the "gold box" may remain unopened, and experimental religion is fairly turned out of door.

But quitting for a season these views of the subject, are the various branches of this hypothesis founded on the sacred word? Are they consistent with the analogy of faith? Are they not hostile to experimental religion? And finally, are they not likely to be productive of many-fatal effects and consequences? These are questions of the last importance, and demand our most serious consideration. Some of these I hope to examine in the present letter.

First. That "all those who bring forth fruits meet for repentance are true penitents," is most readily granted by us; because the fruits which they produce will induce us to believe that their repentance is genuine, and the contrition which they manifest sincere. But it will not from thence follow, that these characters are "*bonâ fide* Christians," or "born again." For it must not be forgotten, that the motives from which they act must be taken into the account, before we can possess a proper criterion by which to decide whether they are in the favor of God or not. And yet the principle of action is passed over by Mr. H. in total silence, as though it had no connection with the great work of salvation. If nothing but a dread of punishment operates on the mind, and the person is induced to submit to the divine commands in order to mitigate impending wrath, or

because he will not increase it, then it is evident that he does not, nay, cannot act from a principle of love; and, while he remains in this state, no peace or joy can reign in his soul. And, consequently, while these internal evidences of his acceptance are wanting, nothing but external reformation, resulting from terror which is accompanied with remorse, can mark his conduct. It is from this ground that the spiritual condition of his soul must be estimated, and from this estimation that his character must be denominated. Hence then, though a fear of punishment may produce inward contrition and outward reformation, and thereby afford sufficient evidence of genuine repentance, yet nothing can be inferred therefrom, that will tend to prove that such a character is so far in the divine favor as to have obtained justification.

St. John tells us, that "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love. (1 John, iv. 8.) Now love, it is well known, is an inward affection of the soul; and to the person who possesses it, no other evidence of its existence can be so powerful as that sensibility which he feels in his own mind. Whoever, therefore, loves God, must necessarily know it; and he who loves him, and knows it, must feel that inward peace which is its inevitable consequence. But as love can never inhabit that bosom which is influenced to action by a principle of terror, the unquestionable result is, that such a person "knoweth not God." The situation in which these penitents have been de-

scribed, will prove that they are awakened and truly repentant sinners: but it will not prove that they are justified by faith; because they have not peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. See Rom. v. 1.

But, *Secondly*, we are told, that "repentance is regeneration, and regeneration repentance." To establish this most strange proposition, which intentionally confounds repentance with regeneration, if it do not systematically blend a sense of guilt with justification, Mr. H. has produced neither scripture nor argument. But he has assumed it as a position "which all but sciolists in divinity know," (p. 68.) and erected his theory upon this baseless peradventure. St. Luke has said, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;" (Acts, iii. 19.) thus evidently making a distinction between repentance and conversion, which he could not have done if repentance and regeneration were the same. The same distinction is preserved by the Prophet in this general exhortation: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." (Isa. lv. 7.) Is it not evident from this passage, that the forsaking of wickedness must precede the turning to the Lord? And is it not equally certain, that the former may exist without the latter, and that both are absolutely necessary in order to the obtaining of that par-

don which is here promised? Can any words within the compass of language be more expressive, to mark those distinctions for which we contend, than those which the prophet has here placed before us? And yet, Mr. H. thoughtlessly asserts, that "repentance is regeneration, and regeneration repentance."

Our Lord, in reply to St. Peter, who said, "Behold we have left all and followed thee," observed as follows: "Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matt. xix. 28.) Now, if repentance and regeneration be the same, may not the words of our Lord run thus—"ye which have followed me through the *repentance*," &c. To mention such an interchange of ideas, is itself sufficient to expose the error. St. Paul, in his epistle to Titus, says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of *regeneration*," &c. (Titus, iii. 5.) Can we, when reading these words, assert, that regeneration in this passage means nothing more than repentance? Will any man affirm, that we are "washed by repentance?" Or can we, without offering an insult to the church of God, which can hardly be exceeded by any thing but that violence which we must offer to the sacred word, contend that the terms, or the ideas for which they stand, are any way synonymous?

Again, the "new creature" spoken of in Galatians, vi. 15. plainly relates to regeneration; but, instead of identifying itself with repentance, evidently pre-supposes it. When St. Paul says,— "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," (2 Cor. v. 17.) will any reasonable man affirm, that he means, that such a person is nothing more than a sincere penitent, or one that possesses only true repentance? And when he asserts, that "the inward man is renewed day by day," (2 Cor. iv. 16.) can it be thought that he intends to unfold to his hearers and readers the doctrine of repentance? Does the Prophet do nothing more than inculcate the doctrine of repentance, when he tells us, that they who "wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength;" (Isa. xl. 31.) and does the Psalmist intend exactly the same, when he speaks of our "strength, or youth, being renewed like the eagle's?" (Psal. ciii. 5.) In all these places, an infusion of divine power into the soul must be understood;—a power not merely to enable us to behold the danger of our situation, but to assist us in the performance of those things which are acceptable in the sight of God, from motives by which an awakened sinner, or mere penitent, cannot be actuated.

When we compare repentance and regeneration together, we find several instances in which they are distinct from each other. Repentance implies an awful sensibility of our sinfulness, and a deep contrition for it; but regeneration implies a deli-

erance from sin's dominion, and imparts a new principle of action. The former includes a change of opinion founded on a change of prospect; but the latter a renewal of our nature. The former presents us with a prospect of danger; the latter gives us power to flee from it. The former groans, being burdened; the latter triumphs in being set free. The former expresses the language of captivity; the latter rejoices in the liberty of the sons of God. The former brings with it a sense of the divine displeasure; the latter gives us views of his reconciled favor. And yet we are told that "repentance is regeneration, and regeneration repentance."

Thirdly. Mr. H. asserts, that "all sincere penitents have a weak, general, and obscure faith in Christ;" and that "it is impossible that a man should be a subject of genuine repentance, and yet be destitute of some grain of living faith in Christ." That genuine repentance is inseparably connected with some kind of faith in Christ, I readily admit; for no man can feel sorrow for having broken his laws, and trampled under foot his dying love, while he has no faith in his existence, his power, and his character. Neither will any man groan for deliverance from the burden which he feels, or petition the Saviour for mercy, unless he believes he is both able and ready to receive him, and feels some degree of confidence in his promises. It is this "weak, general, and obscure faith" which keeps hope alive, and banishes des-

pair; for the latter reigns in triumph, whenever the former wholly disappears.

But still this "weak, general, and obscure faith," though saving in its degree, by keeping the penitent from despair, by no means answers the character of that by which he is to be justified in the sight of God. And though Mr. Horne, dissatisfied with Mr. Wesley's definition of justifying faith, has substituted another in its stead, it is one which this "weak, general, and obscure faith" of penitents will not reach, if we detach from it that sweeping explanation which makes all faith to consist in "a cordial belief of the *Scripture testimony* concerning the Father and the Son." (p. 98.) Mr. H. has defined faith to be "the receiving Christ as made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, in an humble, lowly, penitent and obedient heart." Now, though we admit this definition, yet in this "general faith" which repenting sinners have, there is no receiving of Christ into the heart in his gracious characters; there is no reliance or recumbency on him for salvation; neither does "he dwell in their hearts by faith." On the contrary, doubts and personal unbelief so far prevail with the penitent, as to keep alive in his soul that sorrow through which he waters his couch with his tears. And hence he laments his want of the Saviour, and feels his necessity of some inward evidence that he is born of God.

That Christ has tasted death for sinners, and

that he is included in the number, he readily acknowledges; but this "general faith" affords him no satisfaction. This general belief he possessed prior to his being awakened, and yet he is fully conscious that he was then in a state of spiritual unbelief, notwithstanding his firm belief of the scripture testimony. On comparing, indeed, his present with his former state, he finds within himself a remarkable difference. He now feels a personal conviction from above, bringing home the same truths with irresistible power, and saying to him—"Thou art the man." He, therefore, finds a necessity of having something more than "a general faith" in the promises of the gospel, to accomplish his deliverance from the burden which he feels. Prior to his being awakened, his persuasion of his sinfulness, and his faith in Christ and his gospel, strongly resembled each other. Both were general; both were uninfluential;—the former permitted him to live in sin, and the latter to neglect and disregard the Saviour of the world. But now the commandment, brought home with power, having completely slain him, his convictions are become personal, powerful, and penetrating; and nothing can counteract their effects, but grace realized through a degree of faith which is equally personal, powerful, and energetic. What a dangerous error is it then to instruct penitents, that, though their convictions are keen, personal,

and piercing, they may be justified by a faith which is "weak, general, and obscure?"

Fourthly. Mr. H. affirms, that "men may not only be in the favor of God and not know it, but that it must be so in the nature of things at one time with every child of God." That the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, is attainable in the present life, is declared in scripture too plainly, it might be thought, to be misunderstood, or successfully controverted by any who profess to favor those evangelical views of religion which the gospel affords. St. Luke informs us, that one grand design of Christ's coming into the world, "was to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins." (Luke, i. 77.) Our Lord has said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." (John, vii. 17.) In short, the whole current of scripture presents this truth to our view, that "this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

This important doctrine, Mr. Horne cannot be charged with denying, or at least only in an indirect manner. He allows the thing to be possible, and even attainable by Christians of an exalted character, who know how to "recognise their faith;" but at the same time he contends, that "it is not essential to salvation." (p. 33.) That a knowledge of our being accepted is not essential to acceptance itself, *i. e.* does not constitute

any part of it, when considered in the abstract, we, with Mr. Wesley, readily allow ; and the reason is obvious : acceptance must precede our knowledge of it, because this knowledge presupposes the fact, just as a shadow presupposes a substance, and is evidently founded upon it. Acceptance is an act of God ; but our knowledge of it is a branch, a primary branch, of experimental religion. If, therefore, this had been the only point for which Mr. H. had contended, no room would have remained for any difference of opinion.

But though we grant that acceptance and our knowledge of it, are two distinct ideas, and allow that the latter cannot be included in the former, or form any part of it ; still we contend, that they are so closely connected together, that the former cannot be recognised by us without the latter. Here we are completely at issue with Mr. H., who "affirms, that men may not only be in the favor of God and not know it, but that it must be so in the nature of things, at one time, with every child of God."

That justification is by faith, we gather from the plain language of scripture: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 1.) Now, faith is an inward assent which the mind yields to any given proposition, when it is supported by proof ; and, whether it justifies or not, its existence can be ascertained only by an evidence which is purely mental. The same Apostle who has told us, that

justification is by faith, has said, that "faith is the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. xi. 1.) Now, nothing can be more plain than this, that if the evidence of any given fact fails us, the fact instantly ceases to be an object of belief, and in many cases becomes totally unknown. Is not, therefore, that hypothesis very presumptuous, which peremptorily asserts, not only, that "a man may be in the favor of God and not know it, but that in the nature of things it must be so, at one time, with every child of God," and that "he may have justifying faith without being able to discern it." (p. 99.)

Nor can it be of any avail to assert, that "justifying faith is to be inferred from the external fruits which it produces." I grant, that to those who are spectators of my conduct, the effects which result from my faith are of the last importance. They will be enabled by them to appreciate the reality of my experience; for these fruits will corroborate or contradict what I profess to have obtained and to enjoy. But these external fruits are not the only, nor even the primary evidence by which I can be certified of the existence and quality of my faith. That the quality, as well as the existence of faith, must be thus understood, is evident, because that which the Apostle describes as "the evidence of things not seen," is justifying faith; and it is impossible that we can retain the just import of the term, if we discard the quality which it designates. Now, if justify-

ing faith is to be inferred only from the fruits and effects which result from it, how can this faith ever be admitted as the evidence of things not seen? While inference is the only proof that we have of the existence of justifying faith, this faith itself can never be an evidence of objects still more remote; because, if this were to be admitted, inference must be built upon inference, and faith itself would actually want that very evidence which it is presumed to impart.

If justifying faith, under any given circumstance, can only be ascertained to exist in the manner above stated, instead of being "the substance," it can hardly be the shadow "of things hoped for." It, therefore, no longer bears the characteristic mark which the Apostle has given to faith, and, consequently, cannot be that which he has described as "the evidence of things unseen, the substance of things hoped for." For certain it is, that a faith which can be known to exist only through those outward fruits and effects which are presumed to result from it, can never be admitted as an evidence to prove the existence of any other thing, much less can it be considered as a substance, when it is less than a shadow. It, therefore, retires from that definition which St. Paul has given of faith, and can be nothing more than the creature of imagination, or the tool of an hypothesis.

Should it be said, that "outward works form only a part of the evidence which faith affords,"

no advantage can be gathered from hence to favor those who argue for the hypothesis. I know the Apostle has declared, that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God," and that peace is here asserted to be an inward evidence. But do those possess this inward peace, who mourn after an absent God? Do those possess this peace, who neither "discern their faith, nor feel comfort?" The want of peace is that which creates their sorrow. Peace is what they seek more earnestly than thousands of gold and silver. For this they wait with anxious solicitude; and because they find it not, they refuse to be comforted till God speaks peace to their souls. How then can inward evidence be pleaded as a proof of faith in any repentant sinner, when this is the very blessing of which he is wholly destitute, and when we are assured that "a man may be in the favor of God and not know it?" What then, under these circumstances, but outward evidence can remain? And if nothing but outward evidence can be found, we must again hasten to our former conclusion. A faith, therefore, which may any way be supposed to exist, that affords no "evidence of things unseen," that is not "the substance of things hoped for," and that brings no peace into the soul, can never be a faith which justifies in the sight of God, nor be that which the Apostle has described.

Outward works, I grant, will afford corroborative evidence of the quality of faith; but, how-

ever excellent they may appear in the sight of men, they must spring from proper motives, and be influenced into being by proper causes, to be pleasing and acceptable to God. But both faith and its quality must be ascertained by some evidence independently of those good works which are visible; and, therefore, the existence of both must be determined by some other criterion. For though no effect can exist without an adequate cause, yet these good works which appear, can never, in all ordinary cases, afford a sufficiency of indubitable evidence to enable spectators to determine on the motive from whence they sprang: Hence, as the motive from which the action springs, stamps the value of the action itself, nothing can be more absurd than to attempt to appreciate the quality of the motive by that of the action which derives all its excellencies from it. This would compel us most completely to argue in a circle: first, the motive must give value to the action, and then the action must give value to the motive. The truth is, we must have some other criterion by which to ascertain the nature of our faith, than that which these good works are able at all times to furnish, or remain destitute of that evidence which is necessary to enable us to ascertain it. This evidence, reason, scripture, and experience, have taught us where to seek, and how to find.

Reason tells us, that whatever is an evidence, must, in order to support that character, not only exist, but shine by its own lustre, or it can-

not bear testimony to any given fact. If this be not admitted, it must be supposed to impart a greater perspicuity of evidence than that which substantiates its own existence ;—a circumstance which will compel us to conclude that it communicates that very proof which it must be admitted to want. But as nothing can communicate what it has not, faith can never be an evidence of things unseen, while its nature can only be ascertained by those very effects which a pure motive is necessary to render excellent.

If we appeal to the scriptures, their language is decisive. They tell us, that “faith is an evidence of things not seen, the substance of things hoped for ;” and, consequently, that it must exist in ways not subjected to the above charges of absurdity. They furthermore observe, that “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness :” (Rom. x. 10.) that “he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself :” (1 John v. 10.) that “whosoever believeth on him, shall receive remission of sins :” (Acts x. 43.) and that “he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” (John, iii. 36.)

Experience also concurs with the testimony of reason and scripture. The sacred writings present us with the map of our spiritual journey, and direct the Christian how to visit those heights and depths which they describe. The love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us, is the permanent source of our experimental knowledge, that Christ hath power on earth to forgive sins. From this principle, does that

faith which works by love start into existence, and, shining by its native lustre, become an evidence of things not seen with our bodily organs. Hence we view it as the substance or subsistence of things hoped for; and, through that light which is imparted with it to the mind, we are led to know the nature of that motive from which we act, and to receive an assurance that the life we live in the flesh is by faith in the Son of God, who hath loved us and given himself for us. From this inward principle peace flows into the soul; from this the fruits of the Spirit spring; by this the consolations of grace are realized; and through this we have our fruit unto holiness. Thus we walk in the light of God's reconciled countenance as children of the light, and have fellowship with the Father and the Son through the eternal Spirit. And dismissing that doctrine which would absurdly instruct us to believe, that we "may know that we are in the favor of God without knowing it," as a contradictory chimera, we receive the Saviour into our hearts by faith, and, having everlasting life, rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

But this principle, which Mr. Horne lays down, should be rejected, not merely because it has an hostile aspect in the light in which it has been considered, but because it opens the door to many pernicious effects. He has said, "I am not ashamed nor afraid to affirm, not only that men may be in the favor of God and not know it, but that in

the very nature of things it must be so, at one time, with every child of God." (p. 68.) It is in this point that his principles chiefly centre, and from it that many destructive consequences may be deduced.

1. This principle, that a man may be in the favor of God and not know it, has a natural tendency to lead to Pharisaic delusion. The man who is thus taught to believe that he is in the favor of God, will naturally inquire, how can this thing be? And the only reason which can be assigned to satisfy him must be, because he brings forth fruits meet for repentance: for "when men bring forth fruits meet for repentance, we hesitate no longer, but consider them *bonâ fide* Christians, though weak in faith." (p. 41.) Now, every one will allow, that it is natural for an awakened sinner, to desire that others should not think more unfavourably of his state than he does himself; this must inhabit the bosom of every one who seeks earnestly for peace. Indeed, one source of his expected consolation is, that those on whose judgment he relies, endeavour to sooth his wounded spirit. When, therefore, he is told that his conduct alone is the principal, if not the only basis of that judgment, by which his spiritual condition is to be estimated, his utmost attention will be directed to this point. And as in an exact proportion as this stands fair he will be consoled, so in the same proportion he will be taught to pay less regard to those convictions

which he feels. A scrupulous observance of every instituted rite, he will be instructed to believe, is an evidence of that faith which he "does not discern," and a convincing proof that he is "in the favor of God, though he does not know it." The influence of example, and fallacious argument, will confirm the opinion which error thus calls into existence; time will render the malady inveterate; and in proportion as these principles predominate, the Pharisee will become complete.

2. An inevitable consequence of the previous error is, that conviction will in time be stifled. For while the outward fruits of repentance form the rule of judgment by which both himself and others are to be guided in their decision on his spiritual state, the keenness of his conviction will be blunted by having the attention directed to what must be deemed a more important object. And in proportion as the acuteness of these convictions dies away, he will be protected in the delusion in which he was first taught to confide; and will be instructed to furnish himself with additional arguments drawn from this source—that he is making some advances in the narrow way that leadeth to life. With a conduct strictly moral, and a mind thus fortified in error, he will be placed beyond the reach of salutary admonition. For should some faithful friend attempt to warn him of his danger, by hinting that his heart is unrenewed, he will be charged with "bending all his strength to break his peace."

(p. 98.) And should his friend, in order to convince him of his error, relate his own experience, and give him an account how he was caught in the same snare and delivered from it, the deluded man is already furnished with the following reply: "I credit your damnatory testimony as little as Mr. Wesley's: you have been taught by definition-men; and they and the devil disturbed your calm affiance on the Beloved." (p. 85.) Thus gathering strength from public declaration and private persuasion, conviction will no longer be a troublesome companion. It will die away; and he who before trembled from an apprehension of danger, will now sleep in undisturbed security.

3. One error generally leads to, and begets another. The same principle which tends to stifle conviction, tends also to invalidate the testimony of conscience. The man who can be taught to believe that he may be in the favor of God without knowing it, and in direct opposition to the feelings of his heart, will easily be led to suspect the testimony of that principle, which, as he imagines, had imposed upon his judgment. When, therefore, he is persuaded that his conscience has already been proved to be erroneous, and that too in the acutest evidence which it ever bore, he will suspect its veracity on all future occasions; he will treat its dictates with indifference, if not with contempt; and dismiss it as an unworthy and suspicious guide. When assailed by its thunder on any occasion which does not interfere with his

outward morals, he will naturally reason thus: "I have already felt impressions which were equally severe with those which I now feel. I treated them with the utmost seriousness, and experienced much sorrow on the occasion; but friendly instruction and matured experience have taught me, that the charges which it brought were unfounded, and I am resolved to be no longer the dupe of what has once been detected as an imposture." By what arguments such reasonings can be repelled by those who affirm that "a man may be in the favor of God and not know it," "may have faith and not discern it," "be justified and not have comfort," I confess myself at a loss to say.

4. Another evil which flows from this pernicious principle is, that it leads to a false and delusive peace. Indeed, when convictions are stifled, and the clamours of conscience are no longer heard with attention, a false peace is the inevitable result. The same occasions which blunt the edge of conviction, will induce the person to conclude that he now begins to feel a small degree of that peace to which he is conscious that he had been an entire stranger. This circumstance will lead him to place an additional degree of confidence in those principles by which he has been deceived; and this confidence, in its turn, will induce him to solace himself on his growing stupidity, which he has fatally mistaken for peace, and will urge him to sing a requiem to his departed fears. Thus will he be insensibly led to speak peace to his soul,

though God has not spoken it; and to sink deeper and deeper into a deception that originated in his adopting a principle, which taught him to believe that he might be in the favor of God and not know it.

5. This imaginary light will lead those who are governed by it, to walk in real darkness. Confident of being in the divine favor, the half-slumbering penitent can no longer approach the throne of grace, in the language and with the feelings of the Publican, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He may, indeed, pray for brighter displays of the divine approbation; but the delusion under which he labours, rendering him insensible of his real state, will effectually prevent him from petitioning for justifying faith. This he will flatter himself he already possesses; though he does not discern it. And full of this conviction, he will aim to erect the superstructure without laying a proper foundation; and, by cherishing this radical error, defeat his own designs. So far as this principle gains the ascendancy in his mind, he will imagine that he has made improvements in the divine life; and fancying himself to be rich and increased in goods, he will find no inclination to suspect that he is poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. To such characters we know who hath said—"If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say We see; therefore your sin remaineth." (John, ix. 41.) Principles which lead to such conclusions, ought to

have something more alluring than a direct opposition to scripture, to recommend them. Mr. H. has said, that "a man may be in the favor of God and not know it;" but St. John has informed us that "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." (1 John, i. 6.)

6. The principle against which I argue, will naturally lead those who are governed by it, to entertain preposterous ideas of faith. What absurd notions must I not have of this exalted grace, when I am led to believe that I can be justified by it, and obtain the favor of God through its instrumentality, and yet know nothing either of the instrument or the blessing? It must induce me to conclude, that justifying faith began its saving operations in that moment when I was personally convinced that I was in a state of unbelief. I must admit it to be a something which is an evidence of things unseen, though I have no immediate knowledge of its testimony, or discernment of its existence; and consider it as an invisible agent through which I have laid hold on the Saviour and received the favor of God, though these blessings are equally unknown. It is an evidence which affords no proof of the fact which it witnesses,—that realises a blessing which is unperceived even while it is possessed,—and, though luminous in itself, and capable of shining by its native lustre, is to be ascertained either by that cloud of sorrow which arises from a consciousness

of its absence, or to be inferred from that outward reformation of conduct which may have arisen from another source. If this faith be recommended in the bible, I frankly acknowledge I know not where to find it. But I appeal to any reasonable man, whether these contradictions do not flow from that principle which admits that justification is by faith, and yet contends, that "a man may be in the favor of God and not know it," and "have faith without discerning it?"

7. The principle before us tends to conceal the motive from which our actions flow, and instructs us to infer it from the effects produced. Whether the actions of penitents result from the favor of God imperceptibly granted, from a dread of punishment, from interested designs, or from any other cause, it is to the effects alone that we are directed to look. "Patiently wait (we are told) till causes develop their legitimate effects." (p. 42.) I grant that this principle is laid down as a rule by which we are directed to estimate the motives of others. But if those characters of whom we judge, are instructed to believe that "they may be in the favor of God without knowing it," by what other rule than this which we prescribe to ourselves, shall they estimate the sources of their actions? "They will feel justified in judging of themselves in the same manner that others judge of them." (p. 32.) Indeed, every other rule of judgment is hostile to the principle established, and would destroy it if admitted. If, therefore, awakened individuals

have no other rule by which to estimate the motives of their own actions, but by inferring them from the actions themselves; the inward principle, as well as their consciousness of it, may be dismissed as a fallacious guide, while their outward conduct stands fair. And when this is once granted, it is impossible to say to what fatal effects it may not lead us, or after how much error and absurdity such a rule shall cease to operate.

8. If "a man may be in the favor of God without knowing it," why may he not be a penitent without knowing it? I see no reason that can be assigned for the one, which will not reach the other. Neither does it appear to be a greater insult offered to common sense, to suppose the latter than the former; especially, when we take into the account living faith, which, though the instrument of justification may, it is said, exist and operate "without being discerned." For if I must infer the motive of my action from the action itself—the genuineness of repentance from the fruits which it produces—and the certainty of regeneration from identifying it with that repentance, the genuineness of which is only to be known by inference;—if I must infer the reality of justifying faith from its being inseparable from penitence—and gather assurance from a recognition of my faith—surely, penitence itself may be inferred from reformation; and the instant this is admitted, the vortex of heathen morality will instantly furnish Christianity with a grave. If then, by making

this little stride, (which, analogy says, may be justly made, and which it is to be feared too many will actually make,) I am permitted to infer penitence from reformation, as I am to infer the divine favor from similar actions, the conclusion will be inevitable, that a man may be a real penitent without knowing it. For I feel no hesitation in asserting, that if our knowledge of penitence is no more essential to its existence, than our discernment of faith is to the existence of faith, the former may be as reasonably inferred as the latter. Under circumstances so inauspicious, convictions, according to this hypothesis, will dwindle into non-entities, since reformation will prove their inutility. The ministers of the Gospel will then only have "to denounce perdition, on all who live as *practical* atheists in the world;" and "here their painful damnatory commission, which is the strange work of the God of love, will end." (p. 43.)

9. But granting that penitence may not be so easily inferred from reformation as I have supposed, what shall prevent the man who has been brought to believe that repentance and regeneration are the same, from inferring that he has "a witness of the Spirit, which, though it can be produced to no other man, is of immense importance to the confirmation of the believer himself?" (p. 46.) Can any reason be assigned, according to the hypothesis, that shall fairly repel or prevent this conclusion? A direct witness is positively denied; (p. 113.) and, consequently, no witness but that

which is indirect, remains. An indirect witness can bring no direct testimony, either of the thing which it professes to establish, or of its own existence; and, consequently, it is only to be inferred from external actions, from sources of authority, or from preconceived principles. And all such as embrace the hypothesis, have an equal right and as much reason to affirm, that they have "a witness of the Spirit," though they do not know it, as Mr. H. has to "affirm that a man may be in the favor of God and not know it."

10. From fancying himself to possess "a witness of the Spirit," the journey is short to another conclusion, namely, to his having obtained perfect love, if he should think such a blessing attainable, and should distinguish it from that witness of the Spirit which he has been presumed to infer. For having once admitted it as an incontrovertible axiom, that repentance and regeneration are the same, and that he is now in the favor of God though he does not know it, he will readily conclude, that those "apprehensions of wrath" under which he laboured, are no longer "an unfathomable mystery." He will have already learned that "the devil had been falsely accusing him, and misrepresenting God to him;" (p. 94.) and from hence will conclude, that he has little reason to depend on the testimony either of his judgment or his conscience, when they lead him to suspect that he has not attained unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

From taking a retrospect of the past, he will calculate on the future, and proceed in a manner somewhat like the following, to fortify himself in those errors by which he has been deceived: "Though I feel within myself thoughts and dispositions which appear diametrically opposite to that meek and lowly mind which was in Christ; yet I know, by past experience, that the testimony of my judgment and conscience is a suspicious test. I well remember the time, when their united evidence induced me to believe that I was under the wrath of God; and very severe were my sufferings on that account. The snare, however, was at last broken, through the instructions which I received from those who knew my state better than I then knew it myself; and I discovered the cause of my inward conflict to be nothing more than a stratagem of the devil to rob me of my peace. But I have since learned, that I was at that very time in the favor of God though I did not then know it; and that I had justifying faith though I could not discern it, nor find comfort, nor perceive within my bosom any thing but terror, sorrow, and unbelief. Having thus learned wisdom by the things which I have suffered, I will carefully avoid in future that rock on which I have already struck; and, in hope believing against hope, conclude myself to be fit for heaven in opposition to those false accusations of the devil who is continually misrepresenting God to me. As to my life and morals, I find them, on a strict review, to be irre-

proachable, so far as irreproachableness can attach itself to us in the present imperfect and infirm state of things. I am charitable to the necessities of others, I pay every man his honest due, I avoid those vices to which I was addicted in my unconverted state, I neglect no means of grace, and to the utmost of my power endeavour to obey the laws of God: This I know, by past experience, is the most substantial testimony of my being in the divine favor. It bore me out, when inward evidences could not be obtained; it overpowered the darkness which overwhelmed my soul, and affords at all times a criterion by which the world may judge. The sins which marked my life prior to my conversion, and those infirmities which have beset me since, I have already carried to the Saviour of mankind, who died for sinners. I believe on him as he is revealed in the gospel, and dismiss my wicked doubts, from a full persuasion that "assurance is not essential to salvation." That this faith which I cherish is genuine, I have no reason to question; for "what is faith in God or Christ, but a cordial belief of the scripture testimony concerning the Father and the Son?" (p. 98.) This is the faith which, I am confident, I now possess.—It is a much easier task to deny these conclusions than to repel them.

11. The theory before us, tends to lead those who embrace it, to brand the inward witness of the Spirit with the name of enthusiasm. That there is any direct witness, Mr. Horne positively

denies. (p. 113.) “And what more dangerous and fallacious criteria (he asks) can we resort to, than assurance and non-assurance? They (*i. e.* penitents) will feel justified to judge of themselves by the same rule that ministers judge of them.” (p. 32.) The rule by which ministers judge of this subject may be gathered from these words—“What prophet or apostle bears witness against the devil-begotten sin of non-assurance?” (p. 45.) Let these principles be once established in the mind of a person converted to them, and he will view the doctrine of assurance in a very suspicious light. They will furnish him with occasions to treat the subject with indifference, and, perhaps, with contempt; and induce him to suspect either the judgment or the veracity of those who profess to have obtained a blessing to which he is a stranger, and of which he half doubts the existence. Urged by this false and dangerous principle, the deluded character that I have supposed, will scrutinize the professions of him whom he suspects, with malicious eagerness,—will reflect on his language with critical malevolence,—will examine his conduct with inhuman diligence,—will magnify every flaw which he discovers, into a dreadful chasm,—will compare it with a standard of perfection which he feels little solicitude in attaining; and, after despising as “a mock sun” that steady light which never illuminated his own soul, will deride “the high-flying assurances” which he hears, and gravely pronounce the man to be actuated by enthusiasm.

12. These principles are wonderfully calculated to make us indifferent about higher attainments: Being once satisfied in our minds, that "assurance is not essential to salvation," and that "weak and ignorant Christians have it not," our inducements to pursue this blessing will lose almost all their influence. Our principles will have instructed us to believe that assurance is not essential to salvation, and we shall feel but little solicitude about the mere non-essentials of religion. Solacing ourselves with being regenerated, or born again, because we have passed through the sincerity of repentance; and consoling ourselves with that false peace which has resulted from the belief that we were in the favor of God though we did not know it, the satisfaction which will spring from hence, will instruct us to detach privilege from duty, and to estimate higher attainments as a matter of choice rather than obligation. The brightest prospects which the acquirement of assurance can hold out, will be counterbalanced by that indolence through which we have been lulled asleep; and we shall be half tempted to construe our lukewarmness into an evidence of our humility, because we content ourselves with "the crumbs which fall from our Master's table." To confirm us in this error, the dread of falling into enthusiasm will haunt us like an angry ghost; and those epithets which we have probably bestowed on others, will terrify us with the dangers of presumption which our imaginations had raised. Tenacious of our

principles, "our ministers will no longer be able to command terrifying arguments to lash our consciences. We shall think ourselves perfectly safe in our low attainments, despise higher dispensations, and bury our talent of grace till it is taken from us, and given to those who improve their own." (See Fletcher, vol. iv. p. 162.)

13. The principles which Mr. Horne inculcates, will incline humble penitents to doubt the attainableness of assurance: By asserting that "well-instructed Christians will have assurance, but that weak and ignorant Christians have it not," (p. 33.) those who are really mourning after God, and labouring under a sense of his displeasure, are taught to believe that the blessing is not to be attained by them. Humbled under a sense of their manifold iniquities, they dare not look up to Heaven for so important a favor. A conviction of their unworthiness will keep them at an awful distance from this peculiar manifestation of grace, which none but the "well instructed" are privileged to enjoy. This will prove at once the grave of their expectations and their hopes. No man can be more sensible of his ignorance than he who is awakened by the Spirit of God; and, consequently, no man can be more remote from assurance, than such a weak and ignorant character as he is *when taught by such instructors*. While, therefore, he continues to view himself in this light, he will not look up for assurance, nor expect it; but, on the contrary, he will think it wholly inapplicable

to his case and condition. And as humility is inseparable from that penitential sorrow which he is presumed to possess, he will continue to walk in darkness to the close of life, nor once conceive that assurance is to be realised by himself.

14. From the admission of the preceding error, there is another which may be expected to follow. Such a character, as I have above described, will have no criterion by which to distinguish faith from presumption. Instructed to believe, that "weak and ignorant Christians have not assurance," and fully persuaded that he answers this description, he will naturally conclude, that none of the promises of the gospel, which hold out the consolations of the Spirit, are applicable to his case. And while labouring under this deception, it will not be in his power to exercise that faith of expectation, by which alone the blessing is to be realised. The thought of presumption will continually deter him from stepping into the pool, and completely rivet those fetters which the hypothesis first put on. A strict adherence, therefore, to the principles which are thus inculcated, must cause his faith to rest perpetually on inference, and, consequently, prevent him from the enjoyment of a blessing which the well instructed experience; but which, being inapplicable to his case, and not essential to salvation, as he imagines, he will neither seek nor find.

15. Among the evils to which this theory leads, its natural tendency to banish experimental reli-



gion from the human mind, ought not to be forgotten. "What is faith (Mr. H. asks) in God or Christ, but a cordial belief of the SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY concerning the Father and the Son?" (p. 98.) "We insist (he adds in the next page) these penitents have cordially received Christ; and the only reason why they have *not* comfort, is because you stupify them with damnatory clauses, and they do not discern their own faith, even while it saves them from habitual sin. Our way of comforting them is simple and scriptural. We point them to Christ, and shew them what faith is. When, therefore, they recognise their faith in Christ, they settle in peaceable assurance." (p. 99.) In these passages we are told that faith is a belief of the scripture testimony concerning the Father and the Son;—that this faith may be possessed without being discerned, and without bringing comfort;—and, that assurance results from our recognition or discernment of our faith. What is now become of experimental religion? From what source shall it be drawn, or where shall we look to find it? It is not to be found before faith, because without faith it is impossible to please God: it is not to be found in faith, for this is nothing more than a "cordial belief of the scripture testimony concerning the Father and the Son:" it is not in the consciousness of possessing faith, for such a consciousness is not essential to faith, seeing faith may be possessed "without being discerned:" it is not in the peace of God which results from faith,

Because this peace is not the necessary companion of faith; and "the reason why penitents have not comfort" arises from another cause: it is not in our seeking assurance, for this flows from "our recognition of our faith," which is an act of reason: it, therefore, can only result from assurance, and unhappily this we are told (p. 33:) "is not essential to salvation." Few, we believe, who enjoy the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, will be inclined to barter it for the theory which is here set before them; and fewer still, we fear, who embrace this hypothesis, will ever feel much solicitude about seeking the power of godliness, of which, as "being weak and ignorant," they must be destitute.

16. It will tend to confirm backsliders in their state of apostacy. Persuaded that a man may be in the favor of God and not know it, and that assurance is not essential to salvation, the man who apostatizes in heart, and loses sight of God's favor, will have no rule by which to discern his awful condition. He may feel guilt upon his conscience, but he will console himself that it is nothing but "the devil falsely accusing him." (p. 94.) He will feel a sense of the divine displeasure, but he will flatter himself that it is only "Satan misrepresenting God to him." (p. 94.) He will find darkness within, but he will have learned that "weak and ignorant Christians have not assurance." (p. 33.) He will long for those consolations which he once enjoyed; but he will silence the wicked thought, by pleading that "those who receive Christ have not always

comfort." (p. 99.) He will find himself destitute of faith, but he will recollect that "men have faith without discerning it." (p. 99.) He will reason on the nature of faith, but he will conclude, that it is "a cordial belief of the scripture testimony concerning the Father and the Son." (p. 98.) These articles of his creed he will still retain; and though he may not think himself rich and increased in goods, he will be insensible that he is poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. And while he avoids outward sin, he will preserve the criterion by which himself and "learned and experienced ministers judge" of his spiritual condition, and be confirmed in his apostacy.

17. But, granting that the principles against which I argue, should only be embraced in a partial manner, the effects which I have attributed to them will only then be produced in a partial manner. In this case another evil will arise. Convictions and the theory will keep alive in the soul a perpetual warfare. The man who feels himself in this situation, will naturally fall into a state of suspense between the convictions which he feels, and the temptations to stifle them which the hypothesis holds out. The former will tell him that his state is dangerous; while the latter will inform him that his safety is complete: the former will lead him to suspect the truth of the hypothesis which he has but partially received; and the hypothesis will instruct him to discard, as "the accusations and misrepresentations of the devil," the inward apprehensions of his mind:

the former will urge him to seek after some relief from the anguish which he feels; but the latter will assure him, that "no more dangerous and fallacious criteria can be resorted to, than assurance and non-assurance." Thus buffeted between conviction and delusion, harassed with doubts while tempted with security, tormented with apprehensions of danger while labouring to subdue them, he will seek rest without being able to find it, and spend his days in uncertainty and misery.

18. Another consequence which will frequently result from the preceding, is scepticism. The man who is taught, by an hypothesis which he partially acknowledges, to suspect the validity of his own convictions, will be instructed by his own convictions to doubt the veracity of the hypothesis which he cannot cordially receive. Suspicions in this case will become mutual; and the mind perpetually labouring under the painfulness of indecision, will grow familiar with uncertainty, and, finally, harden into established scepticism. In this condition the threatenings of the scriptures will be defeated in their application, through the delusions of the hypothesis; and the promises of the Gospel will lose their allurements, through a persuasion which the convictions will beget of their unsuitableness. Hence, the mind, losing all confidence in the authenticity of a revelation which can beget no certainty, and retaining morality as the only thing which the hypothesis and its own convictions concur in pronouncing ex;

cellent, will dismiss every thing besides as visionary and delusive, and settle at last in confirmed deism.

19. Nor will the above evil terminate with the person who first becomes its victim. It will powerfully influence by bad example. Nothing is more natural to the mind of man, than to communicate to others the discoveries which it has made. The individual who finds a gloomy quiet in the scepticism which his own folly has matured, will readily impart to others, who labour under the same painful emotions that he has felt, and who walk the same thorny path which he has travelled, the dreadful secret of stifling the uneasiness of their minds; he will plead his own example to confirm his theory, and imperceptibly instil into their minds those doubts which now hold him in close captivity, but by which he dreams he has been set perfectly free. Example and theory, when they concur, will operate in a most powerful manner. And in proportion as this pernicious principle spreads, in the case before us, it will give to doubt a growing empire. And should it once obtain a general ascendancy among professors, it would prove fatal to experimental religion; and, in an exact ratio to its extent, would have a tendency to banish moral certainty from the world.

20. The hypothesis before us tends to bewilder the understanding. When those to whom we look with confidence for instruction, boldly affirm, that they "know a man may be justified, and have solid peace with God, and not know that his

trust in Christ is faith; and his peace God's own seal of pardon;" (p. 38.)—when these same ministers declare, that "a man may have faith and not have comfort," that "he may have faith and not discern it," and that "men will feel justified in judging of themselves by the same rule that ministers judge of them;" (p. 32) it is impossible to calculate upon all the conclusions to which such affirmations will lead. If I may judge of myself by the same rule that ministers judge of me, and if they affirm that they "do know I may be justified and not know that my trust in Christ is faith," then I may know that I am justified by faith, (for no justification can be without faith) without knowing that "my faith in Christ is faith." And if I "may have solid peace without knowing that this peace is God's own seal of pardon," and "be justified and not have comfort," then my having peace, and my being destitute of it, must be alike incompetent to afford me any evidence of the fact which I am taught to believe. And if because I am a child of God, I may, and must be, at some time in the favor of God and not know it;" (p. 68.) and if I judge of my case as ministers judge of it, then I must conclude, that I believe I am in the favor of God, while I believe no such thing. Such modes of reasoning would require a considerable time to carry the human understanding to its most exalted state of perfection.

21. It establishes a false foundation for reasoning. (1.) It teaches me to conclude that I am in

the favor of God, though I do not know it; thus directing me to infer certainty from ignorance. (2.) It teaches that I may know that this faith may be possessed without being discerned; thus making the knowledge of a fact to precede the perception of it. (3.) It directs me to believe the testimony of an evidence, before I am satisfied of the existence of the evidence. (4.) It makes a recognition of faith necessary to our discernment of it; thus depriving faith of its native lustre, and compelling us to depend upon the inductions of reason for our knowledge of an intuitive principle. (5.) It blends repentance with regeneration; thus identifying our knowledge of a disease with its cure. The fatal effects which will result from such an inversion of established principles, it is less difficult to perceive when we survey the hypothesis, than to avoid when we have once embraced it.

I will not say that such a theory will lead us to "damnable clauses;" but many will not hesitate to conclude, that it will lead to something infinitely more awful. It brings the mind of man into an insensibility of its condition; it teaches it to view the power of godliness in an indifferent light, and tends to confirm it in those delusions of which our hearts are most susceptible. It tends indeed to give a moral turn to our outward conduct, but beyond this it has no efficacy to reach. On the contrary, it steels the mind against its own convictions, and leads it to disregard im-

pending dangers ; it deprives it of the most powerful motives to make its calling and election sure, and deafens it to those thunders of the divine law which were appointed by the wisdom of God to drive it to Jesus Christ for personal pardon. Habituated to delusion, and strongly fortified against every thing that can dispel the charm ; —resting in a false peace, and encouraged, by the temporizing precepts of those watchmen whose duty it is, when they see the sword approaching, to give the people warning ; —sanctioned by the example of others who partake in the melancholy calamity, and gliding onward to the close of life under a fall persuasion that “faith may be possessed without being discerned ;” the unhappy spirit may be traced to the margin of eternity, on the confines of which, if we pause for a moment, we may contemplate one of the most finished pictures of insensible horror that can be well imagined on this side the grave. May God in infinite mercy keep every seeking soul from this dangerous precipice, through Jesus Christ our Lord !

Far be it from me to insinuate, that the consequences which I have deduced from Mr. Horne’s hypothesis are systematically adopted by him, or even viewed in a defensible light. Nothing, I am fully persuaded, can be farther from his intentions, than to inculcate evils which his soul abhors. To repel consequences which are so pernicious, would be among his earliest efforts, could he be persuaded that they resulted from his esta-

blished principles; and should his attempt prove unsuccessful in his own estimation, he would rather abandon the cause than retain its effects.

But it is not from his estimate, or mine, of either of our principles, that the public will be guided in their decisions. We may establish our premises; but they will deduce consequences from them of which we are not always aware, to suit their private or their public interests. Whatever will sooth the indolence of the human heart;—whatever will widen the path which leads to heaven;—whatever will render the road less difficult, will be seized with avidity by all who feel a reluctance in bowing their necks to the yoke of Jesus Christ. Whatever has a tendency to blunt the edge of conviction,—to promise security to the distressed,—to shield the apprehensive from danger,—to remove anguish from the agonizing heart,—to give peace to the afflicted,—or to induce earnest seekers to believe that they have already obtained that favor of God which they seek, bids fair to meet with a favourable reception from such characters, how slender soever the foundation may be on which they rest their hopes. While, whatever tends to confound the different degrees of Christian experience;—to make those who travel towards Mount Zion to rest in past attainments;—to insinuate to them that the most important blessings which the gospel promises to bestow through Christ, are not necessary to be known in order to salvation;—and to

make that which affords intuitive evidence to depend upon the decisions of reason, must be visibly pernicious in proportion to the effects produced, and hypothetically so, as it tends towards them. How far the theory of Mr. H. is implicated in these charges, those who read his observations and mine have a right to determine.

Collecting together the scattered fragments of the hypothesis, and placing them before him in an aggregate view, the reader, who experimentally knows in whom he has believed, will survey the questionable mass with the mingled emotions of apprehension and sorrow. He will look back on his past experience, and compare it with the hypothesis which is now placed before him; and will perceive such a disagreement in features, as will not easily be reconciled with what he has felt, nor be speedily effaced from his memory. He will review those awakenings by the Spirit of God, through which he felt the arrows of the Almighty wounding him, and recollect the pangs of the new birth through which he has passed. He will compare his former darkness with his subsequent light, his apprehensions of wrath with a sense of his acceptance, and be fully convinced that these stages through which he travelled can bear no more resemblance to one another, than the hypothesis does to both. And on comparing his experience with that declaration which affirms, that repentance and regeneration are the same, he will want no arguments to convince him of its fallacy,

but will bless God that he has not so learned Christ.

On the doctrine of assurance he will make similar observations, when he compares his experience of it with those declarations of Mr. H. which tend to lessen the importance of the blessing, and to make the attainableness of it dubious or equivocal. He will so connect it with the divine favor, that he will find it impossible to make any separation between them in his own experience. For though he knows that acceptance, and an assurance of it, are not the same, yet he will consider the latter as the only evidence which the scriptures have afforded, by which the former can be ascertained; and he will conclude, that while destitute of this evidence, he had no reason to believe that he was in possession of the important blessing. He will view the Author of his Salvation as the Sun of Righteousness, and consider his acceptance as a sacred ray emanating from this Fountain of life and light, to enliven and illuminate his soul. The warmth and vigour which this ray imparts, he will view as the communications of grace which reach his heart; and the sensibility which they beget by their benign influence, as the only evidence by which they can be realised. While this ray continues to shine upon him, he cannot be destitute of the evidence which it brings; and if it cease, his evidence must expire. And to retain the fact, when the evidence which ascertains its existence is done away through the re-

removal of that ray which alone could keep it alive, is at best no better than an unauthorised presumption, which, instead of discovering faith, argues credulity, and betrays enthusiasm.

Both the plain and the figurative language of scripture clearly informs us, that the evidences which we have of our acceptance with God, depend not on the inductions of reason, but on more lively sensibilities of which the most illiterate may be susceptible. Few, comparatively, can reason much, but all can feel much. And while this intuitive evidence is retained in an unbroken light, no sophistry can beguile its possessor of what he enjoys. With these views before us, we may ask "where is the wise—where is the scribe—where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? Thus hath God chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence." (1 Cor. i. 20. 27, 28, 29.)

We learn from an authority not to be controverted, that the Jews under their dispensation, how obscurely soever their light might have shined, beheld through types and shadows the Saviour of the world, whom we behold with open face. They "did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all

drink the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual rock which followed them; and that rock was Christ." (1 Cor. x. 3, 4.) Our Lord, adopting the same metaphor, said, "Verily, Verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John, vi. 53, 54.) These figurative expressions suggest to our minds ideas which cannot be detached from intuitive evidence, without suffering the most daring violence. And so far as they have any analogy to the subject before us, they hold forth vital Christianity on principles which cannot be misunderstood. The comparisons before us, imply an appetite, hold out food, and lengthen the idea into actual eating. And so far as they have any spiritual allusion, we can no more gather from them, that the favor of God can be possessed without being enjoyed, than that a hungry man can eat, be filled, and refreshed, and yet remain wholly unconscious that his wants have been supplied.

Not only so, but eating is an action which the hungry man must perform; and, consequently, is one of which he can neither be insensible nor unconscious. What man in his senses would affirm, that he may eat and be filled, and yet not know it?—Or drink, and yet have no mental discernment of the fact? Should we admire the understanding of that Spectator who would inform him,

when complaining of hunger, that "his stomach was already filled with food, and that the present demands of his appetite arose from a false suggestion of nature, misrepresenting to him the reality of his situation?" Would he not justly expose himself to ridicule, should he assert, that "appetite is food, and food appetite, and that it is madness in this country to talk of hunger which is not connected with supply?" And would not such a person be suspected of having in reality that madness which he attributed to the complainant, should he further affirm, that "a man may be supplied without knowing it; and that it is impossible that he, or any one, can be a subject of genuine hunger, and yet be destitute of some grain of nutritive food?" And would it not almost provoke our indignation to hear him argue in the following manner? "Look at your actions; behold, you can walk, transact your daily business, and perform all the functions of a healthy man, therefore you have eaten and are filled. It is of no consequence whether you know the fact of which I assure you, or not; you may have food without discerning it, and continue to be nourished by it, notwithstanding your appetite thus attempts to delude you with a false report." Few hungry men, I conceive, would think this a satisfactory account of a good dinner, or be content to retire with such a nominal meal. Their situation would be "even as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he

awaketh, and his soul is empty : or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh ; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite." (Isa. xxix. 8.)

Nor can the application of these conclusions be defeated, by asserting " that the spiritual supplies, of which our Lord and his Apostle speak, belong to those who have made a considerable proficiency in the divine life." The words of our Lord demolish this miserable subterfuge. He tells us, that " unless we eat his flesh and drink his blood, we have no life in us. "Are all then, excepting adult Christians, destitute of all spiritual life?" If so, then spiritual life is not essential to religion : if not, must not every one who has this spiritual life, thus spiritually feed on him? And is not this the great and distinguishing characteristic by which we may know whether we have life or not? And is it possible that any man can partake of this blessed food, and yet be wholly unconscious of the delicious repast? Let those who are watering their couch with their tears ;—let those who are mourning after an absent God ;—let those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness ;—let those who are groaning for deliverance from their sins ;—let those who see men as trees walking ;—let those who have little faith, and who pray, " Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief ;"—let those whose darkness is turned into light ;—let those who have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

and who feel his love shed abroad in their hearts; —or, finally, let common sense answer these questions.

St. Paul, inverting the figure which our Lord had used to introduce to our view spiritual life, under the representation of "eating his flesh and drinking his blood," tells us, that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xiv. 17.) But this inversion of figure has not led him to an inversion of conclusion. It conducts us to the same point to which our common Master led us; and urges us to seek Christ in us the hope of glory. Now, if the kingdom of God consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, it will be not only absurd but contradictory, to suppose that any man can possess this kingdom and yet be destitute of that righteousness, peace, and joy, in which it consists. And it will not be less absurd to imagine, that the favor of God can consist in any thing which does not include these characteristic marks of the Apostolic description. For should this be once admitted, it will then follow, that St. Paul's account of the kingdom of God within us, is not only defective, but erroneous; because, in his definition of this kingdom, he will not then have given or included one single feature or ingredient which is essential to what he professedly defines. But no man who allows the authenticity of the scriptures, and the plenary inspiration of their authors, will bring against the Apostle so

foul a charge. When, therefore, these principles are granted (and I know not how they can be denied), that righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, are included, in a greater or less degree, in that kingdom of God which all who are born of God possess, it will follow with little less than demonstrative certainty, that the doctrine which asserts, that "a man may have faith without discerning it, and cordially receive Christ and not enjoy comfort," must be wrong.

I have already concluded from the Apostle's words, that the kingdom of God cannot be possessed without giving to its possessors righteousness, peace and joy, because these ideas form the essence of his description. And this being once granted, it will be attended with no difficulty to prove, that peace and joy cannot inherit a bosom that is unsusceptible of their existence. The decisions of reason can no more ascertain the existence of peace and joy, than the existence of daylight can be proved by demonstration. They are blessings which must shine by their own light; and we can no more conceive that these can continue when their evidences are done away, than that we can possess the susceptibility of feeling, and yet be insensible of it. Peace and joy are blessings which the mind alone is capable of realizing; and the instant they become imperceptible, they cease to exist.

It may, indeed, be said, that "those of whom the Apostle speaks are not babes in Christ, but

the adult sons of God;" but what advantage is to be drawn from this declaration, I am not able to discover. If babes in Christ have not this righteousness, peace, and joy, they cannot possess the kingdom of God; because, in the possession of those, the possession of this consists. And if they have not these blessings, they can produce no title to the kingdom, and, consequently, have no present claim on the inheritance. Hence those who believe they are in the divine favor, while wholly destitute of these sacred evidences which result from it, must rest their faith on a sandy foundation, and fancy that they actually realize a blessing which only lies before them in prospect.

Our Lord, when conversing with Nicodemus on the great doctrine of regeneration, described it by the analogy of our being born into this world. And when the ruler of the Jews inquired, "How can these things be," he referred him to the action of one of the elements upon his body, for an illustration of the truths which he inculcated. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John, iii. 8.) Could Nicodemus possibly think that our Lord intended by this figure to inform him, that he might know the sound of the wind without hearing it, and be convinced that it acted upon his body without his feeling it? Would he not, under these circumstances, have repeated his objection, and said—"How can these things be?" And if he had asked—"By what means shall I as-

certain the fact, when these evidences are excluded," would not his question have been beyond the reach of all reasonable reply? And if our Lord had affirmed, that he might gather the certainty of his doctrine and the propriety of his illustration from the inductions of reason, would he not have questioned his own previous observation—"We know that thou art a teacher come from God?"

The simile by which our Lord illustrated his doctrine, was not more appropriate as it applied to the subject, than conclusive as it applied to the decisiveness of its evidence. No man would wait to infer from reason that the wind bloweth where it listeth, when he had superior evidence which reason can neither strengthen nor destroy. Neither will any man be content to receive through mediums, facts which are capable of immediate perception. The action of the wind brings its own evidence with it; and he who is destitute of the operative proof which it affords, must remain ignorant of its nature.

To impart a knowledge of sounds to men devoid of the sense of hearing, is as impossible as to communicate to one born blind a sensibility of colours. Sensitive proof can admit of no substitute or rival. But the organ of hearing is not the only thing that is necessary to our being acquainted with sounds; neither is the organ of vision all that is necessary to our discernment of visible objects. In both cases, the organ must be adapted to its purpose, and be brought into contact with the objects, in order to be of use; and till these objects appear,

the senses are devoid of exercise. In this view, "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." To these characters spiritual organs are given; and on these spiritual objects are bestowed; both are brought into union with each other; and their faculties exercise themselves on objects, which, being presented to them, they cordially embrace.

But the man, who, merely awakened from the sleep of spiritual death, is no more than a sincere penitent, instead of laying hold on the hope set before him, has thus far only the power of hearing and seeing restored to him; and while the true light, which is the life of the world, remains at a distance from him, his utmost ability will only discover to his views the horror of his situation. But though in this condition—when that light which shineth out of darkness visits his soul, and enables him to behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, terror will immediately give place to love, and thus a new principle of action will spring up in his soul. Then he with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, is changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

With an earnest desire that this heavenly principle may be more generally diffused, till it is universally experienced;

I once more beg leave to subscribe myself,

Dear Brethren,

Yours

Affectionately and faithfully,

T. COKE.

LETTER VI.

VERY DEAR BRETHREN,

DISSATISFIED with Mr. Wesley's definition of justifying faith, which he had avowedly taken from the homilies of the church of England, Mr. Horne, though one of her established ministers, has introduced another in its stead. He does not, indeed, pronounce his new definition to be infallible; but such is the complacency with which he views it, that he declares he "cannot mend it." I will not question his inability; but must beg leave to withhold my assent from what he has adopted, and on this ground claim the liberty of stating my reasons for denying its propriety.

Mr. Wesley's definition, the reader will recollect, was stated, in my first letter, to be "A sure trust and confidence that God both hath and will forgive our sins; and that he hath accepted us again into his favor, for the merits of Christ's death and passion." This definition, Mr. H. asserts, is both absurd and defective; and one ground of his

objection is, that "the essential idea contained in faith, namely, that it is believing, is neither expressed itself, nor implied in any equivalent term." (p. 80.) This definition I have already considered, and shall feel no objection to re-examine it, when it has been proved, "that a sure trust and confidence" does not include the radical idea of faith. The substitute which Mr. H. has given, is recorded in the following words: "The receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as made unto us of the Father, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, in an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart." (p. 83.)

This devouring definition, which, we are told, "will eat up Mr. Wesley's, as easily as the rod of Moses, turned into a serpent, swallowed up those of Pharaoh's magicians," it may not, however, be amiss to examine. Whether Mr. H. may be competent or incompetent to the task of mending it, I take not upon me to determine; but that it stands very much in need of repair, I hope soon to make apparent, because the thing professedly defined has no place whatever in the definition.

Justifying faith, says Mr. H., is, "the receiving of the Lord Jesus," &c. That Christ must be received into a lowly, penitent, and obedient heart, in order to our knowledge of justification, I readily allow; but it will not follow from hence that this is a definition of faith. Christ can only be received into the heart by faith; nothing, therefore, can be more absurd than to suppose that the act

of receiving him, is a definition of the instrument by which it is done. The receiving of Christ is a proof of the exercise of faith, but not a definition of its nature. The exercise presupposes the existence of faith, but does not define the nature of the thing which is presupposed ; so that the receiving of Christ is no more the definition of faith, than walking is the definition of an animal, or the cutting down of a tree, the definition of an axe or a saw. Whatever is presupposed, must afford a definition of its nature, if capable of one, from the qualities it really possesses, without making an appeal either to the actions of which it is capable, the manner in which it is exercised, or the effects which it produces. Instead of this, Mr. H., in the case before us, has blended exercise with properties, and defined faith by the manner of its operation.

St. John, in describing the manner of our union with Christ, has said—"He came unto his own; and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John, i. 11, 12.) What is there in this passage which defines faith, which develops its nature—which unfolds any of its inherent qualities—or displays any of its constituent parts? It is simply a plain declaration of the manner in which believers are united to Christ, of the way in which faith must be exercised, and of the blessed effects which will follow the believing on

his name. And yet, under the imaginary sanction which this passage is presumed to give, Mr. H. has taken shelter; and fondly fancies that we cannot object to this branch of his definition, unless we will quarrel with the beloved disciple. This doctrine we shall not hesitate to admit, as soon as it shall be made to appear, that the receiving of Christ is a definition of the instrument by which it is effected.

But the primary reason, it seems, for which this definition is introduced, is to set aside the formidable word "sure," which Mr. W. had prefixed to "trust and confidence;" for this appears to have given him offence. That nothing, which bears any resemblance to this naughty word, is introduced, Mr. H. not only asserts, but almost triumphs in asserting. "If it be said, 'But in this definition there is nothing of assurance,' I reply—I did not intend there should be any thing of it." (p. 84.) Now, let us grant that he has been successful, and that in giving a definition of justifying faith which he "cannot mend," every idea of assurance is excluded, and that "it has no more to do in justification than the feather of a goose;" (p. 87.) faith in this case must be wholly made up of negatives. Confidence, trust, and firm reliance, must be entirely rejected; because, if retained or introduced, they will inevitably include or connect themselves with a greater or less degree of assurance: but how a combination of negatives can ever obtain the denomina-

tion of justifying faith, or perform the offices of it, I confess myself at a loss to say. That faith cannot be wholly made up of negatives is evident from the nature of unbelief, it being in itself the reverse of faith, and a pure negation of it. Hence then it follows, that faith must exist positively, and must be constituted of ingredients which, however nominated, must be more or less connected with assurance.

If faith be an assent which the mind yields to any given proposition, when this proposition is supported by evidence, it is clear that no man will give his assent, to any given fact until he is convinced of its truth; and this conviction can never beget assent until it is strong enough to assure him that it is worthy of regard. Now, no man can be assured without assurance, nor place genuine confidence in any thing which totally excludes it in all its variations and degrees. Mr. H., therefore, has been peculiarly unfortunâte, in proportion to the success which has attended his definition.

A faith from which all assurance is excluded must be a faith of uncertainty; I had almost said, a faith of doubt; for no medium can easily be found between them: And he who is justified by a faith of *uncertainty*, and *insecurity*, (for that which is uncertain, must be insecure,) will find a valuable acquisition in that doctrine which makes assurance to be the effect of recognition and inference. Now, it is certain, that no evidence which this faith of uncertainty and insecurity can impart,

can bring peace and joy into the soul ; and how assurance is to be inferred from the recognition of a faith which is in itself uncertain, I have not ingenuity enough to discover. If, therefore, the internal radical principle be wanting, no outward fruits and effects can spring from proper motives; or become an unquestionable evidence of the soul's acceptance with God. A faith, therefore, which excludes all assurance cannot be that which justifies.

That this faith may be so obscure and invisible, as to give unbelief a predominancy in the mind, Mr. H. allows ; and indeed it would seem strange that he should think otherwise ; but for this he finds an excellent palliative. He admits the triumph of unbelief, but exonerates the will from the turpitude of the action, and resolves the whole into ignorance. In fortifying the outposts of his definition of that faith which excludes all assurance, Mr. H. supposes a professor of it to say—"Why then had I not peace?" To this he answers thus: "because your ignorant unbelief leaned to the traditions of men, and not to the power and grace of Christ. 'But was not that unbelief damnable?' No, it was the unbelief of ignorance, not of will; for even then you were saying—Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief. I laugh at the voluntary humility of the definition men. They publish themselves as a set of damned sincere penitents." (p. 88.)

In what manner *sinful* unbelief is to be wholly

detached from ignorance, I do not know; it is a problem that it is incumbent on Mr. H. to solve; for till this be done, the line which divides vice from virtue remains undefined. If ignorance be supposed to exonerate from guilt, the hypothesis which inculcates it sings a syren song, to which too many will be inclined to listen who are resting short of Christ, in them the hope of glory; and all the lukewarm will seek shelter, and find it, under the delusive sound. We ought not, however, to forget that ignorance is one of the effects of sin; and to make the sinfulness of sin to be abolished by an effect which results from it, is a refinement in theology which our forefathers never knew. As every one, therefore, may adopt this plea, the door is open for all to enter, and ignorance becomes an asylum for vice.

There are few points which Mr. H. has more consistently kept in view through the whole series of his letters than this,—that the doctrines which we inculcate are cruel and severe, reaching in many instances almost to diabolical barbarity. To set this off in the most odious light, he omits no opportunity of recommending the lenity of his own system, by exhibiting the extent of that mercy which it displays. It is not always, however, that he exempts himself from the charges which he is so forward to bring against others. I could easily recriminate, were I disposed to return the unhandsome language which he has used; but I forbear. Of this fact, the following

passage will furnish us with a striking example : “ But as St. Paul asserts, we receive the Spirit by faith; and as we should not know whether there were any Holy Ghost but by the scriptures; so I affirm, that no man ever received the Spirit until he had previously staked his soul on the testimony of the written word. This, brethren, is a weak place in Methodism.” (p. 98.) What now is become of all those who had not, and who have not, the written word? If “ no man ever received the Spirit until he had previously staked his soul on the testimony of the written word,” it is easy to anticipate the consequences to which this principle must lead. If the doctrine thus stated be true, then all who have not been favored with the written word must have perished everlastingly. Yea, all pious Heathens, through every age, must have lived and died without hope, and without God in the world. Few, very few indeed, can be saved, if this principle be true.

If Mr. H. will repel these conclusions, he must have recourse to the various dispensations of the gospel;—those dispensations which Mr. Fletcher defended, which Mr. Wesley acknowledged, and which I have pointed out in a preceding letter. His appeal to these dispensations I most readily admit; but in case he avail himself of them, I demand, on the same ground, the same right for Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher;—a right which I have shewn they claimed for themselves, though Mr. H. has insinuated, that “ it is a palpable un-

truth." (p. 79.) In case he avail himself of the dispensations, then we stand exempt from the charges of dereliction which are brought against us, and nearly one half of his publication falls to the ground; but if, on the contrary, he refuse to take shelter under the dispensations, he stands charged with the above conclusions, which consign to eternal misery almost the whole of the human race.

To counterbalance the preceding weight which he had inadvertently thrown into the scale of severity, Mr. H. profusely pours his lenitives on the dying bed: "I do verily believe, (says he) that whosoever dieth crying, God be merciful to me a sinner, (provided he say it with true repentance, on which I conceive not myself called to pass a judgment, but to leave him with God who seeth his heart,) shall be saved." (p. 108.) Though this is certainly carrying lenity to a great length, yet I feel less disposed to controvert the position, than to animadvert on the consequences to which, on Mr. H.'s principles, it is calculated to lead. It certainly has the appearance of tendency to encourage the profligate to postpone their repentance to a dying hour, from a full assurance that salvation awaits them there. Lenity, undoubtedly, is commendable; but there are certain boundaries beyond which it cannot pass, without degenerating into indifference about distinctions between truth and error. Nothing can be farther from my intention than to impute to Mr. H. any such

design. But it is to be feared, that men of corrupt minds, availing themselves of an expression which describes mercy in its utmost extreme, will convert it into a general principle, and infer from it consequences which we shudder to behold.

Among the various doctrines which we inculcate, on which Mr. H. has chosen to animadvert, and to load with opprobrious epithets, there is one article which excites his attention in a peculiar manner; and this is the inward evidence of acceptance which we urge every sincere penitent to seek. This inward evidence, we view as nothing more nor less than God's manifestation of the Spirit of adoption, which is promised to believers, and revealed in their hearts. To display this doctrine in such a light that our presumption may be manifest, and our arrogance apparent, he has availed himself of all suitable occasions, and some unsuitable ones, to represent the Spirit of adoption as inapplicable to those whom we earnestly press to seek it, and the "direct witness" of this Spirit as wholly unattainable by all. To place this subject in a distorted point of view, in order that it might furnish him with inferences which would operate to our disadvantage, he has exhibited this branch of our creed under very improper colouring.

The light in which Mr. H. views a direct witness of the Spirit, and represents us as viewing it, may easily be gathered from the following passages: "Do you, can you, believe, that the new-born babes of Methodism have all clear and explicit

faith in Christ, and fix immediately on his glorious atonement; that the Spirit of adoption, which Jesus gave to his immediate disciples, as the seal of adult sonship, is immediately shed abroad in their infant hearts: that, as co-heirs with their Lord, they immediately drink the generous wine of the kingdom, and rejoice in hope of the glory to be revealed, with joy full of glory? And to all this, do you add a direct witness, an inward impression, a voice of God, known by its own god-like and infallible evidence, testifying—thou art pardoned—thou hast redemption in his blood! (p. 39.) “The misfortune is, you give them no just idea of justifying faith—preach up assurance for faith, and clog the doctrine by asserting, not only that it is accompanied by the Spirit of adoption, but has also a direct witness, Thou art pardoned, thou hast redemption in his blood.” (p. 99.) “The Spirit of adoption is so frequently spoken of, that to deny it we must deny the scriptures. The direct witness, as described by Mr. Wesley, has no place in scripture, nor, as far as I know, is it asserted by any but the Methodists.” (p. 114.) “I deny there is any direct witness. The scriptures nowhere affirm it, and I dare not be wise above what is written.” (p. 113.) “The testimony borne by the direct witness, under whatever form of words it is expressed, is substantially this, Thou art a child of God. It is then an internal voice, or certain words applied to the mind, and supposed to be spoken directly by the Holy Ghost,

of which, though no criteria can be given, yet it is said to be accompanied with indubitable evidence." (p. 114.) From these passages, and from a variety of others, it is evident that Mr. H. admits the Spirit of adoption to be the privilege of adult Christians, but totally denies a direct witness. "He that looks and prays (he observes) for a direct witness, asks for what is neither promised nor defined; which they who assert, cannot describe; and which is utterly unnecessary to holiness and consolation: for adoption is sealed by filial love and confidence." (p. 113.)

That the Spirit of adoption, and the witness of the Spirit, are clearly promised in scripture, is evident from the following passage: "For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. viii. 15, 16.) Such is the plain and undeniable language of scripture: but whether this witness be direct or indirect;—whether, like faith, it is to be known by intuition or inference, is the important question which remains to be decided.

Mr. Horne affirms, that "no direct witness is promised in scripture," and on this account he withholds his assent. As to the epithet *direct*, I allow the fact, but deny that this is any reason for refusing assent, and assert that neither is an indirect witness promised, as far as it relates to the

mere epithet *indirect*. If, therefore, the silence of scripture can be pleaded as the foundation of an argument in the former case, it must be admitted to be equally forcible in the latter; and then the result will be, that there can be no witness of the Spirit either direct or indirect. For if he has a right to deny a direct witness, because the scriptures nowhere assert it under the mere epithet *direct*, I have an equal right to deny an indirect witness on the same ground. Our claims are equal, and they must stand or fall together.

That a witness of the Spirit is promised in the Gospel, is a position which no more requires proof than it admits of denial. On this point the scriptures are decisive; and he who allows their authority, cannot rationally dispute the fact. But to obtain an adequate knowledge of its nature, we must experience it in our hearts; and to judge whether it be direct or indirect, we must repair to the subject itself; and, considering it in connection with its effects and consequences, abide by the evidences which shall appear. But, first, it may be necessary to state what we mean by the term.

By "a direct witness" we do not mean, as Mr. H. has insinuated, another Spirit distinct from the Spirit of adoption; neither do we mean another evidence distinct from that which the Spirit of adoption bears. We have no more conception that there are two such witnesses, than that there are two distinct Spirits; or, that there are two,

Spirits, than that there are two Gods. We view this "direct witness" as nothing more than the primary testimony which the Spirit of adoption bears, imparting to us an assurance, with a greater or less degree of evidence, that we are born of God, and have passed from death unto life.

When God justifies an awakened sinner, he does it by an act of mercy for the sake of Jesus Christ. Immediately when justification takes place, our views are, that God sends forth the Spirit of his Son into the pardoned heart as the Spirit of adoption; and the evidence which this Spirit bears to ours that we are accepted through the Beloved, is the only direct witness which we know, or for which we contend. But this I hope more fully to express hereafter.

From this brief statement, it is evident that we do not make the witness of the Spirit to be a distinct being from the Spirit himself, but only an evidence of his being present, and of what he has done, and this testimony which he bears is that which constitutes the direct witness. Still, however, the ideas are distinct. For though there can be no testimony without a testifier—no act without an actor, yet the testifier and the evidence which he bears, can never be so blended together as to abolish all distinctions between them. But when we stand charged (as Mr. H. has charged us, p. 118.) with asserting, that, independently of an assurance of the remission of sins, we seek for another direct witness, we view ourselves either

as undesignedly misrepresented by those who know, not whereof they affirm, or slanderously traduced by men who wilfully vilify our doctrines.

An indirect witness can only operate indirectly through some medium; it is this circumstance which makes it indirect. Now, there can be no medium but that of the sacred writings; and the fatal consequences which will ensue, when the Spirit's operations are confined exclusively to the written word, I have already pointed out. An indirect witness can never impart any positive testimony, and, consequently, can never produce any positive conviction of a fact. And the mind which always remains destitute of positive conviction, must always remain destitute of assurance.

As Mr. H. positively denies "that there is any direct witness," no witness but that which is indirect can remain, or be recognised by him. And how the recognition of that which imparts only an indirect witness can beget assurance, is a paradox which I cannot unravel. That the indirect witness which he acknowledges, operates through the medium which I have pointed out, is evident from his own declaration. In reply to the following question—"How, or in what manner is the divine testimony manifested?" he answers, "By the love of God shed abroad in the heart." This is that for which we contend: but he explains—"If I am pressed—How does the Spirit of God shed it abroad? I answer again, by enlightening the eyes

of my understanding, to discern the abundant love of God revealed to me in the word; and this love of God cordially believed, makes me abundantly to love God. If the objector still presses me, by asking, How does the Spirit operate on your mind to discern that in scripture which you never saw before? I answer, that it is what the scripture hath not revealed, which I probably could not understand if it had, and which I presume not to investigate, as being in its nature, I conceive, incomprehensible." (p. 124.) In this passage Mr. H. brings himself to that very point in which a direct witness becomes necessary,—not to reveal the mode of operation, but to excite our love, and give us a clear discernment of God's reconciled favor. But rather than admit its existence, he takes shelter under the canopy of a professed inability to comprehend what no one takes upon him to explain; thus artfully evading the question which he durst not meet. He has started an objection which he cannot answer. He has met a lion in the way; and retreats with precipitation from the sight of that direct witness which he denies.

The Apostle Paul prayed, that we might "be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ (not a discernment of his word) might dwell in our hearts by faith." (Eph. iii. 16, 17.) He declares also, that we "are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God

dwell in us." (Rom. viii. 9.) "That we shall be quickened by his Spirit that dwelleth in us." (Rom. viii. 11.) and, that "the Spirit of God dwelleth in us." (1 Cor. iii. 16.) St. John has said, "he that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him." (1 John, iv. 12.) that "he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him;" (v. 16.) and that "whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." (1 John, iv. 15.) And to prevent all mistakes, we are assured, that "no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. xii. 8.) Nor has our Lord himself omitted to testify the same important truth. His declarations are, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." (John, vi. 56.) "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John, xiv. 16, 17.) No words within the compass of language can be more forcible than those I have adduced, to declare the certainty of the real indwelling God within every believing heart. But if the doctrine of Mr. H. be true, that the Spirit bears witness only by his fruits, and these fruits result from my being enabled to discern the abundant love of God revealed in his word, the Spirit himself is supplanted by the testimony which the

scriptures bear of him ; and the only thing which primarily dwells in our hearts, is a cordial belief of the truth of the written record. Here then Mr. H. is fairly at issue with St. Paul, St. John, and our Lord himself ; and those who advert to the respective authorities before them, will find no difficulty in forming their decisions in favor of truth.

That the Spirit himself, and not the record which the scriptures bear of him, dwells in the believing heart, is too plainly expressed in the passages above quoted, to be called into question ; and from the manner of his residence, the nature of the evidence which he brings may be fairly inferred. Is it reasonable to suppose that the Holy Spirit would take up his abode in our hearts, and yet refer us to the written word for our primary evidence of his inward residence? Will he conceal those beams which always shine by innate lustre, that he may manifest himself to us through a medium, which, without his light, is but a dead letter? Will the Sun of righteousness shine, and rise on our hearts, and yet direct us to behold his glory reflected from a mirror? The natural sun shining in meridian splendour affords intuitive evidence of his refulgence ; and it is ridiculous for us to hunt through the mazes of philosophy for a knowledge of his power, when we see his light, and feel his invigorating warmth. And analogy says, that it is not less absurd for us to suppose that the Holy Spirit will take up his abode within

us, and yet withhold his intuitive evidence, which all can understand, because all can feel; and direct us, for our primary knowledge of the light which he imparts, to the sacred records, which some wrest to their own destruction. The man who can think this, must entertain very degrading views of that light which shineth upon his heart; and he who thinks otherwise, must admit the direct witness for which we contend.

But while Mr. H. denies a direct witness, he admits the Spirit of adoption, and by so doing allows that evidence which he positively rejects. "The Spirit of adoption (says he) fills every faculty." (p. 111.) Now, if the Spirit of adoption fills every faculty, he must take up his residence in our bosoms, and must bear that direct testimony which we assert. Nothing can fill every faculty, and yet afford no direct testimony of the fact: it will amount to little less than a contradiction to suppose it. In short, whatever occupies every faculty, must fill that very station which a direct witness is supposed to engross, and, consequently, by so doing, become that very thing which it is presumed to supersede.

Mr. H. positively denies that there is any direct witness; but on what solid ground his denial is founded, it would be difficult indeed to say. Is he a master of universal truth? if not, this which he denies, may be one with which he is unacquainted. Does he know every possible mode of evidence which infinity can communicate? if not,

this may be one to which he is a stranger. Is he acquainted with all the varieties which infinite love can display? if not, this may be an instance which has not yet reached him. Is his intellect capable of grasping infinite goodness, wisdom, and mercy? if not, such a direct witness may be imparted. Has he analysed every portion of holy writ;—explored the causes, perceived the import, and anticipated the consequences, of every expression? if not, a direct witness may be among those truths which lie concealed to him. Is he intimately acquainted with the actual experience of every Christian; if not, that experience with which he is unacquainted, may include a direct witness. Is he sure that to impart a direct witness is hostile to the Divine nature? if not, then he may have imparted it. Is he certain that it is denied in any part of the bible? if not, then it may yet be there, though undiscovered by him. Is he certain that such a witness is irreconcilable with the divine perfections, and the grand scheme of redemption? if not, it may be congenial with the former, and constitute a part of the latter. Is he sure that God cannot impart it? if not, then he may have done it. Has he reached the heights and depths of all possible experience? if not, it may yet await him, and he may yet be benefited by it. In short, if he do not know every species of evidence within the reach of possibility,—every form which infinite benevolence has assumed,—and every thing which it either has, or has not done, he can-

not know that there is no such thing as a direct witness of the Spirit. An ability to answer all these questions, and many more, is necessary, to the denial which he has made. And yet, without possessing a single qualification to answer any of them, he has assumed the ground on which no finite being dares to stand, and boldly asserted, "I deny there is any direct witness." (p. 113.)

We know nothing of any witness, either direct or indirect, which stands opposed to the written word,—which tends to lessen its authority, or which shrinks from an appeal to its glorious sanctions, either by evasions or defiance. The sacred word is our ultimate rule of faith and practice; and whatever directs our views into another channel, we know, from this circumstance, to be the voice of a stranger, which we ought not to follow. It is by this rule that we try the spirits, and receive that Spirit alone which brings with it those testimonials that it belongs to God, which are contained in the written word.

But while we contend for this ultimate appeal, we do not deny that inward testimony of our adoption, through which the scriptures have assured us we may know that we have passed from death unto life. Indeed, no spirit could be tried by the written word, unless it manifested some inward evidence of its existence and operation on our hearts, antecedently to this appeal. The evidence, therefore, of any spirit operating on our hearts, which is brought to this sacred touchstone,

must, by referring to this decision, be known by some previous manifestation; and, consequently, the testimony which it brings, whether true or false, must be direct. Christ in us the hope of glory, we seek not in the scriptures, but, as directed by them, in our hearts; and wait for an inward manifestation of his love, that we may know we are born of God.

That the love of God to us, shed abroad in the heart, is the privilege of the adult sons of God, Mr. H. will probably allow. If then the fact be granted, it would seem absurd to deny its cause; for no effect can be without a cause which is adequate to its production. To this office nothing can be assigned in the present instance, but the Spirit of God, or the Holy Ghost given unto us. It would not be less absurd to admit both cause and effect to exist, and yet to deny the evidence by which their relation to each other is known, and by which the fact itself is fully ascertained. No fact can be adopted, unless we previously admit its evidence; and no evidence can be known as such, unless it reach the perceptive powers of those to whom it is evidence.

Now, should Mr. H. contend, that this communication is made by the "enlightening of our understandings through the Spirit," &c. then this act of enlightening will become a direct witness of his saving operation. Should he assert, that it is "by enabling me to discern the abundant love of God," &c. then this light by which I know

I have ability to discern, will bear a direct testimony in behalf of that Spirit from whence it sprang, and of that fact which is thus attested. If the motives from whence I act are changed, then my evidence of this change must be known, and will bear a direct testimony in favor of the cause which produced it. In short, every striving, every operation, every manifestation of God to the heart, bears a direct witness to the presence and activity of the agent, as well as in favor of the effects produced.

Now, if God reveal himself to us, either in his word, or by enlightening our understandings, or by any other mode of his gracious dealings, it must be through his Spirit. For as there is no saving knowledge of the Father but by the Son, so there is no knowledge of the Son but by the Spirit. (Matt. xi. 27.) No man, St. Paul affirms, can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. (1. Cor. xii. 3.) These important positions are amplified by the same Apostle, in another place, into a powerful argument, which he thus states: "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now, we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." (1 Cor. ii. 11, 12.)

The foundation of this argument is laid in a position which suits the capacities of all, and finds

a mirror in every man's experience and knowledge. It runs thus—"What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" To this plain question every one must reply, that "nothing but the spirit of a man can enable him to understand the things of a man." And when this answer is admitted, it must follow, that the inward principle by which we discern and know the things of a man, must so shine upon our understandings by its native lustre, as to bring the fact perceived into union with our spirits, and by so doing, afford us a direct witness of those truths which are perceived and understood.

Wherever the things of a man are known by the spirit of a man, that spirit must afford a direct testimony of its own existence; for without this it must actually want that authority which it is presumed to impart; and by wanting that authority or evidence upon which our knowledge of its existence rests, it can never become a witness of those things which are presumed to be known by its testimony. But since the things of a man are thus known, and known by the spirit that is in man, the union itself, which is formed between the fact and the spirit, must be recognised by a witness which the spirit brings; which witness, by making us acquainted with facts that were before unknown, must reach our minds antecedently to them, and therefore be direct.

In transferring the argument to divine things,

the analogy must hold good ; for without this the simile will be deprived of its intended meaning. Let the analogy be destroyed, and the whole passage can serve no purpose but that of delusion, by leading us into an error from which we can find no means of extricating ourselves. But as such an imputation can never be thrown on the Apostle, who wrote by the plenary inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the conclusion is inevitable, and a direct witness becomes recognised by our admitting the cause of our knowledge, and the facts which are ascertained.

But it is not merely by implication and inference that the argument is made good. The plain and positive declaration of the Apostle enforces both the premises and conclusion in the most unequivocal manner. For, after having told us that "no man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him," he carries on the observation to illustrate the subject of which he spoke : "Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Here, then, is a plain testimony that the things of God are only known by the Spirit of God. Now, if it be only through the Spirit that we know the things of God, it clearly follows, that the witness of the Spirit, through which they are known, cannot be concealed. It would be the greatest absurdity to assert, that we admitted the Spirit to bear testimony to the things of God, while we denied the testimony which it brought, and supposed that it

afforded no evidence of its own existence, except through those very facts which we receive by its witness.

- I cannot receive the testimony of any testifier, unless I am first satisfied that the testifier exists; neither can I admit the facts which any testifier reveals, unless I first admit his evidence. The writing must always be believed, before the thing witnessed by it can be received; because testimony is that upon which my receiving of the thing testified is invariably dependent. I may know whether the testimony given be true or false by referring it to some infallible standard of truth, namely, by weighing it (in the present case) in the balance of the sanctuary; but the testimony must first be given before it can be perceived, and first be recognised as an evidence before it can be weighed. Now, as the standard presupposes the testimony of which it proves the truth, so the testimony presupposes the testifier; but the existence both of the testifier and his testimony must rest on a witness that is direct, because that witness is prior to, and distinct from, the standard to which we ultimately refer, when we attempt to investigate and ascertain its nature.

That this Spirit of God is imparted to us "that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God," is the plain Apostolic account. But if the testifier himself, by whom the things given to us of God are known, lies concealed,

and affords no direct evidence of his existence in the heart, he withholds his testimony, and therefore cannot impart that knowledge of given truths which I am supposed to receive through his agency. If, by this Spirit, I know the things freely given to me of God, he must afford a direct witness of his existence by the evidence which he communicates: but if he do not give me to know these things, then he is not that Spirit which the Apostle describes. If this Spirit be concealed, he cannot give me to know the things of God; but if he be not concealed, he must be known by his own light, because whatever is revealed to us, is revealed by the Spirit. If, then, the Spirit be known, he must be known by the Spirit; and that which is known by itself, must be known by its own light; and that which shines by its own light, must bring with it an evidence or witness which is direct. As, therefore, the spirit of a man, by which human things are known, must afford a direct evidence of their existence, even so the Spirit of God, by which divine things are known, must afford a direct witness of their existence also. That the former is true, is assumed by the Apostle as a truth sufficiently evident to become the basis of his argument; and that the latter is certain, appears from the "even so" with which he applies the illustration.

But the argument does not terminate here. It assumes the question on a more extensive scale. The spirit of a man is essentially necessary to

know the things of a man. No inferior capacities are equal to it, no instinctive powers can reach it, no animal sagacity is adequate to the purpose; nothing less than the spirit of a man is equal to the things of a man: "Even so," no human understanding, no exertions of reasoning, no refinements of education, no philosophical researches, are equal to the things of God. These are placed where nothing but the Spirit of God can reach them. As, therefore, nothing less than the human intellect is equal to the comprehension of human things, so nothing but the Spirit of God is equal to the comprehension of the things freely given to us of God.

Now, as the things of God are of a spiritual nature, they can only be known by a spiritual power. And as this spiritual power is not the offspring of the human understanding, it can be raised in the soul only by the Spirit of him who hath begotten us again to a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hence the Apostle argues, that "the natural man knoweth not the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned." A spiritual being operating, and a spiritual power raised, imply a spiritual communication, whatever may be the instrument of conveyance; and where the agent, the power, and the communication, are recognised as spiritual, there we must admit a spiritual and direct witness of the facts attested.

If a spiritual power make spiritual communica-

clous without bringing with it a spiritual evidence it must act contrary to its nature; and to suppose it to bring with it that which is spiritual, is to admit that which is intuitive; and that which is intuitive must be direct. To admit a spiritual power to operate as such, while we disclaim a spiritual evidence, is to assert the fact, and deny the only evidence which can prove it to be what we affirm. On the contrary, to allow the evidence of these facts, as well as the facts themselves, to be spiritual, is to admit a witness which operates immediately on the soul, and that which operates immediately must be direct.

“No man (the Apostle says) can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” (1 Cor. xii. 3.) Now, no man can adopt this truth, unless he knows it; and no man can know it, but by the Holy Ghost; and no man can know it by the Holy Ghost, but by a spiritual evidence; and no man can have a spiritual evidence unless it be direct. Of these connective propositions the proofs may be easily adduced. The first is plain scripture, and needs neither explanation nor defence. Secondly, if we affirm that Jesus is the Lord, while we know nothing of the fact we affirm, we become false witnesses by attesting that to be a fact which to us is a falsehood. The third is founded on sacred authority, “the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” (1 Cor. ii. 11.) The fourth proposition arises from the active energy of the agent. Nothing can open

in the mind spiritual perceptions but a spiritual power; and the existence of spiritual perceptions becomes an evidence to prove the spiritual operation of this power. That this evidence must reach the soul is clear, for its existence cannot be ascertained without it. And to contend, that I have a spiritual evidence of my adoption, while I deny that it is direct, is once more to assert the fact, and deny the only witness by which it can be known. Here then the conclusion once more returns upon us. That which is spiritually known, must be known by a spiritual witness; and that by which it is known, must be direct.

As divine revelation was first given by the Spirit, so a communication or an unfolding of this revelation can only be by the same Spirit. That the first proposition is true, is evident from the express declaration of scripture: "For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. i. 21.) And that the second is true, rests on the same authority; "for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life; (2 Cor. iii. 6.) and the reason is, "that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." (Rom. vii. 6.) From these passages it is evident, that both revelation, and the spiritual disclosure of it, are by the Spirit, and by this alone.

Now, it is impossible that the Spirit can make an application of the written word to any thing

but our souls, because these are to be raised into newness of life—these are to be quickened,—these are the objects of the Spirit's agency. And it is equally impossible to allow this fact, and yet suppose that the Spirit has no direct witness; when we admit that he so operates on our hearts as to make an application of the written record: Such a supposition can only be heightened by the absurdity of imagining that we only know him indirectly, by viewing him through that very medium which must remain a dead letter, till he brings it home with power to our souls. The distance between our unquickened souls and God's revealed will, proves the necessity of some intervening power to bring them together; and the commandment being personally applied, proves the actual intervention of the Spirit. Now that which intervenes between the holy word which records the promises, and our souls, to bring them into union, must operate without a medium; and that which operates without a medium must afford an evidence that is direct.

Admitting the sacred writings to be a medium through which God communicates his promises, and displays the riches of his grace; yet it is evident that something is still wanting to bring us nigh by the Blood of sprinkling. This the holy scriptures themselves have pointed out, namely, the Holy Spirit, which leads into all truth. Now that which applies any medium to our hearts, must needs approach nearer to our hearts than that medium which it applies; and, consequently, can

never be restricted in its operations by that medium beyond which it extends, and which it confessedly brings home to our souls. From these premises the conclusion in favor of a direct witness is obvious. That agent which applies a medium, must necessarily have an action independently of it; and that which thus acts, must afford a testimony which is direct.

St. Paul asserts, that "the Spirit of God is within us." He does not in this place say the fruits of the Spirit, nor the records of the Spirit, but the Spirit itself; "and we have no right to be wise above what is written," or to introduce ideas which the Holy Ghost saw proper to omit. Now, if the Spirit of God be within us, he cannot be within us by a medium. Whatever is made a medium of communication, must be supposed to be nearer to us than that agent which acts through it. Thus much the term itself imports; for without this it ceases to be a medium. Hence, then, it is impossible that the scriptures can be a medium *in the case before us*, because these are without us, but the Spirit of God is within us; and that which is known to exist within us by experience, without reaching us through a medium, must have a witness which is direct.

The Apostle informs us, that "as soon as Christ was revealed in him, he conferred not with flesh and blood." (Gal. i. 16.) Can it be supposed that this revelation was made to him through a medium? or that, though Christ was revealed in his heart, he bore no direct witness of his appearance? Now Christ is the same yes-

terday, to-day, and for ever. (Heb. xiii. 8.) in all his ordinary manifestations. If, therefore, before the sacred records were committed to writing, he illuminated the saints of old by and through his Spirit, we have no reason to think his arm is shortened, or his ear heavy. His power is the same; his ordinary workings are the same; and whenever his spiritual residence is in the heart, the evidence of his presence must be direct.

Our Lord, when about to take his leave of his disciples, who, overwhelmed with sorrow, were inconsolable for their approaching loss, soothed the anguish of their hearts with the following promise: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." (John, xiv. 16.) No man can reasonably suppose, on perusing this passage, that our Lord designed only to console them with a promise, that his words should be fulfilled to them through the scriptures, or that they so understood him. Neither can we imagine that it was his intention to direct those who should succeed them in the lapse of afterages till the end of time, to view this Comforter only through the medium of revelation. To prevent such an interpretation, the following verse imparts its light; "Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Now that which dwelleth in us, if it speak through a medium,

can only speak through one which is nearer to us than itself; but such a medium cannot be found: its evidence, therefore, must be direct. Our Lord says, "he shall be in you." Whatever is within us, as it can admit of nothing nearer, must either shine by its own light, or not shine at all. That the Spirit does shine, is evident; because he brings all things to our remembrance, teaches us all things, and guides into all truth. (John, xiv. 26. & xvi. 13.) Hence then the immediate consequence is, that he both resides within us, and shines by his own lustre.

Saint John has said, "We know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." (1 John, iii. 24.) Can this inward residence of the indwelling God (I would ask) be known, and known by the Spirit which is given to us, if neither the former nor the latter had any direct witness? Can any agent evidence to me an important fact, when that agent can no more be known to exist than the fact which he witnesses? Can I receive the testimony of a witness, when that witness wants another to certify his existence? Or can the testimony of this testifier be known, when he can only be proved to exist by something which is indirect? Who does not perceive that a man must first renounce his understanding, before he can receive such an inversion of thought and order? Analogy, reason, and common sense, unite in declaring in favor of a direct witness.

An indirect testifier may bear an indirect testi-

mony; but it can do nothing more, because nothing can communicate what it does not possess: the supposition would compel us to allow, that it could communicate such a testimony, and not communicate it, at the same time. A direct testimony from an indirect testifier, therefore, cannot be obtained. But while nothing but an indirect testimony appears, it is impossible that positive knowledge can be procured by it. Positive knowledge can only arise from positive testimony; and this an indirect testifier cannot impart. The evidence, however, of which the apostle speaks, actually imparts this knowledge: "Hereby we KNOW that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." Now, as direct knowledge cannot arise from an indirect testimony, and as this direct or positive knowledge is recognised by the Apostle, and recognised as arising from the witness of the Spirit, it follows with commanding certainty, that this witness is, and must be, direct. The Prophet Isaiah, when describing the new covenant, expresses himself in the following words: "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My Spirit which is upon thee, and my words which I have put into thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seeds' seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." (Isa. lix. 21.) In this passage the promised application is evidently immediate. His Spirit is said to be put upon us, and his

words into our mouth; and both are to continue for ever. His words are not said to be merely recorded, that we might be instructed by them; they are brought still nearer. They are not even said to be written on our hearts, though the heart is the spring of action; but they are placed, if possible, still more remote from a medium, and are said to be put "into our mouths," into the very organ of utterance, so that nothing remains but that they be spoken. Is it possible then that there can be a medium between the organ of utterance and utterance itself? between articulation, and the only instrument by which articulation can be performed? If not, the words must reside within us; and the evidence which they impart must be direct.

On examining the whole passage, we cannot but perceive that no medium whatever is introduced as the instrument of conveyance. On the contrary, the word is put into our mouths, and the Spirit is put upon us; so that the divine Agent occupies the only place which it could be supposed to engross. Hence the whole process is clearly made out without a medium. The chain leaves no vacancy for such a link to supply. It is unbroken and entire; and the introduction of a medium will derange its order, and annihilate its beauty.

Saint Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, quotes from the prophet Jeremiah, a description of the same covenant, which they mutually amplify in these words: "For this is the covenant that I

will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. Heb. viii. 10, 11.) On combining this passage with that which I have just quoted from Isaiah, it appears that every avenue shall be filled up. The heart, the mind, the mouth, are all occupied by the Holy Agent, and a positive knowledge of the Lord is announced as the certain result. If then every avenue shall be filled with the law and word of God through his Spirit resting upon us, and if all our powers shall be so far renovated that all shall know him, from the least to the greatest, then it is evident that this knowledge must be intuitive; and, consequently, the witness by which this knowledge is obtained must be direct.

The same doctrine is repeated, and furthermore inculcated, by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, in his epistle to the Ephesians. His prayer runs thus: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." (Eph. i. 17, 18.) That the enlightening here mentioned, is inward,

is too evident to be disputed; for the Agent by which it is done, being the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, displays the cause; whilst our knowledge of the hope of his calling, and of the fellowship of his sufferings, points out the effect. Now, if the witness with which this Holy Agent is attended, be only indirect, how can the effect produced be positive or actual knowledge? Indirect testimony can never confer an evidence which shall rise higher than probability; and where nothing but probability is, there actual knowledge cannot be. But as the Apostle positively declares, that our knowledge of certain given facts is the result of that enlightening which our understanding immediately receives, the proof is decisive, that the evidence by which it is ascertained rises higher than probability. If, therefore, positive knowledge be produced, and the evidence to produce it must rise higher than probability, the testimony on which it rests cannot be indirect; and that witness which is not indirect, but rises above it, must be direct.

The same truth is also taught by the beloved disciple, and similar inferences may be made from his declaration: "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." (1 John, iv. 13.) In this passage also the residence of the Holy Spirit is declared, the knowledge of the fact is asserted, and the cause of it is assigned. Now, if the evidence on which this knowledge rests were only indirect, no cer-

tainty could be obtained. A deficiency in knowledge is invariably accompanied with doubt, which is the offspring of ignorance. Now doubt is always so hostile to knowledge, that it is impossible they can exist together when applied at once to the same subject; for no man can doubt that which he knows. That knowledge is the result of the evidence produced, the Apostle plainly declares;—"Hereby *know* we," &c.; and hence it is certain, that the testimony from which it results, cannot be that which terminates in doubt and uncertainty. But as that which terminates thus, cannot be higher than indirect, the conclusion follows, that nothing but a direct witness can be the foundation of the Apostle's proposition.

To reject a direct witness from an apprehension that it is delusive, or under a persuasion that we cannot resort to a more dangerous or fallacious criterion, is to degrade the influence of the Holy Spirit. We must, in this case, suspect his inward testimony, and confide in our rational observations. We must exalt reason above the Holy Spirit, our own decisions above his dictates, and use the latter as an engine to drive the former from our bosoms. When David invited us to "taste and see that God is good," can it be thought that he had any intention to persuade us that "tasting and seeing" imply mediums? Every one must know that taste and sight are sensations, and as such can admit of no mediums. And that which imparts experimental knowledge without the inter-

vention of mediums, must afford an evidence which is direct.

To reason, I acknowledge, lies our ultimate appeal; but reason dictates when its operations are to be suspended. If, therefore, the influences of the Holy Spirit must be submitted to the test of reason, reason informs us that it is called upon to travel in a region which lies beyond its province; and we shall be compelled to desert its dictates by fondly attempting to enlarge its empire. To the dictates of the Holy Spirit, well informed reasons yields an implicit submission. They cannot, indeed, contradict each other, for both are precious gifts of Heaven; but the former outsoars the latter, and leaves it to acknowledge that the flight is above its comprehension. But when reason, or something which bears that name, asserts, that the direct witness which the Holy Spirit imparts, is "a mock sun," "a dangerous criterion," "a satanic illusion," and we abide by the decision, we compel it to arrogate to itself a right which its sober dictates disown. In this case reason acts an unreasonable part, and an unreasonable reason is a contradiction in terms.

That a guilty sinner, when truly awakened by the Spirit of God, feels within himself a direct witness of his guilt, sinfulness and condemnation, will hardly admit of any dispute. Nothing but such a witness can make known to him a personal application of general truths, and say to his conscience, "Thou art the man." An indirect wit-

ness can never impart a positive conviction; and nothing short of positive conviction can truly awaken a sinner, and urge him to forsake sin, and seek earnestly after God. But these effects are actually produced; the conclusion therefore follows, that the evidence or witness to produce them, is direct. Now, if genuine personal conviction cannot be produced without a direct witness, it must follow that a sense of condemnation in which the conviction in part consists, cannot be removed by a witness that is indirect. An indirect witness can never remove what a direct witness supports, for no effect can be greater than its cause. Let this be granted, and the consequence is inevitable—that something more than an indirect witness is necessary to remove an effect which a direct witness had begotten.

That the effect of conviction is to be removed, is the plain language of scripture. St. Paul says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" (Rom. v. 1.) and in another place he adds, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. viii. 1.) Now, whenever "the soul is baptized with the fire of divine love, when a well, yea, rivers of living waters spring up within it unto eternal life," it is certain that a sense of condemnation must be removed. If, therefore; a sense of condemnation be taken away, and no indirect evidence of the fact be sufficient to destroy

what nothing but a direct evidence could beget, the conclusion is undeniable, that a direct witness of the Spirit must be admitted, in what stage soever of experience it may be supposed to appear.

Saint Paul having informed us, that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," proceeds further to describe this divine gift: "For ye have not received (says he) the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. viii. 14—16.)

In the latter passage two spirits are evidently introduced to our notice; the one is the Spirit of God, the other is our own. The testimony or evidence which results from these spirits, is also distinguished; that of the Spirit of God is not, indeed, specifically described, but it is intelligibly expressed; "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

In speaking of the witness of our own spirit, Mr. Wesley writes thus: "Now this is properly the testimony of our own spirit; even the testimony of our conscience, that God hath given us to be holy of heart, and holy in outward conversation. It is a consciousness of our having received, in and by the Spirit of adoption, the tempers mentioned in the word of God, as belonging to his adopted children; even a loving heart

towards God, and toward mankind, hanging with child-like confidence on God our Father, desiring nothing but him, casting all our care upon him, and embracing every child of man with earnest tender affection, so as to be ready to lay down our life for our brother, as Christ laid down his life for us; a consciousness that we are inwardly conformed, by the Spirit of God, to the image of his Son, and that we walk before him in justice, mercy, and truth, doing the things which are pleasing in his sight." (Sermons, vol. i. p. 192.) To the numerous observations which Mr. W. has thus summed up in the preceding paragraph, I shall make no additions, because the facts, being admitted both by Mr. H. and ourselves, form no part whatever of the present controversy.

"But what is that testimony of God's Spirit (Mr. W. asks) which is superadded to, and conjoined with this? How does he bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God? It is hard (he observes) to find words in the language of men to explain the deep things of God. Indeed, there are none which will adequately express what the children of God experience. But, perhaps, one might say (desiring any who are taught of God to soften or strengthen the expression), the testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Jesus hath loved me, and given him-

self for me; that I, even I, am reconciled to God (p. 193.)”

This statement of a direct witness, that “it is an inward impression on the soul,” &c. Mr. H. positively rejects as unscriptural; and the reasonings by which the fact is supported, he views as “a tower built upon the sand.” Mr. W. in a subsequent page of his sermon, in illustrating the subject which he designed to enforce, has made the following observation: “Suppose God were now to speak to any soul—“Thy sins are forgiven thee,” he must be willing that soul should know his voice, otherwise he would speak in vain. And he is able to effect this; for whenever he wills, to do is present with him. And he does effect it. That soul is absolutely assured this voice is the voice of God. But yet he who hath that witness in himself, cannot explain it to any one who hath it not.” (p. 203.)

On connecting together these two passages which are divided by no less than ten pages, Mr. H. has selected out the two words “impression” and “voice,” and reiterated “voice and impression,” “impression and voice,” as though Mr. W. had actually affirmed, that the direct witness of the Spirit consisted in an audible voice, articulated by the organs of speech; or had meant by the word “impression” something corporeal, or bearing a strong resemblance to it. And against such an impression, and such a voice, he directs his ar-

gments, as though Mr. W. had actually introduced the terms in the sense in which they are quoted.

The expression in which the word voice occurs in Mr. W.'s sermon, is evidently only illustrative and comparative. The whole is a supposed case, not a real one; and is only designed to point out the connection between this voice, admitting it to have been given, and the sensibility which it begets if uttered and heard. Yet this hypothetical and illustrative relation, Mr. H. has assumed as an asserted fact; and has represented Mr. W.'s view of the direct witness, as consisting in an "impression or voice," though he had forewarned all against it, by the following caution: "It is hard to find words in the language of men to explain the deep things of God. Indeed, there are none that will adequately express what the children of God experience." "What are ten thousand "voices and impressions," (Mr. H. asks,) in comparison of this indwelling God? What are they? From my heart I believe them to be satanic illusions; to draw us away from the True Witness, as the damnatory clause is, to degrade scriptural assurance." (p. 118.)

From the manner in which Mr. H. has depicted our views, it would appear, that the direct witness for which we contend, is a something unconnected with, if not hostile, to the indwelling God; whereas the reverse is the case. It consists in an

inward influence upon the mind, or mental impression, which the presence of the indwelling God occasions by his residence. It is a manifestation of his love, which sheds a soft tranquillity over the soul, diffusing a spiritual warmth or vitality through all our spiritual powers, and begetting within our bosoms a satisfactory assurance that the moral relation in which we stood to God is changed. It is that which enables us to view a reconciled God; which presents the Sun of Righteousness to our sight; and which discovers the balm of Gilead applied to our wounded hearts. It is an internal evidence which the indwelling God affords of his presence, by which we know that the sacrifice of Christ has been available in our behalf; and that being interested in him, God is no longer a consuming fire. This, if Mr. Horne's observations have any application to us, is what he contrasts with the real indwelling God, and plainly calls "a satanic illusion."

Nothing, however, can be farther from my view, than to insinuate that this light, by which we discern the love of God manifested towards us, shines alike in all, or is even accompanied at all times with the same degree of lustre to the same person. Few individuals, perhaps, experience it alike. Our love towards God, our peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, which, in no small degree, depend upon these manifestations, partake, perhaps, in most believers of similar variations; so few

there are, I am afraid, who constantly and fully live up to the glorious privileges of the Christian dispensation.

“That this testimony of the Spirit of God (says Mr. Wesley) must needs, in the very nature of things, be antecedent to the testimony of our own spirit, may appear from this single consideration; We must be holy of heart and holy in life, before we can be conscious that we are so; before we can have the testimony of our spirit that we are inwardly and outwardly holy. But we must love God, before we can be holy at all, this being the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God till we know he loves us. We love him, because he first loved us. And we cannot know his pardoning love to us, till his Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. Since, therefore, this testimony of his Spirit must precede the love of God and all holiness, of consequence, it must precede our inward consciousness thereof, or the testimony of our spirit concerning them.” (Sermons, vol. i. p. 193.)

To counteract the efficacy of Mr. W.'s reasonings in the above paragraph, Mr. H. has employed several of his succeeding pages; but with what success remains briefly to be examined.

“1. Though Mr. Wesley's reasoning (he observes) were absolutely conclusive, it could not prove the direct witness he contends for. When the love of God is fully shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit of adoption, I laugh at all other witness, and while it abides there, I need none.” (p. 117, 118.) I feel no desire to interrupt

this Rev. Gentleman's laughter, provided he allow that the Spirit of adoption brings with it an internal evidence of its existence and actual residence; an evidence which lies at the root of that peace, love and joy, which we in return feel towards God. But if, on the contrary, he recognises the Spirit of adoption, without admitting it to afford any prior evidence of that power which can alone excite within us those graces and internal fruits which are acknowledged by all, he must teach us to love God without having any inward manifestation of his love towards us, prior to our love to him, at a moment when we declare that we love him because he first loved us. In this case, he must permit us to smile at him, if we please, for adopting a fact, as a certain effect of a cause of which he confesses himself to be destitute of all evidence, antecedently to the effect adopted.

To keep his laughter in countenance, Mr. H. asserts as follows: "Their justifying faith is an assurance of the remission of sins. Still they want more assurance. You then give them a direct witness, which, wonderful to say! though it has no criteria by which it is distinguished, produces an assurance as indubitable, as a man has of the sun's shining, when he stands in the full blaze of his beams!!!" p. 118. This statement we deny. We only contend, that before we can believe in the remission of sins, some evidence of the fact must be imparted to the mind, as the basis of this faith; and that this, as being the primary witness of the fact, must, from the nature of its

existence, precede this faith, and therefore must be direct. " Yet this direct witness is not the Spirit of love, power, and of a sound mind." (p. 118.) Certainly not; our love, power, and soundness of mind, are effects or fruits which the Spirit produces when we receive him. But grateful love can never be excited within our bosoms, until we have some inward evidence that God first loves us; and this never can be obtained until his love, in a greater or less degree, is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us; because it is from this love that the evidence of its communication springs.

" 2. I grant, the testimony of the Spirit goes before the testimony of our spirit; but I deny what Mr. Wesley assumes without even an attempt to prove it, as though the fact were self-evident; that the testimony of the Spirit is direct, and such as he describes it." " In all his ordinary operations, I affirm, the Spirit speaketh by the word, and worketh by faith in that word," (p. 118, 119.) To arguments which derive their chief force from " I deny," and " I affirm," we have nothing to answer. Mr. H. here grants that the testimony of the Spirit of God goes before the testimony of our spirit, and by so doing he eventually admits the very thing which he denies; for whether the Spirit speaketh by the word or not, is not the question. Let the prior testimony of the Spirit be granted, and the direct witness cannot be refused. If the Spirit speak by the word, so as to

produce conviction, an awakening power must intervene between the word and the soul, in order to bring the threatenings home, and to rivet conviction; and this awakening power must be supported by a direct evidence, in order to produce the effect. In like manner, if the consoling Spirit of adoption speak by the word, he must intervene between the word and our souls to apply the promises, and must bring with him a direct testimony in order to obtain credit, and produce the effects attributed to his gracious operations. Let this be denied, and the testimony of our spirit must precede that of the Spirit of God; let this be granted, and the direct witness is acknowledged.

3. Mr. Wesley asserts, "We must be holy of heart and holy in life, before we can be conscious that we are so." This Mr. H. allows. "We must love God (Mr. W. affirms) before we can be holy at all, this being the root of all holiness." In reply to this last argument, Mr. H. says, "A religion in which there is no love, is vile and contemptible. It is a sacrifice without a heart. If ye love me, said Jesus, keep my commandments. Wherever, therefore, there is the fruit of godly obedience, there also is the principle of filial fear." (p. 120.) In this passage, Mr. H. should have said "filial love," not "filial fear;" for love, and not fear, was the thing to be proved. But this would have compelled him to infer love from obedience, as he now infers fear. Yet how either

love or fear is to be made out by inference, it is hard to say. Mr. H. has said, that "peace, love, joy, &c. abundantly shed abroad in the heart, are as real and indubitable objects of internal feeling, as anger, fear, or covetousness." (p. 116.) Here *fear* and *love* are supported by their proper evidences, without being inferred from obedience, or any other principle. Mr. H. is the author of both positions, and I must leave him to reconcile them together.

"Is the glorious Gospel (Mr. H. asks) not worthy to be believed? and if I do believe in my loving Father and Redeemer, will not precious faith produce some degree of holy love, without this direct witness?" (p. 122.) St. Paul has said, that love is a fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. v. 22.) But if we admit love to be *produced* by faith, agreeably to the language before us, I fear that "human tradition will not only gain admission into the secrets of the sanctuary," but supplant the declaration of the Apostle, and make faith usurp the place of the Holy Spirit:

If the testimony of God's Spirit precedes that of ours, as Mr. Wesley asserts, and Mr. Horne admits, it is evident that it must be communicated prior to the removal of a sense of condemnation from our minds, or rather is that by which it is accomplished, just as light by its appearance banishes darkness; for a removal of a sense of condemnation is an effect of the divine favor, just as the retirement of darkness is an effect of

appearing light. It is certain, that nothing but a sense of the divine favor, is capable of removing a sense of condemnation; for the divine favor not manifested, can never be ascertained, or acknowledged as such. Now, if nothing but a sense of the favor of God be competent to the production of this effect, and this effect be actually produced, the prior evidence of that favor must be manifested in order to its accomplishment; and, consequently, the witness, from the priority of its nature, must be direct. It is not possible that we can love God, while we labour under a sense of condemnation; condemnation, therefore, must be removed prior to our love to God, in order to make way for it. If, therefore, our love towards God presupposes his love towards us, and his love be manifested in the removal of a sense of condemnation, which also is prior to our love, it follows, that the evidence by which this love is displayed, must act immediately upon our souls to produce these effects. Thus the removal of a sense of condemnation from our minds must be known prior to our loving of God, and consequently, prior to all those holy fruits which result from it. The knowledge therefore of this important fact, can never reach us any other way than by a direct witness, because it proceeds all mediums through which it might be presumed to act.

But admitting this direct witness for which we contend;—a witness which, in point of time, and

in the order of nature, precedes those effects both inward and outward, which result from the communication of divine love, of which this inward testimony is the evidence—"By what criteria, it is asked, shall it be known to be genuine? How shall the witness be distinguished from the voice of a stranger?" "Is this direct witness, Mr. H. asks, repeated from day to day?" (p. 115.) In reply, to this question, our Lord answers: "If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John, xiv. 23.) Again, the Comforter is given, "that he may abide with us for ever." (v. 16.) Those, therefore, who stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, (Gal. v. 1.) having an inward steady evidence of Christ in them the hope of glory, do not want the repetition of a voice from day to day, as Mr. H. has strangely inquired, and perhaps more strangely imagined.

Secondly, this direct witness may be distinguished from the voice of a stranger, by the fruits and effects which immediately follow it. "Peace, love, and joy, abundantly shed abroad in the heart, are as real and indubitable objects of internal feeling, as anger, fear, or covetousness." Now, if the witness which attests the Spirit's presence, be accompanied with these blessed fruits, so that old things pass away, and all things become new, what shall prevent him who possesses it, from distinguishing the gold from the dross, the genuine witness from the illusion?

Thirdly, It is accompanied with the outward works, arising from proper motives, which form the visible part of the Christian character. "The scriptures teach, (says Mr. Wesley,) This is the love of God (the sure mark thereof) that we keep his commandments. (1 John, v. 3.) And our Lord himself saith, he that keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me. (John, xiv. 21.) Love rejoiceth to obey; to do in every point whatever is acceptable to the Beloved. A true lover of God hastens to do his will on earth as it is done in heaven." (vol. i. p. 200.) Here then are decisive and indubitable marks, both internal and external, with which this evidence is accompanied, and by which it may be known from "a satanic suggestion."

But "if, on the other hand, it (the direct witness) be an abiding voice, ever echoing in your ears, surely, in so long a time, you might tell us how you distinguish it from the voice of a stranger." (p. 115.) "He, (says Mr. W.) who hath that witness in himself, cannot explain it to one who hath it not. Nor is it to be expected that he should. Were there any natural medium to prove, or natural method to explain, the things of God, to unexperienced men, then the natural man might discern and know the things of the Spirit of God." (p. 203. vol. i.) "The Spirit of adoption (says Mr. H. most truly, but most inconsistently, because he denies a direct witness) brings its own evidence; but it is an evidence which

cannot be produced, or made satisfactory to any one but ourselves. Our external visible fruits;—our words, actions, tempers, are the evidence we must bring forward to the world and the church.” (p. 125.) Here Mr. H. has completely answered his own question, and by so doing, precluded the necessity of all further reply.

But “if our last, and only satisfactory appeal lies to the Spirit’s holy fruits, who does not see, that it is by them the Spirit *truly* witnesses?” (p. 124.) To this genuine witness we have no objection. But is not the passage artfully worded? We never denied, nor attempted to do so, that “by these fruits the Spirit *truly* witnesses.” But Mr. H., to make good his ground, after having denied a direct witness, should have asserted, that ~~it is by these fruits that~~ the Spirit *exclusively* witnesses. This he seems to have had some scruples in affirming; for had he done so, it would have overturned another part of his hypothesis, in which he has asserted, that “a man may have faith without discerning it, and without having comfort.” To have introduced the word, “*exclusively*,” would, therefore, have demolished no inconsiderable part of his theory; and having omitted it, his question “does not weigh the feather of a goose.”

“When a man recognises his faith, he realises his assurance. His faith stands simply and wholly on the promises of God made to him in Christ. His assurance stands on two legs; the right on

those faithful promises; the left, on his consciousness that he hath so believed those promises which are yea and amen in Christ." (p. 115, 116.) That the faith which justifies, includes within it nothing of assurance, Mr. H. has positively told us, (p. 64.) though he now asserts that when a man recognises his faith, he realises his assurance. It is evident from hence, that assurance must arise from a consciousness, that, with a faith destitute of all assurance, we have believed the promises of the gospel! Now, if that faith by which we lay hold on the promises, be devoid of all assurance, it is certain that a recognition of it can never beget assurance; for it is absurd to suppose that assurance can result from the mere recognition of that which is destitute of it. This is an unpleasant circumstance, which makes "the left leg" of assurance lame.

A consciousness of the divine favor, admitting it to be imparted, can never beget a sense of that favor, because this consciousness is an effect which results from it. The thing itself must, therefore, be communicated, before any consciousness of it can be possessed; and must impart some previous evidence of its existence, and personal application, in order to beget this consciousness. That this primary evidence, by which consciousness is begetten, cannot be faith, or the effect of it, is evident also, because faith itself, in all its stages, is subsequent to consciousness. I cannot believe that I enjoy the divine favor till I am conscious of it;

consciousness, therefore, cannot in this case be preceded by faith. If, therefore, consciousness be an evidence of any given fact, and this consciousness cannot be preceded by faith, the immediate parent of this consciousness must be an intuitive manifestation of the thing known or believed; and every intuitive manifestation must be direct.

The fruits of the Spirit presuppose the operation of the Spirit; and peace with God presupposes that operation to be known; because peace can only flow from a consciousness of favor. Now, whatever is presupposed cannot be begotten by any effects which result from it; for this would make the effect contribute towards the production of its own cause. But as this cannot be admitted, it follows, that the evidence by which that which is presupposed is ascertained, must be direct.

But the right leg of assurance, it seems, stands on those faithful promises; and the left on our consciousness that we have so believed those promises which are yea and amen." Now, according to this statement, it appears that assurance does not arise from faith in God, or Christ, or the promises of the gospel; but from a strong degree of confidence in our own faith, which is destitute of it. We must believe the promises of the gospel with a faith that is devoid of assurance, in order to justification; and then recognise this very faith, and realise our assurance! Thus assurance is no longer the gift of God; it is not wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit; but "it is a truth of second rank

and virtue, deduced from a primary one by faith and reason." (p. 116.) St. Paul asserts, that the Gospel came not unto the Thessalonians in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. (1 Thess. i. 5.) But Mr. H. cautions us against an obvious error into which we might certainly have fallen, by assuring us that it is only "a truth of second rank and virtue, deduced from a primary one by the co-operation of faith and reason." The same Apostle speaks of the full assurance of faith (Heb. x. 22.); but Mr. H. separating faith from assurance, degrades the latter to a secondary rank, and calls in an auxiliary power; and, propping faith with reason, indirectly hints at the inaccuracy of the Apostolic observation, and draws assurance from a cause and combination which the scriptures nowhere assign. A faith which is destitute of all assurance, may call reason to its aid to produce assurance; but this will only prove its inadequacy to the purposes for which it was given. This circumstance may make the co-operation of reason necessary; but "the left leg" of assurance must be very lame, indeed, to want the assistance of such a crutch.

Faith, whether considered as a recipient or anticipating power of the soul, can never contribute towards any of those evidences on which it rests, and from which it derives its existence. Both the facts themselves, and the evidences by which they are attested, on which faith lays hold, must be made known to the mind prior to the operative existence of faith, because these

evidences and facts call faith into action. "How shall we call on him, in whom we have not believed; and how shall we believe in him, of whom we have not heard!" (Rom. x. 14.) It is to our perceptive consciousness that these facts are first manifested; for that of which we are wholly unconscious, can never be an object either of our belief or knowledge. If, therefore, the mind must be conscious of the favor of God, before it can believe it, and a sense of this favor must be communicated before we can be conscious of it, the evidence or witness that produces this consciousness which lays a foundation for faith, whether imparted to the mind through a medium, or without one, must be direct.

In p. 126. Mr. H. descants upon the fatal consequences to which he conceives the doctrine of the direct witness is calculated to lead; but in this procedure his progress is somewhat singular. In the first stage he supposes the evil possible; presently it becomes highly probable; in the next place, he gives it a tone of certainty; and, finally, argues from it as formidably as though his conclusions had been all fairly inferred by legitimate induction. He has, however, had candour enough to insert from Mr. Wesley's writings a sufficient antidote against his own conclusions. These observations clearly show, that the doctrine against which he argues has no necessary connection with the evils he has supposed; and every one knows, that if a doctrine must be abandoned because it is lia-

ble to abuse, there is not one that can be retained. The greatest blessings that God has ever bestowed on man, both of a temporal and a spiritual nature, have not only been liable to abuse, but have actually been abused, and prostituted to the basest of purposes. If, therefore, this were admitted as a reason why they should be rejected, every thing that has been violated must be discarded, and in this case we shall banish excellency from the world.

“That joy in the Lord, (says Mr. Wesley,) which accompanies the witness of the Spirit, is an humble joy, that abases to the dust; that makes a pardoned sinner cry out, I am vile. What am I, or my father's house? Now mine eye seeth thee, I repent in dust and ashes. And wherever lowliness is, there is meekness, patience, gentleness, long-suffering: There is a soft yielding spirit, a mildness and sweetness; a tenderness of soul which words cannot express. But do these fruits attend the supposed testimony in a presumptuous man? Just the reverse. The more confident he is of the favor of God, the more is he lifted up,” &c. (Sermons, vol. i. p. 199.)

As there is an obvious, inherent, and essential difference between light and darkness, between the glimmering of a taper and the light of the noon-day sun; so Mr. W. observes, there is in like manner an essential difference between spiritual light and spiritual darkness: between the light wherewith the Sun of Righteousness shines upon our hearts, and that glimmering light which

arises only from sparks of our own kindling. And this difference also is immediately and directly perceived, if our spiritual senses are rightly disposed." "But to require a more minute and philosophical account of the manner whereby we distinguish these, and of the criteria or intrinsic marks whereby we know the voice of God, is, he contends, to make a demand which never can be answered." To illustrate this, he introduces the case of St. Paul, when relating the circumstances of his conversion before Agrippa. "Suppose, (says he) when Paul answered before Agrippa, the wise Roman had said, "Thou talkest of hearing the voice of the Son of God. How dost thou know it was his voice? By what criteria, what intrinsic marks, dost thou know the voice of God? Explain to me the manner of distinguishing this from a human or angelic voice?" Can you believe the Apostle himself would have once attempted to answer so idle a demand? And yet, doubtless, the moment he heard that voice, he knew it was the voice of God. But how he knew this, who is able to explain? Perhaps neither man nor angel."

(Sermons, vol. i. p. 202.)

But Mr. W., it seems, "betrays the weakness of his cause, by acknowledging the voice he contends for has no criteria of its own, and by putting it on a level with a miracle." (p. 132.) It, however, happens, that Mr. W. does not put it on a level with a miracle, as Mr. H. has supposed.

He only introduces a miracle as a something which has no specific criterion with which we are acquainted; and seizes this single circumstance to illustrate his argument, and confirm his conclusion, that the want of specific criteria is no argument against the certainty of fact. This is an inference which Mr. H. has been endeavouring to repel, that he might make room for another, and conclude that the want of criteria is a proof of delusion or non-existence.

But granting that Mr. W. had placed the direct witness for which he contends, on a level with miracle, in what manner would his conduct have appeared presumptuous? Are not all the Spirit's operations and effects miraculous? Is not that faith which is of the operation of God—is not conversion—is not adoption—is not a sense of pardon—and is not Christ in us the hope of glory, miraculous? Nature cannot accomplish these gracious works; and that which is performed by a superior power, must bear the appellation. But Mr. H. denies that there is any thing miraculous in either. "For though the Spirit of adoption be in itself above all miracles, it neither suspends, nor contradicts, one law of nature. It adds to it, but takes nothing from it." (p. 134.) In this passage, Mr. H. has given us only a partial definition of miracle. Miracle is that by which any action is performed which nature cannot accomplish; for to nothing else can we ascribe those actions which rise above her power. He allows, that "the Spirit

of adoption, as to its power and effect, is above all miracles. But how any thing can be done which is neither miraculous nor not miraculous,—or how any thing can add to the laws of nature without being miraculous, he has not informed us, and I have not ingenuity enough to discover.

“Suppose (says Mr. W.) God were now to speak to any soul, Thy sins are forgiven thee, he must be willing that soul should know his voice, otherwise he would speak in vain. And he is able to effect this, &c. and he does effect it.” (vol. i. p. 202.) On quoting this passage, Mr. H. replies, “I suppose no such thing.” And yet, after denying the premises, he argues against the conclusion with as much seriousness, as though it had been founded on facts which were unconnected with the supposed case on which it rests. But Mr. W. it seems, “calvinizes” by making the supposition. And to prove that his argument is unfounded, Mr. H. introduces a fancied parallel, drawn from our Lord’s discourses to his disciples, relative to his mission, the death he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, and the great events of which he spoke. “Could he not (Mr. H. asks) have conveyed to them an indubitable knowledge of the events he spake of? Unquestionably. Did he do so? He did not. Why did he not? Because he would not give miraculous testimony to truths on which depended the work of grace—the honest or dishonest heart. He left them sufficiently clear, in connection with the evidences

he still meant to give, for godly men to believe." (p. 134.) That the words which Christ spake to his disciples, while here on earth, were not thought by him to be adequate to every purpose of their experimental instruction, is plain from the promise which he gave them of another Comforter, which should lead them into all truth, and bring all things to their remembrance. This promise was verified on the day of Pentecost in an emphatical manner, and is spiritually fulfilled from day to day in every believing soul. It is for the accomplishment of those promises which teach the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, and the enjoyment of Christ in the heart by faith, that Mr. W. contends. And "God is able to effect this; for whenever he wills, to do is present with him. And he does effect it," in every sincerely penitent and believing heart.

"But he who hath that witness in himself, cannot (says Mr. W.) explain it to one who hath it not." This Mr. H. grants to be the case to carnal men. "But will it hold good (he asks) to those in whose hearts the peace, love, and joy of the Lord are revealed by the Spirit? If it does not, why then do you not explain it to us, that we may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ? Are those who have the adopting Spirit carnal, and incapable of comprehending you? If you insist, it is inexplicable to those who have it not: I answer, then it is a miraculous gift, or a word without meaning. For

myself, I do not hesitate to declare my opinion, that it is the last." (p. 134, &c.) In reply to these questions, Mr. H. will probably not dispute my authority, if I produce his own words. The answer fairly meets his interrogatories; and leaves less room for debate, than the two quotations do for reconciliation. "The Spirit of adoption brings its own evidence, but it is an evidence which cannot be produced, or made satisfactory to any one but ourselves." (p. 125.) Mr. H. knows who has said, "If you insist, it is inexplicable to those who have it not; I answer, then it is a miraculous gift, or *vox et preterea nihil*, a word without a meaning."

"Had this sermon (says Mr. H.) been analysed by Mr. Wesley, as written by another, how easily would he have perceived, that the writer argues in a circle. Without scripture proof, he assumes an inward "impression or voice" to be the witness of the Spirit, and, when pressed by objections, he proves this direct witness by the fruits of the Spirit. The fallacy is clear to a logician," &c. (p. 135.) In reply to this, I answer, that the "impression or voice" is not the thing he assumes as the witness of the Spirit, as Mr. H. has described them, but only imperfect representations of the fact; for he knew that "it cannot be produced or made satisfactory to any but ourselves." Neither does Mr. W. prove this direct witness by the fruits of the Spirit. He appeals to the fruits of the Spirit, to prove that this witness is genuine and not spurious, but not to prove the existence of the

witness itself. The fallacy, therefore, of the inference which is attempted to be made, will appear evident to common readers, as well as logicians.

“ I acknowledge (Mr. H. observes) Satan cannot make us humble and holy. But neither will an inward voice : which, though it had all possible evidence that it was immediately from the Spirit, must, in its nature, be a transient thing ; whereas, we seek an abiding witness, which will open our understandings to understand the scriptures, strengthen our faith to receive them with more cordiality, and daily fill us with peace, love, and joy, in believing.” (p. 136.)

We grant that an inward voice cannot make us holy ; and on the same ground, contend that neither can an outward one, unless accompanied with divine power. But still we believe, that the Spirit which bears this witness can accomplish all things necessary to our salvation. It is against this, and not against its evidence, that Mr. H. should have directed his observations ; and by not having done it, he has written to little purpose. We do not, however, consider this inward witness to be a transient thing, unless the residence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts be a transient thing. But if the latter be permanent and abiding, no reason can be assigned why the evidence of his presence must be undulating and temporary. The notion of a real voice has led to this error ; but we disclaim the charge, and the idea conveyed by it.

The direct witness for which we contend, is a light which shineth into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, affording to us the earliest evidence of our adoption. Mr. Baxter, in the words which Mr. H. has quoted from his confession of faith, (p. 50.) observes as follows: "If there be any thing (as surely there is) in which the Divine Nature and Spirit of adoption consisteth, it must be this holy appetite of the soul for God, by way of love; which is *bred by an internal sense* of his loveliness, and love to man: which differenceth a Christian from other men, as a child differs towards its father from strangers or neighbours. Till the love of God be the very state or nature of the soul, (working there towards his honour, interests, word, and servants,) no man can say that he is God's habitation, by the Spirit. And how the heart will ever thus be habited, without believing God's love to us, it is hard to conceive." What inducement Mr. H. could have had to quote this passage, I am at a loss to conceive. For, if "the holy appetite of the soul for God be bred by an *internal sense* of his loveliness, and love to man," then there must be an internal and direct witness of the fact: so that the words of Mr. Baxter confirm those doctrines they were produced to overthrow.

The last eight pages of Mr. Horne's book are rather admonitory and apologetical than argumentative, and, therefore, require no particular re-

ply. Unfortunately, the greater portion of Mr. Horne's admonitions will lose a considerable part of their intended effect, by being inapplicable to us. We do not, by insisting on a direct witness, attempt to set aside the fruits of the Spirit either inwardly or outwardly; much less do we supersede their necessity by any thing we advance. To this fact, Mr. Wesley's sermon on the witness of the Spirit will bear the most ample proof. And, indeed, for this fact, Mr. H. is not backward at times to give us credit; though he speaks on some occasions as if he viewed us in a different light. It is to these fruits, both internal and external, that we appeal, when called upon to assign a reason for the hope that is in us; and from their conformity to the written word we draw satisfactory evidence, that we have not "passed by the most glorious thing in Christianity, and placed a mere suggestion on the throne, and dignified it as the direct witness of the Spirit."

But while we assert, that the direct witness of the Spirit cannot set aside its internal and external acknowledged fruits, we contend that these acknowledged fruits cannot set aside this direct witness. It is the primary personal manifestation of God's love to our souls; and while it immediately emanates from this blessed source, it lies at the foundation of all our grateful returns to God. It flows from his peculiar favor, and is in itself the "pleasant taste or sense of it." In short, it is a manifestation of the Spirit of adoption;

an inward evidence of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts; an internal witness that we are born again.

“After patient investigation of the subject (says Mr. H.), and from a consideration of the manner in which Mr. Wesley describes the direct witness, I must conclude, he meant nothing more than a text of scripture applied by the Spirit.” (p. 139.) I answer, it is not for us to dictate to the Holy Spirit which operates on our hearts. Sometimes this inward evidence arises from a passage of scripture applied to the soul, and sometimes from some truth correspondent therewith, and evidently deducible from its principles: nothing but this can be applied by the Spirit. But whether a passage of scripture be made a medium of communication or not, the effect produced is invariably the same. A light is imparted which was unseen before. A persuasion is also begotten, that condemnation is removed, that God is reconciled to us through Jesus Christ, and hath again taken us into his favor.

But Mr. H. adds, “We have no scriptural and rational marks by which we can distinguish them (direct testimonies) from mere suggestions of our own minds, or satanic illusions.” (p. 140.) If this objection were founded in fact, I readily acknowledge that it would be fatal, not only to the direct witness, but also to every branch of experimental religion. But to prove the assertion, will be found a more difficult task than to make it.

First, the true direct witness leads us to love God, and to yield an implicit obedience to his commandments. Secondly, it appeals with entire submission to the written word, and ultimately abides by its dictates. Thirdly, it leads to holiness of heart and life. Whatever witness is not accompanied with these marks, we are fully assured is not the witness of the Spirit; and whatever witness has them, cannot be "destitute of scriptural and rational marks, by which it may be distinguished from the mere suggestions of our own mind, or satanic illusions."

Nor is this direct witness unnecessary, as Mr. H. has asserted, unless a direct manifestation of God's love towards us can be deemed so; for this is the evidence of such a manifestation. It is an evidence which witnesses the love of God; and whether we suppose it to operate through an application of revealed truth, or by enlightening the understanding to perceive what was before inapplicable and concealed, still its existence must be recognised, though under different names. And when I know that I have passed from death unto life, the fact itself must be brought into union with my spiritual powers by an evidence that is direct, in what stage soever it may be placed.

If then this evidence, or direct witness, be possible;—if it be necessary;—if it be consistent with scripture, and supported by reason;—if it manifest the Divine love towards us;—if it tend to excite our love to God;—if it be beneficial;—if it be

guarded by indubitable evidence; by which its genuine nature may be ascertained;—if it lead to holiness of heart and life;—if it be experienced by thousands;—we dare not abandon it, because it has been denominated a “mock sun.” That it answers these descriptions, I hope, I have made fully to appear; and the blessed effects which have resulted from the preaching and experience of this doctrine, may be found in the souls of those who now rejoice in the God of their salvation with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

With the sacred writings in our hands, this evidence in our hearts, and the calm dictates of sober sense on our side, we have nothing to fear from an appeal unto them. After the way which some call heresy, we have hitherto worshipped the God of our Fathers; and confiding in his protecting arm and assisting grace, we hope to persevere. Thus far we trust God has made us instrumental in his hand for much good. We trust also that he will still bless us more abundantly, and continue to crown our labours with increasing success, till having fought the good fight, and kept the faith, we shall finish our course with joy, and be for ever with the Lord.

To Mr. Horne, I impute no bad motive in his investigation of our principles; but regret that he should have been betrayed into the use of so many unbecoming expressions; and am surprised, that on some of the points in question he should not have better known our principles. That Mr.

Horne himself, and you, my beloved brethren more especially, may enjoy every blessing of the covenant of the gospel of peace, and finally inherit that region where the sight of the beatific vision shall leave no room for a diversity of opinions, are among the genuine wishes of my heart. With these hopes, prospects, and desires, I finally subscribe myself,

My beloved Brethren in the Lord,

Yours

Affectionately and faithfully,

THOMAS COKE.

THE END.

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