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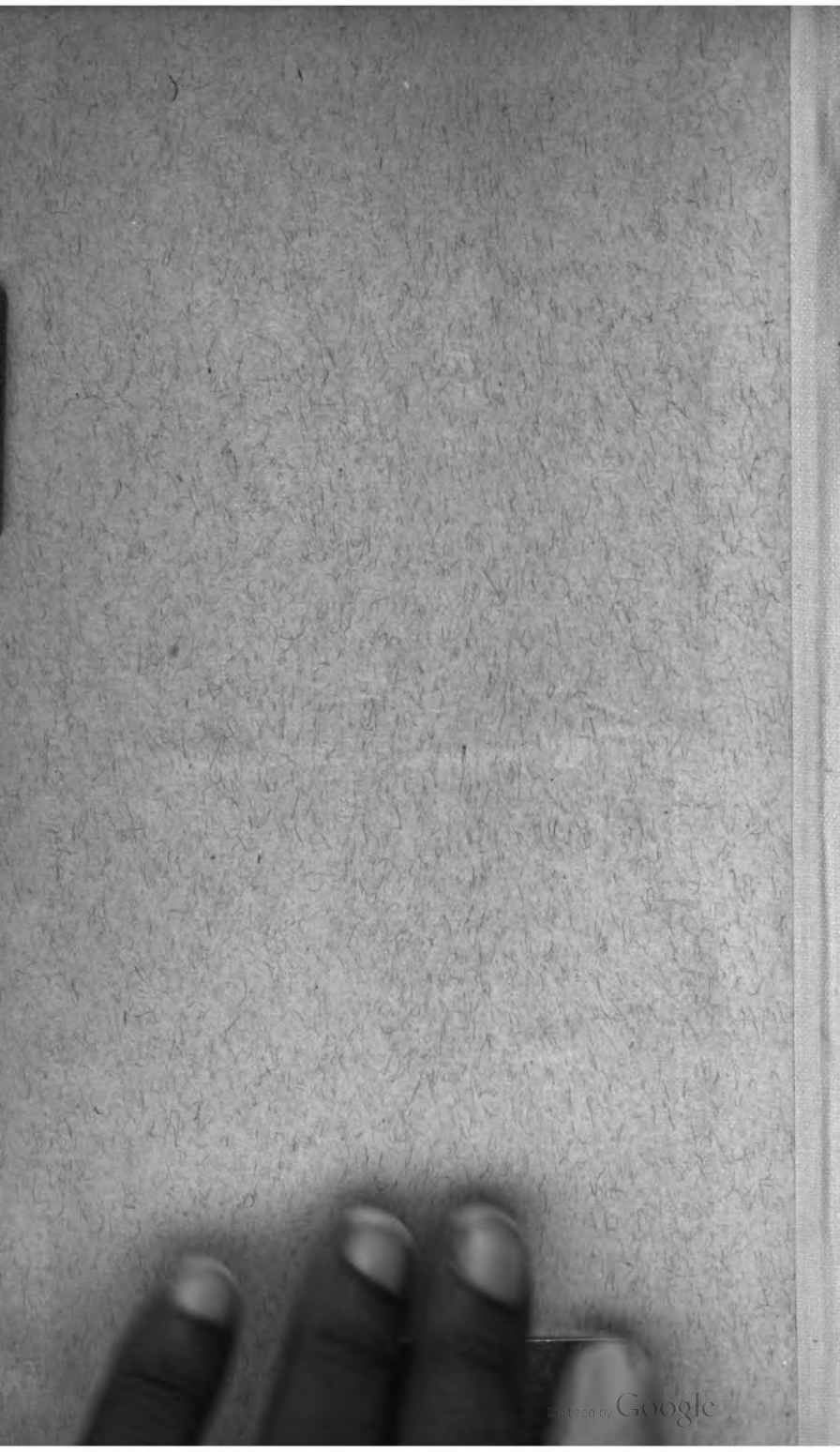
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Do. to Robert O. Doremus

Dear Oaden

The following (un-
fortunately long out of print in
country) I regard as one of insecting
volumes, and can safely say that few
other uninspired volumes have had
such clear views of the most imp-
ortant doctrines of the Gospels. I now
repose upon its faithful perusal, and
calculate too much upon the influence
of your mind and would express
hope that not only now but in the
future you may often seek instruction
and pleasure from its pages.
I present it to you as
marks of approbation of your excellent
conduct during the past year in
Bible class committed to my charge.

Yours affectionately

A. A. A.

New York July 1838.

not in
H
K

HERON AND ASPASIO:

OR, A SERIES OF

Dialogues and Letters

UPON THE MOST INTERESTING AND IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

ASPASIO VINDICATED,

IN

ELEVEN LETTERS FROM MR. HERVEY TO THE REV. JOHN WESLEY.

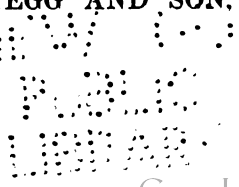


BY

THE REV. JAMES HERVEY, A.M.

RECTOR OF WESTON-FAVELL, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
LADY FRANCES SHIRLEY.

MADAM,

IF Christianity was inconsistent with true politeness, or prejudicial to real happiness, I should be extremely injudicious, and inexcusably ungrateful, in presenting these *Essays* to your Ladyship. But as the religion of Jesus is the grand ornament of our nature, and a source of the sublimest joy, the purport of the following pages cannot be unworthy the countenance and protection of the most accomplished person. Neither can there be a wish more suitable to the obligations or the dictates of a grateful heart, than that you may experience what you read, and be what you patronise.

Did religion consist in a formal round of external observances, or a forced submission to some rigorous austerities, I should not scruple to join with the infidel and the sensualist to dread it in one view, and to despise it in another. You need not be informed, Madam, that it is as much superior to all such low and forbidding singularities, as the heavens are higher than the earth. It is described by an author, who learned its theory in the regions of Paradise, and who displayed its efficacy in his own most exemplary conversation ;—it is thus described by that incomparable author : “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

To be reconciled to the Omnipotent God ; to be interested in the unsearchable riches of Christ ; to be renewed in our hearts, and influenced in our lives, by the sanctifying operations of the Divine Spirit—this is evangelical righteousness ; this is genuine religion ; this, Madam, is the kingdom of God established in the soul. How benign and inviting is such an institution ! How honourable and advantageous such a state ! And from such privileges, what other effects can flow, but that “peace, which passeth all understanding ;” that “joy, which is unspeakable and glorious ?”

Is there any thing in the amusements of the gay, and pursuits of the ambitious, of greater, of equal, of comparable value ? Is not all that wealth can purchase, all that grandeur can bestow, somewhat like those glittering bubbles, which, when

viewed are emptiness, when grasped, are nothing? Whereas the comforts, the benefits, the hopes of Christianity, are at once supremely excellent, and infinitely durable; a portion suited to the dignity of a rational soul; large as its faculties, and immortal as its being.

All these blessings are centered in Christ; were purchased by Christ; are communicated from Christ. It is for want of knowing those boundless and everlasting treasures of pardoning, justifying, saving merit, which the Lord Jesus Christ possesses, and which he freely dispenses even to sinners, that so many unthinking persons are attached to ignoble objects, and beguiled by delusory pleasures. Unhappy creatures! what can they do but catch at shadows, and stoop to trifles, while they are ignorant of the grand, the substantial, the exalted good? It is for want of duly attending to that fulness of grace, and that plenteousness of redemption, which dwell in our most adorable Saviour, that so many serious persons are strangers to the tranquillity and sweetness of religion; are subject to all its restraints, but enjoy few, if any, of its delights. Mistaken zealots! How can they avoid the gloomy situation, and the uncomfortable circumstances, so long as they withdraw themselves from the Sun of Righteousness, and his all-cheering beams?

May your Ladyship live continually under his heavenly light and healing wings; be more fully assured of his dying love; and have brighter, still brighter manifestations of his immense perfections! By these delightful views, and by that precious faith, may your heart be transformed into his holy, his amiable, his divine image! Your happiness will then be just such as is wished, but far greater than can be expressed, by,

MADAM,

Your most obliged, and

Most obedient humble servant,

JAMES HERVEY.

Weston-Favell, Jan. 6, 1755.

P R E F A C E.

THE reader will probably expect some account of the ensuing work; and to gratify him in this particular will be a real pleasure to the author.

The beauty and excellency of the Scriptures;—the ruin and depravity of human nature;—its happy recovery, founded on the atonement, and effected by the Spirit of Christ:—these are some of the chief points, vindicated, illustrated, and implied in the following sheets. But the grand article, that which makes the principal figure, is the **IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS** of our divine Lord; from whence arises our justification before God, and our title to every heavenly blessing; an article which, though eminent for its importance, seems to be little understood, and less regarded; if not much mistaken, and almost forgotten.

The importance of this great evangelical doctrine,—how worthy it is of the most attentive consideration, and of universal acceptance,—is hinted in the second dialogue; so that I need, in this place, do nothing more than give the sense of a passage from Witsius, which is there introduced in a note. “The doctrine of justification,” says that excellent author, “spreads itself through the whole system of divinity. As this is either solidly established or superficially touched, fully stated or slightly dismissed; accordingly, the whole structure of religion either rises graceful and magnificent, superior to assault and beyond the power of decay, or else it appears disproportionate and defective, totters on its foundation, and threatens an opprobrious fall.”

The design is executed in the form of dialogue; those parts only excepted in which it was not easy to carry on a conversation, and assign to each person a proper degree of significancy. Here, to avoid the common imputation of bringing upon the stage a mute or a shadow,—one who fights without weapons, and submits without a

contest,—the scene shifts. Our gentlemen separate, and, instead of conversing, enter upon an epistolary correspondence.

The dialogue form seems, on many considerations, a very eligible way of writing. Hereby the author gives an air both of dignity and of modesty to his sentiments. Of dignity; by delivering them from the mouths of persons in every respect superior to himself. Of modesty; because we no longer consider him in the raised, but invidious, capacity of a teacher. Instead of calling us to his feet, and dictating his precepts, he gratifies our curiosity. He turns back a curtain, and admits us to some remarkable interviews, or interesting conferences. We overhear, by a kind of innocent or imaginary stealth, the debates which pass in the recesses of privacy, which are carried on with the most unreserved freedom of speech, and openness of heart; a circumstance which will apologize for some peculiarities that might otherwise be inconsistent with humility, or offensive to delicacy. Particularly it may obviate the disgust which generally, and indeed deservedly, attends the frequent intrusion of that ambitious and usurping monosyllable, *I*.

The names of the persons are prefixed, each to his respective share of the discourse, in imitation of Cicero, and for the reasons which he assigns: “*Quasi enim ipsos induxi loquentes: ne inquam et inquit sæpius interponerentur. Atque id eo feci, ut tanquam præsentibus coram haberi sermo videretur**.” This method, he very justly intimates, is removed farthest from the narrative, and makes the nearest approaches to life and reality. It quite secretes the author, and, by introducing the persons themselves, renders all that passes entirely their own. It prevents likewise the repetition of those interlocutory words—he said, he replied; which, unless the speeches are very long, must frequently recur, and have no pleasing effect upon the ear. And if the speeches are long, the spirit of conversation is lost. The associates are no longer talking; but one of them, or the author, is lecturing.

Though I have so much to say in behalf of the model, I have very little to say with regard to the execution, unless it be to confess the deficiency. There is not, I am sensible, that peculiar air and distinguishing turn which should mark and characterise each speaker. This is what the nature of finished dialogue requires, and what the author applauds in some very superior writers. But not having the ability to copy it, he has not the vanity to affect it. Nevertheless, the attentive reader will, all along, perceive a dif-

* De Amicitia.

ference in the sentiment, if not in the language. The materials vary, even when they run into the same mould, and take the same form. In the diction also there must be some diversity; because several of the objections are proposed in the very words of one or two eminent writers who have appeared on the other side of the question. These are not particularised by the mark of quotation; because the man of reading will have no occasion for the assistance of such an index, and the man of taste will probably discern them by the singularity of the style.

Some of the following pieces, it must be acknowledged, are of the controversial kind: a species of writing least susceptible of the graces which embellish composition; or rather, most destitute of the attractions which engage attention and create delight. Yet I have sometimes thought, that it is not absolutely impossible to make even the stern face of controversy wear a smile, and to reap some valuable fruit from the rugged furrows of disputation. Whether this is effected in the present work, the public must judge; that it has been attempted, the author may be permitted to declare.

To soften the asperities of argument, views of nature are interspersed; that if the former should carry the appearance of a rude entangled forest, or of a frowning gloomy recess, there may be some agreeable openings, and lightsome avenues, to admit a prospect of the country; which is always arrayed in charms, and never fails to please.

The author confesses a very peculiar fondness for the amiable scenes of creation. It is therefore not at all improbable but his excursions on this topic may be of the diffusive kind, and his descriptions somewhat luxuriant. It is hoped, however, that the benevolent reader will indulge him in this favourite foible. If any should feel the same prevailing passion for the beauties of nature, it is possible these persons may be inclined not only to excuse, but to approve the fault; and may take part with the lover, even in opposition to the critic.

Further to diversify the piece, sketches of philosophy are introduced; easy to be understood, and calculated to entertain the imagination, as well as to improve the heart; more particularly, to display the wise and beneficent design of Providence, in the various appearances and numberless productions of the material world. Neither are these remarks altogether foreign to the main point; but as far as the wonders of creation may comport with the riches of free grace, subserve the general end.

As to the choice of my subjects ; *some* people have desired to see an invective against the fashionable and predominant vices of the age. This, I apprehend, would be like picking off the leaves, or clipping away the twigs, from some overgrown and noxious tree. Waving this tedious and ineffectual toil, I would rather lay the axe to the root. Let the knowledge and love of Christ take place in the heart, and not only a few of the branches, but the whole body of sin will fall at once.

Some would have the author insist upon the conscientious observation of the Sabbath, inculcate the daily worship of God in the family, and urge a devout attendance on the public ordinances of religion. But when a person is convinced of sin, and made sensible of misery ; when he has "tasted the good word of God," Heb. vi. 5 ; "and seen by faith the Lord's Christ," Luke ii. 26 ; he will want no solicitation or incitement to these means of grace and exercises of godliness. He will have just the same disposition to them all, as the hungry appetite has to wholesome food, or the new-born babe * to the milk of the breast.

Others may imagine, that I have neglected the interests of morality ; because here is no professed attempt to delineate its duties, or enforce its practice. Let these persons remember, that morality never makes such vigorous shoots, never produces such generous fruit, as when engrafted on evangelical principles. And if I do not crop the pink, the rose, and the carnation—if I do not gather the peach, the nectarine, and the pine-apple—and put them into my reader's hand, for his immediate enjoyment ; I am endeavouring to sow the seeds, and plant the roots in his garden, which, if cherished by the favourable influence of heaven, will yield him not an occasional, but a constant supply of all.

As several texts of Scripture come under consideration, criticisms upon the original are frequently subjoined, in order to clear up some difficulties, to rectify some mistranslations, or point out the many delicate and masterly strokes which occur in the Bible. And glad should I be, extremely glad, if I might recommend and endear that invaluable book ; if, as the divine Redeemer "rideth on in the word

* 1 Pet. ii. 2. This comparison is, perhaps, the most exact and expressive that words can form, or fancy conceive. Babes covet nothing but the milk of the breast. They are indifferent about all other things. Give them riches, give them honours, give them whatever you please, without this rich, delicious, balmy nutriment, they will not, they cannot be satisfied. How finely does this illustrate, and how forcibly inculcate, what our Lord styles, "the single eye," and "the one thing needful !" or, the salutary doctrines and delightful privileges of the gospel ; together with that supreme value for them, and undivided complacency in them, which are the distinguishing character of the Christian !

of truth, of meekness, and righteousness," Psal. xlv. 4; this hand might scatter a palm branch, or this performance might lie as a floweret, to strew his way * and solemnise his triumph.

In the course of the disputation, I dare not suppose that I have discussed all the arguments which sagacity may devise, or sophistry urge. Perhaps I have not removed all the scruples which may awaken prejudice, or embarrass integrity. This, however I may venture to affirm, that I myself have met with no considerable objection, which is not either expressly answered, or virtually refuted, in these conferences. And though I should neither satisfy nor silence the gainsayer, I shall think my endeavours happily employed, if they may throw light upon the dim apprehension, establish the wavering faith, or comfort the afflicted conscience.

If any should burlesque or ridicule these venerable truths and exalted privileges, I shall only say with my divine Master, "O that thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid," it is evident from such a procedure, "they are hid from thine eyes," Luke xix. 42. Should any, in the spirit of decency and candour, either start new, or revive old objections, I doubt not but they will receive both a due examination and a proper reply. As these doctrines enter into the very essence of the gospel, and constitute the glory of our religion, they can never want a succession of advocates, so long as the sun and moon endure. For my own part, I must beg leave to retire from the lists, and lay down the weapons of controversy. Virgil's language is my resolution:

"Discedam, explebo numerum, reddarque tenebris."

This declaration is made, not from any the least suspicion that my tenets are indefensible, but because I would apprise my friends, and the friends of our common Christianity, that the field is clear and open for them to advance; that I resign to others the glorious combat, and shall content myself with wishing them success in the name of the Lord: because it becomes a person in my declining state to be more peculiarly intent upon encountering a different adversary, who is sure to overcome, and never allows quarter. Yet by this "word of my testimony, and by the blood of the Lamb," Rev. xii. 11, I hope to triumph even when I fall; and to be more than conqueror, through Jehovah my righteousness.

Should any thing be urged forcible enough to overthrow my arguments, or detect a mistake in my sentiments, the world may depend

* Alluding to Matth. xxi. 8.

upon seeing a free and undissembled retractation. I shall look upon it as a duty which I owe to my conscience, to my readers, and to my God, publicly to acknowledge the error.—It is one thing to be silent; another to be obstinate. As I shall inflexibly adhere to the first, I would with equal steadiness renounce the last. Though I withdraw from the strife of pens and of tongues, I shall take care to preserve a mind ever accessible to truth, ever open to conviction; a mind infinitely more concerned for the purity and prosperity of the everlasting gospel, than for the prevalence of my own opinion, or the credit of my own performance.

As I have the happiness of being a member, and the honour of being a minister, of the reformed established church, I cannot but reflect, with a peculiar pleasure, that every doctrine of note maintained in these dialogues and letters, is either implied in our Liturgy, asserted in our Articles, or taught in our Homilies. It affords me likewise some degree of satisfaction to observe, that the most material of the sentiments have been adopted by Milton, are incorporated into his *Paradise Lost*, and add dignity to the sublimest poem in the world. To have the highest human authority, and the first genius of the nation, on a writer's side, is no contemptible support. This must surely give a sanction, wherever our religious establishment is revered, or polite literature is held in repute. Yet even this sanction, compared with the oracle of revelation, is only like a range of ciphers connected with the initial figure,—which were they detached, would be insignificant, but, in such a subordination, are considerable.

Perhaps it should be farther acknowledged, that I have not always confined myself to the method of our systematic writers, nor followed their train of thoughts with a scrupulous regularity. I would conduct my fellow-creature to the supreme and eternal good, Christ Jesus. I have chosen the path which seemed most agreeable and inviting, rather than most beaten and frequented. If this leads, with equal certainty, to the great and desirable end, I dare promise myself an easy excuse. However, that method and order, in the doctrinal parts of the plan, are not wholly neglected, the following summary of contents may show.

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Theron and Aspasio;

OR,

A SERIES OF DIALOGUES AND LETTERS

ON THE

MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

DIALOGUE I.

Theron was a gentleman of fine taste, of accurate rather than extensive reading, and particularly charmed with the study of nature. He traced the planets in their courses, and examined the formation of the meanest vegetable, not merely to gratify a refined curiosity, but chiefly to cultivate the nobler principles of religion and morality. Several discoveries he made, and every discovery he improved to this important end—to raise in his mind more exalted apprehensions of the Supreme Being, and to enlarge his affections with a disinterested benevolence, conformable, in some degree, to that boundless liberality which pervades and animates the whole creation.

Aspasio was not without his share of polite literature, and philosophical knowledge. He had taken a tour through the circle of the sciences; and, having transiently surveyed the productions of human learning, devoted his final attention to the inspired writings. These he studied with the unbiassed impartiality of a critic, yet with the reverential simplicity of a Christian. These he regarded as the unerring standard of duty—the authentic charter of salvation—and the brightest mirror of the Deity, affording the most satisfactory and sublime display of all the divine attributes.

Theron was somewhat warm in his temper; and would, upon occasion, make use of a little innocent raillery, not to expose his friend, but to enliven the conversation; sometimes disguising his real sentiments, in order to sift the subject, or discover the opinion of others.—Aspasio seldom indulges the humorous or satirical vein, but argues with “meekness of wisdom;”^{*} never

^{*} ——— Mitis sapientia Læli, — Hor.

is a most amiable character, and delicately drawn, but is, I think, expressed with greater strength and superior beauty by the sacred penman: “Let him show out of a good conversation his works, with meekness of wisdom,” James iii. 13.

puts on the appearance of guile, but always speaks the dictates of his heart.

Aspasio was on a visit at Theron's seat. One evening, when some neighbouring gentlemen were just gone, and had left them alone, the conversation took the following turn.

Asp. I would always be ready, both to acknowledge and applaud whatever is amiable in the conduct of others. The gentlemen who gave us their company at dinner, seem to be all of a different character; yet each, in his own way, is extremely agreeable.

Lysander has lively parts, and is quick at repartee; but he never abuses his wit to create uneasiness in the honest heart, and flush the modest cheek with confusion. What solidity of judgment, and depth of penetration, appear in Crito! yet how free are his discourses from the magisterial tone, or the dictatorial solemnity. Philenor's taste in the polite arts is remarkably correct; yet without the least tincture of vanity, or any weak fondness for applause. He never interrupts the progress, or wrests the topic of conversation, in order to shine in his particular province. Trebonius, I find, has signalised his valour in several campaigns. Though a warrior and a traveller, he gives himself no overbearing or ostentatious airs. In Trebonius you see the brave officer, regulated by all the decency of the academic, and sweetened with all the affability of the courtier.

No one affects a morose silence, or assumes an immoderate loquacity. To engross the talk, is tyrannical; to seal up the lips, is monkish. Every one, therefore, from a fund of good sense, contributes his quota; and each speaks, not with an ambition to set off himself, but from a desire to please the company.

Ther. Indeed, Aspasio, I think myself happy in this accomplished set of acquaintance; who add all the complaisance and politeness of the gentleman to the benevolence and fidelity of the friend.

Their conversation is as innocent as their taste is refined. They have a noble abhorrence of slander, and detest the low, ungenerous artifices of detraction. No loose jest has either the service of their tongue, or the sanction of their smile. Was you to be with them, even in their freest moments, you would hear nothing that so much as borders upon profaneness, or is in the least injurious to purity of morals.

Asp. There is but one qualification wanting to render your friends completely valuable, and their social interviews a continual blessing.

Ther. Pray, what is that?

Asp. A turn for more serious conferences. Their literary debates are beautiful sketches of whatever is most curious in the sciences, or most delicate in the arts. From their remarks on our national affairs, and on foreign occurrences, a person may almost form a system of politics. But they never touch upon any topic of morality; never celebrate the sublime perfections of the Deity; never illustrate the beauties, nor enforce the truths—

Ther. Fie upon you, Aspasio, for your unpolite hint! Who can forbear interrupting the harangue which pleads for such an outrageous violation of the mode? would introduce edifying talk into our fashionable assemblies? How is it that you, who, in other instances, are a gentleman of refinement, can be so strangely inelegant in this particular?

Asp. For such a practice, Theron, we have no inconsiderable precedents.

Thus Socrates*, the wisest of the Athenian sages; thus Scipio†, the most accomplished of the Roman generals, conversed. Thus Cicero‡, the prince of orators, improved his elegant retirement at the Tusculan villa. And Horace §, the brightest genius in the court of Augustus, formed the most agreeable hours of his conversation upon this very plan.

Were I to enumerate all the patrons of this, forgive me if I say, more honourable mode, the most illustrious names of antiquity would appear on the list.

Ther. This practice, however extolled by the philosophic gentry of ancient times, would make a very singular figure in the present age.

Asp. And should not the copy, after which the generality of mankind write, be singularly correct? Persons of exalted fortune are the pattern for general imitation; are the copy, in conformity to which the inferior world adjust their manners and regulate their behaviour. They, therefore, are under the strongest obligations not to give a contemptible stamp to the fashion. Benevolence to their fellow-creatures calls loudly upon them—a concern for the public good challenges it at their hands, that they signalise themselves by a pre-eminence in all that is excellent.

Ther. Away, away with these austere notions! such a strain of conversation would damp the gaiety of our spirits, and flatten the relish of society. It would turn the assembly into a conventicle, and make it Lent all the year round.

Asp. Can it then be an austere practice, to cultivate the understanding and improve the heart? Can it damp the gaiety of our spirits, to refine them upon the plan of the highest perfection? Or will it flatten the relish of society, to secure and anticipate everlasting delights?

Ther. Everlasting delights, Aspasio! To talk of such a subject would be termed, in every circle of wit and gallantry, an usurpation of the parson's office; a low method of retailing by scraps, in the parlour, what the man in black vends by wholesale from the pulpit. It would infallibly mark us out for pedants; and, for aught I know, might expose us to the suspicion of enthusiasm.

Asp. Your men of wit must excuse me, if I cannot persuade myself to admire either the delicacy of their language or the justness of their opinion.

The first, be it ever so humane and graceful, I resign to themselves. As for the other, I would beg leave to inquire, "Are the clergy, then, the only persons who should act the becoming part, and converse like rational beings? Is solid wisdom and sacred truth the privilege of their order; while nothing is left for you and me, but the play of fancy, or the luxuries of sense?"

I would next ask the circles of gallantry, "Where is the impropriety of interweaving the noble doctrines displayed by the preacher with our common discourse? or what the inconvenience of introducing the amiable graces, recommended by his lectures, into our ordinary practice?" Will such an exercise of our speech rank us among pedants? Is this the badge of enthusiasm? A splendid and honourable badge truly! such as must add weight to any cause, and worth to any character.

* Vid. Socratis Memorabilia, per Xenoph.

† We are informed by Cicero, that it was a practice with Scipio, with his friend Lælius, and some of the distinguished nobility of Rome, to discourse upon the interests of the republic, and the immortality of the soul.

‡ Vid. Tuscul. Quest.

§ "O noctes, cœnæque deum!"

Ther. This would curb the sprightly sallies of wit, and extinguish that engaging glow of good-humour which enlivens our genteel intercourses. Accordingly you may obverse, that if any formal creature takes upon him to mention, in polite company, a religious truth or a text of scripture, the pretty chat, though ever so profusely flowing, stagnates in an instant. Each voluble and facetious tongue seems to be struck with a sudden palsy. Every one wonders at the strange man's face; and they all conclude him either mad or a methodist.

Asp. Agreeable strokes of wit are by no means incompatible with useful conversation, unless we mistake an insipid vivacity, or fantastic levity, for wit and facetiousness. Neither have I heard, that, among all our acts of parliament, any one has passed to divorce good sense and good humour. Why may they not both reside on the same lips, and both circulate through the same assembly? For my own part, I would neither have our discourse soured with austerity, nor evaporate into impertinence; but unite (as a judicious ancient advises) the benefits of improvement with the blandishments of pleasantry*. And as to your polite people, if they can find more music in the magpie's voice than in the nightingale's note, I must own myself as much surprised at their ears, as they are at the strange man's face.

Ther. With all your grey-headed authorities, I fancy you will find very few proselytes among the professors of modern refinement. Fashion is, with the world, the standard of morals, as well as of clothes; and he must be of a very peculiar turn indeed, who would choose to be ridiculous in either.

Asp. Rather, Theron, he must be of a very pliant turn, who tamely delivers up his conduct to be moulded by a fashion, which has neither true elegance to dignify it, nor the least usefulness to recommend it. And which, I beseech you, is most ridiculous? He who servilely imitates every idle fashion, and is the very ape of corrupt custom? or he who asserts his native liberty, and resolutely follows where wisdom and truth lead the way?

Ther. Would you then obtrude religious discourse upon every company? Consider, Aspasio, what a motley figure this would make. A wedding, and a sermon! quadrille, and St. Paul! the last new play and primitive Christianity!

Asp. You know the rule, Theron, which is given by the great Master of our assemblies; "Cast not your pearls before swine," Matt. vii. 6. Some there are so immersed in sensuality, that they can relish nothing but the coarsest husks of conversation. To these, neither offer your pearls nor prostitute your intimacy. But when persons of a liberal education and elevated sentiments—when these meet together, why should not their discourse be suitable to the eminence of their rank, and the superiority of their genius? raised far above the level of that trite and effeminate strain, "Upon my honour, the actress topt her part! Heavens! how charmingly she sung! how gracefully she trod the stage!"

Ther. Indeed, my Aspasio, I am entirely in your way of thinking, however I have hitherto put on the mask. The gift of speech is one great prerogative of our rational nature; and it is a pity that such a superior faculty should be debased to the meanest purposes. Suppose all our stately vessels, that pass and repass the ocean, were to carry out nothing but tinsel

* "Cum quadam illecebria ac voluptate utiles." *Aul. Gel.*

and theatrical decorations—were to import nothing but glittering baubles and nicely-fancied toys—would such a method of trading be well-judged in itself, or beneficial in its consequences? Articulate speech is the instrument of a much nobler commerce, intended to transmit and diffuse the treasures of the mind. And will not the practice be altogether as injudicious, must not the issue be infinitely more detrimental, if this vehicle of intellectual wealth is freighted only with pleasing fopperies?

Asp. Such folly and extravagance would be hissed out of the commercial world. Why then are they admitted and cherished in the social?

Ther. Why indeed? He must be far more acute than your Theron, who can assign a single reason to countenance them. To explode them, ten thousand arguments occur. A continual round of gay and trifling conversation, of visits quite modish, and entertainments not moral, must give an indolent turn to the mind, such as will enervate its powers, indispose it for generous action, and gradually sap the very foundation of virtue. Whereas, a frequent conference on the glories of the Godhead, or the wonders of creation, would invigorate and ennoble the soul; would enlarge her faculties, and elevate her desires.

Asp. “Did not our hearts burn within us,” said the travellers at Emmaus, “while he talked with us by the way?” Luke xxiv. 32. Those discourses, it is true, were conducted with a spirit, and enforced with an energy, absolutely unequalled; yet the same happy effects would in some degree result from our friendly conferences, if they turned upon the same important points. We also should feel our hearts warmed with holy zeal, and glowing with heavenly love.

Ther. Such conferences would not only be productive of present advantage, but yield a renewed pleasure in the retrospect. We might reflect, with real complacency, on hours spent in so rational a manner. And who would not prefer the silent applause of the heart, to all those tumultuous joys which wanton jests create, or the circling glass inspires?

Asp. One who thoroughly knew mankind, and had tried the merits of the jovial board, very pertinently compares such flashes of mirth to the “crackling of thorns under a pot,” Eccl. vii. 6. The transient blaze of the one, and the senseless noise of the other, continue but for a moment, and then expire; that in smoke and darkness, this in spleen and melancholy.

I said, spleen and melancholy. For however jauntie and alert the various methods of modish trifling may seem; whatever ease or grace they are supposed to give the conversation; sure am I, it will be afflictive to look back upon interviews squandered away in very vanity, and shocking to look forward upon the account which we must all shortly render. What figure will such an article make in the final reckoning, and at the decisive bar! “Our social hours, which might have promoted our mutual edification, and been subservient to our Creator’s glory, all lost in merriment and whim; or worse than lost, in flattery and detraction: A blank, or a blot.”

Ther. Venus, we find, has her zealous knight-errants, and Bacchus his professed votaries, in almost every company. And is it not truly deplorable, that the God of nature alone has none to assert his honour, none to celebrate his perfections? though he is the original of all beauty, and the parent of all good.

When I have taken my morning walk amidst dews and flowers, with the

sun shedding lustre round him, and unveiling the happy landscape ; how has my eye been charmed with the lovely prospect ! how has my ear been ravished with the music of the grove ! Methought every note was a tribute of harmony : and all nature seemed one grand chorus, swelling with the Creator's praise. But how has the scene been reversed, when leaving my rural elysium, I entered the haunts of men ! where I saw faculties divine, meanly engaged in trifles ; where I heard the tongue prompt to utter, and fluent to express, every thing but its Maker's glory.

I assure you, I have often been chagrined on this occasion, and sometimes said within myself, "What ! shall trifles be regarded, and the Majesty of heaven neglected ? Shall every friend, and every visitant, receive his share of respect, and no acknowledgments be paid to that exalted Being, who is worthy, more than worthy, of all our veneration ?"

Asp. This will be still more afflictive to an ingenuous mind, if we consider, that the infinite and glorious God is present at all our interviews ; vouchsafes to express his satisfaction, and acknowledges himself magnified, when, with admiration and love, we talk of his transcendent excellencies. Nay, we are assured, that the Lord of all lords not only hearkens, but keeps a book of remembrance ; and will distinguish such persons at the day of universal retribution. When the loose train of licentious talkers are driven away as the despicable chaff, these shall be selected for his peculiar treasure, and numbered among the jewels of Jehovah ; Mal. iii. 16, 17.

Ther. If the gentlemen who make high pretensions to reason, think themselves discharged from these doctrines of revelation, they should not forget their own Scriptures. A philosopher will tell them the duty of employing their time, as in the awful presence, and under the immediate inspection of the Supreme Being*. An orator will show them the egregious impropriety of wasting their friendly interviews in the fumes of drollery, or the froth of impertinence†.

Asp. Who then, that is wise, would not habituate himself to a practice, which comes recommended by the voice of reason, and is enforced by the authority of God ?—a practice, which will administer present good, will afford pleasing reviews, and terminate in everlasting honour ?

Ther. It is strange, that subjects which deserve to be received as the universal topic, are almost universally banished from our discourse. Was this cabinet enriched with a series of antique medals, or a collection of the finest gems, my friends would naturally expect to be entertained with a sight of those rarities, and an explanation of their meaning. Why should we not as naturally expect, and as constantly agree, to entertain each other with remarks on those admirable curiosities which are deposited in the boundless museum of the universe ?

When a general has won some important victory, or an admiral has destroyed the enemy's fleet, every company resounds with their achievements, every tongue is the trumpet of their fame. And why should we not cele-

* " Sic certe vivendum est, tanquam in conspectu vivamus : sic cogitandum, tanquam aliquis in pectus intimum inspicere possit : et potest. Quid enim prosit ab homine aliquid esse secretum ? Nihil Deo clausum est. Interest animis nostris, et cogitationibus mediis, intervenit." *Senec. Epist.* 83.

† Cicero says, with an air of graceful indignation, " Quasi vero clamorum virorum aut tacitos congressus esse oporteat, aut ludicros sermones, aut rerum colloquia leviorum." *Academ. Quæst.* lib. iv.

urate, with equal delight and ardour, that almighty hand which formed the structure, and furnished the regions, of this stupendous system ?

Asp. Especially, if to his immensely glorious, we add his supremely amiable perfections. When the victorious commander is our cordial friend—when he has professed the tenderest love, done us the most signal good, and promised us a perpetual enjoyment of his favours—it will be impossible to neglect such an illustrious and generous person. His name must be engraven upon our hearts, must slide insensibly into our tongues, and be as music to our ears.

Is not all this true, and in the most supereminent degree, with regard to the blessed God? Can greater kindness be exercised, or greater love be conceived, than to deliver up his own Son to torments and death for the expiation of our sins? Can benefits more desirable be granted, than to adopt us for his children, and sanctify us by his Spirit? Can promises more invaluable be made, than those which ensure to us the preferments of heaven, and the riches of eternity?—All this is attested concerning the Almighty Majesty, in the Scriptures of truth. What a fund, therefore, for pleasing and delicate conversation are the Scriptures?

Ther. Here also I have the pleasure of concurring with my Aspasio; though I believe he suspects me to be somewhat wavering or defective in my veneration for the Scriptures.

Asp. No, Theron; I have a better opinion of your taste and discernment than to harbour any such suspicion.

Ther. The Scriptures are certainly an inexhaustible fund of materials for the most delightful and ennobling discourse. When we consider the Author of those sacred books; that they came originally from heaven, were dictated by divine wisdom, have the same consummate excellence as the works of creation; it is really surprising that we are not always searching, by study, by meditation, or converse, into one or other of these grand volumes.

Asp. When Secker preaches, or Murray pleads, the church is crowded and the bar thronged. When Spence produces the refinements of criticism, or Young displays the graces of poetry; the press toils, yet is scarce able to supply the demands of the public. Are we eager to hear, and impatient to purchase, what proceeds from such eloquent tongues and masterly pens? and can we be coldly indifferent, when, not the most accomplished of mankind, not the most exalted of creatures, but the adorable Author of all wisdom, speaks in his revealed word? Strange! that our attention does not hang* upon the venerable accents, and our talk dwell upon the incomparable truths!

Ther. I admire, I must confess, the very language of the Bible. In this, methinks, I discern a conformity between the book of nature and the book of Scripture.

In the book of nature the divine Teacher speaks, not barely to our ears, but to all our senses. And it is very remarkable how he varies his address! Observe his grand and august works. In these he uses the style of majesty. We may call it the true sublime. It strikes with awe, and transports the mind.—View his ordinary operations. Here he descends to a plainer dialect. This may be termed the familiar style. We comprehend it with ease, and

* "The people hung upon the lips of their all-wise Teacher;" *Luke* xix. 48.

attend to it with pleasure.—In the more ornamented parts of the creation, he clothes his meaning with elegance. All is rich and brilliant. We are delighted; we are charmed. And what is this but the florid style?

A variety, somewhat similar, runs through the Scriptures. Would you see history in all her simplicity and all her force; most beautifully easy, yet irresistibly striking? See her, or rather feel her energy, touching the nicest movements of the soul, and triumphing over our passions, in the inimitable narrative of Joseph's life. The representation of Esau's bitter distress, Gen. xxvii. 30, &c.; the conversation pieces of Jonathan and his gallant friend, 1 Sam. xviii. xix. xx.; the memorable journal of the disciples going to Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 13, &c.; are finished models of the impassioned and affecting. Here is nothing studied; no flights of fancy; no embellishments of oratory. Yet how inferior is the episode of Nisus and Euryalus, though worked up by the most masterly hand in the world, to the undissembled artless fervency of these scriptural sketches *!

Are we pleased with the elevation and dignity of an heroic poem, or the tenderness and perplexity of a dramatic performance? In the book of Job they are both united, and both unequalled. Conformably to the exactest rules of art, as the action advances the incidents are more alarming, and the images more magnificent. The language glows, and the pathos swells, till at last the Deity himself makes his entrance. He speaks from the whirlwind, and summons the creation—summons heaven and all its shining host, the elements and their most wonderful productions—to vouch for the wisdom of his providential dispensations. His word strikes terror, and flashes conviction; decides the momentous controversy, and closes the august drama, with all possible solemnity and grandeur.

If we sometimes choose a plaintive strain, such as softens the mind and soothes an agreeable melancholy; are any of the ancient tragedies superior, in the eloquence of mourning, to David's pathetic elegy on his beloved Jonathan, 2 Sam. i. 19, &c.; to his most passionate and inconsolable moan † over the lovely but unhappy Absalom; or to that melodious woe, which warbles and bleeds in every line of Jeremiah's Lamentations?

Would we be entertained with the daring sublimity of Homer, or the correct majesty of Virgil? with the expressive delicacy of Horace, or the rapid excursions of Pindar? Behold them joined, behold them excelled, in the odes of Moses, and the eucharistic hymn of Deborah; in the exalted devotion of the Psalms, and the glorious enthusiasm of the Prophets.

Asp. Only with this difference, that the former are tuneful triflers, and amuse the fancy with empty fiction; the latter are teachers sent from God,

* Let a person of true taste peruse, in a critical view, the two first chapters of St. Luke. He will there find a series of surprising incidents, related with the greatest simplicity, yet with the utmost majesty.

† "The king went up to the chamber and wept; and as he went, he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would to God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!" 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

What says Mezentius, when his son is slain? when, to sharpen his sorrow, the pale corpse, the miserable spectacle, is before his eyes, and within his arms! The most pathetic word he utters is,

— "Hœu! nunc misero mihi demum
Exilium infelix, nunc alte vulnus adactum."

How languid is Virgil, how inexpressive the prince of Latin poetry, compared with the royal mourner in Israel!

and make the soul wise unto salvation. The Bible is not only the brightest ornament, but the most invaluable depositum. On a right, a practical knowledge of these lively oracles, depend the present comfort and the endless felicity of mankind. Whatever, therefore, in study or conversation, has no connexion with their divine contents, may be reckoned among the toys of literature, or the ciphers of discourse.

Ther. Here again the book of Scripture is somewhat like the magazine of nature. What can we desire for our accommodation and delight, which this storehouse of conveniences does not afford? What can we wish for our edification and improvement, which that fund of knowledge does not supply? Of these we may truly affirm, each in its respective kind is "profitable unto all things."

Are we admirers of antiquity?—Here we are led back beyond the universal deluge, and far beyond the date of any other annals. We are introduced among the earliest inhabitants of the earth. We take a view of mankind in their undisguised primitive plainness, when the days of their life were but little short of a thousand years. We are brought acquainted with the original of nations; with the creation of the world; and with the birth of time itself.

Are we delighted with vast achievements? Where is any thing comparable to the miracles in Egypt, and the wonders in the field of Zoan? to the memoirs of the Israelites, passing through the depths of the sea, sojourning amidst the inhospitable deserts, and conquering the kingdoms of Canaan? Where shall we meet with instances of martial bravery equal to the prodigious exploits of the Judges; or the adventurous deeds of Jesse's valiant son, and his matchless band of worthies? 2 Sam. xxiii. 8, &c. 1 Chron. xi. 10, &c. Here we behold the fundamental laws of the universe, sometimes suspended, sometimes reversed; and not only the current of Jordan, but the course of nature controlled. In short, when we enter the field of Scripture, we tread—on enchanted, shall I say? rather, on consecrated ground; where astonishment and awe are awakened at every turn; where is all, more than all, the marvellous of romance, connected with all the precision and sanctity of truth.

If we want maxims of wisdom, or have a taste for the laconic style, how copiously may our wants be supplied, and how delicately our taste gratified! especially in the book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and some of the minor prophets. Here are the most sage lessons of instruction, adapted to every circumstance of life, formed upon the experience of all preceding ages, and perfected by the unerring spirit of inspiration. These delivered with such remarkable conciseness, that one might venture to say, every word is a sentence; at least, every sentence may be called an apophthegm, sparkling with brightness of thought, or weighty with solidity of sense. The whole, like a profusion of pearls, each containing, in a very small compass, a value almost immense, all heaped up (as an ingenious critic speaks) with a confused magnificence, above the little niceties of order.

If we look for the strength of reasoning, and the warmth of exhortation; the insinuating arts of genteel address, or the manly boldness of impartial reproof; all the thunder of the orator, without any of his ostentation; all the politeness of the courtier, without any of his flattery—let us have

recourse to the Acts of the Apostles, and to the Epistles of St. Paul*. These are a specimen, or rather these are the standard, of them all.

I do not wonder, therefore, that a taste so refined, and a judgment so correct as Milton's, should discern higher attractives in the volume of inspiration, than in the most celebrated authors of Greece and Rome.

———"Yet not the more
Cease I to wander where the muses haunt,
Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,
Smit with the love of sacred song; but chief
Thee, Sion, and the flowery banks beneath,
That wash thy hallow'd feet, and warbling flow,
Nightly I visit."——

Asp. Another recommendation of the Scriptures is, that they afford the most awful and most amiable manifestations of the Godhead. His glory shines, and his goodness smiles, in those divine pages, with unparalleled lustre. Here we have a satisfactory explanation of our own state. The origin of evil is traced; the cause of all our misery discovered; and the remedy, the infallible remedy, both clearly shown, and freely offered. The merits of the bleeding Jesus lay a firm foundation for all our hopes; while gratitude for his dying love suggests the most winning incitements to every duty. Morality, Theron, your (and let me add, my) admired morality, is delineated in all its branches, is placed upon its proper basis, and raised to its highest elevation. The Spirit of God is promised to enlighten the darkness of our understandings, and strengthen the imbecility of our wills. What an ample—Can you indulge me on this favourite topic?

Ther. It is, I assure you, equally pleasing to myself. Your enlargements, therefore, need no apology.

Asp. What ample provision is made, by these blessed books, for all our spiritual wants! And, in this respect, how indisputable is their superiority to all other compositions!

Is any one convinced of guilt, as provoking Heaven and ruining the soul? Let him ask reason to point out a means of reconciliation, and a refuge of safety. Reason hesitates as she replies, "The Deity may, perhaps, accept our supplications, and grant forgiveness." But the Scriptures leave us not to the sad uncertainty of conjecture: They speak the language of clear assurance: "God has set forth a propitiation," Rom. iii. 25.: "He does forgive our iniquities," Psal. ciii. 3.: "He will remember our sins no more," Heb. viii. 12.

Are we assaulted by temptation, or averse to duty? Philosophy may attempt to parry the thrust, or to stir up the reluctant mind, by disclosing the deformity of vice, and urging the fitness of things. Feeble expedients! Just as well calculated to accomplish the ends proposed, as the flimsy fortification of a cobweb to defend us from the ball of a cannon; or as the gentle vibrations of a lady's fan to make a wind-bound navy sail. The Bible recommends no such incompetent succours. "My grace," says its almighty Author, "is sufficient for thee," 2 Cor. xii. 9. "Sin shall not have dominion

* Another very remarkable instance of propriety in St. Paul's writings is, that though diffuse in the doctrinal, they are concise in the preceptive parts. On the former, it was absolutely necessary to enlarge: on the latter, it is always judicious to be short. The celebrated rule of Horace, "Quicquid præcipies, esto brevis," was never more exactly observed, nor more finely exemplified, than by our Apostolic author.

over you," Rom. vi. 14. The great Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength, "he worketh in us both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 13.

Should we be visited with sickness, or overtaken by any calamity, the consolation which Plato offers is, That such dispensations coincide with the universal plan of divine government. Virgil will tell us, for our relief, That afflictive visitations are, more or less, the unavoidable lot of all men. Another moralist whispers in the dejected sufferer's ear, "Impatience adds to the load; whereas a calm submission renders it more supportable." Does the word of revelation dispense such spiritless and fugitive cordials? No: Those sacred pages inform us, that tribulations are fatherly chastisements, tokens of our Maker's love and fruits of his care; that they are intended to work in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and to work out for us an eternal weight of glory; 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Should we, under the summons of death, have recourse to the most celebrated comforters of the Heathen world, they would increase our apprehensions rather than mitigate our dread. Death is represented by the great master of their schools, as "the most formidable of all evils." They were not able positively to determine whether the soul survived; and never so much as dreamed of the resurrection of the body. Whereas, the book of God strips the monster of his horrors, or turns him into a messenger of peace; gives him an angel's face, and a deliverer's hand; ascertaining to the souls of the righteous an immediate translation into the regions of bliss, and ensuring to their bodies a most advantageous revival at the restoration of all things.

Inestimable book! It heals the maladies of life, and subdues the fear of death. It strikes a lightsome vista through the gloom of the grave, and opens a charming, a glorious prospect of immortality in the heavens.

These, with many other excellencies peculiar to the Scriptures, one would imagine more than sufficient to engage every sensible heart in their favour, and introduce them with the highest esteem into every improved conversation. They had such an effect upon the finest genius, and most accomplished person, that former or latter ages can boast; insomuch that he made, while living, this public declaration, and left it when he died upon everlasting record: "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth;" Psal. cxix. 103. "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day;" Psal. cxix. 97. "Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I may be occupied in thy precepts; and I will speak of thy testimonies even before kings;" Psal. cxix. 46. If David tasted so much sweetness in a small, and that the least valuable part of the divine word; how much richer is the feast to us, since the Gospel is added to the Law, and the canon of Scripture completed! since (to borrow the words of a prophet) the Lord God "has sealed up the sum;" has put the last hand to his work; and rendered it "full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty," Ezek. xxviii. 12.

Ther. Another very distinguishing peculiarity of the sacred writings just occurs to my mind. The method of communicating advice, or administering reproof, by parables. A method which levels itself to the lowest apprehension, without giving offence to the most supercilious temper; yet it is as much superior to plain unornamented precept, as the enlivened scenes of a well-wrought tragedy are more impressive and affecting than a simple narration of the plot.

Our Lord was asked by a student of the Jewish law, "Who is my neighbour?" which implied another question, "How is he to be loved?" The inquirer was conceited of himself, yet ignorant of the truth, and deficient in his duty. Had the wise instructor of mankind abruptly declared, "You neither know the former, nor fulfil the latter," probably the querist would have reddened with indignation, and departed in a rage. Therefore to teach, and not disgust—to convince the man of his error, and not exasperate his mind—the blessed Jesus frames a reply, as amiable in the manner as it was pertinent to the purpose.

A certain person going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves, Luke x. 30. Not content to rob him of his treasure, they strip him of his garments, wound him with great barbarity, and leave him half dead. Soon after this calamitous accident, a traveller happens to come along that very road: and what renders him more likely to administer relief, he is one of the sacred order; one who taught others the lovely lessons of humanity and charity, and was therefore under the strongest obligations to exemplify them in his own practice. He just glances an eye upon the deplorable object; sees him stretched on the cold ground, and weltering in his blood; but takes no further notice; nay, to avoid the trouble of an inquiry, passes by on the other side. Scarce was he departed, when a Levite approaches. This man comes nearer, and looks on the miserable spectacle; takes a leisurely and attentive survey of the case*. And though every gash in the bleeding flesh cried and pleaded for compassion, this minister of the sanctuary neither speaks a word to comfort, nor moves a hand to help. Last comes a Samaritan †, one of the abhorred nation, whom the Jew hated with the most implacable malignity. Though the Levite had neglected an expiring brother; though the priest had withheld his pity from one of the Lord's peculiar people; the very moment the Samaritan sees the unhappy sufferer, he melts into commiseration. He forgets the embittered foe, and considers only the distressed fellow-creature. He springs from his horse, and resolves to intermit his journey. The oil and wine, intended for his own refreshment, he freely converts into healing unguents. He binds up the wounds; sets the disabled stranger upon his own beast; and, with all the assiduity of a servant, with all the tenderness of a brother, conducts him to an inn. There he deposits money for his present use; charges the host to omit nothing that might conduce to the recovery or comfort of his guest; and promises to defray the whole expense of his lodging, his maintenance, and his cure.

What a lively picture this of the most disinterested and active benevolence! A benevolence which excludes no persons, not even strangers or enemies, from its tender regards; which disdains no condescension, grudges no cost, in its labours of love. Could any method of conviction have been more forcible, and at the same time more pleasing, than the interrogatory proposed by our Lord, and deduced from the story? "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?" Or can there be an advice more suitable to the occasion, more important in its nature, or expressed with a more sententious energy, than "Go thou, and

* This seems to be the import of *ελθων και ιδων*, Luke x. 32. This diversifies the idea, and heightens the description, of Jewish inhumanity.

† If this was a parable, we cannot but admire the accuracy of our Lord, both in laying the scene, and selecting the circumstances.

do likewise?" In this case, the learner instructs, the delinquent condemns, himself. Bigotry bears away its prejudice; and pride (when the moral so sweetly, so imperceptibly insinuates), even pride itself lends a willing ear to admonition.

Asp. It has been very justly remarked, That this eloquence of similitudes is equally affecting to the wise, and intelligible to the ignorant. It shows, rather than relates, the point to be illustrated. It has been admired by the best judges in all ages; but never was carried to its highest perfection, till our Lord spoke the parable of the prodigal (Luke xv. 11, &c.); which has a beauty that no Paraphrase can heighten, a perspicuity that renders all interpretation needless, and a force which every reader not totally insensible must feel.

Ther. The condescension and goodness of God are everywhere conspicuous.—In the productions of nature, he conveys to us the most valuable fruits, by the intervention of the loveliest blossoms. Though the present is in itself extremely acceptable, he has given it an additional endearment, by the beauties which array it, or the perfumes which surround it.—In the pages of revelation likewise, he has communicated to us the most glorious truths, adorned with all the graces of composition: such as may polish the man of genius, and improve the man of worth; such as highly delight our imagination, even while they cultivate and refine our morals. So that they really are, as one of their divine authors very elegantly speaks, "like apples of gold in pictures of silver*."

Asp. Who then would not gladly receive that gracious exhortation "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly?" Col. iii. 16. Who would not willingly obey that benign command, "Thou shalt talk of it when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way; when thou liest down, and when thou risest up?" Deut. vi. 7.

When I consider the language of the Scriptures, and sometimes experience their energy on my soul, I am inclined to say, "Other writings, though polished with the nicest touches of art, only tinkle on the ear, or affect us like the shepherd's reed. But these, even amidst all their noble negligence, strike, alarm, transport us, somewhat like the voice of thunder, or the archangel's trumpet."

When I consider the contents of the Scriptures, and believe myself interested in the promises they make, and the privileges they confer, I am induced to cry out, "What are all the other books in the world, compared with these invaluable volumes? No more than an entertaining novel, or a few prudential rules for domestic economy, compared with a parent's will, a royal charter, or an imperial grant of titles and manors."

All these circumstances remind me of an encomium most deservedly given to the Bible; which, though quite artless, is, I think, abundantly more expressive than the most elaborate efforts of rhetoric. It came from the lips of a martyr; who, being condemned to die for his inviolable adherence to the doctrines of Scripture, when he arrived at the stake, and had composed him-

* Prov. xxv. 11.—Theron follows the received translation. I should prefer the exposition of Glassius, who supposes רְשֵׁתֵי כֶסֶף to signify "Retiacula argentea, in quibus oculi sunt minutissimi, penetrabiles tamen visu." According to this interpretation, the passage will present us with apples of gold in net-work, or lattice-work, of silver; where the fine fruit receives a new charm, by showing itself through the elegant apertures of the silver.

self for his execution, took his final leave in these affecting words: "Farewell sun and moon! farewell all the beauties of creation, and comforts of life! farewell my honoured friends! farewell my beloved relations! and farewell, thou precious, precious Book of God!"

Aspasio had scarce uttered the last sentence, when a servant came to let them know "supper was upon the table."—Very opportunely, said Theron, has our repast waited till our conference is ended. We have showed what a large field of delightful speculation the Scriptures open; and what ample materials for the most refined discourse they afford. As nothing can be more ungraceful, than to neglect in our own conduct what we recommend to the practice of others, let us, this very night, begin to ennoble our interviews with these improving subjects,—let us endeavour to make religious conversation, which is in all respects desirable, in some degree fashionable.

DIALOGUE II.

THE next morning, when breakfast was over, Theron and Aspasio took a walk into the garden—their spirits cheered, and their imaginations lively—gratitude glowing in their hearts, and the whole creation smiling around them.

The spot adjoining to the house was appropriated to the cultivation of flowers. In a variety of handsome compartments were assembled the choicest beauties of blooming nature. Here the hyacinth hung her silken bells, or the lilies reared their silver pyramids. There stood the neat narcissus, loosely attired in a mantle of snowy lustre; or the splendid ranunculus wore a full-trimmed suit of radiant scarlet. Pinks were rising to enamel the borders; roses were opening to dress the walls; surrounded on all sides with a profusion of beauteous forms, either latent in the stalk, or bursting the buds, or blown into full expansion.

This was bounded by a slight partition, a sort of verdant parapet, through which they descend by an easy flight of steps, and are presented with the elegant simplicity of the kitchen garden. In one place you might see the marigold flowering, or the beans in blossom. In another, the endive curled her leaves, or the lettuce thickened her tufts: cauliflowers sheltered their fair complexion under a green umbrella; while the burrage dishevelled* her locks, and braided them with blooming jewels, of a finer azure than the finest sapphires. On the sunny slopes, the cucumber and melon lay basking in the collected beams. On the raised beds, the artichoke seemed to be erecting a standard, while the asparagus shot † into ranks of spears. The level ground produced all manner of cooling salads and nourishing esculents. Nothing was wanting to furnish out the wholesome luxury of an antediluvian banquet.

Soon, a high wall intervenes, through which a wicket opens, and transmits them into the regular and equidistant rows of an orchard. This plantation is so nicely adjusted, that it looks like an arrangement of rural piazzas, or a

* Referring to the loose irregular manner of its foliation.

† Alluding, not only to the shape, but also to the growth of this plant, which is so unusually quick, that it may almost be said to start, rather than to rise out of the earth.

collection of diversified vistas. The eye is everywhere entertained with the exactest uniformity, and darts with unobstructed ease from one end of the branching files to the other. On all the boughs lay a lovely evolution of blossoms, arrayed in milky white, or tinged with the softest red. Crowding into one general cluster, without relinquishing any vacant space for leaves, they formed the fairest, the gayest, the grandest alcove, that fancy itself can imagine. It is really like the court of the Graces. None can approach it without finding his ideas brightened, and feeling his temper exhilarated.

Contiguous to this correct disposition of things, nature had thrown a wilderness, hoary, grotesque, and magnificently confused. It stretched itself, with a large circular sweep, to the north; and secured both the olitory and the orchard from incommoding winds. Copses of hazel and flowering shrubs filled the lower spaces, while poplars quivered aloft in air, and pines pierced the clouds with their leafy spears. Here grew clumps of fir, clad in everlasting green: there stood groves of oak, that had weathered for ages the wintry storm. Amidst this woody theatre ran a winding walk, lined with elms of insuperable height, whose branches, uniting at the top, reared a stately arch, and projected a solemn shade. It was impossible to enter this lofty labyrinth without being struck with a pleasing dread. As they proceeded, every infection diffuses a deeper gloom, and awakens a more pensive attention.

Having strolled in this darksome avenue without a speck of sunshine, without a glimpse of the heavens, on a sudden they step into open day.—Surprising! cries Aspasio, what a change is this! What delightful enchantment is here!—One instant whelmed in Trophonius's cave*, where horror frowns, and darkness lowers, and solitude reigns: transported the next into the romantic scenes of Arcadia, where all is populous, all is lightsome, and all is gay.—Quick as thought, the arches of heaven expand their azure; turrets and spires shoot into the skies; towns, with their spacious edifices, spread themselves to the admiring view. Those lawns, green with freshest herbage; those fields, rich with undulating corn; where were they all a moment ago?—It brings to my mind that remarkable situation of the Jewish lawgiver, when, elevated on the summit of Pisgah, he surveyed the goodly land of promise; “surveyed the rivers, the flood, the brooks of honey and butter;” surveyed “the mountains dropping with wine, and the hills flowing with milk,” Job xx. 17. Joel iii. 18.; surveyed all with those eyes, which, for forty tedious years, had been confined to dry sands, ragged rocks, and the irksome wastes of a desolate howling wilderness.

Here they seated themselves on the first mossy hillock which offered its couch. The rising sun had visited the spot, to dry up the dews, and exhale the damps that might endanger health; to open the violets, and expand the primroses that decked the green. The whole shade of the wood was collected behind them; and a beautiful, extensive, diversified landscape spread itself before them.

Theron, according to his usual manner, made many improving remarks on the prospect and its furniture. He traced the footsteps of an all-comprehending contrivance, and pointed out the strokes of inimitable skill. He

* The reader may find a curious account of this cave, together with a very humorous, and (which should always accompany humour, or else it will be like a sting without the honey) an improving description of its effects, in the *Spectator*, Vol. viii. No. 598, 599.

observed the grand exertions of power, and the rich exuberance of goodness, most signally, most charmingly conspicuous through the whole.—Upon one circumstance he enlarged with a particular satisfaction.

Ther. See, Aspasio, how all is calculated to administer the highest delight to mankind. Those trees and hedges, which skirt the extremities of the landscape, stealing away from their real bulk, and lessening by gentle diminutions, appear like elegant pictures in miniature. Those which occupy the nearer situations are a set of noble images, swelling upon the eye, in full proportion, and in a variety of graceful attitudes; both of them ornamenting the several apartments of our common abode, with a mixture of delicacy and grandeur.

The blossoms that array the branches, the flowers that embroider the mead, address, and entertain our eyes with every charm of beauty*; whereas, to other creatures, they are destitute of all those attractives which result from a combination of the loveliest colours and most alluring forms. Yonder streams, that glide with smooth serenity along the valleys, glittering to the distant view like sheets of polished crystal, or soothing the attentive ear with the softness of aquatic murmurs, are no less exhilarating to the fancy than to the soil through which they pass. The huge enormous mountain, the steep and dizzy precipice, the pendent horrors of the craggy promontory, wild and tremendous as they are, furnish out an agreeable entertainment to the human mind, and please even while they terrify; whereas the beasts take no other notice of those majestic deformities, than only to avoid the dangers they threaten.

Asp. How wonderfully do such considerations exalt our idea of the Creator's goodness, his very distinguishing goodness to mankind! And should they not proportionably endear that eternal Benefactor to our affections? His ever-bountiful hand has scattered blessings, and with profuse liberality, among all the ranks of animated existence. But to us he exercises a beneficence of a very superior kind*. We are treated as his peculiar favourites. We are admitted to scenes of delight, which none but ourselves are capable of relishing.

Ther. Another remark, though very obvious, is equally important: The destination of all those external things is no less advantageous, than their formation is beautiful. The bloom, which engages the eye with its delicate hues, is cherishing the embryo fruit, and forming within its silken folds the rudiments of a future dessert. Those streams, which shine from afar like fluid silver, are much more valuable in their productions, and beneficial in their services, than they are amiable in their appearance. They distribute, as they roll along their winding banks, cleanliness to our houses and fruitfulness to our lands. They nourish, and at their own expense, a never-failing supply of the finest fish. They visit our cities, and attend our wharfs, as so many public vehicles, ready to set out at all hours.

Those sheep which give their udders to be drained by the busy frisking lambs, are fattening their flesh for our support; and while they fill their own

* Therefore, when the prophet describes the Christian Church, adorned with all the "beauties of holiness," he borrows his imagery from these amiable objects: "Israel shall bud and blossom," Isa. xxvii. 6.—Nay, the very "wilderness," even the Gentile nations, being converted unto Christ, "shall blossom as a rose," Isa. xxxv. 1.—"I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon;" Hos. xiv. 5. What an elegant picture! and what a comfortable promise!

fleeces, are providing for our comfortable clothing. Yonder kine—some of which are browsing upon the tender herb, others, satiated with pasturage, ruminant under the shady covert—though conscious of no such design, are concocting, for our use, one of the softest, purest, healthiest liquors in the world. The bees that fly humming about our seat, and pursue their work on the fragrant blossoms, are collecting balm and sweetness, to compose the richest of syrups; which, though the produce of their toil, is intended for our good.

Nature, and her whole family, are our obsequious servants, our ever-active labourers. They bring the fruits of their united industry, and pour them into our lap, or deposit them in our store-rooms.

Asp. Who can ever sufficiently admire this immense benignity?—The supreme Disposer of events has commanded delight and profit to walk hand in hand through his ample creation; making all things so perfectly pleasing, as if beauty was their only end; yet all things so eminently serviceable, as if usefulness had been their sole design. And, as a most winning invitation to our gratitude, he has rendered man the centre, in which all the emanations of his beneficence, diffused through this terrestrial system, finally terminate.

But, my dear Theron, is not this apparent, in a much more wonderful manner, throughout the whole economy of redemption? It were a small thing for this inferior class of unintelligent creatures, to be continually employing themselves for our benefit. Even the Son of the most high God, through all his incarnate state, acted the very same part. He took flesh, and bore the infirmities of human nature, not for himself, but for us men, and our salvation. He suffered want, and endured misery in all its forms, that we might possess the fulness of joy, and abound in pleasures for evermore. When he poured out his soul in agonies, under the curse of an avenging law, was it not with a compassionate view to make us partakers of eternal blessedness? When he fulfilled, perfectly fulfilled the whole commanding law, was it not for this gracious purpose, that his merits might be imputed to us, that we by his obedience might be made righteous? Yes;

—————“For us he liv'd,
Toil'd for our ease, and for our safety bled.”

Nothing in the whole course——

Ther. Pardon me for interrupting you, Aspasio. I have no objection to the general drift of your discourse; but that particular notion of imputed righteousness has always appeared to me in a very ridiculous light. And I must say, that such a puritanical nostrum makes a very unbecoming figure amongst your other manly and correct sentiments of religion.

Asp. You know, Theron, I have long ago disavowed that ignoble prejudice, which rejects doctrines, or despises persons, because they happen to be branded with contemptible names. It is true, the writers styled Puritans, are remarkable for their attachment to this peculiarity of the gospel. It runs through all their theological works, and very eminently distinguishes them from the generality of our modern treatises. But must it therefore be wrong, because maintained by that particular set of people? Or, are they the only advocates for this important truth?

Ther. Ay; it is as I suspected. I have lately conjectured, from several

hints in my Aspasio's discourse, that he has been warping to the low ungentleman-like peculiarities of those whimsical fanatics.

Asp. I cannot conceive why you should call them whimsical. To settle faith on its proper basis—the meritorious righteousness of the Redeemer; and to deduce obedience from its true origin—the love of God shed abroad in the heart; to search the conscience, and convince the judgment; to awaken the lethargic, and comfort the afflicted soul; and all from a thorough knowledge, joined to a masterly application, of the divine word;—these, sure, are not whimsical talents, but real excellencies. Yet these, if we may credit history, entered into the preaching; these, if we will examine impartially, are to be found in the writings, of the Puritans.—And a pearl, you will please to remember, is a pearl still, though it should hang in the Ethiopian's ear.

Ther. Ethiopian indeed! You have truly characterised that demure and gloomy generation. I hope you do not intend to introduce their affected solemnity and forbidden reserve into your own easy and engaging conversation. Though, for aught I can judge, this would be no more ungraceful, than to patch such antiquated notions on the refined scheme of Christianity.

Asp. My dear friend, you are too ludicrous; and I begin to catch the infection. We had better return to our first topic. Let us contemplate the wonders of creation; and, as we admire the works, learn to adore the Maker.

Ther. None of your evasions, good Aspasio. You must not think to put me off at this rate. I have wanted an opportunity to rally you upon this head, and to argue or laugh you out of these religious oddities.

Asp. If you will not agree to terms of peace, I hope you will allow some cessation of arms. At least till I can muster my forces, and prepare for the vindication of my principles.

Ther. No; upon the spot, and out of hand, you are required to answer for yourself, and these same queer opinions.—I shall serve you as the Roman consul served the procrastinating monarch. When he demurred about his reply to the demands of the senate, and said, “he would consider of the matter;” the resolute ambassador drew a circle round him with his cane, and insisted upon a positive answer, before he stepped over those limits.

Asp. This, however, you will give me leave to observe, that the affair is of a very serious nature. Upon condition that you will dismiss your flourish of wit, and strokes of satire, I will acquaint you with the reasons which have made me a thorough convert to this doctrine. Once I held it in the utmost contempt, and pified the simplicity of (as I then styled them) its deluded admirers. But I am now become such a fool, that I may be truly wise and substantially happy. I have seen my ruined state, and I bless God for this sovereign restorative. It is the source of my strongest consolations, and the very foundation of my eternal hopes.

Ther. Excuse me, Aspasio, if the vivacity of my temper, and the seemingly uncouth tenet, kindled me into a more humorous gaiety than became the occasion. You speak of the point with so much seriousness, and in such weighty terms, as check my levity, and command my respect. Be please to execute what you have promised; and the most engaged attention of my mind shall atone for the petulant sallies of my tongue.

Asp. To conceive a dislike of any doctrine, only because persons of a particular denomination have been very officious to promote its reception; this is hardly consistent with an impartial inquiry after truth.

Ther. I grant it, Aspasio. And I should be ashamed of my opposition, if it was founded on so slight a bottom. But, abstracted from all party considerations, I can see nothing in this supposed article of our faith that may recommend it to the unprejudiced inquirer. What can be more awkward than the term, or more irrational than the sentiment ?

Asp. The word *imputed*, when used in this connexion, may possibly convey a disagreeable sound to the ears of some people ; because they look upon it as the peculiar phraseology of a few superstitious sectarists, and reject it merely on the foot of that unreasonable surmise.—But how can you be disgusted at the expression, Theron, who have so often read it in the most approved and judicious writers ? St. Paul, who might affirm with relation to his epistles, much more truly than the painter concerning his portraits, “ I write for eternity *,” scruples not to use this awkward language several times in the same chapter †. Milton, the correctness of whose taste, and the propriety of whose style, no person of genius will ever question, delights to copy, in various parts of his incomparable poem, the Apostle’s diction. Authorised by such precedents, it is superior to cavil, and warranted beyond all exception.

As to the sentiment, I take it to be the very fundamental article of the gospel ; and I believe, whoever is acquainted with ecclesiastical history will allow, that it bore the principal sway in extricating us from popish darkness, and introducing the Reformation. What says our Lord, with regard to the love of God, and the love of our neighbour ? “ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Much the same would I venture to say concerning the imputation of our sins to Christ, and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to us : On these two doctrines hang all the privileges and the whole glory of the gospel.

Ther. In our last conversation, I must own, I saw a strong resemblance between the works and the word of God. But I never observed any thing in nature, that bore the least analogy to imputed sin or imputed righteousness. To me your two doctrines seem very unaccountable and irrational.

Asp. That our sins should be charged upon the only-begotten Son of God, and that his righteousness should be made over to sinful worms, is strange, exceeding strange. The Psalmist calls it, “ marvellous loving kindness,” Psal. xvii. 7. The Apostle styles it, “ love that passeth knowledge,” Eph. iii. 19. And it has sometimes, I must freely confess, been almost ready to stagger my belief. However, I have found myself relieved in this perplexity, not only by the testimony of the Scriptures, but even from the contemplation of nature. All nature is full of strange and mysterious effects ; consequently, is a voucher for the mysterious truths of Christianity.

How surprising are the experiments of electricity, and the occult qualities of the loadstone ! How surprising those countless legions of effuvia which transpire from a small odoriferous body ! and those infinite myriads of luminous particles, which issue from a smaller flaming substance † ! There is not

* Alluding to the painter, who, apologising for the slow procedure and scrupulously nice touches of his pencil, said, *Æternitati pingo*, “ I paint for eternity.”

† See Rom. iv., in which single chapter some branch of the word *λογίζεσθαι*, “ to be imputed,” occurs no less than ten or eleven times.

‡ Dr. Nieuwentyt has computed, that from a lighted candle, about the size of six to the pound, there issues, in the second of a minute, an effusion of particles, vastly more than the number of sands which the whole globe of the earth contains.

a blade of grass, but surpasses the comprehension of all mankind ; and not a single atom, but is big with wonders ; insomuch, that the intelligent observer can nowhere fix his thoughts, without being astonished, transported, and even lost in admiration.

Since the procedure of Providence in this visible system is a continued series of stupendous and unsearchable operations ; need we be alarmed, can we reasonably be offended, if the scheme of redemption is equally stupendous, is far more amazing ? Yet, though amazing, I hope it will not appear, what you was pleased to insinuate, irrational.

Suppose we state the signification of the terms, and adjust the boundaries of our subject, before we enter upon a survey of its contents ?

Ther. Such a caution would have prevented, at least have shortened, many a vehement and tedious controversy.—You see, on yonder heath, the preparations for an approaching race. There stand the posts which are to mark out the limits of the course. Without this previous restrictive care, how irregular would be the excursions of the contending steeds ! How difficult, rather how impossible, to declare the conqueror and award the prize !—A clear definition of terms seems equally necessary for candid disputants. Without it, they may wrangle for ages, and never come to a determination.

Asp. Justification is an act of God Almighty's grace ; whereby he acquits his people from guilt, and accounts them righteous *, for the sake of Christ's righteousness, which was wrought out for them, and is imputed to them.

Ther. Two of your terms want some further explication. What do you understand by Christ's righteousness ? And what is the meaning of imputed

Asp. By Christ's *righteousness*, I understand the whole of his active and passive obedience ; springing from the perfect holiness of his heart, continued through the whole progress of his life, and extending to the very last pang of his death.—By the word *imputed* I would signify, that this righteousness though performed by our Lord, is placed to our account ; is reckoned or adjudged by God as our own. Insomuch, that we may plead it, and rely on it for the pardon of our sins, for adoption into his family, and for the enjoyment of life eternal.—Shall I illustrate my meaning by a well-attested fact ?

Ther. Nothing gives us so easy a conception of any difficult point, as the method of explaining by parallel facts, or proper similitudes.

Asp. I do not say the case is parallel. I only produce it, to aid our conceptions.—Onesimus, you know, was Philemon's slave †. He had perfidiously deserted his master's service, and still more perfidiously stole his good. The fugitive, in his guilty rambles, providentially meets with St. Paul. He is charmed and captivated with that gracious gospel, which proclaims mercy even for the vilest of sinners. He becomes a thorough convert to the religion of Jesus, and is received into the spiritual patronage of the apostle ; who learning his dishonest conduct and obnoxious state, undertakes to bring about a reconciliation with his offended master ; despatches him, for this purpose with a letter to Philemon ; and, amongst other persuasives, writes thus in the poor criminal's behalf : “ If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account : I Paul have written it with mine own hand ; I wi

* Should any reader object to the definition, apprehending, that justification implies more than the pardon of sins, I would desire him to suspend his judgment till he has perused Dialogue X., where this point is more circumstantially considered.

† See the Epistle to Philemon.

repay it." That which the zealous preacher of Christianity offered, the adored Author of Christianity executed.—We had revolted from the Lord of all lords, and broke his holy commandments. The Son of God, infinitely compassionate, vouchsafes to become our Mediator. That nothing might be wanting to render his mediation successful, he places himself in our stead. The punishment which we deserved, he endures : The obedience which we owed, he fulfils.—Both which, being imputed to us, and accepted for us, are the foundation of our pardon, are the procuring causes of our justification.

Ther. Is this the exact signification of the original word, which we translate *imputed*.

Asp. In the book of Numbers we meet with this phrase ; and in such a connexion, as clears up its meaning. Jehovah enacts a decree concerning the Levites, who had no vintages to gather, nor any harvests to reap. He directs them to present the tenth part of their tithes, in the form of a heave-offering ; adding, "and this your heave-offering" shall be reckoned* unto you, "as though it were the corn of the threshing-floor, and as the fulness of the wine-press ;" as satisfactory to me, and as beneficial to you, as if it were the tenth of your own labours, and the tithe of your own increase. So the expiatory sufferings which Christ endured, the complete obedience which he performed, are reckoned to true believers ; and are altogether as effectual for obtaining their salvation, as if they were their own personal qualifications.

Ther. The imputation mentioned in your passage, is the imputation of something done by the Levites themselves, not of something done by another. This, I apprehend, is the true import of the word, when it occurs affirmatively in Scripture.

Asp. This is always the import,—should have been said, in order to make the objection forcible. But you could not so soon forget the instance just now alleged. St. Paul, speaking of the crimes which Onesimus had committed, and of the injuries which Philemon had sustained, says, "Charge them all on me ; I will be responsible for the one and for the other, as much as if the whole guilt had been of my own contracting."—Here is supposed, not the imputation of something done by the apostle himself, but of another's criminal behaviour.

Under the law, Aaron is commanded to "put the iniquities of Israel upon the scape-goat," Lev. xv. 21.—The same sentiment is re-inculcated, when the goat is said to "bear the iniquities of the people," Lev. xvi. 22. This was plainly an imputation, yet could not possibly be the imputation of anything done by the devoted animal. The effects which took place upon the execution of this ordinance, indicate a translation of guilt ; for the congregation was cleansed, but the goat polluted. The congregation so cleansed, that their iniquities were conveyed away, and to be found no more ; the goat so polluted, that it communicated defilement to the person who conducted it into the land not inhabited. All this was God's own appointment, and de-

* Num. xviii. 27. וְנִשְׂבַּח exactly answers to St. Paul's *λογισθη*, Rom. iv. 9.—The same phrase is used, and the same doctrine taught, Lev. xvii. 3, 4. Thus also saith the eternal Judge concerning the believers in Christ : "The righteousness of my Son is imputed to them : they are, in the eye of my justice, righteous ; they shall be dealt with as righteous persons ; and made partakers of the kingdom of heaven."

signed, like the whole system of Mosaic ceremonies, to instruct his church in the knowledge of the great Mediator; in whose person and office that was done really, which elsewhere could be accomplished no otherwise than typically.

Ther. If this is your meaning, Aspasio, I am apt to think it will be a difficult matter to make me a proselyte. I must be content to pass for one of the stiff-necked generation, since I can see neither wisdom nor equity in ascribing to a person what he has not, or imputing to him what he does not.

Asp. It was not Aspasio, but his friend, who set out with a view of making proselytes. If I can maintain my ground, and vindicate my own belief, it will be no inconsiderable acquisition. However, I shall not despair of seeing the partner of my heart become a sharer of my faith. When we are convinced of our numberless sins, when we feel the depravity of our nature, and begin to discern the inconceivable sanctity of our Judge; then, perhaps, this exploded article may be found worthy of acceptance, its constitution admired as the wisdom of God, and its privilege coveted as the consolation of our souls.

Ther. I shall wave, at present, an examination of each particular, and only make some remote observations, which seem, nevertheless, pretty nearly to affect your scheme. Some persons, I dare be positive, have not so much as heard of your terms; many persons have no manner of acquaintance with your doctrine. Will you strike off all these from the list of Christians? will you condemn all these as desperate infidels?

Asp. Not heard of them! in a Protestant nation! where the gospel is publicly preached, and the Bible in every one's hand! This, if true, is much to be lamented.

In answer to your question:—It is not my custom, much less is it my prerogative, to condemn others. Has God committed all judgment unto me, that I should presume to anticipate the decisive sentence, or launch the thunderbolts of eternal vengeance? Neither do I affirm the condition of such persons to be desperate. There may be those who have no explicit knowledge of the doctrine, who are even prejudiced against the expressions, yet live under the belief of the truth, and in the exercise of the duty. "They are never diverted, by the splendour of anything that is great, or by the conceit of anything that is good in them, from looking upon themselves as sinful dust and ashes." Their whole dependence is upon that Just One, who expired on the cross, and whom the heavens have received. They seek the sanctifying Spirit, in consequence of their Saviour's death, and give all diligence to "add to their faith virtue," 2 Pet. i. 5.

Ther. If people may be safe, and their eternal interests secure, without any knowledge of these particularities, why should you offer to puzzle their heads about a few unnecessary scholastic terms?

Asp. Scriptural terms, you should have said, Theron. However, we are not very solicitous as to the credit, or the use, of any particular set of phrases. Only let men be humbled, as repenting criminals, at the Redeemer's feet; let them rely, as devoted pensioners, on his precious merits; and they are undoubtedly in the way to a blissful immortality. Yet will their way be less clear, and their steps more embarrassed, by not distinctly understanding the benign genius of the gospel. A proper information in this important point would shed light upon their paths, and encourage them in their

journey ; would further their progress in vital holiness, and increase their joy in the Lord.

Ther. The followers of your opinion, I have observed, are perpetually dwelling upon this one favourite topic, to the exclusion of that grand and truly essential part of Christianity—sanctification.

Asp. If you have ever taken notice of such a conduct, you are unquestionably right in withholding your approbation. It is a manifest incongruity, and deserves your censure. But, assure yourself, it proceeds from a misapprehension in the persons, and has no connexion with the nature of the doctrine.

I am far, very far, from reducing the various parts of Christianity (which when connected make up so well-proportioned a system) to this single, however distinguished branch. Sanctification is equally necessary, both to our present peace and to our final felicity. Indeed they are as reciprocally necessary for the purposes of intellectual and eternal happiness, as the heart and the lungs are to the subsistence of the animal economy. The former must transmit, the latter must refine, the vital fluid ; or else disease will take place, and death will ensue. My intention is, that those fundamental truths of the gospel, like these master organs in the body, may have each its proper office assigned ; each concur to support the better health, and to promote the spiritual growth, of the Christian.

Ther. Other of your zealous folks I have known, who are all for the sanctifying influence of the Spirit, and reckon this affiance on the Saviour's merits among the beggarly elements of religion. They scarce ever mention what Christ has done for us, but insist wholly upon what he does in us. When the religious people are so divided among themselves *, how can a stranger act ? which opinion shall he choose ?

Asp. Which, Theron ! Let him discard neither, but associate both. If the all-gracious Redeemer has poured out his blood on the cross that my guilt may be expiated, and presents his intercession in heaven that I may be endued with the Spirit ; if he will be the meritorious cause of my justification, and the operative principle of my sanctification, why should I scruple to receive him in either, in both capacities ? Who would lop off the right hand, in order to impart the higher dignity or the greater importance to the left ? I would be no partialist in Christianity ; neither diminish her dowry, nor mutilate her privileges.

Ther. You seem, if not to mutilate, yet to split the merits of Christ, and parcel out the efficacy of his mediatorial undertaking ; ascribing so much to his active, and so much to his passive righteousness ; pardon to this, and life to that.

Asp. Some, perhaps, may be pleased with this way of stating the matter. But it is a method which I neither attempt to defend, nor wish to imitate. To distinguish between the active and passive righteousness, I think is not

* Theron's inquiry concerning these two particulars is sometimes made an objection against all religion. But have those who adopt this objection never seen naturalists divided in their judgment, with relation to the design and use of several appearances in the material, the vegetable, the animal creation, while one decries as a nuisance what another admires as a beauty ? Yet no one, I believe, ever took it into his head, from such a diversity of opinions, to doubt whether the frame of nature is a just, a regular, and a finished system ; or to deny, that power, goodness, and wisdom, support, pervade, and direct the whole.

amiss ; because this sets the fulness of our Lord's merit in the clearest light, and gives the completest honour to God's holy law. But to divide them into detached portions, independent on each other, seems to be fanciful, rather than judicious. For, had either part of the mediatorial obedience been wanting, I apprehend neither pardon, nor acceptance, nor any spiritual blessing, could have been vouchsafed to fallen man.

The two parts are inseparable ; making, in their connexion, a necessary and noble whole for the accomplishment of our salvation ; just as the light and the heat of yonder sun blend their operation, to produce this delightful day, and this fruitful weather. However, therefore, I may happen to express myself, I never consider them as acting in the exclusive sense ; but would always have them understood as a grand and glorious aggregate ; looking upon our Saviour's universal obedience, which commenced at his incarnation, was carried on through his life, and terminated in his death—looking upon all this, in its collective form, as the object of my faith, and the foundation of my hopes.

Ther. I think you lay too much stress upon this controverted, and perhaps merely speculative point.

Asp. Merely speculative ! Say not thus, my dear friend. “ How I may be justified before God, my Maker, my Governor, and my Judge,” is an inquiry, of all others, the most interesting and important. It is the main hinge on which every instance of practical religion turns. True comfort, willing obedience, holy communion with the divine Majesty, all depend upon this capital point.

Far from being a merely speculative point, it ascribes the most undivided glory to the ever-blessed God and his free grace : It administers the most serene and substantial satisfactions to frail, but believing men : It cherishes, with the most kindly influence, that pure and undefiled religion which has its seat in the heart, has its birth from love, and is a real antepast, both of the business and the bliss of saints in light. Can we, then, lay too much stress upon a doctrine so greatly momentous, upon a privilege so extensively beneficial ?

Ther. When all this is proved, then for my reply, Aspasio. Nay, then you shall have more than a reply ; I promise you my cordial assent.

Asp. And if all this be incapable of proof, I assure you, Theron, I will not solicit your assent. Nay, more, I will revoke and renounce my own.

Ther. At present, I believe, we must go in, and prepare for our visitants. Some other interview will give us an opportunity to canvass this question more minutely.

Asp. Though I have never much inclination, even when there is the most leisure, for controversy, yet, if you insist upon it, I shall not absolutely refuse to engage in a debate with my Theron ; because he will come to the amicable rencounter without bringing angry passions for his second. My reasons will be impartially weighed, not artfully eluded, much less answered with invective. If some inadvertent expression should drop from my lips, he will not rigorously prosecute the slip ; nor aggravate an unguarded sentence into the crime of heresy. Candour will form his judgment, and good-nature dictate his expressions.

Ther. I thank you, my dear Aspasio, for your genteel admonition. What I am in the language of complaisance, means what I should be. Well ; I shall endeavour to take your hint, and check this my impetuosity of spirit.

I have admired, O that I could imitate ! the beautiful example of St. Paul. When Festus, forgetting the dignity of the governor, and the politeness of the gentleman, uttered that indecent reflection, " Paul, thou art beside thyself ; much learning doth make thee mad : " did the great preacher of Christianity kindle into resentment ? The charge was unjust and abusive. But the apostle, with the most perfect command of himself, returned the softest, yet the most spirited answer imaginable. " I am not mad, most noble Festus ; but speak the words of truth and soberness," Acts xxvi. 24, 25. Inexpressibly graceful was this calm and obliging reply. Though short, infinitely more convincing than a whole torrent of bitter or recriminating words. It disarmed the judge of his rising displeasure ; it conciliated the favour of his royal assessor ; and brought honour to the Christian cause.

This amiable self-regimen, and moderation of temper, I shall be sure to see exemplified in my friend's conversation, however I may fail of it myself, or be proof against all his arguments.

Asp. Ah ! Theron, we want no monitor to remind us of our supposed excellencies. And if you begin with your compliments, it is time to put an end to our discourse.

Only let me just observe, that divine truths cannot be properly discerned but by the enlightening influences of the divine Spirit. We must address ourselves to this inquiry, not only with unprejudiced minds, but likewise with praying hearts. We must bring to this dispute, not barely the quiver of logic, but that " unction from the Holy One, which may teach us all things," 1 John ii. 20, 27. Let us then adopt the poet's aspiration :

———Thou celestial Light,
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate ; there plant eyes ; all mist from thence
Purge and disperse !

MILTON, B. iii. l. 51.

DIALOGUE III.

Ther. WE are now, Aspasio, about two miles distant from my house. The horse-road lies through a narrow dusty lane ; the footpath leads along a spacious pleasant meadow. Suppose we deliver our horses to the servant, and walk the remainder of the way ?

Asp. You could not make a proposal more agreeable to my inclination ; especially as the air is become cool, and the walk is so inviting.

What a magnificent and charming scene ! Hills on either side, gently rising, and widely spreading ; their summits crowned with scattered villages and clustering trees ; their slopes divided into a beauteous chequer-work, consisting partly of tillage with its waving crops, partly of pasturage with its grazing herds. Before us, the trefoil, the clover, and a variety of grassy plants, differently bladed and differently branched, weave themselves into a carpet of living green. Can any of the manufactures formed in the looms, or extended in the palaces of Persia, vie with the covering of this ample area ? vie with it, in grandeur of size, or delicacy of decoration ?

What a profusion of the gayest flowers, fringing the banks, and embroidering the plain !

— Nature here

Wantons as in her prime, and plays at will
Her virgin fancies, pouring forth more sweet,
Wild above rule or art, enormous bliss !

MILTON, B. v.

Nothing can be brighter than the lustre of those silver daisies, nothing deeper than the tinge of those golden crowfoots ; yet both seem to acquire additional beauty, by succeeding to the deformity of winter, and flourishing amidst so much surrounding verdure.

Ther. Nature is truly in her prime. The vegetable tribes are putting on their richest attire. Those chestnuts, on our right hand, begin to rear their flowering pyramids ; those willows, on our left, are tipped with tassels of grey ; and yonder poplars, which overlook the river, and seem to command the meadows, are pointed with rolls of silver.

The hawthorn, in every hedge, is partly turgid with silken gems, partly dissolved into a milk-white bloom : Not a straggling furze, nor a solitary thicket, but wears a rural nosegay. All is a delightful display of present fertility, and a joyous pledge of future plenty. Now we experience what the royal poet, in very delicate imagery, describes : “ The winter is past : the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth ; the time of the singing of birds is come ; and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs ; and the vine, with the tender grapes, give a good smell ; ” Cant. ii. 11—13.

Asp. Your quotation and the scene remind me of a remark, which should have taken place in our last night’s discourse. When we were enumerating the excellencies of the sacred writings, methinks we might have added,—Are you fond of pastoral, in all its flowery graces, and blooming honours ? Never have we seen such excellent touches of rural painting, or such sweet images of endeared affection, as in the “ Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.” All the brilliant and amiable appearances in nature are employed, to delineate the tenderness of his heart, who is love itself ; to portray the beauty of his person, who is the chiefest among ten thousand ; and describe the happiness of those souls, whose “ fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ ; ” 1 John i. 3.

See, Theron, what the cheering warmth and the genial showers of spring have done ! Such a change, so pleasing and so ennobling, the gospel of Christ introduces into the soul. Not a day, scarce an hour passes, but this season of universal fecundity produces something new. And is there any state, or any circumstance of life, on which the faith of Christ does not exert a similar efficacy, and bring forth fruit unto God ?

This is supposed to be the spiritual meaning of that fine descriptive picture which you have borrowed from the Canticles. It displays the benign agency of grace and its doctrines, especially of our Lord’s satisfaction for sin, and of his righteousness imputed to sinners. These operate with much the same favourable and happy energy, both on our morals and our comforts, as the sweet influences of the vernal sun operate on the sprouting herbs and opening flowers.

Ther. If such were the effects of your doctrine, it would stand the fairer chance for general acceptance. But there are several weighty scruples to be removed, before persons of a liberal and enlarged way of thinking can acquiesce in your opinion. Who, for instance, can persuade himself, that what you call the satisfaction of Christ is consistent with the dictates of reason, or with the perfections of the Deity ?

Asp. Let gentlemen be candid in their inquiries, and truly liberal in their way of thinking; then, I flatter myself, these scruples may be removed without much difficulty.

God, the almighty Creator and supreme Governor of the world, having made man, gave him a law, with a penalty annexed in case of disobedience. This sacred law our forefather Adam presumptuously broke; and we, his posterity, were involved in his guilt. Or, should that point be controverted, we have undeniably made, by many personal transgressions, his apostacy our own; insomuch that all have sinned, have forfeited their happiness, and rendered themselves obnoxious to punishment.

Man being thus ruined, none could recover him, except his injured Maker. But shall he be recovered, shall he be restored, without suffering the punishment due to his crime, and threatened by his Creator? What then will become of the justice of the divine Lawgiver? and how shall the honour of his holy law be maintained? At this rate, who would reverence its authority, or fear to violate its precepts?

Sinners might be emboldened to multiply their transgressions, and tempted to think, that the God of immaculate holiness, the God of unchangeable veracity, "is altogether such an one as themselves."

Does it not appear needful that some expedient be devised, in order to prevent these dishonourable and horrid consequences?

Ther. Proceed to inform us what the expedient is.

Asp. To ascertain the dignity of the supreme administration, yet rescue mankind from utter destruction, this admirable purpose was formed, and in the fulness of time executed. The second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity unites the human nature to the divine, submits himself to the obligations of his people, and becomes responsible for all their guilt. In this capacity he performs a perfect obedience, and undergoes the sentence of death; makes a full expiation of their sins, and establishes their title to life. By which means the law is satisfied, justice is magnified, and the richest grace exercised. Man enjoys a great salvation, not to the discredit of any, but to the unspeakable glory of all, the divine attributes.

This is what we mean by Christ's satisfaction. And this, I should imagine, wants no recommendation to our unprejudiced reason; as I am sure it is most delightfully accommodated to our distressed condition. It is also confirmed by many express passages of Scripture, and illustrated by a variety of very significant images.

Ther. Pray, let me be favoured with some of your scriptural images. After which we may inquire, whether your doctrine will stand the test of reason.

Asp. What is your notion of a ransom? When Priam redeemed the dead body of Hector from the victorious Achilles, how was it done?

Ther. By paying a price. Thus Fabius recovered the captives which were taken by Hannibal. He transmitted the sum required, and they were discharged from their confinement.

Asp. Such is the redemption procured for sinners by our Lord Jesus Christ. Of such a nature (though incomparably more grand and august in all its circumstances), and expressed by the very same word*, "The Son of Man

* *Ανθρωπίνου σπλάχνου*, are used in this precise signification by the most approved authors of Greece.—*Λασιμψύχα λυτρα Αντιβα, και τους αιχμαλωτους απιλασι*, says Plutarch. *Ο υιος του ανθρωπου ηλιθι δειναι την ψυχη αυτου λυτραν αντι πολλων*, says our blessed Saviour, Matth. xx. 28.—*Ανθρωπινωι ταλαντων ιση*, is the language of Demosthenes. *Εν ο ιχθυειν τι, καταλυσειν δια του αιματος αυτου*, are the words of St. Paul, Eph. i. 7.

came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Christ also paid a price, a real price, a most satisfactory price; in consideration of which, our freedom from every penal evil is granted. "Ye are redeemed *," says the apostle, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." Let me add one text more, which, in the same style of commutative justice, asserts the same truth: "Christ has redeemed us," hath bought us off, "from the curse of the law," Gal. iii. 13. Yes, my friend,

"The ransom was paid down. The fund of heaven,
Heaven's inexhaustible exhausted fund,
Amazing and amazed, pour'd forth the price
All price beyond. Though curious to compute,
Archangels fail'd to cast the mighty sum."

Night Thoughts, No. iv.

Ther. Hold a little, good Aspasio. Consider the consequence of what you maintain. If there was a ransom in the case, to whom was it paid? The devil had led sinners captive. They are said to be the slaves of Satan. And shall the blessed Jesus pay his life to that accursed fiend? Shocking to imagine! Yet, shocking as it is, it must follow from your own and your poet's assertion.

Asp. You misapprehend the case, Theron. The ransom was paid to God. "Thou hast redeemed us to God," Rev. v. 9. is the confession of the saints in light. Satisfaction was made to the divine law, and to the divine justice; the one of which was offended, the other violated, and both concurred to denounce the transgressor's doom; of which doom Satan was only the destined executioner, whose malignity, and implacable rage, God is pleased to make the instrument of inflicting his vengeance, as he formerly used the idolatrous kings of Assyria and Babylon to chastise the disobedient Israelites.

"When we were without strength," Rom. v. 6. utterly ruined, yet absolutely helpless; when none, in heaven or earth, could afford us any succour; then our Lord Jesus Christ most graciously and most seasonably interposed. He said, as it is very emphatically represented by Elihu, "Deliver them from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24. He did what is very beautifully described by our English classic:

—— "So man, as is most just,
Shall satisfy for man, be judged and die;
And dying rise, and rising with him raise
His brethren, ransom'd with his own dear life."

MILTON.

Ther. But pray, do not you allow that Christ is truly and properly God?

Asp. We not only allow it, but we insist upon it, and make our boast of it. This is the very foundation of his merit, and the support of our hope.

Ther. This may aggrandise the merit of Christ, but it will increase the difficulty of your task. For, according to this opinion, Christ must make satisfaction to himself. And is not this a practice quite unprecedented? a notion perfectly absurd?

Asp. It is quite unprecedented, you say. On this point I shall not vehemently contend. Only let me mention one instance. Zaleucus, you know,

* 1 Pet. i. 18. We have an equivalent expression, used in the same signification, by one of the correctest writers in the world,

"Et fratrem Pollux alterna morte redemit."

VIRG.

the prince of the Locrians, made a decree,—That whoever was convicted of adultery, should be punished with the loss of both his eyes. Soon after this establishment, the legislator's own son was apprehended in the very fact, and brought to a public trial. How could the father acquit himself in so tender and delicate a conjuncture? Should he execute the law in all its rigour, this would be worse than death to the unhappy youth: Should he pardon so notorious a delinquent, this would defeat the design of his salutary institution. To avoid both these inconveniences, he ordered one of his own eyes to be pulled out, and one of his son's, by which means the rights of justice were preserved inviolate, yet the tenderness of a parent was remarkably indulged: and may we not venture to say, that in this case Zaleucus both received and made the satisfaction? received it as a magistrate, even while he made it as a father.

Ther. I cannot see how this suffering of the father was in any degree satisfactory to the law, since the father and the son could not be considered as one and the same person. It may pass for an extraordinary instance of parental indulgence; it may strike the benevolent and compassionate hearer; but, if tried at the bar of equity and reason, it will hardly be admitted as any legal satisfaction; it will probably be condemned, as a breach of nature's first and fundamental law, self-preservation.

Aep. What you observe, Theron, I must confess has weight: It will oblige me to give up my illustration. Nevertheless, what you urge against the propriety of the comparison, tends to establish the certainty of the doctrine. For Christ and his people are actually considered as one and the same person. They are one mystical body; he the head, they the members; so intimately united to him, that they are "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh;" Eph. v. 30.; Col. i. 20: by virtue of which union, their sins were punished in him, "and by his stripes they are healed," Isa. liii. 5. they obtain impunity and life.

Though there may be nothing in the procedure of men which bears any resemblance to this miracle of heavenly goodness, it receives a sufficient confirmation from the language of Scripture. He who wrote as an amanuensis to the unerring Spirit has declared, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world;" unto whom? unto some third party? No; but reconciling it, by the death and obedience of Christ, "unto himself," 2 Cor. v. 19. And I can very readily grant, that this divine exertion of benignity and wisdom should be without a precedent, and without a parallel.

Difficulties, I own, may attend the explication of this article, or be interwoven with its consequences. At the same time I must affirm, that our apprehensions of heavenly things are so obscure, and our ideas of the divine benevolence so scanty, that we may very possibly mistake, and fancy that to be absurd, which is only great, wonderful, and incomprehensible. Nor shall I be thought presumptuous in adding, that it will be impossible for all the sagacity in the world to prove this doctrine an absurdity, though it should ever remain an inexplicable mystery. How many phenomena, in the constitution of external nature, are confessedly mysterious and inexplicable! They challenge, they command our assent; yet baffle all our researches, and defy our utmost penetration. If, then, we find this truth fully and incontestably revealed in the Bible, we must renounce the philosopher before we can consistently act the sceptic.

Ther. Let us see, then, whether it be so fully and incontestably revealed in the Bible. You have given me, as yet, but one of your scriptural images.

Asp. I have another at your service. Christ is called an High-priest. What do you take to be the nature of the priestly office?

Ther. The business of the priest was, I apprehend, to offer sacrifices, and to make intercession for the people.

Asp. Very true; and Christ could not, with any propriety, receive this appellation, if he had been defective in performing either of the sacerdotal functions. Now, that he offered no such victim as slain beasts, is universally acknowledged. We might presume, therefore, even though we had not the authority of an apostle to assure us, that "he offered himself through the eternal Spirit to God," Heb. ix. 14.

The cross, shall I say? rather, his divine nature, was the altar; his soul and body, each immaculately pure, were the holocaust. These he resigned; the one to deadly wounds, the other to inexpressible anguish, and both to be instead of all whole burnt-offerings. On this invaluable oblation, his intercession at the right hand of his Father is founded; from this it derives that prevailing efficacy, which is the security of his standing, and the recovery of his fallen disciples.

Give me leave to ask farther, what is your idea of a sacrifice? When Iphigenia was slain at the altar, what was the import of that memorable action?

Ther. It was intended, if we may credit Virgil's account*, to appease the indignation of the superior powers, and to obtain a propitious gale for the wind-bound fleet and confederate forces of Greece. But I hope you would not make that solemn butchery of the royal virgin a pattern for the Supreme Goodness; nor the practice of gross idolaters a model for the religion of the holy Jesus?

Asp. By no means, Theron. Only I would observe, that the custom of offering sacrifices obtained among the most cultivated nations of the heathen world; that these sacrifices were frequently of the vicarious kind, in which the victim was substituted instead of the offerer; and the former being cut off, the latter was discharged from punishment; consequently that the classic authors would (in case there was any need of such auxiliaries) join with the sacred writers to declare the expediency, and explain the nature of sacrifices. This also you will permit me to add, that if the heathens talk sensibly on any part of religious worship, it is on the subject of sacrifices. Their sentiments concerning expiatory oblations seem to be the faint and distant echo of revelation; and I have usually considered them, not as the institutions of mere reason, but as the remains of some broken tradition.

However, the truest and most authentic signification of a sacrifice is to be learned from the Jewish ritual, explained by the gospel comment. Do you remember the Mosaic account of that ordinance?

Ther. You are much better acquainted, Aspasio, with those sacred antiquities, and can give the most satisfactory information with regard to this particular. Only let me remind you, that alms are styled offerings; and praises, both in the prophetic and evangelical writings, come under the denomination of sacrifices.

* Sanguine placasti ventos, et virgine cæsa.

Asp. Though praises and alms are styled sacrifices, they are not of the propitiatory, but eucharistic kind. They are never said to expiate transgressions, only are represented as acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, that divinely precious victim, whose merits both cancel our guilt and commend our services! According to ———

Ther. Stay a moment, *Aspasio*. Let me recollect myself. This may be the meaning of sacrifices, as ordained by Moses, and solemnised among the Jews. "Sacrifices were a symbolical address to God; intended to express before him the devotion, affections, dispositions, and desires of the heart, by significative and emblematical actions." Or thus, "The priest made atonement for sin, by sacrificing a beast, only as that was a sign and testimony of the sacrificer's pure and upright heart."

Asp. Sacrifices, I acknowledge, were a symbolical address to God. But would you confine their efficacy only to the death of the animal, and the purity of the offerer? No, *Theron*: they always had a reference to the great sacrifice, ordained in the eternal counsels of Jehovah; prepared when the co-eternal Son was made flesh, offered when the blessed Jesus surrendered himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter. They were so far from being independent of this divine oblation, that they acted in perpetual subserviency to it, and derived all their virtue from it. They were the shadow, but the body was Christ.

"They expressed," you say, "the devotion, affections, dispositions, and desires of the heart." But I rather think they expressed the guilt and the faith of the offerer. His guilt: for this seems to be intimated by the very names of the propitiatory sacrifices; the sin and the sacrifice, the offending action and the expiatory rite, being signified by one and the same word*. It is somewhat more than intimated by the occasion of the offering, and the state of the offerer; since it was only on account of guilt contracted that peculiar oblations were made, and only from a guilty person that they were required. His faith, or firm belief that ceremonial guilt, which shut him out from the communion of the visible church, and subjected him to the infliction of temporal judgments, was removed by these; but that moral guilt, which defiles the soul, and excludes from heaven, should be purged by some better sacrifice than these†. In the exercise of this faith, Abel offered up a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain; and without this faith exercised in some degree, it was impossible to please God.

If sacrifices were intended to bespeak integrity of heart, methinks the state of innocence had been the properest period for their institution and oblation. But we never hear of this awful ceremony till man is fallen, and sin committed. If intended to denote purity of heart, why should they be particularly enjoined on that solemn day when confession was made of all the sins of the whole congregation? Lev. xvi. 21. An oddly-concerted advice this! in which the tongue must contradict what the ceremony would recognise. Or, how could it be proper, after the violation of some law, or the neglect of some ordinance, immediately to go and offer a sacrifice? What would be

* פְּחִיחִי denotes a sin, and sin-offering, Lev. iv. 3. 24. חַטָּאת signifies the trespass, and the trespass-offering, Lev. v. 15. 19.

† They "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh," Heb. ix. 13. "but could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience," Heb. ix. 9.

the language of such a practice? "I have done wickedly, but my heart is pure and upright." Is this consistent with the spirit of humility, of modesty, or of common ingenuity? Is this the way of giving glory to God, or of taking shame to ourselves? Whereas, let the sacrifice be a typical expiation, and this is the significance of the action, "Lord, I confess myself guilty. Punishment and death are my due. Let them fall, I beseech thee, on my victim; that thy justice being glorified, and thy law satisfied, thy mercy may be honourably displayed in my forgiveness."

Besides, Theron, what likeness, what agreement is there, between the profession of integrity and an animal mortally wounded, wallowing in its own blood, and struggling in the agonies of death? Whereas, between these dying pangs and the punishment due to sin, or the sorrows sustained by the crucified Saviour, there is an apparent, a striking, and in various respects an edifying, resemblance.

Ther. They declared, perhaps, the sacrificer's readiness and resolution to slay the brute in himself, and to lay down his life in adherence to God.

Asp. I do not remember any assertion of this kind in the Bible, or any hint to countenance such an interpretation. It seems, in some cases, to be incompatible with the very nature of things, and contrary to the express declarations of Scripture. Doves, you know, lambs, and sheep, were offered in sacrifice. But shall we slay the lamb, the dove, the sheep in ourselves? So far from it, that Christ's disciples are either described by these creatures, or commanded to imitate their properties. "Be ye harmless as doves," Matth. x. 16. "Peter, feed my lambs," John xxi. 15. "My sheep, hear my voice," John x. 27.

Supposing, however, that this might be a subordinate design, or a valuable improvement of the sacrificial acts, yet their primary intention, and ultimate end, were widely different; were much more significant of the divine compassions, and much better adapted to the comfort of mankind. They were an awful indication, that death was the wages of sin; at the same time a cheering declaration, that God was pleased to accept the death of the animal instead of the sinner's; a figurative representation also of that illustrious Person, who was to bear the sin, of many, and pour out his soul for transgressors.

Ther. Since sacrifices were of a religious nature, they should not only be instructive and beneficial in their tendency, but have their due effects with regard to God, to sin, and to the person who brought them.

Asp. They had their effects with regard to God, that his justice might be magnified and his anger appeased—to sin, that its demerit might be displayed, yet its guilt be done away—to the person who brought them, that he might obtain pardon, be exempted from punishment, and exercise his faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ther. There are so many sorts of sacrifice appointed in the Jewish rubric, that I am at a loss for a distinct idea, unless some one be singled out and separately considered.

Asp. Among all the sacrifices instituted by Moses, none more circumstantially typified the blessed Jesus, or more appositely expressed the benefits of his oblation, than the paschal lamb, and the sin-offering, on the day of atonement.

An expositor, who cannot be mistaken, has given us this interpretation of the paschal lamb: "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us;"* declaring hereby, that Christ is a real sacrifice; that he was prefigured, in this capacity, by the paschal lamb; that the circumstances which distinguished it, met in him; and the advantages which resulted from it, were procured by him: those, in their truest import—these, in their largest extent. The words of the apostle speak this sense to the plainest, simplest reader. Whereas, to extort any other signification from them, what subtilty of wit, and what refinement, or rather violence of criticism, must be used!

The paschal lamb was without blemish. Such was the lamb of God; free from all taint of original sin, and from every spot of actual transgression.—A lamb of the first year, in all the sprightliness and floridity of youth. Christ also laid down his life, not when worn with age, or debilitated with sickness; but in the very prime of his days; amidst all the bloom of health, and all the vigour of manhood.—The lamb was to be slain in such a manner, as might occasion the most copious effusion of its blood. And was not this very exactly fulfilled in our suffering Saviour? His blood flowed out in vast abundance, by the amazing sweat in the garden; by the rending lashes of the scourge; by the lacerating points of the thorns; by the dreadful nails which cleft his hands and his feet; by the deadly spear which ripped open his side, and cut its way to his heart.—Though the blood was to be so liberally spilt, a bone of the lamb was not to be broken. And you cannot but recollect, you cannot but admire, the wonderful interposition of Providence, to accomplish this emblematical prediction. When the soldiers had received a command to break the legs of the three crucified persons; when they had actually broke the legs of each malefactor, which hung on the right side of our Lord and on the left; their minds were overruled (by a divine influence, no doubt) to spare the blessed Jesus, and to leave all his bones unhurt, untouched.

The lamb was to be killed before the whole assembly; in the presence, either of the whole congregation of Israel, or else of that particular society which concurred in eating the flesh. And did not the whole multitude of the Jews conspire against our Redeemer to put him to death? Did they not all cry out, as with one voice, *Crucify him! Crucify him!* Was he not executed at one of their grand festivals, and in the sight of the whole assembled nation?—The blood was not to be poured heedlessly upon the ground, but received carefully into a basin, and sprinkled, with the utmost punctuality, upon the door-posts. In like manner, the blood of the heavenly Lamb is not to be trampled under foot by a contemptuous disregard. It is the treasure of the church, and the medicine of life; to be received, therefore, by an humble faith, and devoutly applied to our consciences.—The sprinkling of that blood secured every Israelitish family from the destroying angel's sword. So the merits of the slaughtered Saviour† screen every believing

* 1 Cor. v. 7. Would any one venture to say, "Paul our passover is sacrificed for us:" Yet this, I think, may be, or rather is in effect, said, by the account which some persons give of Christ's satisfaction. The very thought of such a blasphemous absurdity is too painful and offensive for the serious Christian to dwell upon.

† Both St. Peter and St. Paul speak of the blood of sprinkling, 1 Pet. i. 2. Heb. xii. 24.; intimating, by this remarkable form of speech, that the death of Christ will be of no advantage to the sinner, unless it be applied to his heart; as the blood of the paschal lamb was no protection to an Israelite, till it had tinged the posts of his door.

sinner from the stroke of offended justice, and from the pains of eternal death.—What must have become of the Israelite, who, trusting to the uprightness of his heart, should neglect to make use of this divinely appointed safeguard? He must inevitably have been punished with the death of his first-born. Equally certain, but infinitely more dreadful, will be his condemnation, who, before the omniscient Judge, shall presume to plead his own integrity, or confide in his own repentance, and reject the atonement of the dying Jesus.

Ther. Now, if you please, for the sin offering*, which seems to have been the most eminent sacrifice of them all.

Asp. It was the most comprehensive, because it shadowed forth not only the death of Christ, but his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven. As the various actions of some illustrious personage, which can be exhibited by the painter in a single draught, are displayed in several compartments, yet all constitute one and the same grand historical picture; so these glorious events, incapable of being represented by any single animals, were typified by two kinds of the goats, which nevertheless were reputed by us as one offering†.

These goats were brought to the door of the tabernacle, and there presented before the Lord. Christ also presented himself before God, when "he went up to Jerusalem, that all things written by the prophets concerning him might be accomplished," Luke xviii. 31. The goat on which the Lord's lot fell, was devoted to death. "Christ also being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," Acts ii. 23. "was crucified and slain. The body was burned without the camp, which pointed at the very place and pictured out the very nature of our Lord's sufferings: "For he suffered without the gate," Heb. xiii. 12.; was there exposed to the rage of men and the wrath of God, under the most exquisite pains of body, and the most insupportable agonies of soul; all significantly typified by the flame of a devouring fire, than which nothing is more fierce, more penetrating, or more severely tormenting.

As the animal which was slaughtered shewed forth the Redeemer dying for our sins, that which escaped prefigured the same Saviour rising again for our

* For the circumstances relating to the sin-offering, the reader will consult Lev. xv. For those which concern the paschal lamb, he will have recourse to Exod. xii.

† How runs the divine command? "He (the high-priest) shall take of the congregation two kids of the goats for a sin-offering," Lev. xvi. 5. Are not these two kids styled in the singular number and collective sense, an offering? That we might not mistake God is pleased to add, "and one ram for a burnt offering." Here he names one, to prevent a misapprehension of his meaning when he had before said two. To render his meaning still more apparent, and that we may regard this goat as joined in the same offering with the other, the Lord, contrary to his own rule in all other cases, orders the high-priest to lay his hands upon the head of the scape-goat, not upon the head of the goat devoted to death. He divides the necessary circumstances of a sacrifice between the two, to intimate, in the clearest manner, that neither the one nor the other separate, but both taken together, were the one sacrificial oblation, appointed for this distinguished solemnity.

If this be true, I think the passage is a pretty considerable proof, that atonement was made by suffering vicarious punishment; notwithstanding what has been urged against it from the tenth verse of the chapter. Should we require human authority for the support of this interpretation, one of the greatest human authorities may be seen in the celebrated Witsius: "Uterque hircus pertinebat ad unum sacrificium pro peccato, hostiæ unius loci. Uterque erat pecus piacularis, vicaria Israeli peccatori, ejusque peccatum ferens." *D. Oecon.* lib. iv. cap. 6.

justification. The high-priest put his hands upon the head of the scape-goat, and with great solemnity confessed the sins of the whole congregation. The import of this ceremony is expressly declared in the sacred canon: "The goat shall bear upon him their iniquity*." It is charmingly explained by the prophet, "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all," Isa. liii. 6.; and most delightfully confirmed by the apostle, "He himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree," 1 Pet. ii. 24.

This done, the goat was dismissed into a land not inhabited, a place separated from all resort of men, where he was never likely to be found any more: to teach us, that our offences, having been expiated by the bleeding Jesus, are entirely done away, shall never rise up in judgment against us, but, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, "When the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, they shall not be found," Jer. l. 20. It is further enjoined, that "Aaron shall confess all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, in all their sins." Iniquities, transgressions, sins, are particularised; and to this cluster of expressions the word *all* is added, to inform us, that the least sins need the atonement of Christ's death; to assure us, that the greatest sins are not beyond the compass of its efficacy; and that all sins, be they ever so heinous, or ever so numerous, are forgiven to the true believer.

The high-priest carried the blood of the victim into the second tabernacle, even within the veil. So Christ entered with his own blood, not into the holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself. The blood was sprinkled before the mercy-seat, and left in the holy of holies, that it might always remain before the Lord. And does not Christ always appear in the presence of God for us? does he not ever live to make intercession for us? to plead his all sufficient propitiation in our behalf; that the benefits procured thereby may be communicated, ratified, and perpetuated to his people?

Ther. These benefits, *Aspasio*, are ascribed in Scripture to repentance and reformation of life, qualifications of our own; not to any such cause as a vicarious sacrifice, where the merit must necessarily subsist in another. What says the apostle Peter when he had just received his instructions from the Holy Ghost? "Repent and be converted;" not look unto an atonement, or depend upon a propitiation; "that your sins may be blotted out," Acts iii. 19.

Asp. It is true, the benefits of the new covenant are promised to penitents, as their happy portion; but never assigned to their repentance, as the procuring cause; never to their repentance, but to the blood of the great High-priest, called therefore "the blood of the everlasting covenant," Heb. xiii. 20.; being the condition stipulated in it, required by it, and in consequence of which all its unspeakable privileges are bestowed.

Besides, the qualifications you suppose are the gift of the Lord. We are not able to exercise them till Christ, who is exalted for this very purpose, gives repentance, Acts v. 31. A conversion to God, and a newness of life, are not the effect of human abilities, but the work of the divine Spirit, and the fruit of the Redeemer's death. Indeed, this death is the purchase of every heavenly blessing. This opens the heaven of heavens, and all its

* It is observable, that whereas the scape-goat is said to bear (נשׂא) the sins of Israel, Lev. xvi. 22.; the very same phrase is applied to Christ, Isa. liii. 12.

inexhaustible stores. By this we have the enjoyment of grace, and by this the hope of glory.

Ther. You begin to be in raptures, Aspasio!

Asp. Excuse me, Theron. It is not easy to repress the sallies of delight and devotion, when we muse upon such amazing loving-kindness, and are touched with a sense of such immensely rich benefits. A great High-priest who is "higher than the heavens," Heb. vii. 26. yet humbled himself to death, even the death of the cross! who is "consecrated for evermore," Heb. vii. 28. and pleads all his merit, improves all his influence, for our consummate felicity!

"What heart of stone but glows at thoughts like these?

Such contemplations mount us, and should mount

The mind still higher; nor ever glance on man

Unraptured, uninflamed."

Night Thoughts, No. iv.

But I check myself; and will either reply to your objections, or listen to your sentiments; listen as attentively as you yourself attend to the music of that shrill-tongued thrush.

Ther. Its sweetly-modulated lays, eminent even in the symphony of spring have indeed attracted my ears. But my mind is disengaged, and free to your conversation.

Asp. I can repeat a song, sweeter far than this, or all the melody of the woodland choirs—a song, which has harmony enough to make the brow of melancholy wear a smile, or to sooth away the sorrows of death itself. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us," Rom. viii. 33, 34. According to my friend's principle the strain of this triumphant exclamation was ill-judged, and should have run in the following manner: "Who shall lay any thing to our charge? We have endeavoured to preserve a rectitude of disposition, and to persist in a laudable course of action. Wherever we failed, we have been sorry for the fault, and have implored pardon from the divine Majesty. What shall dismay us? or who shall condemn us?" Your topics of consolation would be complete, without having recourse to the death of Christ as an atonement for sin; or to the resurrection of Christ, as an evidence that the atonement is accepted; or to the intercession of Christ, as the cause of our interest in that transcendent blessing.

Ther. Since you so frequently mention, and so earnestly insist upon atonement, I should be glad to know the precise signification of the word. I am told the original phrase has nothing to do with the idea of making satisfaction.

Asp. We may learn the precise signification of atonement, by considering the means, the effect, and the manner whereby the means accomplish the effect. The effect of atonement, is pardon. The means of obtaining it, are the death of Christ. The way or manner whereby the death of Christ becomes efficacious for this blessed purpose, is the sovereign appointment of his Father, the infinite dignity of his person, and especially the vicarious nature of his sufferings, or their being undergone in the stead of sinners.

Ther. It has been supposed, and is affirmed too, that our Saviour's obedience

and death were conducive to our redemption, only in virtue of his Father's will and appointment.

Asp. I am glad it is some other, and not my Theron, who espouses this opinion, which is highly injurious to the dignity of our Redeemer's person, and to the merit of his obedience. Neither is it very honourable to the wisdom of the Father, unless we suppose him therefore to have appointed the death of Christ, because he knew it was fully sufficient for the glorious purpose.

And why should we use that weak inadequate expression, conducive to our redemption? Would any one say of Solomon's elegant and sumptuous temple, that it was conducive to the accomplishment of what Moses foretold? Exod. xv. 17. David's provision of stones, of timber, and of gold, was, if you please, conducive to it; but Solomon's act was perfective of it, was the very execution of the thing itself. Such are the obedience and death of Christ, with respect to our redemption.

Ther. But we forget the original word, and neglect to inquire into its genuine import.

Asp. The word, which we translate *atonement*, implies, in its primary acceptation, the notion of covering. Thus the ark was covered*, "was overlaid with pitch, within and without," that all its chinks might be secured against the insinuating attempts of the water, and all its timber defended from the injuries of the liquid element. When an object, in this or any other manner, is covered over for safety, the covering receives every shock, and sustains all damages, which would otherwise fall upon the thing covered. The image, therefore, is very pertinently used, to express the true evangelical nature of atonement; and the word is used, with equal propriety, to describe the mercy-seat †, which was a costly covering for the ark, made of pure gold, and exactly commensurate to that sacred repository. In this were lodged the tables of the law; whose precepts we have violated, and to whose curse we were subject. Consequently the mercy-seat, both by its situation, its extent, and its office, prefigured the Redeemer; who interposes between the law and the offender; fulfils the commands, and sustains the curse of the former; merits pardon, and procures salvation for the latter.

As some fine flower, having entertained our eye with one beautiful colour, suddenly breaks, or gradually softens into another, and gives us a renewed pleasure; such, methinks, is the nature of this delightful word. It is expressive of the hoar-frost ‡, which, in a serene but sharp wintry morning, covers the houses, covers the trees, covers the whole face of nature. So, the blood of Jesus, according to the Psalmist's representation, covers all our guilt, and hides every offence, Psal. xxxii. 1. Insomuch that, when this blood is applied by the divine Spirit, the Lord "sees no iniquity in Jacob," Numb. xxiii. 21. He acts as if he saw none; neither punishes the guilty, nor abhors the polluted sinner.

* מָצַח, Thou shalt "besmear, cover, or overlay," Gen. vi. 14. This is the first place in which our word occurs. It is supposed to give us the genuine and native sense of the phrase. Perhaps the English expression "cover," may be derived from the participle מָצַח "copher."

† מִצְחָה, Exod. xxv. 17.

‡ דָּבַח, Psal. cxlvii. 16. The idea deduced from hoar-frost is not so exact and striking,

The same expression is used with reference to a covenant, and signifies the abolition of the contract* ; which was done by cancelling the deed, or expunging the articles of stipulation. By the covenant of works, all mankind became obnoxious to condemnation, were bound over to death. By the grace of Christ, our obligation to punishment is disannulled, and the hand-writing of condemnation is blotted out. Should you ask, How this is effected? By paying a ransom, and offering a sacrifice. Should you further inquire, Of what this ransom and this sacrifice consisted? Of nothing less than the precious blood, the inestimable life, the divinely magnificent person of Christ.

Ther. These then are the capital ideas included in the original word—a covering by way of defence, and a covering by way of concealment.

Asp. They are, Theron.—As the brain, in the animal body, is the source of sensation, sends out various detachments of nerves to animate and actuate all the parts of the vital system ; so these two capital ideas branch themselves into a variety of subordinate, yet similar significations, which run through the whole economy of the gospel, to enliven and quicken the spirit of a believer. Let me instance in a few particulars. This richly significant word denotes—the exercise of divine mercy, Deut. xxxii. 43. ; the pardon of sin, Deut. xxi. 8., 2 Chron. xxx. 18. ; a cleansing from guilt, Numb. xxxv. 33. ; purging from transgression, Psal. lxxv. 3. ; reconciliation for iniquity, Dan. ix. 24. ; the pacifying of wrath, Ezek. xvi. 63. Do not these passages (which are expressed by some branch of the verb that conveys to us the idea of atoning) plainly intimate, that the atonement of Christ is the meritorious cause of all these desirable effects? is the foundation of every act of divine goodness, and the origin of every blessing, vouchsafed to sinners?

Ther. After all, this is the consideration which principally offends and perplexes me: God is a spirit, an absolutely perfect and infinitely pure being ; remote, inconceivably remote, from whatever is gross or corporeal. How then can he take pleasure in the effusion of blood, or the burning of flesh? how can any such low carnal inducements make him merciful to sinners, or appease what you call his wrath?

Asp. Rather, what the Scriptures call his wrath. You mistake our doctrine, my dear Theron. We never maintain that any sacrifice whatever, not even the propitiation of Christ's death, was intended to make God merciful ; only to make way for his eternal purposes of mercy, without any prejudice either to the demands of his law or the rights of his justice. Our sentiments on this head are exactly consonant to his own declaration, and his own procedure, in the case of Job's friends ; see Job xlii. 7, 8. Though displeased with their conduct, he was merciful to their persons ; nevertheless, he would not exercise that mercy till they had first offered a sacrifice, and acted faith in a dying Saviour.

Neither is it ever supposed, that the infinitely wise and pure God can take pleasure in the effusion of blood, or the burning of flesh, simply con-

in our northern clime, as in the more southern regions. There, the exhalations and dews being more copious, the hoar-frost must fall thicker, lie deeper, and more fully correspond with the notion of covering.

* Isa. xxviii. 18. כַּפַּר אֲבֹלֵבִיט׃ “ Proprie sonat, oblinetur, oblitterabitur, est enim כַּפַּר Hebraeis proprie quid obducere, atque inde (cum obducta et oblita dispareant) delere abolere.” Thus, I apprehend, the words should be pointed.

sidered; only as they had a reference to that noble and inestimable sacrifice, which brings the highest honour to his name, which those slaughtered animals exhibited in a figure, and to which every true Israelite had a believing regard.

I say, had a believing regard. For it is affirmed by the author of the Hebrews, that the gospel was preached to the Israelites in the wilderness, Heb. iv. 2. What does he mean by the gospel? The very essence of this benevolent scheme, according to the apostle's own definition, is, that "Christ died for our sins," 1 Cor. xv. 3. How was this gospel preached to our fathers in the wilderness? By significant emblems; especially by slaughtered animals, and bleeding victims, by which Christ was almost continually, though not so evidently as in these latter times, "set forth crucified for sinners," Gal. iii. 1.

In this sense alone, those carnal usages were worthy the wisdom of God to appoint, and the majesty of God to accept. This gave them a peculiar dignity and importance, and set them far above all the similar observances used in the heathen worship. They were also, when thus explained, thus improved, extremely profitable to believers; as they directed their contemplation to the future sufferings of a Saviour, and ratified to their faith the benefits of his ever-operating sacrifice; which, we were assured by an infallible voice, was effectual "for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant*."

Ther. So you apprehend, that in those usages practised by the ancient Jews, the gospel was emblematically preached, and Christ in a figure exhibited?

Asp. Most certainly, Theron. And for this cause, under the law almost all things were purged with blood, Heb. ix. 22. The multiplicity, the variety, the constancy of their sacrifices, were all designed to impress upon their minds, and familiarise to their thoughts, this great evangelical truth. Was any one overtaken by a fault? He must present a victim, and the priest must slay it, by way of trespass-offering; to signify, that the guilt which was contracted could be done away only by the atoning death of Christ. Had any one received a signal blessing? A beast was slain by way of peace-offering; as a public expression of gratitude for the mercy, and also as an emphatical declaration, that all good vouchsafed to fallen man is owing to the Redeemer's ransom. Was any one to be invested with the priestly office, or admitted to minister in the sanctuary? A ram or a bullock must bleed, by way of atonement, and for the purpose of consecration, Lev. viii. 22., Numb. viii. 12; in order to testify, that no man can officiate with acceptance in the worship of God; that no service, though of a religious kind, can be pleasing in his sight, till the former is interested in the merits, unless the latter is recommended by the death of the great High-priest.

And not only by their solemn sacrificial acts, but even by their ordinary meals, this grand lesson was inculcated. They were forbidden to eat the blood, in order to awaken and preserve in their consciences a reverential

* Heb. ix. 15. When I reflect on these words, I wonder how any one can assert, That all the Jews died under the curse of the law. Died under the curse of the law! even though the apostle has warranted it for a truth that "all these" (meaning Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, &c.) "died in faith," Heb. xi. 13.

and fiducial regard to the precious blood of Christ. The Holy Ghost, assigning a reason for this sacred prohibition, says expressly, "Because the blood maketh an atonement for your souls," Lev. xvii. 11.; the blood of beasts typically, the blood of Christ effectually. O that Christians would, in this particular, learn of Jews; learn, at least, from Jewish ordinances, to have their attention incessantly fixed on that divine High-priest, who, by one offering, hath perfected for ever,—not barely conduced or contributed to the work, but hath fully accomplished it, and obtained complete remission for—them that are sanctified, Heb. x. 14.

Ther. Some offerings were made without any effusion of blood. What could these mean? or how could they typify the sacrifice of Christ?

Asp. Perhaps the apostle might foresee such an objection when he used that guarded expression, *almost* all things were purged with blood. If, in these cases, there was no effusion of blood, yet there was a destruction of the substance. The meat-offerings were consumed by fire; which is much the same to inanimate things, as shedding of the blood is to living creatures. The same effect is ascribed to these oblations, as to those of the sanguinary kind. It is expressly declared of the poor man's trespass-offering, which consisted of fine flour, and was burnt upon the altar, "It shall make an atonement for him," Lev. v. 11, 12, 13. So that here also was what we may truly call a visible prediction of Christ. The offerings which flamed, as the victims which bled, shewed forth our dying Lord; whose one "oblation of himself once offered," comprised all the qualities, and realised the whole efficacy represented by every other sacrifice.

Ther. Another odd circumstance has often given me disgust, and been apt to prejudice me against the institutions of the Old Testament. Many of them appear mean, contemptible, and perfectly puerile. "Can these," I have said within myself, "be ordained by a God of infinite wisdom, and transcendent glory? Can we reasonably imagine, that a mandate should be issued from the court of heaven, on purpose to forbid the boiling, and enjoin the roasting of some particular piece of meat? Exod. xii. 9. Will the great Ruler of the skies concern himself about the precise manner of killing one bird, and releasing another? Lev. xiv. 4, 5, 6, 7. Will he who claims the worship of the heart, have such an especial regard to a drop or two of despicable blood, put upon the tip of the right ear, or the thumb of the right hand? Exod. xxix. 20. Surely, such childish ceremonies are too minute and trivial for the notice, much more for the solemn appointment, of the supreme Majesty!"

Asp. You will please to remember, that when those ceremonies were ordained, it was the infancy, at least the minority, of the church. If we advert to this circumstance, we shall have reason to admire both the all-comprehending wisdom, and the no less condescending goodness of Jehovah. His all-comprehending wisdom, in conforming so accurately and so minutely the type to the event, though the former was established long, long before the latter existed. Many ages before the Desire of Nations appeared, his picture was drawn, was presented to public view, and is now found to correspond in every feature with the illustrious original. What hand could be equal to such a task, but only the hand of an omniscient limner? His condescending goodness, in adapting the tenor of his revelation to the state of his people; "speaking unto them even as unto babes," 1 Cor. iii. 1.

not by naked precepts, or abstracted truths, but by earthly similitudes, and (if I may so express myself) by embodied instructions, such as were level to their low capacities, and calculated to affect their dull apprehensions.

The institutions to which you hint were undoubtedly mean and trifling, if considered in themselves. Accordingly, their wise and majestic Author cautions his people against such erroneous and unworthy notions. "I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices," Jer. vii. 22. "It was not my design that they should acquiesce in the shadow and neglect the substance. I never intended that they should rest in the porch, but pass through these ordinances to much sublimer things. Christ and spiritual blessings were principally in my view; to which all the Mosaical usages were relative, subservient, and one continual manufaction." Considered in this light, as bearing a reference to the ever-blessed Mediator, as emblems of his person and pledges of his grace, they acquire a real magnificence, and convey the most salutary lessons.

The blood put upon the tip of the ear and thumb of the hand, denotes our personal application of the death of Christ; without which all its virtue, though boundless and inconceivable, will profit us nothing. Those particular parts of the body may signify the perceptive and executive faculties; in both which we offend, and for both which we need the great propitiation. Of the two birds you mention, one was to be killed, the other was to fly away, after it had been dipped in the blood of its fellow. Thus the Lord Jesus was crucified for our sins; and we being washed in his blood, being interested in the atonement of our holy victim and elder brother, are acquitted from guilt, and escape condemnation. Concerning the paschal lamb it was particularly enjoined, That the flesh should not be eaten raw, nor sodden with water, but roasted with fire; and of every offering from the herd or from the flock, and the inwards were, by an express command of God, delivered up to the devouring flame. All this was an emblem of that tremendous indignation, which "is poured out like fire," Nah. i. 6.; which seized our immaculate Sacrifice, that it might spare polluted sinners; and which must have consumed utterly any mediator, who was less than infinite, or other than divine.

Had you beheld our renowned Newton blowing up, with great assiduity and attention, his little watery vesicles into the air, you would perhaps have despised the venerable philosopher, and have thought him little better than a hoary idiot. But when you was told, that in every one of these volatile soapy bubbles he discovered the beautiful colours of the rainbow, and from this seemingly childish experiment he explained the nature of that wonderful arch; you would then entertain a different notion, both of the man and of his employ. So when you discern the blessed Jesus looking forth at these windows, and shewing himself through these lattices * of the Jewish economy, you will, I hope, conceive a higher opinion of them, and derive richer advantage from them.

Ther. There are several persons, as well as ritual observances, of a very singular character mentioned in the Mosaic law. The leper, for instance, the Nazarite, with others of the same antiquated and grotesque stamp;

* Cant. ii. 9. The word, in the first edition, is "flourishing through." It was taken from the Hebrew, without consulting the English, and is a literal translation of פָּרַח.

which seem, to me at least, so many unmeaning narratives, that convey no manner of edification to readers in the present age. I have frequently had an inclination, and now I have a proper opportunity, to ask your opinion upon these points.

Asp. I thank you, Theron, for giving me the hint. What you propose is by no means foreign to the topic of our discourse. Those persons were truly remarkable; neither are the peculiarities of their case recorded in vain. They picture out, in dismal and delightful colours, the sinner and the Saviour. To know ourselves, and to know Christ, is true wisdom; is indeed the consummation of all knowledge. Here we have a lecture of hieroglyphical instruction, on both those important subjects.

The leper was an emblem of a sinner; see Levit. chap. xiii. xiv.; his disease extremely afflictive to himself, and intolerably loathsome to others. Sin likewise is the sorest of all miseries to the wretch who commits it; and most detestably odious to the God who forbids it. The leper was secluded from the benefits of society, and all communication with his fellow-citizens. The sinner also, while impenitent and unpardoned, is an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, Eph. ii. 12.; without any enjoyment of the comforts, or any interest in the privileges of the gospel. If he dies in this condition, he must be for ever shut out from the kingdom of heaven; for ever cut off from the presence of the Lord.

The contagion was sometimes so pestilent, that it not only tainted the clothes of the diseased, but spread itself over the walls of his house, and infected the timber of the beams. It was sometimes so inveterate, that it could be eradicated no other way but by burning the garment, and demolishing the building. Does not this give us a clear, but melancholy view of original corruption? which has transfused its poison through all the faculties of the soul, and all the members of the body; nor will ever be entirely expelled, till death releases the former, and consigns the latter to the dust.

What could cure this terrible distemper, even in its mildest state? Not all the balm of Gilead; not all the drugs on a thousand hills; nothing but the consecrated oil, and sacrificial blood, duly applied by the high-priest. And what can heal the disorders of our fallen souls? so far heal them as to purge away their guilt, and subdue the prevalence of their iniquities? No acts of mortification, no vigilance, nor any efforts of our own; nothing but the atoning death, and sanctifying Spirit, of the blessed Jesus. The malignity and virulence of this plague of the heart, are absolutely incorrigible by any other expedient. But, blessed be divine grace, this remedy, provided by our great High-priest, and administered by our great Physician, is sovereign and never fails.

The case of the Nazarites, (see Numb. chap. vi.) was the very reverse of the state of the lepers. "Her Nazarites," Jeremiah says, "were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk: they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphires," Lam. iv. 7. A faint representation of the only begotten Son, who is the fairest among ten thousand; the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; both God and man in one sacred, wonderful, adorable Saviour. They, during the time of their separation, abstained from wine, withdrew from secular business, avoided every kind of pollution, and dedicated themselves in an especial

manner to the service of God. A type of that glorious Nazarite, who was separated for a season from the fruitions of heaven ; who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, both in his nature and all his conversation ; who sanctified himself, and devoted his life and labours, his soul and body, to the glory of his Father, and the redemption of his people. The Nazarites, even when they had discharged their vow, and were ceremonially clean, yet were obliged to offer a sin-offering, a burnt-offering, and a peace-offering. So the great Redeemer, though he had perfectly obeyed all the preceptive parts of the divine law, yet was required to offer up a sacrifice—even the incomparably precious sacrifice of himself—in order to consummate the work of our salvation.

Ther. Have you a sufficient warrant for this strain of interpretation ? Is it sound, is it rational, or conformable to any authentic standard of scriptural exposition ? Methinks it looks more like the child of fancy, than the offspring of judgment ; more like the sally of a sportive imagination, than the result of a sober disquisition.

You cannot be ignorant, Aspasio, how the ruling passion tinctures the whole conduct. Hence it is, I apprehend, that your religious inamoratoes find heavenly beauties, where Scripture intended no more than natural truths. Hence it is that they turn plain facts into profound figures, and allegorise common sense into pious absurdity. Have you never seen the mystic interpretations of some ancient, and, I may add, some modern divines ? The honesty of their design is transparent, and the piety of their lives is unquestionable : otherwise we should be tempted to suspect, that they meant to burlesque the Scriptures, and disgrace their Author.

Who can ever persuade himself, that the supremely wise God would send us to search for a body of divinity in a bundle of rods ? or set us to spin all the mysteries of Christianity from a few fleeces of wool, ring-streaked, speckled, and spotted ? Gen. xxxi. Thus to expound the Scriptures, is not to open them clearly, and apply them judiciously, but rather to whip them into froth*.

Asp. We have the authority of our Lord himself, who has informed us, that the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness, John iii. 14. was figurative of his own suspension and death on the cross : that the temple built on Mount Sion was typical of his immaculate body, in which dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, John ii. 19. 21. ; Col. ii. 9. : that the prophet Jonah, lodged in the belly of the whale, and discharged from that strange confinement on the third day, Matt. xii. 39, 40. was an emblem of his own descending into the grave, and rising again before his flesh saw corruption.

We have also the testimony and the practice of the chiefest of the apostles for our warrant. He assures us, that the rock smitten by Moses had a reference to Christ, 1 Cor. x. 4. ; who was wounded for our sins, and is the foundation of our hopes : that the waters issuing at the stroke, were significative of those spiritual blessings which flow from a crucified Saviour : that as the former followed the sons of Jacob through all the circumvolutions of their tedious journey, the latter accompanied the disciples of Jesus in every stage of their earthly pilgrimage. Let the great teacher of the Gentiles be our expositor, and we shall see the veil of the temple dignified with a significancy, richer far than its costly materials and curious workmanship.

* Luther used to call such far-fetched and unnatural allegories, “ spumam scripturæ.”

Its silk and embroidery exhibit to the eye of faith the pure and spotless flesh of Christ, Heb. x. 20. As, by rending the material veil, the holy of holies became visible and accessible; so, by piercing the body and spilling the blood of Christ, the God of heaven was manifested and the way to heaven opened.

Every reader must admire those divided waves, which, instead of overwhelming the Israelites with a resistless deluge, stood like a wall of defence on their right hand and on their left, as they marched through the depths of the sea. Every reader must admire that suspended cloud, which spread itself like a spacious canopy over the hosts of Israel, and screened them from the annoying sunbeams as they passed through the sultry desert. Our admiration must be heightened, when we find that which was a cloud by day becoming a pillar of fire by night, and illuminating their camp with the most amazing as well as the most cheering splendour. But St. Paul discerned a greater glory, and a deeper design, in those unparalleled events. The people, he says, "were baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea," 1 Cor. x. 2. These symbolically represented the baptism of water and of fire; or the application of Christ's blood to our souls, and the efficacy of his Spirit on our hearts:—in the former of which consists our justification, from the latter of which proceeds our sanctification.

I fear you will think my discourse somewhat like the journey just now mentioned; but I must not wholly omit the Epistle to the Hebrews, which is the most unexceptionable vindication, as well as the faultless model, of allegorical exposition. It is delightful to observe what propriety of address the inspired writer uses. He speaks to the Jews in their own way; alludes to their own usages, ordinances, and ceremonies; proves them to be types of, and guides to, a more clear, a more benign, and in all respects a more excellent economy*. More particularly he displays the transcendent superiority of Christ and his gifts, even to those persons and privileges which they held in the highest esteem. These, like the morning star, were introductory to, yet totally eclipsed by, the rising sun.

They had exalted apprehensions of the angelic excellencies. The apostle therefore celebrates the Redeemer, as the Lord whom angels obey, as the God whom angels adore. They always reckoned Moses to be the first favorite of heaven, and chief among the children of men. He lets them know, that Moses, with all his extraordinary endowments, was but a servant in the house of Jesus. It was his greatest honour to minister unto this Prince of Peace. As the priesthood and sacrifices were some of their distinguishing privileges, he shows the pre-eminence of Christ's office to all the Aaronic orders. He demonstrates the extensive and everlasting efficacy of his one atonement, in preference to every form, and the whole series of Levitical oblations.

Ther. Thus interpreted, I must acknowledge, the book of Levitical ceremonies is significant and edifying; whereas, abstracted from this evangelical improvement, nothing can be more empty and jejune. I once thought, that to peruse those obsolete canons, was like sitting down to an entertainment of dry bones. But, if such be their import, they may yield marrow and fatness to the attentive mind.

* He styles the legal oblations, and the whole service of the Jewish sanctuary, "the example and shadow of heavenly things;" or of Christ Jesus, and evangelical worship, and spiritual blessings, Heb. viii. 5.

Due care, however, should be taken, not to suppose a type where there is no apparent foundation of analogy in the thing itself, or no hint of this nature given us by the unerring Spirit; lest, instead of being guided by truth, we are bewildered by fancy. And when either or both these handles present themselves, I think we should beware of straining the subject beyond the bounds of a just and reasonable comparison; lest, instead of following the clue, we stretch it till it breaks. If the first caution is not observed, the sense of Scripture will lie so deep or be removed to such a distance, that none but persons of the most acute discernment can find it, or none but persons of the most excursive imagination can reach it. If the second is not regarded, the meaning of those divine volumes will become so vague and volatile, that there will hardly remain any possibility of ascertaining or fixing it.

Asp. As to the expedience and necessity of these cautionary limitations, I have the pleasure of agreeing entirely with my friend. Let our fancy submit to the reins of judgment, otherwise her excursions will be wild and lawless. Let our zeal borrow the eyes of discretion, otherwise her efforts will be blind and extravagant. And let all, thus tempered, thus regulated, be under the influence of enlightening grace. Then to spiritualize the ancient Scriptures, will be to convert the stones of the sanctuary into the jewels of a crown; and to fetch, not water only, but milk and honey, from the flinty rock.

Then how pleasing must it be, as well as instructive, to discover the blessed Jesus in all the institutions of the Mosaic law! To see his incarnation prefigured by the feast of tabernacles, when the Israelites were to relinquish their houses and lodge in booths, Lev. xxiii. 34. 40. 42.; even as the Son of God left the bosom of his Father and the seats of bliss, to inhabit a cottage of clay, and sojourn in a vale of tears. To see our spotless and divine Victim, typically slain at the joyful solemnity of the passover, and the anniversary fast of expiation. To see his death, that inestimable ransom for our souls, presented to our faith, in every morning and evening sacrifice, Exod. xxix. 38, 39.; his intercession, that prevailing recommendation of our prayers, most sweetly expressed by the rich incense which attended the sacred rite. To see the various methods of purification; some pointing at the fountain for sin and for uncleanness, opened in our Redeemer's bleeding heart, Exod. xxix. 4. Psal. li. 7.; others referring to those sanctifying operations of the Spirit, which act as a refiner's fire, or as fuller's soap, Numb. xxxi. 23. Isa. iv. 4. To see, in the city of refuge, that perfect security which Christ's meritorious sufferings in our stead afford to every penitent and believing sinner, Numb. xxxv. 11, 12.

Was it so very affecting and so very encouraging to Æneas, when he beheld the story of the Trojan heroes pictured upon the walls of the Carthaginian temple? (*Virg. Æn.* 1.) How much greater encouragement and joy must arise in the Christian's breast, when he perceives the amiable lineaments of his everlasting Friend portrayed in all the peculiarities of the Jewish worship, and in the most distinguishing events of the Jewish history! This must highly ennoble the Bible, and inexpressibly endear it to our affections. This spreads lustre, life, and glory, through every page of that blessed book. And though I would forbear indulging what might be called a pious wantonness of imagination; yet I should much rather choose, in expounding the Scriptures, to ramble with Augustine than err with Grotius; see, or think I see,

my Saviour, even where it may not perhaps be easy to make out the traces of his dignity to the satisfaction of a rigorous inquirer, rather than shut my eyes upon the display of his perfections when they beam forth with the most inviting beauty.

Ther. How soon is this walk finished! How imperceptibly has the time stole away! These garden gates I always used to approach with a particular complacency. They seemed to afford me a welcome retreat from the impertinence and vanity of the world. Now, methinks, I enter them with reluctance, because they are likely to put a period to this agreeable conversation. However, as my Aspasio enters with me, I am reconciled, I am satisfied. It will be in his power to restore the pleasure which must now be interrupted. And this is what I shall ere long request, because I have not spoke my whole mind upon the present subject.

Asp. Whenever you think proper, Theron. This is to me a favourite subject; and not to me only, but to incomparably better judges. The man who had been caught up into the third heavens, and seen the visions of God, "determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2. At the grandest assembly that ever was convened on earth, this furnished the principal, if not the only topic of conversation. And in that world where the voice of joy and thanksgiving is perpetually heard, this constitutes the burden of the song, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood," Rev. v. 9.

DIALOGUE IV.

Ther. I must now desire my Aspasio to inform me, what that grand assembly was, (which he mentioned in the close of our last discourse), and where convened?

Asp. Can you not guess, Theron?—Was it in the plains of Thessaly, when Xerxes drew together the forces of more than half the known world, and appeared at the head of all the potentates of the east? Was it in the Roman forum, when the senators were assembled in their robes, and the barbarians took them for a synod of gods? No: it was on the mount of transfiguration, where the Son of the true God, the Lord of eternal glory, shone forth in some of his celestial and native splendour; with garments white as the snow, Mark ix. 3. and a countenance bright as the sun: where he conversed with two of his most distinguished saints, just come down from the regions of bliss and immortality; with Moses the great deliverer of the law, and with Elijah the resolute restorer of its honours: where he was attended by three of his principal ambassadors, who were to be the reformers of mankind, and the lights of the world.

This, I think, is the most venerable and august assembly that the annals of history have recorded.—And what was the topic of conversation among these illustrious personages? Not the affairs of state, nor the revolutions of empires; not the curious refinements of literature, nor the wonderful discoveries of philosophy; but the ignominious and bloody exit which the divine Jesus was soon to make at Jerusalem. This circumstance, methinks,

should recommend the subject to our frequent discourse, even though it was less eminent for intrinsic dignity and comfortable import.

Talking in this manner, they arrive at the park ; which, the moment you enter, fills the view with its bold, enlarged, and magnificent sweep. It was diversified with level and rising ground. Here scooped into mimic amphitheatres, with the deer pendent on the little summit, or shooting down the easy precipice ; there raised into gentle hillocks, some of which were canopied with a large spreading solitary oak, others were tufted with a cluster of tapering and verdant elms. Two or three cascades, gleaming from afar, as they poured along the slanting rock or the grassy slope, gave a pleasing variation to the prospect ; while they startled the timorous inexperienced fawns with their foaming current and watery roar. Grandeur and simplicity seemed to be the genius of the place. Every thing breathed an air of noble negligence, and artless majesty.

In the centre of all rose a curious romantic mount. Its form was exactly round, somewhat like a sugar-loaf, lopt off a little below the point. Not coeval with nature, but the work of human industry. Thrown up, it is supposed, in those perilous times, when Britain was alarmed by foreign invasions, or bled with intestine wounds. It was covered all around with alder shrubs ; whose ranks, gradually arising and spreading shade above shade, composed a kind of woody theatre, through which were struck two or three spiral walks, leading, by a gentle ascent, and under embowering verdure to the summit. At proper intervals, and on every side of the hill, were formed little arborets, with apertures cut through the boughs to admit a prospect of the country. In one or other of these leafy boxes you command, at every hour of the day, either the enlivening sun or the refreshing shade. All along the circling avenues, and all around the beauteous rests, sprung daffodils, primroses, and violets ; which, mingling with hyacinths and cowslips, composed many a charming piece of natural mosaic.

How agreeable, as they climb and wind themselves round the hill, to reflect on the happy change which has now taken place ! Where steely helmets gleamed, or brazen shields clashed, the goldfinches twitter their loves, and display their painted plumes. The dens of rapine, or the horrid haunts of bloodshed, are become the retreats of calm contemplation and friendly converse. In yonder lower spaces, where the armed troops were wont to patrol, from whence they made excursions to ravage the villages or terrify the swains, the fallow-deer trip lightly, or the full-headed stags stand at bay.

From a small eminence, but at a considerable distance, gushed a couple of springs, which, rambling through a grove, lost one another in the shady labyrinth. Emerging at length from the gloom, they approached nearer and nearer, and fell into embraces at the foot of this hill. They rolled in amicable conjunction along the pebbly channel which encircles its basis, and added their sober melody to the sprightly warbling of the birds. Flowing off in one common stream, they formed the fine pieces of water which beautified the park. From thence they stole into the meadow, and widened into a river. There, enamoured as it were with each other, they glide by wealthy towns, and sweep through flowery vales ; regardless of the blooming toys which deck the one, and of the noisy crowds which throng the other.

So, said Aspasio, may Theron and his Selina, pleasing and pleased with

each other, pass through the busy and the amusing scenes of life; neither captivated by the one, nor anxious for the other. With such harmonious agreement, and indissoluble union, may they pursue the course marked out by Providence, their happiness increasing, and their usefulness enlarging, as they draw nearer the Ocean of all good! Then, parted by a gentle stroke of fate, like the waters of some ample stream severed by the piers of an intervening bridge, may they speedily reunite! reunite in consummate bliss, and never be separated more!

Ther. I thank you, Aspasio, for your affectionate compliment. Nor can I wish you, by way of return, a greater recompence, than the continual exercise of such a benevolent temper. For to exercise benevolence, is to enjoy the most refined and exalted pleasure; such as makes the nearest approaches to the felicity of the Eternal Mind, who, as the Scripture most beautifully speaks, "has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants."

But while we are seated on this mount, our situation reminds us of (what you just now mentioned) the grand conference relating to the death of Christ—a business for which you have indeed accounted, but in a manner that may be thought not the most honourable to the divine attributes.

Asp. I have represented it as a ransom for our souls, and a sacrifice for our sins. If you disapprove my account, be pleased to favour me with your own. For what purpose, according to your opinion, did that ever-blessed person die?

Ther. To confirm the truth of his doctrine, and leave us a pattern of the most perfect resignation.

Asp. And is this all? Shall we thus impoverish the riches of grace? Was this notion defensible, it could never be desirable. But it has as little to support it as it has to recommend it. For, upon such a supposition, where is the difference between the death of Christ and the death of the martyrs? They confirmed the truth of the gospel: In their sufferings was obedience and resignation, the same in quality, though not in degree. Upon such a supposition, what benefit could the ancient patriarchs receive from the Redeemer; since none could be improved by the example of his patience, or the pattern of his obedience, till they were actually exhibited? or how could Christ be styled, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world?" Rev. xiii. 8.; the advantages of whose death commenced from the very beginning, as they will be prolonged even to the end of time.

Not to depend on consequential arguments, let us hear the express declaration of our divine Master himself: "This is my blood, which is shed"—for what? To give credibility to my gospel, or yield an example of entire resignation? Rather—"for the remission of sins," Matt. xxvi. 28. Will any one attempt to make the remission of sins, and the proposal of a pattern, or the ratification of a doctrine, synonymous terms? They who can torture and transmute the genuine sense of words at this extraordinary rate, may metamorphose any expression into any meaning.

If, then, we would consider our Lord's death in its due amplitude, we must consider it both as a pattern of piety and as a ransom for sinners; we must neither separate nor confound these very distinct, yet very consistent effects.

Ther. Is it not inconsistent with the acknowledged principles of justice, that the innocent should be punished instead of the offender?

Asp. If the innocent person has an absolute power over his own life, willingly substitutes himself in the place of the guilty, and by his vicarious sufferings fully answers all the purposes of a righteous government ;—in this case, which was the case with our Lord, I see not the least repugnancy to the rules of justice.

The Bible, that authentic transcript of the counsels of Heaven, avows, and by avowing vindicates the practice, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all *." When all we like sheep had gone astray, and were exposed to the stroke of vengeance, as those wandering creatures to theavenous beasts ; the good Shepherd interposed, and the just God made that vengeance to fall upon him, which must otherwise have been executed upon us. "He suffered," says another inspired writer, "the just for the unjust," 1 Pet. iii. 18. that, by expiating our guilt, "he might bring us to God ;" now to his gracious favour, hereafter to his blissful presence.

You will permit me to add a passage from our common favourite, Milton ; because it is no less beautiful in itself, than it is pertinent to the occasion ; and please the critic, and may expound the apostle. Messiah, pleading in behalf of fallen man, thus addresses his Almighty Father :

—————"Man, dead in sins and lost,
Atonement for himself, or offering meet,
(Indebted and undone!) hath none to bring.
Behold me then! me for him! life for life
I offer. On me let thine anger fall.
Account me man: I for his sake will leave
Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
Freely put off; and for him lastly die
Well-pleas'd; on me let Death wreak all his rage."

MILTON, B. iii. l. 233.

Ther. The fine imagination of a poet will hardly pass for a decisive argument. When we are searching after truth, we must attend to the dictates of reason, not follow the vagaries of fancy. And reason, *Aspasio*, demonstrates against your notion of a vicarious sacrifice: Reason, that primary guide, and final test, both in discovering and determining the sense of Scripture.

Asp. Suppose you, then, my dear *Theron*, that none are in possession of reason, but the pupils of *Socinus*, and the zealots for *Deism*? or that none make use of reason, in their religious inquiries, but men of this mould?

"Wrong not the Christian, think not reason yours;
'Tis reason our great Master holds so dear:
'Tis reason's injured rights his wrath resents;
'Tis reason's voice obey'd his glorious crown;
Through reason's wounds alone thy faith can die."

Night Thoughts, No. iv.

Poets, you see, are far from disclaiming reason. Equally far is Christianity from discarding the sober, the sanctified use of this noble faculty. When reason is under the influence and direction of the divine Spirit, we have the same high opinion of her excellence as yourself. And when thus regulated, we have, I am persuaded, the sanction of her authority for all our sentiments.

Reason, as she operated in the sages of the heathen world, instead of re-

* Isa. liii. 6. יָצַד עָלַי מַדּוּעַ made to meet, or fall upon, in an hostile vindictive manner; with a design to take vengeance, or inflict death; as an armed man falls upon his enemy, as a fierce lion on the helpless lamb.

jecting, approved and adopted this very scheme; approved it even under the disadvantage of a mutilated and defective, or rather of a perverted and deformed. The current language of the classic authors, and almost every history of Greece and Rome, are vouchers for the truth of this observation. As the Gentiles were unanimous in the custom of offering sacrifices, and equally unanimous in supposing their vicarious nature, so also are the Jewish writers.

Ther. What man of sense pays any regard to the Jewish writers? I know legendary they are, and extravagant to the last degree. Do not call them, rather than writers.

Asp. They are, I believe, extravagant enough in their comments upon Scripture; but they relate, with sufficient exactness and fidelity, the prevailing belief of their nation. In this case, their testimony is as unquestionable, as, in the other, their notions are chimerical. Now, had it been a mistaken belief, surely our blessed Lord, that infallible judge and impartial reprove, would have testified his disapprobation of it. Surely his disciples, who were actuated by the unerring and undaunted spirit of their master, would have entered their protest against it. Surely St. Paul, in his epistle to that very people, and in his treatise on that very subject, would have endeavoured himself to rectify such an error, and have weeded out the tares before he sowed the good seed. But there is not the least hint of this kind in all the discourses of our Saviour, or in all the writings of his apostles.

They speak to a people who were accustomed to look upon their sacrifices as peculiar oblations, and a typical expiation of guilt. They speak of our Redeemer's crucifixion, and the benefits of his death, in the sacrificial terms that were of current use and established signification. If, therefore, the popular opinion was improper, their manner of expression and address must be calculated rather to authenticate error than to propagate truth: that, I think, even the silence of the inspired penmen on this occasion, is but a little inferior to a loud attestation. Did they only say nothing against the doctrine of satisfaction by sacrifice, it would in effect, and circumstances considered, be saying abundance for it. But they are very copious and explicit upon the point.

Ther. Where are they so copious? If you have such a heap of their allegations, it will be easy to pick out a few, and give us a specimen.

Asp. It is as easy, Theron, as it is delightful. "Messiah shall be cut off," says the prophet Daniel, "but not for himself," Dan. ix. 26. For whom then, and for what? Isaiah informs us concerning both. "For the transgression of my people was he stricken," Isa. liii. 8. Because this is an article of the last importance, it is repeated, it is confirmed, it is explained with the most remarkable particularity: "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed," Isa. liii. 5. Our Lord himself asserts the same truth in the very same style: "I am the good shepherd, and lay down my life for the sheep," John x. 15. St. Paul, in a multitude of passages, sets his seal to this momentous doctrine. St. Peter maintains it in very forcible words: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," 1 Pet. ii. 24.

The sacred writers not only assert this capital article, but use every diversity of speech, in order to give it the fullest evidence and strongest establishment. "He made reconciliation for the sins of the people," Heb. ii. 17

"Jesus Christ the righteous is the propitiation for our sins," 1 John ii. 2. :
 "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev. i. 5. :
 "He was made sin for us, though he knew no sin," 2 Cor. v. 21.

Ther. Nobody makes any objection to these texts; but the sense, the true sense of such phrases, is the thing in question.

Ans. What you call the question, to me appears so plain, as not to want a decision, or admit of a doubt. However, since you seem to demand a critical scrutiny, it will not be thought pedantic if I make an observation or two upon the original languages; or rather, as you are not acquainted with the Hebrew, on that language of which you yourself are a judge and a master.

If one died for all, then were all dead. The preposition *υπερ*, in this connexion, must necessarily signify more than "on our account, or for our advantage." Because, if it be taken in this unsettled rambling sense, the apostle's argument is vague and inconclusive. In case our Lord had suffered, only "to free us from some evil, and procure us some benefit," this would by no means imply that *all were dead*, under the sentence of condemnation, obnoxious, and doomed to death, 2 Cor. v. 14. The utmost you can infer from such premises is, that all stood in need of a deliverance from some evil, or wanted the procurement of some good. Whereas, suppose the sacred writer to intend that our Lord's death was truly vicarious, and undergone in our stead; that he suffered what was our due and our doom; then the reasoning is just, and the inference undeniable.

"He gave himself, *ανταλυτρον υπερ*, a ransom for all," 1 Tim. ii. 6. If this does not imply the notion of vicarious, I very much question whether language itself can express it. *Αυτρον* is a ransom, which conveys a vicarious sense, in its most common and authorized acceptation. *Αντι*, which is equivalent to *instead**, still more fully ascertains and strengthens the idea. *Υπερ*, which is translated *for*, and denotes a substitution of one in the place of another†; this added to all, renders the expression as determinate and emphatical for the purpose as words can possibly be.

Shall I argue from a more obvious topic, which has no such dependence on the precise significancy of the original? "Surely," says the prophet, he speaks with vehemence, as of an affair which is very weighty; he speaks with confidence as of a fact which is very certain; "he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," Isa. liii. 4. What can this mean, but he hath taken upon himself that affliction and those miseries which properly belonged to us? Let us read on, and this meaning will present itself in the clearest view. "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted:" we took him for a real malefactor, and thought that he was punished for his own misconduct. In opposition to which injurious and false surmise it is added, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." May I not here borrow the prophet's language, and say, with an air of certainty, Surely this is the plainest proof in the world, that our sins were the meritorious cause of Christ's sufferings; and if our sins were the meritorious cause of his sufferings, our sins must be charged upon him, and punished in him.

* *Αντι*, Matth. ii. 22. By this word the Septuagint translate the Hebrew *תחת*. And that *תחת* denotes the substitution of one instead of another, no student of the sacred language will venture to deny. See Gen. xxii. 13.; 2 Sam. xviii. 33.; 2 Kings x. 24.

† *Δεσμευθη υπερ Χριστου*. "We beseech you in Christ's stead," 2 Cor. v. 20. *Ισα υπερ σου κατανοησεν με*, "that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me," Phil. ver. 13.

St. Paul affirms, that "Christ has delivered us from the curse of the law," Gal. iii. 13. How? By taking our place, and enduring what we deserved; or, as the apostle himself speaks to the same effect, but in a much more emphatical manner, "by being made a curse for us." Does not this evidently denote both a commutation of persons, and a translation of punishment? He suffered, who was innocent; not we, who are guilty. He also suffered that very sentence which the law denounced on us; for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things," Deut. xxvii. 26.: to this we were obnoxious. It is written again, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," Gal. iii. 13.: to this Christ submitted. And if Christ endured that very curse which we deserved—if, by this means, he delivered us from all malediction—either this must be suffering in our stead, or else nothing can be called by that name.

Shall I descend lower still, and refer our point to the determination of illiterate men? Ask any of your serious tenants, what ideas arise in their minds upon the perusal of the afore-mentioned texts? I dare venture to foretell, that, artless and unimproved as their understandings are, they will not hesitate for an answer. They will neither complain of obscurity, nor ask the assistance of learning; but will immediately discern, in all these passages, a gracious Redeemer suffering in their stead, and by his bitter, but expiatory passion, procuring the pardon of their sins. Nay further, as they are not accustomed to the finesses of criticism, I apprehend they will be at a loss to conceive how it is possible to understand such passages in any other sense.

Say not, this is an improper appeal, or these are incompetent judges. The Scriptures were written for their edification; not to exercise the ingenuity of subtle disputants, but to instruct the meanest of mankind in the way of salvation. Therefore, on fundamental articles, we may assuredly conclude the expression will be easy, and the doctrine perspicuous; so that "he who runs may read, and the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein*." And though I am far from undervaluing the aids of literature, yet, upon those momentous subjects which are inseparably connected with our eternal felicity, I cannot but regard the common sense of plain, honest, humble Christians, as the very best of critics.

Ther. It has been said by a learned critic, "That vicarious punishment or suffering gives us too low ideas of the Son of God, as it sinks them to the pain and suffering of a malefactor, the very meanest idea we can have of them."

Asp. The idea is plainly suggested by the word of prophecy, and supported by the attestation of sacred history. In that it was foretold, and in this it is recorded, "that he was numbered with transgressors," Isa. liii. 12.; Luke xxii. 37. To this purpose speaks St. Paul, though somewhat more cautiously than your critic. He was made, not indeed of sinful flesh, but in the likeness of sinful flesh; and though perfectly innocent, was left to endure the vengeance of the vilest miscreants.

Yes, my dear Theron, that glorious Person, whom the highest angel adores,

* Isa. xxxv. 8. The word *fools* seems to denote persons of slow understanding and dull apprehension, as Luke xxiv. 25; or else it signifies those who, for want of a cultivated education and the improvements of literature, are accounted fools by the sons of science, as 1 Cor. i. 27.

“suffered as if he had been the criminal, the pain and punishment which we, or equivalent to that which we, the real criminals, should have suffered.” If to consider this, gives us a low idea—if to suffer this, was a deep abasement—how exceedingly high, and how immensely grand, is the goodness and the grace manifested therein! The lower you draw the arrow on the string, the loftier flight it makes in the sky; and the greater our Lord’s humiliation for us, the more wonderful and adorable his love to us.

Ther. As there cannot be a vicarious guilt, or as no one can be guilty in the stead of another; so there cannot be a vicarious punishment, or no one can be punished instead of another; because punishment in its very nature, connotes guilt in the person who bears it.

Asp. If you mean by guilt the consciousness of having committed a sin, and the internal defilement consequent upon it, we never suppose such a vicarious guilt. It is not so much as intimated, that Christ was stung with the remorse, or stained with the pollution, of the adulterous David, the perfidious Peter, and the persecuting Saul; but that he was treated by the righteous God as if he had perpetrated these, and all the crimes of all believers, either in the past or succeeding ages.

If by guilt you mean the charge of a criminal action, and the obligation to suffer the penalty, your assertion is nothing more than begging the question. It nakedly affirms the very thing in debate; and bare affirmations, unsupported by evidence, are seldom admitted as decisive proofs. We, on the other hand, are inclined to believe, that all our criminal actions were charged upon Christ, and that he suffered the punishment which they deserved. The former of these is not so properly called vicarious guilt, as real guilt—contracted by one, imputed to another. The latter we readily allow to be vicarious punishment, sustained in their stead whose guilt was imputed. For both these points we have the authority of truth itself, speaking in the Scriptures. “The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all:” here is the imputation. “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;” here is the vicarious punishment. And you know to what casuists we submit the interpretation of these texts—common sense, and an honest heart.

Ther. Is not this shocking to suppose? horrid to affirm? If the guilt was really imputed to Christ, then punishment was his due. Justice might insist upon it, and he could not escape it.

Asp. To suppose this, is so far from shocking my apprehension, that it appears, even on your own principles, right and necessary. Right, because punishment, as you yourself have declared, always connotes guilt; I would add, either contracted, or at least imputed. And indeed the sufferings of Christ could not be of a penal nature, unless he endured them as under a charge of guilt. It is necessary to suppose this, otherwise how will you vindicate the justice of God? He bid his sword awake, and smite the blessed Jesus, Zech. xiii. 7. But shall the judge of all the earth do wrong? Shall he smite, where there is nothing but innocence? no guilt, either personal or imputed? That be far from him! The thought be far from us!

Whereas, upon this supposition, it becomes a just and righteous thing, that God should inflict, and that Christ should sustain, the most rigorous punishment. And I do not know but this might be the cause of our Lord’s silence, when he was accused at Pilate’s bar and at Herod’s judgment-seat.

It is probable he considered himself as standing before a higher tribuna and responsible to eternal justice for the criminal actions of all his people. In this situation, and in this capacity, clear himself of personal demerit he could, clear himself of imputed guilt he could not. Therefore he was dumb, he opened not his mouth. For though, as the Son of the Most High God, glory and immortality were his undoubted right; yet, as the Surety for sinful men, tribulation and death were his condign portion.

And why should this be thought shocking? It is not the least derogation to the transcendent excellency of Christ. It casts not the least stain on the unspotted sanctity either of his nature or his life. To bear sin as a voluntary surety, is infinitely different from committing it as an actual transgressor. To say Christ was punished for any irregularity of his own, would be false, impious, and horrid. To say that he was charged with our guilt and endured the punishment due—in the plain and full sense of the word due—to our sins, is so far from being injurious to his dignity, that it pays the proper honour to his mediatorial undertaking. It pays him the honour of the highest obedience to his Father's will, the deepest humiliation of his own illustrious person, and the most boundless benevolence to mankind.

Ther. God, is love, Aspasio, all love. Whereas you would——

Asp. Not often interrupt a friend's discourse. But I cannot forbear interposing a query on this occasion. Is there, then, no just displeasure in the Deity? What meaneth that solemn denunciation of the supreme Lawgiver, "The anger of the Lord shall smoke against that man?" Deut. xxi. 20. What meaneth that awful declaration of the apostle, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men?" Rom. i. 18. Or in what sense are we to explain that alarming interrogatory of the prophet, "Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? Nah. i. 6. Whence could those avenging visitations proceed, which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with a tempest of fire? Gen. xix. 24.; which swept away so many thousands of the polluted Israelites with a raging pestilence? Num. xxv. 9. and consigned over so many legions of rebellious angels to chains of darkness."

Surely, Theron, if there be any determinate signification in language, any lesson to be learned from the most tremendous judgments, it is, that the Lord, though free from all the discomposure of passion, is nevertheless angry with the wicked, Psal. vii. 11. Deut. ix. 8; and will make impenitent offenders feel the effects of his wise and holy indignation.

Ther. Does not your doctrine represent the all-merciful God as a rigorous being, who, when once displeased, will hardly be pacified? Whereas, the Lord himself declares by his prophet, "Fury is not in me." Men of satirical wit would be apt to insinuate, that you had mistaken Jehovah for Moloch, and was erecting a Christian church in the valley of the son of Hinnom.

Asp. We take our representations of God, not from the vain conjecture of men, but from the records of infallible truth. There he is described as righteous God, a jealous God, Exod. xx. 5.; and to incorrigible sinners as consuming fire, Heb. xii. 29.; though wonderfully condescending, yet transcendently majestic, insomuch that none of the fallen race are permitted to approach his throne, but only through the intervention of a great Mediator John xiv. 6.; and without shedding of blood, even the blood of a person

higher than the heavens, there is no remission of any offences, Heb. ix. 22. vii. 26.

When the Lord says, "Fury is not in me," Isa. xxvii. 4., the words have a peculiar reference to his church, which, in a preceding verse, he had styled "a vineyard of red-wine." The connexion seems to denote, that his fierce anger was turned away from his people, on account of the satisfaction made by their Saviour. Though his own people are the objects, not of his indignation, but of his love, let no ungodly wretches audaciously presume: It is not so with them. They are "the briars and thorns*" mentioned in the next clause, cumberers of the ground, unprofitable and noxious. Then he warns them he challenges: "Who will set them in battle against me?" Let them come on; they shall find it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Nay, he will not stay for their approach: "I will march against them," is his threatening: "I will pass through them; I will burn them together." This will certainly be the case, if not in the present, yet in a future world. When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut to the door, mercy is gone for ever. Then nothing must be expected, nothing will then be experienced, but "vengeance and fiery indignation, to devour the adversaries of the gospel." God will then "execute judgments in anger, and in fury, and in furious rebukes," Ezek. v. 15.; with such awful severity and immense glory, as will cause heaven to adore, and hell to tremble.

Yet in all this there is not the least tincture of that outrageous temper, which in man we properly call fury. In man, fury implies an immoderate degree of resentment, which will hearken to no reasoning, and accede to no terms. The gospel account proves, even to a demonstration, that this has no place in the divine nature. So far from it, that God, though highly provoked, has provided an atonement, has made overtures of reconciliation to his disobedient creatures, has even besought a guilty world to accept of forgiveness, 2 Cor. v. 20. This is the purport of that gracious invitation which follows in the prophet: "Let him," let the wicked man, forsake his way, and "take hold of my strength;" let him fly to my crucified Son, who is the power of God for the salvation of sinners; cleaving to his merits by faith, as some poor delinquent to the horns of the altar†. Thus he shall make peace; all his iniquities shall be forgiven, and all my displeasure shall be pacified. So that the insinuations of our satirical gentlemen are as egregiously mistaken as they are shockingly worded.

You are a man of sense, Theron, and esteem that character far above the idle reputation of a wit. As such, let me ask you seriously, Is it not for the honour of the divine Majesty to exercise justice as well as mercy? Always to pardon, and never to punish, would be tameness, rather than benignity; a renunciation of holiness, rather than a display of goodness. Or can it be right in us so extravagantly to magnify the amiable, as to

* There is a fine contrast between the vineyard and the thorns, at the same time a regular continuation of the metaphor. As nothing is more common than to see the latter shooting up amidst the former; so nothing is more common than to have hypocrites intermingle themselves with believers.

† This is the precise idea included in the original *וּפָדוּ* and the idea is as charming as the image is expressive. Isa. xxvii. 5.; 1 Kings i. 50.

depreciate, nay even annihilate, the awful attributes of the Deity. says a poet, is the theology, not of Christians, but of infidels :

“ Who set at odds heaven's jarring attributes,
And with one excellence another wound ;
Maim heaven's perfection, break its equal beams,
Bid mercy triumph over—God himself,
Undeified by their opprobrious praise :
A God all mercy is a God unjust.”—*Night Thoughts*, No. iv.

Ther. But we have lately been told, that the pardoning grace of Lawgiver is not obstructed by any demands of law and justice ; for can set them aside.

Asp. What ! Set aside a law, which is holy, righteous, and good ! aside a justice, which is eternal, inflexible, and infinite !—St. Paul gives very different solution of this difficulty. He tells us, not that God set a his law and his justice, “ but that he set forth the blessed Jesus for a pitiation, through faith in his blood,” with this express design, “ that might declare his righteousness,” Rom. iii. 25. ; might demonstrate, only his clemency, but his justice, even that vindictive justice which essential character and principal office is to punish sin.

This seems to be the import of the word *righteousness* in the present connexion, and, I think, more than seems, if we consult the following verse : “ To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness ; that he might be just*,” evidence himself to be strictly and inviolably righteous, in administration of his government ; even while he is the all-forgiving gracious Justifier of the sinner that believeth in Jesus. According to the plan, “ mercy and truth meet together ; righteousness and peace kiss each other.” ‘Psal. lxxxv. 10. ; all the attributes harmonize ; every attribute glorified, and not one superseded ; no, nor so much as clouded.

Ther. If some are verging to one extreme, are not you inclining to the other ? Our ears tingle, and our blood runs chill, at the very thoughts so severe a vengeance, on an object so worthy and illustrious. Besides, how can we suppose that the beneficent Creator and Preserver of men should take pleasure in the sufferings of the most unblamable person that ever existed ? especially since he himself has made this tender declaration, “ I will have mercy and not sacrifice,” Matt. ix. 13.

Asp. A tender declaration indeed it is ; signifying, that God is better pleased with the duties of humanity and charity, than with the most costly and pompous train of sacrifices ; nay, that he will even dispense with the observance of his own ceremonial institutions, when they interfere with the exercise of beneficence one to another : thus resigning (so admirable is his goodness !) the services due to himself, for the benefit and comfort of his creatures. But all this has no sort of relation to the sacrifice of Christ which was the most noble, and the most acceptable oblation ever made to the King of heaven.

We are assured by a prophet, that “ it pleased the Lord to bruise his Son

* Rom. iii. 26. The attribute of justice must be preserved inviolate ; and inviolate is preserved, if there was a real infliction of punishment on our Saviour. Nothing can thoroughly clear up this great evangelical paradox—“ Just, yet Justifier of the ungodly.”

child Jesus." God not only gave up his Son to sufferings, but gave him up with a divine complacency*. In like manner, the blessed Jesus addressed himself to the dreadful task, not only without reluctance, but with the utmost alacrity. "I delight to do thy will," was the language of his soul. Should you ask, How could the Son take pleasure in undergoing, or the Father in inflicting, such amazing sorrows? No otherwise, than upon account of those grand and everlasting advantages which were to result from them.

"A severe vengeance," you say, "such as makes our ears to tingle." This is the very thing intended, to awaken and alarm presumptuous offenders; that they "may hear and fear, and do no more wickedly." It is such a method of dispensing grace, as is calculated to strike the deepest terror, even while it cherishes the brightest hope; strike the deepest terror on every persevering sinner, while it cherishes the brightest hope in every penitent transgressor.

Ther. If one of my servants had affronted or injured me, I should, upon the submissive acknowledgment, forgive his fault, and not insist upon satisfaction for the wrong. Will you make the Father of compassions more inexorable in his nature, more rigid in his demands, than a human master?

Asp. When you have a servant that owes his being to your power, that has received innumerable benefits from your bounty, yet has offered you innumerable affronts, all attended with the most aggravating circumstances, and all in defiance of the most righteous threatenings; when you are possessed of infinite majesty, and unblemished sanctity; when truth inviolable, and justice inflexible, are essential to your character; then, Theron, the parallel will hold good, and your conduct shall be a pattern for the procedure of Jehovah.

Till then, you and I must be willing to forgive, because God has made it our bounden duty; and because we have incomparably more to be forgiven by the Judge of the world, than we can possibly remit to our fellow-creatures. In the mean time, you will allow the great God, who is glorious in holiness, to communicate his heavenly favours in a manner becoming himself; on such august and honourable terms, as shall maintain the rights of his universal government, and manifest the glory of his adorable attributes.

Ther. Might not God have cancelled our transgressions, and received fallen man into his favour, without any propitiation? To deny this, would be to limit the Holy One of Israel, and impose conditions on that uncontrollable Sovereign, "who giveth no account of any of his matters."

Asp. We need not embarrass ourselves by entering upon inquiries, which may seem to lie beyond the limits of human understanding;—enough for us to know, that this propitiation was absolutely necessary with regard to the first covenant. For as God had solemnly declared, "In the day thou eatest thereof, dying thou shalt die," his truth and justice stood engaged to execute the threatening. And no second Adam could restore the first, but by taking this curse upon himself.

* This is the idea included in the original word *שָׂפַח*, Isa. liii. 10.; which is but poorly and faintly represented by the *Βουλευσα* of the Septuagint.

“ Die man, or justice must ; unless for him,
Some other able, and as willing, pay
The rigid satisfaction, death for death.”

MILTON, B. iii. l. 210.

Therefore the divine Jesus, who lay in the bosom of the Father, and knew the counsels of heaven, says, “The Son of man must be lifted up* ; on the cross. There was a necessity for his crucifixion ; because this was stipulated in the covenant of peace made between the Father and the Son because it was expressly foretold by the ancient prophets, (and the Scripture cannot be broken), that the Messiah should be cut off out of the land of the living ; because a variety of types, and a multitude of sacrifices, prefigured his death : one of the types pointed out the very manner of his suffering ; and all the sacrifices, detached from their dependency on this great oblation, would have been beggarly elements—mere unavailing empty ceremonies.

I apprehend, it is no limitation of the great God to suppose him incapable of acting otherwise than in perfect and perpetual consistency with himself. Neither is it any infringement on his absolute sovereignty, that he cannot but order all affairs for the honour of his justice, his fidelity, and each of his exalted perfections. This is the very thing which the sacred writers express in their plain but strong language, “God who cannot lie,” Tit. i. 2. ; “He cannot deny himself,” 2 Tim. ii. 13.

Ther. God is often said to forgive our sins ; particularly in that sublime passage, where he proclaims his name to Moses : “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth ; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.” Now, pardon is a free thing. Freeness is implied in the very nature of forgiveness. Take away the former, and you destroy the latter. If an equivalent be given, pardon is no longer pardon, but a purchase. Forgiveness ceases to be an act of grace, and becomes the payment of a debt.

Asp. The text you quote is truly sublime, and equally comfortable. But you forget to mention one article of very great moment, which closes and completes the glorious character ; which seems added on purpose to prevent any wrong apprehensions of the Deity, and to guard against all abuse of the doctrine : “He will in no wise clear the guilty †.”—God will not, on any consideration whatever, absolve the obstinate, persevering, irreclaimable offender ; neither will he acquit any of the guilty race, absolutely, unconditionally, or without such a satisfaction as may repair the honour of his injured law.

“We have redemption through his blood,” says the apostle, “even the forgiveness of our sins,” Eph. i. 7. It is forgiveness, you see, though bought with a price. It is remission, though procured by blood. It is free, with regard to that Sovereign Being who pardons ; for he was under no

* John iii. 14. *Δι' αὐτοῦ*, &c. The same expression is used, Luke xxiv. 26.

† Exod. xxxiv. 7. This text is not without its difficulty, especially in the original. Steuchus interprets the words, *Et innocens non erit sine piaculo*, “He shall not be acquitted without a piacular sacrifice.” I think they may be translated, with a little more propriety and exactness, thus : “Pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin,” וְגִקְרָה לֹא וְגִקְרָה though not with impunity ; or rather, “though he will by no means let it go unpunished,” meaning sin ; which is the immediate antecedent, is expressed in the three preceding words, and may very properly be referred to in this clause.

obligation to admit of a propitiatory sacrifice, but might, without any diminution of his dignity, have left all mankind to perish in their sins. It is free with regard to the obnoxious creatures who are pardoned; for it is vouchsafed without any satisfaction demanded at their hands, or any penalty inflicted on their persons. It is in this respect also free, that an interest in the great atonement is granted to us, without the least merit, or any deserving qualifications of our own.

In all this, God is not only merciful, but most tenderly and immensely merciful. And will any one calumniate this adorable method of exercising mercy, because provision is also made for the glory of God's truth, God's holiness, and supreme authority?

Ther. Does not your notion of a propitiatory sacrifice derogate from the goodness of the Almighty Father, and transfer all our obligations to the incarnate Son?

Ap. Is there not goodness in allowing a substitute to suffer in our stead? Is there not still greater goodness in providing a substitute for us, without any solicitation on our part? Is there not the very highest exertion of goodness, in appointing a dear, an only, an incomparably excellent Son for the purpose? This marvellous scheme, far, very far from obscuring, most illustriously displays the superabundant loving-kindness of the Father.

"God so loved the world," apostate and polluted as it was—How did he love it? To a degree unutterable by any tongue, inconceivable by any imagination, and only to be expressed by the infinitely precious effects:—Loved it so, "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. And does this derogate from the goodness of the Almighty Father, to give not barely pardon and life, but give them through the hands, nay, through the wounds, the agonies, the death of his divinest, dearest Son?

Such privileges, vouchsafed on any terms, must challenge the devoutest acknowledgments. But when attended with this additional demonstration of favour, they are enough to inflame us with gratitude, and transport us with admiration. They not only manifest, but commend * the divine love; shew it to the greatest advantage, in the highest perfection, with every circumstance of recommendation and endearment. By this means, blessed God! thou hast unspeakably enhanced thy benefits! thou hast rendered them, though invaluable in themselves, exceedingly more so by the manner of conferring them!

Ther. Again in your elevations, *Aspasio*? The world, you know, is grown very rational and inquisitive; will admit nothing but upon clear evidence and full conviction. We expect, in all religious inquiries, not the flights of fancy or the sallies of zeal, but a sobriety of reason and solidity of argument.

Ap. The world, rational as it is, seems by the taste of the present age, no enemy to works of fancy. The world therefore may not be displeased with an affecting story. And a story, suitable to the occasion, just occurs

* Rom. v. 8. *Συνιστησι*. It seems to be an image taken from the practice of tradesmen, who, in shewing their goods, point out their excellencies, and set in the clearest light whatever may bespeak their worth, or recommend them to the purchaser.

to my mind ; such as may serve to shadow forth, though very faintly, the surpassing benignity and grace of our crucified Lord.

An Asiatic queen, departing this life, left behind her three accomplished sons, all arrived to years of maturity. The young princes were at strife who should pay the highest respect to their royal mother's memory. To give scope for their generous contention, they agreed to meet at the place of her interment, and there present the most honourable gift they knew how to devise or were able to procure.—The eldest came and exhibited a sumptuous monument, consisting of the richest materials, and ornamented with the most exquisite workmanship. The second ransacked all the beauties of the blooming creation ; and offered a garland of such admirable colours, and delightful odours, as had never been seen before. The youngest appeared without any pompous preparation, having only a crystal basin in one hand, and a silver bodkin in the other. As soon as he approached the tomb, he threw open his breast ; pierced a vein that lay opposite to his heart ; received the blood in the transparent vase ; and with an air of affectionate reverence, placed it on the beloved parent's monument. The spectators, struck with the sight, burst into a shout of general applause, and immediately gave the preference to this last oblation.

If it was reckoned such a singular expression of love, to expend a few of those precious drops for the honour of a parent ; O how matchless, how ineffable, was the love of Jesus, in pouring out all his vital blood for the salvation of enemies !

Ther. My greatest objection is still to come. If Christ suffered in our stead, he must suffer that very punishment which was due to our iniquities. This your orthodox divines affirm to be incomparably worse than bodily death ; to be nothing less than the everlasting displeasure of God.

Asp. The punishment due to our iniquities, was shame, death, and the divine wrath.

As for shame—Was ever shame like that shame which our despised Redeemer bore ? Though Prince of the kings of the earth, yet born in a stable, and laid in a manger. When an infant, exiled from his own country and a vagabond in a foreign land. When engaged in the discharge of his ministry, accused of the most flagitious crimes, and branded with the blackest names. When brought to his exit, apprehended as a thief ; condemned as a malefactor, nay, the vilest of malefactors, a robber and a murderer is preferred before him. His executioners poured contempt upon all his venerable offices. As a king, they ridiculed him, by putting a mock sceptre into his hand, and crowning him with ragged thorns * instead of a royal diadem. They vilified his prophetic character, by hoodwinking his eyes, striking his blessed head, and then asking in cruel derision, “who it was that smote him†.” They cast reproach upon his priestly undertaking, when they sharpened their tongues with malicious irony, and shot out those bitter words, “He

* To have crowned the blessed Jesus with straw, would have been a vile insult, and treating him like an ambitious madman. But to crown him with keen, pungent, lacerating thorns, was adding cruelty to their insults ; unheard-of barbarity to the most contemptuous mockery, Matth. xxvi. 29.

† Scornfully insinuating, that his sacred prophetic office was fit for nothing, but to serve such despicable purposes, Matth. xxvi. 68.

saved others, himself he cannot save," Matth. xxvii. 42. To render his infamy as public as it was shocking, they hung him on a tree; and exposed him, defiled as he was with spitting, and disfigured with wounds, to the gazing eyes and contumelious scoffs of numberless spectators.

If you doubt whether Christ sustained the wrath of God, let us follow him to the garden of Gethsemene—A scene, which I would always recollect when I walk along the fertile vale, or expatiate amidst the flowery garden, or enjoy the delights of any rural retirement.—He had no remorse to alarm his spotless conscience; yet fearfulness and trembling came upon him. No violence was offered to his sacred person; yet a horrible dread overwhelmed him. It was night, cold night; and though our divine Master lay prostrate upon the earth, amidst the fall of chilling dews, he sweat—sweat blood—sweat great drops of blood, running down in reeking streams to the ground!—"He was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows," Psal. xlv. 7.; yet so insupportable was his affliction, that he could not forbear crying out, "My soul is sorrowful—exceeding sorrowful—sorrowful even unto death!" Matth. xxvi. 38. What cause, what adequate cause, can be assigned for this amazing anguish? None but the wrath of his Almighty Father, who was now become an inexorable Judge, and treated him no longer as the Son of his love, but as the Surety for unnumbered millions of guilty creatures.

Ther. Was it possible that the innocent and holy Jesus, the dearly beloved Son of God, should be an object of his Father's wrath?

Ans. It was not only possible, but unavoidable and necessary: unavoidable, with respect to the divine holiness; necessary, for the procurement of our redemption. Sin was charged upon Christ; all the sins of all believers, in all ages and places of the world. And could the infinitely righteous God behold such a deluge of iniquities, (those abominable things which he hateth,) without expressing his displeasure? Or could the blessed Jesus be punished, truly punished for them, without any painful sensation of their horrid evil, and of that tremendous indignation which they deserved?

If this was not the case, who can maintain the dignity of his conduct during the agony in the garden? Was there no pouring out of the divine displeasure? Then his behaviour in that hour of trial did not equal the intrepidity of the three Hebrew youths, who continued calm, and without the least perturbation, while the furnace was heated into seven-fold rage, Dan. iii. 16, 17, 18. But if this was the time in which, no created arm being strong enough to give the blow, "it pleased the Lord to bruise him," Isa. liii. 10.; if the Most High God "bent his bow like an enemy, and stood with his right hand as an adversary," Lam. ii. 4.; it is easy to account for the prodigious consternation of our Redeemer. It is not to be wondered, that his heart, though endued with otherwise invincible fortitude, should become like melting wax. For who knoweth the power of that wrath, at which "the pillars of heaven tremble?" Job xxvi. 11.

Ah! Theron, the vinegar and the gall which they gave him to drink, were not half so bitter as the cup of his Father's wrath; yet, for our sake, he drank it off to the very dregs. The nails that pierced his hands, and the spear that cleft his heart, were not half so sharp as the frowns of his eternal Father's countenance; which, for our consolation, he patiently submitted to bear.—He was rent with wounds, and racked with pain; his bones were

dislocated, and his nerves convulsed; a thousand thorny daggers were planted in his temples, and life flowed out at ten thousand gushing veins. Yet this all this was gentle, was lenient, in comparison of those inexpressible agonies which penetrated his very soul. The former fetched not a single complain from his mouth; the latter wrung from his breaking heart that passionate exclamation, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"—Astonishing words! Surely, a distress, beyond all imagination grievous¹ uttered them. Surely, the vengeance, not of men, but of heaven itself, extorted them. Every syllable of which speaks what the mourning prophet describes: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger?" Lam. i. 12.

Here now is our whole punishment endured; the shame of the cross, and the sorrows of death; the suspension of the Almighty's favour, and the terrible sensations of his wrath.

Ther. Be it so. Yet all this amounts to no more than part of payment. For these sufferings were transient, temporary only, not eternal. Therefore the main circumstance, the most bitter ingredient, was wanting.

Asp. In the estimate of divine justice, and in point of penal satisfaction they were equivalent to our endless punishment; especially if we consider the severity of the sufferings and the dignity of the sufferer.

The severity of the sufferings.—At the last day, all those fierce eruptive flames, which have raged in Etna, in Vesuvius, and in every burning mountain throughout the world; all those confined subterranean fires, which have so terribly shaken the foundations of Jamaica, Sicily, and Constantinople—in a word, the whole element of fire, however employed through the revolutions of time, wherever diffused through all the regions of the globe, will then be collected from all quarters, and burst forth in one vast resistless, general conflagration. In some such manner, all that wrath which was due to the innumerable multitude of sinners, redeemed from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, which, if executed on the offending creatures, had been prolonged to eternal ages—all that wrath was contracted into one inconceivably dreadful blaze, and at once poured out upon the interposing Surety; at once flamed forth on our heavenly victim. This will appear more than probable, if, among other particulars, we contemplate the unequalled magnanimity of our Lord, who is styled "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," Rev. vi. 5. and compare it with his bloody sweat in the garden, and his exceeding bitter cry on the cross †.

The dignity of the Sufferer.—Had our Saviour's sufferings been the sufferings of a mere man, or of the most exalted angel, I acknowledge they could

* To heighten our idea of this distress, the evangelists make use of the most forcible words—*ἡξίασε ἐν τῷ θυμῷ αὐτοῦ*, he was seized with the most alarming astonishment—*ἀθημάσθη*, he was overwhelmed with insupportable dejection—*περικλυτός*, he was besieged on all sides as it were, with an army of invading sorrows—He wrestled, amidst strong cries and tears, not only with the malice of men and rage of devils, but with the infinitely more dreadful indignation of God; he wrestled even unto an agony of spirit, *ἡ ἀγωνία*. All these circumstances of horror and anguish, constitute what a celebrated poet very justly styles,

"A weight of woe more than ten worlds could bear!"

† I think the language of the Greek liturgy is the language of strict propriety, as well as of fervent devotion, *Δι' ἀγῶνιστον ἐν σπλάγχνοισιν*. The sufferings of our Lord are, in their measure and weight, to us unknown; absolutely beyond the reach of human imagination.

have borne no proportion to our demerit. It were impossible for a finite being to sustain the wrath, or discharge the debt. But they were the sufferings of the Prince of Heaven, and the Lord of Glory; before whom all men are as dust, and all angels as worms.—Was an infinite Majesty offended? An infinite Mediator atoned. Weigh the dignity, the immense dignity of the Redeemer's person, against the everlasting duration of our punishment, and it will not only counterbalance, but preponderate. Finite creatures can never make an infinite satisfaction; no, not through the most unlimited revolution of ages. Whereas, when our divine Lord undertook the work, being truly and properly infinite, he finished it at once. So that his sufferings, though temporary, have an all-sufficiency of merit and efficacy. They are, in this respect, parallel; nay, on account of the infinitude of his nature, they are more than parallel to an eternity of our punishment.

It was Emmanuel, it was the incarnate God, who purchased the church, and redeemed sinners, with his own blood, Acts xx. 28. The essential grandeur of our Saviour communicated its ennobling influence to every tear he shed, to every sigh he heaved, and every pang he felt.

This renders his sufferings a perfect, as their vicarious nature renders them a proper, satisfaction. And though "the wood of Lebanon was not sufficient to burn, nor all the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering," Isa. xl. 16. this sacrifice fully answers the exigence of the case. The sacrifice sends up an ever acceptable odour to the skies, and diffuses its sweet perfume through all generations; such as appeases heaven, and revives the world.

Yes, Theron, you must give me leave to repeat the delightful truth: It was "the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us," Tit. ii. 13, 14. His sacrifice, therefore, must be inconceivably meritorious. O that sinners, the vilest of sinners, knew its all-sufficient efficacy! they would no longer be holden in the bonds of iniquity by that destructive suggestion of the devil, "There is no hope," Jer. ii. 25.

Ther. What valuable end could such vicarious sufferings accomplish? Suppose God absolutely inexorable, and they cannot avail. Suppose him divinely merciful and they are needless.

Asp. The difficulty you propose, I think, has been obviated already; so that I have no occasion to solve your dilemma, but only to answer your query. These sufferings, as a punishment, gave ample satisfaction to the divine violated law; as a sacrifice, they perfectly reconciled us to our offended God; as a price, they redeemed us from every evil, and purchased for us a title to all good.

This is a subject of the most distinguished importance. Let not my Theron imagine I would abuse his patience, if I dwell a moment longer on the favourite topic. I might enumerate many ends, all magnificent and gracious, accomplished by this wonderful expedient. I content myself with specifying a few; but those, such as bring the highest glory to God, administer the most solid comfort to man, and most effectually promote the interests of piety.

In this we have a manifestation of the most awful justice, and at the same time a display of unbounded goodness. Awful justice; in that the great and terrible God, though determined to exercise mercy, would exercise it only in such a manner as might vindicate the authority of his law, might testify the purity of his nature, and declare the inviolable faithfulness of his word. Unbounded goodness; in that he withheld not his Son, his only

Son, but freely gave him up for us all; gave up "the brightness of his glory," to be covered with infamy; gave up "the beloved of his soul," to expire in agonies; on purpose to obtain honour and immortality for apostate men. The torments inflicted on all the damned in hell, are not so fearful a monument of God's justice, as those dying agonies of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor could a thousand worlds conferred on mankind, have been such an act of superabundant munificence as that gift of his ever-blessed Son.

Look we for power and wisdom? To uphold the humanity of Christ, under all the studied cruelties of men, under the insatiate rage of devils, and the far more tremendous curse of the divine law*; to conquer sin, and death, and hell, by a person bound with fetters, nailed to a tree, and crucified in weakness; to expiate by one offering, the innumerable millions of crimes committed by all his people, from the beginning to the end of time: was not this power! matchless power! astonishing power! And as for wisdom, how admirable was the contrivance, which could harmonize the seemingly opposite claims of mercy and of justice! and not only satisfy each, but magnify both! Had punishment been executed in all its rigour on the sinner's person, mercy had lost her amiable honours. Had the sinner been restored to favour, without any penalties sustained either by himself or his Surety, justice had been set aside as an insignificant attribute. Whereas, by our Lord's vicarious and expiatory sufferings, both are manifested, and both are exalted. Therefore the Scripture affirms, that God hath not only exercised, but abounded in wisdom and prudence; nay, hath abounded in all wisdom and prudence, Eph. i. 8. by this combination of righteous vengeance and triumphant grace, which is at once so honourable to himself, and so advantageous to his people.

Ther. "Advantageous to his people."—I am glad you are come to this point. This is what I want to have cleared up. I am for those doctrines which glorify God by doing good to man. Give me the religion whose aspect is benign, and whose agency is beneficial: not like a meteor, to dazzle us with a vain glitter; or like a comet, to terrify us with a formidable glare; but like yonder sun, whose beams shed light, and life, and joy all around.

Asp. If this be what you seek, and what you prize, the Christian religion, this doctrine in particular, will answer your warmest expectations, and challenge your highest esteem; for it is rich with benefits of the most needful, the most desirable, and most exalted kind.—The first and grand blessing is pardon of sins; pardon, not of small sins only, but of the most aggravated, the most horrid, the most enormous. Be they flaming as scarlet, be they foul as the dunghill, be they black as hell itself,—yet they shall be as the spotless wool, or as the virgin snows, Isa. i. 18. They shall "be as though they had never been." Pardon, not of a few, but of all sins. Be they numerous as the hairs of our head, numerous as the stars of heaven, numerous as the sands upon the sea-shore, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from them all, 1 John i. 7.

Hereby we have the victory over death, and admittance into eternal life. For thus saith the holy apostle concerning the poor sojourners in clay:

* Isa. xliii. 6. "I the Lord will hold thine hand, and will keep thee." This is spoken of the Messiah.

Seeing therefore the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also partook of the same; that, by undergoing death, he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage," Heb. ii. 14, 15. And thus saith the venerable elder concerning the glorified saints in light: "These are they who came out of great tribulation; and they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne," Rev. vii. 14.

The Philistines rejoiced when Samson, the destroyer of their country, was delivered into their hands. How much greater reason have we to rejoice, since the blessed Jesus has vanquished our last enemy! has made death the minister of endless life, and the grave a gate to eternal glory! Joseph had cause to be glad, when he put off his prison-garments, and was clothed with change of raiment; when he was brought from the dungeon to the palace, and honoured with a seat at the right hand of the king. But is it not an incomparably richer blessing, to have our robes washed in redeeming blood, and our souls cleansed from all guilt? Is it not an incomparably higher advancement, to be admitted into the blissful presence, and to possess the everlasting kingdom of God?

To comprehend all in a word.—Hereby are procured, even for the most unworthy creatures, all the benefits of the new covenant. Therefore the blood of Christ is styled by a prophet, "the blood of thy covenant," Zech. i. 11: by an apostle, the blood of the everlasting covenant," Heb. xiii. 20: and our Lord himself says, "this is the new covenant in my blood," Luke xii. 20. Is it a privilege to know God, the infinitely amiable centre and source of all perfection? Is it a most valuable endowment to have his laws put into our minds, and written on our hearts? Is it a branch of real felicity to have our numberless sins forgiven, and not one of our iniquities remembered any more? Is it the compendium of all happiness to have God for our portion and our exceeding great reward? to be his peculiar treasure, his loving and beloved people? Heb. viii. 10—12. Of all these we may say—They are the purchase of Immanuel's blood; and whoever is truly interested in the one, is unquestionably entitled to the other.

Who, then, would refuse so comfortable—

Ther. Too comfortable, we might imagine, to be either true in itself or safe in its consequences. Must it not tend to imbolden the sinner in the prosecution of his vices? Who need scruple to transgress, or be very solicitous to repent, if an all-atoning sacrifice has been offered for every kind and every degree of wickedness?

Ans. Would you have sinners intimidated? Nothing speaks such terror to the children of disobedience, as the bitter passion and accursed death of Christ. All the rhetorical aggravations of sin, with regard to its loathsome nature, and execrable vileness; all the severity of vengeance, executed upon rebellious angels or wicked men; all, all are weak and inexpressive, compared with the dreadful emphasis of this great transaction. For, if the Lord Almighty spared not his own Son, when guilt was not found in him, but only imputed to him; how much less shall he spare corrigible offenders, who both habitually commit, and obstinately persist in, their daring impieties?

If, by repentance, you mean an ingenuous sorrow for our transgressions, nothing is so likely to break the stony, or melt the icy heart, as these dole-

ful effects of sin. Let us imagine ourselves present at Calvary and stand by the Cross. See! the innocent, the amiable, the illustrious Saviour, hat on a tree—a tree, torturous as the rack, and ignominious as the gibbet! See his face is foul with spitting, and his sides are torn with the scourge. His veins stream with blood, and his heart is wounded with anguish. There he hangs, abandoned by his friends, reviled by his enemies, and forsaken even by his God. Can we reflect that we, even we, were the cause of this insupportable misery, and not feel remorse in our consciences, or sorrow in our minds? Can we reflect, that for us, for us he bore this amazing torment, and not smite our breasts, or be pained at our very souls?

If, by repentance, you mean a thorough renunciation of all iniquity, the motive is so effectual to divorce the heart from every abominable idol, as to divert the feet from every evil way, as an attentive consideration of our Redeemer's death. Whose indignation does not rise against the infamous wretch that betrayed the blessed Jesus? who is not ready to detest those envenomed tongues which accused him, and those barbarous hands which crucified him? How then can we cherish those horrid lusts, which were the principal actors in this deepest of tragedies? how can we caress, how can we entertain, how can we endure, those execrable iniquities, which were the betrayers and murderers of the Prince of Life? "He bore our sins in his own" bleeding, agonizing "body on the tree," not that we should be emboldened to repeat them, but incited to abhor them, and induced to forsake them; that in our practices and our affections, we should not only be averse, but even "dead to sin" 1 Pet. ii. 24.

If you would have benevolence, your favourite principle, take place and operate, it is impossible to urge so endearing a persuasive to universal good will, as this "kindness and love of God our Saviour," Tit. iii. 4. How can we indulge the sallies of resentment, or harbour the seeds of animosity when the meek, the merciful, the infinitely gracious Redeemer, laid down his life for his bitterest enemies? How can we treat with contempt or indifference even the meanest of mankind, since our divine Master gave his glorious person for vile wretches, and miserable sinners? Never was there a more winning a call to disinterested charity, as the amiable example of Christ, never so binding a cement of brotherly love, as the blood of the crucified Jesus.

In short, would you have people possessed of every heavenly virtue, animated to the practice of every good work? Nothing administers so powerful an incitement to them all, as a lively and appropriating sense of this wondrous grace. Set home by the Holy Ghost*, it produces such a warm gratitude, and such a heartfelt joy, as are far more operative than the most awful threatenings, or the most cogent reasonings. So that, quite contrary to your suspicions, the native tendency of this excellent doctrine is, to suppress ungodliness and promote piety.

Observe how the present calm evening, yonder mild declining sun, and the

* The reader will give me leave, on this occasion, to subjoin the noble doxology of the Church; which, when thus applied, may be an excellent means, both of expressing our gratitude, and quickening our devotion. "Glory be to the Father," for providing the all-sufficient atonement, and giving his Son to save a ruined world. "Glory be to the Son" for humbling himself to the death of the cross, and obtaining eternal redemption for sinners. "Glory be to the Holy Ghost," for testifying of Christ in our hearts, and appropriating this great salvation to our souls.

soft balmy breezes, have unlocked the flowery prisons, and detached a profusion of odours through the air; have inspirited the little songsters of the grove, and fetched lavish harmony from their throats. So sweetly will a true belief in Jesus Christ, and him crucified, draw forth all the powers of the soul, in acts of ready and cheerful obedience. He is therefore said, not only to justify, but also to "sanctify the people with his blood," Heb. xiii. 12.

Let us consider the death of Christ, in this its full grandeur and extensive efficacy, and we shall discern the admirable propriety of the apostle's remark, "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," Heb. ii. 10. It became; as an act of sovereignty in God, it comported with the dignity, and emblazoned (if I may so speak) the incomprehensible majesty of his perfections. As an execution of impartial vengeance on our Surety, it asserted the rights of divine government, and secured the utmost veneration to the divine law. As an emanation of rich indulgence to us, it redressed all our misery, and retrieves our whole happiness. In each, in every respect, it is worthy of the most grateful and adoring acceptance from sinful man, and such as will be had in everlasting honour by the choirs of saints, and the host of angels.

Ther. I thank you, Aspasio. Your arguments have not indeed converted me, but they have strengthened my faith. I never was so unhappily mistaken, as to disbelieve the satisfaction made by our Lord Jesus Christ; made to divine justice; made for the sins of the world. But I now see more clearly its reasonableness and importance; its cheering aspect on the guilty conscience, and its benign influence on the moral conduct.

Asp. I congratulate you, dear Theron, from my inmost soul, on your thorough conviction of this important truth. May you have still more extensive and generous views of the glorious article! and may every renewed view be more and more influential on your heart!

Reviving, ravishing thought! to have him for our bleeding victim! him for our great propitiation! at whose feet the armies of heaven bow, and the saints in light adore! Reviving, ravishing thought; to have all our punishment sustained, and the whole curse of the law exhausted; so that justice itself can demand no more! Nay, to have so perfect a ransom paid for our redemption, that it is not barely an act of favourable indulgence, but of the highest righteousness* also, to pardon, accept, and glorify the believer. In such a method of reconciliation, how fully does the judgment acquiesce, and how securely the conscience rest!

Excuse me, Theron. My affections are again upon the soar. But I clip their wings.—Only let me ask, Is not this doctrine the grand peculiarity of the gospel, by which it stands distinguished from every other religion professed in the world! Is it not the central point, in which all the lines of duty unite, and from which all the rays of consolation proceed? Strike

* Therefore the apostle says, "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," 1 John i. 9. Faithful; because he had promised this blessing, by the unanimous voice of all his prophets. Just; surely, then, he will punish! No; for this very reason he will pardon. This may seem strange; but, upon the evangelical principles of atonement and redemption, it is apparently true; because, when the debt is paid, or the purchase is made, it is the part of equity to cancel the bond, and consign over the purchased possession.

this article from the creed, and you reduce the mystery of godliness to a system of ethics ; you degrade the Christian church into a school of philosophy. To deny the expiation made by our Redeemer's sacrifice, is to obscure the brightest manifestation of divine benignity, and to undermine the principal pillar of practical religion ! is to make a desperate shipwreck of our everlasting interests, and to dash (such, I fear, it will be found in the final issue of things) ourselves to death on the very rock of salvation.

Ther. Now, I believe, it is time to repair homewards. And I hope there will be no disagreeable exchange, if we resign our seat on the mount for a place in the dining-room.

Asp. Pray, let me inquire, as we walk along, (for I was unwilling to interrupt our discourse, merely to gratify my curiosity), what may be the design of yonder edifice, which rises on a small eminence near the public road ? it is neither a tower, nor a dwelling-house ; but looks like a state column, erected on purpose to beautify the prospect.

Ther. It is a sort of monumental pile, erected, as the story goes, on a very memorable occasion. Queen Eleanor accompanied king Edward the First to (what was called) the holy war ; in which he gained signal advantage over the infidels, and acquired a large share of renown to himself. After many gallant exploits performed in the field, a treacherous and desperate Saracen, demanding admittance into his chamber under pretence of private business, wounded him with an impoisoned dagger ; the consequence of which, his physicians declared, must be inevitable and speedy death, unless the poison was sucked out by some human mouth. This might possibly preserve the royal patient, but would be extremely dangerous to the operator.

Dangerous as it was, his queen claimed the office ; insisted upon it as the consort's right ; and executed it so faithfully, that she saved the king's life—so happily, that she lost not her own. After this, she returned to England and lived many years, and bore several children. But sooner or later royal blood itself must pay the debt to nature. Dying on a journey to Scotland, she was brought back to the last and long home of our English monarchs. Wherever her corpse rested in the way to its interment, a structure † soon (as you now behold) was raised, in order to perpetuate the memory of her conjugal affection.

Asp. And should not our hearts be a monument of gratitude to the blessed Jesus, who drew the deadly venom, not from our veins, but from the immortal part of our nature ; and not at the hazard, but at the loss, of a certain and unavoidable loss of his precious life ? He opened his breast, he opened his very soul, to the keenest arrows of vindictive justice ; that transfixing him, they might drop short of us ; “ the poison whereof drank up his spirits,” Job. vi. 4, that the balm of peace might refresh ours.

O, my Theron ! let our memories be the tablet to record this unexampled instance of compassion and goodness. Let our affections dwell upon this tragical, the delightful history ; till they melt into contrition, and are inflamed with love. If we want an inscription, let us make use of those noble

* Westminster Abbey.

† One of these structures stands on the high-road near Northampton. A Latin inscription informs the traveller concerning its occasion and design :—

“ In perpetuam Regine Eleanore
Conjugalium amoris memoriam.”

lines, which, in the finest climax imaginable, describe the magnificence and grace of this astonishing transaction : —

———“ Survey the wondrous cure,
 And at each step let higher wonder rise.
 Pardon for infinite offence ! and pardon
 Through means that speak its value infinite !
 A pardon bought with blood ! with blood divine !
 With blood divine of him I made my foe !
 Persisted to provoke ! Though woo'd and awed,
 Blessed and chastised, a flagrant rebel still !
 Nor I alone ! A rebel universe !
 My species up in arms ! Not one exempt !
 Yet for the foulest of the foul he dies !”

Night Thoughts, No. iv.

DIALOGUE V.

ASPASIO having some letters of importance to answer, as soon as the cloth was taken away, retired from table. His epistolary engagements being dispatched, he inquired for Theron. The servants informed him that their master had walked into the garden. A very little search found him seated on an airy mount, and sheltered by an elegant arbour.

Strong and substantial plants of laburnum formed the shell, while the tender and flexile shoots of syringa filled up the interstices. Was it to compliment, as well as to accommodate their worthy guests, that they interwove the luxuriant foliage ? Was it to represent those tender but close attachments, which had united their affections, and blended their interests ? I will not too positively ascribe such a design to the disposition of the branches. They composed, however, by their twining embraces, no expressive emblem of the endearments and the advantages of friendship. They composed a canopy of the freshest verdure, and of the thickest texture ; so thick, that it entirely excluded the sultry ray, and shed both a cool refreshment, and an amusive gloom ; while every unsheltered tract glared with light, or fainted with heat.

You enter by an easy ascent of steps, lined with turf, and fenced with a balustrade of sloping bay trees. The roof was a fine concave, peculiarly elevated and stately. Not embossed with sculpture, not mantled over with ret-work, not incrustated with splendid fresco ; but far more delicately adorned with the syringa's silver tufts, and the laburnum's flowering gold, whose large and lovely clusters, gracefully pendent from the leafy dome, disclosing their sweets to the delighted bee, and gently waving to the balmy breath of spring, gave the utmost enrichment to the charming bower.

Facing the entrance lay a spacious grassy walk, terminated by an octangular basin with a curious *jet-d'eau* playing in the centre. The waters, spinning from the lower orifices, were attenuated into innumerable little threads, which dispersed themselves in an horizontal direction, and returned to the reservoir in a drizzling shower. Those which issued from the higher tubes and larger apertures, either sprung perpendicularly, or spouted obliquely, and formed as they fell several lofty arches of liquid crystal, all glittering to the eye and cooling to the air.

Parallel to the walk ran a parterre, planted with an assemblage of flowers which advanced one above another in regular gradations of height, of dignity and of beauty. First, a row of daisies, gay as the smile of youth, and fair as the virgin snows. Next, a range of crocuses, like a long stripe of yellow satin, quilted with threads, or diversified with sprigs of green. A superior order of ranunculuses, each resembling the cap of an earl's coronet, replenished the third story with full blown tufts of glossy scarlet. Beyond this, a more elevated line of tulips* raised their flourished heads, and opened their enamelled cups; not bedecked with a single tint only, but glowing with an intermingled variety of almost every radiant hue. Above all arose the noble ornament of a royal escutcheon, the *fleur-de-luce*, bright with ethereal blue, and grand with imperial purple; which formed, by its graceful projections, a cornice or a capital of more than Corinthian richness, and imparted the most consummate beauty to the blooming colonnade.

The whole, viewed from the harbour, looked like a rainbow painted upon the ground, and wanted nothing to rival that resplendent arch, only the boldness of its sweep, and the advantage of its ornamental curve.

To this agreeable recess Theron had withdrawn himself. Here he sat musing and thoughtful, with his eye fixed upon a picture representing some magnificent ruins. Wholly intent upon this speculation, he never perceived the approach of Aspasio till he had reached the summit of the mount, and was ready to take a seat by his side.

Asp. Lost, Theron! quite lost in thought! and unaffected with all the amiable objects! insensible amidst this profusion of beauties, which, from every quarter, make their court to your senses! Methinks, the snarling cynic in his tub could hardly put on a greater severity of aspect than a polite philosopher in his blooming Eden.

Ther. Ah! my dear friend, these flowery toys, which embellish the garden, are familiar to my eye, and therefore cheap in my esteem. I behold them frequently, and for that reason feel but little of the pleasing surprise which they may possibly awaken in a stranger. Something like this we experience with regard to events infinitely more worthy our admiring notice. Else, why are we not struck with a mixture of amazement, veneration, and delight, at the grand machinery and magnificent productions of nature?

That the hand of the Almighty should wheel round the vast terrestrial globe, with such prodigious rapidity and exact punctuality, on purpose to produce the regular vicissitudes of day and night, on purpose to bring about the orderly succession of seed-time and harvest! We wonder when we read of the Israelites sojourning forty years in the desert, marching backward and forward over its burning sands, and find neither their clothes waxing old, Deut. viii. 4, by so long a use, nor their feet swelling with such painful journeys, Neh. ix. 21: yet we are neither impressed with wonder nor affected with gratitude, when we enjoy the benefits of the air, which clothes the earth, as it were, with a garment; which has neither contracte

* Here is, it must be confessed, some little deviation from the general laws of the season; some anachronism in the annals of the parterre. The flowers united in this representation do not, according to the usual process of nature, make their appearance together. However, as, by the economy of a skilful gardener, they may be thus associated, I hope the possibility of the thing will screen my flowery productions from the blasts of censure.

any noxious taint through the extensive revolution of almost six thousand years, nor suffered any diminution of its natural force, though exercised in a series of unremitted activity ever since the elementary operations began.

This draught in my hand shows us the instability of the grandest, most laboured monuments of human art. They are soon swept away among the other feeble attempts of mortality; or remain only, as you see here, in shattered ruins, memorials of the vain and powerless ambition of the builders. How strange then, that a structure, incomparably more tender and delicate, should be preserved to old age and hoary hairs! That the bodily machine, which is so exquisite in its frame, so complicated in its parts, and performs so many thousands of motions every moment, should continue unimpaired, yet act without intermission, so many days and weeks, and months and years! How strange all this; yet, because common, how seldom does it excite our praise, or so much as engage our notice!

Asp. Your remarks are as just, as the neglect of them is customary.—Unaccountable supineness! Though “God doth great things,” worthy of all observation, “yea, and wonders without number,” we yawn with indolence, instead of being animated with devotion, or transported with delight. “Lo! he goeth before us,” in evident manifestations of wisdom and power, “yet we see him not; he passeth on also,” and scatters unnumbered blessings from his providential hand, “but we perceive him not,” Job ix. 10, 11.

This, though greatly culpable, is to be reckoned among the smallest instances of our ungrateful insensibility. Are we not inattentive even to the work of redemption? That work, which, according to the emphatical declaration of Scripture, “exceeds in glory,” 2 Cor. iii. 9; is by far the greatest, the most marvellous of all sublunary, perhaps of all divine transactions. Are we not shamefully unaffected, even with the appearance of God in human flesh? Though the King of kings vouchsafes to exchange his throne for the humiliation of a servant, and the death of a malefactor; though he is pleased, by the imputation of his active, as well as passive obedience, to become “the Lord our righteousness;” yet——

Ther. You are taking an effectual way, *Aspasio*, to rouse me from my reverie, and make me indeed like the snarling philosopher. “Imputed righteousness is a scheme grossly frivolous and absurd, utterly insufficient to answer the end proposed; and, one would think, could never be depended on, where there is the least degree of understanding and capacity for reasoning*.”

Asp. Who is warm now, *Theron*? May I not remind my friend, that the resentful is no more fitted to work conviction than the rapturous? Perhaps you have not duly considered this subject, nor seen it in the proper point of view. I have sometimes beheld a ship of war several leagues off at sea. It seemed to be a dim cloudy something, hovering on the skirts of the horizon, contemptibly mean, and not worthy of a moment's regard. But, as the floating citadel approached, the masts arose; the sails swelled

* The reader will probably be disgusted at this heat of temper, this asperity of diction, and both so abruptly introduced. I have no apology to make for my *Theron*. The reader has reason to be disgusted, has reason to be chagrined. Only let me desire him to remember, that this is the very spirit, nay, these are the very words, of a celebrated opposer of our doctrine; not added when he has fully proved the absurdity of the scheme, but assumed even upon the entrance to his discourse.

out; its stately form and curious proportions struck the sight. It was no longer a shapeless mass, or a blot in the prospect, but the master-piece of human contrivance, and the noblest spectacle in the world of art. The eye is never weary of viewing its structure, nor the mind in contemplating its uses.

Who knows, Theron, but this sacred scheme likewise, which you now look upon as a confused heap of errors, may very much improve when more closely examined; may at length appear a wise and benign plan, admirably fitted to the condition of our fallen nature, and perfectly worthy of all acceptance?

Ther. I know not what may happen, Aspasio; but there seems to be very little probability of such a change. For, though my last opposition was a mock-fight, in my present objections I am very sincere, and to this doctrine I am a determined enemy. The notion of a substituted and vicarious righteousness, is absurd even to common sense, and to the most natural and easy reflections of men.

Asp. It may not, my dear friend, agree with our natural apprehensions, nor fall in with the method which we might have devised for the salvation of mankind. But this is the voice of Scripture, and a maxim never to be forgotten: "God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways," Isa. lv. 8. "His righteousness is like the strong mountains, and his judgments are like the great deep," Psal. xxxvi. 6; the former immovable, the latter unsearchable.

Ther. The mention of mountains puts me in mind of what I was reading yesterday; the keen irony with which Abimelech's principal officer chastised the blustering Gaal: "Thou seest the shadow of the mountains, as if they were men," Judges ix. 36. He, it is sarcastically intimated, was afraid, and my Aspasio seems to be fond, of shadows.

Asp. Happy for your Aspasio, that irony is no argument. If a jury was impannelled to try me and my doctrine, I should certainly except against Irony. Generally speaking, he is neither a good man, nor a true: and, if I remember right, you yourself consented to set him aside in this debate. I shall therefore adapt my reply rather to what is solid than what is smart. "This notion," you say, "is absurd even to common sense." A saying, on which I must beg leave to put a query. It was, I own, absolutely beyond the power of common sense, unassisted by divine revelation, to discover this truth. I will grant, farther, that this blessing infinitely transcends whatever common sense has observed in all her converse with finite things. But if I have any the least acquaintance with common sense, I am very sure she will not, she cannot pronounce it an absurdity. To this judge I refer the cause.

And to open the cause a little, let me just observe, that God imputed our sins to his Son. How else could the immaculate Jesus be punished as the most inexcusable transgressor? "Awake, O sword, against the Man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts," Zech. xiii. 7. Is not this the voice of a judge pronouncing the sentence, and authorizing the execution? Or rather, does it not describe the action of justice, turning the sword from us, and sheathing it in Christ? who, if he was our substitute with regard to penal suffering, why may he not stand in the same relation with regard to justifying obedience? There is the same reason for the one as for the other;

every argument in favour of the former, is equally conclusive in behalf of the latter.

Ther. I very freely grant, that Christ Jesus was punished in our stead; that his death is the expiation of our sin, and the cause of our security from penal suffering. But this——

Asp. Will undeniably prove, that sin was imputed to him; otherwise he could not truly suffer in our stead, nor be justly punished at all. "And imputation is as reasonable and justifiable in one case as in the other, for they both stand upon one and the same foot; and, for that reason, he who throws down one, throws down both." I should not have interrupted my Theron, only to introduce this answer from an eminent divine, who adds what should be very seriously considered: "And therefore, whoever rejects the doctrine of the imputation of our Saviour's righteousness to man, does, by so doing, reject the imputation of man's sin to our Saviour, and all the consequences of it. Or, in other words, he who rejects the doctrine of the imputation, does, by so doing, reject the doctrine of the expiation likewise*."

Ther. I know nothing of this divine; and, eminent as he is, can hardly take his *ipse dixit* for a decision.

Asp. I was in hopes you would pay the greater regard to his opinion, because he is not in the number of the whimsical fanatics.

Give me leave to observe farther, that the imputation of Christ's righteousness bears an evident analogy to another great truth of Christianity. We did not personally commit Adam's sin, yet are we chargeable with guilt and liable to condemnation on that——

Ther. How! we chargeable with guilt and liable to condemnation on account of Adam's transgression! This position I must deny, I had almost said, I must abhor. None other could, in the eye of justice and equity, be blamable for any offence of our first parents, but they only.

Asp. So says Theron; but what says St. Paul? This may be the voice of natural reason, but what is the language of divine revelation? "In whom," that is, in Adam, "all have sinned."

Ther. The words, if I remember right, are, "For that all have sinned."

Asp. In the margin they are translated as I have repeated them. For this interpretation I might contend, as not in the least incompatible with the original phrase †, and as the most precisely suitable to the sacred argument. But I waive this advantage. Let the words run into your mould, and the translation take your form. They are equally decisive of the point in debate. They assign the "reason why death came upon all men," infants themselves not excepted: "For that," or inasmuch as, "all have sinned." How? Not in their own person, this was utterly impossible: But in that first grand transgression of their federal head, which, as it could not be actually committed by them, must, according to the tenor of the apostle's arguing, be imputed to them.

Ther. Pray, what do you mean by that stiff, and to me unintelligible phrase, *federal head*?

* Staynoe upon "Salvation by Jesus Christ alone," vol. i. p. 334.

† Εφ' ᾧ ἠμαρτίαι ἡμῶν, Rom. v. 12.

Asp. I mean what Milton celebrates, when he represents the Almighty Father thus addressing his eternal Son :

—“ Be thou in Adam’s room
The Head of all mankind, though Adam’s son.
As in him perish all men, so in thee,
As from a second root, shall be restored
As many as are restored ; without thee, none.”—B. iii. l. 285.

I mean what the apostle teaches, when he calls Christ “ the second man,” 1 Cor. xv. 47, and “ the last Adam,” 1 Cor. xv. 45. The second ! the last ! How ? Not in a numerical sense, not in order of time, but in this respect : That as Adam was a public person, and acted in the stead of all mankind, so Christ was a public person, and acted in behalf of all his people : That, as Adam was the first general representative of this kind, Christ was the second and the last ; there never was, and there never will be any other : That what they severally did, in this capacity, was not intended to terminate in themselves, but to affect as many as they respectively represented. This is St. Paul’s meaning, and this is the foundation of the doctrine of imputation.

Ther. If you build it on no other foundation than your own particular sense of the apostle’s words, perhaps your ground may prove sandy, and treacherous to its trust.

Asp. I build it upon mine, and I deduce it from yours, Theron. But I am far from resting the whole weight of the cause upon a single text. It is established, again and again, in this same chapter. Neither do I wonder at the prejudices which you and others may entertain against the doctrine. It lies quite out of the road of reason’s researches ; it is among the wonderful things of God’s law. This the inspired penman foresaw, and modelled his discourse accordingly. Like some skilful engineer, who, though he makes the whole compass of his fortification strong, yet bestows peculiar and additional strength on those parts which he apprehends will be exposed to the fiercest attack ; so the wise, the divinely wise apostle, has inculcated, and re-inculcated this momentous point, has enforced it with all the assiduity of zeal, and confirmed it by all the energy of expression. “ If, through the offence of one, many be dead—The judgment was by one to condemnation—By one man’s offence, death reigned by one—By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation,” Rom. v. 15, 16, 17, 18. That there may remain no possibility of mistaking his meaning, or of eluding his argument, he adds, “ By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,” Rom. v. 19.

Ther. Sin, I am told by a celebrated expositor, sometimes signifies punishment. He farther informs me, that we may be said to sin in Adam, not by the imputation of his disobedience to us, but by becoming obnoxious to those sufferings which were due to his sin.

Asp. Then the apostle’s reasoning will stand in this form : “ Death came upon all men, for that all have sinned ;” that is, Death came upon all men, because all have been punished ; or, “ an obnoxiousness to punishment came upon men, because all are become obnoxious to punishment.” A goodly strain of argumentation for an unerring writer to use ! But surely Gamaliel’s pupil would disclaim, much more would Christ’s ambassador scorn, such weak and unmeaning chicanery. He mentions sin and its punishment ; but never hints, that they are intended to signify one and the

same thing. He all along maintains a distinction between them; represents the former as the cause of the latter. Judgment, condemnation, death are owing to sin, offence, disobedience. It is by the imputation of these that we become obnoxious to those.

This account is clear, is natural, and wants no strained criticisms to support it. This account demonstrates the equity of that providential government, which executes the sentence of death even on those descendants of Adam who have not sinned in their own persons. It also illustrates the procedure of that sovereign grace, which treats as righteous, and entitles to life, even those believers in Jesus who have not obeyed in their own persons. —What says our Church? You have a great veneration for the Church of England, Theron.

Ther. I have. But, I fear, my *Aspasio* has neither so honourable an opinion of her worship, nor so steady an adherence to her constitution; otherwise he would not so highly extol those ambitious and canting hypocrites, the Puritans; who were the most inveterate enemies of our excellent establishment, and would have rejoiced in its utter subversion.

Asp. As to the Puritans, you will do me the justice to acknowledge, that I speak only of their evangelical tenets, abstracted from all political principles. As to myself, your fears are friendly, but I trust they are groundless. I would only ask, Who are to be deemed the most affectionate and faithful sons of their sacred mother? Those, I presume, who most cordially embrace her doctrines, and most dutifully submit to her precepts. By this touchstone let my fidelity be tried; and, for an immediate trial, be pleased to repeat her ninth article.

Ther. I cannot say that I remember the particular words of any, though I have often read, and very much approve them all.

Asp. I wish you would commit to your memory four or five of the most distinguished*. They are a valuable treasure, and contain the quintessence of the gospel.

These are the words of the ninth article: "Original sin is the fault and corruption of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam." It is the fault, says the pious Bishop Beveridge, and therefore we are guilty of it; it is the corruption also, and therefore we are defiled with it. Our homilies have recourse to no such palliatives, and qualifying interpretations, as my *Theron's* expositor uses. One of them affirms point blank, that "in Adam all men sinned universally." This seems to be a paraphrase on the text, whose translation you lately controverted. In what sense our great poetical divine understood the sacred writer, is apparent from the following words, which are supposed to have been spoken by *Jehovah* himself:

—————" Adam's crime
Makes guilty all his sons."

MILTON, b. iii. l. 290.

And from another passage, where our rebellious progenitor, bewailing his aggravated misery, and the extensive malignity of his sin, declares,

—————" In me all
Posterity stands curs'd."

B. x. l. 817.

For my own part, I must confess, that if the transmission of original

* Especially Articles 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

depravity be granted, I know not how the imputation of Adam's destructive apostacy can be denied. If we had no concern in the one, how could we be justly punished with the other? I say punished, for to lose the primitive integrity of our nature, and inherit a depraved disposition, is at once a most deplorable calamity, and a most terrible punishment. Corruption transmitted, and guilt imputed, seem to be doctrines indissolubly connected. To allow the former, and reject the latter, is in my apprehension to acknowledge the effect without admitting the cause.

Ther. To make us parties in a covenant which we did not agree to, can this be equitable? To ruin us for a crime which we never committed, can this be merciful? Surely this is a flagrant injustice, never to be ascribed to the all-gracious God; a diabolical barbarity, add some, never to be mentioned without the utmost detestation.

Asp. I see no cause for such a tragical outcry of barbarity, nor indeed for any complaint of injustice. Not to insist upon the sovereignty of an all-creating God, and his unquestionable right to "do what he will with his own," Matt. xx. 15 I would only ask, Did he not condescend to transact with man, not on the foot of absolute uncontrollable authority, but in the honourable and delightful way of a covenant? Were not the terms of this covenant perfectly easy, and wonderfully gracious? Wonderfully gracious; for they proposed a state of inconceivable and everlasting felicity to creatures who were entitled to no happiness, Luke x. 28; had not the least claim to any good; no, not so much as to the privilege of existence. Perfectly easy; for what was the condition on man's part? Not any rigorous act of duty, nor severe course of self-denial, but the free enjoyment of millions of blessings and pleasures, with only the prohibition of one pernicious indulgence. Here, then, is made on one hand, a promise of the most glorious reward that God himself could give; and nothing required on the other, but the smallest expression of allegiance that man himself could wish. And is this injustice? is this barbarity?

Ther. All this was equitable enough with regard to Adam; but why should we be condemned for his violation of the covenant? Or how was such a constitution of things gracious with respect to us?

Asp. "Why condemned?" Because we should have been partakers of the benefit and the glory, if he had persevered in his duty. To this, I presume, none would object. And if they would not to the one, they ought not to the other.

You ask farther, "How was such a constitution of things gracious with respect to us?" I answer, Because it was the most likely means to secure the happiness of us and all mankind. Was not Adam, of all persons, by far the best qualified to act as a general head? He had a perfection of knowledge, to discern his true interest; a perfection of holiness, to capacitate him for obedience; and a perfection of happiness, disposing him to perseverance. As none could have more eminent qualifications, none could have so many obligations. His own welfare, both bodily and spiritual, was at stake; the eternal interests of his rising family, and of his remotest posterity, were depending; the lives, the souls, the everlasting all of the whole human race, were embarked on the single bottom of his fidelity. Therefore the felicity of every individual that should spring from his loins, was a fresh motive to vigilance, an additional engagement to duty. As his love

to his offspring was more refined, more exalted, more godlike than ours, all these considerations and inducements must operate upon him in their fullest scope, and with the strongest energy. What an intrenchment was here to keep out disobedience, and ward off ruin! An intrenchment deep as hell, high as heaven, wide as the whole extent of the human species.—Here, then, I may venture to throw the gauntlet, and challenge the whole world. Let the most penetrating mind devise a scheme, so wisely and graciously calculated to ascertain the success of a probationary state. If this be impracticable, then must every mouth be stopped; no tongue can have the least reason to complain: I, for my part, shall think myself obliged to admire the benignity of my Creator's conduct; and God may justly demand of all intelligent creatures, "What could have been done more" for the preservation and felicity of mankind, "that I have not done?" Isa. v. 4.

Especially when to all this we add, that the same Almighty Being, who appointed Adam to be our representative in the first covenant, without asking our actual consent, appointed also Christ to be our representative in the second covenant, without staying for our actual solicitation. When we take this into the account, there remains not the least shadow of injustice; but goodness, transcendent goodness, shines forth with the brightest lustre.

Ther. Goodness, Aspasio! This is surprising indeed! Why, if Adam's transgression be laid to our charge, we are damnable creatures the very moment we exist; and are liable to the torments of hell, even on account of his disobedience. To term this goodness, is the greatest of paradoxes! to affirm it of the Deity, is little less than blasphemy!

Asp. Let us be calm, my dear friend, and consider the case impartially. If it is not a real truth, I shall be as willing to relinquish it as yourself.

Is not death, eternal death, the wages of every sin? And if of every sin, then doubtless of original, which is the fountain from whence all the streams of actual iniquity flow, or rather the abyss from whence all the torrents pour. That which could not be pardoned but by the humiliation and agonies of God's adorable Son, may reasonably be supposed to deserve the most dreadful vengeance. And it is affirmed, by an authority which you will not dispute, that, "for original as well as actual sin, the offering of Christ is a propitiation and satisfaction*."

Does not St. Paul deliver it as a maxim in divinity, That, "by the offence of one," Adam he undoubtedly means, "judgment came upon all men to condemnation?" Rom. v. 18. The import of the words, together with the connexion of the passage, lead us to understand this of a condemnation to eternal misery. The import of the words; for they are doubled†, to make them peculiarly strong in their signification; and each word, within the compass of this very epistle, is used in that awful latitude of meaning, Rom. ii. 3; iii. 8; viii. 1. The connexion of the passage; because it stands opposed to that justification which is unto life. This, we are sure, includes the idea of an everlasting duration. And why should its tremendous counterpart be less extensive?

This sense is evidently patronised, and this doctrine most peremptorily asserted, by our established church. What says the book of Homilies, when

* Article XXXI.

† Κριμα εις το κατακριμα.

treating of the miseries consequent upon the fall? "This so great and miserable a plague, if it had only rested on Adam, who first offended, it had been much easier, and might the better have been borne. But it fell not only on him, but also on his posterity and children for ever; so that the whole brood of Adam's race should sustain the self-same fall and punishment, which their forefather by his offence most justly had deserved*." Lest any should misapprehend the design of our reformers, and suppose the punishment to consist only of some bodily suffering or the loss of immortality, it is added in the same alarming discourse, "Neither Adam, nor any of his, had any right or interest at all in the kingdom of heaven; but were become plain reprobates and cast-aways, being perpetually damned to the everlasting pains of hell."

Lest you should imagine this might be written under a sally of hasty zeal, or that it is to be reckoned among the doating opinions of a credulous antiquity, let me remind my friend, that it is ingrafted into the Articles: those articles, which were approved by the archbishops and bishops of both provinces, were ratified by the general consent of the clergy, and are to this day the national standard of our belief. The ninth article, beginning with a description of our depraved nature, subjoins an account of its proper desert: "In every person born into the world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation."

Ther. How miserable then is man!

Asp. In himself he is miserable beyond expression. But a conviction of this misery is the beginning of all happiness. The valley of Achor is a door of hope*.

Ther. Explain yourself, Aspasio. You seem to deal very much in the incomprehensible.

Asp. Such a conviction would demonstrate the absolute insufficiency of all human attainments, and all human endeavours, to procure life and salvation. For in case we could perform every jot and tittle of the divine law, offend in no instance, fall short in no degree, persevere to the very end; yet this would be no more than our present bounden duty. Not the least pittance of merit could arise from all this. Much less could this be sufficient to expiate the original guilt, or remove the dreadful entail of primitive all-destroying sin.

This, therefore, would most effectually preclude every false confidence, and sweep away at one stroke every "refuge of lies," Isa. xxviii. 17. It would lay us under an immediate, indispensable, and happy necessity of betaking ourselves to Christ. I say happy necessity; because then we should know, by experience, what each part of our Lord's awful yet tender declaration meaneth: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help," Hos. xiii. 9. We should then find, that as sin and misery hath abounded through the first Adam, mercy and grace have much more abounded through the second. For, if we were ruined by a crime which we committed not, we are recovered by a righteousness which we performed not; a righteousness infinitely surpassing whatever we could have acquired, even though our nature had been transmitted to us free from any depravity, and exempt from all guilt.

* Homily on the Nativity of Christ.

† Hos. ii. 15. Achor signifies trouble.

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this righteousness abides in Christ, but is placed to our account; that Christ, and Christ alone, actually performed it; that Christ, and Christ alone, personally possesses it; but that, performing it in our stead, and possessing it as our covenant-head, God imputes it to us, God accepts us for it, accepts us as much as if we had, on our own behalf and in our persons, severally fulfilled it.

Though one man cannot live, be actuated with the principle of life, by the soul of another; yet you must allow, that one man, nay, that many men may live, be continued in the possession of life, for the righteousness of another. Or else you must do, what I am sure you abhor, you must charge with absurdity and impossibility even the declaration of the Deity: "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then will I spare all the place for their sakes," Gen. xviii. 26.

Ther. Not all your refinements can reconcile me to this uncouth notion. The practice is unexampled, and absolutely inconsistent with the rules of distributive justice.

Asp. Ah! my Theron, if we seek an example of God's unbounded goodness amongst the puny proceedings of men, we shall be led into the most egregious misapprehensions. To measure one of the sparks on your ring, and fancy we have taken the dimensions of the Alps or the Andes, would be, in comparison of this error, a small mistake: Since between a brilliant speck and a range of mountains there is some proportion, but between human beneficence and heavenly bounty there cannot possibly be any. However, the all-condescending Creator has been pleased so to dispense his infinitely rich grace, that we may find, though nothing parallel, nothing correspondent, yet some faint shadow of its matter among the affairs of mankind; something that may perhaps give us such an idea of the stupendous subject, as a glow-worm would give of the sun's splendour, in case a person had never beheld that magnificent luminary. This remark I must entreat you to recollect, whenever I attempt to elucidate the mysteries of the gospel by the occurrences of common life.

When your worthy minister was disabled, by a rheumatic disorder, from attending on the business of his function, several of the neighbouring clergy gave him their assistance. Was he not, by this vicarious performance of his office, entitled to all the profits of his living? It seems, therefore, not so unexampled a thing for one person to act in another's stead. And when a service is thus discharged by the proxy, the benefit may, according to the received maxims of mankind, accrue to the principal. Did not Jehu's descendants, even to the fourth generation, reap the advantage of their great-grandfather's zeal? 2 Kings x. 30. Does not the Duke of **** enjoy the honours and rewards won by the sword of a victorious ancestor? And may not the whole world of believers, with equal, with far greater justice, receive life and salvation on account of their all-deserving Saviour, especially since he and they are one mystical body, represented as such in Scripture, and considered as such by God.

No, say you, this is contrary to the rules of distributive justice. What is your idea of a surety? How was the affair stated, and how were matters negotiated, with relation to your generous acquaintance Philander? He, you know, was bound for an unfortunate brother, who lately stepped aside.

Ther. The debt, by his brother's absconding, devolved upon Philander? He was responsible for all, and obliged to pay the whole sum.

Asp. Was not his payment as satisfactory to the creditor, as if it had been paid in the debtor's own person, by the debtor's own hand ?

Ther. Certainly.

Asp. Was not the debtor, by this vicarious payment, released from all fear of persecution, and acquitted from any future demand on this score ?

Ther. He was.

Asp. Apply this instance to the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ, who is in the sacred writings expressly styled a Surety, Heb. vi. 22. If Philander's act was deemed, in the estimation of law, the act of his brother; if the deed of the former was imputed, in point of advantage, entirely to the latter; why should not the same effects take place with regard to the divine Bondsman and poor insolvent sinners? Why should that be exploded in our systems of divinity, which is universally admitted in our courts of justice ?

Ther. Obedience and righteousness are, in the nature of the things themselves, personal qualities, and only so. Every man is that only (and can be nothing else) which he is in himself.

Asp. Righteousness, as dwelling in us, is undoubtedly a personal quality; and obedience, as performed by us, comes under the same denomination. But does this supersede the necessity, or destroy the existence of imputed righteousness? Your first proposition is ambiguous. Let it speak distinctly; add inherent to your righteousness, and the sense becomes determinate, but the argument falls to the ground.

"Every man is that only (and can be nothing else) which he is in himself." If I never had seen the Bible, I should have yielded my ready assent to this proposition. But, when I open the Old Testament, and find it written by the prophet, "In the Lord shall all the house of Israel be justified," Isa. xlv. 25; when I turn to the New Testament, and hear the apostle saying, "Ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principalities and powers," Col. ii. 10; I cannot concur with Theron, without contradicting revelation. Israel or the true believer is said to be justified, and the foundation of this blessing is declared to be, not in himself, but in the Lord. The Colossians are said to be complete, which we are very certain they were not in themselves and are expressly assured they were so in Christ. Hence it appears quite contrary to my friend's assertion, that sinners both have and are that in Christ, which they neither have nor are in themselves. They have by imputation a righteousness in Christ; they are, by this imputed righteousness, complete before God.

I believe your mistake proceeds from neglecting to distinguish between inherent and imputed. We never suppose that a profane person is devout, or an intemperate person sober. This is inherent righteousness. But we maintain that the profane and intemperate, being convinced of their iniquity, and betaking themselves to the all-sufficient Saviour for redemption, are interested in the merit both of his life and of his death. This is imputed righteousness. We farther affirm, that though really abominable in themselves, they are fully accepted by God for his beloved Son's sake. This is justification through imputed righteousness.

However strange this may seem, it is no precarious or unwarrantable opinion, but the clear and positive declaration of Scripture. He justifieth, he absolves from guilt, he treats as righteous—Whom? Upright, obedient,

sinless creatures? This were nothing extraordinary — No, but “he justified the ungodly, that believe in the Lord Jesus,” Rom. iv. 5; imputing, as the ground of this justification, their trespasses to him, and his righteousness to them.

Ther. I see no occasion for such nice distinctions and metaphysical subtilties, in plain popular divinity. Hard terms and abstruse notions may perplex the head, but seldom improve the heart.

Asp. Why then do you oblige us to make use of them? If some people twist and entangle the reins, it behoves others to clear them of the embarrassment, and replace them in their due order. Many writers, either from an artful design, or through a strange inadvertence, have jumbled and confounded these two very different ideas. Hence they have started objections to our doctrine, which, the moment you introduce this obvious distinction, vanish into air. They fall into a mistake of their own, and then charge the absurdity upon others.

I am no more fond of hard terms and abstruse notions than my Theron. Neither can I think the instance before us so abstruse a notion. I am very certain you are capable of comprehending much higher and nicer refinements. Therefore, I must once again entreat you to remember the very material difference between inherent and imputed righteousness. The former is the essence of sanctification, the latter is the ground of justification. By this we are restored to the favour of God; by that, we are made meet for his heavenly kingdom. Let this distinction, which is easy, which is scriptural, which is important, take place, and we may for the future dismiss what you call the metaphysical subtilties, our disagreement will cease, and our opinions tally.

Ther. I question that, Aspasio. There are other difficulties to be got over before I can digest so crude an opinion. If we are justified by the righteousness of Christ, then the righteousness which justifies mankind is already wrought out.

Asp. And this you take to be a most enormous falsehood, whereas I look upon it as a most delightful truth. The righteousness which justifies sinful man was set on foot, when God sent forth his Son from the habitation of his holiness and glory, to be born of a woman, and made subject to the law. It was carried on through the whole course of our Saviour's life, in which he always did such things as were pleasing to his heavenly Father. It was completed at that ever memorable, that grand period of time, when the blessed Emmanuel bowed his dying head, and cried with a strong triumphant voice, “It is finished!”

If the justifying righteousness was to be wrought by ourselves, we could never be truly and fully justified till death, till our warfare is accomplished, and our last act of obedience exerted. But how uncomfortable is such a notion! how miserable would it render our lives! and how directly does it run counter to the determination of the apostle, “Ye are justified!” 1 Cor. vi. 11.

Ther. Soothed, then, with this pleasing surmise, may not the libertine say to his soul, “Soul, take thine ease in the most indolent security. All my carnal appetites, indulge yourselves without restraint. Conscience, be under no solicitude to live soberly, righteously, and godly; for the work is done, all done to my hands. I am like some fortunate heir, whose parents have been successfully industrious, and have left nothing to exercise the

diligence of their surviving son, but only to possess the inheritance, and live on labours not his own!"

Asp. The libertine, who only speculates or disputes, may indeed abuse the doctrine of grace. But the believer, who feels the power of grace, will improve it to better purposes. Where the former only fluctuates in the understanding, such detestable consequences may ensue: where the latter operates on the heart, it will always produce very different effects. Such a person, from such a faith, will be no more inclined to inactivity or licentiousness, than our busy humming companions are inclined, by this bright sunshine, and all those expanded blossoms, to sleep away their hours in the hive. And you may as soon expect to see these colonies of the spring swarm in December, clinging to an icicle, or dispersing themselves to gather honey on the snow, as to see a truly gracious man, "who is dead to sin, living any longer therein," Rom. vi. 2. Whoever, therefore, so shamefully perverts so sweet and glorious a doctrine, is a witness against himself, that he has neither lot nor portion in the inestimable privilege. If an animal suck poison from the most wholesome herbs, we are sure, from that infallible indication, it is the vile spider, or some envenomed insect, not the valuable and industrious bee.

Ther. Truly, Aspasio, I know not how to call that doctrine sweet, much less can I recommend it as wholesome, which renders repentance, personal reformation, and inherent rectitude, needless. And if your tenet is once received, all these duties may fairly be dismissed. So that if the thing was possible, yet it would be pernicious.

Asp. The prophet was of another mind: "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn," Zech. xi. 10. Sinners shall look by faith to their crucified Lord; shall see him fastened with nails to the cursed tree; see him stabbed to the heart by the bloody spear; and remembering that this was the punishment due to their provocations, believing that by this punishment they are freed from all penal sufferings, and entitled to all spiritual blessings,—they shall not be tempted to transgress, but incited to mourn; not play the profligate, but act the penitent. The apostle exactly agrees with the prophet; and both are diametrically opposite to my friend: "The goodness," the transcendent and amazing goodness of God our Saviour, instead of diverting from, "leadeth to repentance," Rom. ii. 4.

Far from obstructing, it powerfully promotes personal reformation. For thus saith that all-wise Being, who intimately knows our frame, and discerns what is most effectual to work upon our minds: "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared; teaching us, that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world," Tit. ii. 11, 12. Grace, you observe, even that gloriously free grace which bringeth salvation to unworthy creatures, is a dissuasive of all vice, and an encouragement to every virtue.

As to inherent rectitude, how can that be rendered needless by imputed righteousness? Is health rendered insignificant by the abundance of our riches? Does ease become superfluous through the beauty of our apparel? Holiness is the health of our souls, and the ease of our minds; whereas, un-governable passions create keener anguish than a brood of vipers gnawing our bosoms. Inordinate desires are a more intolerable nuisance than swarms

of locusts infesting our abodes. To regulate those, and to restrain these, can never be needless, till comfort and sorrow change their properties—till the diabolical nature becomes equally desirable with the divine.

Ther. The believer, indeed, out of mere generosity, may, if he please, ad works of righteousness of his own. But his main interest is secure without them.

Asp. Rather, Theron, he must out of duty, he will out of gratitude; and from the new disposition of his nature, he cannot but add to his faith work of righteousness.

How runs the heavenly edict in this case made and provided? "I will that they who have believed in God, be careful to maintain good works *."—How beats the pulse of a believing soul? You may feel it in that truly generous demand made by the Psalmist: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits that he hath done unto me?" Psal. cxvi. 12. A grateful heart wants not the goad, but is a spur to itself. How leans the bias of his nature? He is new born; "created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Eph. ii. 10; "his delight is in the law of the Lord," Psalm i. 2. And whatever is our supreme delight, we are sure to prosecute, and prosecute with ardour. "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," was the profession of the apostles; and, if applied to practical godliness, is the experience of the Christian.

Nor can his main interest be secure without a holy obedience. Because the Judge of the world, at the day of eternal retribution, will declare to the workers of iniquity, "I never knew you; depart from me," Matth. vii. 23: because holiness, though not the cause of our admittance to the beatific vision, is so necessary a qualification, that "without it no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. Without it, there is no access to heaven, neither could there be any enjoyment in heaven.

Ther. Pray recollect yourself, Aspasio. According to the tenor of your own illustration, the necessity of personal obedience is evidently vacated. For how can the law demand a debt of the principal, which has been fully discharged by the surety?

Asp. The debt of penal suffering, and the debt of perfect obedience, are fully discharged by our divine Surety, so that we are no longer under a necessity of obeying, in order to obtain an exemption from punishment, or to lay the foundation for our final acceptance. We are nevertheless engaged, by many other obligations, to walk in all dutiful and conscientious regard to the law; because this is the most authentic proof of our love to the gracious Redeemer: "If ye love me, keep my commandments," John xiv. 15. This is a comfortable evidence of our union with that exalted head: "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit," John xv. 5. This is also the most effectual method of adorning our profession, of magnifying its Author, and of winning our neighbours to embrace the gospel: "Let your light," the light of your exemplary conversation, not

* Tit. iii. 8. The original word *εργασαθητε* has a beauty and an energy, which, I believe it is impossible for our language to preserve by any literal translation. It implies, that a believer should not only be exercised in, but eminent for, all good works; should show others the way, and outstrip them in the honourable race; be both a pattern and a patron of universal godliness.

only appear, but “shine before men, that they, seeing your good works,” may think honourably of your religion, Matth: v. 16, “may glorify your Father which is in heaven;” and say, with those proselytes mentioned by the prophet, “We will go with you.”

“Do we then make void the law,” through the imputed righteousness of our Lord? No, verily; but if gratitude to our dying Saviour have any constraining influence; if a concern for our own comfort have any persuasive energy; if there be anything inviting, anything desirable, in the prospect of honouring God, and edifying man—“we establish the law.” By all these generous, manly, endearing motives, we enforce its precepts, and provide for its observance.

Ther. Should we admit this doctrine, mankind could no longer be considered as in themselves, and solely in themselves, accountable creatures. Nor would the future judgment be an equitable distribution of rewards and punishments, but only God’s awful and uncontrollable execution of his own arbitrary and irreversible decrees.

Asp. I have never been accustomed to consider mankind, under the gospel dispensation, as accountable solely in themselves; because in this comfortable and benign scheme a Mediator intervenes, undertakes to answer for his people, and bears the chastisement of their peace. Were we accountable solely in ourselves, Christ as our great High-priest would be set aside, and his sacrifice as a propitiation for sin be of none effect.

Why may not the future judgment be an equitable distribution of rewards and punishments? If those who reject the atonement of the dying Jesus, and refuse to depend on his consummate righteousness, are left to stand or fall according to the issue of their own obedience; if believers, on the other hand, are accepted through their most meritorious Redeemer, but rewarded with higher or inferior degrees of felicity, in proportion to the sanctity of their nature and usefulness of their lives:—I see nothing arbitrary in this procedure, but an admirable mixture of just severity and free goodness: on those who reject the atonement, just severity; to those who rely on their Saviour, free goodness.

Ther. The obedience of Christ was wholly due for himself, and therefore could not merit for another.

Asp. A bold assertion this! Whoever can make it good, will infallibly overthrow my opinion, and at the same time destroy all my hopes. But surely, Theron, it is not your real sentiment?

Could it then be matter of duty in the eternal Son to be born of a woman; and in the Lord of lords, to become the servant of all? Could it be matter of duty in the King of glory, to embrace the infamy of the cross; and in the Prince of life, to pour out his soul unto death? If all this was matter of duty, the ever-blessed Jesus (how shall I speak it! who can believe it?) was no better than an unprofitable servant. For such is the acknowledged character of every one who does no more than is his duty to do, Luke xvii. 10.

Ther. Not so fast, not quite so vehement, my friend. Remember what the Scripture affirms. Christ is said to receive a commandment, and be subject to the law; both which expressions evidently imply duty.

Asp. In order to accomplish our redemption, the Son of God submitted himself to the authority of the law, and became obedient to its precepts.

But this was his own spontaneous act, the matter of his own free choice ; which he lay under no manner of obligation, till he engaged to be our Surety.

“Being in the form of God,” he was Lord of the law ; and no more subject to its commands than obnoxious to its curse. Nevertheless, “he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made under the law.” Wherefore That he might obtain everlasting life and glory for himself? No ; but that he might “redeem those who were under the law,” Gal. iv. 5. From which it appears, that both his engagement and obedience were, not for himself, but for his people. Therefore the prophet cries out, with holy exultation, “To us a Child is born ; to us a Son is given * !” His incarnate state and human nature, together with all that he did and suffered in both, were for us ; those assumed on our account, these referred to our advantage.

Let us consider this, and be amazed, and be charmed. The great universal Lord vouchsafes to pay universal obedience. What condescension was here ! He vouchsafes to pay it, for us men, and for our redemption : what goodness was this !

Ther. Before we indulge the devotional strain, we should take care that our devotion is founded on rational principles ; otherwise it may prove, like the flash of a sky-rocket, transient and momentary.

Asp. For this, I think, there is a solid foundation in reason, as well as Scripture. As soon as the man Christ Jesus was united to the second person of the Trinity, he must have, by virtue of that union, an unquestionable right to everlasting life and glory ; therefore he could be under no necessity of obeying, in order to procure either honour or happiness for himself. But as that he performed in conformity to the preceptive part of the law, he performed under the character of a public person, in the place and for the benefit of his spiritual seed, that they might be interested in it, and justified by it.

Ther. Be it so : the believer is interested in Christ's righteousness. Pray is he interested in all, or only in part ? If in all, then every believer is equally righteous and equally to be rewarded ; which is contrary to an allowed maxim, that there will be different allotments of happiness in the heavenly world. If in part only, how will you ascertain the degree—what proportion belongs to this person, and what to the other ? Either way, your scheme is inextricably embarrassed.

Asp. The reply to my Theron's inquiry is easy ; and the embarrassments he mentions is but imaginary. Every true believer is interested in all Christ's righteousness—in the whole merit of his spotless nature, of his perfect obedience, and expiatory death.

Less than the whole would be unavailable ; whereas the whole renders us completely justified.

You are a great admirer of anatomy, Theron, and you must undoubtedly remember the very peculiar structure of the ear. Other parts of the body are progressive in their growth : their bulk is proportioned to the infantile or manly age. But the organs of hearing, I have been informed, are precisely of the same size in the feeble infant and the confirmed adult. Justification likewise, being absolutely necessary to a state of acceptance with God, is it

* Isa. ix. 6. “Est præterea emphasis singularis in voce nobis. Significat id, quod omnes sentiunt, nostro bono et commodo natum esse huic Puerum Imperatorem.”—VITRING. *in loc.*

every stage of the Christian course, and even in the first dawn of sincere faith, complete. With regard to the existence of the privilege, there is no difference in the babes, the young men, the fathers in Christ*. The perception, the assurance, the comfortable enjoyment of the mercy, may increase; but the mercy itself is incapable of augmentation.

The various advances in sanctification account for the various degrees of future glory; and not account for them only, but render them entirely reasonable, and according to our apprehension of things, unavoidable. As to settling the proportion, we may safely leave that to the supreme Arbitrator. He "who meteth out the heavens with a span, and setteth a compass upon the face of the deep," cannot be at a loss to adjust this particular.

Ther. The organs of hearing, though not precisely, are very nearly of the same bulk in the babe and the man. They acquire from advancing years scarce anything more than an increase of solidity. So that I make no objection to your illustration, but to your doctrine.

If Christ has done all—and we are entitled to his whole merits only by believing—to be saved must be the easiest thing in the world: whereas the Bible represents Christianity as a race and a warfare, a state of conflict and a course of striving. In good truth, *Aspasio*, you prophesy pleasing things. Divinity is not your profession, or else I should number you among "the smooth, emollient, downy doctors." For, according to the articles of your creed, there is no more difficulty in securing heaven, than in rising from our seat.

Asp. A speculative assent to all the principles of religion, is, I acknowledge, a very easy matter. It may, it must exist, wherever there is a tolerable capacity for reasoning, and a due attention to evidence. This notional faith forced its way into the breast of *Simon the sorcerer*, Acts viii. 13; and extorted a confession from the dying lips of *Julian* † the apostate. Irresistible as the stroke of lightning, terrible also as its fiery glare, it flashes conviction into the very devils. Even those execrable spirits "believe and tremble," James ii. 19.

But the faith which, far from resting in speculation, exalts the desires, regulates the passions, and refines the whole conversation; the faith which, according to the expressive language of Scripture, "purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and sets the affections on things above;"—this truly noble and triumphant faith is no such easy acquisition. This is the gift of an infinite Benefactor, the work of a divine Agent; called therefore by way of supereminent distinction, "faith of the operation of God," Col. ii. 12; because God himself, by the effectual working of his mighty power, produces it in the human soul.

* To the same purpose speaks one of our most celebrated divines, as great an adept in sacred literature as ages have produced: "All are justified alike: the truth of faith justifying, not the measure. Justification, therefore, is the same in all that believe; though their belief be in different degrees. So once in the wilderness, all gathered not manna in the same measure; yet, when all came to measure, they had all alike; none above an omer, none under."—*LIGHTFOOT*, vol. ii. p. 1052.

† It is related in ecclesiastical history, that the Emperor *Julian*, that royal but wretched apostate, in an engagement with the *Parthians*, was mortally wounded; and that he cried, with his expiring breath, "*Vicisti, O Galilæe!*"—I am vanquished, O Galilean! thy right hand hath the pre-eminence.

The exercise of this faith I would not compare to an active gentleman rising from his seat, but rather to a shipwrecked mariner labouring to gain some place of safety. He espies a large rock, which rears its head above the boisterous flood. To this he bears away, and to this he approaches; but whirling winds and dashing waves drive him back to an unhappy distance. Exerting all his strength, he advances nearer still, and attempts to climb the desirable eminence, when a sweeping surge interposes, and drenches him again in the rolling deep. By determined efforts, he recovers the space he had lost. Now he fastens on the cliff, and has almost escaped the danger. But there is such a numbness in his limbs that he cannot maintain his hold, and such an impetuous swell in the ocean that he is once more dislodged, and plunged afresh into the raging billows. What can he do? His life, his precious life is at stake. He must renew, still renew, and never intermit his endeavours. Neither let him abandon himself to despair. The Master sees him amidst all his fruitless toil. Let him cry earnestly, "Lord, save me, I perish!" and he who commandeth the winds and the waves will be sure to put forth his beneficent hand, and rescue him from the devouring sea.

Such, my friend, so painful, so assiduous, are the struggles of faith, before it can rest in peaceful security on the "Rock of Ages, Christ Jesus!" Of this you may, some time or other, be assured, not only from my lips, but from your own experience.

Ther. What may happen in some future period of time, is beyond my power to foresee. At present, I am apt to think, we must put a stop to the theological lecture. Do you not remember our engagement with Altinous? and you will own, that punctuality in performing our promises is at least a moral virtue, if it be not a Christian grace.

DIALOGUE VI.

ASPASIO'S affairs called him to London. He staid in 'town a few days; but as soon as business was finished, he quitted the city, and hastened to his friend's country-seat. Upon his arrival he found some agreeable company that came to spend the evening with the family. This incident prevented the immediate prosecution of their subject. As the next morning proved misty, and unfit for walking abroad, Theron invited Aspasio to pass an hour in his study.

It was situate at the extremity of a large gallery, which, while it conducted the feet to a repository of learning, interposed between the ear and all the disturbance of domestic affairs; so that you are accommodated with every thing that may regale a studious mind, and incommoded with nothing that may interrupt a sedate attention. Aspasio readily consented to the proposal; but desired first to take a turn in this beautiful oblong, and divert himself with the decorations of the place.

Asp. A very short survey, Theron, is sufficient to discover the correctness of your judgment, and the true delicacy of your taste. Here are no impertinent and frivolous exhibitions of romantic tales or poetic stories. Here are no indecent pieces of imagery, that tend to corrupt a chaste or inflame a

wanton fancy. On the contrary, I am presented with a collection of maps, accurately drawn by the most able hands; and with several remarkable transactions of antiquity, most eloquently told in the language of the pencil. You have happily hit that grand point, which the gentleman of refinement, as well as the author of genius, should ever keep in view—the union of the beneficial with the delightful.

Ther. Indeed, my Aspasio, I have often been disappointed, sometimes even shocked, in the gardens, the porticoes, and the walks of some modern virtuosi.—Their portraits and statues are little else but an assemblage of elaborate trifles. Ixion stretched upon the wheel, or Phaeton precipitated from the chariot. Apollo stringing his lyre, or Jupiter (I beg his supreme highness's pardon for not giving him the precedence in my catalogue) bestriding his eagle, and balancing his bolts. Pray, where is the advantage of being introduced to this fabulous tribe of gentry? What noble idea can they awaken, or what valuable impression leave upon the mind? The best we can say of such performances is, that they are limning and sculpture expensively thrown away.

This celebrated trumpery one can bear with, however. But when the painting and sculpture, instead of cultivating virtue, and improving our morals, are calculated to be the very bane of both—will you call this an elegant entertainment? No: it is a nuisance; it is a pest. In the statues, I grant, every dimple sinks, and every muscle swells, with the exactest propriety. The countenance is animated with life, and the limbs are ready to start into motion. The picture, I am sensible, is as highly finished as the effigy: the distributions of light and shade most artfully adjusted; the diminutions of the perspective true to a nicety; nor can any thing exceed the easy flow of the robe, unless it be the graceful attitude, and almost speaking aspect, of the principal figure. But is this masterly execution an equivalent for the most malignant effects? for sullyng the purity of my fancy, and poisoning the powers of my imagination?

Is it an indication of the owner's judicious taste, to prefer regularity of features in the hammered block, before orderly and harmonious affections in his own breast? Does it bespeak a refined disposition, or benevolent temper, to be so extravagantly enamoured with the touches of a lascivious pencil, as to expose them in the most frequented passages, and obtrude them on every unwary guest? Surely, this can create no very advantageous opinion of a gentleman's intellectual discernment; much less can it raise an amiable idea of his moral character*. On such occasions I am strongly tempted to suspect, that real honour is a stranger where common decency is wanting.

As for the artist, one can hardly forbear execrating his hateful folly, who could prostitute such fine talents to such infamous purposes. Detested be the chisel that teaches, though with inimitable dexterity, the cold obdurate marble to enkindle dissolute affections! Abhorred be the pencil, that makes no other use of the most lovely colours, than to pollute the canvas, and ensnare the spectator!

* It is a pity but the advice of Cicero, that great master of elegant taste and polite manners, was received as a standard of regulation by all our connoisseurs in the fine arts: "In primis provideat, ne ornamenta ædium atque hortorum vitium aliquod indicent incæsse moribus."—*De Offic.*

It is argued, I know, that many of those pieces are the completest models extant. An everlasting reproach this to the art; but no apology for the performances; since the more nicely they are executed, the more mischievous* is their influence. It strikes the surer, and sinks the deeper. It dresses destruction gay, and paves with beauty the way to ruin.

It is my chief ambition, Aspasio, to have all my decorations so circumstanced, that the beholder may learn some valuable lesson in morality, or be reminded of some important event in history—may find, even in the scenes of his amusement, something to establish his virtue or enlarge his knowledge.

I frequently entertain my eldest son, who is reading the Greek and Latin historians, with an explanation of my principal drawings, that he may behold in colouring what he has perused in narrative.—[At this instant, the youth happened to make his appearance, paying his respects to Aspasio, and dutifully saluting his father].—It just recurs to my memory said Theron, that some necessary affairs of the family require my attendance for a few minutes. Will you excuse my absence, good Aspasio, and permit my son to supply my place?

You will very much oblige me by leaving me such a companion.—And come, my dear Sir, addressing himself to Eugenio, as I know you are a lover of learning, what think you of diverting ourselves with these agreeable books? which give us their instructive lessons, not in puzzling languages, but in pleasing colours. Eugenio spoke his consent, and expressed his modesty, by a becoming blush, while Aspasio proceeded—

Asp. This is a striking picture indeed: hills piled on hills form a most astonishing prospect. What horrible magnificence reigns amidst those wild and shaggy rocks! Nature seems to have designed them for the boundaries of the world. Yet those daring troops are attempting to pass the prodigious barrier. Who are they, Eugenio; and whom shall we call their leader?

Eug. This, Sir, is the famous Hannibal, heading and encouraging his army in the passage of the Alps. The sons of Africa seem to shiver with cold, as they traverse those frozen regions, and march among the clouds.

Asp. It is the very same. Some, you observe, climb with excessive toil the steep and craggy cliffs. Others with far greater difficulty, descend through dreadful declivities of ice, exposed all the while to the arrows of the mountaineers. Some, endeavouring to avoid the showers of steel, slip with their feet, and tumble headlong down the vast projecting promontories. See from what a height they are falling! carriages and their drivers, the horse and his rider, and at what a distance still from the stony abyss below. Some lie with closed eyelids and ghastly features, dashed to death at the very bottom. Others, writhing with the torture of mangled limbs and

* I hope it will not be thought improper, I wish it was entirely needless, to animadvert upon a practice, which is not only a reproach to our Christian profession, but an insult upon national decorum—the practice of exposing to public view, and offering to public sale, such shameful prints, as are fitted only to awaken licentious desires and cherish the most profligate dispositions.

Such spectacles are a species of the rankest poison. And can the poison be less pernicious, because it is received at the eye, instead of passing through the lips? because it tends more immediately to debauch the morals, and but remotely to destroy the constitution? No wonder so many of our youths are corrupted, and so many robberies committed, while such scenes of pictured lewdness are suffered to inflame them with lust and habituate them to impudence.

broken bones, lift up an agonising look to their comrades. Their comrades, insensible of a brother's misery, and wholly intent upon their own preservation, hang frightfully suspended on the edges of the precipice. The precipice seems to totter as they cling; and the alarmed spectator expects, every moment, a hideous downfall. Are you not startled at the view, Eugenio, and in pain for the hardy adventurers?

Eug. I am, Sir; and I wonder how they will extricate themselves from these perilous circumstances. I have read in Livy, that they cut their way through the rocks, after they had softened them with vinegar. But is this probable? how could they procure a sufficient quantity amidst those desolate mountains?

Asp. I believe their resolution and their perseverance were the vinegar. These open a road through rocks. These under the conduct of prudence, and the favour of Heaven, surmount all obstacles. Influenced by these, the survivors press boldly on; and are determined to vanquish the horrors of nature, as a prelude to their victory over the forces of Rome. Let these, resolution and perseverance I mean, be the companions of my Eugenio's youthful studies, and they will enable him also to conquer difficulties—even all the difficulties which lie in his way.

What is our next draught? At each end we have a group of living figures. All the intermediate space is an extensive tract of land, diversified only by rapid rivers, horrid deserts, and mountainous ridges; with here and there a few savage natives, in uncouth dresses and formidable arms. It is more like a map than a picture: and the most remarkable beauty is the aerial perspective; which puts a very agreeable cheat upon our eyes, causing us to behold on an ell of canvas the space of many hundreds of miles.

Eug. This represents the retreat of the ten thousand Greeks. First we behold them in the plains of Media; at an immense distance from their native country; without guides; without provision; and, what is the most desperate calamity of all, deprived of their ablest officers by treachery and murder. Well may they look dejected! How have I pitied them as I read their story; abhorred the perfidy of their enemies; and wished them all success in their hazardous enterprise!

Asp. Do not you perceive their drooping spirits begin to revive, and some gleam of hope diffuses itself through their countenances, while they listen to the eloquent Xenophon, who stands conspicuous in the midst haranguing his soldiers, and rousing their courage? But, ah! what a vast extent of unknown climes must they traverse, with a numerous and victorious army harassing them in flank, or hanging upon their rear! What fatigues must they sustain, what hardships endure, before they arrive at their wished-for home!—Home! Fired by the enchanting name, and animated by their brave philosophic leader, they resolve to push their way through all the extremes of peril and of pain. To scatter, with their little band, the encircling millions of barbarians, is the smallest of their achievements. They cross rivers, they scale rocks, whose slippery banks, and craggy summits, are lined with opposing nations. They wade through deserts of snow, and pass over inhospitable mountains, the far more dreaded abodes of desolation, drought, and famine. They encounter the keenness of the northern storm, and all the rigour of the most malignant seasons. As some of these articles are incapable of being expressed by the pencil, the artist remits us to the

historian, and has contented himself with marking out the most distinguished stages of this memorable expedition. Only we view the courageous itinerants, once again, on a pretty lofty eminence. There they appear, not with their former dejection, but in all the transports of joy.

Eug. This, Sir, is the mountain Tecqua, from whence they had the first view of the sea, and the first dawn of safety. There they embrace one another, and extol their commanders, especially the noble Xenophon, whose history gives me great delight, and his manly yet benign aspect strangely attracts my esteem. Methinks, under such a general, I could have been willing to take my share in all the toil and all the hazards of the expedition.

Asp. Would my Eugenio? Then I will list him under a Captain, unspeakably more accomplished and beneficent. Young as you are, you shall, from this hour, commence a soldier and a traveller;—a soldier to fight against sin, and every temptation—a traveller, to pass through the wilderness of this world, unto the land of everlasting rest. Though your enemies may be numerous, and your journey tedious, yet faint not, neither be discouraged. The Lord of heaven is your guide, and heaven itself shall be your exceeding great reward. When you arrive at those happy abodes, your delight will infinitely surpass all that the Grecians felt on Tecqua, when their ravished eyes beheld, and their tongues with ecstasy shouted, “The sea! the sea!”

The scene of yonder picture, I would venture to affirm, lies among the ancient Jews.

Eug. How can you tell this, Sir, at such a distance?

Asp. By “the fringes in the borders of their garments, and on each fringe a riband of blue.” God Almighty commanded all the Jews to observe this peculiarity in their habit, that their very clothes, being different from the apparel of their heathen neighbours, might admonish them not to be conformed to their idolatrous worship and licentious manners. This, as well as every other divine command, our Lord Jesus Christ most exactly obeyed. Therefore we are told by the evangelical historian, that the diseased woman, “who touched but the hem of his garment, was restored to health.” *Hem* it is in our English Bibles; but if you consult that most excellent of all books, the Greek Testament, you will find that the original word might more properly be rendered *fringe**. However, let us pass from the drapery to the design.

Eug. Here we see David in one of the most threatening exigencies of his whole life. Saul, more like a bloodhound than a king, pursues the best of sons, and the most valuable of subjects. He has extended the wings of his very superior army, in order to surround† the injured hero and his handful of associates.

Asp. This is the most animated, and I think the most masterly perform-

* Matth. ix. 20. *Καταρτιδον*.

† To this, or some such incident, may be applied a passage of the Psalms, which, in our translation, is very obscure; has scarce any sense, or if any, a very unjustifiable one: “Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the wickedness of my heels compasseth me round about?” Psalm xlix. 5. Wherefore! The reason is very apparent: When wickedness cleaves to a person’s heels, or habitually attends his goings, it raises an army of terrors; it unsheathes the sword of divine vengeance, and levels at his guilty head every threatening in the book of God.

ance, that has hitherto come under our notice. Consternation and doubt agitate their looks. Shall they surrender themselves, as so many tame victims, to a tyrant's fury; or shall they cut their way to safety, through the hearts of countrymen, friends, and brothers? Dreadful dilemma! While they are debating, the pursuers are closing upon them. A few, a few minutes more, must decide their fate. But who is the person that intervenes just at this critical juncture?

Eng. It is a messenger from the principal inhabitants of Judea. He comes breathless and trembling, amazement in his face, and dust upon his head. "An invasion!" he cries; "an invasion! The Philistines have poured themselves upon our frontiers! The Philistines are overrunning the land *!"

Asp. Upon the receipt of this news, see what vexation reddens in the disappointed monarch's aspect! What anger lightens in his eye! At the same time, what pale reflections on his country's danger mingle themselves with the fiery passions, and almost quench the flame enkindling in his cheeks. Shall the vulture relinquish his prey, even when it lies fluttering under his talons? Galling thought! But his kingdom is at stake. If he does not immediately advance to repel the enemy, his all, his all is lost. Burning therefore with indignation, yet chilled with fear, he turns, hasty though reluctant, away. Are you not charmed, Eugenio, with this description of tumultuous and contrary passions, which afford the finest subject for historic painting, and are so happily expressed in this piece?

Eng. Indeed, Sir, I am shocked, rather than charmed. The very looks of that revengeful monarch fill me with horror. What must he suffer in his mind, who discovers such rage and anguish in his features! I would not have his furious temper for all his royal power.

Asp. Then, my dear Eugenio, you must endeavour to suppress every emotion of envy and malevolence. You must cherish a cordial good-will to all men; and learn to rejoice in their excellencies and happiness, as well as in your own. Envy is the worm that gnaws, envy is the fury that embroils his wretched heart. And an author, with whom you will ere long be acquainted, has assured us,

Invidia Siculi non invenere tyranni
Tormentum majus. Hor.

The next is a kind of night-piece. Stars are in the sky, and the new moon rides on the skirts of the hemisphere; which affords just light enough to distinguish objects. This is a perfect contrast to the foregoing: we see no conflict of jarring passions; but the principal person appears sedate and composed, as the night that surrounds him. He stands on the bank of a river, thoughtful and attentive, as though he was pondering or executing some important project.

Eng. This is Cyrus the Great. He stands upon the banks of the Euphrates, not far from Babylon. He points with his sceptre, and is giving directions to his army. The directions are to pass through the channel of the river (which is drained of its water) in order to surprise the city.

Asp. This is a prince of very superior dignity, the honoured instrument of executing Jehovah's counsels. He was foretold by the prophet Isaiah,

* This event is related 1 Sam. xxiii. 25, &c. And it is one of the most extraordinary instances of a divine interposal, at the very crisis of need, that any history has recorded.

and even mentioned by name, more than two hundred years before his birth Isa. xlv. 28 ; xlv. 1. Let us wish him prosperity ; for he goes to humble the pride of Babylon, and release the captivity of Israel. See with what regular movements and what calm alacrity his troops advance ! Silence seems to escort them, while under covert of the shades, and with Providence at their head, they march along a road never before trodden by the foot of man. The soldiers of the garrison have abandoned their station or the wall, to join in the dissolute indulgence of this fatal night. The inhabitants, like many a heedless sinner, are lulled in indolence, and dreaming of pleasures, even on the very brink of ruin.

Eug. Why are those brazen gates which lead to the river placed in such a distinguished point of view ? They strike my eye more, I think, than all the monuments of art and grandeur which adorn that superb city. And let me farther ask, whether the painter has not offended against probability, in suffering them to stand wide open ? On the approach of so formidable an adversary, I should expect to have found them shut with all possible security.

Asp. In this particular, the painter has shewed his judgment and not forgotten his piety. God had devoted that haughty and oppressive metropolis to destruction. And you will perceive, from this circumstance, how wonderfully he overrules all events for the accomplishment of his sacred purpose. Had those ponderous gates been shut*, the city had continued impregnable, and the whole enterprise been defeated. But, through some accidental forgetfulness, occasioned by the disorders of this riotous solemnity, or rather by a very signal interposition of divine vengeance, they are left open, and afford an easy entrance to slaughter and death ; which rush upon the unhappy creatures all sunk in sleep, or overcharged with wine ; as a concealed snare in some dreadful unexpected moment springs up, and inextricably entangles the unwary bird. Was I to inscribe this picture with a motto, I would chuse the apostle's admonition, " Be sober ; be vigilant."

Who is this, with his length of hair † flowing upon his shoulders, with such amplitude of personage, such magnificence of mien, and noble plainness of habit ?

Eug. This is my favourite piece. My father sometimes shows me the heads of the philosophers ; but there is something so uninviting and severe in Socrates and Diogenes, that I could never much admire them. But this, Sir, is Scipio ; the thunderbolt of war, as Virgil calls him. Here is something so lovely and engaging, as well as grand and majestic, that I am never weary of looking on him.

Asp. He appears with a lady of distinguished beauty in his hand.

Eug. This is the captive princess who had been taken in war, who was set

* See this very momentous, though seemingly inconsiderable circumstance, finely illustrated by M. Rollin, and compared with a remarkable prophecy in Isaiah, *Ancient History*, vol. ii. p. 144, &c. ; a work in which the most entertaining and instructive events of antiquity are regularly digested, elegantly related, and stripped of those minuter incidents which make the story move slow, and are apt to fatigue the attention.

† I believe it was not customary with the Romans, especially their warriors, to have long flowing hair. This, therefore, might seem an offence against what the Italians call *il costume*, if the painter was not supported by the authority of Livy, who, in his descriptive picture of Scipio, gives us the following touches : " Species corporis ampla ac magnifica. Præterquam quod suapte natura multa majestas inerat, adornabat promissa Cæsaries, habitusque corporis, non cultus munditiis, sed virilis vere ac militaris. Lib. xxviii. c. 35.

apart for the general's prize, but whom he is now restoring to her espoused husband.

Asp. You are right, Eugenio. He has just led in his lovely captive, attended by her husband and parents, amidst a full assembly of Romans and Celtiberians, the victors and the vanquished. His modest eyes, you observe, are rather turned from, than gazing upon the blooming virgin. Cannot you suppose how the spectators must be affected upon the opening of this extraordinary scene? Every one beholds the hero with admiration, the lady with delight. Every bosom is big with expectation, or in pain for the event. After a short pause, he addresses himself to the lover in words to this effect: "I am no stranger to your interest in this fine woman: The fortune of war has put her entirely into my power. The circumstance of my youth cannot render me insensible to so engaging a person: but with us Romans, honour and generosity have a more prevailing influence than transitory gratifications. Take your bride; be happy in each other; and, when you look upon this gift, admire the Romans, be a friend to Rome." Upon this he delivers her (as you behold the action here represented) to the enamoured prince.—See how the crowds, that cluster and hang around, are struck with the beneficent deed! In the Celtiberians, we behold a mixture of veneration and surprise. Their looks are full of meaning. Methinks they are going to cry out, "Excellant man!" In the Romans, we discern a conscious superiority and exultation of mind. Triumph is in their features, as though they would say, "This wondrous man is ours." In the lady, we admire the accomplished and modest fair, uniting all the dignity of her birth with all the delicacy of her sex. What soft confusion and what tender joy appear in her countenance! She is lost in wonder, and at a loss for words: she speaks the acknowledgments of her heart by the silent eloquence of a tear, which steals down her glowing cheek to bedew the kind hand that has protected her innocence, and is delivering her to her lord. Her lord is under an apparent and a graceful struggle of love and gratitude: he doats upon his charming princess, and he almost adores his generous benefactor. We can hardly tell whether he is going to clasp the former in his arms, or throw himself at the feet of the latter. The aged parents express their transport in a different manner. Their knees are bent to the earth; their eyes are lifted up to heaven; they implore for their noble guardian every blessing that the gods can bestow. Scipio himself displays all the magnanimity of the conqueror, tempered with the sedateness of the philosopher, and softened with the gentleness of the friend. He gives happiness; but he enjoys a greater. His eyes sparkle with a sublime delight; and he seems to anticipate the applause which this truly heroic act will gain in all countries and in all ages.

Eug. Is not this a greater victory than any that he had won in the field of battle; and a nobler triumph than any that could be voted him by the applauding senate? Amiable Scipio! Might I be a Roman, I would be no other than Scipio.

Asp. I wish you, my dear Sir, the temperance and generosity of Scipio; but from a better motive than his. He, I fear, was too much swayed by a spirit of ambition, which you must endeavour to suppress rather than cherish. A spirit of ambition which pants after distinction, and thirsts for applause, is diametrically opposite to the genius of the gospel, Gal. v. 26. It is a lesson which must infallibly be unlearned, if ever we become pos-

sessors of faith, or partakers of Christ, John v. 44. It is a *root of bitterness*, which naturally produces envy, Gal. v. 26; that most odious, and (as you have just now seen) most self-tormenting of all tempers. It is a habit of mind, which generally renders men incendiaries in the church, and disturbers of its tranquillity, 3 John 9, 10. It is, therefore, more like an enchanted potion which inebriates, than a genuine cordial which animates.

Eug. From what motive then would you encourage me to be diligent in the pursuit of learning, and in the cultivation of every virtue?

Asp. Not that you may acquire the poor, contemptible, perishing honour, which cometh from men;—but that you may please God, your Almighty Creator; that you may glorify Christ, your infinitely condescending Redeemer; that you may yourself attain what is the true dignity and only felicity of your nature; and may be serviceable to the best interests of your fellow-creatures—even their present holiness and their eternal happiness.

These are the grand and endearing encouragements which our holy religion proposes. These will operate, I am bold to aver, with a much sweeter and a far more sovereign efficacy, than all the glittering enticements which ambition can devise: and, what is above all other considerations weighty, these will be more likely, or rather these will be very certain, to receive the divine blessing.

You told me you was never weary of contemplating Scipio. For which reason I promise myself, you will not be fatigued or displeased, though I have so long confined your attention to this portrait. But have we no hero of Britain fit to join this illustrious triumvirate from Rome, Persia, and Judea?

Eug. The very next we meet is one of our English kings. But I cannot say that I remember either his name or his story.

Asp. How, my young gentleman! Do you read the annals of other nations, and not acquaint yourself with the affairs of your own country? If I was in your place, I would apply myself to the classical writers by way of study, and to some valuable English historian by way of amusement. Such an amusement is infinitely preferable to novels or romances, and will not only relax your attention, but enrich your mind.

Eug. I thank you, good Sir, for your admonition; and, if you please, I will now begin the study you recommend. Your explanation of these drawings shall be the rudiments of my knowledge; and I shall think it a happiness to receive my first instructions from so able a master.

Asp. It is honour enough for me, Eugenio, to have given you the hint. I only point out your game, or spring the covey; you shall be taught by a more expert proficient to make it your own. Yet, though others may direct you with greater skill, none will rejoice in your successful pursuit more sincerely than myself.

This is our renowned Henry the Fifth, as he appeared after the victory of Agincourt. You see the gallant conqueror clad in steel, and recent from the slaughter of the insulting foe. He seems to breathe an heroic ardour, which is irradiated and exalted by a lively devotion. If courage can be expressed by the pencil, that is its genuine likeness; keen, yet composed; grasping the sword, yet looking up to heaven. He that a little while ago drove the battle, like a whirlwind, on the legions of France, now bends a suppliant knee, and offers the eucharistic hymn to the Lord God of Hosts.

No turbulent or disorderly joy riots among the soldiery. They express not the triumph of their hearts in frantic exultations or drunken revels, but in acts of thanksgiving to Jehovah; in an attitude which speaks the devout acknowledgment of the prophet, "Thou art our battle-axe and weapons of war," Jer. li. 20; or the grateful declaration of the Psalmist, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory," Psal. cxv. 1.

This last instance informs my Eugenio, that prayer is an honourable employ; has been practised by persons of the most admired endowments; is the surest method of obtaining success in whatever business we undertake, and of enjoying prosperity in whatever circumstances we are placed.

The next piece is different from all the preceding. In those, armies with their banners displayed, ships of war riding at anchor, battering engines and instruments of death, form the perspective. In this, we have, all around, a lovely and rural landscape, expressive of peace, and enriched with plenty. Corn and cattle in the valleys, fruitful vineyards on the hills, and beautiful gardens surrounding the houses. But who is that graceful and august personage, seated on a stately throne of ivory and gold?

Eug. This is Solomon, having an interview with the Queen of Sheba. A large train of her attendants throng the avenues of the palace: some leading foreign animals; some bearing vases and caskets; all arrayed in strange apparel. The Israelites stare upon their outlandish visitants, their costly presents, and peculiar habits. Their visitants are as much surprised at the walls, the towers, and especially the temple of Jerusalem. But you, Sir, I apprehend, are most pleased with the venerable person who fills the throne?

Asp. Indeed I am; and so is his royal guest. You observe, in her robe, her retinue, her deportment, an unpolished kind of grandeur. But all in Solomon is so splendid, and at the same time so elegant; displays such a delicacy of taste and such a magnificence of spirit, that the Sabeen princess is perfectly in raptures. See how she stands fixed and gazing with speechless admiration, like one lost in astonishment and transported with delight! Her looks speak what, when she recovers the power of utterance, her tongue expresses: "It was a true report that I heard in my own land, of thy acts, and of thy wisdom. Howbeit, I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen; and behold, the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame which I heard."

Eug. This is a great compliment. Is it right, Sir, to praise a man in such plain terms, and such high strains, to his very face? I think I have heard Philenor blame such a practice, as inconsistent with refined manners; and I have heard my father say, no one is a better judge of fine breeding than Philenor. And if the most agreeable behaviour, added to the most winning conversation, are what you call fine breeding, I am sure Philenor is master of it to a very great degree. I love to be in his company, and am never better pleased than to hear him talk.

Asp. The compliment is high, but it is just. It is strictly conformable to truth, and proceeds from the most unaffected sincerity. If we take what follows into consideration, we shall have a pattern of true politeness; a propriety, and a refinement of address, far surpassing her majesty's external state. "Happy are thy men; happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom." Instead of envying,

congratulates the domestics of Solomon, and rejoices in their superior felicity. This is benevolence. "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel. Because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice."—Here she ascribes all his royal virtues, and matchless accomplishments, to the bounty of Heaven. Though they are applauded in the person of Solomon, they are recognized as the free gift of God. This is piety. When the endowments we celebrate lead us to magnify not their possessor, but their author, then the poison is corrected, and turned into medicine. Praise thus circumstanced loses its malignity, and is rendered salubrious.

It pleases me to perceive, that you take so much notice of the conversation which passes between your worthy father and his ingenious friends. I promise myself, you will also remember the maxim which we have now learned from a queen—a queen, whom not only the sacred historian, but our Lord Jesus Christ himself vouchsafes to mention, and with marks of approbation; whose name therefore will be had in honour, when Semiramis and Cleopatra, the heroines and the beauties, are consigned over to oblivion. The maxim which I mean is this: There must be an union of sincerity, of benevolence, and of piety, in order to constitute true politeness. Whoever pretends to fine breeding, and is destitute of these qualities, is nothing more than a pretender. He bears just the same proportion to this ornamental character, as the ape and the monkey bear to the man.

But we have not sufficiently examined our picture. The dome is of cedar, supported by pillars of marble, to which are annexed curtains of silk and embroidery. The pillars shine with the most glossy polish, and swell upon the eye with the boldest projections. The curtains, pendent in large and easy folds, seem not adhesive to the canvass, but waving in the air. The throne is exquisitely contrived, richly ornamented, and highly finished. It is evident the painter had in his eye that remarkable observation of Scripture, "There was not the like made in any kingdom;" and he has really done all which art could devise, or colours execute, in order to exemplify the great encomium.

If the monarch was absent, we should desire no better entertainment than to view the beauties of the apartment; but can hardly allow any attention to the edifice, when so graceful and so grand a presence bespeaks our regard. For I must own there appears to me something peculiarly excellent in this figure: a serenity and dignity, without any of that martial air which adds a tincture of ferocity to the warrior; a sagacity and penetration not to be equalled by the wrinkles of age, yet transparent through all the bloom of youth. Piety and wisdom, the love of God and the grace of his Spirit, give an elevation to the mind, a secret charm to the countenance, and something more than mortal to the whole man. I am apt to suspect, Eugenio, that you yourself are ready to adopt a new favourite; that you now prefer Solomon even to Scipio; and had rather be like the "beloved of the Lord," than the darling of Rome.

Eug. Every thing in Solomon is so venerable and heavenly, that I am filled with awe rather than fired with emulation. It is not for a boy to think of imitating such high perfection!

Asp. Why not, my dear Sir? It was God who gave Solomon his superior wisdom and exalted accomplishments. And God is "the same yesterday, to-day,

and for ever;" as willing to hear, and as able to help you, as he was to hear and bless his servant Solomon. Neither let your youth be a discouragement. "Out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings, he ordaineth strength, and perfects praise," Psal. viii. 2. Samuel ministered in the temple when he was but a child, 1 Sam. ii. 18. Josiah, while he was yet young, began to seek after the God of his fathers, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3. Timothy was acquainted with the holy scriptures from his earliest years, 2 Tim. iii. 15. And Solomon himself was none of the oldest, when he was favoured with that extraordinary vision, and made that admirable choice at Gibeon, 1 Kings, iii. 5, 6, &c.; a passage of scripture which I dare say you have read, which I would recommend to your attentive consideration, and which I hope you will take for the model of your conduct. And if you, like that illustrious young prince, desire a wise and understanding heart, more than the affluence of wealth or the distinctions of honour; if you "seek wisdom as silver, and search for her as for hid treasure; then shall you also understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Prov. ii. 4, 5.

The next that occurs presents us with a view of the sea; and a most tremendous view it is.

Eug. This is the voyage related by the evangelist, when our Lord sailed with his disciples, and bid the storm be still, and made the ocean calm.

Asp. Then we may truly say, "A greater than Solomon is here!" Give me leave to hint, upon this occasion, that every picture of Christ must necessarily depreciate his glorious person. Therefore you will never think, that a few rays beaming round his sacred head, can properly distinguish the Son of God, or express the grace of his offices, and the divinity of his nature. It is not to display the perfections of the Lord Jesus himself, but only to give us an idea of one of his works, that the pencil has been employed on this grand subject.

You will also remember, that it was not the main ocean, but the lake of Tiberias on which they sailed. However, the painter is at liberty to make his sea as large as he pleases, and his storm as terrible as he can. Accordingly, he has collected all the horrors of a tempest. Lightnings fire the arch above; and thunders, could thunders have been painted, would have rocked the ground below. Those flaming bolts have smitten a huge promontory, and torn its rugged brow. See how the rocky fragment is tumbling with impetuous bound from cliff to cliff! The waters, lashed by furious winds, heave and toss their tumultuous billows: here they rise in rolling ridges, there they rage in devouring whirls. Amidst these horrible commotions, you behold a vessel in all the extremity of distress: straining under the blast, battered and half overwhelmed by the surge, she can no longer maintain the unequal conflict; she yields to the resistless flood; and begins, evidently begins, to sink. Perplexed, amazed and at their wits' end, the disciples run to and fro. They shift their tackling, lighten the stowage, try every expedient; and find, to their inexpressible affliction, every expedient ineffectual.

We cast our eye forward, and their divine Master appears sedately rising from a gentle slumber. He sees the perplexity and horror of his companions, without the least emotion of alarm. He sees destruction approaching, heaven and earth mingling; and instead of being dismayed, enjoys the elemental war. What composure in his mien! what dignity in his attitude! what majesty, sweetened with compassion, in his aspect! such as our

arise from no other cause, but a conscious and undoubted certainty that not one of the company should perish, not a hair of their head be injured; and that all this mighty uproar of nature should end in a demonstration of his mightier power, and a confirmation of his disciples' faith. He looks abroad into the mutinous sky and the turbulent deep: He waves, with an authoritative air, his sacred hand, and adds the great commanding words, *Peace! be still.* Do you inquire after the effect? let Milton declare it:—

“ Confusion heard his voice, and wild uproar
Stood ruled.”

This is expressed in another draught, where all is hushed, the tremendous agitations cease, and the most profound tranquillity takes place. The water is smooth as glass; we have the picture of a perfect calm, and view those very persons, who a little while ago were in the wildest distraction and in the jaws of ruin, surrounding their Lord as men alive from the dead. Their consternation is turned into wonder; and their pangs of fear into ecstasies of joy. They acknowledge the omnipotence, and adore the goodness of Jesus.

Eug. Well may they acknowledge his omnipotence, since winds and waves obey him. Great reason have they to adore his goodness, since he rescued them from the very jaws of death—that worst of deaths, perishing in the stormy deep.

Asp. If Jesus Christ had vouchsafed such a deliverance to my Eugenio, what would he have thought, or how would he have been affected?

Eug. I should have thought myself inexpressibly obliged, and that I could never show sufficient gratitude to so great a benefactor.

Asp. Assure yourself, then, my dear Sir, that he has done infinitely more for you: that he has delivered you, not indeed from being swallowed up by the raging billows, but from sinking into the pit of everlasting perdition: that he has not only rescued you from endless destruction, but obtained eternal life and heavenly happiness for you.—This he has done, not by speaking a word, or issuing a command; but by bearing your guilt, suffering your punishment, and dying the death, the most ignominious and tormenting death, in your stead. Should you not then unfeignedly love him? study to please him? and make it the reigning endeavour of your life to glorify him?

Here Theron returned, and the young student withdrew, after receiving some affectionate and encouraging compliments from Aspasio, who was going to enlarge upon the excellent taste of his friend, the instructive style of his pictures, the good sense and great proficiency of his son: but Theron, far from coveting the praise, and fully satisfied with the consciousness of acting the becoming part, prevented his discourse by stepping to a pair of glass folding-doors, which, thrown open, admitted them into the study.

A chimney-piece of grey marble, with plain, but bold and protuberant mouldings, formed a very handsome appearance. In various little niches were fixed elegant busts; and on the several interstices hung beautiful prints, representing many of the most eminently learned men, who were the ornaments and blessings both of ancient and modern times. The shelves all around were accommodated, not encumbered, with books.

Aspasio, running over the lettered backs, observed a collection of the most valuable authors in history and natural philosophy, in poetry and divinity.

You will easily perceive, said Theron, that I am somewhat singular in furnishing my study, as well as in ornamenting the avenue. My books are not for show, but use; and claim a regard, rather on account of their worth than their number. An immense multitude of volumes, I have always thought, is more likely to embarrass the attention than to improve the understanding. A huge library seems to resemble a perplexing labyrinth; and often bewilders the mind, instead of leading it expeditiously to the acquisition of truth.

When people are eager to peruse a multiplicity of writings, it frequently happens, that in reading all they digest none. They taste some empty and transient amusement, but collect no solid or lasting advantage. Their minds are somewhat like those capacious looking-glasses, which we have seen exposed in the most frequented and populous streets of London. They receive all manner of shadowy images, but no substantial impression. A thousand figures pass through them, not one abides in them.

Our books, replied Aspasio, as well as our friends, should rather be select than numerous. For my part, I would desire no more than two or three of the most correct and masterly writers in any science. These a person of moderate capacity may be able to comprehend; and not comprehend only, but enrich his memory with the choicest sentiments, and make the substance of their works his own. He will, by repetition and familiar converse, enter into their spirit, and acquire their manner; while a rambler in reading does little more than gratify his fancy, without refining his taste, or amending his heart.

Upon this Aspasio turned himself, and espied in one corner of the apartment the celestial and terrestrial globes; in another, a large reflecting telescope; and on the top of a bureau, one or two of the best microscopes.

These instruments, resumed Theron, have opened an inexhaustible fund of the finest entertainments*. They have furnished us with new eyes, and brought up, I may venture to say, a new world into our view. They give us a sight of wonders, which may seem incredible to the incurious vulgar, and were utterly unknown to the most inquisitive sages of antiquity. They charm the eye with a display of inimitable beauties, where nothing worthy of notice was expected. They throw the mind into a pleasing transport of admiration; and from the meanest, lowest objects, raise the most amiable and exalted ideas of the all-glorious Creator.

I have often regretted, that such rational and manly gratifications should be almost universally supplanted by the fantastical and childish amusements in vogue. Why should not the contemplation of nature's surprising novelties be as acceptable an entertainment as the stale diversion of quadrille? be as refined an employ for a leisure hour as to count the spots on a pack of cards? The ladies, I am very sure, might find brighter colours and more delicate ornaments in the robes and head-dress of a common fly, than ever

* Gentlemen of taste and seriousness cannot, I think, have a nobler piece of furniture for their studies, than the microscope and the telescope, the orrery and the air pump. This apparatus would afford them a most delightful and improving amusement in a solitary hour; it would also give them an opportunity of entertaining their company, in a truly elegant and very instructive manner. It would open a fine and ample field for displaying the glories of God the Creator, and of God the Redeemer.

they found amidst the trinkets of a toy-shop. And was the fair circle of females once acquainted with the radiant varnish and rich studs which enamel the cover of a beetle's wing, I am apt to think they would view with less rapture, with more indifference, perhaps with a becoming disdain, all the pretty fancies of a beau's wardrobe.

A few days ago, when the accomplished Manilia favoured us with a visit, I shewed her, through a magnifying-glass, the sting of a bee, the scale of a sole, the wing of a gnat, and some other beautiful minims of nature, together with the powder which adheres to our fingers when we touch the body of a moth: "Amazing!" cried the young lady; "what elegant figures! What enchanting finery!

———"Smallest lineaments exact,
In all the liveries deck'd of summer's pride,
With spots of gold and purple, azure and green."

MILTON, book vii.

"How perfect the polish, and how high the finishing of that little weapon! This piece of defensive armour, how skilfully contrived, and how curiously wrought! Here rising into little ridges, like the bosses of a buckler, fitted to repel injuries: there, scooped into little cavities, designed, I suppose, to diminish its weight; that the coat of mail may not encumber, even while it defends, the puny wearer. What I took to be a whitish despicable rag, is the neatest fan I ever beheld; mounted on sticks * inimitably tapering and slender, tinged with all the soft and lovely colours of the most glossy mother-of-pearl. But what astonishes me more than all, is the view of that coloured dust, which your instrument has turned into a cluster of feathers; every one wrought off with a regularity and a delicacy that are beyond the power of description. The finest stroke drawn by the Italian pen, compared with the extreme minuteness of the shaft, is broad and bulky as an admiral's mast. A speck of leaf-gold, could it be weighed against the exquisite attenuations of the vane †, would seem more substantial and ponderous than yonder marble slab.

"How nice, even to a prodigy, must be the mechanism of the animalcule race! I see globules, I see tides of blood, rolling through meanders inexpressibly finer than the finest hair.—Stranger still! I see whole shoals of active creatures expatiating in a single drop of water ‡; taking their pastime amidst such a scanty canal, as unstrained, and as much at large, as leviathan in the abysses of the ocean. A whole kingdom of those creatures, though collected into a body, are quite undiscernible by the naked eye. What then must be the size of every individual? Yet in every individual there is a complete system of limbs; each endowed with spontaneous mo-

* These sticks are the little ribs which support, at proper intervals, the fine transparent membrane of the wing.

† Vane is the feathery part of a quill.

‡ In a single drop of water, Dr. Hook is said to have discovered, with his microscope, eight millions two hundred and eighty thousand animalcules. This is mentioned, because it is the prevailing philosophy of the age: though I must confess that M. Gautier seems to have gone a considerable way towards giving it another turn; as he has proved, before a learned assembly at Paris, that the vermiculares of Lewenhoeck, and the living molecularæ of M. de Buffon, were only balls of air agitated by the fermenting of the seed. If so, it is not impossible but Dr. Hook's animalcules may be nothing more than balls of air, agitated by the fermenting of the pepper. Be this as it will, the young lady's remarks on the wonders of mechanism in the animalcule creation, I believe, will never be controverted.

tion ; all assembled, though not crowded, in a living atom. To reflect upon the texture of vessels and the operation of organs, so complex, so numerous, yet so inconceivably minute ; how it awakens admiration, fills me with reverence of the Almighty Maker, and yields a pleasure infinitely superior to all the modish amusements of our sex ! Your discoveries of life in miniature have given me a disgust of what is called high life, and its solemn fopperies. You have spoiled me, Theron, for a fashionable trifle. I shall no longer relish the dull economy of the fan, or the poor parade of the snuff-box."

Asp. Have you nothing to say of the telescope ?—I believe it must be my province to celebrate this admirable invention ; and I wish I could do it with Manilia's brilliant imagination. If the microscope leads us downward, to the curious secrets of the animalcule creation, the telescope bears us upward, to the grand peculiarities of the starry regions. The eye, conducted by this wonderful guide, visits a variety of majestic orbs, which would otherwise be lost in unmeasurable tracts of ether. This, far more surprising than the discoveries of Columbus, has found out new colonies of worlds in every quarter of the nocturnal skies. This has placed a glittering crescent on the brow of one * of the planets ; and has given others a most stately train of attendants †.

Tell me, Theron, could you discern the full choir of the constellations, or distinguish the variegated face of the moon, without the aid of our telescopic tube ? Could you, with your unassisted eye, get a sight of Jupiter's satellites, or procure a glimpse of Saturn's ring ? Without that supplementary aid to our sight, they are quite imperceptible ; though the satellites of the former are incomparably more magnificent than the retinue of all the monarchs in the world ; and, compared with the ring of the latter, all the bridges on ten thousand rivers are less than the ferule of your cane.

As the telescope to the eye, so is revelation to the understanding. It discovers truths, which, exclusive of such a discovery, had been for ever hid from the most sagacious minds. It is strange to the unlearned observer, that this ponderous globe of earth and seas should wheel its rapid circuit round the sun. But the telescope has rendered this fact clear to a demonstration. It is strange likewise to our natural apprehensions, that we should die in Adam, and be undone by our first parent's disobedience ; nor less so that we should be made alive in Christ, and derive our recovery from his imputed righteousness. But revelation makes this doctrine as certain as it is comfortable.

Ther. Does revelation make it certain ?—This is a point not yet established, but taken for granted. I rather apprehend, that revelation in no place maintains it—in many places disavows it. Since your absence, Aspasio, I have spent some time in searching the Scriptures, with a particular view to this tenet ; and I can find no such expression in the whole Bible, as the imputation of Christ's righteousness. If it was so leading an article as you represent, surely it could not have been entirely forgotten by the inspired writers, nor utterly excluded from their body of divinity.

Asp. The very identical expression may not occur, and yet the doctrine be abundantly taught. I believe you never met with the word *resurrection* in any part of the Pentateuch, nor ever read the phrase *satisfaction* in all the New Testament. Yet our Lord fully proved the truth of the former

* The planet Venus.

† The satellites of Jupiter and Saturn.

from the writings of Moses ; and you yourself have acknowledged the latter to be the unanimous sense of the apostles and evangelists.

In the Epistle to the Romans, we have express and repeated mention of righteousness imputed. What or whose righteousness can be the subject of this assertion ? Not the righteousness of angels : they are a superior class of beings, and have no such intimate connexion with our nature. Not the righteousness of eminent saints : this is the exploded error of Popery ; and furnishes the Romish zealots with that chimera of arrogance and folly, work of supererogation. Not any righteousness of our own : for it is positively declared to be without works, Rom. iv. 6, in which no works of our own have any concurrence or the least share.—What other righteousness then can be meant, but the righteousness of our great Substitute, Surety, and Saviour, who took our nature, discharged our debt, and is therefore styled “ Jehovah our righteousness ? ” Jer. xxiii. 6.

Ther. This seems contrary to the whole tenor of the sacred instructions. What says the prophet ? “ When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right he shall save his soul alive,” Ezek. xviii. 27. Here that greatest of blessings, the salvation of the soul, is ascribed to a departure from evil and a perseverance in good ; to a real alteration in a man’s own temper and conduct not to any fanciful application of some transmissive righteousness from another.

Asp. Let me ask my Theron, Is there no wickedness but riot and debauchery, profaneness and injustice ? Unbelief, though it may pass without censure or notice in a system of morality, is, in the volume of revelation declared a capital crime. Our Lord, speaking of the Holy Spirit, mentions it as a signal part of his office, that “ he shall convince the world of sin.” Of what sin ? Scandalous violations of moral rectitude ? This were a needless employ. The light of reason is sufficient to evince such a charge, and the court of conscience is erected to pass the deserved sentence. Of sin, adds the heavenly Teacher, “ because they believe not on me,” John xvi. 9 ; on my death, as the cause of their forgiveness ; on my righteousness, as the ground of their acceptance ; on my Spirit, as the powerful principle of their holiness.

Unbelief treats God as a liar, I John v. 10 ; because it rejects the testimony which he has borne concerning his beloved Son. Unbelief tramples on the blood of Christ, and is a most contemptuous affront to all his saving offices. Unbelief would counteract the operations of the Holy Ghost, whose peculiar work it is to testify of Christ, and make manifest his righteousness. Unbelief instigates (could we have thought it possible ?) a child of dust, a slave of sin, to idolise himself and his own performances. To say all in a word, unbelief is that great, that comprehensive iniquity, which scornfully rejects, or impiously renounces, the most glorious method of salvation which Omniscience itself could devise.

The wicked man, therefore, never turns from his wickedness, till he turns, by a true faith, to Jesus Christ. Till then, he is a rebel against the gospel, however he may pay some specious and partial regard to the law. So flagrant a rebel, that he stands particularly excepted in the act of evangelical indemnity. For as “ he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ; so he that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him,” John iii. 18. 36.

Ther. What are the Psalmist’s sentiments on this subject ? Does not he

represent the matter in a very different light? "Thou, Lord, art merciful; for thou rewardest every man according to his," not another's "works," *Psal. lxxii. 12.*

Asp. Wcighty saying! May it impress our very hearts! God is merciful, and therefore rewardeth. From whence it appears, that what we call a reward, is really an act of mercy rather than of justice. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift" (says the apostle, altering his style, and making a most important distinction,) the gift "of God is eternal life," *Rom. vi. 23.* The inspired penman subjoins, not *for*, but *according to*, every man's works. His works are the measure, not the meritorious cause. To merit, is the sole prerogative of the Saviour. To him it is owing, that our imperfect services are honoured with any acceptance; much more that they are recompensed with any reward.

Ther. Does not this exposition of yours clash with that truly generous acknowledgment of St. Peter? "In every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him," *Acts x. 35.* Here it is undeniably evident, that acceptance with our Creator is founded on a man's own piety and personal integrity.

Asp. Rightly to understand this text, we should inquire into the circumstances of the history. The apostle had been strongly and most unreasonably prejudiced in favour of the Jews; imagining that the salvation of Christ, like the dispensation of Moses, must be confined to his countrymen. But now, having considered the purport of his late heavenly vision, having compared it with the angelic message delivered to Cornelius, and being made acquainted with the character of that valuable man, he breaks out into this truly catholic declaration: "My prejudices are vanished. My sentiments are enlarged. From the instance before me, it is demonstrably certain, that God does not appropriate the blessings of his covenant to any particular person, family, or people. 'But, in every nation, he that feareth him, and, from a principle of religion in the heart, 'worketh righteousness' in the life, 'is accepted;' so accepted, as to be an object of the divine favour, and an inheritor of eternal happiness."

This, I think, is the exact meaning of the place. And let it be recollected, that no one truly fears, or can possibly please God, without faith, *Heb. xi. 6.* For which reason it is necessary to suppose, that Cornelius, though a heathen by birth, had believed through grace. Nay, it is evident from the context, that he had heard of Jesus Christ; had some acquaintance with the design of his coming, and the execution of his office*; enough to be the ground of a real, though perhaps an infantile faith. The business of the apostle was, to lead this convert into the clear light and full privileges of the gospel; to ratify and confirm his title to them, by the sacred seal of baptism; and introduce him, as the first-fruits of the Gentiles, into the Christian church.

So that nothing can be concluded from this passage, but that the glad tidings of Christianity are for Jews, for Gentiles, for all people; that faith,

* See *Acts x. 36, 37.* Indeed it could hardly be otherwise, since Cornelius was settled at *Cæsarea*, the residence of the lord-lieutenant, and seat of the civil, as *Jerusalem* was of the ecclesiastical government. In a place of such general resort, so very remarkable an event could not be unknown, especially as Philip the evangelist had fixed his abode in that city. See *Acts, viii. 40.*

even when weak, is productive of good works; and when sincerely improved will certainly be increased—"will go from strength to strength."

Ther. Does not our Saviour, in describing the process, and foretelling the issue of the last decisive trial, assign a kingdom to the righteous? assign in this precise view, as a proper remuneration of their own good works saying, in the most express terms, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; for," &c. *Matt. xxv. 30.*

Asp. Be pleased to take notice of the expression. They are bidden to inherit; and what is freer than an inheritance? Observe also the reason alleged, and compare it with the rule of judicature: "He that believeth, saith the supreme Judge, "shall be saved." This is the avowed, the invariable standard, by which he proceeds in administering everlasting judgment. Accordingly, he confers eternal life on the righteous, as persons entitled to this great felicity, on the foot of his own gracious appointment.

For denotes, not the foundation, but the evidence of their right. "I acquit such a person," says the arbitrator in a judicial claim, "for the witnesses depose that the debt is paid." The deposition, which answers to these righteous acts, is the proof; payment of the debt, which corresponds with Christ's perfect obedience, is the cause of the discharge. "For ye have given, ye have abounded in all instances of duty to me, and love to your brethren; and thereby have manifested yourselves true believers."

It may be further observed, that our Lord says not, ye have done it to your fellow-creatures, but to "these my brethren," *Matth. xxv. 40.* He commends not every random act of good-nature or generosity, but such kinds of beneficence only as carry the Christian stamp—were exercised to a disciple, "in the name of a disciple." And those most evidently spring from faith; these undeniably attest its sincerity.

Ther. Are not these distinctions more subtile than solid?

Asp. To me they appear in no such light. If you think otherwise, let us appeal to those excellent persons themselves. The turn, the very remarkable turn of their sentiments, will fully decide our question. Do they lay any stress upon their own religious duties and beneficent deeds? Far from relying on them, farther still from pleading them, they bestow not a single thought upon them. Having fixed their hopes on the Rock of Ages, they forget these transient bubbles*. Nay, they wonder that their exalted Master should condescend to make any honourable mention of such imperfect services. O that we may be enabled, through the whole course of our lives, to follow the example of their piety! and, when we stand before the tremendous tribunal, to imitate their humility and wisdom! Their humility, in renouncing themselves, and disclaiming all desert of their own: their wisdom, in reposing their whole confidence on the merits and righteousness of their Redeemer.

Ther. Our Lord makes no mention of this doctrine in his sermon on the mount. Whereas, if it had been so very material, he would at least have touched upon it in that comprehensive summary of true religion.

* Bubbles they are, compared with the all-glorious obedience of Christ, or considered in reference to the grand affair of justification before God. But as bubbles, or watery vesicles inflated with air, are the means of exhibiting the beautiful colours of the rainbow, so these services, though poor and defective, bear testimony to the existence of that precious grace—faith.

Asp. Our Lord says not a word concerning the sacrifice of his death. Neither is there a syllable relating to his intercession for transgressors. But are these articles of our faith to be deemed fictitious or superfluous, because they are not expressly inculcated in that admirable treatise of practical divinity?

However, upon a more attentive examination, perhaps, we shall find the point most strongly implied, though not distinctly specified: its necessity demonstrated, though its nature be not explained. The illustrious Teacher opened his mouth, and with a peculiar solemnity said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," Matt. v. 3. But who are they? Not the persons who soothe themselves with the flattering conceit of the Laodicean church, "I am rich in obedience, and increased in spiritual goods," Rev. iii. 17. Those rather, who see their indigence, bewail their guilt, and hunger and thirst after the justifying merit of a Redeemer; who, from the very bottom of an humbled heart, confess, "Lord, I am no more able to conform all my conduct to thy most holy law, than I am capable of atoning for my innumerable sins. Christ must be my righteousness, as well as my propitiation, or else I am irrecoverably undone."

The inimitable preacher farther assures his hearers, that, "unless their righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matth. v. 20. How must Christians exceed the Pharisees? Not only in being sincere, in having respect unto all God's commandments; but also in possessing a complete righteousness, such as the divine holiness can with complacency accept, and in which the divine justice may with honour acquiesce. Nor can this be any thing less than the perfect obedience of the great Mediator. St. Paul's memorable testimony, concerning his attainments in the Pharisaical, and his hopes in the Christian state, afford the very best comment upon this important declaration of our Lord; Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9.

Ther. The Oracle of heaven, you know, was once consulted upon that most momentous of all questions, how a person may ascertain his title to life and immortality? and what is the tenor of the sacred rescript? We are referred to the ten commandments; and, in the most explicit terms, with the most peremptory air, told, "This do, and thou shalt live," Matth. xix. 17; Luke x. 28.

Asp. That particular person, if you please, was referred to the ten commandments; not we, and mankind in general. Our Lord, in the preceding verses, had been informing his disciples, that they must receive the kingdom of God, or the grace of the gospel, and the blessings it proposes, as a little child. And this can hardly signify, in consequence of their own doings.

Ther. "That particular person referred to! Not we, and mankind in general!" I do not understand your meaning, *Aspasio*.

Asp. You will observe, then, that our Lord's reply was not an universal direction, but an answer, *ad hominem*, peculiarly adapted to the young gentleman's application, which, however it may be admired, was none of the wisest. Instead of asking, "How shall a poor guilty mortal, who is every day offending, obtain forgiveness from the righteous God?" instead of saying, "How shall I, who am not able to think a good thought, make sure my title to an eternal weight of glory?" our querist demands, "What good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" The reply proceeds upon the

inquirer's own principles: "If you expect salvation upon such legal terms, know that your obedience must be nothing less than a perfect conformity to the divine law. Perform all its precepts in their utmost extent, and with an unremitting perseverance, then"—But, alas! such perfection is too high for fallen creatures, they cannot attain unto it. Necessarily, therefore, must they drop all such pretensions, and have recourse to some other method of justification.

Ther. Why did that "wonderful Counsellor," if such was the purport of his answer, express himself so obscurely? Why did he not divert his promising scholar from this fruitless attempt, and put him in the right, the practicable way of obtaining salvation?

Asp. This he did with the finest address, and in the most skilful manner. Had our Lord affirmed, "You are worldly, you are covetous, your riches are your god;" such a charge would in all probability have been as confidently denied as it was plainly urged. Therefore he brings this specious hypocrite to a test*, which could not be evaded, and which was sure to discover the truth; a test, which laid open the palpable and enormous defects of his so much boasted obedience; which made it appear that, instead of keeping all the commandments, this vain self-justiciary had not obeyed the very first; but amidst all his towering imaginations of himself, had been, and at that very instant was, a sordid grovelling idolater, who preferred his transitory possessions on earth to an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. Could any expedient be more suitable to the case, or better calculated to reduce him, intoxicated as he was with pride, to a sober humble mind; to beat him off from his false foundation, "the righteousness which is of the law," and lead him to a reliance on the promised, the expected, the present Messiah?

It puts me in mind of my friend Sagacio's conduct, which seems to have some conformity with our Lord's procedure, and may possibly tend to illustrate its propriety.—Visiting one of his unlearned neighbours, he found him in company with a certain talkative stranger, who was haranguing at an extravagant rate on the wonders of astronomy. Sagacio soon perceived, that the chief furniture of this extraordinary adept lay in a little acquaintance with the technical terms, and somewhat more than a little share of assurance. How should he bring the self-plumed sciolist to a little modesty of sentiment, and decorum of conversation? He took leave to ask, "What the word *astronomy* might signify?" The orator was struck dumb in a moment. He had never informed himself, it seems, that astronomy related to the order and regulation of the stars. This single question taught our minute philosopher more effectually than twenty lectures on the subject. It taught him his own ignorance, and that he had the very rudiments of his so much admired science still to learn.

Ther. What will you say to those famous passages in the epistle of St. James, "By works a man is justified," "Was not Abraham our father justified by works?" James ii. 21, 24. Can any words be plainer in their

* Matth. xix. 21. "If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor." This direction seems to be much of the same nature with that other part of our Lord's reply: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Both were personal, both occasional, both adapted to particular circumstances. The latter is no more the stated evangelical way to heaven, than the former is indispensably obligatory on all Christians.

meaning? Or can any meaning be more directly opposite to the whole scope of your argumentation?

Asp. This I would say, Theron: The passages you quote, when detached from the context, may seem inconsistent with the declarations of another apostle; as a limb, when wrenched from its natural situation, appears with an air of disproportion. Whereas, reduce the dislocated part, and it will recover the symmetry of its shape, it will harmonize exactly with the animal system. Replace likewise these assertions, consider them in connexion with the whole paragraph, and they will be found, if not unisons, yet perfect concords, with the strain of St. Paul's teaching.

What is the point which St. James undertakes to illustrate? To distinguish a genuine from an insincere faith: "If a man say, he hath faith," James ii. 14: this is mentioned as the boast of some hypocritical professor. So that the apostle is evidently dealing with a pretender to the precious gift, and therefore replies, "Shew me thy faith;" prove the reality of thy claim, prove it to me and to the church, to thy fellow-creatures and fellow Christians. If unproductive of righteous and godly works, we must pronounce it spurious, worthless, dead.

Having detected the counterfeit, he proceeds to describe the sterling. The grand characteristic of which is, a frame of mind, and a course of action, corresponding with the doctrine believed. By this touchstone, the faith of our renowned progenitor was tried, and being tried, was "found unto praise, and honour, and glory." "Was not Abraham our father justified by works?" Justified! How? As to acceptance with the supreme Judge? No: this was effected long before the patriarch offered up Isaac. But when he exercised that heroic act of self-denial, resignation and obedience, then his justification was evidenced to all his contemporaries and to all generations. "His faith was made perfect," answered its proper end, and appeared to be of the true, the triumphant, the scriptural kind, since it overcame the world, overcame self, and regarded God as all in all.

Upon the whole, St. Paul speaks concerning the justification of our persons; St. James concerning the justification of our faith*. St. Paul describes the manner of being justified before the all-seeing God; St. James points out the proof† of a justified state, as it is visible to men. The former proceeds from the immaculate righteousness of Christ, placed to our account; the latter consists in the fruits of righteousness adorning our life. Rightly understood, therefore, these passages are not in the least contradictory to the epistles of St. Paul, or to the scope of my argumentation; but are a reasonable caveat, and a proper preservative, against misunderstanding those, or perverting this.

Ther. I wish you would read that concise, but judicious abridgement of

* That the expression used by St. James signifies this declarative justification, is plain from 1 Tim. iii. 16, where the apostle speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, says, *δικαιωθη*, He was justified in or by the Spirit; declared to be the true Son of God; manifested on earth, and recognised from heaven, as the undoubted Saviour of the world.

† A very little reflection, I should imagine, must convince every unprejudiced reader, that St. James cannot possibly be stating the method of justification before the infinitely righteous God; because he never so much as mentions the death of Christ, "who made his soul an offering for sin; to whom give all the prophets witness, that whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins; and besides whom, there is no other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved." Could an apostle so absolutely forget his Lord; and in a case where every other inspired writer acknowledges him, nay acknowledges him to be ALL IN ALL!

true religion, comprised in the fifteenth Psalm. The sacred penman, for his own, and for the information of all mankind, asks, "Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon thy holy hill?" To this most interesting inquiry the following verses are a full and satisfactory answer; the whole of which turns upon the discharge of moral duties—"walking uprightly, and working righteousness;" without a syllable, or a single hint, concerning the very superior excellence of faith, or the extreme necessity of a vicarious obedience.

Asp. I have often read, and I well remember, that beautiful, and instructive Psalm. And I beg leave to observe, once for all, with relation to such passages of the Old Testament, that they suppose the persons whom they describe to be convinced of their natural corruption, to be humbled under a sense of their actual guilt, and to live in a conscientious observance of the expiatory sacrifices; all which had an invariable reference to Christ, and derived their whole virtue from his mediation.

Would any of the Jewish saints, think you, have dared to advance a plea for eternal blessedness, upon the foot of their own conformity to such moral directions; neglecting at the same time the sacrifices of the three great festivals, or a believing improvement of the daily oblation? By no means. They were, and they would acknowledge themselves, deplorably defective; they would plead the promise of free grace, and fly to the blood which God himself had appointed to make an atonement for their souls. By such sentiments, and such a conduct, they reduced to practice the very essence of our doctrine; disavowing their own deeds, however virtuous or religious, and trusting in the strength of Israel, "the Lord our righteousness," who alone fulfilled all the precepts contained in this excellent formula of duty; who was also the substance of every purifying and of every propitiatory rite.

Ther. Has not the sacred writer expressly said, at the close of the Psalm, "Whoso doth these things, shall never fall?"

Asp. He has; and this, I apprehend, is his meaning: "Persons of such a temper, and such a practice, bear the marks of God's children, and are meet for his glory. Accordingly, they shall never fall either into total apostacy here, or final condemnation hereafter. They are now heirs, and in due time shall be possessors, of his eternal kingdom."

But you will take notice, that all these duties and qualifications only characterise, not constitute, the inheritor of heaven. You will likewise advert to another very remarkable circumstance in the description: "He setteth not by himself, but is lowly in his own eyes*;" or, as the more expressive original speaks, he is despicable and vile in his own sight: so far from aspiring to self-justification, that he even condemns and abhors himself, and falls down, as a most unworthy wretch, at the foot of infinitely free grace.

Ther. I cannot but think it is the current doctrine of Scripture, and I am sure it is one of the first principles which the light of nature teaches,—That the Most High God must necessarily love righteousness, and take pleasure in the righteous.

* Psal. xv. 4. בכחצונו יכשאו. I cannot say that I admire the Bible translation of this clause: "In whose eyes the vile person is contemptible." Methinks, it does not savour of the tender and benign spirit of our religion, which teaches us to honour all men, to despise no one's person, but only to detest the wickedness of the wicked.

Asp. If the light of nature was to publish a gospel, I believe it would be formed upon your plan: it would bestow favour only on the innocent, the virtuous, and the holy. But the gospel of Christ runs in a very different strain: this brings pardon for the condemned, and blessings for the accursed: this is health to the sick, and recovery to the ruined. "The Lord hath anointed me," saith its divine Author, "to preach good tidings to the meek *," who are humbled under a sense of their sinfulness. "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted," who are wounded with a conviction of their undone state;—"to proclaim liberty to the captives," the wretched captives of Satan; "and the opening of the prison to them that are bound," found in the chains of ignorance, impotence, and misery.

As I am myself a most unworthy sinner, you must not be displeased if I espouse the cause of those unhappy creatures. Yet though a friend of sinners, I am no enemy to the righteous. I entirely agree with my Theron in allowing, that the Most High God necessarily loves righteousness. Only I want to be informed where this admirable and lovely quality is to be found? Not among the Gentiles: they have swerved from the dictates of natural conscience. Not among the Jews: they have broken the holy commandment delivered on Mount Sinai. Not among Christians: for, if God should enter into judgment with us, we could not answer him one of a thousand. In the kingdom of Ethiopia, or in the country of the Moors, where will you find the native whites?

The Son of God found none among the race of Adam that were entitled to the character of righteous. He who gave himself a ransom for all, makes no application to such persons †. Why? Because he sullenly disesteemed personal goodness, or was unable to distinguish the excellency of inherent virtue? No; but because he knew, that, amiable as these qualifications are, they have no existence in the human heart, till the sinner, reconciled by his death, be sanctified also by his Spirit.

You remember, perhaps, that remarkable answer which the Spartans once returned to a threatening embassy from some of the neighbouring states? Nothing could be more concise; and I think nothing was ever more spirited and significant.

Ther. Those neighbours gave them to understand by their ambassadors, "That if they entered their territories, they would burn their towns, make the inhabitants prisoners, and spread destruction wherever they advanced." To which insolent menace, the brave Lacedemonians made no other reply than—*If*. Is this the story to which you refer?

Asp. The very same. And when you are speaking of human righteousness, as the cause of our acceptance with the eternal God, I would borrow the language of a Spartan. *If*, shall be my reply.—*If*, seclusive of the obedience, and independent on the Spirit of Christ, you can furnish yourself with this endowment; or *if* you can carry your righteousness to that perfection, which may equal the purity of the law, and comport with the

* Isa. lxi. 1. Upon this passage of Isaiah, I would beg leave to observe, that the word *meek* seems not to answer or convey the prophet's idea. The original עַבְדֵי יְהוָה signifies, in this place, *the afflicted*; not so much those who are beautified with meekness, as those who are oppressed with misery, spiritual misery especially; not excepting even those who are slaves to their own unruly passions.

† Matth. ix. 13. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

majesty of the Lawgiver; then trust in it—let it be the ground of your confidence, and seek no better foundation.

But whosoever shall in this manner seek for his recommendation to the favour of God, will act like the mistaken countryman in Horace, who, being unable to ford the river, took up a resolution to wait till the stream was all run by :

———“ At ille
Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis ævum *.”

Ther. Here, I fancy, we must take leave of your countryman. If he adheres to his resolution, we shall find him in the very same situation when breakfast is over; and may resume our subject, just where it is discontinued.

DIALOGUE VII.

Ther. To me, who have spent the greatest part of the winter in town, these scenes of the country are inexpressibly pleasing. Take who will the gilded saloon, and the silken settee, so long as I can shelter myself under the canopy of such a spreading beech, and use one of its coarse misshapen roots for my seat.

It is true we see no longer those splendid brocades, and elegant toupees, which distinguish the Park and the Mall: but we have full in our view a multitude of honest rustics, pursuing their cheerful labours in yonder meadow; some mowing the luxuriant herbage; some raising it into regular cocks; others loading their waggons with the hay, or clearing the ground with their rakes. The ground, cleared of its soft encumbrance, appears fresh and green, like another spring; while the exhalations of the teded grass, floating in the air, give a rural perfume to the gale. And which, my Aspasio, which are the most valuable objects:—the little labourers of the hive, that enrich themselves, and regale their masters; or the gay flutterers of the garden, whose whole life is nothing but sport, and their highest character is, to be insignificantly pretty?

Asp. In this retirement we hear none of the wanton and corrupting airs of the opera; no, nor the majestic and ennobling melody of the oratorio †. But we have a band of music stationed in the grove, and a concert of native harmony warbling from the boughs. We are entertained with the music which charmed the human ear long before Jubal found out his instruments, Gen. iv. 21, and thousands of years before Handel composed his notes. The bulfinch, and a multitude of little tuneful throats, strike the key. The thrush below, and the sky-lark responsive from above, diversify and exalt the strain. The blackbird, somewhat like the solemn organ, with notes, perfectly mellow and gracefully sonorous, crowns the choir; while the

* Vain man, desist; such flattering hopes forego:
It flows, and flows, and will for ever flow.

† “Majestic and ennobling.”—This I think, is the true character, and expresses the real tendency, of the oratorio. Nevertheless, it may not be improper to observe, that if we carry a trifling or irreligious spirit to the entertainment; if we attend to the musical airs, but disregard those sacred truths which enter into the composition; such a behaviour will be little better than a profane taking God’s adorable and glorious name in vain.

turtle's melancholy voice, and the murmuring water's plaintive tone, deepen and complete the universal symphony.

This is the music which constituted the first song of thanksgiving, and formed the first vocal praise, that the all-gracious Creator received from his new-made world. This is neither the parent of effeminacy, nor a pandor for vice, but refines the affections, even while it amuses the imagination.

Ther. All the entertainments of nature are calculated to secure our innocence, as well as to gratify our fancy. And what is another very agreeable circumstance, those gratifications which afford the sublimest pleasure are exhibited gratis, while those which enervate the mind and debauch the affections must be dearly purchased. Every one cannot gain admittance into the boxes or the pit, when some celebrated tragedy is brought upon the stage; but every one may behold the beauteous exhibitions of spring, and the finished productions of autumn. All may contemplate the machinery of nature, and the wonders of creation; thereby enjoying a far more exquisite amusement, without any of the guilt or any of the danger.

The inhabitants of yonder villages have never beheld the splendid procession which solemnizes the coronation of a monarch, nor the gaudy illuminations which distinguish the anniversary of his birth. But they see, almost every morning, a much nobler spectacle displayed in the east. They see the great ruler of the day, or rather the envoy from day's eternal Sovereign, making his entry amidst the spaces of the sky. The heavens are strewed with colours, which outvie the pinks and carnations. The grass is decked with dew-drops, and every plant is strung, as it were, with pearls. All around, the darkness retires, and sweet refreshing gales arise. At length the magnificent luminary appears. And what is all the ostentatious pomp of kings, what is all the glitter of the most brilliant court, compared with his transcendent lustre? This spectacle we may behold without loss of time or prejudice to health. Nay, we cannot behold it without improving one and redeeming the other. So beneficial are even the pleasures which nature yields; so serviceable the very diversions to which she invites!

Asp. Thus gracious is the Almighty Maker in the constitution of material things. The substantial and the valuable are open to every one, are accessible by all. Only the tinsel and the trappings are the property of a few, the poor prerogative of wealth.

No less gracious is God in the disposal of spiritual favours. These are infinitely more excellent, and yet are equally free. We are invited to buy them "without money and without price," Isa. lv. 1. What do you give for the benefits of the rising sun, or the delights of this rural melody? The case is much the same with regard to the righteousness by which we are justified, and all the blessings of salvation.

Ther. This brings to our remembrance the countryman whom we left on the banks of the river. And for aught I can see, Theron and the rustic are pretty much upon a footing; the first as far from acceding to your notions, as the last is from gaining his point.

Asp. Have you any objection, Theron, to these gifts of nature, because they are neither purchased by your money nor produced by your own toil?

Ther. But who can ever expect to obtain pardon, and acceptance, and eternal salvation, at so cheap a rate? It seems to be all delusion, Aspasio.

Asp. So cheap! Then you would pay somewhat, I perceive, by way of

price. But give me leave to ask, What price did you pay to God your maker, for fashioning you in your mother's womb? what price have you paid to God your preserver, for upholding you ever since you was born? or what price do you think of paying to God the supreme proprietor, for the ground on which you tread, for the air in which you breathe, for the light by which you see? Just the same price must you advance to God your Saviour, for all his justifying merits.

Both these and those proceed from the same Benefactor. They are all absolutely necessary, either for the welfare of the body or the happiness of the soul. And they are all vouchsafed on the same free terms. For thus saith the prophet: "His going forth," in the dispensation of the gospel, "is prepared as the morning." Christ, with all his precious privileges, "shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth," IIos. vi. 3. However, if you are acquainted with a different or a better way, be so good as to communicate your knowledge.

Ther. Some, you may observe, depend upon their inoffensive behaviour. They live peaceably; they do no harm to their neighbours; they are guilty of no gross offence against God. And why should they not hope to obtain his favour? They apprehend the prophet Samuel establishes their hope, when he makes this solemn appeal: "Whose ass have I taken? whose ox have I taken? or whom have I defrauded?" I Sam. xii. 3. Nay, they imagine that our Lord himself has authorized their expectation, by giving this character of Nathaniel: "An Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," John i. 47. A freedom from outward injustice and inward hypocrisy, is all the qualification, applauded in the one case, avowed in the other.

Asp. This negative goodness (if it deserves to be called goodness) was a plea for the empty Pharisee. But none, I presume, would choose to be associated with such a companion, either in character here, or in condition hereafter.

Samuel, in the place you mention, is vindicating himself only to his fellow-creatures, and only in the capacity of a magistrate. He speaks not of his justification before the Judge of quick and dead. This he well knew must be derived from another source, and must rest upon a firmer bottom.

The "Israelite without guile," was a person who not only abstained from every sin, but performed every duty; and without any wilful neglect of the one, or any allowed indulgence of the other. This instance, therefore, will by no means prove the sufficiency of your negative righteousness, which seems to have just the same degree of excellency as a fountain that never issues in water, or as a cloud that never descends in rain.

Ther. In this particular, Aspasio, your sentiments are mine. But I would add morality to civility; the virtuous to the inoffensive conversation. And if we not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well; if we use temperance, exercise charity, and keep all the commandments to the best of our power, is not this a sufficient foundation for our hope?

Asp. Yes, Theron; if, as you add morality to your civility, you add perfection to both. Otherwise you must be ranked, not among the claimants, but among the delinquents. You have no title to a reward, but stand in need of pardon.

It is a principle of justice, founded on the unalterable constitution of things, that the debtor be acquitted when he has paid the debt. But sup-

posing him, instead of gold, to bring iron; instead of talents to return pence; instead of defraying, to increase the score daily; can he then reasonably expect or legally claim a discharge?

With respect to such an obedience, we may pass our verdict in the figurative, but very expressive language of Isaiah: "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it," Isa. xxviii. 20. It can neither give rest to the alarmed conscience, nor afford protection to the guilty soul. If we have nothing better to plead, we shall not be able to lift up our heads in the last decisive judgment; but "must enter into the rock, and hide ourselves in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty," Isa. ii. 10.

Ther. We will go a step farther, and take in the exercise of devotion. We will read God's word, pray to his divine Majesty, and regularly attend on his public worship. Here now are social accomplishments and moral virtues, completed by the performance of religious duties.

App. Completed! I fear that expression will scarcely abide the test of a single query. Have you then performed all your duties, with that ardent love of God, and undivided view to his glory; with that adoring gratitude to the blessed Jesus, and that child-like dependence on his Spirit, which the nature of things requires, and the Scriptures of truth enjoin? If not, your duties, be they moral or religious, or both, are far from being complete; nay, they are utterly defective, and for that reason absolutely insufficient for your justification. They are clipped or sophisticated coin; and will that be current in the world of glory?

Ther. Allowing them to be defective, they are at least sincere. And though not free from all alloy, yet, if they bear the image and superscription of integrity, why should they be rejected as "reprobate silver?" Jer. vi. 30.; why should they not obtain the currency you mention?

App. "Alas!" says a judicious and admired writer, "the imperfections of our best services daily forfeit the blessings of time. How impossible then is it, that the sincerity of them, amidst so many frailties and defects, should purchase the glories of eternity!"

Ther. Be your writer ever so judicious, I can confront him with others, equally capable of judging, and diametrically opposite in opinion. What says that wise and brave man, the successor of Moses, and generalissimo of the armies of Israel? Joshua, I am sure, declares himself on my side: "Fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity," is his last solemn charge to the people, Josh. xxiv. 14. Even the great apostle, on a review of his ministry, makes it matter of self-gratulation, that he "had his conversation in godly sincerity," 2 Cor. i. 12.

App. You have quoted the charge delivered by the servant; be pleased to recollect the protestation made by the master: "Not for thy righteousness," says Moses, "or for the uprightness of thy heart, dost thou go to possess their land," Deut. ix. 5. Even an earthly Canaan was not given to the Israelites as the reward of their own, either outward obedience or inward sincerity. Much less can we expect the kingdom of immortality on account of any uprightness of our intentions, or piety of our actions.

However, as the doctrine of sincerity is the favourite and the fashionable tenet, I will conform a little to the taste in vogue. You shall have no reason

to complain, that I am either a cynic or a stoic*. Let it suffice us to be sincere; only let us refer ourselves to the apostle for a description of this darling qualification: "That ye may be sincere, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God," Phil. i. 10, 11.

Here are three properties of acceptable sincerity,—It must bear fruits, "the fruits of righteousness;" and bear them abundantly, so that we may be filled with them. The branch and the fruits must derive,—that its vigour, these their flavour, and both of them their very being, from the all-supporting, all-supplying root Christ Jesus. Then, instead of terminating in self-justification, they must redound to the honour of God. It is not said, these shall justify you, but "these shall glorify your Father which is in heaven."

This kind of sincerity can never be too highly esteemed, nor too zealously encouraged. But this, you will observe, flows from the grace of Christ, and issues in the glory of God; therefore does but very poorly attest, either the sufficiency of human ability to perform good works, or the sufficiency of human works to win the prize of our high calling.

Ther. Do you then exclude all works? Will you make a mere nothing, both of our moral endowments and of your evangelical obedience?

Asp. They are excluded, both the one and the other, from all share in justifying us; yet not by me, but by an authority to which there can be no objection, and from which there lies no appeal. Speaking of salvation, thus saith the wisdom of God, "Not of works——"

Ther. Works of the ceremonial law, I suppose. These, we all acknowledge, are, under the Christian dispensation, as a bond cancelled or an act repealed. But sure you will allow a better office, and a nobler character, to that course of obedience which is regulated by the commands of Christ.

Asp. St. Paul will allow it no such office as that for which my Theron is pleading. "Ye are saved," says the apostle. Ye are delivered from wrath, reconciled to God, and made heirs of his kingdom. How? "By grace, through faith," Eph. ii. 8. Grace, like a magnificent sovereign, from the riches of his own bounty, and without any respect to human worthiness, confers the glorious gift. Faith, like an indigent petitioner, with an empty hand, and without any pretence to personal desert, receives the heavenly blessing.

Both grace and faith stand in direct opposition to works, all works whatever—whether they be works of the law, or works of the gospel; exercises of the heart, or actions of the life; done in a state of nature, or done under the influences of grace; they are, all and every of them, equally set aside in this great affair.

That the bill of exclusion is thus extensive, or rather quite unlimited, appears from the reason assigned: "Lest any man should boast," Eph. ii. 9; that all pretence of glorying may be cut off from fallen creatures; that the whole honour of obtaining salvation may be appropriated to him, "who hid not his face from shame and spitting."—And is he not worthy, unspeakably and infinitely worthy, to receive this unrivalled honour, as a recompence for his unparalleled humiliation?

Ther. All our good works, we allow, are recommended by Christ. They prevail for our justification only through his merits. So that we still depend upon the Redeemer; and, by this means, pay him the highest honour.

* The cynic had no complaisance; the stoic was quite inflexible.

Asp. Depend upon the Redeemer! No, my dear friend; you rely upon your own pious acts and moral qualifications. They, they are your grand recommendation. The office consigned over to the divine Jesus, is nothing more than to be as it were master of the ceremonies. He may have the credit of introducing your fine accomplishments with a kind of graceful air. But is this an office suited to his incomparable dignity? Was it for this that he bowed the heavens and partook of our nature? Was it for this that he became subject to the law, and obedient unto death? Only for this, that he might usher in our own endowments with a plume and a scarf? Surely, Theron, you can never entertain such low thoughts of the incarnate God, and of Christ's mediatorial undertaking.

Ther. Neither can I entertain such low and vilifying thoughts of our own virtuous attainments. They distinguish persons of eminence and worth from the sordid wretch and execrable villain, just as the noble faculty of reason distinguishes the man from the brute.

Asp. To deny good works the merit of justifying us, is very different from vilifying them.—You are going to build a new house, Theron: Pray, do you intend to hew your timber from the flimsy tendrils of the vine?

Ther. No, certainly.

Asp. Because you do not think its feeble shoots proper to form the beams, and support the roof, of your intended edifice; do you therefore affront them, depreciate them, or disallow their usefulness? By no means. They may beautify your walls with their ornamental spread, and enrich the desert with their delicious fruit. This is an office suitable to the nature of the plant; and from this it receives sufficient estimation, without pretending to the honours of the oak.

Virtuous attainments, I own, are a considerable distinction in the present state of things; and what is a higher encomium, (I shall now outshoot you in your own bow,) they will distinguish the true believer from the hypocritical professor, even at the great tribunal. But let them be content with their province, and not intrude upon the Saviour's prerogative. To effect justification be his, to discriminate the justified, theirs. Neither let them elate their possessors with a vain conceit of themselves, who, though they were meek as Moses, holy as Samuel, and wise as Daniel, must confide in nothing but the boundless mercies of the Lord, must plead nothing but the infinite merits of his Christ.

This is the theology both of the Psalmist and of St. Paul. They derive the blessedness promised in Scripture, not from the shallow stream of human accomplishments, but from the inexhaustible ocean of divine grace: "Blessed is he whose unrighteousnesses are forgiven, and whose sins are covered," Psalm xxxii. 1.

Ther. Will Aspasio then, like many of our modern disputants, mutilate the holy word? industriously display what seems to strengthen his argument, but artfully secrete what tends to overthrow his scheme? How could you forget, or why should you suppress the following clause, "And in whose spirit there is no guile?" Was you afraid it would demolish your opinion, and point out an upright honest mind as the cause of this blessedness?

Asp. Far was I, my dear Theron, from any such groundless apprehensions, and equally far from all such delusory designs. "Shall I talk deceitfully for God?" Job xiii. 7. His sacred cause does not need it, and his exalted Majesty would disclaim it. No, I would condemn my tongue

to eternal silence, rather than speak a syllable, either to conceal or disguise the truth,

Most readily we will admit the sentence you mention, "In whose spirit there is no guile." It is evident from the context, that these words are not descriptive of a person in whose heart and conversation there is no iniquity, but of a penitent sinner, whose mouth freely confesses the iniquity of them both, confesses without any reserve or the least attempt to palliate; which, instead of invalidating, corroborates my argument, since, according to your own allegation, the highest merit consists in a free acknowledgment of sin, or a total renunciation of all worthiness.

Ther. When, therefore, we join repentance to all our other works, lament our deficiencies, and implore forgiveness, surely this must be available with a merciful God, and cannot but entitle us to the happiness of heaven.

Asp. How strange does it sound, at least in my ears, for poor miserable guilty creatures, to talk of entitling themselves to the happiness of heaven by any deeds of their own! when it is owing wholly to God's rich forbearing mercy that they are not transmitted to hell; owing wholly to God's free preventing grace that they are enabled to think a good thought.

But not to enlarge upon this consideration, I would ask, whether those penitential exercises were attended with a hearty detestation of sin, and an utter abhorrence of the sinner? Ezek. xxxvi. 31. If they were, you would then renounce yourself universally. You would never think of placing the least dependence on any thing of your own, nay, you would even loathe yourself. If they were not, then your very repentance falls short, and is to be repented of. It is as if "one came to the press-fat for to draw out fifty vessels, and there were but twenty," Hag. ii. 16. It is, if I may continue the prophet's metaphor, and the prophet's language, "the scant measure, which," in this your spiritual traffic, as well as in the affairs of secular commerce, "is abominable," Mic. vi. 10.

Or, should your repentance be without a failure and without a flaw, I must still say to my friend, as our Lord replied to the young ruler, "One thing thou lackest." In all these acts of humiliation you have only taken shame to yourself, whereas a righteousness is wanting, which may magnify the law and make it honourable. Should God, without insisting upon this, pardon and reward, he would not act according to his glorious character, nor be at once "a just God and a Saviour," Isa. xlv. 21. And if you can find this righteousness, "either in the depth, or in the height above," in any person or any object, save only in the imputed obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, I retract whatever I have advanced.

Ther. A preacher and an author has lately assured us, that we are to be "accepted of God, and saved by our own obedience." If so, I need not scruple to repeat my assertion, that our own duties, especially when accompanied with repentance, are a real and proper foundation for life eternal.

Asp. Then the apostle was under a great mistake, when, treating of Christ and his merits, he ventured to assert, "Other foundation can no man lay, save that which is laid, even Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11.

Ther. If you will not credit a modern preacher, I can produce a decision, made by one of the most ancient and authoritative synods: "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life," Acts xi. 18. Repentance unto life is their unanimous voice, and my unexceptionable voucher.

Asp. I can easily guess the assembly to which you refer. But I can hardly grant it the venerable name of a synod. It consisted of some Judaizing converts, who adhered with a tenacious and bigoted zeal to the Mosaic rites. However, though I might scruple my Theron's appellation, I readily acquiesce in their determination.

It is not said, those Gentiles were penitent, and therefore God granted them life. This should have been the language of the assembly, in order to establish my friend's way of thinking. On the contrary, they were dead in sin. God, of his free goodness, granted them repentance, which is both the beginning, and a substantial part of true life, even of that life which is founded on justification, is carried on by sanctification, and completed in glory.

I would farther observe, that repentance is a turning of the heart. And when it is repentance unto life, it is a turning of the heart from every other object to the great and sole fountain of good, Christ Jesus, Acts xix. 4.—Were men slaves to sensuality? When they repent, they are turned to Christ for refined and heavenly affections. Were they wont to confide in themselves and their own works? As soon as they truly repent, they turn to Christ for a better righteousness, and thereby, for everlasting acceptance with God. In short, they turn from every false stay, and fly only to Christ, depend only on Christ, looking not to their own tears or humiliation, not to their own duties or graces, but “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,” Jude 21.

Ther. Suppose it should be wrong to expect such a vast reward, as the inconceivable glories of heaven, on account of our own duties; yet to set them wholly aside, to allow them no influence at all, not so much as the least co-operation, in turning the scale; this is an excess on the other hand. If the former is presumption, the latter is fanaticism.

Asp. I must confess I do not thoroughly understand what you mean by fanaticism. Neither is it of much significancy to enter upon the disquisition of an obnoxious term. I would only maintain, that on us unworthy sinners whatever is bestowed by the righteous God, is bestowed, not as a debt* to our works, but as the donation of pure grace.

Ther. I think it is sufficiently of grace, if we acknowledge good works to be wrought by the assistance of the divine Spirit; and then admitted, together with our Saviour's merits, as a recommendation to the divine favour.

Asp. The Pharisee could make his acknowledgments for the assistance of grace: “God, I thank thee,” was his language. Yet this did not exempt him from the charge of pride, nor secure him from the sin of boasting. Besides, if good works are wrought by the operation of the divine Spirit, they draw a bill upon our gratitude, not upon the bank of heaven; they render us the obliged, not the deserving party. To think or teach otherwise, is errant Popery †, however it may lurk under a veil of Protestantism.

You bring to my mind a memorable story. Two persons were travelling through the deserts of Arabia; the one utterly unarmed, the other wore a sword and carried a musket. As the place was exceedingly dangerous, the

* *Bestowed as a debt*, is, I must allow, somewhat like jargon. But perhaps jargon and inconsistency may not be without their propriety in this place, as they tend to show the gains of that doctrine which would connect such contradictory ideas.

† Good works, says a champion for the church of Rome, are “mercatura regni cœlestis, —the price we pay, or the commodity we barter, for the kingdom of heaven.”

latter, solicitous for the safety of his companion, makes him a present of his fire-arms ; which was no sooner done, than a lion espies them, and advances fiercely towards them. The foremost discharges his piece, and wounds their horrid aggressor. The wound neither killing nor disabling, only enrages the monster. He seizes the unfortunate marksman, and is upon the point to tear him limb from limb. His fellow-traveller flies to his succour, snatches up the carbine which dropped from the other's hand, and fells the ravenous beast to the ground ; then, drawing his sword, stabs him to the heart, and rescues his friend. The lion thus slain, they take off the skin, which he who slew the lordly savage claims as his own. "No," says his grateful friend, "as you did part of the execution with my weapon, I insist upon half of the shaggy spoil. I expect satisfaction likewise for the loss of my piece, which you broke in the encounter." To obtain both, he commences a law-suit against that generous associate, who not only gave him the weapon, but saved the prosecutor from the very jaws of destruction.

Ther. If I had been judge, I should, without much hesitation, have determined such a cause. Instead of costs and damages for my plaintiff, I should have transmitted the wretch to the pillory.

Asp. I believe all the world would applaud your sentence. Only be pleased to remember, that the procedure, on which you so justly animadvert, is the very picture of our excessive unreasonableness, if we presume to write ourselves creditors, and the divine Being debtor ; because he has delivered us from the bondage of corruption, and enabled us to perform the duties of godliness.

Theron paused, as somewhat struck by the representation. After a short interval, Aspasio resumed the discourse.

Believe me, my dear friend, salvation, both in the root and all its branches, is entirely of grace. Or else believe me, for the many cogent testimonies of Scripture, which most circumstantially ascertain this great truth. Election is of grace : "Having predestinated us into the adoption of children," not on account of human worthiness, but "according to the good pleasure of his will," Eph. i. 5. Equally gratuitous is our effectual vocation : "God hath called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace," 2 Tim. i. 9. Faith, with all its precious fruits, is owing to the same cause : "By grace ye are saved through faith," Eph. ii. 8. From hence springs justification, together with all its attendant privileges : "Being justified freely by his grace*." This is the origin of regeneration, and every living principle of godliness : "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth," James i. 18. The consummation of bliss flows from the same all-supplying source : "The gift of God is eternal life," Rom. vi. 23. It is in every respect a gift, not only without, but contrary to, all desert of ours.—So that the foundation is laid in the riches of grace ; the superstructure is reared by the hand of grace ; and when the top stone is brought forth, when our felicity is completed in the kingdom of heaven, the everlasting acclamation will be, "Grace, grace unto it !" Zech. iv. 7.

This is that glorious gospel, which human learning could never have discovered ; which carnal reason cannot understand ; which the wisdom of this

* Rom. iii. 24. *Δωρεάν ἐν αὐτοῦ χάριτι.* One of these words might have served to convey the apostle's meaning. But he doubles his assertion, in order to give us the fullest conviction of the truth, and to impress us with a sense of its peculiar importance : "Freely, by his grace."

world accounteth foolishness ; which the envy of the devil, and the pride of man, will always oppose.

Ther. What say you to the opinion which Ouranius so strenuously maintains, That we are justified, not by the merits of Christ imputed to us, but by Christ himself formed in our hearts ? And Ouranius is none of your proud or carnal people. His writings are remarkable for their strict piety, and his life is as exemplary as his principles.

Asp. You know, Theron, I have nothing to do with the persons of men, but with the truths of the gospel. Ouranius, though eminently devout, may be mistaken : and, if this is his way of thinking, he quite misapprehends the doctrine of grace.

What is written in the oracles of Scripture ? “ The Lord justifieth the ungodly,” Rom. iv. 5. What is implied in the maxim of Ouranius ? He justifieth the holy, the heavenly, the Christ-like. “ A man is justified by faith,” Rom. v. 1., says the secretary of heaven. He is justified by works, says the pen of Ouranius : only let them be works of a superior order ; such as are eternal, spiritual, and wrought by the operation of Christ on the soul. According to this notion, every one is justified by his own love, his own purity, his own zeal. Whereas, an unerring writer has most solemnly declared, “ That by one man’s obedience,” many myriads of sinners, even all the redeemed world, “ shall be made righteous,” Rom. v. 19.

This notion, I think, is legalism in its greatest subtilty, or highest refinement. It disannuls the merit of Christ, it vacates all imputation, and makes our salvation to consist wholly in the work of sanctification. Against which, if you remember, I entered my protest in one of our first conferences*. And now, having ventured to animadvert on the tenets of others, it may reasonably be expected that I should give an account of my own faith. “ I am justified ; my soul is accepted ; not because Christ has put his laws in my mind, but shed his blood for my sins ; not because I myself am enabled to walk in all godly conversation, but because the Lord Jesus has fulfilled all righteousness as my surety.”

Ther. I am for neither of the extremes. The middle way is most eligible. This is what sound sense approves, and the sacred system authorises. “ Whoso believeth on me,” says our Lord, “ shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life,” John iii. 15. “ Blessed,” adds the beloved disciple, “ are they who do his commandments ; that they may have a right to the tree of life ; and may enter in, through the gates, into the city,” Rev. xxii. 14.

Conformably to these texts of Scripture, I would neither reject our Redeemer’s merits, nor repudiate good works. As this shady tree, and these cooling breezes, unite their properties to render our situation agreeable ; so those two causes, acting in conjunction, exalt us to the favour of God, and constitute us heirs of heaven. God himself has joined them. And I must urge my remonstrance in our Lord’s own words, “ What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.”

Asp. Would you then make impotence itself a coadjutor with omnipotence ? Does this humble the sinner ? Does this exalt the Saviour ? No : it is a most injurious infringement of his mediatorial dignity. Instead of excluding, it evidently introduces boasting. In consequence of such a scheme, it would be said by the inhabitants of the heavenly world, “ Thanks to our blessed

* See Dialogue II., p. 20.

Redeemer for this happiness! yet not to him only, but to our own righteousness also."

Can you imagine, that the obedience of Christ is insufficient to accomplish our justification? Must its efficacy be reinforced by the accession of our works? And what are these works of ours, that they should enhance the value, the immense value, of our Redeemer's? Maimed, tarnished, worm-eaten things: eaten by the worms of self-seeking, self-admiring, self-love; tarnished by a thousand vanities; maimed by ten thousand negligences. To join these in commission with our divine Master's righteousness, would be infinitely more disgraceful than to tack the beggar's rag on the monarch's robe; would be altogether as needless as to dream of augmenting the sea by the drops of our bucket.

Ther. Worm-eaten! What reason have you to represent our acts of obedience under this sordid and shameful image?

Asp. I thought you could hardly brook this disparaging expression. It is somewhat like petty treason against the dignity of man. My reasons I would postpone to some other opportunity; when, if you please, we will give the cause a full hearing. At present, to make amends for this vile slander, I will suppose your works to have no defect; nay, to have all the perfection which you yourself could wish. Will you glory on this account? You are too modest, I am sure, to avow or patronise such a practice: yet, if we say or think concerning any attainments of our own, "This is the ground on which I expect to escape condemnation, and inherit life; we do, in the most offensive, though not in the most explicit manner, glory*."

Or will you reckon, that these services, because faultless, are in any degree meritorious? Let us hear our Lord's decision in the case: "When ye have done," not only some, but "all those things which are commanded you." And where is the man, or what is his name, who, in any nation, or in any age, has done all that is commanded?

Where shall I find him? Angels, tell me where?
Shall I see glories beaming from his brow?
Or trace his footsteps by the rising flowers?

Yet even in such a case, if all this were performed, what shall we say? We are no better than unprofitable servants; we have done nothing more than what was our indispensable duty to do, Luke xvii. 10; and have, on this footing, just the same claim to honours and rewards, as the negro slave, after the despatch of his daily business, has upon the estate or the wealth of an American planter.

Ther. But what say you to those passages of Scripture which I have quoted? You have given them a hearing, but no answer. They, I do insist upon it, expressly assert, therefore incontestably prove, an union of Christ's merit and our own works in the business of salvation.

Asp. It is written in the book of Revelation, "Blessed are they that do his commandments." And wherefore? Because the obedience of faith is attended with a real blessedness on earth, and demonstrates our title to eternal

* "Omnis causa justitię et salutis est materia et objectum *καυχνησιως*. Unde apostolus: Nam si Abraham ex operibus justificatus est, *ἵχι καυχημα*;" i. e. Whatever is the cause of righteousness and salvation, is a real and proper foundation for glorying. Therefore the apostle acknowledges, "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory," Rom. iv. 2.

blessedness in heaven. It is, though not the purchase, yet the evidence of our right to the tree of life.

All this I acknowledge. But where, I beseech you, does the Scripture join the obedience of Christ and the obedience of man, as mutually conducive to the justification of a sinner? The Scripture utterly disavows such a co-partnership, and asserts what our Homily expresses, "Surely, there can be no work of any mortal man (be he ever so holy) that shall be coupled in merit with Christ's most holy act*." The Scripture steadily declares, that in this greatest of transactions Christ is not an accessory, but the principal; nay, that he is *all*. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this" illustrious and exalted "Person†, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things." Through this Person, without any partner or coadjutor. By him: not by him and our works jointly, but by him solely; without the concurrence of any other action or any other agent. This was typified by the high-priest, when, on the solemn day of expiation, he went into the tabernacle alone, and made the figurative atonement without any associate, Lev. xvi. 17. From all things: by him they are wholly, as well as solely, justified; freed from every charge, whether of omission or commission, and rendered, not in part only, but completely acceptable.

I hope, therefore, you will no longer consider the supremely excellent Jesus as a partial cause of our justification. What would be the consequence, if a person should fix one foot on the bank of yonder river, and rest another on the fluid stream?

Ther. He must unavoidably fall.

Asp. And what says our divine instructor to those double-minded Galatians, who could not believe themselves safe and complete in the merits of Christ alone, but must be seeking some other foundation on which to repose a share at least of their confidence? He says, and they are awful words; they call for my Theron's most serious regard, "Ye are fallen from grace," Gal. v. 4.

Let me entreat my friend to beware of this error. I think it is the prevailing error of our times; and so much the more dangerous, because it is somewhat specious. To pour contempt upon the blessed Jesus, with the libertines and deists, would be shocking to a mind that retains the least reverence for sacred things. Entirely to set aside the meritorious efficacy of his undertaking, with the Arians and Socinians, would be afflictive to a conscience that is impressed with the least sense of sin. Whereas, to erect our merits on the foundation of Christ's; to be found in his, yet not renounce our own righteousness; this is both plausible to our reason, and pleasing to our vanity; this seems to honour the divine Saviour, even while it gratifies human pride. But this is an egregious falsehood, and cannot stand: this is an abominable idol, and must be laid in the dust. Christ, like the real mother of the child, will have the whole, or none, 1 Kings iii. 26; the whole—unshared, unrivalled, undiminished glory of our salvation.

Let me again entreat my dear Theron to beware of this error. It is the main pillar in the Roman heresy, and the master-policy of the Popish Machiavelians. "Christ hath merited, that we may merit," is their grand

* Homily on Good Friday.

† Acts, xiii. 38. *Δια τούτου*, the word *man* is not in the original. So that I think, "this illustrious and exalted Person," is the fullest and most exact translation.

maxim, and their grand delusion. Hence come their penances and their pilgrimages; hence the hypocritical mortifications of some, and the extravagant austerities of others; this enriches their shrines, and fills their cloisters. And to those seminaries of superstition let it be banished, let it be confined. There let them raise their scaffolding, and try to enlarge the dimensions of the sky; there let them kindle their flambeaux, and attempt to increase the lustre of the sun. And when they have effected this easier task, then will we Protestants follow their example, and adopt their system; then will we also think of adding our own righteousness, by way of supplement to the dignity and efficacy of our Lord's.

Ther. If we are justified wholly by our Lord's righteousness; if nothing need be added, if nothing can be added, to its all-comprehending fulness, what becomes of the generally received opinion,—that Christ obtained for us only a possibility of being saved, or put us into a capacity of acquiring salvation?

Asp. It will be discountenanced and overthrown, as extremely dishonourable to the Redeemer, and no less uncomfortable to the redeemed. When Christ procured our pardon, and recovered our title to life, it was all his own doing. "Of the people there was none with him," Isa. lxiii. 6. In both cases his work was perfect. Hear his own testimony: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," John xvii. 4. Should you want an explication of these words, I refer you to the comment of an apostle: "He," that is, Jesus Christ, "has obtained eternal redemption for us," Heb. ix. 12. This was his work, and it is fully executed. He has—he has obtained eternal redemption; and left nothing for his people, but to accept the glorious purchase, and live as becomes the redeemed of the Lord.

This truth is written, as with a sunbeam, in the pages of the gospel; and sounds, as with a voice of thunder, in the songs of heaven. "Salvation to our God," they cry, "that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb," Rev. vii. 10. Those saints in glory ascribe the whole—the whole of their salvation they ascribe to the grace of God, and to the blood of the Lamb.

Ther. Have not many of our ablest divines represented faith, obedience, and repentance, as the terms of acceptance? Christ, according to this account, procured not the blessing itself, but only the grant of easier conditions on which it may be enjoyed.

Asp. What says that sublime Being who gives the ablest divines all their wisdom? "My righteous servant shall justify many," Isa. liii. 11; not pave the way, or adjust the preliminaries, but despatch the very business; "shall justify." The terms of acceptance, for fallen and rebellious man, were a full satisfaction to the divine justice, and a complete conformity to the divine law. These, impracticable by us, were consigned over to Christ. By him they were thoroughly accomplished; and by this accomplishment of them, he purchased for us all blessings. Among others, he purchased the gift of faith, the grace of repentance, and ability to yield thankful, dutiful, evangelical obedience. These, therefore, are very improperly called the terms, which are really constituent parts of our salvation.

To sum up all in a word: The whole tenor of revelation shows, that there are but two methods whereby any of the human race can be justified: Either by a perfect obedience to the law, in *their own* persons; and then

the reward is of debt: Or else, because the Surety of a better covenant has satisfied all demands in their stead; and then the reward is of grace. There is no trimming or reconciling expedient. You may choose either of the two; but no third is proposed or allowed.

Ther. Was there not a different method for the ancient people of God?

Asp. None, Theron. In the state of primitive innocency, a perfect and persevering observance of the divine command was the condition of life and immortality. When, by the first grand apostacy, this became impossible, a free pardon, and gracious acceptance, through the blessed Jesus, were substituted in its stead. Which economy, like a fountain of life, was opened, when God promised "the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head," Gen. iii. 15. It ran like a salutary rivulet through the antediluvian world;—continued its progress along the patriarchal age;—flowed, in broader streams, under the Mosaic dispensation;—is derived down to us, abundantly enlarged, by the coming of Christ, and the ministry of his apostles;—will be transmitted with an increasing spread to the latest posterity;—nor ever cease to amplify and extend its influence, till, as the fountain is become a river, the river is augmented into an ocean; and "the knowledge of the Lord" our righteousness "fill the earth, as the waters cover the abysses of the sea," Isa. xi. 9.

There was, I confess, a diversity in the administration, but no difference in the nature, of the blessing. Jesus Christ, however variously manifested, was the "same yesterday," is the same "to-day," will be the same "for ever," Heb. xiii. 8: as it is the very same sun which gleams at early dawn, which shines in the advancing day, and glows at height of noon.

My simile reminds us of the time, and leaves a most important doctrine upon our memories. Suppose we take the admonition, and begin to move homeward.

Ther. We need be in no hurry, Aspasio. My watch tells me, that we have half an hour good. Besides, I have something farther to allege, and from a very great authority, which seems directly contrary to your notion.

Asp. Just as you please, Theron. If you choose to stay, I am all compliance with your inclination; and, would truth permit, I should be all conformity to your opinion.

Ther. You know who it is that asks, "What doth the Lord require of thee?" And neither of us need be informed, what it is that the prophet replies; "Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God," Mic. vi. 8. But I want to know, what you think of this passage.

Asp. I think it is absolutely inconsistent with your scheme. This passage inculcates humility. But your scheme is the very reverse of that amiable virtue. A self-justiciary walking humbly with God, is little better than a contradiction in terms.

The Lord has said, "Ye shall be saved by grace*." Your system replies, "No, but by our own works."—It is declared in Scripture, "that the gift of God is eternal life." It is implied in my friend's doctrine, that this happiness is the wages of our own deeds.—"My Son shall have all the glory of a sinner's salvation," is the unalterable decree of the Most High.

* Eph. ii. 5. This text lays the axe to the very root of spiritual pride, and all self-glorifying whatever. Therefore the inspired writer, foreseeing the backwardness of mankind to receive it, yet knowing the absolute necessity of its reception, again asserts (ver. 8.) the very same truth, in the very same words.

"We will have a share in the honour," is the language of your opinion.—Look, how wide therefore the east is from the west ; so remote is such a strain of teaching from the practice of walking humbly with our God.

Ther. But consider, good Aspasio ; have I not the prophet's authority for my opinion ? Are not his words expressly on my side ? Does he not mention those duties of morality and piety as the appointed method of obtaining the divine favour ?

Asp. He mentions, I apprehend, a solicitous inquiry ; to which he gives a satisfactory answer ; then subjoins a practical improvement of the whole. The inquiry is expressed in these words : "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God ? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old ? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams ; with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ?" Mic. vi. 7, 8. To which it is replied, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good" for this important purpose ; namely, the Messiah ; pointed out by all thy sacrifices, and described in the preceding chapter. Atonement for sin, and peace with God, are to be made by a better hand, and in a better way, than thou proposest. He, "whose outgoings have been from of old, from everlasting," Mic. v. 2 : He, who is the Son of the Highest, and yet the seed of "her that travaileth," Mic. v. 3 : He has undertaken, and will fully execute, this great office.

"And what doth the Lord thy God require of thee ?" What temper, what conduct, what expressions of gratitude, from his people, who are reconciled through the blood of Christ, and admitted to the blessings of the new covenant * ?—They are to testify their thankfulness, by the alacrity, uniformity, and constancy of their obedience ; or by the conscientious discharge of every moral, social, and religious duty.

If this be a true interpretation of the text, instead of establishing, it overturns your cause.—But I have another objection to your method, perhaps more weighty than the foregoing.

Ther. Pray, let me hear it.—I am not so enamoured with my notions, but I can bear to have them censured ; nor so attached to my scheme, but I can relinquish it for a better.

Asp. I would illustrate my meaning by a common experiment in optics. When objects are viewed in a concave speculum, or in the hollow of a polished spoon, how do they appear ?

Ther. Inverted.

Asp. Such is my friend's system of religion. He inverts the order of the gospel : he turns the beautiful building upside down, and lays that for the foundation which should only be part of the superstructure.—Not so the apostle Paul. He, like a wise master-builder, places Christ as the foundation-stone, and rears his edifice of practical godliness on that all-supporting basis.—Examine his epistle to the Romans ; which is unquestionably the completest model of doctrine, and the noblest body of divinity, extant in the world.

* "Thy God," is the phrase. Which denotes an interest, implies an appropriation, and is the peculiar language of the covenant. "Thy God ;" not made so by thy humble walking, but by an act of his own grace, previous to any obedience of thine. According to Theron's principles, the prophet should rather have said, Walk humbly (not with thy God, but) that he may be thy God.

He first discovers the depravity of our nature and the misery of our condition: he then displays the method of our recovery by Christ, and the blessings freely vouchsafed in his gospel: after which he delineates the offices of morality, and enforces them by the most engaging motives; motives drawn from the free, unbounded loving-kindness of God our Saviour, and from the rich invaluable benefits of his grace.—Privilege he plants as the root; from which duty blooms as the flower, godliness grows as the fruit.

The same order is observed by St. Peter in his very concise, but very accurate map, of the way to heaven: “Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Christ,” 1 Pet. i. 2. First, the everlasting and electing love of the Father; then the enlightening and renewing agency of the Spirit, who testifies of Christ, and applies his death to the soul, purifying the heart by faith; from whence, as from a fountain of living water, flows true sanctification, and every act of filial obedience, every species of real holiness;—all which, being partly defective, and partly polluted, must be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, and made acceptable by his dying oblation.

Ther. Is this the constant method in which the sacred writers represent the gospel salvation? Do they always observe this particular order, in arranging its doctrines and its duties? Or, is it not an insignificant circumstance which goes first, provided we take in both?

Ans. To observe this order, I am persuaded, is no insignificant circumstance. It is of great consequence, both to our establishment and to our growth in grace. Is it a matter of indifference to the archer whether he send the point or the feather of his arrow foremost? Can he, in either case, hit the mark with equal ease and equal certainty?

I believe you will find, that the sacred writers, in all their evangelical discourses, invariably adhere to this order. Nay, it took place even under the legal dispensation.—When the Lord God published his law from Mount Sinai; when he wrote it, with his own finger, on tables of stone; how did he introduce the precepts? how enforce their observance? Let us attend to the preamble, which is the language of love, and the very spirit of the gospel: “I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,” Exod. xx. 2. “I have already delivered thee, with a mighty hand, from the most sordid and insupportable slavery. I have promised thee, for thy possession, the delightful country of Canaan, ‘a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations,’ Jer. iii. 19. Nay, I myself am thy portion; a God in covenant with thee; engaged by an inviolable contract, and with the exertion of all my attributes, to do thee good. Therefore keep the statutes, the judgments, and ordinances which I am now going to establish.”—Could there be a more winning inducement, or a more endearing obligation to obedience?

I might point out the same strain running through the exhortations of Moses and the songs of David, the sermons of the prophets and the writings of the apostles: But this I wave, not through an apprehension of its difficulty, only from a fear of prolixity.—However, you will not think me tedious if I produce one more instance from the great master of our schools: “For we ourselves were some time foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving diverse lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another,” Tit. iii. 3—8. Here he sets before us a dismal but exact picture of our

depraved and undone condition. Then he presents us with a delightful view of our redemption, both in its gracious cause and precious effects: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared; not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he hath shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Having thus provided for our happiness, he then promotes our holiness: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men."

I make no comment * upon the passage; because I hope you will commit it, as a noble depositum, to your memory. Your own diligent meditation, accompanied with humble prayer, will furnish out the best exposition.—Only I would just remark, that the apostle, always consistent, always uniform, marshals his thoughts with his usual exactness. Good works are not disbanded, nor yet suffered to lead the van, but made to bring up the rear †. When he mentions these fruits of the Spirit, he mentions them, not slightly as matters of small moment, but earnestly, as affairs of great importance. It is his desire and his charge, that all believers should be careful ‡; have their hearts upon the business, should use their best contrivance and exert their utmost endeavours, not barely to practise, but to maintain; to be exemplary, distinguished, and pre-eminent in the exercise of every virtue, because this virtue and those works, though not the ground of a reconciliation with God, are amiable in the eyes of all, and honourable to the Christian profession. They are also a necessary ingredient in personal happiness, and the apparent means of social usefulness.

Ther. This view of the evangelical plan is, I must confess, new to me; and particularly your ordonnance of the epistle to the Romans.

Asp. If this be new, perhaps what I am going to advance may be strange.—We have been talking about acceptance with God, and debating whether our own good works are the cause of this inestimable blessing: what will you say, if we can perform no good work till we are interested in Christ, and accepted by God?

Ther. Say!—That this is razing foundations.

* Perhaps the reader will give me leave, though Aspasio has declined the office, to add a short expository stricture upon the most distinguished parts of this very important paragraph. I. We have the cause of our redemption; "not works of righteousness which we have done, but the kindness, the love, the mercy of God our Saviour." II. The effects; which are, 1st, Justification—being justified, having our sins forgiven, and Christ's righteousness imputed: all this, without any the least deserving quality in us; solely by his grace, and most unmerited goodness: 2d, Sanctification—expressed by the "washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;" whose influences purify the soul, as the washing of water cleanses the body; and introduce an improvement into all the faculties of the mind, somewhat like that annual renovation and general smile of nature, which the return of spring diffuses over the face of the earth. III. The end and consummation of all; "that we should be made heirs of the heavenly kingdom; and live, now in the assured hope, hereafter in the full enjoyment, of eternal life."

† The same order is observed by St. John, Rev. xiv. 13. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

‡ *φεισθησονται*. This is somewhat like that emphatical expression, which so often occurs in the Old Testament, *השמרו לציווהו* "Ye shall observe to do:" ye shall be very diligent to fulfil; ye shall be very exact in performing.

Asp. It is razing the wrong, the foundation falsely so called, which will certainly deceive as many as make it their trust. And is it not prudent, when we are building for eternity, carefully to examine the ground? Is it not friendly to divert a man from the treacherous sand, and lead him to the unshaken rock? For this cause I said it once, and for this cause I say it again, That we can perform no good work till we are interested in Christ, and accepted of God.

Ther. Produce your reasons, Aspasio. And strong reasons they must be, which are forcible enough to support such an opinion.

Asp. The case seems to speak for itself. How can a man that is evil do works that are good? Would you expect to "gather grapes off thorns, or figs off thistles?" But let us hear what our unerring Teacher says: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me," John xv. 4. Nothing can be more express and full to our purpose. But that which follows is far more awful and alarming to our consciences: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned," John xv. 6. From which it appears, that the human heart is never actuated by good tempers, that the human life can never be productive of good works, until a man is ingrafted into Christ; no more than a branch can bear valuable fruit, while it continues in a state of separation from the tree. It appears also, that persons alienated from Christ are, and all their performances too, like broken, withered, rotten boughs—fit for nothing, but to be committed to the flames, and consumed from the earth. Both they and their services, far from being meritorious, are, in the estimate of heaven, worthless and despicably mean.

Ther. What! Are all the noble deeds, performed by the advocates for morality and lovers of virtue, worthless in themselves, and despicable before the Supreme Being? Worthless and despicable (grating words!) only because they are not attended with the peculiarities of your faith? Can the want of this little circumstance change their nature, and turn their gold into dross?

Asp. My dear Theron, call not the circumstance little. It is sufficient, were your works more precious than gold, to debase them into tin, into lead, into dross. When the poor shepherd brought you, yesterday morning, a present of some wood-strawberries, bringing them as an humble expression of his gratitude, they were kindly received. But if he had offered them as a price for your house, or as the purchase of your estate, how should you have regarded them in such a connexion? No words can express the disdain you would have conceived. When Barnabas presented a sum of money to the apostles, for the supply of their necessities and the relief of indigent believers, Acts iv. 37. it was welcome to them, and pleasing to God. But when Simon the sorcerer offered his gold to Peter and John; offering it, not from a principle of faith, but as an equivalent for the Holy Spirit; not in order to testify his thankfulness, but rather to play the huckster with heaven, it was rejected with the utmost indignation, Acts viii. 20.

I leave my friend to apply the preceding instances. Only let me beg of him to believe, that if my words are grating, they are extorted by the force of truth. If I am obliged to blame what he calls good works, it is, as a great critic blames eloquence, "with the tenderness of a lover."—But my censure falls only on their faulty origin and unbecoming aim. Let them spring from the

grace of Christ as their source, let them propose the glory of Christ as the end; then, instead of putting a slight upon them, or giving them a bill of divorce, I would court, caress, and wed them. Whereas, if neither this can be kept in the view, nor that principle operate in the heart, I must persist questioning the genuineness of their character, nay, in denying the very possibility of their existence. There may be a mimicry of holy actions: but it is mimicry only; as empty as the combs made by those wasps, and better than a flame that is painted.—I have an authority for this doctrine which I think you will not offer to controvert.

Ther. What authority?

Asp. That of our Church; who declares in her 13th Article, “Works done before the grace of Christ, and inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasing to God; forasmuch as they spring not out of faith in Christ.” Faith in Jesus Christ purifies the heart. Till this be done, we have neither disposition nor capacity for holy obedience. Nay, without faith in Christ, our persons are abominable*, our state is damnable, and how can any of our works be acceptable?

Such a one, you say, is honest in his dealings, temperate in his enjoyments, charitable to the poor. I allow it all. But unless these seeming virtues are referred to the glory of the supreme Jehovah, unless they flow from faith in the crucified Jesus, they may be acts of worldly policy, or selfish prudence, or Pharisaical pride—they are by no means a pleasing oblation to the Lord Almighty. Nay, instead of being acts of duty, and objects of approbation, they stand condemned in the Scripture, and as breaches of the commandment. They stand condemned in that Scripture which declares, “Without faith it is impossible to please God,” Heb. xi. 6. They are breaches of that commandment which requires, “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,” 1 Cor. x. 32.

Upon the whole, if we will submit to the determination of our established church, or acquiesce in the decision of our divine Master, we must acknowledge, that there is no such thing as a good work till we are reconciled to God, and our persons accepted in his sight. Therefore to represent our own works as the means of reconciliation and acceptance, is both chimerical and absurd. Chimerical, because it builds upon a phantom, and takes for reality what has no existence: absurd, because it inverts the natural order of things, and would make the effect antecedent to the cause.

Ther. Before we quit this agreeable retreat, let me ask my *Aspasio*, what he proposes by running down all those works which are the produce of inward religion, and essential to true holiness; whose excellency is displayed in the clearest, and whose necessity is urged in the strongest terms, throughout the whole Bible?

Asp. I am far from running down works which are the produce of inward religion, and therefore may be justly styled, “works of faith and labours of love.” But I would caution my *Theron* and myself to take care, that our works be accompanied with those circumstances which alone can render them truly good. Let them arise from faith, and bear witness to love; or else we shall have “thistles instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley,” Job xxxi. 40.

I would also persuade my friend, and I would habituate myself, not to repose our confidence in any works whatsoever; lest they prove a bruised

* “To the defiled and unbelieving is nothing clean.” Tit. i. 15. The apostle joins *defiled* and *unbelieving*, to intimate, that without a true belief nothing is clean. The understanding and the conscience are polluted. Both the man and his doings are impure.

and, that breaks under our weight—or a pointed spear, that pierces us to the heart. We shall never be like the church, “who comes up out of the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved,” Cant. viii. 5, so long as we bolster up ourselves with a conceit of personal righteousness. This was the error, the fatal error, of the Pharisees; this the film which blinded the eyes of their kind, and sealed them up under the darkness of final unbelief.

Besides, my dear Theron, if you expect to be saved by your own duties, you will be loath to see the worst of your condition. To see the worst of your condition will be a dagger to your hopes, and as death to your soul. You will therefore be inclined to “daub with untempered mortar,” Ezek. iii. 10. Instead of acknowledging the deep depravity of your nature, and the numberless iniquities of your life, you will invent a thousand excuses to palliate your guilt; and by this means erect a wall of partition between your soul and the merits of your Redeemer; which will be a greater inconvenience, a more destructive evil, than to cut off all supply of provision from an army, or even to intercept the sunbeams from visiting the earth.

Ther. Now you talk of armies, I must observe, that though I have scarce been able to keep my ground in this argumentative action, I cannot allow you the honour of a victory, as a retreat is very different from a rout.

Asp. I would also remark, that my friend has changed the intended plan for operations; has almost continually acted upon the offensive; while my part has been only to sustain the shock. At our next encounter, you may expect to have the order of battle reversed. I shall direct my forces to begin the charge. Put yourself therefore in readiness for a brisk attack.

Ther. You act the fair enemy, Aspasio, I must confess, in thus giving the alarm before you make the assault.

Asp. This hostility may appear fairer still, when I assure you, that my weapons aim not at the destruction of your comfort, or the demolition of any valuable interest. Only they would be “mighty through God, to pull down the strongholds” of unbelief, and bring every self-exalting, every rebellious thought, “captive unto Christ,” 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; captive, in a willed submission to his righteousness, as well as a dutiful subjection to his commands. And when such is the tendency of the campaign, it will be your greatest advantage to lose the victory; it will be better than a triumph to acknowledge yourself vanquished.

DIALOGUE VIII.

Ther. OUR last conversation ended with a challenge. To decline or delay the acceptance of it, would look like cowardice in me, and be a piece of injustice to you, Aspasio. Therefore I am now ready to give you all the satisfaction which a gentleman can demand. Only, as the weather continues hazy, I believe my study must be the place of action.

Asp. A challenge, Theron!

Ther. What, Sir! do you boggle? would you eat your words, and play the pottroon?

Asp. Perhaps I may have an inclination to follow the example of a brother hero, who ran away from the field of battle, just as his comrades

were advancing to charge the enemy; and when called to an account for behaviour, right worthily alleged, that his retreat proceeded, not from timidity of mind, no, but from a concern for the public good; "for," quoth he, "if I had been knocked on the head to-day, how should I have been able to fight for my country to-morrow?"

You smile, Theron, at my doughty warrior, and his sage maxim. I since you have glanced at a certain modish custom, give me leave very seriously to assure you, that if the affair was to be determined by sword or pistol, I should reckon such a conduct, a resolute refusal at least, not at unmanly, but the truly wise and gallant behaviour. For surely it can never be an instance of wisdom, to hazard my life at the mere caprice of a turbulent ruffian, who is a stranger to all the principles of humanity and generosity, but a slave, an abandoned slave, to his own ungovernable passions. Surely it can never be an act of real bravery to expose my person, because some foolhardy practitioner in the fencing-school is desperate enough to do this! The gentleman, the true gentleman, should exert a becoming dignity of spirit, and scorn to set his welfare on a level with that of an inconsiderate and barbarous bully*.

Ther. But honour, my Aspasio, honour is at stake. Better to lose life, than forfeit our reputation. Better to be in a grave, than to be the jeer of every coffee-house; and perhaps pointed at, as we pass the streets, mean-spirited, sneaking, or, as the gentlemen of the sword so elegantly speak, white-livered animals.

Asp. Forfeit our reputation! Amongst whom, I beseech you?—A foolish rash and precipitate creatures; the pupils of La Mancha's knight; the sons of chimeras † and cruelty; whose applause is infamy, and their detraction the highest praise they can bestow. From every judicious and worthy person your conduct will be sure to gain approbation, and your character esteemed. When Cæsar received a challenge from Antony to engage him in single combat, he very calmly answered the bearer of the message: "If Antony weary of life, tell him, there are other ways to death besides the point of the sword." Who ever deemed this an instance of cowardice? All ages have admired it as the act of a discreet and gallant man, who was sensible of his own importance, and knew how to treat the petulant and revengeful humour of a discontented adversary with its deserved contempt.

Barely to lose our life, is the smallest of those evils which attend the mischievous practice. It is pregnant with a long, an almost endless train of disastrous consequences, to parents, wives, children, friends, associates, and the community. It is an infallible expedient to be deprived of the favour of the infinite God, and to be excluded from the joys of his eternal kingdom. It is the sure way to become an object of abhorrence to the angels of light.

* Aspasio calls the person who gives the challenge a bully. And such, notwithstanding all the maxims of fantastical and false honour, he will certainly be found, when tried the bar of reason or justice. For, if the most impetuous, irrational, and brutal barbarian is allowed to constitute a bully, he has an indisputable title to the character, who, on account of a mere punctilio, or some slight affront, would destroy a life that might be of service to society, might be a blessing to various relatives, and is intimately connected with a blissful or miserable immortality.

† This kind of gentry are styled, in a book with which they have little or no acquaintance, but whose maxims will be had in reverence when their names are lost in oblivion, כנפול "the sons of bluster," or "the children of noise," Jer. xlviii. 45.

and be made the laughing-stock of devils in their dungeons of darkness*. Shame, everlasting shame, shall be the reward of such gallantry, "the promotion of such fools," Prov. iii. 35.

Ther. With regard to this point, I am entirely of your opinion, Aspasio, however I may differ in other particulars.

Asp. Say you so, Theron! Would you then tamely submit to affronts, insults, and injuries?

Ther. As to the trifling affronts of a peevish, incontinent tongue, I would treat them with a superior scorn. And when thus treated, they are sure to recoil, with the keenest edge and severest weight, upon the impotent malice which offers them. The wretch should see, that I could pity his misery, and smile at his folly. But as to injuries, the case is otherwise. Should any one assault my person, it is at his peril. He would find, and perhaps to his smart,

*Et nos tela manu, ferrumque haud debile dextra
Spargimus, et nostro sequitur de vulnere sanguis.—VIRG.*

Here the fundamental and everlasting law of self-preservation calls upon us to play the man. And I am sure Christianity does not require us to yield our throats to the knife, or open our breasts to the dagger.

But to retire to deliberate, to sit down and indite a formal challenge, seems to me altogether as savage and iniquitous, as to assault on the highway. He that demands my money on the road, or extorts it by an incendiary letter, or decoys me into the snare by a forged and counterfeit note, is stigmatized for a villain, is abhorred by every person of integrity, and when detected is rewarded with a halter. Why should we reckon the headstrong bravo less injurious, who makes his attempt upon my very life, and thirsts with insatiable fury for my blood?

Asp. He allows you a fair chance, it is said.

Ther. A chance! Of what? Either of falling a sacrifice to his rage, or of imbruing my hands in his blood! which is neither more nor less than reducing me to a necessity of launching into damnation myself, or of transmitting a fellow-creature to eternal vengeance. And is this an extenuation? this a mitigating circumstance? It really proves the practice so inexcusably wicked, that nothing can be pleaded in its defence. The very argument used to justify the horrid deed inflames its guilt, and aggravates its malignity.

It is a pity but the legislative authority would interpose for the suppression of such a flagrant wrong to society, and such a notorious violation of our benign religion. Why should not the laws declare it felony to make the first overture for a duel? since it is always more heinous, and frequently more pernicious;—is always murder in the intention, and frequently issues in double destruction; the one inflicted by the stab of violence, the other executed by the sword of justice.

Might it not, at least, be branded with some mark of public infamy, or subjected to a severe pecuniary mulct? so that a gentleman of spirit and

* "Let me tell you with confidence," (says an excellent person, addressing himself to one of these unhappy desperadoes,) "that all duels or single combats are murderous: blanch them over (how you list) with names of honour and honest pretences, their use is sinful, and their nature devilish." See the Select Works of Bishop Hall, folio, p. 526.

temper might have it in his power to return the compliment of a challenge letter with some such answer:—

“SIR,

However meanly you may think of your life, I set too high a value upon mine, to expose it as a mark for undisciplined and outrageous passion. Neither have I so totally renounced all that is humane, benevolent, or amiable, as to draw my sword for your destruction, because you have first been overcome by precipitate and unreasonable resentment. You have given me an opportunity of acting the gentleman and the Christian. And this challenge I accept, as a note under your hand for five hundred pounds*; which very soon be demanded according to law, by, Sir, yours,” &c.

Asp. But to resume the proper subject—*Asp.* the nature of our engagement which I now recollect, and which was explained when I ventured to give you what you call the challenge. As it is not my Theron, but the obstacle to his faith, and the enemies of his felicity, that I am to encounter, perhaps I shall have courage to stand my ground; and, instead of violating all obligations of equity, honour, and conscience, I shall certainly evidence love to my friend, may possibly promote his truest good.

Ther. I do not see how this can be effected by your late attempt. I undertook to run down all works of righteousness as absolutely unable to find acceptance with God, and equally insufficient to recommend us to his favour. It is for the credit of these, which Aspasio has depreciated, that I enter the lists.

Asp. Pray, what is the standard to which these works of righteousness must be conformed, and by which their sufficiency may be determined?

Ther. The moral law, doubtless; I know no other standard of righteousness, nor any other way of becoming righteous.

Asp. You will, I hope, ere long be acquainted with another way. At present, I agree to your proposal. We will join issue on this footing, and bring the merits of our cause before this tribunal. Yourself shall be the judge. I will only ask your opinion, and refer myself to your decision. You are not I am soon weary of the military style. I had obtruded myself on a post which I was not qualified to act, and now resume a more becoming character.

Ther. If you place me on the bench, I shall allow of no such digression but shall keep you close to the subject.

Asp. Has your lordship then considered the nature of the divine law, and the extent of its obligations?

Ther. It obliges all persons, and comprises the whole duty of man. It forbids all immorality, and enjoins every virtue.—Are not these your sermons?

Asp. They are, when somewhat enlarged.—The empire of the law, as prohibitory of evil, extends both to the outward and inward man. It tal

* Might not the refuser of a challenge be dignified with some honorary distinction resembling the civic crown amongst the ancient Romans; since, by his cool and temperate bravery, he saves one life from the sword, another from the halter?—Was some honorary distinction, on the one hand, united to a pecuniary forfeiture on the other, I cannot but think they would prove an effectual method to check the progress of this destructive evil.

cognizance of the actions ; it judges every word. All the operations and all the dispositions of the soul come under its sacred jurisdiction. It is indeed a discerner, not only of the working thoughts, but also of the dawning intentions : and arraigns them both at its awful bar. " It pierces even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit," Heb. iv. 12. Not the inmost recesses of the breast are too deep for its penetration, nor all the artifices of the deceitful heart too subtle for its detection. Other laws forbid the unclean act ; this condemns the wanton eye, and irregular desire. Other laws punish the injurious deed ; this passes sentence on the unguarded sallies of passion, and the most secret emotions of resentment. So eminently true is that remark of the Psalmist, " Thy commandments are exceeding broad," Psalm cxix. 96. Tell me now, Theron, has your obedience been commensurate to this extensive platform of duty ?

Ther. If the law be so very extensive—

Asp. Nay, my friend, you cannot suspect that I have stretched to an undue extent the obligations of the divine law, since this interpretation is established by an authority too great to be controverted, too clear to be misunderstood—even by the authority of Christ himself ; whose sermon upon the mount is a professed exposition of the commandments, and maintains in the most explicit manner all that I have advanced : so that if our Lord's exposition is just, I think it will be neither rash nor uncharitable to say, there is not a man upon earth but has broke them all.

Ther. Are we all idolaters then ? all adulterers ? all murderers ? Shocking to imagine !

Asp. It is shocking, I confess. But how much more so, if such delinquents expect justification by their own deeds ?

Ther. This is no proof of your assertion, my good friend.

Asp. To be fond of gold, to be enamoured with the world, to love any creature more than the ever-blessed Creator, are instances of idolatry, Col. iii. 5. Phil. iii. 19. not quite so gross, but altogether as real, as to set up idols in our temples, or pay acts of adoration to senseless images. Have you always been free from this apostacy of the affections ?

Our infallible Teacher has informed us, that unreasonable anger, contemptuous language, and malevolent wishes, Matth. v. 22. are each a species of murder, and not many removes from the assassin's deadly stab. Have you been always meek, always benevolent, and never chargeable with this mental homicide ?

We are further assured, that the indulgence of inordinate desire is, in the impartial estimate of Heaven, as the commission of the impure deed, Matth. v. 28. And evil concupiscence of every kind violates that sacred precept, " Thou shalt not covet." Has your will been invariably upright, and warped with no irregular inclination ? are you wholly unpolluted with this adultery of the heart ?

I wait not for a reply. I have often heard you plead guilty to all—yes, to all and every of these charges respectively.

Ther. Where, and when, Aspasio ?

Asp. In the most sacred place, and on the most solemn occasion. And not you only, but a whole multitude of self-condemned criminals. Our church, you know, has ingrafted the decalogue into her public service ; and taught all her members to answer, after the repetition of each command

ment, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." Is there any sense in these words? or have we any meaning when we utter them? If we have, surely they must imply an acknowledgment of disobedience in every particular. The criminal arraigned at the bar never falls on his knees, and craves forgiveness, till he either confesses or is convicted. This then must be the purport of our response, "We are verily guilty concerning this thing; and we humbly implore both pardoning mercy for the past, and strengthening grace for the future."

Give 'me leave to urge my question a little farther. Is there a single day in which you have not transgressed, some way or other, this sacred rule?

Ther. If the law of God will dispense with no deviation, not even in the first starts of thought, or the least wanderings of desire—But surely to affirm this, is to extend the law beyond all reasonable bounds. The motions of evil desire, if indulged, are undoubtedly criminal. But are they also, when restrained, breaches of duty? I should rather imagine, that such temptations are thrown in our way for the trial of our obedience—which, had they no power over our affections, would not be trials; and when they are resolutely withstood, cannot be faults.

Asp. What was the judgment of our reformers? and what is the voice of our church? We may find both in the ninth Article. "Although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin." It is not said, concupiscence hath then only the nature of sin when it is ripened into action; but of itself, and before it breaks out into the commission of iniquity. Of itself it is contrary to the pure nature, and therefore cannot but be condemned by the perfect law of God.

Ther. This I can truly plead in my own behalf, that it has not been customary with me to offend; at least, not presumptuously, or of deliberate wickedness.

Asp. My dear Theron, do not offer to palliate your guilt. Such an opiate may stupify, but will not cure; or rather, like opiates ill prepared, it will intoxicate the mind, and counteract the operation of every healing medicine. Besides, it is not only pernicious, but false and unreasonable. You know the use of that solar microscope, and are able to inform me of its effects.

Ther. I ought to be pretty well acquainted with these experiments; since it has long been my favourite diversion to employ a few spare hours in such agreeable speculations.

Asp. You have seen the body of an insect accommodated to the surprising instrument. When, in this situation, the animal was pricked by a very fine needle, your eye, your naked eye, just perceived the puncture, and discovered perhaps a speck of moisture oozing from the orifice. But in what manner were they represented by the magnifying instrument?

Ther. The puncture was widened into a frightful gash; the speck of moisture swelled into a copious stream, and flowed like a torrent from the gaping wound. An ox, under the sacrificing knife, scarce looks more bulky, or bleeds more largely.

Asp. Do you not apprehend my design?—If we, short-sighted mortals, and almost blinded with self-love; if we cannot but be sensible of our faults, how flagrant must they appear, in what enormous magnitudes, and with

what aggravating circumstances, to an eye perfectly pure, and infinitely penetrating?

Instead of attempting to extenuate our offences, let us make some such improving reflections: "If this holy law, which prohibits the minutest failure, form the indictment; if this all-discerning God, who sifts our conduct even to the smallest defect, be the judge; if our personal goodness, which abounds with imperfections, be our plea; what can we expect at that decisive hour, when the Lord shall "lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet?" Isa. xxviii. 17. Surely, this consideration should incline us to adopt the wise and ardent wish of the apostle, "That we may," now, in this our day, "win Christ, and," at the last tremendous audit, "be found in him; not having our own righteousness, which is of the law," for the foundation of our hopes, "but the righteousness which is of God, by faith in Jesus Christ," Phil. iii. 8, 9.

Consider the law in its nobler capacity, as enjoining whatever is excellent. Can you hope, Theron, to be justified by it, if you fall short of its demands, not barely in a few instances, but in every action of your life, and every temper of your heart?

Ther. Such a hope, cherished amidst such circumstances, would be fallacious and absurd; but I trust I am not so very faulty, or rather so entirely abandoned, as your interrogatory supposes.

Asp. Have you duly weighed the perfection and spirituality of the divine law? It is a transcript of the unspotted purity and absolute rectitude of the divine nature. It requires an unreserved obedience to all God's commands, and a most unfeigned submission to all his dispensations; without regretting the former as a grievous yoke, or repining at the latter as rigorous treatment. It calls, not only for external duty, but also for the most upright imaginations and devout affections. Nay, it insists upon the exercise of every virtue, and that in the highest degree: love to God, without the least lukewarmness, and love to all our neighbours, without any unkindness; a sanctity of desire that knows no stain, and a humility of mind that is free from all elatement. In a word, it requires us to be perfect, "even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect," Matth. v. 48.

Do any of your actions come up to this exalted standard? Are any of your graces thus refined?

Ther. Am I then absolutely an insolvent before the great Lord of the universe? Have I no lamb in my fold without a blemish? nothing in my life, nothing in my heart, but what is defective and defiled?

Asp. Indeed, my friend, this is not your condition alone, but the condition of the most irreproachable person on earth. There is none perfect, in any character or in any work, no not one. None that obeys the divine law, uniformly, invariably, and completely.

Cast your eye upon the names which are subjoined to those beautiful prints. How elegant is the engraving! how accurate are the letters! The strokes most delicately fine! their shape most exactly true! Let me ask you to transcribe them with your pen, and make the copy equal to the original. Preserve all the noble boldness of the Roman stamp, and all the graceful softness of the Italian touch.—What? could you not execute this task, even in your present unimpaired health, and with the exertion of all your skill? How shamefully then must you fall short, if your eyes were dim

with age, if your hands shook with a paralytic disorder, and your understanding was oppressed with a lethargic dulness? Such is really the case with regard to all the children of men. Our nature is depraved, our moral abilities are enervated, and our intellectual faculties clouded. And can we, in such a state of impotence, transcribe that sacred system which is the very image of God—transcribe it into our tempers, and render it legible in our lives, without diminishing one jot or tittle of its perfect purity?

Ther. Though I fall short, there are Christians of a much higher class; Christians, I do not doubt, who have these laws written on their hearts, all whose tempers are cast into this heavenly mould. Nor am I myself without hopes of making more considerable advances in holiness.

Asp. May your hopes be quickened into vigorous endeavours, and your endeavours be crowned with abundant success! What you suppose concerning very eminent Christians, I cannot wholly admit, neither do I wholly deny. They may have all their tempers cast into the heavenly mould; but then they are conformed to the sacred pattern only in part. There is a resemblance, yet not such as that clear and steady mirror (pointing to a fine glass over the chimney-piece) exhibits, but such as some turbulent and muddy stream reflects. If the breasts of these eminent Christians were formed on the model of Drusus's house *, I verily think you would have a lower opinion of their acquisitions in virtue.

David, whom God himself dignifies with the most exalted of all characters, and styles "A man after his own heart;" who to a most inflamed love added a most accurate knowledge of the divine testimonies; was deeply sensible of the truth I would inculcate. After an attentive contemplation of the sublimity, the extent, the sanctity of those heavenly institutes, he breaks out into this humbling exclamation, "Who can tell how oft he offendeth?" Psal. xix. 12. "Was the most vigilant conduct, or the most purified soul, examined by this consummate rule, innumerable would be found the slips of the former, and glaring would the failures of the latter appear."

Ther. I cannot see the reason for degrading human nature to such an extravagant degree, and ranking human works among the refuse of things.

Asp. Do you ask the reason of this remonstrance? It is to preserve us from the mischievous error of the Pharisee, who, measuring himself, not by the true, sublime, and extensive sense of the law, but by a false, debased, and mutilated interpretation, became haughty in his own conceit, and abominable in the sight of God. Hear him trumpeting his own praise: "I am no extortioner, no adulterer," Luke xviii. 11. This the poor vain creature fancied was a sufficient obedience paid to the second table. See him still strutting in his own imaginary plumes†: "I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess," Luke xviii. 12. This, he foolishly

* When Drusus, a noble Roman, was deliberating upon a model for his new house, the architect offered to build it in such a taste, that no eye should overlook any of his rooms. "You quite mistake my inclination," said Drusus; "I am for the very reverse of your plan: I would have my house so contrived, that every passenger may see whatever is transacted within."

† This seems to give the genuine signification of *το υψηλον εν ανθρωποις*, Luke xvi. 15; not "that which is highly esteemed," *ισομουν υδαζος*. The proposition, taken in this sense, is neither necessarily nor universally true. The meekness of Moses, the fortitude of Joshua, the wisdom of Solomon, were highly esteemed among those very men to whom our Lord addressed his discourse; yet none can suppose, that the endowments of those illustrious personages were "an abomination in the sight of God."

dreamed, was a due compliance with the demands of the first table. The young ruler seems to have been under the same delusion, when he had the assurance to declare, "All these things," which are prescribed by the divine law, "have I kept from my youth up," Matth. xix. 20.

A more pestilent opinion it is scarce possible for the mind of man to entertain. And nothing can appear more egregiously mistaken, if we consider the vast comprehensive scope of the sacred precepts, and are convinced that they require a most exact conformity, in every particular and every punctilio.

Ther. Is there nothing valuable, then, in regularity of conduct and integrity of heart? nothing valuable in our acts of charity and habits of virtue? nothing whatsoever that may recommend us to our Maker?

Asp. From our fellow-creatures they stand entitled to respect, imitation, and gratitude; but before infinite perfection they must drop their claim, and lie prostrate in the dust, imploring forgiveness, not challenging a reward. We all discern a beauty and a twinkling lustre in the stars, when viewed under the shades of night: but when the magnificent source of day arises, their beauty vanishes, their lustre is darkness. Such are human accomplishments when compared with the perfect law, or beheld by the piercing eye of the supremely glorious God.

Ther. Methinks this notion confounds the difference of good and evil; and by rendering all our actions blameable, would render them all alike. This is levelling with a witness!

Asp. It only shows that there are blemishes in all; whereas some are flaw and blemish all over. Is there no difference between the leopard's spots and the raven's foot? If I maintain that neither of those animals are perfectly white, doth this imply that both are equally black?

All we perform, however specious it may seem, is very far short of our elevated rule, therefore cannot procure the divine favour, or entitle us to the kingdom of heaven. Nay, if God should enter into judgment with us, on the foot of our own performances, he would discover such defects, even in the choicest instances of our obedience, as must render them matter of condemnation*, not meritorious of applause.

Be pleased to observe this penknife.—What can be more exquisitely keen than the edge, or more nicely polished than the blade? but how do they appear when beheld through one of those microscopes?

Ther. The edge less sharp than the woodman's axe, or rather more blunt than his iron wedge. The polish resembles a mass of coarse metal rudely hammered on the anvil.

Asp. How very delicate is the cambric which forms your ruffles, and gives such an ornamental air to your whole dress! nothing can be finer than the threads, or more exact than the texture; but what is their appearance in a microscopic view?

Ther. You would take the fine threads for hempen cords; and would almost be positive, that they had been wattled together by the clumsy hands of the hurdle-maker, rather than curiously wove in the artist's loom.

Asp. That lovely piece of enamel, which makes a part of your lady's

* To this assertion St. Cyril bears a very express testimony: "Even those of our actions which seem to be performed in a right manner, could not escape censure and blame, if God should examine and bring them to the test."

pensile equipage, quite charms the spectator with the justness of its figure and the radiancy of its colours. But——

Ther. Under the scrutiny of this searching instrument it loses all its elegance ; and, instead of winning our admiration, provokes our contempt. It looks like a heap of mortar, plastered on by the mason's trowel.

Asp. You see then, Theron, what gross indelicacies, what bungling inequalities, this supplementary aid to our sight discovers, even in the most finished works of human art. So, and abundantly more, does the immaculate purity of God discern imperfections in our most upright deeds and most guarded hours.

I said immaculate, and I ought to have said more ; for God is not only unerringly wise to detect, but infinitely pure to abhor, all contamination. Angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, are endowed with immaculate, but the Lord is possessed of infinite purity. Have you considered this attribute of the Godhead, Theron ?

Ther. I have ; and not without amazement at the charming, the awful descriptions of it, which occur in the sacred writings. God is not only holy, but, as the lawgiver of the Jews very sublimely expresses himself, "glorious in holiness," Exod. xv. 11. The sacred penmen, treating of this illustrious perfection, seem to labour the important point. They indulge the loftiest flights of imagination, they employ the boldest figures of speech, and add the most glowing colours of eloquence ; not without frequent acknowledgments, that all the force of language is abundantly too feeble for the unutterable subject.

One of the prophets, addressing the King eternal, immortal, invisible, breaks out into this ecstatic exclamation : " O Lord, my God, my Holy One, thou art of purer eyes than " (to allow, shall I say ? This is an ascription of praise unspeakably too mean for thy surpassing excellency : Thou art of purer eyes than) " to look upon evil, and canst not behold iniquity," Hab. i. 13. Another, rapt into a prophetic vision, sees the seraphim veiling their faces in token of profound humiliation ; hears those sons of ardour and love crying in loud responsive strains, " Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Sabaoth * !" Isa. vi. 3. Nay, so transcendently holy, says another devout worshipper, that all created glory is totally eclipsed in his presence : " He looketh to the moon, and it shineth not ; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight," Job xxv. 5. And " his very angels," those refined and exalted intelligences, " he chargeth with folly," Job iv. 18.

Asp. Very majestic descriptions ! And pray let us observe the impressions which such beamings of the divine effulgence made upon the saints of old. Moses, drawing near the cloudy pavilion, the presence-chamber of the Holy One of Israel, says, with emotions of uncommon dread, " I exceedingly fear and quake !" Heb. xii. 21. When Job is favoured with some peculiar manifestations of the omnipotent God, see his posture ! hear his words ! " I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," Job xlii. 6. How strong is the language ! how deep the abasement ! When Isaiah saw the incomprehensible

* The word *Sabaoth*, though a Hebrew expression, is retained in that excellent hymn entitled *Te Deum* ; and some people, I am inclined to believe, inadvertently confound it with *Sabbath*. The latter signifies the rest of the seventh day ; and in this connexion, yields a sense not very apposite, and comparatively mean. Whereas the former denotes armies or hosts, and furnishes us with an image truly grand and majestic, worthy to be admitted into the songs of seraphs.

Jehovah sitting upon his throne, and the princes of heaven adoring at his footstool, seized with a pang of reverential fear he cried out, "Woe is me! I am undone! for I am a man of unclean lips!" Isa. vi. 5. When Ezekiel beheld an emblematical representation of him who dwelleth in light inaccessible; when the Ancient of Days, veiled under a human shape, appeared to Daniel; though one was a devout priest, and each was an eminent prophet, yet, overwhelmed with a mixture of veneration and terror, they both "fell down at his feet as dead," Ezek. i. 28. Dan. x. 8, 9; and this, not before a full display, but only before a glimpse of the Godhead, which, though partial and transient, was too dazzlingly bright for an eye of flesh to bear.

O my friend! my Theron! what figure must our mean performances, our low attainments, make before this immensely glorious God? Let us examine the behaviour and spirit of Job a little more particularly. He is one of your favourite examples, and indeed very deservedly, for in piety he had no superior and no equal—"there was none like him in the earth;" yet, when he has to do with the Maker of all things, and the Judge of all men, he pours out his abashed soul in these very remarkable professions: "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse."—See Job ix. 20, 21. 30, 31, 32. He declares yet farther, "If I wash myself in snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou," O righteous and eternal God, "plunge me in the ditch;" manifest me, notwithstanding all this care and circumspection, to be a guilty and filthy creature; yea, so very guilty and filthy, that my "own clothes," were they sensible of the pollution, "could not but abhor me."

This he confesses, not because he was an habitual sinner, or chargeable with any scandalous immorality, but because his mind was filled with the most affecting sense of God's inconceivable holiness and infinite glory. "For," adds the venerable sufferer, "he is not a man as I am;" but a Being of such extensive knowledge that nothing can escape his discernment, of such exalted purity that every spot of defilement is loathsome in his sight. For which reason, it is absolutely impossible "that I should answer him," with reference to my own personal righteousness, "or that we should come together in judgment," on any such footing, without confusion to myself, and ruin to my cause.

To all this he subjoins, what is still more memorable and exemplary: "Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul, I would despise my life." He supposes himself in a higher state than your most advanced Christian, "though I were perfect;" yet even in such a state, were it attainable and attained, "I would not know my soul;" not dwell upon, not plead, no, nor so much as cherish a thought of, my own accomplishments and acquirements. In the important business of justification, they should stand for ciphers; they should be thrown into shades; they should entirely disappear. Nay more, "I would despise my life:" my life, with all its most shining actions and most distinguished virtues, should be reckoned insignificant and despicable; just as insignificant and despicable, with respect to this great transaction, as a wandering spark would be, if appointed to diffuse day amidst the darkness of night, or produce spring amidst the depths of winter.

Ther. These are alarming hints, Aspasio, I must confess. A law which requires an exact and universal obedience, both in heart and life! A God of such majesty, purity, and glory, that men of the most approved integrity are

overwhelmed with confusion in his presence! I shall consider them, at my leisure, with the attention they deserve. At present, I believe, opportunity is giving us the slip. Yonder coach seems to be moving this way, and the livery looks like Philander's.

Aspasio, desirous to fix those convictions which are of the last consequence to our faith and salvation—very desirous to fix them on his friend's mind, replied :

Asp. As your visitants are at a distance, give me leave to observe, that the wisest of men, attending to the first of these particulars, has poured contempt upon all human excellency : "There is not a just man upon earth, that doth good and sinneth not," Eccl. vii. 20. The apostle of Christ takes shame to himself on the same account, and teaches all mankind to strike the sail of self-conceit : "In many things we offend all," James iii. 2. David, considering the latter of these points, prays with the utmost earnestness, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord!" and assigns this humbling reason for his petition, "for in thy sight shall no man living be justified," Psalm cxliii. 2. This induced Nehemiah, who had been so nobly zealous for the honour of his God, not to confide in his own valuable services, but make application to forgiving goodness : "Spare me, O Lord, according to thy great mercy," Neh. xiii. 22.

Had I set before you the example of the poor publican, who smote upon his breast, durst not lift up his eyes to heaven, but cried, from the bottom of a polluted heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Luke xviii. 13; self-love might possibly have whispered, "Surely I am not to be ranked with that abominable wretch. I stand upon some better footing than such an infamous offender." With respect to the enjoyment of eternal life, we stand upon no better, upon no other. And when low as that obnoxious despised creature, we are upon the very same ground with the most exalted saints. They all appear before the Majesty of heaven in the same attitude of unfeigned humiliation, and with the same acknowledgments of utter unworthiness. For it is a certain truth, and admits of no exception, that to justify sinners is not the privilege of human obedience, but the sole prerogative of "the Lord our righteousness."

Ther. Is not the practice of Hezekiah an exception to your rule? These, if I recollect aright, are the words of that holy king : "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight," 2 Kings xx. 3. You see, he puts the issue of his trial before the everlasting God, upon his own integrity and his own obedience.

Asp. These are his words, but they are not used with this view. He humbly represents before the great Sovereign of the world how beneficial his former life had been, and how serviceable his prolonged life might be, to the best interests of the Jewish nation. He recurs to his obedience, not that he may establish his hope of eternal happiness in heaven, but that he may obtain a reprieve from the grave, and a lengthening of his tranquillity on earth. Neither is this obedience gloried in by way of merit, but only pleaded by way of argument; as though he had said, "Remember, gracious God, how I have exerted my royal authority to suppress idolatry, to extirpate vice, and to promote thy true religion. Consider how greatly thy people stand in need of such a vigilant and zealous governor; and to what a miserable condition both

church and state may be reduced, if thou takest away thy servant by this threatened but untimely stroke. And, for the welfare of Judah, for the honour of thy name, for the support of thy own worship, *O spare me a little!*"

Aspasio paused, expecting a reply. As Theron continued silent and musing, Aspasio, with a smile of benevolence, proceeded—Come, my Theron! why so deep in thought? have you any objection to the evidences I have produced? They are some of the most dignified characters and illustrious personages that could be selected from all ages: kings, princes, and patriots; priests, saints, and martyrs. Should these be deemed insufficient, I can exhibit a larger and nobler cloud of witnesses:—larger, for they are a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues; nobler, for they stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. Ask those shining armies, Who they are, and whence they came? Their answer is comprised in one of my favourite portions of Scripture, one of those delightful texts, from which I hope to derive consolation, even in my last moments. For which reason, you will allow me to repeat it, though it may perhaps be mentioned in a former conversation: "We are they who came out of great tribulation; and have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are we before the throne," Rev. vii. 14, 15.

Some of them laid down their lives for the sake of Christ; many of them were eminent for works of righteousness; all of them were endued with real holiness. Yet none of these qualifications constituted their passport into the regions of endless felicity. They had "washed their robes," had fled to the atonement, and pleaded the merits of Jesus their Saviour. Hereby they had "made them white;" this was the cause of their acquittance from guilt, and their complete justification: and therefore, on this account, their persons were accepted; they were presented without spot before the throne, and admitted to that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand for evermore.

Ther. I have no objection to your witnesses. But, methinks, your doctrine is strangely debasing to human nature.

Asp. A sign, Theron, that it is agreeable to the genius of the gospel; which is calculated, as the eloquent Isaiah foretold, to humble the sinner and exalt the Saviour*: "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day," Isa. ii. 11. "Man, though naturally vain, shall be made sensible of his numberless offences; shall see the defects which attend his highest attainments; shall confess the impossibility of being justified by the deeds of the law; and place all his hope upon the propitiatory death, and meritorious obedience, of the Lord Jesus Christ."

* "That doctrine," said an eminent divine, "which tends
To humble the sinner,
To exalt the Saviour,
To promote holiness,

you may embrace as sound: that which is defective in its influence on any one of them, you should reject as corrupt."

DIALOGUE IX.

THERON, impressed with the last conversation, was very desirous to resume the subject, and renew the important debate. With this view he conducted his friend into a retirement commodious for the purpose.

They enter a spacious lawn, which lay opposite to the house, and stretched itself in the form of an expanded fan. The mounds on either side were dressed in verdure, and ran out in a slanting direction. The whole, to an eye placed at a distance, bore the resemblance of a magnificent vista ; contracting by slow degrees its dimensions, and lessening at last into a point, which the regular and graceful seat with all imaginable dignity supplied.

Nature had sunk the lawn into a gentle decline, on whose ample sides were oxen browsing and lambs frisking. The lusty droves lowed as they passed, and the thriving flocks bleated welcome music in their master's ear. Along the midst of this verdant slope ran a spacious and extensive walk, which, coated with gravel and fenced with palisadoes, looked like a plain stripe of brown intersecting a carpet of the brightest green. At the bottom, two handsome canals, copiously stocked with fish, floated to the breeze ; whose waters, beheld from every front room in the house, had a fine effect upon the sight, not without a refreshing influence on the imagination. At the extremity of one stood a stately colonnade. The roof was elevated on pillars of the Ionic order, and the area slabbed with stones, neatly ranged in the diamond fashion. Several forest chairs accommodated the anglers with a seat, while the bending dome supplied them with a shade.

Corresponding, and on the margin of the other canal, was erected a summer-house, of a very singular kind.—The lower part had an opening towards the north. It was cool ; it was gloomy ; and had never seen the sun. It carried the romantic air of a grotto, or rather the pensive appearance of a hermit's cell. The outside was coarse and rugged with protuberant stones. Partly overspread with ivy, partly covered with moss, it seemed to be the work of ancient years. You descend, by steps of turf, through a low and narrow door. A scanty iron grate, instead of a large sweeping sash, transmits a glimmering light, just sufficient to discover the inner structure, which appeared like one continued piece of rock-work—a cavern cut, you would imagine, from the surrounding quarry. Above, hung an irregular arch, with an aspect rather threatening than inviting. Below, lay a paving of homely pebbles ; in some places a little furrowed, as though it had been worn by the frequent tread of solitary feet. All around were rusticity and solemnity ; solemnity never more visibly seen than through a gloom. The furniture of the same grotesque fashion with the apartment. A bench hewed, you would suspect, by Nature's chisel, out of the solid stone ; a sort of couch, composed of swelling moss, and small fibrous roots. From one corner trickled a pure spring, which crept with a bubbling moan along the channelled floor, till its healthy current was collected into a basin, rudely scooped from the ground. On the edge of this little receptacle lay chained a rusty bowl, and over it stood an antique worm-eaten table. On the least obscure part of the wall you discern, dimly discern, a parchment scroll, inscribed with that sage, but mortifying admonition, "Vanity of vanities ! all is vanity !"

Over this recess, so pleasingly horrid, and adapted to solemn musings, arose an open and airy belvidere. You ascend by winding stairs; and coming from the uncouth abode below, are sweetly surprised with an elegant hexagon. The ceiling lofty, and decorated with the softest, richest, almost flowing fret-work. The wainscot, in pannels of oak, retained its native surn; so beautifully plain, that, like an amiable countenance, it would have been disfigured, rather than improved, by the most costly paint. On this were disposed, in gilded frames, and to great advantage, a variety of entertaining landscapes. But none surpassed, none equalled, all were a foil to, the noble lovely views which the windows commanded. The chimney-piece, of white shining marble, streaked with veins of vivid red: over it was carved a fine festoon of artificial, in it was ranged a choice collection of natural flowers. On a table of glossy walnut lay a portable telescope, attended with Thomson's Seasons, and *Vanierii Prædium Rusticum* *.

The whole was fitted up in the highest taste, and furnished with every pleasurable ornament, on purpose to harmonise with that lavish gaiety, which seemed to smile over all the face of nature; on purpose to correspond with that vernal delight, which came breathing on the wings of every fragrant gale: I may add, on purpose to remind the beholder of those immortal mansions, which are decorated with images infinitely more splendid, with objects unspeakably more glorious; where holy beings will spend, not a few vacant hours in refined amusement, but a boundless eternity in the consummation of joy. For, to a well-turned mind, nature is a preceptor; and these are her instructive lessons; to the pure in heart, even sense is edifying; and these are its delicate moralities.

The redundant waters of the canal rolled off in a spreading cascade; which, tumbling from many a little precipice, soothed the air with a symphony of soft and gurgling sounds, nor ever intermitted the obliging office,

“ From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve.”

But when the fanning breezes dropped their wings, when the feathered choir were hushed in sleep, when not so much as a chirping grasshopper was heard throughout the meads, this liquid instrument still played its solo, still pursued its busy way, and warbled as it flowed melodious murmurs.

Asp. Such, Theron, so uniform, uninterrupted, and invariable, should be our conformity to the divine law. But, alas! those sacred precepts are so exceeding broad, that the most enlarged human obedience is far from being commensurate to their extent; so absolutely holy, that our highest attainments fall vastly short of their exalted perfection. How then can we expect justification from such a consummate rule? How dare we place our dependence upon such imperfect duties? especially before a God of unerring discernment and immaculate purity.

Ther. Because mankind are incapable of pleasing their Maker, by yielding an absolute and invariable obedience to the moral law; does it follow from thence, that they cannot render themselves acceptable to him, by an universal course of sincere obedience?

* “*Vanierii Prædium Rusticum* :” A most elegant Latin Poem; which treats of every remarkable peculiarity relating to the business of a country life, or the furniture of a country-seat. It entertains us with a description of the most agreeable objects, in an easy flow of the purest language, and most musical numbers.

Asp. I think it follows, from what has been already observed. If you desire new arguments, they are at hand.

The law, says the teacher of the Gentiles, is the ministration of condemnation, 2 Cor. iii. 7. How can this be true, if it requires no more than a sincere obedience; such as is proportioned to our infirm state? If this be sufficient to justify, and entitle us to our Creator's favour, the law ceases to be the ministration of condemnation. It becomes (which is flatly contradictory to the apostle's doctrine) the ministration of righteousness.

The law is styled, by the same inspired teacher, "a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ*." How can it, upon your supposition, be qualified for such an office? If a sincere obedience be the whole of its demands, it can no longer direct us to Christ, it will no longer deliver us over to a Redeemer's merit; but must draw and attach us to itself, teaching us to look upon its precepts, and our own conscientious observance of them, as the tenure of eternal life.

Do you insist upon a third proof? A third presents itself; not so much founded on argumentation, as deduced from example. How was Abraham, the friend of God and father of the faithful, justified? By a course of sincere obedience? No; but by faith in the promised Messiah. "Abraham worked not," with a view to obtain justification; "but believed on him who justifieth the ungodly." How was David, the man after God's own heart, justified? By his zeal for the Lord, and by his eminent services? No; but by a righteousness imputed; even that righteousness of the blessed Redeemer, through which "iniquity is forgiven, and sin pardoned." And can we be said to walk humbly, or can we be thought to walk surely, if, refusing to tread in the steps of these exemplary saints, we diverge into a path of our own devising?

Ther. "Of our own devising!" No, my friend; there is a milder law introduced by the gospel, condescending and merciful to our infirmities, which accepts of sincerity instead of perfect obedience.

Asp. When was this milder law introduced, and the stricter abrogated? Not upon the entrance of sin, I presume. At this rate, the original law must be the creature of a few days, perhaps of a few hours only. But can we imagine, that the all-wise and unchangeable God would ordain a system of precepts to be disannulled as soon as enacted? Not in our Lord's time, I am very certain. That holy commandment, which requires supreme love to God, and perfect charity to men, he assures us, was still in force, Matth. xxii. 37, 38, 39. Nay it is evident, from the nature of the Deity, and from our relation to one another, that it always will be in force, that it never can cease, but is necessary and everlasting.

"A milder law, condescending to our infirmities!" What can be the purport of such an institution? It must be supposed to speak the following language: "Be it known unto you, O children of Adam, that you are no longer enjoined to love the Lord with all your strength, nor to love your neighbour as yourselves. Once, indeed, I insisted upon absolute purity of heart; now I can dispense with some degree of evil concupiscence." Since Christ is come, and his gospel preached, you need not always be clothed with

* Gal. iii. 24. Παιδαγωγός, "a schoolmaster;" who pretends not to finish the education of youth, but directs them to, and prepares them for, higher studies or nobler employments. The law, in like manner, aims not at furnishing us with a title to happiness; but fits, disposes, and disciplines us, for the all-sufficient Redeemer.

humility, but may feel some little emotions of pride. In short, because you are weak, I will connive, or even accommodate my demands to your enfeebled and depraved condition."

Not to urge (what must be shocking to every ear) that such a doctrine would make the Holy One of God a minister of sin, and the gospel of our salvation a patent for licentiousness; let me only ask, Does this agree with our Lord's declaration, "One jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled?" Matth. v. 18. Is this suitable to the perfections of the divine Legislator, "with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning?" James i. 17. Will this consist with the avowed resolution of the Almighty Jehovah, "He will magnify the law, and make it honourable?" Isa. xlii. 21.

Ther. However you may decry what I call the milder law, St. Paul asserts it to be the Christian scheme. This he strenuously argues for, as the only scheme by which any man can be justified in the sight of God.

Asp. Does he, Theron? in what epistle? what chapter? what verse? He says, addressing himself to the Galatian converts, "I do not frustrate the grace of God, for, if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain," Gal. ii. 21. From which passage we learn two very momentous truths, that were we to derive a justifying righteousness from the law, this would not only be derogatory to the honour of grace, but subversive of its very being; that by seeking justification through our own conscientious behaviour we make, as far as in us lies, the death of Christ a vain thing, for which there was no occasion, and of which there is no use.

To the same purpose it is written in that invaluable epistle to the Romans, "If they which are of the law be heirs," if they who trust to their own performance of the law are thereby entitled to the heavenly inheritance, "faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect," Rom. iv. 14.— See now, my friend, the tendency of your opinion! It is not a mere speculative mistake, an error of inconsiderable consequence, but such as strikes at the fundamentals of the gospel. Instead of being the only Christian scheme, it totally overthrows Christianity itself*; for it would render the promise abortive, and supersede the necessity of faith; it would destroy the very existence of grace, and make even the death of Christ a superfluous transaction.

Ther. This I see, Aspasio, that the method of obtaining acceptance on account of our own sincerity, is a benign expedient, such as corresponds with the compassionate nature of the Deity, and is what the apostle styles, "being justified by faith, without the deeds of the law."

Asp. How! To be justified by faith, and justified by sincerity, the same thing? Is it possible that these should be equivalent terms? Let me illustrate my query by a similitude, which our present situation suggests. Sometimes an easy comparison is more convincing than a laboured argument.

From this pleasing eminence we command an extensive view of the country. Our eye connects the artless grandeur of nature with the elegant embellish-

* St. Paul says of those preachers who taught justification by the works of the law, "they would pervert," or (as the original word *μισεργισμοσ* may be translated) subvert and overthrow "the gospel of Christ." To pervert, give a wrong turn, or a false colour, seems not to express fully the apostle's idea, nor to preserve the native energy of his argument. The Greek word is equivalent to the the Hebrew *סָבַךְ*, which we generally render *coverters*. Gal. i. 7.

ments of the summer-house. Nor is the public road the least entertaining part of the scene; because it presents us with a moving picture, with a perpetual succession of new objects. How many travellers have passed in review since we took our seat in this agreeable elevation! Just at this instant a stage coach bolts out of the lane, filled, I presume, with passengers that reside in the neighbourhood, or are to lodge in the next market-town. We will suppose them set down at their journey's end. An acquaintance visits them, congratulates them on their arrival, and asks the customary question, "how did they come?" "We came," they say, "without walking a step ourselves, yet by walking as well and as far as we were able." Is this answer intelligible? Are these methods of travelling consistent? So intelligible is my friend's doctrine; so consistent is justification vouchsafed without the deeds of the law and justification obtained by performing the deeds of the law as well as we are able.

Ther. Without the law, signifies without the necessity of an exact and unerring conformity to it.

Asp. This is not without, but by the law, qualified in the rigour of its demands, and departing somewhat from the perfection of its precept. Could you affirm, with any propriety, that this part of the hemisphere without the sun, because an intervening cloud has moderated its fervour and abated its glare?

What says the apostle? His words in another place will determine the meaning in this. If a state of acceptance with God be of works, be referable to our own obedience, whether sincere or perfect, "it is no more of grace*." Works and grace, in point of justification, are irreconcilable opposites. On this pinnacle they cannot stand together. One must supplant and overthrow the other.

But why do I speak of grace? If my friend's opinion prevail, grace is an end. What we took to be the gospel, turns out a covenant of works. Salvation ceases to be a free gift, and becomes a necessary payment. For "to him that worketh," that performeth what the law requires, "is the reward not reckoned of grace," but he may claim it as his due, it must be paid him as a matter of debt; Rom. iv. 4.

Ther. You take no notice of what I urged concerning the benignity of this scheme, and how much it magnifies the clemency of the great Legislator.

Asp. But why should clemency erect its throne on the ruins of almost every other attribute? This method would dishonour the veracity of God which has denounced a curse upon every deviation from his revealed will. It would depreciate the administration of his justice, which cannot but punish whatever violates his sacred precepts. It would greatly derogate from the dignity of his law, and make it a mere thing of wax, to bend, and truckle, and take its form from the sin and weakness of human nature.

Ther. Will the divine law then make no favourable allowances for human infirmities, for constitutional faults, and strength of passion?

Asp. Far be it from me to represent the law of the Most High, either more strict, or more yielding, than it really is. To avoid all possibility of

* Rom. xi. 6. The passage produced by Aspasio, refers immediately to the doctrine of election, and but remotely to the privilege of justification. However, as the former includes the latter, if that be perfectly free, this cannot be the consequence of works. The argument therefore, I apprehend, is conclusive, though the proof is not so direct.

such a mistake, let us hear the declaration of the law itself: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them," Gal. iii. 10.

"Every one;" without any exception of persons, without any regard to pleas, either of human weakness or violent temptation. "That continueth not;" it is not enough to observe these holy commandments in the general tenor of our conversation. Our course of obedience must be without any intermission, from the earliest dawn of reason to the latest period of life. "In all things;" we must refrain from all the sins that are forbidden, and from every approach towards them. We must practise all the virtues that are enjoined, and in their full extent of perfection.

In a word, the law insists upon obedience, perfect in its principle, perfect in all its parts, perfect in every degree, and in each of these respects perpetual*. The least deficiency in any one particular renders us liable to vengeance: and notwithstanding any repentance for transgressions, notwithstanding all pretensions to sincerity of heart, subjects us to the curse.

Theron paused;—he seemed to be struck with surprise;—but rallying his thoughts, replied, If this be the sense of the passage, who of all flesh can be saved?

Asp. Say rather, If the extent of the divine law be so enlarged, if its demands be so high, and its sanction so awfully rigorous, then must "every mouth be stopped; then is all the world become guilty before God; and by the works of the law shall no man living be justified."

Ther. Will not such excessively severe doctrine drive people into despondency, or even drown them in despair?

Asp. No, Theron! unless it be such a despair as is the parent of heavenly hope, and productive of those amiable twins—peace and joy: A despair, I mean, of being reconciled to our offended God, and of obtaining eternal happiness by any satisfaction or any duties of our own.

Ther. Surely you forget the gracious manifesto published by the condescending King of heaven: "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, according to what a man hath, not according to what he hath not," 2 Cor. viii. 12. Is it not plain from this text, that infinite goodness will admit our honest, though imperfect endeavours; and since we are not able to pay an unsinning, will mercifully accept our best, obedience?

Asp. I do not forget, but possibly my friend may misapply, the gracious manifesto. To whom was the word of this consolation sent? To true-believers, who had "given their own selves to the Lord," 2 Cor. viii. 5; who "were established in Christ," 2 Cor. i. 21; "and abounded in faith," 2 Cor. viii. 7. If you likewise, my dear Theron, acknowledge yourself a vile sinner in your worst, and an unprofitable servant in your best estate; if, in consequence of this acknowledgment, you fly for refuge to the wounds of a crucified Saviour, and rely for salvation only on his obedience unto death; then you imitate those Corinthian converts; then you may apply that indulgent declaration to yourself; and then would I venture to address you in the elegant and cheering language of the royal preacher, "Go thy way, eat thy

* That the law insists upon an obedience absolutely perfect, will be further evident to the attentive reader, if he considers the tenor of St. Paul's argumentation, in his epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians, particularly Rom. iii. 23, iv. 15; Gal. iii. 21.

bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God no accepteth" * both thy person and thy performances.

But if you overlook the righteousness of the blessed Jesus; if you depend upon yourself and your own attainments; you are (how shall I speak it?) not accepted, but accursed. In such a case you have already heard your doom denounced by the leader of the Jews, and may hear it ratified by the apostle of the Gentiles: "As many as are of the works of the law," who seek justification by their own observance of its commands, "are under the curse Gal. iii. 10.

Ther. Under the curse! because our attempts to obey, though faithful exerted, are attended with defects! Is not this unreasonable and shocking? Unreasonable, that the God of justice should establish a law of such colossal perfection, as no child of Adam can, even with his utmost assiduity and care, fulfil? Shocking, that the God of mercy should thunder out a severe denunciation on the least inadvertent breach, on every unavoidable failure? This exceeds the relentless rigour of Draco, or the tyrannical impositions of Egyptian task-masters. Draco is said to have written his laws in blood; yet he never enacted such institutions as were absolutely too strict and difficult to be observed. And though the Egyptian task-masters insisted upon the full tale of bricks, without allowing the necessary proportion of straw, yet the punishment they inflicted was incomparably less than everlasting destruction.

Asp. If God Almighty, in delivering his law to fallen mankind, intended to propose the means of their justification, your argument would be valid and your inference undeniable. But the Supreme Legislator had a very different, a far more mysterious design. However, before I proceed to touch upon this point, let me desire to know your opinion.—For what reason do you think you, was the law ordained?

Ther. For what reasons? To deter men from the commission of vice, and excite them to the practice of virtue. To set before them a rule for their conduct, which, if they diligently observe, they shall be rewarded with eternal happiness; which, if they presumptuously transgress, they shall be punished with eternal misery.

Asp. If man had never fallen, this doctrine had been sound divinity, and this method a practicable scheme. But ever since the fall, such a way of salvation is somewhat like the north-east passage. As mountains of ice, and the severest rigours of winter block up this,—so extreme impotence in man and the utmost perfection in the law, bar up that. "The law," saith the apostle, "is weak;" is incapable of furnishing us with a title to the heavenly felicity; not through any defect in its precepts, but "through the flesh, through the inability of our degenerate nature.

Yet I must confess you are not alone in your opinion. Multitudes have unwarily entertained the same notion; not apprehensive that they frustrate hereby the grace of God, and render it of none effect with regard to them

* Eccl. ix. 7. *Aspasio* discovers an ambiguity in the word *accepted*. If people mean, that a person shall be accepted, as their justifying righteousness, as that which shall be accepted, as their justifying righteousness, to everlasting felicity, the proposition is extremely false. If they mean, that a person shall be accepted, as their justifying righteousness, through the obedience of believers, though very imperfect in itself, and through the merit of Christ, and find favour through all his recommending merits, the proposition is extremely true.

elves. If you examine the scriptural account, you will find it quite of another strain.

Ther. Pray let me hear the scriptural account. For whenever those divine oracles speak, I am all attention : wherever they interpose their authority, I am all submission.

Asp. "By the law is the knowledge of sin," Rom. iii. 20. Far from being our justifier, it is our accuser. It arraigns, and proves us guilty. It demonstrates, beyond all possibility of contradiction, that the very best among us have failed and come short of our duty ; nay, that the very best among us have done amiss, and dealt wickedly.

"I was alive without the law once," says the apostle, Rom. vii. 9. I thought myself upright and holy ; and entitled, by virtue of these qualifications, to life eternal. "But when the commandment came," shining in its purity, and operating with power, "sin revived : " A clear and lively sense of guilt shot, like a piercing ray, through all my soul. I saw myself chargeable with many past provocations. I felt myself subject to much remaining corruption. In consequence of which "I died : " my vain conceits were blasted ; my presumptuous hopes expired ; I could not but acknowledge myself justly liable to condemnation and death.

Ther. It had this effect on Saul, when he was a malignant and barbarous persecutor. But when people are virtuous and benevolent, what purpose does it then serve ?

Asp. A very important one ; yet such as may probably, at the first hearing, affect you with a little surprise. "The law entered," says the apostle, "that the offence might——"

Ther. Be restrained, no doubt.

Asp. "That the offence might abound," Rom. v. 20, is the assertion.

Ther. Surprising, indeed ! Is it possible that God's law should give countenance to sin ? nay, add spurs to the sinner ?

Asp. Let us beware of mistaking our sacred casuist. The law entered, not that the commission of sin might be authorised, but that the abundance of our sins might be manifested ; that all mankind, even your virtuous persons, may perceive the great multitude of their iniquities, the greater impurity of their hearts, together with the utter imperfection of their highest attainments and best services.

This end could not be answered by a law relaxed in its demands, or warping to our weakness ; only by a system of precepts every way exact, and in all degrees perfect. Whoever would represent to his neighbour the spots that sully, or the scars that disfigure his countenance, must effect the design, not by a stained, but by a pure mirror.

Ther. "The knowledge of sin, and a conviction of our exceeding sinfulness : " these are intentions which I should not have suspected.

Asp. These are not all. There is another intention of the law, equally necessary, and no less awful : "It reveals the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," Romans, i. 18. Having set before the sinner his innumerable offences and enormous guilt, it denounces the doom which he deserves ; it unsheathes the sword of justice, and threatens the offender with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.

Ther. A modern writer supposes, that God may set aside the law in favour of frail men. I might far more reasonably suppose, that he would mitigate

the law, on the same consideration. But what you urge makes me afraid to lean on so precarious a prop.

Asp. To look for comfort and salvation from this quarter, would be to lean, as the Arabian proverb speaks, "on a wave of the sea," which will not only fail to support, but will certainly swallow up the unadvised and rash dependor.

No, Theron; rather than the divine law should lose its honours, Sodom and Gomorrah were laid in ashes; the ancient world was destroyed with a deluge; the present frame of nature is destined to the flames, and all its unholy inhabitants will be condemned to hell. Nay, rather than the least tittle should pass unaccomplished, its curse has been executed on God's own Son, and all its injunctions have been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

Ther. As I dare not confide in the modern provisional *salvo*, so neither can I accede to your severe and terrifying notions. The laws of a wise and beneficent governor are calculated for the good of his subjects.—What good, what advantage can accrue to us, from receiving such a sentence, and possessing such convictions?

Asp. Though I might mention many advantages, I shall content myself with selecting one, which is not only valuable in itself, but the introduction to every spiritual blessing. When, by the instrumentality of the law, and the illumination of the Spirit, we are brought under such convictions, then we are taught to see our danger; then we are made to feel our misery; and then we shall no longer sleep in security, but solicitously look out for deliverance, and gladly accept the sovereign remedy.

Ther. The law, according to your representation, is intended to accuse me—to convict me—to condemn me. So it becomes, instead of a salutary, a killing system.

Asp. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," 2 Cor. iii. 6. If we adhere to the literal sense, without attending to the spiritual design; if we regard only the precept and the sanction as they stand in themselves, and neither consider nor improve them as acting in subserviency to the Mediator's righteousness; they are doubtless a killing ordinance, and bind us down under a sentence of death. But, rightly improved—Hold! let me proceed no farther with the argument.

You are a sportsman, Theron, and delight in the manly recreations of the field; you must therefore have read that fine poem which so elegantly describes your favourite diversion.

Ther. *The Chase*, I suppose you mean.

Asp. The same. Do you remember the large description of the royal stag-chase?

Ther. Perfectly well. It is not a week since I perused the whole passage, and with as much pleasure as if it had been entirely new.

Asp. Then you can give me a summary of the agreeable narrative.

Ther. I can. But will not this chase lead us away very far from our subject?

Asp. Perhaps not so far as you imagine. I have a reason for my request.

Ther. What reason, I beseech you?

Asp. You shall soon know. Only favour me with the account.

Ther. I protest, I cannot discern the least connexion between these rural sports and the grand topic of our conversation. However, since you command, I will implicitly obey.

The stag, roused from his lair, shakes his dappled sides, tosses his beamy head, and, conscious of superior agility, seems to defy the gathering storm. You see, speaking of poetry, I have caught something of the poetical strain.

Asp. This enlivened manner excites my eagerness, and makes me more desirous to hear the sequel.

Ther. First, he has recourse to stratagem, and evasive shifts. He plunges into the copse, darts across the glade, and wheels about in doubling mazes, as though he would pursue even the foe he avoids. The full-mouthed pack unravel all his windings, and drive him from his wily arts.

Now he betakes himself to flight, and confides in his speed. He bursts through the woods, bounds over the lawns, and leaves the lagging beagles far behind. The beagles, slow but sure, trace his steps through woods, through lawns, through half the extended forest: Unwearied, still unwearied, they urge their ardent way, and gain upon the alarmed object of their pursuit.

Again he flies, flies with redoubled swiftness; shoots down the steep; strains up the hill; and takes shelter in the inmost recess of some sequestered grove. The sagacious hounds hang, with greedy nostrils, on the scent. They recover, by indefatigable assiduity, the ground they had lost. Up they come a third time; and, joining in a general peal of vengeance, hurry the affrighted animal from his short concealment.

Perplexed, and in the utmost distress, he seeks the numerous herd. He would lose himself, and elude his pursuers, amidst the multitude of his fellows. But they, unconcerned for a brother's woe, shun the miserable creature, or expel him from the selfish circle. Abandoned by his associates, and haunted with apprehensions of approaching ruin, he trembles at every leaf that shakes. He starts; he springs; and wild, and swift as the wind, flies he knows not where, yet pours all his soul in flight. Vain, vain are his efforts! The horrid cry, lately lessened, thickens upon the gale, and thunders in his ear. Now the poor breathless victim is full in view: his sprightliness forsakes him; his agility is spent. See how he toils in yonder valley with faltering limbs and a hobbling gait! The sight of their game quickens the pace, and whets the ardour of the impetuous hounds. With tumultuous violence they rush in, and with clamorous joy demand their prey.

What can he do, surrounded as he is with insulting tongues and ravenous jaws? Despair is capable of inspiring even the timorous breast. Having nothing to hope, he forgets to fear. He faces about, and makes a resolute stand. The trunk of a sturdy tree covers his rear, and his own branching horns defend him in front. He rushes upon his adversaries, gores some, lays others grovelling on the turf, and makes the whole coward pack give way.

Encouraged by this unexpected success, his hopes revive. He rallies once again his drooping spirits; exerts the little remainder of his strength, and springs through the midst of the retiring rout. It is his last, last chance. He stretches every nerve; once more loses sight of the rabble from the kennel; and, finding no security on the land, takes to the water! He throws his burning sides into the river, sails down the cooling stream, and slinks away to the verge of some little shelving island. There, finding a resting-place for his feet, he sculks close to the shady margin. All immersed in the wave, excepting only his nostrils, he baffles for a while the prying eye of man, and the keener smell of brute.

Discovered at length, and forced to quit this unavailing refuge, he climbs

the slippery bank. Unable to fly any longer, he stands at bay against an aged willow; stands, all faint with toil, and sobbing with anguish. The crowds that gather round him with merciless and outrageous transport, triumph in his misery. A multitude of blood-thirsty throats, joined with the sonorous horn, ring his funeral knell. The tears, till this fatal instant unknown, gush from his languishing eyes, and roll down his reeking cheeks. He casts one more look on the woods, the lawns, the pleasing scenes of his former delights; and, determined to die, prepares to sell his life as dear as possible.

At this most critical juncture, the royal sportsman comes up. He sees the distressed creature, and as soon as he sees, he pities! The clemency which attends the throne, accompanies even the diversions of majesty. He issues the high command. The prohibitory signal is given. The pack, though raving for blood, are checked in a moment; and not checked only, but called off from the prey. Disappointed and grumbling they retire, and leave the intended victim of their fury to enjoy his liberty, his safety, and his ease again.

I have now followed the stag till I have tired your patience. Why did you suffer me to run on at this extravagant rate? You know I am, on these favourite topics, an everlasting talker.

Asp. Why this apology, Theron? I am sure you did not see my mouth yawn, or my head nod, while you was pursuing your subject. Besides, I intend to make reprisals, and put your attention to the same trial.

Thus the strictness of the law pursues the soul; dislodges it from every refuge of lies; and never remits its terrifying menaces, till the poor delinquent ceases from self-confidence, and fixes on Christ for his whole salvation.

The man, perhaps, is awakened into a serious concern for his eternal state. In consequence of which, he relinquishes his profane and iniquitous practices; breaks the Sabbath, and defrauds his neighbour, no more. But the law quickly represents, and in a glaring light, that a negative obedience is by no means sufficient.

Upon this he betakes himself to a course of positive holiness; gets acquainted with religious people, and performs religious duties; prays in secret, and attends public ordinances; conscientiously observes the Lord's day, and regulates his behaviour by the rule of God's commandments. Now, he is ready to congratulate himself on his remarkable and hopeful reformation.

Soon he perceives, that all his proficiency is but skin-deep, a mere outside varnish, which has not penetrated the inner man. He begins, therefore, to watch over the motions, and bewail the evils of his heart. He labours to subdue pride, and curb passion; to purge out filthy lusts, and to banish spiritual wickedness. Notwithstanding all his vigilance, conscience flies in his face, either for the neglect of some virtue or the commission of some sin. The law rings in his ear that dreadful denunciation, "Cursed is he that performeth not all things."

Struck by this conviction, his wounds bleed afresh. He is obliged to seek some new balm for his sore. In order to appease an offended God, and atone for his sinful relapses, he makes many sorrowful confessions, possibly submits to voluntary sufferings. He denies himself, and bestows liberally on the poor: he sighs deeply and mourns bitterly. But can waters that are muddy cleanse the garment that is filthy? Wilt thou satisfy, O vain man,

wilt thou satisfy for one sin by committing another? In these penitential exercises, were thy thoughts steadily devout? In those acts of beneficence, was thy heart warmly affectionate? If not, such fancied reparations of past faults only aggravate the heavy score.

What shall he do? He cannot pay: to beg he is ashamed. Fain would he enter into life, yet not be too much indebted to grace. He attempts, therefore, to compound with Heaven. He binds himself by solemn, perhaps by sacramental engagements, to use greater circumspection for the future; then turns his eye to the divine Mediator, not with a view of relying wholly on his righteousness, but only to obtain such a supply as may make up the deficiencies of his own. Somewhat like this was the mistake of the Galatian converts, against which St. Paul, in his epistle to that people, so solidly disputes, and so sharply inveighs.—For a while he holds fast his purposed integrity. At length, falling notoriously short in executing his part, a startling voice sounds in his ear that dreadful alarm, “Cursed is he that continueth not.” His heart sinks with discouragement, and all his resolutions hang their cumbered heads. He has tried every method that he can devise, and has found every method ineffectual. All his expedients are a spider’s web, and his hope is as the giving up of the ghost.

His soul, pursued by the law, and hunted by terror, is brought to the gates of death, or the very brink of despair. And now the King of kings, now the Lord our righteousness, appears for his rescue. Now is accomplished that gracious declaration, “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help,” Hos. xiii. 9. Driven from every false refuge, and drawn by the blessed Spirit, he comes weary and heavy laden to Christ. Convinced of the sin of his nature, the sin of his life, and the sin of his best duties, he renounces himself in every view. This is all his salvation, and all his desire, that he may win Christ, and be found in him. Did that poor afflicted woman say, “If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole?”—With equal ardour does this enlightened sinner cry, “If I may but have fellowship with the glorious Immanuel, in his merits and in his benefits, I am alive from the dead, I am happy for ever.”

Having seen a glimpse of the transcendent excellency of the Redeemer’s person; having received a taste from the inexhaustible fulness of his grace; O how he longs for brighter manifestations! how he thirsts after more plentiful draughts!—None that come to Christ are cast out. He that awakens these ardent desires, in his due time gives the desired blessings. After various conflicts, a comfortable and established faith is wrought in the penitent’s soul. He believes that the Son of the Most High died in his stead, and was obedient for his justification; believes that all the unsearchable riches of the adored Mediator’s life and death are his portion.

By this faith his heart is purified, his heart is quickened, he is fitted for every good work. Though temptations assault him, he derives strength from his Saviour; “resists the devil, and is faithful unto death.” Though corruptions defile him, he flies to the “fountain opened for uncleanness,” Zech. xiii. 1; makes daily, hourly application of the blood of sprinkling, and goes on his way rejoicing in God his Saviour.

Ther. Your discourse puts me in mind of Absalom’s procedure when Joab refused to make him a visit. The prince ordered his servants to set on fire the general’s standing corn, 2 Sam. xiv. 30. This stratagem had its intended

effect. The apprehension of danger drove him, when the respectful invitation would not lead him, to a personal interview. You seem to suppose that the law was delivered with such a design—to lay us under the necessity of flying to the atonement of Christ.

Asp. I do, Theron. And for this opinion I have far better authority than my own supposition. We are assured by unerring wisdom, that “Christ is the end of the law,” Rom. x. 4. It points invariably to him; it terminates wholly in him; and then obtains its first, its principal purpose, when sinners are brought to their divine Redeemer for righteousness and strength; for that righteousness which entitles to heaven, that strength which capacitates for obedience.

“The law hath concluded all mankind under sin,” Gal. iii. 10; yet not with an intention that any should be discouraged now, or perish for ever; but that every one may see his inexpressible need of a Saviour’s death, and a Saviour’s obedience; that, being thus prepared both to value and receive so precious a blessing, the promise of justification “by faith in Jesus Christ may be given to them that believe.”

Let us advert to this grand aim of the law. Then we shall see goodness, unquestionable and sovereign goodness, in forming its constitution so sublimely perfect, and making its threatenings so inflexibly severe. Exclusive of this wholesome severity, we should supinely disesteem, perhaps wantonly reject, the grace of the gospel. The prodigal son would never have returned to his father in that humble, submissive, supplicating posture, if he had not found his circumstances utterly ruined, and felt himself perishing with hunger. No more would the conceited sons of Adam, disclaiming all pretence to any merit of their own, and with nothing but the halter of self-condemnation about their necks, fall down at the feet of a merciful Redeemer, if they were not instigated by the sharp goad, or rather driven by the flaming sword of the law.

Ther. Has the law, then, nothing to do with our temper and conversation? Is it no longer to be considered as a system of duties? no longer to be regarded as a rule of life?

Asp. When it has forced the lines of self-righteousness, and driven us to Jesus Christ, that only citadel of safety, for acceptance and salvation, then it serves as a rule for our conduct; then it shows us, like a friend and a guide, how to order our conversation and adorn our profession; how to glorify God and express our gratitude to Christ. But till it has accomplished the fore-mentioned end, it thunders vengeance, it flashes terror; it is, as Moses speaks, a “fiery law,” Deut. xxxiii. 2.

And is it, my dear Theron, a fiery law? Then let it constrain us to take shelter in that meritorious obedience, which will be to our guilty souls “as the cold of snow in the time of harvest,” Prov. xxv. 13. Is it a law which “worketh wrath?” Let it endear to our affections that inestimably precious gospel which “preacheth peace by Jesus Christ,” Acts, x. 36. Is it “the ministration of condemnation?” 2 Cor. iii. 19. O let it quicken our flight to that all-gracious Surety, who was condemned at Pilate’s bar that we may be acquitted at God’s tribunal!

To all this agrees our celebrated Milton, whose divinity is as faultless as his poetry is matchless. You will give me leave to quote a few of his beautiful lines, which recapitulate, as it were, the whole preceding conversation; and

while they recapitulate the conversation, confirm the doctrine. This will make you some amends for my late tedious harangue. This will tip the lead with gold.

“ So law appears imperfect ; and but given
With purpose to resign them, in full time,
Up to a better covenant ; disciplined
From shadowy types to truth ; from flesh to spirit ;
From imposition of strict laws, to free
Acceptance of large grace ; from servile fear
To filial ; works of law to works of faith.”—B. xii l. 300.

DIALOGUE X.

Asp. AGAIN, Theron ! Must we never lay aside the weapons of controversy ?—You put me in mind of the resolute Athenian, who, having fought with distinguished bravery on the field of Marathon, pursued the vanquished Persians to their fleet. At that very instant a galley full of the enemy's troops was putting off to sea. Determined, if possible, to prevent their escape, he laid hold of the vessel with his right hand, which was no sooner fixed, than chopped off by the sailors. The warrior, not at all discouraged, seized it with his left. When that also was cut away, he fastened his teeth in its side ; and never quitted his gripe till he resigned his breath*.

Ther. I have been reconsidering the case of imputed righteousness, and am by no means satisfied as to the propriety of the phrase, or the truth of the doctrine, especially in the sense which you espouse. Objections arise, more substantial and weighty than any that have hitherto been urged ; and which, if I mistake not, you will find it a more difficult task to answer.

Asp. I must do my best. And if my best attempts prove unsuccessful, I shall say, with the gallant Iphicrates, when overpowered by the eloquence of his antagonist, “ My adversary is the better actor, but mine is the better play.”

I say better ; for to you, Theron, I will freely own, what to another person I should not be so willing to disclose,—That I receive no comfort, but from the habitual belief, and daily application, of this precious doctrine. Whenever I read the most correct and beautiful writings that proceed in the contrary strain, I feel my spirits heavy, I find my prospects gloomy, and not one ray of consolation gleams upon my mind. Whereas, much meaner compositions, which breathe the savour of this evangelical unction, seldom fail to quicken my hopes, to brighten my views, and put into my mouth that piously alert profession of the Psalmist, “ I will run the way of thy commandments, now thou hast set my heart at liberty,” Psalm cxix. 32. Though I am far from laying any considerable stress upon this observation, farther still from advancing it into the place of an argument, yet I may be permitted to mention it in the confidence and familiarity of friendship.

Ther. An opinion proposed with so much modesty, and so nearly connected with my Aspasio's comfort, has doubtless a claim to my serious atten-

* The Athenian's name was Cynægyrus. The author who relates this extraordinary story is Justin. If the reader should think it a rhodomontade, I believe he will not judge amiss. And I promise myself, the same good sense will enable him to distinguish between what is hinted by way of pleasantry, and what is urged by way of argument.

tion. Otherwise it might possibly provoke my raillery. For you must know I am no great admirer of inward feelings. I cannot think them a very solid method of demonstrating your point. It must be enforced by better reasons, if you would gain it access to my heart.

We must place, you say, a dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ, in all that he has done and suffered. What he has done and suffered, you add, is our only justifying righteousness; and to place our dependence on it, is the only method to obtain pardon of our sins, and life eternal.

Asp. I have said it, Theron, and I abide by it. This being the righteousness of God, is—

Ther. Give me leave, before you proceed farther, to propose a query. Does the righteousness of God signify the active and passive obedience of Christ?

Asp. Righteousness is a conformity to the law in heart and in life. As the Son of God voluntarily made himself subject to the law, perfectly fulfilled its precepts, and suffered to the utmost its penalty; this, I should imagine, furnishes us with the truest and noblest signification of the phrase.

Ther. What if I or others should imagine quite the reverse?

Asp. I thank my friend for his admonition. It is indeed unreasonable that my bare imagination should pass for orthodoxy and truth. Let us then inquire after better proof.

When the divine name, in the sacred phraseology, is added to a substantive, it expresses some very extraordinary property. "The trees of the Lord," Psal. civ. 16, denote those stately and magnificent forests which the hand of the Most High planted. "The mountains of God*," are those prodigiously large elevations of the earth, which none but an almighty arm could establish. The righteousness of God likewise means a righteousness of the most supereminent dignity; such as is worthy to be called by his name, and may justly challenge his acceptance. And where shall we find this, but in the conduct and person of his blessed Son? This has a most unexceptionable claim to the exalted title; being, as a masterly critic explains the phrase, "a righteousness devised by God the Father, from all eternity; wrought out by God the Son, in the person of Jesus Christ; applied by God the Holy Ghost to the sinner's soul."

Ther. This doctrine of yours, if I rightly understand it, would make remission of sins but one half of our justification, and something else necessary in order to obtain eternal life; which is just as rational as to suppose, that though one cause may expel darkness, another must supervene in order to introduce light.

Asp. The nature of justification, and the nature of condemnation, are two opposites, which will mutually illustrate each other. What is implied in the condemnation of a sinner? He forfeits eternal life, and is doomed to eternal death. What is included in the justification of a sinner? It supersedes his obligation to punishment, and invests him with a title to happiness. In order to the first, there must be a remission of sins; in order to the second, an imputation of righteousness. Both which are derived from Christ's mediation in our behalf; and both take place when we are united

* This is the import of the original הַיָּהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, Psalm xxxvi. verse 7, *Hebrew*; verse 6, *English*.

to that divine head; so that we do not derive them from two different sources, but ascribe them to one and the same great all-sufficient Cause.

Your comparison, though intended to overthrow, I think, fully establishes the sentiment. When yonder bright orb makes his first appearance in the east, what effects are produced? The shades of night are dispersed, and the light of day is diffused. To what are they owing—each to a separate, or both to the same origin? Every one's experience will answer the question. Thus, when the "Sun of righteousness" arises in the soul, he brings at once pardon and acceptance. Remission and salvation are under his wings. Both which constitute the "healing of the nations," Mal. iv. 2; and both owe their being to Christ's obedience, embraced as active, and not rejected as passive.

Ther. This, I know, is the fine-spun theory of your systematic divines. But where is their warrant from Scripture? By what authority do they introduce such subtle distinctions?

Asp. I cannot think the distinction so subtle, or the theory so finely spun. To be released from the damnatory sentence is one thing; to be treated as a righteous person, is evidently another. Absalom was pardoned when he received a permission to remove from Geshur and dwell at Jerusalem; but this was very different from the recommencement of filial duty and parental endearment, 2 Sam. xiv. 24. A rebel may be exempted from the capital punishment which his traitorous practices deserve, without being restored to the dignity of his former state, or the rights of a loyal subject. In Christianity likewise, to be freed from the charge of guilt, and to be regarded as a righteous person, are two several blessings, really distinct in themselves, and often distinguished in Scripture.

Ther. Where are they distinguished? in what texts of Scripture? This is what I called for—your scriptural warrant.

Asp. What think you of Job's reply to his censorious friends? "God forbid that I should justify you!" Job xxvii. 5. That he forgave them, there is no doubt. Yet he could not justify them; could not allow their reflections to be equitable, or their behaviour charitable.

What think you of Solomon's supplication? "Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants; condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness," 1 Kings, viii. 32. To condemn, in this passage, evidently signifies to pronounce guilty, and obnoxious to punishment. By parity of reason, to justify, must denote, to pronounce righteous, and entitle to happiness.

What says Solomon's father? "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord! for, in thy sight, shall no man living be justified!" Psalm cxliiii. 2. A man might be pardoned, if judged according to the tenor of his own obedience. But no man could be declared righteous, in consequence of such a trial: this were absolutely and universally impossible.

From all which passages I conclude, that to be justified is different from, is superior to, the bare remission of sin.

Ther. All these instances are derived from the Old Testament; the New, if I mistake not, speaks another language. Consider the case of the penitent publican. What does he request? "God be merciful to me a sinner!" What does he obtain? "He went down to his house justified," Luke xviii.

13, 14. If, then, the petition and the grant may be deemed correspondent, pardon and justification must be reckoned equivalent.

Asp. The Old and New Testament are, in their style and contents, exact correspondent. Echo, in yonder cloisters, does not more punctually re-berate the speaker's voice, than those divine books harmonize with each other.

Yet it will not follow, from the publican's request and the publican's blessing, that pardon and justification are the same: only that God's bounty frequently exceeds our prayers, and is larger than our expectations; or that the blessing which was implored, and the blessing which was vouchsafed, are inseparably connected, and always accompany each other.

St. Paul mentions "a justification of life;" not barely an exemption from the sentence of death, but such a justification as gives a title (Rom. v. 18) the reward of life. The words are very emphatical. We shall injure the dignity of their meaning, if we understand them in a more contracted sense. Towards the close of the same chapter, we have another passage rich with consolation, and full to our purpose: "Grace reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life," Rom. v. 21. Here is pointed out the prime source of our blessings—ininitely free and triumphant grace: the meritorious cause—not any works of man, not any qualifications of our own, but the perfect righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ: the effect or end of all—which is not barely an absolution from guilt, but an instatement in life; a life of holy communion with God in this world, to be crowned with an eternal fruition of him in another.

Let me produce one text more, which just at this instant occurs to my memory. You will find it in the apostle's defence of himself before Festus and Agrippa. He opens, as it were, his apostolical commission, and repeats the words of his royal Master: "I send thee" to ignorant and enslaved, guilty and ruined creatures, "to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among all them which are sanctified by faith that is in me," Acts xxvi. 18. The great preacher of the Gentiles, or rather the supreme Lord of all preachers, has distinguished between remission of sin and the inheritance of saints; between the pardon that delivers from hell and the justification that entitles to heaven. So that the former does by no means constitute the latter; but is connected with it, as a link in the same sacred chain; or included in it, as part of the same glorious whole.

Ther. Admitting your distinction to be proper, is not the satisfaction made by the death of Christ sufficient of itself to obtain both our full pardon and our final happiness?

Asp. Since my friend has started the question, I may venture, with all reverence to the divine counsels, to answer in the negative; it being necessary that the Redeemer of men should obey, as well as suffer in their stead. For this we have the testimony of our Lord himself: "This commandment," says he, "have I received of my Father, that I should lay down my life," John x. 18. "Thus it becometh us," adds he in another place, "to fulfil all righteousness," Matth. iii. 15. To which his apostle subjoins, that if we "reign in life," it must be not only through those sufferings which expiate, but also through that righteousness which merits, Rom. v. 17.

Ther. Our Lord's testimony relates only to a positive institution, and is quite foreign to our purpose. I have often been disgusted at such strained

applications of Scripture. The partisans of a system wrest the sacred book. They deal with divine truth as the tyrant Procrustes served those unhappy creatures who fell into his merciless hands. Is a text too short to suit their design? Our Procrustean expositors can stretch it on the rack, and lengthen its sense. Is it too full to consist with their scheme? They can lop off a limb, secrete a sentence, or contract the meaning. Is this to reverence the great God? Is this to treat respectfully his holy word?

Asp. I have been grieved, I assure you, and disgusted at this practice, as well as yourself; a practice not only very irreverent, but very injudicious also. It really prejudices the cause it would unfairly recommend. Such a support is like "a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint," Prov. xxv. 19; not only unserviceable, but hurtful; an obstruction rather than a furtherance. However, I am not conscious of committing any violence on this passage, or of forcing it into my service. The circumstance you object, rather strengthens than invalidates the conclusion. If it was so requisite for our blessed Mediator to observe a positive institution, how much more necessary to fulfil those moral precepts whose obligation is unalterable and everlasting?

Besides, it should be considered whether Christ's sufferings were a complete satisfaction to the law. Complete they were with regard to the penalty, not with regard to the precept: a distinction obvious and important. From whence arises the following argument, which, for once, you will allow me to propose in the logical form.

By what alone the law was not satisfied, by that alone sinners could not be justified:

By Christ's sufferings alone, the law was not satisfied.

Therefore, by Christ's sufferings alone, sinners could not be justified.

But when we join the active with the passive obedience of our Lord, the efficacy of the one with the perfection of the other, how does our justification stand firm, in the fullest sense of the word? We have all that the law demands, both for our exemption from the curse, and as a title to the blessing.

Ther. Does not the Scripture ascribe the whole of our salvation to the death of Christ? delivering it as a never-to-be-forgotten maxim in Christianity, that "we have redemption through his blood," Eph. i. 7; "are brought near through the blood of Christ," Eph. ii. 13; nay, "that we are justified" (the very point under debate) "through his blood," Rom. v. 9. Would the inspired writer have assigned these various blessings to this one cause, if it had been a price inadequate to the purchase, or a means insufficient to accomplish the end?

Asp. This part of our Lord's meritorious humiliation is, by a very usual figure, put for the whole. The death of Christ includes, not only his sufferings, but his obedience. The shedding of his precious blood was at once the grand instance of his suffering, and the finishing act of his obedience. In this view it is considered, and thus it is interpreted, by his own ambassador, who, speaking of his divine Master, says, "He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. ii. 8.

By the same figure, faith is sometimes said to be a lively influential persuasion "that Christ died for our sins," 1 Cor. xv. 3. At other times it is represented as a firm practical belief, that "God hath raised him from the dead," Rom. x. 9. Neither of which can, without the utmost contrariety to the

analogy of Scripture, be taken in the exclusive sense. Each act must be understood, not separately, but jointly ; each as implying both, or reciprocally inferring one another.

In like manner, when the Scripture ascribes our justification to the death of Christ, we are not to think that it would set aside, but imply his obedience. It is not because his active obedience has no concern in procuring the blessing, but because his bitter passion was the most conspicuous, and the completing stage of his ever-glorious undertaking. Then, and not till then, he could truly say, "Father, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do," John xvii. 4.

Ther. According to your account, then, it should be possible for a man to have all his sins done away, yet not attain to complete justification ; which is as contrary to sound sense and true divinity, as to imagine that crookedness may be removed and the object not become straight.

Asp. No, Theron. According to my account, it is impossible that the active and passive obedience of our Redeemer should be disjoined. To whomsoever the one is imputed, from him the other is not withheld. They were undivided in Christ the illustrious head, and they are undivided in their application to his mystical body. As Christ, in suffering, obeyed, and, in obeying, suffered ; so, whoever receives Christ as an atonement, receives him also as a righteousness.

This has been observed before ; and if this be real fact, what an inestimably precious gift is the gift of Christ ! Never was the most sovereign remedy so admirably suited to any malady, as this is adapted to all our wants. In him may we be found, living and dying ! How safe, how happy then !— Let me not weary your patience, if I repeat a passage from our excellent Dr. Lightfoot, which, though artless and remarkably simple, has very much affected my mind, and I hope will leave some valuable impression on my friend's. "Justification," says that judicious divine, "is a man's being interested in all Christ's righteousness. And if anything is to be longed for, sure that is to be interested in all Christ's righteousness."

Ther. You do not weary my patience, neither do you satisfy my doubts. For you take no notice of the absurdity objected, and the comparison that enforces it.

Asp. Your comparison, my dear friend, is not founded on a parallel case. Neither sense nor philosophy find a medium between the removal of crookedness and the succession of straightness. But reason discerns an apparent, and revelation maintains an important difference, between the pardon of guilt and a title to life. This has already been proved from Scripture, and is, to me at least, evident from the very nature of things. For if a king, in favour of some condemned malefactor, revoke the sentence of death, this is one very considerable act of clemency. But if he pleases to make the pardoned criminal a partaker of his kingdom, or an heir of his crown, this surely is a new and a much higher instance of royal bounty.

If you insist upon a similitude, the word of God, which always speaks with consummate propriety, will furnish us with one. Zechariah illustrates the doctrine of justification. He represents the sinner by a person arrayed in filthy garments. His pardon is described by taking away this sordid apparel. By which benefit he ceases to be defiled, yet is he not hereby clothed, yet is he not hereby justified : this is an additional blessing, signified

by putting on "change of raiment," Zech. iii. 4, 5, and wearing beautiful robes. Here the circumstances tally; the two constituent parts of justification are severally displayed and strongly marked. Here we have the removal of filth, and the robe of righteousness; that which frees us from being abhorred, and that which renders us accepted; which, though distinguishable in themselves, and distinguished by the sacred writer, are always united in the divine donation.

Ther. This notion is founded on a chimerical covenant, that Christ would take upon him the obedience due from man, of which there is not the least intimation in holy Scripture.

Asp. That Christ undertook every thing necessary to redeem lost sinners from guilt and condemnation, every thing necessary to procure for attainted rebels a fresh title to life and glory; this cannot be reckoned chimerical. This must be as real, as that lost sinners are redeemed, or attainted rebels restored; every proof of the one proves and establishes the other. This is what we call a covenant, and, from its benign nature, the covenant of grace.

Without undertaking this, I see not how our Lord could sustain the character of a surety; nor without fulfilling it, how he could execute the office of a Redeemer. And I believe you yourself will be at a loss to show, with what kind of justice the eternal Father could "lay our iniquities," Isa. liii. 6, on the innocent Jesus, unless he had consented to be answerable for our guilt.

Ther. This is no answer to my objection. I said, and it has been asserted by a very eminent and able pen, that there is no intimation of any such covenant in the whole Scriptures.

Asp. What then can be the meaning of those remarkable words in the prophecy of Zechariah, "The counsel of peace shall be between them both?" Zech. vi. 12, 13. Here, I think, the covenant is mentioned, and the parties are specified.—"The counsel of peace," if I mistake not, signifies the mysterious and unsearchable contrivance formed for the recovery of ruined man—formed and carried into execution by the Lord Almighty, or God the Father, and that illustrious Person who is to "build the temple and bear the glory." A character which none can claim, a task to which none is equal, but the blessed Jesus only.

In the 40th Psalm, the conditions of the covenant are circumstantially recorded, which were, the incarnation and obedience of the eternal Son: "A body hast thou prepared me. Lo! I come to do thy will," Heb. x. 5. 7. The accomplishment of these conditions is alleged and pleaded by our great Mediator, in the introduction to his last solemn prayer, John xvii. What he implores, in the process of his supplications, may be looked upon as the recompence decreed him by the Father, and stipulated in this magnificent treaty. Implores, did I say? It is very observable, that our Lord makes a demand rather than a request. The expression is not $\epsilon\rho\omega\tau\omega$, but $\theta\epsilon\lambda\omega$ *; a word of authority, not of supplication. He claims what, by the Father's engagement and by his own obedience, was become his unquestionable right.

Here are the parties of the covenant, the conditions of the covenant, the performance of the covenant, and the reward which, by virtue of such performance, is merited, is claimable, is due. All this, I should imagine, amounts to an intimation, and somewhat more than an intimation, of the covenant.

* Not *I beg*, but *I will*, John xvii. 24. *Sic volo, sic juben.*

Ther. This you call the covenant of grace; but if we are justified by Christ's fulfilling of the law, we are justified by works. So that, before you can strike out such a way of salvation, you must contradict yourself; and what is more adventurous, you must abolish that fundamental principle of the gospel, "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Asp. We are, I grant it, justified by works. But whose? The works of Christ, not our own. This is very far from contradicting ourselves, equally far is it from abolishing what you call the gospel principle, which, though an undeniable truth, is not an evangelical doctrine: because it only shows us our miserable state, and the utter impossibility of relieving ourselves; whereas nothing is genuine gospel, but what speaks comfort and administers recovery.

Between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, this, I apprehend, is the difference:—By the former, man was indispensably bound to obey in his own person; by the latter, the obedience of his surety is accepted instead of his own. The righteousness required by both is not sincere, but complete; not proportioned to the abilities of fallen man, but to the purity of the law, and the majesty of the Lawgiver. By this means, the glory of God as an awful sovereign, and the glory of his law as an inviolable system, are entirely preserved and illustriously displayed. The salvation of sinners neither clashes with the truth, nor interferes with the justice of the Supreme Legislator. On the contrary, it becomes a faithful and just procedure of the most high God, to justify "him that believeth on Jesus," 1 John i. 9.

Ther. When you make this difference between the two covenants, where is your authority from Scripture? Which of the sacred writers have taught us, that though one demanded personal, the other is content with vicarious obedience?

Asp. Which? The first three. The most eminent historian, the most enraptured poet, and the most zealous preacher. I need not inform you that I mean Moses, David, and Paul.

The testimony of David has been already recited. Moses gives us a concise, but very instructive account of the second covenant. With whom, according to his representation, was it made? Not with Adam, or any of his posterity, but with the Lord Jesus Christ, in the room and stead of both. None of the articles are proposed to a poor, impotent, ruined creature; but the whole is consigned over to the interposing Saviour, significantly described by "the seed of the woman." It is not said, "Thy best endeavours, O Adam! thy true repentance and sincere obedience shall retrieve this fatal miscarriage;" but, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," Gen. iii. 15; the Son of the Most High, by taking thy nature, submitting to thy obligations, and suffering death for thy sins, shall fully repair thy loss."

Christ, we see, undertook to execute the conditions. Christ was our representative in this great transaction. For which reason he is styled by St. Paul, "the second man," 1 Cor. xv. 48, and "the surety of a better covenant," Heb. vii. 22. Our help being laid upon one that is so mighty, upon one that is so faithful, the covenant is said to be "in all things well ordered and sure," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5; admirably well ordered, indeed, for the comfort of the Christian, and the security of his salvation. "It is true," may he argue, "I cannot fulfil the conditions, and it is equally true, that this is not required at my hands. The Lord Jesus Christ, of his adorably rich good-

ness, has performed all that was conditional, and has established for me and for his people a valid title to the promises, the privileges, and ——”

Ther. “Has thereby released me from all obligation to duty.” Farewell, then, to our own obedience: no more occasion for any holiness of life. Nay, the sluice is opened for an inundation of ungodliness. Fine divinity truly! Should I not rather say, downright Antimonianism?

Asp. No, my friend, “Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil,” *Matth. v. 17.* He has fulfilled it to the very uttermost in his own person. He has also merited for us those supplies of the Spirit, which alone can enable weak corrupt creatures to yield faithful and acceptable obedience. Though our Lord Jesus died, and was obedient “for the ungodly;” though he finds us ungodly when he justifies us, yet he never leaves his people in this abominable state. On the contrary, he teaches them to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts,” *Tit. ii. 12.*

Pray, let us consider the tenor of this covenant, since you are so very apprehensive of its consequences. “I will put my laws into their minds, and on their hearts will I write them,” *Heb. viii. 10.* “They shall discern such a beauty and glory in my precepts, as will engage their desires, and win their affections; so that it shall be no longer their burden, but their delight, even their meat and drink, to do the will of their Father in heaven.”—This, this is one of the privileges purchased by our great Mediator. And it seems wondrous strange, that the purchase of an estate for you or me, should be reckoned the sure means to deprive us of the possession, or debar us from the enjoyment.

How often is this weak surmise urged as an argument? all whose plausibility is owing to a palpable mistake, or an egregious fallacy; to a supposed separation of things which are absolutely inseparable—I mean our justification and our sanctification. You are a philosopher, Theron. Try if you can separate gravity from the stone, or heat from the fire. If these bodies and their essential properties are indissolubly connected, so are a genuine faith and a conscientious obedience. To suppose them disunited, is as contrary to sound divinity, as it would be contrary to true philosophy if you should talk of a burning substance that has no warmth, or of a solid substance that has no weight. Never therefore, my dear friend, repeat this stale objection; never propagate this ungrounded clamour, nor adopt a cavil which is altogether as unphilosophical as it is anti-evangelical.

Ther. We digress from the point. My principal objection is not satisfied. I was observing, that, according to your manner of stating the affair, salvation is no longer free, but founded upon works. They are the works of the law, though Christ performs them. To maintain that we are justified by these works, is to confound the difference between the law and the gospel.

Asp. Though we should admit your premises, we cannot acquiesce in your conclusion. The same righteousness by which we are justified, is both legal and evangelical: legal, in respect to Christ, who was made under the law, that he might obey all its commands: evangelical, in respect to us who work not ourselves, but believe in the great Fulfiller of all righteousness. This is much of the same nature with that other momentous distinction in divinity—salvation is freely given, yet dearly bought: freely given with regard to us; dearly bought with regard to Christ. So we are justified by works, if you look for-

ward to our Surety ; we are justified without works, if you cast a retrospective view on ourselves.

Theron was silent.—Aspasio, after a short interval, renewed the discourse. I know not whether my friend is yielding to my arguments, or searching after objections ; deliberating upon a capitulation, or mustering his forces for a fresh sally. However, let me take this opportunity of dropping a hint, and suggesting a caution.

The grand reason which inclines some people to reject this comfortable doctrine lies concealed, if not in an absolute disbelief of our Lord's eternal glory and Godhead, yet in unsettled apprehensions of it, or an habitual inattention to it. If our Saviour was not really God, as some writers, unhappily mistaking themselves, endeavour to persuade the world, it would be a reasonable practice, and entirely consistent with their scheme, to disavow the imputation of his righteousness : because, upon such a supposition, his obedience was no more than a bounden duty ; in which there could not be the least pretence to merit, and which could be profitable to none but himself. Whereas, if we verily believe him to be the incarnate God, his submission to the law becomes an act of voluntary humiliation. Which circumstance, together with the transcendent dignity of his person, render his obedience, not meritorious only, but inexpressibly and infinitely meritorious.

As the blood of Christ is called God's "own blood," Acts xx. 28, so the obedience of Christ was performed in the person of that adorable Mediator, "who is God over all," Rom. ix. 5. He acted through the whole course of his life, and suffered death at the last, not merely as a man, but as God-man ; as Jehovah Jesus ; Emmanuel. Let me entreat you to remember, nay let me entreat you never to forget, this all-important article of our faith. And may the Spirit of wisdom give us an understanding to know the weighty, the extensive influence, of so glorious a truth !

Ther. Far be it from me to derogate from the dignity of our Saviour's person, or to depreciate the merits of his mediatorial office. Place them as high as words can reach, exalt them as far as thought can soar, I steadfastly believe you will fall short, immeasurably short, of their real worth. But this consideration seems to increase the absurdity of your notion : for if Christ's righteousness, his very righteousness be imputed, then the true believers are altogether as righteous as Christ himself ; whereas, if you maintain that his righteousness is imputed only as to its effects, you will keep clear of this rock.

Asp. This, I apprehend, will be like keeping clear of Scylla only to fall foul upon Charybdis. What are the effects of the Mediator's righteousness ? Pardon of sin, justification of our persons, and the sanctification of our nature. Shall we say, these effects, these benefits are imputed ? To talk of their imputation, I think, is an affront to sound sense ; as, I am sure, to be put off with their imputation would be a fatal disappointment of our hopes. All these benefits are, not imputed, but imparted ; they are not reckoned to us, but are really enjoyed by us : ours they are, not barely in the divine estimation, but by proper and personal possession.

Yet it does by no means follow, that believers are altogether as righteous as Christ himself, unless you can prove that to be the receiver is, in all respects, the same as to be the author and finisher, Heb. xii. 2. The righteousness of

Christ arises wholly from himself, the source of ours subsists in another. Christ's righteousness is originally and absolutely his own; whereas it is made ours in a way of favour and gracious imputation. Circumstances these, which create a material difference, which yield room for a vast pre-eminence.

Ther. But if Christ's perfect obedience be accounted ours, methinks we should have no more need of pardoning mercy than Christ himself.

Asp. Yes; because, before this imputation, we were sunk in guilt and dead in sins; because, after it, we are defective in our duty, and in many things offend.

Ther. Does not this doctrine render the intercession of our Saviour superfluous? What occasion have they for an advocate with the Father, whose righteousness has neither blemish nor imperfection?

Asp. They stand in need of an advocate, first, that they may be brought home to "the Repairer of their breaches," Isa. lviii. 12, and made partakers of his righteousness by a living faith: next, that their faith may be preserved, notwithstanding all opposition, steadfast and immoveable; or rather, may be carried on victorious and triumphant, even to the end.

Ther. You say, "Christ performed all that was conditionary;" then he repented for us, and believed for us. This must be admitted in pursuance of your principles: but this is so wild a notion, so contrary to reason and Scripture, that to mention it is to refute it.

Asp. Christ performed whatever was required by the covenant of works, both before it was violated, and after it had been transgressed. But neither repentance nor faith were comprehended in this institution. It knew nothing of the one, and it would not admit of the other. It was not therefore necessary, neither indeed was it possible, for our spotless and divine Lord to repent of sin or believe in a Saviour. But he did unspeakably more, "He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Heb. ix. 26. He is himself the Saviour of all the ends of the earth; and he has power to bestow that blessed Spirit, which worketh faith and produceth repentance.

Ther. However, from what you have advanced, this will unavoidably follow,—That a man is to be justified under the character of a notorious transgressor of the law, and justified under the character of a sinless observer of the law. And what is this but a glaring inconsistency?

Asp. Not at all inconsistent, but absolutely needful, if we consider those distinct branches of the divine law, the preceptive and the penal; both which, in case of guilt already contracted, must necessarily be satisfied. Not at all inconsistent, but perfectly harmonious, if we take in the two constituent parts of justification—the acquittance from guilt and a title to life. The former supposes us to be transgressors of the law; and such the highest saints in the world are. The latter requires us to be observers of the law; and such must the inheritors of heaven be. Much less is this inconsistent, if we consider believers in their personal and relative capacity; as they are in themselves, and as they are in their Surety. Notorious transgressors in themselves, they have a sinless obedience in Christ. The consciousness of that will be an everlasting motive to humility; the belief of this, an inexhaustible source of joy.

All this is no more inconsistent, than the union of a gloomy contexture and a lightsome splendour, in those detached clouds which float amidst the firmament. In themselves, they are a lowering and dark collection of vapours;

by the impression of the sunbeams, they are as fair and bright as the polished silver.

Ther. After all, the imputation taught in Scripture is not the imputation of Christ's righteousness, but of our own faith. Agreeably to the apostle's express declaration, "Abraham believed in God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness," Rom. iv. 3.

Asp. This objection admits the thing in dispute, though it controverts the way and manner of obtaining it; admits the necessity of some active, positive righteousness, in order to our justification. In this particular, I am glad to agree with my Theron; and in this particular, I believe the generality of serious people agree with us both. Whenever their consciences are awakened, and seek to establish the hope of eternal life, they constantly turn their eyes to some righteousness, which they apprehend may, either in whole or in part, answer the demands of the law. Some look to their own sincere obedience; others call in to their succour works of supererogation. My friend would assign this office to his faith.

Ther. Is this a proper answer to my objection, Aspasio? The text is point-blank against your tenet. You do wisely therefore not to confront, but to elude the evidence.

Asp. I did not intend it for an answer; only as an occasional observation, which nevertheless has a pretty close connexion with the subject. Neither would I use so mean a subterfuge, as to elude an argument which I could not confute. If my friend had allowed me leisure to explain myself, this should have been my reply.

That a man is not justified by works, is a position most clearly demonstrated, and a doctrine most zealously inculcated by St. Paul. That faith is a work* exerted by the human mind, is equally certain. Unless, therefore, we would render the apostle inconsistent with himself, we must understand the passage in a qualified sense. Why should we not suffer him to be his own interpreter? why should we not take the narrative of his experience for a comment on his doctrine? He declares, that the ground of his own comfort, the cause of his own justification, was not the grace of faith, but the "righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 9; not the act of believing, but the grand and glorious object of a sinner's belief, "the Lord our righteousness."

Besides, what was that faith of Abraham to which the apostle refers, and which he proposes as the invariable model of our justification? It was faith in the promised seed—in Jesus Christ the righteous. It was a firm persuasion, that this illustrious person should spring from his loins, and be the author of forgiveness, acceptance, and salvation to himself, and to a multitude of believers numberless as the stars of heaven. Let us tread in these steps of the holy patriarch, and we shall ascribe little, ascribe nothing to our faith, but all to the infinitely excellent obedience of our Redeemer.

Ther. Sure, Aspasio, you will not presume to correct inspiration! The inspired writer makes no mention of a Redeemer's obedience. He says expressly and positively, "It," that is Abraham's faith, and not anything else, "was counted unto him for righteousness."

* So it is called by Him, who knew what is in man, and what were the differences of things: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent," John 29.

Asp. True, Theron; as those windows are reckoned, are counted the lights of your house. Why? Because they illuminate? No; but because they afford a passage to the illuminating rays. Through them, the first and best of elements is diffused into all your habitation. So "we are saved by grace through faith;" by grace imputing, through faith accepting, the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Grace is the magnificent source of this nobler light, faith is the means of transmitting it into all the faculties of the soul.

When our Lord declares to the diseased woman, "Thy faith hath made thee whole," Matth. ix. 22, how are we to understand his words? That the patient's belief, and not the agency of Christ, wrought the cure? To suppose this, would be extremely derogatory to the power of our great Physician. And if we ascribe justification to the act of believing, this will be equally derogatory to the obedience of our great Mediator. In the former case, Christ and his omnipotent operation were all in all. In the latter case, Christ and his infinite merit are all in all. In both cases, faith is only the eye to discern, or the hand to receive, the sovereign good.

I would farther observe, that faith is very particularly distinguished from the righteousness which justifies. We read of the righteousness which is by faith, which is of faith, Rom. ix. 30; Phil. iii. 9. This form of expression puts an apparent difference between the evangelical faith and the evangelical righteousness; since whatever is by another, and of another, cannot, without the greatest violence to reason and language, be reckoned that other.—If faith was the cause of our acceptance with God, then we should be justified by a righteousness which is confessedly imperfect: for who has ever attained to the highest degree of this virtue? or whose faith is not mixed with an alloy of unbelief? If faith itself was the matter of our justification, I see not how boasting could be excluded; how the law could be magnified; or what reason the apostle could have to account all things, but the righteousness of Christ, meaner than dross, Phil. iii. 8.

Say not, that we presume to correct inspiration: we only interpret the inspired word in an harmonious consistency with itself. This sense is agreeable to the prevailing doctrine, and to the current language of Scripture. To the prevailing doctrine; which is "a believing in him who justifieth the ungodly." Sift and examine this expression, "him who justifieth." You will find that the work is Christ's; Christ's and no other's. The Holy Ghost assigns not the least share, not so much as a co-efficiency, to any other cause. Faith, therefore, if it presumes to arrogate this exalted prerogative, or if it pretends to the least part in this important business, is a sacrilegious usurper. To the current language; as when God is called our fear, Gen. xxxi. 42, 53; our hope, Psalm lxxi. 5; Jer. xiv. 8; our joy, Psalm xliiii. 4. In these places, the act is undoubtedly put for the object: so, in the passage before us, the act must denote the object of faith. It is to be understood, not absolutely, but as some divines speak, objectively, instrumentally, relatively.

Ther. In the name of wonder, what can you mean by this heap of harsh and obscure expressions? Let me entreat you, Aspasio, to speak in your own style, not in the dialect of Aquinas. I have an irreconcilable aversion to these scholastic terms: they are the barbarisms of divinity: I know but one use they are fitted to serve; that is, to perplex and puzzle a cause you cannot maintain: somewhat like the liquor which a certain fish, when closely pursued, is said to emit, by which the water is darkened, and the foe eluded.

Asp. This, Theron, is the meaning of our uncouth phrases : it is not faith itself which justifies ; but that righteousness which faith continually views, which faith delightfully apprehends, and on which it finally terminates.

To be plainer still ; we are justified by faith, in the same manner as we are fed by the hand, or as we are said to drink of a cup. Neither the hand nor the cup are the cause of our sustenance, but the instruments ; one of conveying it, the other of receiving it. If an apostle affirms, " We are justified by faith ;" faith itself declares, " in the Lord I have righteousness." Put these passages together, and you will have the true sense of our doctrine, and the true doctrine of the gospel.

When Themistocles fled from the malice of his countrymen, what recommended him to the protection of King Admetus ?—Not his name ; that was obnoxious—Not his actions ; they had been hostile—But the person of the young prince, whom the distressed refugee caught up in his arms ; and charged with these credentials, presented himself to the royal parent*. So faith recommends to God, and justifies the soul, not for itself or its own worth ; but on account of what it presents, and what it pleads.

Ther. Is not this a fanciful distinction, and an excessive refinement ? Has it any foundation in Scripture ?

Asp. It is implied in almost all the representations of Christ, and all the descriptions of faith, which occur in the sacred writings.

Christ is likened to clothing : and believers are said to " have put on Christ," Gal. iii. 27. Now it cannot be the act of putting on, that covers our bodies, or keeps them warm ; but the commodious garment which is worn.—He is compared to bread : " I am the bread of life," John vi. 35. Shall we say it is the act of eating which strengthens the constitution, and recruits our spirits ? No surely ; but the food eaten and digested. Christ was typified by the " cities of refuge," Numb. xxxv. 13, and sinners by the obnoxious manslayer ; who, if he fled to one of those privileged abodes, and there remained, was safe. No prosecution against him could be valid. He had nothing to fear from the avenger of blood. In this case, was it the bare act of flying that screened the criminal ? By no means. This conveyed him to a place of security. But the place itself was his sanctuary, his asylum, his safeguard.

Faith is styled a receiving of Christ : " As many as received him, to them gave he power," or granted the privilege, " to become the sons of God," John i. 12. The office of faith is, according to this definition, not to contribute its quota, much less to deposit the whole sum, but to take and use the inestimable gift.—Faith is called, " a looking unto Jesus," Heb. xii. 2 ; in allusion, I suppose, to the famous expedient provided for the wounded Israelites, Numb. xxi. 8. Our crucified Lord was prefigured by the brazen serpent ; our guilt by the stings of the fiery serpents ; and our faith by looking to the miraculous remedy. Did the healing power, I would ask, reside in the mere act of viewing ? No ; but in the emblem of a dying Saviour, elevated on the pole, and ordained for the recovery of the people. Here all the efficacy was lodged. From hence it was all derived. The action of the eye, like the office of faith, was only to fetch home, and apply the sanative virtue.

* This, says Plutarch, was a custom peculiar to that country ; was reckoned the most solemn method of supplicating favour, and seldom met with repulse. To which I may add, it is a custom which Christians should imitate, in all their addresses to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. When thus used, thus improved, it will never fail of success.

Once more : faith is represented as "laying hold" on God our Saviour, Isa. xvii. 5 ; "leaning" upon our beloved, Cant. viii. 5 ; "cleaving" to the Lord, Acts xi. 23. Please to take notice of yonder vine. Its shoots are weak, and its branches flimsy. Being absolutely unable to support themselves, they are furnished with a very remarkable set of clasps, which, like so many fingers, lay hold on the pegs in the wall, or fasten themselves to the poles within their reach. Without such a provision, the boughs must lie prostrate on the ground, and be exposed to the insults of every foot ; whereas, by this kind contrivance of nature, so creeping a plant will climb into the air and enjoy the breeze ; so feeble a plant will stand out the winter, and defy the storms. —An instructive admonition to sinners ! and no contemptible illustration of faith, especially in its principal and most distinguishing employ. Thus let us apprehend the blessed Jesus, hold us fast by our adored Redeemer, cleave to his ineffable worthiness, as those twining tendrils, by repeated circumvolutions, adhere to their substantial supporters ; then shall we rise, by merits "not our own," from the most abject and miserable condition, to a state of everlasting honour and joy.

Ther. Some people, I believe, would hardly forbear smiling at the peculiarity of your diction, and might be inclined to call your discourse canting, rather than reasoning. For my own part, I must acknowledge, that as all your peculiar phrases are derived from the Scriptures, I hear them with reverence, rather than any disposition to sneer. Was my friend delivering a Latin oration, it would be a sufficient warrant for any of his expressions to prove that they came from the Ciceronian mint : and will it not be, at least, an equally sufficient authority for any modes of speech used in a theological essay, to allege that they bear the stamp of the Bible ?

Though I make no objection to your language, I have yet another scruple with regard to your doctrine.—Do the ancient fathers adopt or inculcate this imputed righteousness ? If it was so important an article of our faith, surely it could not be unknown in those early ages which were so near the apostolical fountain ; it would not have been omitted by those zealous preachers who chose to endure all the rigours of persecution rather than renounce their holy profession.

Asp. I think it were sufficient to answer this question, by asking another. Do the apostles, does the Holy Spirit of God speaking in Scripture, inculcate this doctrine, or display this privilege ? If so, we need not be very solicitous for any further authority. "To the law and to the testimony," Isa. viii. 20, is our grand, our final appeal. Amidst all the darkness and uncertainty which evidently run through the writings of the best of men, this is our unspeakable happiness, that "we have a more sure word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed," 2 Pet. i. 19.

However, to be a little more particular :—It cannot be expected that we should find many passages in those pious authors, very strong and very explicit upon the point ; because in their days it was not so professedly opposed, and therefore could not be so exactly discussed as in later ages. Nevertheless, they have left enough behind them to avouch the substance of what we assert, "That a man is not justified by any works, duties, or righteousness of his own, but only by faith in Jesus Christ." I cannot say that I have charged my memory with their very words, and for that reason must not attempt at present to make any citation. But when a proper opportu-

nity offers, and their works are before me, I may possibly produce a few their testimonies.

In the mean time, I can mention a set of writers, whose attestation will I imagine, carry as much weight with my friend, as the united voice of the Greek and Latin fathers.

Ther. Who are they?

Asp. Our venerable reformers. The Homilies composed by those excellent divines are as express to my purpose as they are unexceptionable in the evidence. This is their language: "The true understanding of this doctrine. We be justified freely by faith without works, is not, that this our act believe, or this our faith in Christ, doth justify us; for that were to count ourselves to be justified by some act or virtue that is within ourselves. But the true meaning thereof is, that although we hear God's word, and believe it; although we have hope and faith, charity and repentance, and do never so many good works; yet we must renounce the merit of all our virtues and good deeds, as things that be far too weak and insufficient to deserve remission of sin, and our justification. We must trust only in God's mercy, and that sacrifice which our High-priest and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, offered for us upon the cross."

The Homily subjoins a very apposite illustration, which may conclude our discourse with perfect propriety, and I hope with equal efficacy. "So that as St. John the Baptist, although he were never so virtuous and godly a man, yet in the matter of forgiving sin, he did put the people from him and appoint them unto Christ, saying thus unto them, "Behold!" yonder is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world;" even so, a great and as godly a virtue as the lively faith is, yet it putteth us from itself and remitteth us unto Christ, for to have only by him remission of sins or justification. So that our faith in Christ, as it were, saith unto us thus It is not I that take away your sins, but it is Christ only; and to him only I send you for that purpose, forsaking therein all your good words, thoughts and works; and only putting your trust in Christ*."

Ther. If there be any tolerable sense of the notion under debate, I think it must be understood as follows:—Christ's performance of the law of his mediation, or, in other words, his unsinning obedience to the moral law, and the spotless sacrifice of himself to the vindictive justice of God; these are the only valuable considerations on account of which the gracious God restores guilty creatures to a state of acceptance with his divine Majesty.

Asp. I am far from denying your proposition; I rejoice in the propriety of my Theron's sentiments. May his faith, which is thus far advanced, be carried on by grace, till it is completed in glory! That unsinning obedience, and that spotless sacrifice, are indeed the only valuable, they are also the truly, or rather the infinitely valuable consideration, which has fully merited for us the remission of sins and the enjoyment of life; and this not only from the gracious, but even from the just, the faithful, the righteous God.

But then they must be imputed, in order to furnish us with a claim, and invest us with a right to the purchased privileges. Suppose them not imputed, and what becomes of our interest in them? They are like a medicine prepared, but not applied. Suppose them imputed; and they lay a firm, an

* See the second part of the Homily on Salvation.

apparent, a rational foundation, for every pleasing hope, and for every heavenly blessing.

Ther. I fear I have acknowledged too much.—My thoughts fluctuate. My mind is unsettled. I would not withstand the truth; I would not disbelieve any doctrine of the gospel. Yet—what shall I say? While I listen to your reasoning, I am half a convert: when I recollect the objections, I revert to my first opinion.

Of this, however, I am convinced—That human righteousness is insufficient for our justification. Here your arguments have carried their point. I shall henceforth place my hopes of everlasting happiness, not upon any works of my own, but upon the free goodness and unbounded beneficence of the Supreme Being; pursuant to that maxim of Scripture, “The gift of God is eternal life.”

Asp. You do right, Theron, to expect eternal life as the gift of God, not as the wages of your own obediential service. But be pleased to remember, that all the gifts of grace, though perfectly free to sinners, are founded upon a grand and inestimable price paid by their Saviour.—Are they entirely absolved from guilt? It is because Christ gave his life for their ransom. Are they heard with acceptance when they pray? It is because their exalted High-priest intercedes in their behalf. Are they completely justified, and instated in endless bliss? It is because their Redeemer’s consummate obedience is the glorious equivalent for this and every other blessing. Therefore, when you mention eternal life as the gift of God, you should not forget to add with the holy apostle, “through Jesus Christ our Lord,” Rom. vi. 20.—Well, my Theron, what say you farther? Is your quiver emptied? Are your scruples satisfied? May I interpret this silence as an act of assent?

Ther. Observe how the ranunculuses on yonder gay parterre have contracted their spreading tufts, and the tulips have closed their expanded cups, while all the neighbouring flowers have shut their ivory doors, or drawn their velvet curtains. Such is the state of my thoughts. They are all bent inwards, collected in themselves, and pondering upon your discourse, which has inclined me, before I was aware, to contemplate, rather than talk. You will excuse my thoughtfulness, Aspasio; or, if it wants an apology, you must blame yourself: for, had your reasons been less cogent, my attention had been more disengaged.

Asp. My dear Theron, I shall only wish, in allusion to your own simile, and in the language of the best of books, that these truths may “distil as the dew” upon your mind, Deut. xxxii. 2. and “lie all night upon your branches,” Job xxix. 19.—This, I am persuaded, is the only way to have all your comforts “green before the sun,” and all your virtues “flourish as an herb:” whereas, under the influence of any other faith, I am afraid they will be as the garden that is visited with a drought, or as the leaves that are smitten with a blast.

Ther. I shall attentively consider both your doctrine and your arguments; which, that I may execute with more ease, and to better purpose, be pleased to sum up, in a few words, the substance of what has passed. This done, it will be time to withdraw. The flowers, you see, are our monitors. They have folded up their robes, and veiled their beauties: a custom which they seldom use till the rising damps render it unsafe for their master to be among them, and the surrounding gloom renders it difficult for his eye to distinguish them.

Asp. You could not oblige me more than by giving me such a command. We trust for salvation,

Not on our own external duties. This were to build our house upon the sand; which, when the rains descend, when the torrents pour, when the winds blow with tempestuous violence, will certainly fall, and bury the builder, with all his vain hopes, in irretrievable ruin.

Not on the sincerity of our hearts. This, if opposed to Christ, and made the rival of his merits, will be a "despised broken idol." Despised by the infinitely sublime and majestic Ruler of the world: Broken, with regard to the stress we lay, or the confidence we repose, on so deceitful a prop. No more able to stand in the judgment of the great day, than Dagon was able to maintain his station before the ark of the Lord God of hosts, 1 Sam. v. 3, 4.

Not upon our faith. This is often weak, as the rickety child; sometimes quite faint, like a person in a deep swoon; always imperfect, like every other performance of ours. Alas! to what afflicting fears, to what grievous dependency should I, for my part, be perpetually liable, if my own faith was the ground of my justification? Blessed be the Father of mercies! we have a surer support. Not upon faith, not upon faith, but upon its gracious Author, and glorious Object, is the hope of Israel founded. Yet,

Not upon our Lord's righteousness, considered only as passive; but upon his active and passive obedience united: all that he did in conformity to the commands of the law, and all that he suffered in submission to its penalty. Both which, immensely dignified by his divine nature, are a basis for our faith which nothing can shake, are a foundation for our affiance which can never be removed. Nothing else, in any creature, or in all worlds, could expiate the least sin. This not only expiates all sin, but gives a title to every blessing—to the blessings of grace and of glory, of evangelical holiness and everlasting happiness.

DIALOGUE XI.

Asp. I HAVE often purposed, and as often forgot, to ask my Theron what picture he was so attentively surveying, when I stole unperceived upon him in this favourite arbour? *

Ther. I was indulging a pensive pleasure, in viewing the ruins and contemplating the fate of Babylon—that renowned and opulent city! once the residence of the Assyrian monarchs, and capital of one of the greatest empires in the world. The draught I held in my hand represented some of its remains. And indeed this was the very last subject which employed my thoughts. In the morning my son brought me his observations upon the scene, which I have just now been revising.

For I frequently set him to exercise his judgment, or display his fancy, on remarkable passages which occur in history. He was lately commissioned to determine a controversy between the illustrious Leonidas and the less celebrated Pædâretus. This was the point in debate—Which of them discovered the truest generosity of spirit, and the most heroic love of their country?

* See Dialogue V.

The former, who willingly sacrificed his life in its defence? or the latter, who, when he was candidate for a seat among the three hundred, and lost his election, instead of being chagrined or dissatisfied, went home unfeignedly rejoicing, "that there were found in Sparta three hundred men more worthy than himself?" The task of this day was, to give a descriptive picture of those wonderful ruins.

Asp. Pray let me have the pleasure of hearing the young gentleman's performance.

Ther. It will be too long, and too puerile; tire your patience, and offend your taste.

Asp. I do not use to make either of these complaints when I am entertained with Theron's compositions; and as the son has so much of his father's genius, I am not at all apprehensive of any such disappointment. We have a most agreeable situation, and more than an hour's leisure: I must therefore repeat my request.

Ther. It is true, I have retouched the sketch, which may render it somewhat more tolerable. And since you persist in your demand, I will read the paper. Only desiring some allowance for a little luxuriandy of imagination, which in young writers it may be advisable to indulge rather than repress, usage and judgment will probably come with the pruning-knife, and make the proper retrenchments. I must farther observe, that, contrary to the custom which prevails in our schools, I generally choose to have him express his sentiments in English; because it is in this language he must communicate his own, and become acquainted with the ideas of others; because, to acquire some good degree of propriety and fluency in this his native tongue, will be incomparably more serviceable than to speak Latin with the Tarentine elegance, or to write it with the Ciceronian copiousness.

Is this Babylon? the glory of kingdoms! the beauty of the Chaldean excellency!

Where once the gorgeous east, with richest hand,
Shower'd on her kings barbaric pearl and gold!

How is she fallen! fallen from the height of magnificence into the abyss of confusion! What was once the object of universal admiration, is now a spectacle of astonishment and horror.

The palace, where majesty sat enthroned like some terrestrial deity, is a heap of rubbish; no longer distinguished by an air of superior elegance, but by stronger and more melancholy marks of departed dignity*. Where the nobles of that sumptuous court trailed along the marble pavement their robes of purple and embroidery, there the crested snake hisses, or the fierce envenomed adder glides.

How changed is the hospitable hall, and how disgraced the room of state! The first afforded a constant and cordial reception to the welcome guests; in the last, the great king gave audience to his cringing, his adoring vassals. Now, thorns overrun the circumference, and "desolation sits in the threshold of them both." Where are the roofs of ivory, painted with vermilion and adorned with sculpture? the radiant roofs, whose lamps of burnished silver,

* Benjamin, a Jew of Tudela, in his Itinerary, written about the year of our Lord 1170, tells us, "That he was upon the place where this city formerly stood, and found it wholly desolated and destroyed. Only some ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's palace were still remaining; but men were afraid to go near them, by reason of the many serpents and scorpions that were then in the place."

pendent in many a blazing row, yielded light as from another sky? Swept from their foundations, they lie clotted with defiling dirt, or clasped with tangling briars. Music no longer pours her harmony through the spacious and extended apartment; but the night-owl, nestling in some cleft of the ruins, screams her harsh and portentous dissonance. Joy no longer leads to the sprightly dance amidst the lustre of that artificial day; but the solitary bat flits in silent circles, or flaps her sooty wings. All those gay delights, let the sons of sensuality hear the tale, and take warning from the catastrophe—all those gay delights are extinguished, like one of their feeblest tapers, which having illuminated for a while the festive assembly, shone itself to the edge of the exhausted socket, and in a moment flashed into stench and darkness.

The walls, though cemented with bitumen*, and consolidated into the firmness of a flint, are become like the broken bubble. There was a time when the inhabitants, confiding in the strength of their bulwarks and the multitude of their towers, looked down with fearless disdain on the army of besiegers. But now the prophet's threatening is most terribly fulfilled: "The fortress of the high fort of thy walls hath he brought down, laid low and brought to the ground, even to the dust," Isa. xxv. 12.—Where are the gates, the grand and glittering gates †, which admitted the triumphant host or poured forth their numerous legions against the day of battle? Not a trace remains to tell the inquisitive stranger, "Here the spacious avenue opened; here the massy portals rose." Commodious walks, in which the clustering merchants raised the busy hum, and planned the schemes of commerce; ample streets, in which industry drove the toiling car, or smote the sounding anvil, are shrouded with matted grass, or buried beneath the rankest weeds. Silence, in both places, a sullen silence reigns; and inactivity a death-like inactivity, slumbers.

What is become of those hanging gardens, which, for curious contrivance and stupendous workmanship, were never equalled in any nation under heaven? Terraces that overlooked the tallest houses! Parterres exalted to the clouds, and opening their flowery beauties in that strange region! Groves whose very roots were higher than the tops of the loftiest trees! They are not smitten by a dreadful blast. Their beauty is decayed like a withered leaf. Their very being is gone, "like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor which the wind carrieth away, and its place is nowhere found," Dan. ii. 35. What was once the favourite retreat of a queen, and the admiration of the whole world, is now a nest for poisonous reptiles, and a kennel for ravenous beasts. The traveller, instead of expatiating with delight where this pensile paradise flourished, is struck with horror, keeps at a trembling distance, and surveying the rueful spot, cries out, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and true are thy judgments!"

Here stands an obelisk, maimed by the stroke of revolving years, like a mountain oak shattered by the flaming bolt. Another, all unhinged, and quite disjointed, seems to tremble before every blast that blows. There the pyramid ‡, firm as the solid rock, and stable, one would have thought, as the everlasting hills, wrenched from its mighty base, is tumbled headlong in enormity.

* The walls were built of brick, and cemented with a glutinous kind of slime, which binds more firmly than any mortar, and soon grows harder than the bricks or stones themselves.

† There were no less than a hundred gates, all of solid brass.

‡ Strabo calls the temple of Belus a pyramid, lib. xv.

mous ruin, and has crushed many a structure by its fall.—See yonder the triumphal arch, which exhibited through its extensive and beautiful bend an advantageous view of the firmament. It was once the graceful memorial of some celebrated victory; it is now converted into a trophy of a very different kind. Just retaining two uneven, battered, ragged stumps, it serves to recognise the destructive ravages of time. Spires that pierced the clouds, and shot into the skies, are levelled with the trodden soil. On pinnacles, to which the strong-winged bird could hardly soar, the grovelling worm crawls, and the sordid snail leaves her slimy track. Baths that contained the translucent wave, and were so often perfumed with odoriferous unguents, are choked with filth: the grand colonnade that surrounded them is shivered to pieces, and the elevated dome that covered them is dashed to the ground. The public aqueducts, which conveyed cleanliness and health along their crystal currents, are degenerated into a stagnating lake, while croaking vermin swarm among the weeds, and noisome exhalations steam from the mire.

August and stately temples, that seemed to affect the neighbourhood of heaven*, are sunk to the very dust. Who can point the spot where the consecrated victim bled, or the sacred fire glowed? where the sceptred image lifted its majestic head, or the venerating crowds bowed the suppliant knee †? Degraded are those splendid vanities, and cast (according to the denunciation of the sacred oracles) “to the bats and to the moles,” Isa. ii. 20. All is low; low as the spurious dignity of the idols they complimented; low “as the straw that is trodden down for the dunghill,” Isa. xxv. 10.

Sepulchres, the once venerable repositories of the dead, awful mansions destined to everlasting concealment, are cleft and rent asunder. They disclose the horrid secrets of the pit, and frightfully yawn upon the blasted day. Possibly some ravenous creature lurks within, that has already rifled the tomb of its hero, given the putrid bones a new grave, and waits only for the approach of night to repeat his funeral dirge in yells. Inscriptions, designed to perpetuate some illustrious character, or eternise some heroic deed, are blended in the promiscuous mass. In vain would the prying antiquary search for a legible or consistent sentence; in vain attempt to find the memorable names of a Nebuchadnezzar or a Nimrod. These, though engraven on plates of brass, or cut in blocks of marble, are lost amidst the stupendous lumber, as prints on the unsteady sand are effaced when returning tides smooth the furrowed beach.

Here and there a straggling cypress rises, as it were, with funereal solemnity amidst the waste ‡. Somewhat like the black plumes nodding over the mournful hearse, they augment the sadness of the scene, and throw a deeper horror on all below. No human voice is heard, nor human face seen, amidst these desolated heaps; too dreary even for the roam of hoary hermit, or the

* A tower in the temple of Belus, and dedicated to his worship, was very high. It consisted of eight piles of building erected one above another, and rose to the elevation of six hundred feet perpendicular.

† Alluding to that prodigious instance of profuseness, ostentation, and idolatrous madness, “The golden image set up in the plain of Dura, whose height (that is, the height of the statue and pedestal taken together) was threescore cubits,” Dan. iii. 1.

‡ Rauwolf, a German traveller, who passed that way in the year of our Lord 1574, says, “This country is so dry and barren, that it cannot be tilled, and so bare, that I should have doubted whether the potent Babylon did stand there, if I had not known it by several ancient and delicate antiquities that are still standing hereabout in great desolation.”

cell of gloomy monk. Abandoned they are, totally abandoned, to the dominion of solitude, or else to the unmolested resort of shaggy monsters, and feathered hags, which stun the midnight hours; these with their importunate shrieks, those with their execrable howls.

See to what a despicable, what an abhorred state, the proudest monument of earthly grandeur, and the most costly apparatus for earthly felicity, may be reduced! A pregnant and alarming proof, that, for lasting honour, or real happiness,

“They build too low, who build beneath the skies.”

Asp. I very much approve the choice of your subject. The ruins of *Persepolis* would have given us a view of magnificence in abasement: the ruin of *Palmyra* might have showed us elegance in the dust; but the ruins of *Babylon* display, at once, magnificence and elegance under an eclipse, Scripture and revelation in their glory.—The utter destruction of this city, which was absolutely unequalled in every instance of dignity, and seemingly invincible by any enemy, must certainly have been looked upon as the most improbable of events. Nevertheless, its utter destruction was decreed by *Jehovah*, and denounced by his prophet, several ages before the execution took place. The awful sentence was not only denounced, but recorded, and is still remaining in the public archives of our religion.

Ther. Where is this sentence recorded, and remaining?

Asp. In the prophecy of *Isaiah*; and not only recorded, but in the most circumstantial manner, and with a minute detail of the horrible desolation. These are the words of the inspired writer: “*Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there, and the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces,*” *Isa. xiii. 19—22.*

In the two first sentences is comprised the most finished picture of prosperity and grandeur. “*The glory of kingdoms;*” beyond every other royal seat, spacious, ornamented, and wealthy; revered by many conquered and tributary dominions as their mistress and their sovereign. “*The beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency:*” the Chaldeans, who excelled all the nations of the earth in riches, in splendour, and in power, even they gloried in this wonderful city. This was the highest honour of the most illustrious, and chief strength of the most victorious people: fairest, where all was conspicuously fair and noblest, where all was supereminently noble. Yet this distinguished, this crowning city, shall, at the blasting of the breath of *Jehovah*, be totally and totally destroyed, even “*as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.*”

In describing the overthrow, the prophet is equally admirable, and rises, by a most judicious gradation, into all the pomp of horror: *q. d.* “*Now, indeed, it is thronged with citizens; but the hour is coming when it shall be entirely depopulated, and not so much as a single inhabitant left. Lest you should think that, in process of time, it may be re-edified, and again abound with joyful multitudes, it shall never be inhabited more; no, never be dwelt in any more, from generation to generation, but shall continue a dismal waste through*

succeeding ages : a waste so dismal, that none of the neighbouring shepherds shall make their fold, or find so much as an occasional shelter for their flocks, where kings, grandees, and crowds of affluent citizens, reposed themselves in profound tranquillity. Even the rude and roving Arabian shall not venture to pitch his tent, nor be able to procure for himself the poor accommodation of a night's lodging, where millions of polite people basked in the sunshine of profuse prosperity. In short, it shall neither be habitable nor accessible, but " a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment and a hissing," *er. li. 37.* What was once the golden city, *Isa. xiv. 4,* and the metropolis of the world, shall be an everlasting scene of desolation and horror ; a fearful monument of divine vengeance, and an awful admonition to human pride."

All this is foretold in Scripture ; and though to human appearance impossible, though to human apprehension incredible, was, in the appointed time, most minutely accomplished. The memorials and evidences of the accomplishment remain to this very day. They are so authentic, that the most inquisitive curiosity cannot doubt ; and so incontestable, that the most bigotted incredulity will not deny. And should not this teach us to reverence the authority, to admire the wisdom, and confide in the promises, of that heavenly volume ?

I know you are not fond of compliments, Theron. Therefore, instead of speaking my opinion of your son's performance, I will endeavour to return your favour. You have entertained me with an account of the most memorable ruins extant in the material world. Let me present my friend with a picture of ruins no less remarkable, far more deplorable, and unspeakably interesting to us all. I shall give it in the colouring of a great master, whose works this very day I happened to be perusing.

The passage displays a doctrine of the utmost importance in the Christian scheme, and by one of the finest pieces of imagery to be met with in elegant writing. I think it may be looked upon as a practical improvement of *Eugenio's* declamation. It pleased me so much that I transcribed it ; and I make no apology for reading it, because I shall expect your thanks. Only let me hint, that it considers the human soul as originally an habitation of God through the Spirit ; and then, speaking of its fallen condition, proceeds—

" That he hath withdrawn himself, and left this his temple desolate, we have many sad and plain proofs before us. The stately ruins are visible to every eye, that bear in their front (yet extant) that doleful inscription—*HERE GOD ONCE DWELT.* Enough appears of the admirable frame and structure of the soul of man, to show the divine presence did some time reside in it : more than enough of vicious deformity, to proclaim he is now retired and gone. The lamps are extinct, the altar overturned ; the light and love are now vanished, which made the one shine with so heavenly brightness, the other burn with so pious fervour. The 'golden candlestick' is displaced, and thrown away as an useless thing, to make room for the throne of the prince of darkness. The sacred incense, which sent, rolling up in clouds, its rich perfumes, is exchanged for a poisonous, hellish vapour ; and here is, instead of a sweet savour, a stench.' The comely order of this house is turned all into confusion ; the 'beauties of holiness' into 'noisome impurities ;' the 'house of prayer to a den of thieves,' and that of the worst and most horrid

kind ; for every lust is a thief, and every theft is sacrilege. Continual rapine and robbery is committed upon holy things. The noble powers which we designed and dedicated to divine contemplation and delight, are alienated to the service of the most despicable idols, and employed into the vilest intinities and embraces ; to behold and admire lying vanities, to indulge and cherish lust and wickedness.

“ There is not now a system, an entire table of coherent truths to be found or a frame of holiness, but some shivered parcels. How many attempts have been made, since that fearful fall and ruin of this fabric, to compose again the truths of so many several kinds into their distinct orders, and make up frames of science or useful knowledge ! and after so many ages, nothing is finished of any kind. Sometimes truths are misplaced, and what belongs to one kind transferred to another, where it will not fitly match ; sometimes falsehoods are inserted, which shatters or disturbs the whole frame. And what with many fruitless pains is done by one hand, is dashed in pieces by another ; and it is the work of a following age to sweep away the fine-spun cobwebs of a former. And those truths which are of the greatest use, are least regarded ; their tendency and design are overlooked, or they are so loosened and torn off, that they cannot be wrought in, so as to take hold of the soul, but hover, as faint ineffectual notions, that signify nothing. Its very fundamental powers are shaken and disjointed, and their order towards one another confounded and broken ; so that what is judged considerable, is not considered ; what is recommended as eligible and lovely, is not loved and chosen. Yea, the truth which is after godliness, is not so much disbelieved, as hate is held in unrighteousness ; and shines as too feeble a ‘ light,’ in that malignant darkness which ‘ comprehends it not.’ You come, amidst all this confusion as into the ruined palace of some great prince, in which you see here the fragments of a noble pillar, there the shattered pieces of some curious imagery and all lying neglected and useless amongst heaps of dirt.—He that invites you to take a view of the soul of man, gives you but such another prospect and doth but say to you, ‘ Behold the desolation,’ all things rude and wasted so that, should there be any pretence to the divine presence, it might be said ‘ If God be here, why is it thus ?’ The faded glory, the darkness, the disorder, the impurity, the decayed state in all respects of this temple, too plainly shew, ‘ The great inhabitant is gone *.’ ”

Ther. Your painter, I must own, is a master in his profession, and seems to have a peculiar talent for a night-piece.—But why, I beseech you, so much of his shades and solemnity ? Has he no colours but the dark ? no lineaments but the sour ? Could he not allow us one bright tint, one smiling feature, when he was copying the noblest being in this sublunary world ?—Is it for the honour of the great Creator, to give such a deformed draught of his most finished workmanship ?

Asp. It reflects no kind of dishonour upon the architect of Babylon, though its palaces are fallen, its edifices demolished, and its walls levelled with the ground. They might have been built with the exactest symmetry, and once embellished with every graceful ornament, notwithstanding the stroke of violence, or the sap of years, have now reduced them to heaps of rubbish. The human soul, when recent from the inspiration of the Almighty, was

* See Mr. Howe's treatise, entitled, “ The Living Temple.”

bright with knowledge, amiable with virtue, and in every respect excellent. But how—to speak in the language of the mourning prophet, a language never more pertinent than on the present occasion—“how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!”

Ther. Man's soul is rational and eternal; is the offspring of the Deity, and capable of resembling its Maker.

Asp. What Milton allows to the fallen archangel, I can readily allow to fallen man :

———He had not lost
All his original brightness.

The grand and distinguishing faculties of the soul remain. Just as, when a fountain is poisoned, the waters continue to flow; but flow no longer with health, flow rather with death in the stream. These very faculties, unless renewed and regulated by the influence of religion, must be our present misery, and will prove our everlasting curse. “The soul,” you say, “is rational, is eternal.” And do not even the devils possess the powers of reason? Is not their existence also of an endless duration? Yet are they, of all creatures, the most execrable and the most miserable.

You call the human soul the offspring of the Deity: and you call it properly. Must we not then adopt the prophet's exclamation, “How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning!” Isa. xiv. 12. How art thou degenerated, O man, son of the Most High? Thy glorious original serves only to set forth with more glaring evidence, thy deplorable apostasy.

Capable, you add, of resembling its Maker. This, I acknowledge, is a valuable prerogative: in this the infernal spirits have no share. But this capacity will always lie dormant, will never awaken into act, never be established in habit, unless Almighty grace intervene.

Ther. The most celebrated philosophers of antiquity frequently exhort their readers to follow nature, as a certain guide to true excellence. Many eloquent writers of our own country enlarge upon the dignity of human nature; and from this topic derive very forcible arguments for a correspondent dignity both of sentiment and behaviour. Upon what can those principles of the ancient sages, and of our later moralists, be founded?

Asp. Indeed, Theron, I am at a loss to tell. If they have any foundation, it is merely imaginary; not laid on truth, nor confirmed by experience. According to my apprehension, they invert the order of things; they take that for a *postulatum* which ought to be ranked among the *desiderata*, and make an axiom of a mere figment.

Had man continued as he was created, to act according to nature and according to the law of God, would have been one and the same thing. For which reason we find no precepts of religion, no delineation of morality, given to Adam in paradise; because religion and morality were engraven on his heart; or rather, they resulted from the very bent and tendency of his perfect frame. But since the fall it is quite otherwise.

Ther. Have not many of the ancient worthies been living confutations of your opinion? wise philosophers, judicious lawgivers, and steady ministers of justice? their desires refined, their affections benevolent, their whole conduct upright?

Asp. I cannot forbear wondering that you should instance in lawgivers

and ministers of justice ; since the very institution of their office presupposes the depravity of mankind. Was human nature agitated by no irregular vicious inclinations, the barrier of laws would be as needless in civil societies as the vast banks of Holland are needless in our upland counties.

But this, you will say, is a digressive observation ;—your question requires a positive answer. And it is easy to answer—That the painting is beyond the life. If my author has been too free with the dark, my friend has been too lavish of the glittering colours. Those famous men might aim, perhaps at the excellency you describe. Not one of them came up to the mark ; I suppose they did, this would not invalidate my tenet.

Ther. This not invalidate your tenet ! Then demonstration carries conviction.

Asp. Pray, who is your greatest favourite among all the renowned persons of antiquity ?

Ther. Socrates.—He stands at the head of the class ; and was, indisputably, the wisest and the best of the heathen world.

Asp. I think so too. Be pleased, however, to recollect the story of the physiognomist, who pretended to discover the disposition of the mind by the cast of the countenance. The professor of this occult science undertook, you know, to exercise his skill upon Socrates ; and pronounce him, after an examination of his features, lascivious, passionate, and morose. This judgment, so extravagantly wide of the truth, was bringing a storm of ridicule and resentment upon the poor fortune-teller ; when the ingenious philosopher interposed, and owned the description to be exactly true that such was his natural temper ; and if his conversation had been of a different turn, it was owing to the aids of philosophy. So that, even in your most finished character, there was no innate dignity. All was adventitious.

Ther. If corruption was derived unto all men from their forefather Adam methinks all should be equally corrupt. But this is contrary to known facts. Some we see naturally loving and lovely, gentle in their manners, and subject to no inordinate appetites.

Asp. Some persons may be of more composed, or, if you please, of less dissolute manners, than the generality of other people : thanks to a better temperature of their constitution, or a more watchful care in their education. But shew me the unregenerate man who is subject to no inordinate appetite. One vile affection may check another, or a sense of decency may hold the curb upon all ; but it is one thing to have the wild beast in the hearth chained, another to have him expelled, or the lion transformed into a lamb.

Ther. Have we not often observed heroic courage, and a generosity of spirit, where the education has been none of the strictest ? To what can we ascribe these laudable qualities but to the innate virtue and nobleness of the temper, working without any auxiliary succours ?

Asp. Virtue, Theron, is a complete assemblage, not some disjointed shreds of laudable qualities. Those you mention, if not accompanied with the whole circle of amiable accomplishments, are no more to be called virtue than two or three scattered fragments of an edifice are to be honoured with the appellation of a house. How often are those very persons, with all their fortitude, slaves to ignoble pleasures, or in bondage to the basest lusts

A most infallible indication that they have no uniform generosity, nor any real courage. Desire of fame may prompt to many such acts as dazzle the superficial eye, which yet are far, very far from genuine virtue.

Ther. Do you then attribute the Grecian politeness, and the high Roman spirit, all the gallant actions of their heroes and generals, to a desire of fame?

Asp. There is reason to suspect that they derived their origin from some improper motive: and no motive was more artfully instilled, or more assiduously cherished, than the spirit of ambition. View their crowns, their statues, their triumphal solemnities; read their orators, their historians, their poets. The former were the school, the latter were the masters, to inculcate this grand lesson.

Let us consider the Romans a little more attentively; and not amidst the dregs of their community, but in their very best ages, when their republic subsisted, and their Scipios flourished. Many great and shining deeds were undoubtedly performed; but did they spring from a reverential regard to the Supreme Being, from obedience to his will or zeal for his honour.

If this principle should be thought too refined, did they proceed from a love to their fellow-creatures? In case neither of these motives* actuated their conduct, it can never be placed to the account of virtue.—Had benevolence been their leading principle, why such inhumanity to Carthage? why must that opulent city be laid in ashes, and her numerous citizens be put to the sword? Were they enemies to mankind, or a nuisance in the world? You well know, that they were only too industrious, and too powerful; by which means they would be in a condition to eclipse the magnificence of the Roman name, and dispute the prize of sovereignty with the Roman state. For this crime—a crime in Ambition's eye absolutely inexcusable—even Cato's upright soul shall doom them to utter destruction, and Scipio's gentle hand shall execute the horrid decree.

Is this virtue? Does virtue ravage countries, from the mere wantonness of pride or lust of pre-eminence? does virtue destroy millions of lives, only to aggrandise a particular people, or extend the dominion of some favourite empire? If this were virtue, Brutus thought too honourably of her character when he termed her an empty name. I am sure my Theron has juster notions of things. He need not be informed that true virtue, far from personating the rapacious harpy, acts as a father to others, as a father to all; and like him who is both its pattern and its author, "goes about doing good."

Ther. The most elegant cane, if plunged into yonder basin while the waters are curled by the breeze, will appear both crooked and coarse. I cannot but think the accusers of human nature examine her state with a prejudiced understanding, which has the same perverse effect upon their judgment as those ruffled waves have upon the sight. Or else they contemplate her condition with a melancholy mind, which, like a jaundiced eye, gives

* A zeal for the honour of God, and a concern for the good of our fellow-creatures, are the true sources of virtue, 1 Cor. x. 24. 31. When our actions flow not from these principles, reason will put a query upon them, and revelation will expunge them from the list of virtues. They may be specious in themselves; they may be costly to the performer; they may even be serviceable to others; but can no more deserve the title of virtue, than the activity of our firemen in extinguishing the flames on some insured house, can merit the name of Charity.

every object a distempered aspect, darkens the cheerful, discolours the beautiful, and hangs even the sun in mourning.

Asp. Rather let this be the comparison to illustrate our point. View the meanest piece of earth through the prismatic glass, and it will appear, not beautiful only, but perfectly splendid. Remove the delusory medium, and all the sophisticated finery vanishes; the indigo, the orange, the violet, are gone, and leave nothing to be seen but a rude unornamented lump of clay. So, if we consider human nature according to the partial representations of self-love, or contemplate it in the flattering mirror of some popular writings, it may seem regular, holy, excellent: but, if we behold it under the light, the unerring light of revelation, its fancied charms disappear; it stands clothed with deformity, and is a spectacle of commiseration, if not of horror.

Ther. What reason have you to father such a notion upon the sacred writings? The sacred writings inform us, that man was made "after the image of God." This, sure, could not be so dishonourable and depraved a pattern as your discourse would insinuate.

Asp. Far, very far from a dishonourable pattern! The image of God is the consummate standard of all perfection. In conformity to this admirable exemplar our first parents were created; and in this admirable condition they continued till, by transgression, they fell—fell from the most holy and happy state, into guilt, condemnation, and ruin. Therefore, when this fatal catastrophe had taken place, the sacred historian varies his style, and with a remarkable peculiarity, as well as propriety of speech, says, "Adam begat a son in his own * (not in the divine) likeness." That every reader may advert to this melancholy, but important truth, it is marked more strongly still, it is enforced by a very emphatical repetition: "after his own image," Moses adds, Gen. v. 3; as contradistinguished to the image of God, mentioned in a preceding verse. Which expressions are evidently intended to denote the difference between the state in which Adam was created and Seth was begotten.

Ther. Pray let me have a succinct, but full account of this tragical story, since all your orthodox divines lay such a mighty stress upon the doctrine of the fall.

Asp. God, having formed the human body out of the ground, animated the structure with a living soul, and transcribed upon this soul the image of his blessed Self. All was light in the understanding, all was rectitude in the will, and nothing but harmony in the affections.—Man, thus endowed, was placed in the delightful garden of Eden, and furnished with every accommodation which was necessary to support his being, or desirable to gratify his senses. He was constituted lord of this lower creation; and, amidst numberless indulgences, received only one—easy—negative command, "not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." From this he was to abstain, as a pledge of his subjection, and as an exercise of his obedience. Bliss and immortality were to be the reward of duty; misery and death the punishment of disobedience: "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," Gen. ii. 17, was the sanction of the divine law.

How equitable! how gracious the terms! Yet neither the goodness of God could induce him to keep them, nor the authority of God deter him from

* This is affirmed, not of Cain, but of Seth, the most excellent of Adam's children, and father of the holy seed.

breaking them. Unreasonably discontented, even with such advantageous circumstances, and presumptuously aspiring to be like the Most High, he hearkened to the suggestions of the evil spirit. In a word, he violated the precept, and incurred the penalty. God was just, and man was undone. He lost his uprightness, became subject to mortality, and, as the nervous original expresses it, "died the death."

Ther. True, he became subject to many bodily infirmities, and to the necessity of final dissolution. But what has this sentence, or what have these sufferings, to do with your notion of universal depravity in the mind? The death which the Almighty Legislator threatened, can be opposed only to the life which the Almighty Creator gave.

Asp. Be it so—The Creator gave, and man possessed, a life incomparably more excellent than that which the pulse imparts, or the beasts enjoy. He possessed a divine life, which, according to the definition of the apostle, consisted "in knowledge, in righteousness, and true holiness," Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10. This, which was the distinguishing glory, and the supreme felicity of his nature, this, alas! was extinct.

His understanding, originally enlightened with wisdom, was clouded and overwhelmed with ignorance—His heart, once filled with religious veneration and warmed with heavenly love, became alienated from God his maker. His passions and appetites, instead of moving on in orderly array, according to the beautiful measures of truth and duty, grew mutinous, shook off the government of reason, and ran wild into the most lawless extravagancies.—In a word, the whole moral frame was unhinged, disjointed, broken.

Ther. What cause have you to suppose that all this misery was either included in the threatening, or introduced by the fall?

Asp. The ignorance of fallen Adam was palpable: witness that absurd attempt to hide himself from the eye of Omniscience among the trees of the garden.—His aversion to the all-gracious God was equally plain; otherwise he would never have fled from his Maker, but rather have hastened, and on the wings of desire, into the place of the divine manifestation.

A strange variety of disorderly passions were evidently predominant in his breast.—Pride, for he refuses to acknowledge his guilt, though he cannot but own the fact.—Ingratitude, for he obliquely upbraids the Creator with his gift, as though it had been a snare rather than a blessing: "The woman whom thou gavest me."—Want of natural affection; for he endeavours to cast all the blame upon the weaker vessel, and to acquit his obnoxious self by impeaching the wife of his bosom.—The female criminal acts the same unhumiliated part; neither takes shame to herself, nor gives glory to God, nor puts up a single petition for pardon.

As all these disasters ensued upon the breach of the commandment, they furnish us, I think, with the best key to open the meaning of the prohibitory sanction. They prove, beyond any argument, that spiritual death, and all its consequences, were comprehended in the extent of the threatening.

Ther. How could one act of disobedience produce such destructive effects? erase the fair image of the Godhead, and stamp the monster, stamp the very devil in its stead?—and so small an act of disobedience too!

Asp. The prohibition, if you please, was small, not so the transgression. It was committed against the clearest knowledge of duty, and the strongest obligations to obedience. It argued ingratitude for the richest favours, and

unbelief of the most solemn declarations. It was an act of the most horrid presumption in the creature, and of the most impious rebellion against the Creator.

As to the smallness, or rather the gentle and benign import of the command, this aggravates beyond measure the crime of disobedience. Alluding to the words once addressed to the Syrian general, we may justly expostulate: "O thou Adam, if thy Lord had bid thee do some great thing (2 Kings, v. 13.) in submission to his high authority, and out of gratitude for his unspeakable goodness, oughtest thou not to have done it? How much more when he says to thee—Freely eat of all except this single tree. Thousand thousands of honours, privileges, and gifts be thine, only one acknowledgment of thy subjection mine; and that the easiest which thy heart can wish, or even thy fancy conceive."

You ask, How could one act of disobedience produce such destructive effects?—I answer, the reality of the fact, in numberless instances of material nature, is plain to a demonstration, while the manner of operation remains an impenetrable secret. Every child perceives the former, Newton himself is a loss for the latter. For which reason, I have always thought it better to believe what God has taught, than attempt to explain what God has concealed. Let us forego this curious, perhaps fruitless inquiry, and substitute a remark which naturally arises from the subject, and may considerably edify our minds.

Ther. Edify! Is it possible to render this dishonourable and afflictive notion edifying? Can any generous fruit spring from such a penurious soil?

Asp. Sampson, I believe, had no expectation of finding any thing valuable in the relics of his slain lion; but, to his agreeable disappointment, "there was honey in the carcass," Judges xiv. 8. If our doctrine appear ghastly as the one, it may yield a benefit sweet as the other.

From hence we may learn (what, when rightly learned, is more serviceable than all the sciences) the extreme malignity of sin. When volcanoes open their tremendous jaws, and disgorge a fiery inundation, they confine their fury to a single territory. When famine lifts her mildewed hand, and destroys the supports of animal life, she is content with ruining a kingdom or a nation. When war drenches his sword in blood, or the pestilence impregnates the air with poison, they also, even they observe some limits, and never make the whole compass of nature the scene of their ravages. But sin levelled its blow at the whole human race. Sin poured contagion, and spread destruction through all countries and all ages. One single act of sin brought confusion and a curse upon the material, and miseries, infinite millions of miseries, on the rational world. How then should we fear this most pernicious of all evils! with what carefulness guard against its insidious allurements! with what resolution fly from its killing caresses!

Ther. I must observe, that you take for granted what remains to be proved. For, supposing your account true with regard to Adam, yet how does this affect his children? Why must all his posterity be contaminated because their forefather has played the prodigal? Such a heavy charge against the whole body of mankind will not be admitted, without very cogent proofs.

Asp. The proofs are cogent, perhaps irrefragable.—Reason offers to turn

evidence in the case. Reason, in concurrence with revelation, demands, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Job xiv. 4. If the fountain be polluted, how can the streams be pure? and if the root is corrupt, it is impossible to conceive how the branches should be sound, or the fruit good.

The scriptural testimonies are almost innumerable. They pour their evidence from every quarter, and constitute not two or three only, but a whole cloud of witnesses. "God made man upright," says the royal preacher; the human nature, in its primitive state, was without any wrong bias; but at and ever since the first transgression, they have found out and followed many perverse inventions, Eccl. vii. 29.

Ther. I do not deny but multitudes of people, seduced by bad example, or betrayed by their own inadvertency, have departed from the rule of duty; have, as the wise man affirms, tried many foolish experiments to acquire happiness, and devised as many idle excuses for their folly. But this is no such irrefragable proof that they were originally bad: it only implies, that, not taking proper heed to their ways, they warped from their native uprightness. As yonder tulips, though perfectly beautiful at present, if not attended with the necessary cultivation, will degenerate into homely flowers, and at length be no better than tawdry weeds.

Ans. No, my friend. Iniquity is not an adventitious thing, caught from example, or contracted by carelessness. These may increase, but these do not occasion the moral malady. A sinful disposition is as early as our being, the very mould in which all our faculties are cast. David bears very express testimony to this humbling truth: "Behold!" (He sets his N. B. upon the passage. It is a sad, but certain fact; such as should never depart from my memory, nor ever be omitted in my confessions; and is much to be regarded by every reader :) "I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me," Psalm li. 5. As though he had said, "Alas! Lord, this crime, though extremely horrid, is but a little part of my guilt. I have not only sinned in practice, but I am totally and universally corrupt in my very nature."

This he acknowledges, not to extenuate his offence, but to lay open his excessive vileness. And indeed it is not possible to form a right judgment of ourselves, or to be duly humbled before God, unless we add the depravation of our nature to the transgressions of our life. Just as it is impossible to discern what monstrous and voracious animals lie hid in the ocean, if we only glance an eye upon the surface of the waters.

Ther. This, you know, was written by the royal penitent under the pangs of severe remorse. Does not a sense of his enormous iniquity, together with the apprehension of divine wrath, make his hand shake, and lead him to aggravate features? Or, suppose it were true of the adulterous king, is it equally applicable to others, who have escaped such gross pollutions?

Ans. It is no exaggerating draught, but a faithful delineation, and exactly represents every child of Adam. It was written with the utmost deliberation, and therefore is introduced with that call for peculiar attention, "Behold!" and though David was scandalously criminal in his intrigue with the wife of Uriah, yet the general tenor of his life was not only irreproachable, but exemplary. Who so zealous for the house of his God, or so devoted an admirer of the divine word? His heart was an altar ever flaming with

heavenly love : and his tongue a trumpet, to sound the praises of Jehovah through all generations. And if he had reason to make this abasing confession, who is the person that can think himself aggrieved by sharing in the imputation ?

One of our most eminent martyrs*, when he heard of any malefactor condemned to suffer an ignominious death, used to lay his hand upon his breast, and say, "The seeds of all those villanies which brought that unhappy wretch to the gibbet, were sown here ; and if they have not sprung up into the same detestable deeds, unto divine grace, unto divine grace alone, be all the glory !"

Ther. Your martyrs had honest hearts, but not always the clearest heads. I admire their zeal, and reverence their memories ; but I can no more receive their opinion as an oracle, than I can be persuaded to worship their relics.

Asp. I have no intention to palm Popery on my friend, nor any desire to calumniate the human species. If it be disingenuous and sinful to asperse a particular character, how much more unjustifiable to traduce our nature in general !

My account, dark and disgusting as it is, stands confirmed by a higher authority than any private opinion. It is confirmed from an universal survey of mankind, taken by the eye of the Creator himself, and left upon record in the books of revelation. "The Lord looked down from heaven, upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek after God." What is the result of this grand inquiry ? It must, without all peradventure, be infallibly true ; because God's inspection is too keen to be eluded, and his judgment too impartial to be biassed. This is the report made by the infinitely wise Observer :—"They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doth good, no not one," Psalm xiv. 2, 3.

Ther. This, I apprehend, is the character of those besotted creatures, those most egregious of all fools, who say, "There is no God." To them the psalm relates, and to them the abandoned character is appropriated. They have it, if I may so speak, *cum privilegio*.

Asp. It is meant rather of practical than of speculative atheists, who say, not explicitly with their mouths, but implicitly in their hearts, "There is no God ;" who live as if there was no all-seeing eye to take cognizance of their present conduct, no Supreme Judge to call them to a future reckoning. And I dare appeal to yourself, though perhaps the fondest of fathers, whether this instance of "foolishness is not bound up in the hearts of our children † ?" nay, whether it be not natural to us all, both in youth and manhood, to forget our Creator ?

In this case, Theron, there is no monopoly. Your right and mine are too strongly established by experience, and too clearly expressed in the preceding

* Mr. Bradford.

† Prov. xxii. 15. Let none think, that by foolishness the sacred writer means only those silly tricks, which discover a weakness of understanding in children. Solomon's fool is not the idiot, but the sinner ; and the folly stigmatised throughout the Proverbs, denotes, not a failure in the intellectual, but in the religious and moral character.

The words in this passage are peculiarly forcible. "Foolishness is in the heart:" implanted in the very nature ; sunk deep into the inmost faculties ; and not only sunk deep, but adheres almost inseparably—is wrapt, tied, and bound ; twines like the ivy, and is rooted like the oak.

Scripture, to admit of any controversy. If there were any that understood—they are all gone out of the way. There is none that doeth good—no not one. Could any conveyancer in Europe have contrived a form of words more fully to ascertain our unhappy title?

Ther. There may be some texts in Scripture which seem to countenance your assertion, but these refer to the worst of men, in the worst of times. And can you, with any justice, ascribe the properties of a few reprobates to the whole species?

Asp. This very passage, and others of a like import, are adopted by St. Paul, and applied both to Jews and Gentiles, with this professed design, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be found guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19. Which evinces, I should think, beyond all doubt, the universality of its extent.

If to the universality we add the antiquity of this fact, it will bear the two grand characteristics of truth. Far from being a novel opinion, it was received as a maxim in the early age of Job: "What is man, that he should pretend to be clean? and he that is born of a woman, that he should presume to be righteous?" Righteous before the infinitely just and holy One! "Behold! he putteth no trust in his saints," though the most exalted of all intelligent beings. "Yea, the heavens," those brightest parts of the material creation, "are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity!" Job xv. 14—16; though loathsome to God, and worse than poison to his own soul, yet drinketh it like water, without any hesitation or the least fear, with an eager and profuse delight.

This, you will observe, was alleged in a dispute carried on with no small vehemency, yet is admitted on all hands as unexceptionably true. Be pleased also to take notice, that the charge is not confined to some very notorious sinners, but is laid against the whole body of mankind. Whatever figure they may make, each in his own conceit, they are all described in the word of God, as beings insatiably athirst after evil, from objects that we cannot endure to behold, or cannot behold without abhorrence*. Such is man by nature! People must have eyes very different from mine to discern any dignity in this draught.

Ther. As to innate dignity, we will let it pass. But this I must insist upon, and several writers of the first repute are on my side,—That we enter the stage of life in a state of indifference either to good or evil; that the affections are like a balance nicely poised, and preponderating neither one way nor the other: the whole soul, like a sheet of fair paper, is equally susceptible of straight or crooked lines, and will as readily receive the amiable features of an angel, as the hideous deformity of a devil.

Asp. With regard to your first illustration, the simile, I think, confutes the sentiment. For to be in suspense whether we shall love the Lord our God, the giver of all good, and the source of all perfection, this surely must be condemned as an irreligious temper.—This is a criminal halting between God and Baal; a neutrality, which is no better than hostility.

I fear the writers you mention pay but little deference to the inspired

* The original words have two significations: one is used to signify that abominable practice, which the Egyptians could not bear to see, Exod. vii. ver. 22, Heb. Bib.; ver. 26. Engl. Bib. The other denotes an object too squalid to be viewed without loathing.

volume. Our escutcheon is very differently blazoned in that office of spiritual heraldry. "A transgressor from the womb *," is one of our hereditary titles. Transgressors we are by strong internal propensity, even before we transgress in outward act.

Observe the young hawthorn plants, which have unfolded their green leaves in yonder nursery, but have scarce learned to spread the gay blossom. Is there in those an equal aptitude to produce the luscious juicy grape, or their own coarse and husky berry? By no means. They will (unless grafted with some generous cyon) certainly, universally, constantly bear the same harsh fruit with their parent tree; so certainly will the human mind, if not renewed by the Spirit of Christ, branch out into ungodly tempers, and bring forth wicked practices.

Ther. The nobleman mentioned by Xenophon †, when overcome by an alluring temptation, devised for his excuse the notion of two souls, one that inclined him to vice, another that prompted him to virtue. This was a moderate caricature, compared with my friend's. He will allow nothing regular or graceful in the human heart. You have metamorphosed the master-piece of the creation into such a deformed object, as may justly render him a terror to himself. Can there be a grosser libel upon the Creator, or a greater discouragement to our fellow-creatures?

Asp. If this be a distorted piece, what will you call the following description? "God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. This, perhaps, may be reckoned a more monstrous drawing still: yet it came from that hand which painted the canopy of the skies, and touched all the pictures of nature into such inimitable perfection.

Pray let us examine the most distinguishing features in this draught. Not barely the works of his hand, or the words of his tongue, but "the imaginations of his heart," are evil. The contagion has spread itself through the inner man. It has tainted the seat of his principles, and the source of his actions. Is there not, you will say, some mixture of good? No, they are only evil: there is no hopeful tendency: not so much as a little leaven of piety, that may have a chance to diffuse itself, and meliorate the whole lump. But are there no lucid intervals? No happy moments, when virtue gains the ascendancy? None; he is only evil continually. The usurpation of sin is total, and its tyranny perpetual.

What I have advanced, therefore, is no libel upon the Creator's benignity; because it is the very echo of his own determination. Neither is it so properly discouraging, as humbling and alarming to our fellow-creatures: humbling, to make us sensible of our ruin; alarming, to make us desirous of a recovery.

Ther. Is not the description which you have produced peculiar to the men of that wicked generation, whose guilt was as unparalleled as their punishment?

Asp. It is applicable both to them and their successors. The wisdom of God repeats the charge, and fixes it upon the race which survived the flood,

* Isa. xlvi. 8. A truth so apparent and undeniable, that Seneca could not but discern it, though he was an unenlightened heathen; could not but acknowledge it, though he was one of the proud Stoic sect. "Hac conditione nati sumus, animalia obnoxia non paucioribus animi quam corporis morbis." *De Ira*, lib. ii. c. 9.

† Cyropæd. lib. vi.

Gen. viii. 21. The depravity of human nature continued, nor could the waters of an universal deluge purge it away. So deep, alas! is the stain, and so incorrigible the virulency of original corruption, that it will yield to nothing; to nothing will it yield but to the "washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. iii. 5. Till this takes place, every heart of man must wear the prophet's stigmatizing motto, "Deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

Ther. This passage, I am informed, is not rightly translated, especially in the last expression. The Hebrew original does not bear so hard upon the human character as the English version.

Asp. You allow then that the heart is deceitful. And of this we have a glaring proof in the conduct of Hazael. He thought it impossible that he should ever perpetrate such horrid barbarities as the prophet foresaw. "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" 2 Kings viii. 13. Yes, Hazael; however thou mayest imagine thyself gentle as a lamb, thou art fierce as a dog, and savage as a tiger: which was most terribly demonstrated by the event.

Suppose we translate the other word somewhat more accurately, the little alteration will be of less service to your cause. Instead of "desperately wicked," you may, if you please, read "deplorably disordered," Jer. xvii. 3. This is the exact import of the phrase. It is a metaphor derived from a very distempered body, in which the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint: "From the crown of whose head to the sole of whose feet," there is nothing but consuming disease and enfeebling languors*. The rules of civility may set a specious varnish on the conversation, but until grace, sanctifying grace, administers the remedy, the most civilized heart will be like the pale emaciated cheek that is poorly enlivened with paint.

Ther. What say the writers of the New Testament? Is not their way of thinking more liberal and benign? If human nature wore so hideous an aspect under the legal dispensation, since the coming of our Lord, and the publishing of his gospel, one may expect an improved and more pleasing face of things.

Asp. Human nature, in every period of time, and under every dispensation of religion, is still the same. It was the Spirit of Christ who indited the Old Testament; and he cannot vary from himself in the declarations of the New.

I am very much inclined to believe that all the bodily diseases which our divine Physician healed, during his abode on earth, were so many emblematical representations of spiritual disorders, which, like certain family distempers, may be said to run in the blood of all mankind. Will you give me leave, Theron, to explain myself? I do not like to engross the discourse, yet, I would willingly enlarge upon this subject.

Ther. By all means. The laws of argument, separate from the indulgences of friendship, give you a warrant to urge whatever may support your cause. Besides, I shall be glad to hear your sentiments upon a point so curious.

Asp. The poor leper, covered with noisome sores, is the very picture of a polluted sinner. Was the one, for his contagious impurities, separated from

* Isa. i. 6. Agreeable to this doctrine, and consonant to this metaphor, is the confession of our Liturgy, "There is no health in us."

the society of his fellow-citizens? So shall the other, for his abominable uncleanness, be banished from the beatific presence, unless he be cleansed by the blood, and justified by the righteousness of Jesus.

You pity the condition of that unhappy creature who was born blind. His eyes rolled, but rolled in vain, to find the dawning ray. Such is the benighted state of the human mind, till Almighty goodness command the scales of ignorance to fall off, and pour heavenly day through all the intellectual faculties. Then, and not till then, we begin to know the holiness, the justice, the adorable excellencies of God. We see the sublime purity of his law, and the extreme depravity of our own hearts. We are brought acquainted with the transcendent glories of our Redeemer's person, and apprehend that most comfortable mystery of his substitution in our stead. We discern the ineffable perfection of his merits, and the divinely rich freeness of his grace. Truths incomparably more delightful to the soul, than all the delectable scenes of creation are to the sight.

The paralytic's enervated limbs too truly represent the impotence of our nature. Was he unable to grind at a mill, to run in a race, or to turn himself on his bed? So unable are we to "fight the good fight of faith," to exercise the graces of Christianity, or even to turn ourselves unto God. Do not you, my friend, experience something of this inability? For my part, I must lay my hand on my breast, and daily, hourly confess, "The palsy is here. Though not altogether dead in sin, (blessed be Christ Jesus, and his quickening Spirit!) yet how languid is my zeal, how enfeebled my industry, in the great affair of everlasting salvation!—I would fain believe, and with a full assurance of faith, the promises of the unchangeable Jehovah. But how often do I stagger through unbelief!—I would fain love, and with the warmest gratitude, my ever-merciful and most beneficent God. But, oh! what coldness benumbs my affections!—I wish to be humble in every thought, heavenly in all my desires, and wholly resigned to the divine will. But, alas! my sufficiency for these things is like the flaccid sinew, or the withered arm."

It would be endless to particularize all the maladies which were emblems of our misery, and the triumphs of our Lord's power. Let me only remark, that their bodies were afflicted with a single disorder, our souls labour under a complication of evils. They felt their affliction, and were desirous, importunately desirous of relief. We are, till awakened from above, insensible of our calamitous case. We add, to all our other indispositions, a stupifying lethargy, or an extravagant delirium.

Ther. Such allegorical expositions of Scripture are pretty enough; but, I presume, you yourself cannot reckon them demonstrative. For my own part, I must appeal from the surmises of fancy to the verdict of reason.

Asp. I cannot think that the allegorical sense, when soberly introduced, is unworthy our regard, or without its weight. However, I have no design to preclude your appeal. Will the avowed, will the reiterated decision of an apostle, satisfy my friend, and be admitted as the verdict of reason? St. Paul has declared of himself, "In me, that is, in my flesh," or unrenewed nature, "dwelleth no good," Rom. vii. 18; no good temper, not so much as any good desire. Elsewhere he affirms, that "the carnal mind," or unregenerate soul, "is not subject to the law of God," nay, is an enemy, or rather enmity itself, Rom. viii. 7. Against what?—Against sin? That were a

noble antipathy.—Against the world? That were a laudable disaffection.—No, but against God and his law. Amazing perverseness! to be enmity against God, who is boundless benignity and consummate goodness; enmity against his law, which is the transcript of his amiable perfections, and the faultless model of all virtue.

Ther. This, I suppose, is the character of Saul the Pharisee, not of Paul the apostle; descriptive of his condition when he was “a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious.”

Asp. It relates not to himself alone, but is applicable to all who continue in a state of nature. The blessed Author of our being, speaking of mankind in general, says, That “he is even flesh,” mere flesh, altogether flesh*; his very soul, and all its powers, are wholly enslaved to fleshly appetites. The beneficent Restorer of our happiness pronounces the same sentence in the very same words: “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh,” John iii. 6. The faculties which men receive by their natural birth have a carnal bias, incline to nothing but sordid pleasures and ignoble pursuits. Our Saviour reindulges the admonition, and illustrates it by a very remarkable allusion. You cannot forget his answer to a procrastinating disciple, “Let the dead bury their dead,” Matth. viii. 22; intimating, that as many as are unsanctified by the Holy Ghost, though possessed of an animal, are destitute of the divine life; are no more fit for the kingdom of heaven, for its converse or its joys, than a pale corpse in the coffin, or dry bones in the charnel-house, are qualified to transact any secular business.

St. Paul sets the seal of heaven to this momentous truth in various passages of his epistles. From a multitude let me select one, and recommend it to your serious consideration: “You that were sometime alienated, and enemies.” The Colossians, and all mankind, were alienated from the living God; had no true knowledge of him; and, what is worse, had no sincere desire after him. Nay, they were not only strangers, but enemies; in a state of hostility to his holy nature and heavenly will. What can express a greater degeneracy? Nothing, unless it be the following clause: “By a mind intent upon wicked works †;” a mind, not only averse to all good, but passionately prone to all evil.

Ther. A few picked passages, of a figurative import, and artfully cogged by some dexterous interpretation, may seem to support your cause.

Asp. Ah! Theron, there is no need to use sleight of hand. He that runs may read this doctrine in the sacred authors. It is interwoven with the whole series of their historical, and makes a professed part of their practical writings.

What is more common with the inspired penmen, than to express a pro-

* Gen. vi. 3. The word flesh, by which the all-wise Creator characterizes man, signifies, in the sacred writings, whatever is dishonourable in itself, provoking to God or introductory to the ruin of man. The works of the flesh, are a compendium of all iniquity, Gal. v. 19–21. To walk after the flesh, is the very reverse of walking in the spirit, diametrically opposite to the divine law and true holiness, Rom. viii. 4. To be carnally-minded, or to have the influence, the savour, the relish of the flesh (*φρονημα σαρκος*) predominant in our minds, is the spiritual death of the soul, and a presage of eternal death both in body and soul, Rom. viii. 6.

† Col. i. 21. *Τη διανοια εν ταις εργασις ταις πονηραις*, “*mente malis operibus intenta.*” An eminent critic would thus point, and thus translate the words; and assigns, for his alteration, the following reason; “*Mens enim dicitur esse in ea re quam semper cogitat, ad quam cupidine fertur et inclinatur.*”—DAVENANT *in loc.*

fligate course of life by "following our own imaginations, and walking in our own ways?" When immorality and licentiousness were predominant in Israel, knew no restraints, and kept no bounds, how does the unerring historian describe this horrible state of things? "Every one did that which was right in his own eyes," Judg. xviii. 6. Nothing can more strongly imply the extreme depravity of mankind than such a phraseology, which makes it one and the same thing to pursue our natural inclinations, and to act the abandoned sinner.

St. Jude cannot write a few lines but he must touch upon this subject, must teach this humbling lesson: "Sensual," he says, "not having the spirit," Jude 19. According to his estimate, not to be actuated by the power of especial grace, is to remain under the dominion of sensuality. If we may credit this servant of Christ, every man, while unrenewed by the divine Spirit, is governed by flesh and sense. Can any man then pretend to be originally free from the influence of corruption?

St. Paul exempts not himself, no, nor any of the highest saints, from the opprobrious charge: "We all walked according to the desires of the flesh, and of the mind."—Which desires in us, as well as in the idolatrous heathens, were base, sordid, and contaminating. Insomuch that we, who are Jews by birth, who are sons of God by our new birth, even we were "by nature the children of wrath," Eph. ii. 3. And if liable to wrath, then doubtless subject to depravity, and chargeable with sin.

Ther. What says St. James? You have suppressed, and I had almost forgot, his testimony, though it is so very pertinent to my purpose, and so very explicit in my favour: "Men, who are made after the similitude of God." The similitude of God signifies, in the sacred books, those moral endowments which distinguish the possessor both from the brute and the devil. And if men are made after this image, if they are created with these endowments, where is your doctrine of original sin?

Asp. I began to flatter myself that your objections were exhausted. But since I am mistaken in this particular, surely it must be as great a mistake to imagine that our apostle would maintain an opinion so repugnant to the aforementioned texts, and so contrary to universal observation. Do not you perceive the very reverse true with regard to your own children? Why do you address them with such tender entreaties, such warm exhortations, such repeated arguments? Why do you allure them to duty by promises, and deter them from transgression by threatenings? Is all this regimen, all this discipline, necessary for creatures that bear the holy image of God?

They are "made after the similitude of God!" Then they have no need of the renewing influences of the Holy Ghost, in case they live; and no need of the atonement of Christ's blood, in case they die. Would James, the Lord's brother, assert such an egregious error, as not only opposes a single article, but undermines the whole constitution of Christianity? sets aside the sanctification of the divine Spirit, and the propitiation of the Redeemer's death? Impossible for him to assert! Impossible, I should think, for us to suppose!

St. James speaks of a fact that is past; speaks of men collectively, as they were all included in their first parent. The passage, I apprehend, should be

translated, not men that “are,” but men that “were”^a created, &c. The Scripture considers Adam as the common parent of us all ; nay more, considers us all as existing in our great progenitor ; which is so far from overthrowing, that it establishes the point in debate. For if we were all created after the similitude of God, in and with Adam ; it must follow, that we all fell from our conformity to God in and with Adam. And if so—let me for once retort my friend’s interrogatory,—Where is not original sin ? I am very sure it runs through our Liturgy ; is an essential part of our Articles ; and most strongly delineated in our Homilies. Shall I produce some of those testimonies, which are as clear as they are copious ?

Ther. No more of your testimonies, good Aspasio. Inform me rather what advantages can accrue from your inculcating, or my adopting, such a doctrine. Suppose it were undeniably true, disagreeable truths, like disagreeable objects, should be consigned over to obscurity, not obtruded upon our view. On such an occasion, the reply of Themistocles should be mine. One of the literati of Greece offered to communicate an elaborate and curious invention, by means of which his memory should be so wonderfully strengthened, as to retain whatever he read or heard. “ My friend,” replied the hero, “ you quite mistake the way to serve me. I want to learn the art, not of remembering, but of forgetting.”

Asp. If to forget our disease were a likely method to restore our health, I should readily concur in your hero’s way of thinking. As this will hardly be allowed, I cannot but judge it more advisable to remember our disease, that we may inquire after a remedy.

Ther. Where is this remedy to be had ?

Asp. Not on earth, but from heaven. The schools of science cannot discover it. The courts of kings are unable to procure it. The college of physicians know not how to prescribe it. But the gospel of our salvation prescribes, prepares, and dispenses it. The language of Christ in his holy word is, “ I will bring her health and cure,” Jer. xxxiii. 6. And the beginning of our cure is, to be sensible of our disorder.

Hence we are taught to be humble. To review the catalogue of our actual transgressions, is a mortifying employ. But that which lays the soul in the lowest abasement, is the conviction of inbred iniquity. This strikes at the root of human vanity, and cuts asunder the very sinews of self-conceit. Blindness in the understanding, impotency in the will, disorder in the affections—these are not visitants, but inhabitants † ; congenial with our frame, and ingrained in our constitution. How then, oh ! how can we be vain of our moral beauty, who have an hereditary defilement cleaving to all our faculties ? Surely this must banish the Pharisee from our breast, and inspire us with the sentiments of that sincere penitent, “ Behold, I am vile !” Job xl. 4 ; must teach us the language of the abashed leper : “ Unclean ! unclean !” Lev. xiii. 45.

Ther. I should think it would make us melancholy rather than humble ; and serve no other purpose than to introduce an afflictive sense of extreme wretchedness.

^a James iii. 9. That this is the precise signification of the participle *γεννητός*, may be gathered from 1 Tim. v. 9, where *γεννημένη* is translated *having been* ; and must necessarily refer, not to the present, but to the past condition of the widow.

† Called therefore *η οικουσα εν τωι καρτια*, “ sin that dwelleth in me,” Rom. vii. 17.

Asp. Did we intend to rest here, your apprehensions would be just ; but we urge the doctrine of original corruption as a preparative for the redemption of Christ.

It is observable, that very few applied to the blessed Jesus in the days of his flesh but the sons and daughters of affliction. The levee of that Prince of Peace was crowded by the lame, the blind, the diseased. These being sensible of distress, and longing for relief, fell as humble supplicants at his feet ; while others, who were firm in their health, and gay in their spirits, rejected him with contemptuous scorn. When we perceive “the plague of our heart,” and feel those worse than ulcerous sores which overspread our nature, we also shall ardently seek to “the Lord our healer.” When we find ourselves subject to the curse of the law, in bondage to the tyranny of Satan, and liable to everlasting damnation, then the divine Physician and the divine Redeemer will be precious indeed : whereas, if we remain insensible of our misery, the gospel, which is saving health to the contrite soul, will be an unaffecting story to our ears : we may hear it, we may read it, as an amusing narrative ; but shall not receive it as a sovereign remedy.

Ther. Not receive the gospel, Aspasio ! I hardly understand what you mean. I often study the gospel ; I believe it to be a divine revelation, and endeavour to follow its directions. I look upon it as containing the most refined system of morality ; as enforcing every virtue by the strongest motives, and recommending all by the most perfect example.

Asp. To which you should add—as revealing that great Mediator, who has fulfilled all righteousness, to effect our justification ; who has also the fulness of the Spirit, to accomplish our regeneration. Otherwise, what you mention is infinitely short of the gospel. It brings no glad tidings to fallen creatures. It administers no succour to ruined sinners. It is like writing a copy for the blind, or setting a task to the disabled ; which would rather be an insult on their impotence, than a relief of their distress.

The first particular I waive at present. Only let me ask your opinion of the last ; which is a grand doctrine, and a very distinguishing privilege of the gospel : I mean, the doctrine and the privilege of spiritual regeneration ; exclusive of which, all your endeavours to possess virtue, and practise morality, will be no better than endeavours to fly without wings, or to run without feet.

While unimpressed with a sense of our original depravity, we shall probably sit down contented with some superficial reformation, and not aspire after a renewal of the heart. Civility will pass for sanctity, and a temperate disposition for a gracious habit. Why is the new birth, why are all the saving operations of the blessed Spirit, disregarded by some, derided by others ? Because these persons are insensible of their utter inability to all good, and of their abject slavery to all evil. Therefore they see no reason for this divine agency, or for that universal change.

You also, my dear friend, while unacquainted with your natural corruption, cannot apprehend either the reasonableness or the necessity of being “renewed in the spirit of your mind,” Eph. iv. 23. But when experience has taught you the former, you will want no arguments to convince you of the latter. Can creatures who are blind in their understandings, discern the things which belong to their eternal peace ? Can creatures who are dead in sin, exercise the graces or discharge the duties of a Christian life ? Can

creatures, whose hearts are enmity against God, either delight to do his will here, or be meet for his beatific presence hereafter ?

Under the influence of such convictions, that new birth which the gospel of Christ promises, which the Spirit of God produces, will appear as necessary for your state, and be as welcome to your soul, as these gentle dews are necessary for the languishing herbs, and welcome to the thirsty soil.

Ther. The dews, though refreshing to the flowers, may be too chilly for our constitutions. And see! the star of evening, by proclaiming the approach of night, has given us a warning to quit our arbour. Some other time we must resume this inquiry; for I am by no means satisfied that your theory agrees with experience.

Asp. I fear I have already kept you out too long. Let me just observe as we go in, that the doctrine, however disagreeable in itself, is conducted to an advantageous issue. It is productive of a much more substantial consolation, than history assigns to the great, but exiled Marius. When he fled, with his ruined circumstances, to linger out the poor remains of life among the ruins of Carthage, what was his chief support? "Contemplating," says the historian, "that famous city in the dust, he was the less afflicted with his own downfall."

We have not been put off with such cold comforts, such negative benefits. The belief of original sin has a tendency to make us humble, to shew us our need of Christ, to create in us a hunger and thirst after the renewing influences of his Spirit, and the justifying merit of his righteousness. So that it must be owing to our own perverseness, or our own negligence, if we do not levy a tax upon our loss, and rise even by our fall.

DIALOGUE XII.

THE sun was fiercely bright, and the sky without a cloud. Not a breath fanned the woods, nor a gale curled the stream. The fields, exposed to all the fiery beams, were like a glowing hearth. The little birds, overcome by the potent influence, lost for a while their tuneful notes. Nothing was heard in the garden but the drowsy hum of bees, and the moaning buzz of winged insects. All nature seemed to languish, the flourishing meads looked sickly, the gayest blossoms began to fade, the sprightliest animals, if not reposed under some cooling shelter, panted for breath, and hung their drooping heads, amidst the all-surrounding blaze and the unsufferable heat. Aspasio had disappeared ever since dinner, and none could tell whither he was gone. Theron, as soon as the tea equipage was removed, took his way to the wood. Desirous of the thickest shade, he hastened to the centre. A serpentine walk composed the avenue, which, after several windings, delivered him into a large circular area, not covered with a Grecian or Roman temple, unmeaning imitation of Pagan idolatry, but surrounded with aged and princely oaks, the coalition of whose branches threw over the grassy plat, a majestic, rural dome, and their unpierced foliage "imbrowned the noontide hours."

In the midst, and elevated on a square base, was a statue representing the venerable Elijah on his bended knees, with his hands stretched out, and eyes

lifted up to heaven. His attitude, his air, his every feature, were a lively comment on those strong energetic expressions of Scripture, "Hold on God," Isa. lxiv. 7; "Wrestle with the Almighty," Col. iv. 1; "Pour out your hearts before him," Psalm lxii. 8. On one side of the pedestal were engraved the priests of Baal, in frantic emotions calling upon their senseless deity, and gashing themselves with unavailing wounds. On the other was exhibited, in basso-relievo, the adoring Tishbite's altar; the victim burning with fire from the Lord, even while the water ran from every limb, and overflowed the trench below.

A remote cascade tumbled from a craggy rock. The stream, after having wasted its silver foam in a winding progress, straggled into this grand arborescence. Here it just appeared, gliding down a gentle slope, with a flaunting air and a prattling noise. Impressed, as it were, with the unexpected solemnity of the scene, it seemed to check its wanton waves, and turned aside into a more sequestered path: as some heedless trifler, who bolts unawares into the royal presence, stands struck with reverence and awe, or retires with precipitate and confusion.

The deep gloom, shedding a kind of night, even while the sun glared on the sky;—not a whisper stirring among so many millions of leaves, and their warbling natives hushed in silence;—the sonorous toll of the distant cascade, and the tinkling chime of the nearer rill;—the profound adoration and fervent devotion, which lived in the lineaments of the impassioned stone:—all these circumstances rendered the place prodigiously august and striking. Not much unlike the ancient oratories, where holy people retired from the giddy ring and the bustling crowd, to ennoble their minds with sublime contemplation; where they bade a temporary adieu to the tumultuous world, its gay impertinence and solemn dullness, in order to maintain a more uninterrupted communion with that mighty Being, "who sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers before him;" Isa. xl. 22†.

Welcome to Theron was the shady bower; welcome the cool aspect of the musical flow of the water; but more welcome than all was the sight of his friend, who lay reclined at the foot of an oak, with a book half open in his hand, and his eye fixed upon the statue.

Ther. I know not, Aspasio, whether I must make an apology for breaking in upon your retirement; or call you to an account for depriving the ladies of your company at the tea-table.

Asp. Indeed, Theron, I have been so much delighted with the place, with the companion in my hand, and the noble object before me, that I scarcely observed how the time stole away. And I flatter myself, if you will take seat by my side, and share my entertainment, you will be more inclined to excuse than to aggravate my fault.

Ther. Is Tully then (for I observe his name on the volume) your com-

* *Αγωνίζομαι ἐν ταῖς ἀποτυχίαις.*

† What a noble image is here, and what an exquisitely fine contrast! God, the great God, sitteth on those lofty and immense heavens, which, at an inconceivable distance, surround this pensile globe. From that most sublime and magnificent throne he looks down upon the inhabitants of the earth; who, in all their pomp and splendour, amidst all the admired works and boasted acquisitions, are mean and impotent in his sight; mean and impotent, as the poor insects which wander over the parched heath for sustenance, which spend all the day in idle insignificant chirpings, and at night take up their contemptible abode on a blade of grass.

tion? And can such a devoted admirer of the Bible be so highly charmed with a heathen classic? St. Augustin somewhere declares, that though passionately fond, before his conversion, of Tully's writings, yet after that memorable change, he could no longer relish those admired compositions; because they were not sweetened, as he expresses himself, with the mellifluous name of Jesus.

Asp. I am far from pretending to such an exalted pitch of devotion as that seraphic father attained. I can spend a vacant minute on the delicate odes of Horace, and taste a refined entertainment in Virgil's beautiful poem. But when I hear a sermon, or peruse a religious treatise, which borrows neither dignity nor charms from that amiable and glorious name, I own myself extremely disappointed. Without the offices, the merits, or the grace of Christ, the sermon and the treatise appear as defective, as a body that is neither adorned with the head nor enlivened with the heart.

Ther. I suppose then you cultivate an acquaintance with the Grecian and Roman authors, in order to improve your taste, and polish your style.

Asp. These, and, I am apt to think, more considerable advantages than these, may be derived from an occasional application to their works. They may serve as so many shades, to set off with heightened lustre the beauty and glory of the sacred oracles.

While I peruse Plato's ornamented page, or listen to Cicero's flowing periods, I am somewhat like the person who amuses himself in a gallery of painted flowers. He is pleased with the curious creation of the pencil; but finds none of that delicious fragrance, none of those breathing sweets, which meet him in the garden, and regale his sense from the blooming parterre. So here are brilliant sentiments and a florid diction; delicate touches of wit, and bold strokes of description: but no discovery of Christ Jesus, no displays of his ineffable love, no overtures of reconciliation with the blessed God; nothing to yield us solid comfort in our present state, or any joyful expectations with regard to the approaching eternity.

Besides, when I converse with those celebrated geniuses of antiquity, who were at once the most erroneous and the most judicious—the most judicious in their taste of polite literature, the most erroneous in their apprehensions of invisible things—they shew me, what they never intended, the inexpressible need of revelation. They teach me to set a higher value on that inestimable gift. I bless the distinguishing goodness of Providence, which has cast my lot*, not at Athens, but in Emmanuel's land. I say, with wonder and gratitude, "Why did not my existence commence in those eras of religious dotage? Why was not my portion confined to those regions of barbarism and delusion? Why am I not burning incense to idols, paying senseless adoration to sculptured stone, or worshipping, with detestable ceremonies, a set of lascivious, debauched, and scandalous deities?"—Surely, Theron, from every perusal of those volumes, attended with such a reflection, we shall see the utmost reason to magnify "the tender mercies of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us," Luke i. 78, and brought us out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel.

* Alluding to the story of the philosopher who used to bless the gods for three privileges:—That he was made not a brute, but a rational creature; that he was born not in barbarous climes, but in Greece; that he lived not in the more uncultivated ages, but in the time and under the tuition of Socrates.

Permit me to mention another benefit which may result from a correspondence with those masterly writers. The streams may lead us to the inexhaustible fountain; lead us to admire the only wise God our Saviour, who has given such a shining vein of ingenuity to his rational creatures. As I read their works, and am charmed with their beauties, I would frequently reflect—"If the essays of a finite mind, and the compositions of a mortal pen, yield such high satisfaction, what rapturous, what unknown delight, must arise from an uninterrupted communion with Infinite Wisdom! To stand, not at the feet of Homer, and attend the flights of his elevated imagination; not in the presence of Socrates, and hear the dictates of his sagacious soul; but to stand in the courts of the Lord, and before the throne of the Lamb, there to contemplate, without any interposing veil, the counsels of his unerring providence; to have the mysteries of his redeeming love laid fully open to our view; and receive the brightest manifestations of all his amiable, his adorable, his unspeakable attributes?"

Ther. These are advantages truly desirable, and equally obvious. Methinks, it surprises me that I should never so much as propose them, and grieves me that I should so long be deprived of them. A view to such very superior improvements will, I hope, render my future intercourse with those favourite authors still more agreeable, and abundantly more beneficial.—But let me ask, what passage was engaging your attention this afternoon?

Asp. The great orator's treatise concerning the "Nature of the Divine Being*;" that part especially which proves his existence and perfections from the formation of the human body.

Ther. And do you not perceive, that he is almost as deficient in the knowledge of his subject, as he is mistaken in his ideas of the Supreme Cause? The exquisite contrivance and inimitable workmanship of the human frame, were, in those early ages, but dimly discerned. It was the infancy of anatomy, when the very professors had scarcely the qualifications of a modern pupil. Many of the received notions were childish, almost all of them superficial.

Asp. Will my Theron entertain me with a more accurate description of this wonderful structure?

Ther. How could you take occasion, Aspasio, from the hint I dropped, to conceive any such expectation? It is one thing to discover, another to correct, what is amiss. Many spectators can point out an accidental defect in some celebrated statue, or a small indelicacy in some valuable piece of painting, who are absolutely incapable of retouching the one or supplying the other.

Asp. Since we are fallen upon this point, you must give me leave to renew and urge my request. I shall be extremely glad to hear your remarks upon the subject, especially as you have made this branch of science a part of your amusement, and not without the advantage of anatomical dissections; whereas I have very seldom applied my thoughts to the former, and never had an opportunity of being present at the latter.

Let me also observe, that our very situation favours, or rather suggests, such a topic of conversation. All the fine prospects of the country are excluded. We have scarce anything left but ourselves to contemplate. And shall this be the only theme we neglect!

* De Natura Deorum.

Ther. It is somewhat preposterous, I must confess, to pry into the archives of colleges, to ransack the cabinets of the *virtuosi*, to carry our search through the whole compass of external nature, and at the same time overlook the far more surprising curiosities which abound in the composition of our own bodies.—Since you insist upon it, my observations, crude and extemporaneous as they are, shall submit themselves to your judgment, provided you will be content to receive only a few of the outlines and nothing like a finished draught.

Asp. Let me just hint, that the more circumstantial your account is, so much the more welcome will it be to your friend, and so much the more honourable to our common Creator. For I really think, that Galen's declaration upon this head is perfectly just: which I have read in my favourite commentator Beza, and which speaks to the following effect* :—"Such treatises as display the excellencies of the great Creator, compose one of the noblest and most acceptable hymns. To acquaint ourselves with his sublime perfections, and point out to others his infinite power, his unerring wisdom, and his boundless benignity; this is a more substantial act of devotion than to slay hecatombs of victims at his altar, or kindle mountains of spices into incense."—Theron, after pausing a few minutes, thus resumed the discourse.

Ther. When some master-builder undertakes to erect a magnificent edifice, he begins with the less decorated but more solid parts—those which are to support, or those which are to contain the rest. This order, if you please, we will follow in considering "the earthly house of our tabernacle," 2 Cor. v. 1.

First, you have a system of bones cast into a variety of moulds, enlarged or contracted into a variety of sizes. All strong, that they may commodiously bear up the fleshy machine; yet light, that they may not depress the animal with an encumbering load. Bored with an internal cavity to contain the moistening marrow, and perforated with exceedingly fine ducts to admit the nourishing vessels. Insensible themselves, they are covered with a membrane of exquisite sensibility, which warns them of the approach, and secures them from the annoyance, of any injurious friction; and at the same time preserves the muscular parts from being fretted in their action by the hard and rough substance of the bones. Their figures are always most precisely fitted to their uses. They are generally larger at the extremities than in the middle, that they may be joined more firmly, and not so easily dislocated. The manner of their articulation is truly admirable, and remarkably various; yet never varied without demonstrating some wise design, and answering some valuable end. Frequently, when two are united, the one is nicely rounded and capped with a smooth substance; the other is scooped into a hollow of the same dimensions, to receive the polished knob; and both are lubricated with an unctuous fluid, to yield the readiest rotation in the socket.

The feet compose the firmest and neatest pedestal, infinitely beyond all that statuary and architecture can accomplish; capable of altering its form, and extending its size, as different circumstances require. Besides performing the office of a pedestal, they contain a set of the nicest springs, which help to place the body in a variety of graceful attitudes, and qualify it for a multiplicity of advantageous motions. The undermost part of the heel, and the extremity of the sole, are shod with a tough, insensible, sinewy substance.

* *Vide* Bez. Annot. ad Rom. i. 20.

† The periosteum.

This we may call a kind of natural scandal: It never wears out, never wants repair, and always prevents that undue compression of the vessels which the weight of the body, in walking or standing, might otherwise occasion. The legs and thighs are like substantial and stately columns*; articulated in such a manner, that they administer most commodiously to the act of walking, yet obstruct not the easy posture of sitting. The legs swell out towards the top, with a gentle projection, and are wrought off towards the bottom with neat diminutions; which variation lessens their bulk, at the same time that it increases their beauty.

The ribs, turned into a regular arch, are gently moveable for the act of respiration. They form a secure lodgement for the lungs and the heart, which being some of the most distinguished and important organs of life, have their residence fortified by this strong semicircular rampart†. The back-bone is intended, not only to strengthen the body, and sustain its most capacious store-rooms, but also to bring down that communication of the brain which is usually termed the spinal marrow. As an open channel, it conveys—as a well-closed case, it guards—this vital silver‡; and, by several commodious outlets, transmits the animating treasure into all the inferior parts. Had it only been large, straight, and hollow, it might have served these several purposes; but then the loins must have been inflexible, and every man impaled (not by the executioner, but by nature) on a stake coeval with his existence. To avoid which, it consists of very short bones, closely knit together by intervening cartilages. This peculiarity of structure prevents dislocation, and gives the main pillar of our frame the pliancy of an osier, even while it retains the firmness of an oak. By this means, it is a kind of continued joint, capable of various inflections, without bruising the soft medullary substance which fills its cavity, without intercepting the nervous fluid which is to be detached from this grand reservoir, or diminishing that strength which is necessary to support all the upper stories. A formation so very peculiar in any other of the solids, must have been attended with great inconveniences: here it is unspeakably servicable—is, both for workmanship and situation, a masterpiece of creative skill never enough to be admired.

The arms, pendent on either side, are exactly proportioned to each other, that the equilibrium of the structure may not be disconcerted. These being the guards which defend§, and the ministers which serve the whole body, are fitted for the most diversified and extensive operations; firm with bone, yet not weighty with flesh, and capable of performing, with singular expedition and ease, all manner of useful motions. They bend inwards, and turn outwards; they rise upwards, and stoop downwards; they wheel about, and throw themselves into whatever direction we please. To these are annexed the hands, and all terminated by the fingers; which are not, like the arms, of the same length and of an equal bigness, but in both respects different,

* Styled therefore, by the sacred philosopher, "the strong men." Eccl. xii. 3, and compared by the same beautiful writer to pillars of marble, Cant. v. 15.

† "Thou hast fenced me," secured my inward and vital parts, "with bones and sinews," Job x. 11. "Crates pectoris," is Virgil's expression.

‡ This is supposed to be the part which Solomon describes by the silver cord: and is indeed like a cord, on account of its shape; like silver on account of its colour, Eccl. xii. 6.

§ Called, in Solomon's figurative but elegant sketch of anatomy "the keepers of the house," Eccl. xii. 3.

which gives them a more graceful appearance, and a much greater degree of usefulness. Were they all flesh, they would be comparatively impotent; were they one entire bone, they would be utterly inflexible; but consisting of various little bones, and a multitude of muscles, what shape can they not assume? what service can they not perform? Being placed at the end of the arm, the sphere of their action is exceedingly enlarged. This advantageous situation realises the fable of Briareus, and renders a pair of hands as serviceable as an hundred. The extremities of the fingers are an assemblage of fine tendinous fibres, most acutely sensible, which, notwithstanding the delicacy of their texture, are destined to almost incessant employ, and frequently exercised among rugged objects. For this reason, they are overlaid with the nails, a sort of horny expansion, which, like a ferule, hinders the flesh from being ungracefully flattened; and like a sheath, preserves the tender parts from injurious impressions.

In the ministry of the hands, and activity of the fingers, we possess a case of the finest instruments, or a collection of the noblest utensils, qualifying us for the execution of every work which the projecting genius can devise, or the lavish fancy crave. To these we are obliged for the beautiful statues, which have often entertained our eyes in yonder solitary walks; and even for that melodious trumpet, which now addresses our ears from the summer-house on the fish-pond. These raise the lofty column, and turn the spacious arch. These swell the majestic dome, and adjust the commodious apartment. Architecture, with all her striking beauties, and all her rich benefits, is the creation of the human hand. Yielding to the strength of the hand, the tallest firs fall to the ground, and the largest oaks descend from the mountains. Fashioned by the dexterity of the hand, they accommodate the sailor with a floating warehouse; and circulate, from Britain to Japan, the productions of nature and the improvements of art. Obedient to the human hand, metals ascend from their subterranean beds, and compose the most substantial parts of that curious machine*, which transmits far and near, to the monarch's palace and to the peasant's hut, such treasures of wisdom and knowledge, "as the gold and crystal cannot equal," Job xxviii. 17.

Among the Egyptians the hand was the symbol of strength: among the Romans, it was an emblem of fidelity; and I think it may, among all nations, be looked upon as the ensign of authority. It is the original and the universal sceptre; that which not only represents, but ascertains, our dominion over all the elements, and over every creature. Though Providence has not given us the strength of the horse, the swiftness of the greyhound, or the sagacious scent of the spaniel, yet, directed by the understanding, and enabled by the hand, we can subject them to our will, turn them to our advantage, and, in this sense, make them all our own. These hands, (surprising to relate!) these short hands, have found out a way, whereby they can dive to the bottom of the ocean, can penetrate the bowels of the earth, and reach from shore to shore. These feeble hands can manage the wings of the wind, can arm themselves with the rage of the fire, and press into their service the forcible impetuosity of the waters. How eminent is the dignity, how extensive the agency, of the hand! It would require more eloquence than your orator possessed to display the former, and more pages than your book contains, to describe the latter. How greatly, then, are we indebted to our indulgent Creator for accommodating us with this noble, this distinguishing, this invaluable member!

* The printing-press.

Above all is the head, a majestic dome, designed for the residence of the brain. It is framed in exact conformity to this important purpose; ample to receive it, strong to uphold it, and firm to defend it. As the head resembles the general's tent in an army, or the monarch's palace in a city, it has a communication established with all, even the most inferior and remote parts of the system; has outlets and avenues, for the ready dispatch of couriers to all quarters, and for the reception of speedy intelligence on every interesting occasion. It is furnished with lodgments, wherein to post sentinels of various characters, and appointed for various offices. To expedite their operations, whether they are employed in reconnoitring what passes without or examining what claims admittance within, the whole turns upon a curious pivot, most nicely contrived to afford the largest and freest circumvolutions.

This stately capital is screened from heat, defended from cold, and at the same time very much beautified, by a copious growth of hair, which flows down from the parted forelock in decent curls, and hangs mantling on the cheeks, clustering on the shoulders. A decoration incomparably more delicate than any or all the orders of architecture can supply, and so perfectly light, that it no way encumbers or incommodes the wearer.

While many animals creep on the ground, while all of them are prone in their posture or their aspect, the attitude of man is erect, which is by far the most graceful, has an air of dignity, and bespeaks superiority. It is by far the most commodious; fits us for the prosecution of every grand scheme, and facilitates the success of all our extensive designs. It is likewise attended with the greatest safety, being, if not less than any other position exposed to dangers, yet more happily contrived to repel or avoid them.

Asp. May it not likewise be intended to remind us of our exalted original, and our sublime end: our original, which was the breath of the Almighty, and the Spirit of the Most High; our end, which is not the soil we tread on, or any of its low productions, but the heaven of heavens, and the "things that are above."

But not to divert from our subject, which, in my friend's manner of handling it, is as entertaining as it is instructive:—The bones (to carry on your own allusion) are only the rafters, the beams, the shell of the living edifice. You have raised the walls, and laid the floors; you have made the proper divisions, and left the necessary apertures. But in every finished house the roof is covered, and the rooms are wainscotted. The sashes are hung, and the doors turn upon their hinges. The grates are fixed, and the stairs ascend. Within, the lodgings are furnished; without, the front is ornamented. All is rendered commodious for domestic use, and graceful to the external view.

Ther. This likewise is executed by the great, the divine Artificer. Here are ligaments; a tough and strong arrangement of fibres to unite the several limbs, and render what would otherwise be a disjointed unwieldy jumble, a well-compacted and self-manageable system. Membranes, or thin and flexile tunics, appointed to enwrap the fleshy parts, to form a connexion between some, and make a separation between others*.

Arteries, the rivers of our little world †, or the aqueducts of the organised

* The intestines are fastened to each other by the mesentery. The breast is divided into two cavities by the "mediastinum." Both which are reckoned among the membranes.

† A human body was called by the ancients, the "microcosm;" that is, a little world, or the world in miniature.

metropolis, some of which ascend to the head, others spread themselves over the shoulders; some extend to the arms, some descend to the feet, and striking out, as they go, into numberless smaller canals, visit the streets, the alleys, and every individual apartment of the vital city: these being wide at their origin, and lessening as they branch themselves, check the rapid impetus of the blood. To sustain this shock, they are endued with uncommon strength; by performing this service, they oblige the crimson current to pass into the narrowest defiles, and distribute itself into all quarters. The blood thrown from the heart dilates the arteries, and their own elastic force contracts them. By which means, they vibrate in proper places, very perceptibly against the finger; bring advices of the utmost importance to the physician; and very much assist him, both in discovering the nature of diseases, and prescribing for their respective cures. The larger arteries, wherever the body is formed for incurvation, are situate on the bending side; lest being stretched to an improper length by the inflection, their dimensions should be lessened, and the circulating fluid retarded. They are not, like several of the considerable veins, laid so near the surface as to be protrusive of the skin, but are deposited to a proper depth in the flesh. This situation renders them more secure from external injuries. It conceals likewise those starts and resiliations of the pulse, which, if apparent, would discompose the most sedate, and disfigure the most comely countenance. Could we cast our eye upon the river which runs through the neighbouring meadow, we might observe several mills intersecting the stream. The waters at those places, if not entirely stopped, drain away very slowly. In consequence of this obstruction, the lower channels would be sunk dry, and the upper ones swelled into a flood. To obviate both these inconveniences, low-shots are provided, which carrying off the surcharge, prevent a glut above, and supply the banks below. In those parts of the body which are most liable to pressure, much the same expedient takes place. The arteries inosculate, or, breaking into a new track, they fetch a little circuit, in order to return and communicate again within the main road. So, that, if any obstacle blocks up or straitens the direct passage, the current, by diverting to this new channel, eludes the impediment, maintains an uninterrupted flow, and soon regains its wonted course.

Veins are appointed to receive blood from the arteries, and reconvey it to the heart. Small at their rise, and enlarging as they advance, they are void of any pulsation. In these, the pressure of the circulating fluid is not near so forcible as in the arterial tubes; for which reason their texture is considerably slighter. Such an exact economist is nature, even amidst all her liberality*! In many of these canals, the current, though winding continually, and acquiring a proportionable increase of gravity, is obliged to push its way against the perpendicular. By which circumstance it is exposed to the hazard of falling back, and overloading the vessels, if not of suppressing the animal motion. For a security against this danger, valves are interposed at proper distances, which are no hindrance to the regular passage, but prevent the reflux, sustain the augmented weight, and facilitate a progress to the grand receptacle. This auxiliary contrivance comes in, where the blood is

* A parallel instance of frugality is observable in the arteries, whose coats are spun thinner, as the diameter of the vessels becomes smaller, and the pressure of the blood weaker.

constrained to climb ; but is dismissed where the steep ascent ceases, and such a precaution would be needless.

Here are glands, whose office it is to filtrate the passing fluid. Each of these glands is an assemblage of vessels, complicated and interwoven with seeming confusion, but with perfect regularity. As some kind of sieves transmit the dust, and retain the corn ; others bolt out the meal, and hold back the bran ; so some of these glandulous strainers draw off the finest, others the grossest parts of the blood. Some, like the distiller's alembic, sublimate * ; others, like the common sewers, defecate †. Each forms a secretion far more curious than the most admired operations of chemistry ; yet all necessary for the support of life, or conducive to the comfort of the animal. Muscles, wove in nature's nicest loom ; composed of the slenderest fibres, yet endued with incredible strength ; fashioned after a variety of patterns, but all in the highest taste for elegance, conveniency, and usefulness. These, with their tendons annexed, constitute the instruments of motion. The former, contracting their substance, operate somewhat like the pulley in mechanics. The latter, resembling the cord, are fastened to a bone, or some partition of flesh ; and, following the muscular contraction, actuate the part into which they are inserted. This, and all their functions, they execute, not like a sluggish beast of burden, but quick as the lightning. Nerves, surprisingly minute tubes—derived from the brain, and permeated by an exquisitely subtle fluid, which, gliding into the muscles, sets them on work—diffuse the power of sensation through the body ; or, returning upon any impression from without, give all needful intelligence to the soul. Vesicles, distended with an unctuous matter, in some places compose a soft cushion ‡ for nature ; in other places, they fill up her vacuities, and smooth the inequalities of the flesh. Inwardly, they supple the several movements of the active machine ; outwardly, they render its appearance plump, well proportioned, and graceful.

The skin, like a curious surtout §, exactly fitted, is superinduced over the whole, formed of the most delicate net-work, whose meshes ¶ are minute, and whose threads ¶¶ are multiplied even to a prodigy. The meshes so minute, that nothing passes them which is discernible by the eye ; though they discharge every moment myriads and myriads of superfluous encumbrances from the body. The steam arising from the warm business transacted within, is carried off by these real, though imperceptible funnels **,

* The glandulous substance of the brain, which secretes the animal spirits.

† The liver and kidneys. The former of which separates the gall ; the latter drains off a fluid, which being sufficiently known, need not be named. I could wish it had not been so explicitly and coarsely mentioned in our translation of the best of books ; but that we had rendered the original, in 1 Kings xiv. 10. "Every male ;" in Isa. xxxvi. 12. "Eat and drink their own excrements."

‡ The calf of the leg, for instance ; whose large collection of muscles, intermingled with fat, is of singular service to those important bones. It flanks and fortifies them, like a strong bastion. It supports and cherishes them, like a soft pillow. And what is no less pleasing to observe, it accommodates and defends them on that very side, where they most frequently rest their weight, and where they are least capable of being guarded by the eye.

§ "Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh," Job x. 11.

¶ The pores of the cuticula.

¶¶ The nervous fibres, and other vessels of the cutis.

** These are somewhere prettily styled cutaneous chimneys ; and no wonder they are imperceptible, if as Mr. Lewenhoeck affirms, a single grain of sand will cover no less than 125,000.

which constitutes what we usually call insensible perspiration. The threads so multiplied, that neither the point of the smallest needle, nor the incomparably nicer spear of a gnat, nor even the invisible lancet of the flea, can pierce any single part, without causing an uneasy sensation, and a suffusion of blood; consequently, without wounding, even by so small a puncture, both a nerve and a vein*.

The veins, either pervading or lying parallel with this fine transparent coat, beautify the human structure; those parts especially, which are most conspicuous and intended for public view. The pliant wrist, and the taper arm, they variegate with an inlay of living sapphire. They spread vermilion over the lips, and plant roses in the cheeks, while the eye, tinged with glossy jet, or sparkling with the blue of heaven, is fixed in an orb of polished crystal. Insomuch that the earthly tabernacle exhibits the nicest proportions and richest graces;—such nice proportions as afford the most correct models for statuary; such rich graces, as the canvass never bore, as painting imitates in vain.

Asp. How just in itself, and how pertinent to our purpose, is that well-known acknowledgment of the sacred and royal anatomist: “I am curiously wrought!” “There is a variety, a regularity, and an elegance, in the texture of my body; in the formation and arrangement of these bones and muscles, these veins and arteries—resembling, shall I say?—rather, infinitely surpassing, the most costly and admired pieces of embroidery.”

It is one of the finest similitudes which the whole circle of polite arts could afford. Yet every comparison, fetched from the performances of mankind, must necessarily debase the noble subject. All the enrichments which the needle can give, or the most splendid silks receive, are rude, are coarse, are mere sackcloth, when set in opposition to the exquisite delicacy of the fleshly web; as, indeed, all the celebrated palaces, amphitheatres, temples, which ever adorned the most magnificent cities in the world, are but a heap of confusion, if compared with the symmetry and beauty of the bodily fabric. And, what is beyond measure marvellous, all these wonders of mechanism and decoration arose, not from the purer elements, not from the more refined parts of the creation, but from the dust of the ground. How easily, Theron, can that stupendous Artificer renew our hearts, and transform our souls into his own image, who could raise such delicate and stately edifices from particles—despicable particles of the trodden soil!

I could not forbear interposing this remark; because it tends to manifest our Creator's glory, to encourage our hopes, and strengthen our faith; otherwise I should be angry with myself for interrupting your discourse. Pray go on with your description of the animal economy: only let me observe, that such a course of incessant action must exhaust the fluids, must waste the solids; and, unless both are supplied with proper recruits, must gradually weaken, and at length totally destroy the machine.

Ther. For this reason, it is furnished with the organs, and endowed with the powers of nutrition.—Teeth, the foremost thin and sharp, fitted to bite asunder the food, or cut† off such a portion as the mouth can conveniently manage; the hindermost broad and strong, indented like the surface of a

* A blood-vessel at least. Compared with these vessels, the fine filmy threads, which, on some bright autumnal morning, float in the air, or hang on the stubble, must be large as a bell-rope, or bulky as a cable.

† Called therefore, “incisive.”

millstone*, with small cavities, and jagged with little asperities, which qualify them to grind in pieces whatever is transmitted to their operation. Were the teeth, like our other bones, covered with the usual membrane, the act of chewing would always occasion great uneasiness; and, when any hard substance is eaten, might even lacerate the tender tegument. Were they left without any sort of covering, they would suffer from the inclemencies of the air, and be liable to the penetration of liquors: in which case, they must soon become soft and unfit for service, or be corrupted, and entirely perish. To guard against these disadvantages, they are curiously glazed, or overlaid with a neat enamel, as white as ivory, and harder than the bone itself; which renders them an ornament to the mouth, secures them from various injuries, and exempts them from pain in the office of mastication.

As the rims and cushions of a billiard-table keep the ball from flying off, and send it back into the green area for repeated essays of skill; so the lips prevent the food from slipping out of the mouth, and, assisted by the tongue, return it to the renewed attrition of the grinders. While the lips, in concert with the cheeks, are employed in this work, their motion compresses the circumjacent glands: and from innumerable little orifices a thin pellucid liquor exudes, which moistens the attenuated food, and prepares it for more easy digestion. When the mouth remains inactive, these fountains of spittle are in a manner closed. But when it is exercised, either in speaking or eating, their moisture then being peculiarly necessary, they never fail to give out a sufficient quantity.

When the soldier charges his carbine, the cartridge could not make its way to the bottom without the protrusion of the ramrod †. Neither would the food, which we receive at the mouth, descend by the force of its own weight, through a narrow and clammy channel, into the stomach. To effectuate, therefore, and expedite its passage, muscles both straight and circular are provided. The former enlarge the cavity of the throat, and afford a more easy admittance; the latter, closing behind the descending aliment, press it downwards, and finish the deglutition. Before the food enters the gullet, it must of necessity pass over the orifice of the windpipe; consequently, must be in very imminent danger of falling upon the lungs; which would, if not entirely obstruct the breath, yet occasion violent coughing ‡, and great inconveniences. To obviate this evil, the all-foreseeing Contriver has placed a moveable lid, or hung a cartilaginous drawbridge §, which, when any the smallest particle of food advances to enter the stomach, is pulled down and shut close; but the very moment the morsel is swallowed, it is set loose and stands open. By this twofold artifice, the important passage is always

* Styled accordingly, "molares." We find neither of these kinds in the new-born babe. As milk is, for a considerable time, its appointed food, teeth would be of no service to the infant itself.

† This, and the other similitudes, are undoubtedly too mean for the noble occasion. Neither do they, in every circumstance, quadrate with the functions described. When we descant upon a subject of such extensive contrivance as the human structure, it is scarce possible to find similitudes that will correspond in all particulars, or that can rise to the dignity of the original. Yet if they tend, in any tolerable degree, to explain its formation, to display its uses, and render its wonderful economy somewhat more intelligible, perhaps they may be allowed to take place.

‡ This is what we experience when, in eating or drinking, anything goes (as is commonly, and not improperly said) the wrong way.

§ Called the "epiglottis."

barred and made sure against any noxious approaches, yet is always left free for the necessary accession of air, and commodious for the purposes of respiration.

When the maltster prepares his grain for the transmutations of the brew-house, he suffers it to lie several hours steeping in the cistern, before it is fit to be spread upon the floor, or dried on the kiln. The meat and drink likewise must remain a considerable time in the stomach, before they are of a proper consistence and temperature, either for the tender coats or the delicate operation of the bowels. For which purpose, that great receiver is made strong to bear, capacious to hold, and so curiously contrived, as to lay a temporary embargo * upon its contents. Here they are lodged in the very centre of warmth, and concocted by the most kindly combination of heat and humidity. Here they are saturated with other fermenting or diluting juices, and are kneaded, as it were, by the motion of the stomach, and compression of the neighbouring parts. So that every the minutest fragment is separated; the whole is reduced to a tenuity abundantly finer than the exactest grinding could effect; and all is worked up into the smoothest, most nicely-mixed pulp imaginable. From hence it is dislodged by a gently-acting force, and passes, by a gradual transition, into the cavity of the intestines.

Near the entrance, punctual as a porter in his lodge, waits the gall-bladder †, ready to transfuse its acrimonious but salutary juices, on the advancing aliment; which dissolve its remaining viscidities, scour the passage of the intestines, and keep all its fine apertures clear. This bag, as the stomach fills, is elevated by the distension; as the stomach empties, is proportionably depressed. The former posture brings on a discharge, the latter occasions a suppression of the bile. It is furnished also with a valve of a very peculiar, but most convenient form ‡, through which the detersive liquid cannot hastily pour, but must gently ooze. Admirable construction! which, without any care or consciousness of ours, prohibits an immoderate effusion, yet ascertains the needful supply.

Sufficiently charged with this adventitious fluid, the nutritive mass pursues its way through the intestines, whose wonderful meanders are incomparably more curious than the mazes of the Dædalean labyrinth. They are actuated with a worm-like or undulatory motion §, which protrudes the received aliment, and forces its fine milky particles into the lacteal vessels. These are a series of the most delicate strainers, ranged in countless multitudes all along the sides of the winding passage, each so nicely framed as to admit the nutrimental balmy juices, and reject the gross excrementitious dregs. Had the intestines been straight and short, the food might have gone through them, without resigning a sufficient quantity of its nourishing particles. Therefore this grandest of all the vital ducts is artfully convolved, and greatly extended, to afford Nature an opportunity of sifting more thoroughly whatever passes, and of detaining whatever may serve her purposes. Lest such lengths of entrails should be entangled among themselves, or be cumbrous to the

* Which is quite contrary to the economy of the gullet, though they are not only contiguous to each other, but a continuation of the same tube.

† The gall-bladder is situate upon the lower margin of the liver; and to secrete the bilious juice, is supposed to be the principal use of that largest of glands.

‡ A spiral form.

§ Styled vermicular or peristaltic.

wearer, they are packed into the neatest folds, and lie within a narrow compass. They are at least six times longer than the body which contains them; yet are they lodged, not crowded, in a part, not in the whole region, of the lower belly; and, amidst this small space, have sufficient room to execute the nicest and most important functions. Though the alimentary substance can never mistake its way, yet it may, through some accidental impediment, attempt to return backward. In this case a valve intervenes, and renders what would be extremely pernicious, almost always impracticable. As the whole proceeds in this serpentine course, it is perpetually sending off detachments of nutritious juices. In consequence of which it would lose its soft temperature; might become rugged, and pain the tender parts; perhaps be hindered from sliding on to its final exit. To prevent such an obstruction, glands are posted in proper places*, and discharge a lubricating fluid, which aids the progress of the mass, and renews the secretion of the chyle, till all that remains of the one is clean drawn off, and the other—But here you must excuse me; and for my neglect of farther particularity your author shall make an apology: “*Quemadmodum autem reliquæ cibi depellantur, tum astringentibus se intestinis, tum relaxantibus, haud sane difficile dictum est; sed tamen prætereundem est, ne quid habeat injucunditatis oratio †.*”

The chyle, drawn off by all the secretory orifices, is carried along millions of the finest ducts ‡, and lodged in several commodious cells §. As a traveller, by baiting upon the road, and taking proper refreshment, is better qualified to pursue his journey; so the chyle, diverting to those little inns, is mixed with a thin, diluting, watery substance, which renders it more apt to flow, and more fit for use. From hence it is conveyed to one common receptacle ||, and mounts through a perpendicular tube. When provision or ammunition is transmitted to an army, it generally passes under an escort of able troops. As this is the immediate support, and principal nourishment of the whole system, its conveyance is guarded and ascertained with peculiar caution. The perpendicular tube, not having sufficient force of its own, is laid contiguous to the great artery; whose strong pulsation drives on the creeping fluid, enables it to overcome the steep ascent, and unload its precious treasure at the very door of the heart.—Here it enters the trunk of a large vein, most conveniently opened for its reception: it enters in a slanting or oblique direction. By this method of approach, it avoids thwarting, and coincides with, the purple stream, which instead of obstructing its admission, expedites its passage, and, instead of being a bar to exclude it, becomes a vehicle to waft it.—Its entrance is farther secured by a valve, admirably constructed, and most happily situate; which shuts the aperture against the

* In the bowels, which lie nearest the stomach, these glands are smaller or fewer; because, in those parts, the aliment is copiously furnished with moisture; whereas, in the bowels, which are more remote from the stomach, and receive the food drained of a considerable quantity of its chyle, the lubricating glands are either multiplied or enlarged. A most admirable provision! apparently diversified according to the several changes of the aliment, yet exactly adapted to the exigencies of the animal.

† CICERO *de Nat. Deor.*

‡ Fine indeed! since their orifices, through which they admit the chyle, are not discoverable even by the very best microscopes. To this prodigiously nice constructure it is owing, that nothing enters the substance of the blood, but what is smaller than the smallest arteries in the system; and thereby fitted to pass through the finest capillary vessels, without causing any obstruction.

§ The glands of the mesentery.

|| The “*receptaculum chyli*,” a reservoir placed near the left kidney.

refluent blood, in case it should offer to obtrude itself, but opens a free, safe, and easy avenue, to introduce this milk, this manna of nature.

The blood, through every stage of its ample circuit, having sustained great expenses; being laid under contribution by every gland in the whole system, and having supplied myriads of the capillary vessels with matter for insensible perspiration, must be very much impoverished; but is most opportunely recruited by this accession of chyle.—Yet, though recruited, it is not refined. In its present crude state it is absolutely unqualified to perform the vital tour, or carry on the animal functions: therefore, by a grand apparatus of muscular fibres, it is wafted into the lungs, and pours a thousand thousand rills into either lobe.—In the cells, the spongy cells of this amazing laboratory, it imbibes the influences of the external air; its heterogeneous parts are thoroughly incorporated, and its whole substance is made cool, smooth, and florid.—Thus improved, thus exalted, it is transmitted to the left ventricle of the heart; a strong, active, indefatigable* muscle, placed in the very centre of the system. Impelled by this beating engine, part shoots upward, and sweeps with a bounding impetus into the head. There it impregnates the prolific fields of the brain, and forms those subtile spirituous dews†, which impart sense to every nerve, and communicate motion to every limb.—Part flows downward, rolls the recking current through all the lower quarters, and dispenses the nutrimental stores even to the meanest member and the minutest vessel.

Observe how the stately Thames and the rapid Rhine refresh the forests and the groves, water the towns which crowd their banks, and make the meadows they intersect laugh and sing. So, only with an incomparably richer fluid, and with infinitely more numerous streams, this human river laves the several regions of the body, transfusing vigour and propagating health through the whole.

But how shall a stream, divided into myriads of channels, and pervading innumerable tracts, how shall this be brought back again to its source? Should any portion, like your lake-waters after a land-flood, deviate from their course, or be unable to return—putrefaction would take place, a nuisance would arise, death might ensue. Therefore the all-wise Creator has connected the extremity of the arteries with the beginning of the veins: so that the same force which darts the crimson wave through the former, drives it through the latter. Thus it is reconducted, without the least extravasation, to the great salient cistern. There, played off afresh, it renews and perpetuates the vital functions.

Where two opposite currents would be in danger of clashing, a fibrous excrescence interposes‡, which, like a projecting pier, breaks the stroke of

* *Indefatigable*.—This is a very distinguishing, and no less amazing property of the heart. The large muscles of the arm, or the much larger of the thigh, are soon wearied. A day's labour, or a day's journey, will exhaust their strength. But the muscle which constitutes the heart works through whole weeks, whole months, whole years, and never becomes weary; is equally a stranger to intermission and fatigue.

† These are what we call the animal spirits; and it is generally supposed that sensation is caused by the undulatory motion of this nervous fluid; though others imagine it is performed by the vibratory motion of the nerves themselves. It is, I believe, one of those mysteries in the material world, which may reconcile thinking and unprejudiced minds to the mysteries of the Christian revelation. Why should any one wonder to find some doctrines in the Bible that surpass the reach of human understanding, when there are so many operations in the body confessedly and absolutely inexplicable by the most acute anatomist?

‡ In the point where the streams from the *vena cava* and *vena ascendens* meet.

each, and throws both into their proper receptacle. When the wafture to be speedy, the channels either forbear to wind in their course*, or lessen in their dimensions†. When the progress is to be retarded, the tubes are twined into various convolutions‡, or their diameter is contracted into narrower size.—Modelled by these judicious rules, guarded by these wise precautions, the living flood never discontinues its interchangeable tide, but, night and day, whether we sleep or wake, still perseveres to sail briskly through the arteries, and return softly through the veins.

Such astonishing expedients are used to elaborate the chyle, to blend with the blood, and to distribute both through the body; by means of which the animal constitution is maintained. In youth, its bulk is increased; in age, its decays are repaired; and it is kept in tenable condition for the soul during the space of seventy or eighty years.

These are a few, and but a very few, instances of that contrivance, regularity, and beauty, which are observable in the human frame. Attentive inquirers discover deeper footsteps of design, and more refined strokes of skill; discover them not only in the grand and most distinguished part, but in every limb and in every organ; I may venture to add, in every fibre that is extended, and in every globule that flows.

Asp. What a various, but uniform system, is the body! I see the greater multiplicity of parts, yet the most perfect harmony subsists between them all. No one hinders, but each assists, the operation of another; and all conspires to the benefit and preservation of the whole. Most judiciously has the great apostle touched this subject, and most happily applied it, to illustrate the reasonableness and enforce the practice, both of personal and social duties of private content and public concord. See 1 Cor. xii. 12, &c.

“The body,” he observes, “is not one member, but many;” to each of which some peculiar and needful office is assigned: so that the foot, though placed in the lowest order, and destined to serve on the very ground, has no reason to reckon itself a worthless outcast; or to say, “because I am not the head, I am not of the body.” Neither has the head, in its exalted station and amidst its honourable functions, any cause to despise the inferior limbs, or to say, with contempt and self-sufficiency, “I have no need of you.” If there were no feet, what would become of the locomotive faculty? or how could the body convey itself from one place to another? If there were no hands, what should we do for the instruments of action? or how could the animal frame be defended and accommodated?—Nay, the parts “which seem to be less honourable” are necessary. Even those which form the sediments, or throw off the dregs, are of the last importance to life and its comforts. Should those be obstructed in their action, the most raging torment ensues; should the obstruction continue, death is the inevitable consequence.—By this wise adjustment “there is no schism in the body;” no separate or interfering ends are pursued by the members; but the safety and support of each are the one undivided care of all.

Thus should it be among men and among Christians, in the civil community and in the Catholic church. There is in both a subordination of

* In the great artery, that descends to the feet.

† In every interval, between all the ramifications.

‡ In the vessels which carry the blood to the brain; which form the viscous secretions; and indeed which constitute all the glands.

persons, but a concatenation of interests. For which reason, a general agreement should take place, and a mutual subserviency to each other's welfare. The meanest have no cause to be dissatisfied with their condition; but to acquiesce in the unerring disposal of Providence, and cheerfully contribute their share to the common good. The highest should condescend to men of low estate, and maintain a regard to the well-being of the poorest, as that which is intimately connected with their own. In a word, each should feel a tender concern for all; rejoicing in their happiness, and studying to establish it; sympathizing with their miseries, and endeavouring to heal them.

I am sure my Theron will be pleased with this fine comparison used by the apostle, and adapted to purposes at once so noble and so benevolent; especially as it receives additional propriety and force from his own observations. But I have one more inquiry to make.

Your system, though organized, though endued with a principle of motion, and furnished with the powers of nutrition, is still destitute of sense. The creation abounds with objects fitted to yield the most refined entertainment: the sun impurples the robes of morning, and stars bespangle the curtains of night: flowers of silver whiteness, and of golden lustre, enamel the ground: fruits of all radiant hues, and of every delicious taste, hang amiably dangling on the boughs:

———“Airs also, vernal airs,
Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
The trembling leaves.”

But we hear of no capacities formed for the enjoyment of these various delights; without which, the breath of fields must lose its reviving fragrance, the whispering grove must degenerate into sullen silence, and nature's book of knowledge, all fair and instructive, be no better than a vast unmeaning blank.

Ther. Therefore the great Creator, profusely gracious to mankind, has made us a present, an inestimable present, of the senses, to be the inlet of innumerable pleasures, and the means of administering the most valuable advantages.

High in the head, bright and conspicuous as a star in the brow of evening, is placed the eye. In this elevated situation, like a sentinel posted in his watch-tower, it commands the most enlarged prospect.—Consisting only of simple fluids, enclosed in thin tunicles, it conveys to our apprehension all the graces of blooming nature, and all the glories of the visible heavens. How prodigiously wonderful, that an image of the hugest mountains, and a transcript of the most diversified landscapes, shall enter the small circlet of the pupil! How surprisingly artful, that the rays of light, like an inimitable pencil, should paint on the optic nerves, paint in an instant of time, paint in their truest colours and exactest lineaments, every species of external objects!

The eye is so tender, that a slight accident, scarce perceivable by some other parts of the body, would be very injurious to its delicate frame. It is guarded therefore with remarkable circumspection, and the most solicitous care,—with a care evidently proportioned to its nice texture and extensive usefulness. It is intrenched deep in the head, and barricadoed on every side with a strong fortification of bones. As the incursion of the smallest fly would incommode the polished surface, it is farther defended by two sub-

stantial curtains, hung on a most slender cartilaginous rod, which secure it, not barely from blows and from any hurtful attrition, but also from every troublesome annoyance. In sleep, when there is no occasion to exercise the sense, but an absolute necessity to protect the organ, these curtains spontaneously close, and never fail to lie shut. At any time they will fly together with a motion quick as the alarm of fear; I had almost said, quicker than thought itself. At all times they are lined with an extremely fine sponge*, wet with its own native dews, which lubricate the eye-ball, oil, as it were, its wheels, and fit it for a course of unwearied activity. At the end of this skinny mantelet, (if I may use the military style,) is planted a range of bristly palisades†, which keep out the least mote, ward off even the straggling atom, and moderate the otherwise too potent impressions of the sunbeams.

The brows are a kind of natural pent-house, thatched and arched with curious wreaths of hair. The thatch is intended to divert the sweat from trickling into the eyes, and offending them with its brine. The arches are so finely coloured, and so elegantly turned, that they set off the whiteness of the forehead, and bestow additional grace on the whole countenance. Because, in our waking hours, there is almost an incessant call for those little orbs, they run upon the finest casters, rolling upwards or downwards, to the right hand or to the left, with the utmost speed, and with equal ease; which circumstance, added to the flexibility of the neck, renders our two eyes as useful as if the whole body, like the living creatures in St. John's vision, "was full of eyes before and behind," Rev. iv. 6.

The ear consists of an outward porch and inner rooms, with tools of the most admirable contrivance and finished workmanship. The contrivance and the workmanship incomparably nicer than the designs of Palladio, or the architecture of Solomon's temple; though the former were drawn from the magnificent monuments of Rome, though the latter was built in the taste of heaven. Yea, so consummately nice is the structure of this organ, that God, the only wise God, is not ashamed to be called its artificer. "He that planted the ear," Psalm xciv. 9. is to be found among the titles of the exalted Jehovah. In one very remarkable peculiarity, this minute fabric resembles that sacred edifice, the porch being loftier than any other part of the building‡.

The porch I call that semicircular lodge which stands somewhat prominent from the head, and is—not soft and sinking as flesh, lest it should absorb the sound rather than promote the repercussion; not hard and stubborn as bone, lest it should occasion painful inconveniences, when we repose ourselves on either side; but of a cartilaginous substance, covered with a tight expansion of skin, and wrought into irregular bends and hollows, which, like circling hills or surrounding rocky shores, collect the wandering undulations of the air, and transmit them with a vigorous impulse to the finely stretched

* The glandula lachrymalis and its ducts, opening on the inner part of the eye-lid, and secreting the fluid which Theron calls its oil, because it irrigates the eye-ball, and facilitates its motion.

† The hairs which arise upon the extremities of the eye-lash, grow only to a certain convenient length, and never stand in need of cutting. Add to this, that their points stand out of the way, those of the upper eye-lid being bent upwards, and those of the lower downwards. So nice is nature, even in such small matters.

‡ Compare 1 Kings vi. 2. with 2 Chron. iii. 4.

membrane of the tympanum*. The avenue, or narrow entry, is secured from the insinuating attempts of little insects, by a morass (shall I say?) of bitter and viscous matter, disgusting to their taste, and embarrassing to their feet. The hammer and the anvil, the stirrup and the drum, the winding labyrinths † and the sounding galleries; these, and other pieces of mechanism, all instrumental to the power of hearing, are beyond description curious.

Amazingly nice must be the formation, and inconceivably exact the tension, of the auditory nerves; since they correspond with the smallest tremors of the atmosphere, and easily distinguish their most subtile variations. With the gentle gales that fan us, or even with the ruder blasts that assault us, these delicate strings are but little affected; whereas they are perfect unisons with those fine, those significant agitations of the air, which the acutest touch is unable to discern. These living chords, tuned by an almighty hand, and diffused through the echoing aisles, and sonorous cells—these receive the impressions of sound, and propagate them to the brain: these ‡ give existence to the charms of music, and reciprocate the rational entertainments of discourse: these treat my Aspasio with the melody of the woodland choirs, and afford me the superior pleasure of my friend's conversation.

The eye perceives only the objects that are before it, whereas the ear warns us of transactions that pass above us, behind us, all around us. The eye is useless amidst the gloom of night, and cannot carry its observation through the bolted door, or the closed window-shutter; but the ear admits her intelligence through the darkest medium, and the minutest cranny. The eye is upon duty only in our waking hours; but the ear is always expanded, and always accessible; a courier which never tires, a sentry ever in his box. To secure a resource, in case any misfortune should disable one of the hearing or seeing organs, our all-gracious Maker has given us duplicates of each.

As there are tremulous concussions impressed upon the air, discernible only by the instruments of hearing; there are also odoriferous particles, wafted by the same aerial vehicle, which are perceivable only by the smell. The nostrils are wide at the bottom, that a large quantity of effluvia may enter; narrow at the top, that when entered they may close their ranks, and act with greater vigour. Fine beyond all imagination are the steams which exhale from the fetid or fragrant bodies. The very best microscopes, which discover thousands and thousands of animalculæ in a drop of putrefied water, cannot bring one individual among all these evanescent legions to our sight. They sail in numberless squadrons, close to our eyes, close by our ears; yet are so amazingly attenuated, that they elude the search of both.

* So called, because it resembles a drum, both in figure and use; being a fine skin, expanded upon a circle of bones, and over a polished reverberating cavity. It is affected by the vibrations of the external air, as the covering of the war-drum is by the impressions of the stick. It is also furnished with braces, which strain or relax it at pleasure, and accommodate its tension either to loud or languid sounds.

† Of this kind is the auditory tube, intended to soften and qualify the rushing sound; lest, if the incursion were direct, it might be too impetuous, and injure the delicate expanse of the tympanum. While this is designed to moderate, the concavities of the inner structure are prepared to heighten and invigorate the sound, by calling in the auxiliary force of an echo. Such intentions, so varying, nay, so opposite, concur to form this admirable organ!

‡ Elegantly styled, "the daughters of music." For this phrase may refer, as well to the organs which distinguish, as to those which form the harmonious accents, Eccl. xii. 4.

Nevertheless, so judiciously are the olfactory nets laid, and so artfully their meshes sized, that they catch these vanishing fugitives. They catch the roaming perfumes which fly off from the opening honeysuckle; and take in the stationed sweets which hover round the expanded rose. They imbibe all the balmy fragrance of spring, all the aromatic exhalations of autumn, and enable us to banquet even on the invisible dainties of nature.

Furnished with these several organs,

———Not a breeze
 Flies o'er the meadow, not a cloud imbibes
 The setting sun's effulgence, not a strain
 From all the tenants of the warbling shade
 Ascends, but thence our senses can partake
 Fresh pleasure. *Pleasures of Imagination, b. iii.*

Another capacity for frequent pleasure our bountiful Creator has bestowed, in granting us the powers of taste. By means of which, the food that supports our body, feasts our palate; first treats us with a pleasing regale, then distributes its beneficial recruits. The razor, whetted with oil, becomes more exquisitely keen. The saliva, flowing upon the tongue, and moistening its nerves, quickens them into the liveliest acts of sensation. This sense is circumstanced in a manner peculiarly benign and wise, so as to be a standing, though silent plea for temperance. Without recurring to the vengeance of God, or the terrors of eternal judgment, it is a powerful dissuasive from irregular and excessive indulgences; because the exercise of sobriety sets the finest edge on its faculties, and adds the most poignant relish to its enjoyments: whereas riot and voluptuousness pall the appetite, blunt its sensibility, and render the gratifications extremely languid, if not perfectly insipid. The sight, the smell, the taste, are not only so many separate sources of delight, but a joint security to our health. They are the vigilant and accurate inspectors, which examine our food, and inquire into its properties, whether it be pleasant or disagreeable, wholesome or noxious. For the discharge of this office they are excellently qualified, and most commodiously situated; so that nothing can gain admission through the mouth, till it has undergone the scrutiny, and obtained the passport of them all.

To all these, as a most necessary and advantageous supplement, is added the sense of feeling, which renders the whole assemblage complete. While other senses have a particular place of residence, this is diffused throughout the whole body. In the palms of the hands, on the tips of the fingers, and indeed through all the extreme parts of the flesh, it is most quick and lively; the advanced guards, or scouts upon the frontiers, are, or ought to be peculiarly attentive and wakeful. Scouts did I say? the whole army Xerxes, drawn out in battle array, with his millions of supernumerary attendants*, were but like a few gleaners straggling in the field, if compared either in number or order, with those nervous detachments which pervade the texture of the skin, and minister to the act of feeling. How happily this sense tempered between the two extremes! neither so acute as the membranes of the eye, nor so obtuse as the callus of the heel. The former would expose us to continual pain, render our clothes galling, and the very down oppressive; the latter would quite benumb the body, and almost annihilate

* The soldiers and attendants of Xerxes amounted to five millions two hundred and eighty thousand. Another army, so large and numerous, occurs not in all the records of history. *Vide HEROD. lib. vii.*

the touch. Nor this alone, but all the senses are most exactly adapted to their respective offices, and to the exigencies of our present state. Were they strained to a much higher tone, they would be avenues of anguish: were they relaxed into greater insensibility, they would be so many useless encumbrances.

Asp. How admirable and gracious is this provision, which the blessed God has made, to accommodate us with delightful sensations and instructive ideas! The taste, the touch, and the smell, are somewhat straitened in the extent of their operations. The ear carries on a correspondence with a larger circle of objects; but the sight most amply supplies whatever is wanting in all the other senses. The sight spreads itself to an infinite multitude of bodies, and brings within our notice some of the remotest parts of the universe. The taste, the touch, the smell, perceive nothing but what is brought to their very doors; whereas the eye extends its observation as far as the orbit of Saturn; nay glances, and in an instant of time, to the inconceivable distance of the stars. The compass of the earth, and the immensity of the skies, are its unlimited range.

From this remarkable variety, with regard to the sphere and activity of the senses, St. Paul forms one of the finest, boldest, and most important comparisons in the world. By this he illustrates the difference between the wisdom which is derived from the word of divine revelation, and the wisdom which is acquired by dint of human application. In his oration to the Athenians, speaking of their most celebrated sages, he says, "If so be they might feel after, and find him," Acts xvii. 27. In his epistle to the Hebrews, speaking of the man Moses, our author observes, that "he endured, as seeing him who is invisible," Heb. xi. 27. Writing to his Corinthian converts, he adds, as a farther heightening of the contrast, "We all beholding with open face the glory of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. The knowledge of the philosopher is like that obscure and scanty information which is to be obtained by groping with the hand in a dark night: the knowledge of the Christian is like that copious influx of clear and enlarged ideas, which we receive by the mediation of the eye amidst the shining of a bright day.

Tully, we find, has in the book before us hit upon some of the most general and obvious uses to which the several parts of the human body are adapted. Yet how superficial and deficient appears his penetration, when we take in the much deeper discoveries, and the much higher improvements of our modern anatomy. Thus, and abundantly more defective, is his knowledge of moral duties and divine doctrines, when compared with what is taught us in the plain sermon on the Mount, and the unstudied epistles of the Jewish tent-maker.

Therefore, though I would bless the beneficent God for the ministration of all the senses, and particularly for the noble organs of vision; I would be more especially thankful for that light of the world, Christ Jesus, and his glorious gospel, as well as for that "spiritual eye," by which the one is understood and the other seen,—a "lively faith." I would also long for that place of beatific enjoyment, where our views of the adorable Godhead, and our acquaintance with the sublimest truths, will as much transcend all our present apprehensions, as the most enlightened saint exceeds the benighted Gentile.

Ther. The crowning gift—that which improves the satisfaction, and aug-

ments the beneficial effects, accruing from all the senses, is speech. Speech makes me a gainer from the eyes and ears of other people; from the ideas they conceive, and the observations they make. And what an admirable instrument for articulating the voice, and modifying it into speech, is the tongue! The tongue has neither bone nor joint; yet fashions itself, with the utmost volubility, into every shape and every posture which can express sentiment, or constitute harmony. This little collection of muscular fibres, under the conducting skill of the Creator, is the artificer of our words*. By this we communicate the secrets of the breast, and make our very thoughts audible. By this we instruct the ignorant, and comfort the distressed; we glorify God, and edify each other †: the academic explains the abstrusest sciences, and the ecclesiastic preaches the everlasting gospel. This is likewise the efficient of music. It is soft as the lute, or shrill as the trumpet; it can warble as the lyre, or resound like the organ. Connecting the sacred anthem with its tuneful strains, we sooth the cares, and beguile the toils of life; we imitate the angelic choirs, and anticipate in some degree their celestial joys. As the tongue requires full scope and an easy play, it is lodged in an ample cavity, and surrounded with reservoirs of spittle, always ready to distil the lubricating dews. It moves under a concave roof, which serves as a sounding-board to the voice, giving it much the same additional vigour and grace as the shell of a violin adds to the language of the strings.

Wise, wonderfully wise and eminently gracious, is the regulation both of spontaneous and involuntary motion. Was this regulation reversed, what deplorable inconveniences would take place; nay, what unavoidable ruin must ensue! Deplorable inconveniences; if the discharges of the bowels, or evacuations of the bladder, were quite independent on our leave. Unavoidable ruin; if the action of the heart required the co-operation of our thoughts, or the business of respiration waited for the concurrence of our will.

The will, in some cases, has not so much as a single vote; in others, she determines and commands like an absolute sovereign. Nor is there a monarch upon earth so punctually obeyed, as this queen of the human system. If she but intimate her pleasure, the spirits run, they fly to execute her orders; to stretch the arm, or close the hand; to furrow the brow with frowns, or dimple the cheek with smiles. How easily, as well as punctually, are these orders carried into execution! To turn the screw, or work the lever, is laborious and wearisome: but we move the vertebræ, with all their appendent chambers; we advance the leg, with the whole incumbent body; we rise from our seat, we spring from the ground; and though much force is exerted, though a very considerable weight is raised, we meet with no difficulty, we complain of no fatigue.

That all this should be effected, without any toil, and by a bare act of the will, is very surprising: but that these motions should be made, renewed,

* I am sensible that the glottis has a considerable share in modulating the sound, and forming the voice. But as the nature and office of this most curious aperture are very little known by the generality of people, we choose to follow the popular opinion, so neatly described by the poet:

————— “ Dædala lingua,
Lingua figuratrix verborum, opisæque loquelæ.”

Ant. Lucret.

† The articulating tongue is called “our glory,” Psal. lvii. 8. And such indeed it is when devoted to these purposes. It is then a distinction, not only of man from the brutal herd, but of the righteous from the congregation of the ungodly.

continued, even while we remain entirely ignorant of the manner in which they are performed, is beyond measure astonishing. Who can play so much on a single tune upon the spinet, without learning the difference of the keys or studying the rudiments of music? Impossible! Yet the mind of man touches every spring of the human machine with the most masterly skill, though she knows nothing at all concerning the nature of her implements, or the process of her operations. We walk, we run, we leap; we throw ourselves into a variety of postures, and perform a multitude of motions; yet are utterly unable to say, which nerve should be active, which muscle should swell, or which tendon approximate.

Put a German flute into the hand even of a sensible person, without a master to instruct him, he is at a loss to make the instrument speak; much less is he able to sink and soften the sound, to exalt and extend it just as he pleases: yet we are self-taught in the method of forming, regulating, and varying the voice. Naturally, and with unpremeditated fluency, we give it the languishing cadence of sorrow, or the sprightly airs of joy; the low filtering accents of fear, or the elevated tone and rapid sallies of anger.

The eye of a rustic, who has no notion of optics, or any of its laws, shall lengthen and shorten its axis, dilate and contract its pupil, without the least limitation, and with the utmost propriety; adapting itself, even with mathematical exactness, to the particular distance of objects, and the different degrees of light: by which means it performs some of the most curious experiments in the improved Newtonian philosophy, without the least knowledge of the science, or so much as any consciousness of its own dexterity.

I can never sufficiently admire this multiplicity of animated organs; their finished form, and their faultless order. Yet I must confess myself struck with greater admiration at the power, the truly mysterious power and sway, which the soul exercises over them. Ten thousand reins are put into her hand: she is not acquainted with their office, their use, or their name; she has not learned so much as to distinguish one from another; nevertheless she manages all, conducts all, without the least perplexity or the least irregularity; rather with a promptitude, a consistency, and a speed, which nothing else can equal!

Upon the whole, great reason had Euripides to call the human body,

Σοφὸν τέκτονός καλὸν ποικιλίᾳ.

I believe the preceding observations will justify us, if we give a fuller meaning to the poet, and translate his words—"the infinitely varied, and imitantly fine workmanship of a great, supreme, unerring Artist." Or, as Virgil speaks, with a pertinency and a spirit which epitomises, all I have said, and expresses all I would say, this bodily structure is indeed—"non enarrabile textum *."

Asp. "Wonderfully," I perceive, "and fearfully 'are we made,'" Psalm cxxxix. 14. Made of such complicated parts; each so correctly fashioned, and all so exactly arranged †; every one executing such curious functions, and many of them operating in so mysterious a manner, as may justly render us a wonder to ourselves. Since health depends upon such a

* That is a structure, not barely correct, or highly finished, but (as Theron has elsewhere expressed it) "beyond description curious."

† St. Paul's language on the subject is exceedingly beautiful and expressive, *Συναρμολογήματα καὶ συνβεβαζόμενα.* Eph. iv. 16.

numerous assemblage of moving organs ; since a single secretion stopped may destroy the salutary temperature of the fluids, or a single wheel clogged may put an end to the vital motion of the solids ; with what "holy fear should we pass the time of our sojourning here below !" 1 Pet. i. 17 ; trusting, for continual preservation, not merely on our own care, but on that omnipotent hand which formed this admirable machine ; that the same hand which formed it, may superintend its agency, and support its being.

When we consider the extensive contrivance and delicate mechanism—what plans of geometry have been laid ; what operations of chemistry are performed ; in a word, what miracles of art and elegance are executed, in order to furnish us with the necessary recruits, and the several delights of life ;—is there not abundant reason to cry out, with the same inspired writer, "How dear are thy counsels unto me, O God !" "Thy counsels of creating wisdom ! Thou hast not been sparing, but even lavish of thy indulgent designs. Thou hast omitted no expedient which might establish my ease, enlarge my comforts, and promote, yea complete, my bodily happiness !" And is not this a most endearing obligation "to glorify the blessed God, with our bodies, as well as with our spirits ?" 1 Cor. vi. 20.

Ther. "Our spirits !" Ay ; what is this mansion of flesh, though so exquisitely wrought, compared with the noble and immortal inhabitant which resides within ?

——— That intellectual being ;
Those thoughts, which wander through eternity !

MILTON.

This consideration inclines me to think, that if the casket be so highly polished, the jewel cannot be so excessively coarse as my *Aspasio's* doctrine of original corruption supposes.

Asp. I perceive your aim, *Theron* ; but must beg leave at present to decline all overtures for a dispute. If my arguments have failed, your description has answered its end. I cannot suffer my thoughts to be diverted from a subject which is so very engaging, yet so rarely discussed. I have such a strong desire to recollect and retain what has been observed, that even your conversation will at this juncture lose its relish. Here, therefore, I put a period to our discourse, and must break away from your company, in order to ruminate and digest my notions in some sequestered lonely walk ; unless you will permit me, before I retire, to make one remark. And let it not startle my friend if I venture to say, that amidst all his curious observations, he has forgot the principal circumstance of honour and excellence which dignifies the human body.

Ther. I have omitted many fine and admirable properties, I confess. But sure I have not forgot the principal and most distinguishing ?

Asp. You need not be displeased with yourself. It argues no defect in your dissertation. The circumstance I have in my view could never be discovered by following the dissecting knife. It is learned, not from *Cheselden's* drafts, or the tables of *Albinus*, but from the word of revelation.—What I mean is this ; the human body was exalted to a most intimate and personal union with the eternal Son of God. He who decorated the heaven with stars, and crowned the stars with lustre, "he vouchsafed to be made flesh," John i. 14. "and was found in fashion as a man," Phil. ii. 8. Nay, this is even now the apparel of that divine and adorable Person. He is clothed with our nature ; he wears our very limbs, and appears in the dress

of humanity, even at the right hand of God, and at the head of all the heavenly hosts.

What think you of another privilege, mentioned by the apostle? "Your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. vi. 19. Not your souls only, but your very bodies, are the shrine in which "the high and holy One, that inhabiteth eternity," condescends to dwell. He who sitteth between the cherubim, and walketh in the circuit of the skies, is pleased to sanctify these earthly tenements for his own habitation. And is not this a much grander embellishment, than all their matchless contrivance and masterly workmanship? Just as the rod which budded, and the manna which was miraculously preserved; the sacred oracle of Urim and Thummim, with the cloud of glory covering the mercy-seat; were a much higher distinction to Solomon's temple, than the most heightened beauties of architecture.

Nor must I omit the dignity, the transcendent and amazing dignity, which is reserved for these systems of flesh at the resurrection of the just. They will then be refined and improved into the most perfect state, and the most beautiful form; surpassing whatever is resplendent and amiable in the most ornamental appearances of material nature. They will be purer than the unspotted firmament; brighter than the lustre of the stars; and, which exceeds all parallel, which comprehends all perfection, they will "be made like unto Christ's glorious body," Phil. iii. 21; like that incomparably glorious body which the blessed Jesus wears in his celestial kingdom, and on his triumphant throne.

When we add all these magnificent prerogatives which are revealed in scripture, to all those inimitable niceties which are displayed by anatomists, what thankfulness, what admiration, can equal such a profusion of favours?

When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise!

DIALOGUE XIII.

THE morning had been wet. At noon the rain ceased; but the heavens still continued gloomy. Towards evening a gentle eastern gale sprung up, which dissipated the dead calm, and cleared the face of the sky. The sun, which had been muffled in clouds, dropped the veil. Disengaged from the dusky shroud, he shone forth with peculiar splendour. His beams, endeared by their late suspension, were doubly welcome, and produced unusual gaiety.

At this juncture Theron and Aspasio walked abroad. They walked alternately on the terraces; one of which was opposite to the country, the other contiguous to the parterre; where the gales, impregnated with the freshest exhalations of nature, breathed the smell of meads, and heaths, and groves; or else, shaking the clusters of roses, and sweeping the beds of fragrance, they flung balm and odours through the air.

At a distance were heard the bleatings of the flock, mingled with the lowings of the milky mothers; while more melodious music warbled from the neighbouring boughs, and spoke aloud the joy of their feathered inha-

bitants ;—and not only spoke their joy, but spread an additional charm over all the landscape. For, amidst such strains of native harmony, the breathing perfumes smell more sweet, the streaming rills shine more clear, and the universal prospect looks more gay.

Then was experienced what Milton so delicately describes :

If chance the radiant sun with farewell sweet
Extend his evening beam, the fields revive,
The birds their notes renew, and bleating herds
Attest their joy, that hill and valley ring.

With wonder and delight our friends observed both the exquisite beauty and the immense magnificence of things.—They were struck with the most profound veneration of that almighty Majesty, who hung the sun in vaults of azure, and clothed his orb with robes of lustre ; “ whose right hand spanneth the heavens,” Isa. xlvi. 13 ; “ and stretcheth them out as a tent,” for innumerable creatures, worlds, systems, “ to dwell in,” Isa. xl. 22.—Charmed they were at the consideration of the Creator’s boundless beneficence ; who lifts up the light of his countenance, and joy is shed ; who opens his munificent hand, and plenty is poured throughout all the regions of the universe. Insomuch that even inanimate beings seem to smile under a sense of the blessings ; and though they find not a tongue to praise, yet speak their acclamations by their gladdened looks.

Ther. How very different, *Aspasio*, is this delightful appearance of things from your ill-favoured doctrine of original guilt and original depravity ! Your doctrine is a contradiction to the language of nature. Nature says, through all her works, “ That God is good, and men are made to be happy.” Whereas your opinion would turn the whole world into a vast hospital, and make every individual person a leper or a Lazarus.

Asp. I join with my *Theron*, and with universal nature, in bearing witness to the goodness of our God. And nothing, I am persuaded, displays it more, nothing manifests it so much, as the doctrine of our fall in Adam, connected with our recovery in Christ.—Only in one particular I am obliged to dissent. It is not my opinion that would make, but the sin of our forefather which has made, the whole world an infirmary, and every individual person a leper.

Ther. At this rate, you would crowd into that single act of disobedience evils more numerous, and more fatal, than the plagues which were lodged in Pandora’s box, or the troops which were stowed in the Trojan horse.

Asp. Far more numerous, and infinitely more pernicious. The fable of Pandora’s box seems to have been a shred of the doctrine picked up by the heathen wits, and fashioned according to their sportive fancy : this would, if there was any occasion for such weak assistance, bring in the Pagan theology as a subsidiary evidence to our cause. The Trojan horse poured ruin upon a single city ; but the primitive transgression entailed misery upon all generations.

Ther. You have advanced this heavy charge pretty strenuously, I must confess ; but without descending to facts, or appealing to experience. All the invectives are general and declamatory, none pointing and particular.

Asp. It is easy, my dear friend, too easy, to draw up a particular bill of indictment ; and not only to specify the facts, but to demonstrate the charge. Experience, sad experience, will furnish us with a cloud of witnesses, and prove my remonstrances to be more than invectives.

Were we to dissect human nature, as in our last conference you treated the animal system, we should find the leprosy of corruption spreading itself through our whole frame. For which reason it is styled, by an inspired writer, "the old man," Rom. vi. 6. "Old," because in its commencement it was early as the fall, and in its communication to individuals is coeval with their being: "Man," because it has tainted the body, infected the soul, and disordered the whole person.

St. Paul, describing a profligate conversation, speaks in this remarkable manner: "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind," Eph. ii. 3. By the desires of the flesh, he means those irregular inclinations which correspond with the animal part of our constitution: by the desires of the mind, he denotes those evil propensities which are more immediately seated in the intellectual faculties. And by both, he very strongly expresses the total depravation of our nature.

Ther. What you call evil propensities, I am apt to think are not really sinful, but appointed for the trial of our virtue. Nay, since they are confessedly natural, they cannot be in themselves evil; because, upon this supposition, God, who is the author of our nature, would be the author of our sin.

Ans. Then you imagine, that propensities to evil are void of guilt. This is the Popish notion, but neither the Mosaic nor the apostolic doctrine.—In the law of Moses it is written, "Thou shalt not covet," Exod. xx. 17. The divine Legislator prohibits, not only the iniquitous practice, but the evil desire. The apostle gives it in charge to the Colossians, "Mortify your members, which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, and," which is the source of all, "evil concupiscence," Col. iii. 5. Now, can that be free from guilt which we are commanded to mortify? which, if not mortified, denominates us "children of disobedience," and subjects us to "the wrath of God?" Col. iii. 6.

Though these propensities are confessedly natural, they may be evil notwithstanding. The sacred writers oppose what is natural to what is spiritual. Instead of commending it as innocent, they condemn it as "foolish," 1 Cor. i. 14. "base," 2 Pet. ii. 12. and "criminal," Eph. ii. 3.—Neither does this make the author of our nature, the author of our sin. But it proves, that our nature has sustained a deplorable loss; that it is quite different from its original state; that what is spoken of the Israelitish people is applicable to the human race: "I planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine?" Jer. ii. 21.

However, let us observe your proposal; dwell no longer on general hints, but descend to a particular examination. As our examination will chiefly respect the soul, let me inquire, what are her principal faculties?

Ther. The understanding, the will, and the affections. These are the most distinguishing powers which that queen of the human economy retains in her service. These, like the several distributions of some ample river, run through the whole man, to quicken, fertilise, and enrich all his conversation. But you represent them bitter, as the waters of Marah; unwholesome, as the streams of Jericho; noxious, as the pottage prepared for the sons of the prophets.

Ans. Nor is this a misrepresentation: for such they really are, till divine grace, like Moses' wood, Exod. xv. 25, like Elisha's salt, 2 Kings ii. 21, 22.

or the meal, 2 Kings iv. 41. cast in by that holy man of God, sweeten the meal, and render their operations salutary.

The understanding claims our first regard. This, however qualified to serve the purposes of civil life, is unable to discover the truths in which wisdom consists, or to form the tempers from which happiness flows.

Let us take our specimen, not from the uncultivated savages of Africa, but from the politest nation in Europe. The Grecians piqued themselves on their intellectual accomplishments: they termed all the rest of mankind barbarians. Yet even these sons of science, "professing themselves wise, were in fact, egregious "fools," Rom. i. 22. Not to enumerate the shocking immoralities which the poets ascribed to their deities; not to insist upon the gross idolatries which the common people practised in their worship; even their philosophers, the most improved and penetrating geniuses, were unacquainted with the very first principle of true religion. Even they could not pronounce, with an unflinching tongue, "That God is one."

Ther. With regard to the philosophers, the prejudices of a wrong education might pervert their judgment; or, in compliance with the prevailing modes, they might adopt customs, and assent to notions, which they did not thoroughly approve.

Asp. A poor compliment this to their integrity! Had I been their advocate, methinks I would have given up the sagacity of my clients, rather than the fidelity to the cause of God and truth.

With reference to the supreme Good, they were equally at a loss. The bee is not one among all the inferior creatures, not even the crawling worm, the buzzing fly, but perceives what is beneficial, and pursues it; discerns what is pernicious, and avoids it. Yonder caterpillar, whose nourishment is from one particular species of vegetables, never makes a wrong application to another; never is allured by the fragrance of the auricula, or dazzled by the splendour of the tulip; but constantly distinguishes, and as constantly adheres to the leaf which affords her the proper food. So sagacious are the meanest animals with relation to their respective happiness! while the most celebrated of the heathen sages were, on a subject of the very same importance, mere dotards. Varro reckons up no less than two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions concerning the true good; and not one of them derives from the true source: I mean, a conformity to the ever-blessed God, and an enjoyment of his infinite perfections.

If on these leading points they were so erroneous, no wonder that they were bewildered in their other researches.

Ther. We are not inquiring into the circumstances of this or that particular nation, but into the state of mankind in general.

Asp. Cast your eye, Theron, upon those swallows. They shoot themselves with surprising rapidity through the air. I should take them for so many living arrows, were it not for their shifting, winding, wanton motions. Are not these what you call birds of passage?

Ther. These, and some other of the feathered race, are our constant visitors in summer, but leave us at the approach of winter. As soon as the weather becomes cold, they assemble themselves in a body, and concert measures for their departure. Who convenes the assembly—what debates arise or how they communicate the resolution taken—I do not presume to say. This is certain, that not one of them dislodges till the affair is settled, and the

proclamation has been published. Not a single loiterer is to be seen when the troops are preparing for their decampment, nor a single straggler to be found when they have once begun their march.—Having finished their journey through the land, their wings become a sort of sails, and they launch, not into but over the ocean. Without any compass to regulate their course, or any chart to make observations in their voyage, they arrive safely at the desired shore; and what is still more extraordinary, they always find the readiest way, and the shortest cut.

Asp. “The stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgment of their God,” Jer. viii. 7. The young ones of those birds perceive how absolutely necessary it is to forsake the land of their nativity, and travel in quest of milder climes; but our offspring, even when their minds begin to open, “are brutish in their knowledge,” Jer. x. 14. Born they are, and too long continue, “like the wild ass’s colt,” Job xi. 12; not only quite destitute of heavenly wisdom, but stupid to apprehend it, and averse to receive it. “As soon as they are born, they go astray,” and——

Ther. “Go astray”—To what is this owing, but to the bad examples they behold? they catch the wayward habit from the irregular conversation of others.

Asp. Is not this a confirmation of my point? Why are they yielding clay to each bad impression? case-hardened steel to every edifying application?—From imitating unworthy examples, you can hardly withhold them by the tightest rein; but if you would affect them with a sense of divine things, or bring them acquainted with God their Maker, “line must be upon line, line upon line; precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; here a little and there a little*.” What further corroborates my sentiment is, that all these tender toils of erudition are generally unwelcome, are too often unsuccessful, nay, will always be ineffectual, without the concurrence of almighty grace.

Besides, Theron, if this propensity to evil be observable in all children, it seems more than probable that the unhappy bias is derived from their parents, rather than caught from their neighbours; and owing not to the influence of external examples, but to a principle of internal corruption†.—Neglect the education of children, and you are sure to have their manners evil, their lives unprofitable. Nay, only remit your endeavours, and they lose what has been gained, they start aside like a broken bow. And wherefore this? Why do they not, without the rules of discipline or lessons of instruction, spontaneously addict themselves to the exercise of every virtue; just as the cygnets

* A great critic has laid down the following rule to be observed in fine writing :

’Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,
The sound must be an echo to the sense.

POPE’S *Essay on Criticism*.

Never was this delicate maxim more nicely exemplified, than in the above cited passage of Isaiah, chap. xxviii. 13. Another instance of the same kind occurs in the seventh verse; where the language seems to mimic the reeling, straggling, giddy motions of a drunkard; while it iterates and reiterates the idea; expresses the same thing in a different and still different manner; with an apparent, and in this case a significant, circumrotation of words.

† St. Paul confesses, that he and his fellow-saints were, in their unconverted state, depraved: and this, not *ἡμῶν ἔθος*, “by custom or habit,” but *φύσει*, “by nature.” Eph. ii. 3.

in yonder canal spontaneously take to the element of water and the act of swimming?

That bed in the garden before us will suggest the reason. It has been digged and dressed this very day. It now lies smooth and clean. Not a single weed appears on its surface. Yet how certainly will it, in a very little time, produce a plenteous growth of those vegetable nuisances! Whence can this proceed? No hand will sow them; no wish will invite them. But the seeds, though unperceived by any eye, are already there. Disseminated by the winds, they have mixed themselves with the mould, and are sunk into the soil. So, just so it is with our children. The seeds of iniquity are within them; and unless proper diligence be exerted by us, unless gracious assistance be vouchsafed from above, they will assuredly spring up, overrun their souls, and dishonour their lives.

Ther. Let us leave the children, and make men the subject of our inquiry.

Asp. In this respect, Theron,

Men are but children of a larger growth.

We may leave the vest or hanging sleeve-coat, but we shall still find the follies of the child. In youth, what low ambition and fondness for despicable pleasures! In manhood, what a keen pursuit of transitory wealth, yet what a cold inattention to God and holiness! Men, and men too of the greatest abilities, whose penetration on other subjects is piercing as the eagle's sight, are on the most important points blind as the incaverned mole.

Ther. What! is the understanding like the most dim-sighted animal, when lodged in her darkest retirement? that sublime faculty of the soul, which lends her eye to all the rest, sits at the helm, and directs their motions!

Asp. You remember, I presume, that beautiful passage in Milton, (book xi. l. 203, &c.) which Mr. Addison so highly admires, and so judiciously illustrates: the passage, I mean, where the archangel Michael comes down to advertise Adam of future events, and to execute the sentence of divine justice.

Ther. I remember it perfectly well.—In the east, the great light of day lies under an eclipse. In the west, a bright cloud descends, filled with an host of angels, and more luminous than the sun itself. The whole theatre of nature is darkened, that this glorious machine may appear in all its magnificence and beauty. From this radiant chariot the Potentate of heaven alights, and advances with a majestic stateliness to meet Adam.

Asp. Should you see such an august personage alighting from such a splendid chariot, and walking amidst the thronged streets of a city; should you behold every one intent upon his business or diversions, struck with no awe, paying no reverential regard to the celestial visitant—what would you think?

Ther. I should certainly suspect that some superior power had drawn a veil over their sight, and hid this wonderful spectacle from their view.

Asp. Such is really the case with all mankind by nature, and with the generality of people during their whole life. God, the infinitely great God, is in every place. Yet how few advert to his presence?—All nature exhibits him to their senses, yet perhaps he is not in any of their thoughts.

The sun, clothed in transcendent brightness, most illustriously displays his Maker's glory. The moon, though dressed in fainter beams, has lustre enough to show us the adorable Deity, and his marvellous perfections. The stars, fixed as they are, at an immeasurable distance, and lessened almost to

point, come in with their evidence, and magnify their Creator to a gazing but unaffected world.

The air whispers his clemency in the gentle, the refreshing gales of spring. If we take no notice of this soft persuasive address, the tone is elevated, the majesty of Jehovah sounds aloud in roaring winds and rending storms. Yet both expedients fail. Man is like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ears. He refuseth to hear the voice of the charmers, charm they never so sweetly, never so forcibly.

Each flower, arrayed in beauty, and breathing perfume, courts our affections for its infinitely amiable Author.—Not a bird that warbles, nor a brook that murmurs, but invites our praise, or chides our ingratitude. All the classes of fruits deposit their attestation on our palates, yet seldom reach our hearts. They give us a proof of the divine benignity; a proof as undeniable as it is pleasing, and too often as ineffectual also.

In short, the whole creation is a kind of magnificent embassy from its almighty Lord, deputed to proclaim his excellencies, and demand our homage. Yet who has not disregarded the former, and withheld the latter?—How few walk as seeing him that is invisible, or have fellowship with the Father of spirits? though to walk before him is our highest dignity, and to have fellowship with him is our only felicity.

Ther. This is owing to inattention, rather than to any blindness or defect in man's understanding. The many works of genius, which have been produced in various ages, are an abundant proof of his intellectual capacity.—Have not the seas been traversed, and the skies measured? Has not the earth been disembowelled of its choicest treasures, while its surface is beautified with towns, cities, palaces innumerable? What fine arts are invented and exercised, and to what a pitch of perfection are they carried? Arts that seem, if not to exceed, at least to rival nature. It was the understanding which formed all these great designs. It was the understanding which contrived the means, and conducted the execution. And are not these unquestionable evidences of her very superior abilities?

Asp. Then she is like some great empress, who conquers half the world, but is unable to rule herself; who extends her regulations into foreign climes, while her domestic affairs are involved in confusion.—Do you doubt the reality of this remark? Set yourself to meditate upon the most interesting truths. How desultory, how incoherent are your thoughts!—Charge them to be collected; they disobey your orders. Rally the undisciplined vagrants; again they desert the task. Exert all your power, and keep them close to their business; still they elude your endeavours.

The other day I could not forbear smiling at a little adventure of your youngest son's. Some quicksilver, which happened to be spilt upon the floor, parted into several globules. The shining balls looked so prettily, he longed to make them his own. But when he offered to take them up, they slipt from his hand; as soon as he renewed the attempt, so often he met with a disappointment; the closer he strove to grasp them, the more speedily they escaped from his fingers. He seemed at first to be amazed, then became quite angry that the little fugitives should so constantly baffle his repeated efforts. Thus unmanageable I very often find my own thoughts. If yours are under no better regimen, this may convince us both that all is not according to the original creation.

We apply ourselves to converse with the everlasting God in prayer. Here one would expect to have the thoughts all clearness, and all composure. But here "we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves," 2 Cor. iii. 5. All those holy ideas which create reverence, or strengthen faith, or quicken love, come from the Father of lights. Should he withdraw his influence, all will be dull, and dark, and dead. It may be we are somewhat enlivened in this sacred exercise; before we are aware, perhaps in the very midst of the solemn office, our attention is dissipated, and not dissipated only, but scattered to the ends of the earth. The God of all glory is forsaken, and the devotion paid to some senseless foppery. A malefactor, begging his life at the knees of his sovereign, and discontinuing his suit in order to caress a lap-dog, or pursue a butterfly, is but a faint image of the vanity which attends our devotional services. Reason, which ought to correct these irregularities, is treated like the incredulous lord, who, instead of controlling the unruly multitude, was overborne by their impetuosity, "and trodden under foot," 2 Kings vii. 17.

Since, then, the reins are struck out of our hands, and we have lost the rule over our own faculties, surely we are in a state different, very different, from our primitive constitution.

Ther. However insensible to refined speculation, the understanding, when interest is in the case, is apprehensive enough——

Asp. In temporal*, not in spiritual affairs.—Your younger brother, Theron, is a merchant. We will suppose him at the sea-side, within a small distance of the vessel in which a considerable part of his substance is embarked. We will suppose the vessel in the utmost distress, ready to founder with her leaks, or to strike upon the rocks. If he discovers no sign of concern, calls in no assistance from the country, makes no effort to save the crew, and secure the cargo, would you not think him bereaved of his understanding, or deprived of his sight? Could you conceive a more favourable opinion of his eyes or his intellect, if, instead of trying every method to prevent a shipwreck, he should amuse himself with picking shells from the ocean, or drawing figures on the sand?—We, and every one of our fellow creatures, have an interest in jeopardy, unspeakably more precious than all the rich lading of a thousand fleets. Our souls, our immortal souls, are exposed, every day, every hour, to the peril of everlasting destruction. Every temptation is threatening to their endless welfare, as a ridge of craggy rocks to a ship that drives before the strongest gale. Yet how unconcerned are mankind? where is their holy fear? where their godly jealousy? where their wakeful circumspection? Rather what a gay insensibility is observable in their behaviour? or else, what a lifeless formality prevails in their supplications—their supplications to that almighty Being, who alone is able to save and to destroy? Was not the human understanding both darkened and benumbed, we should see our neighbours, we should feel ourselves awakened into much the same earnest solicitude as the disciples expressed, when, perceiving the waves boisterous, and their bark sinking, they cried, "Lord, save us! we perish!"

But, alas! in things of an unseen nature, though of eternal consequence, interest, that habitual darling of every heart, loses its engaging influence. Nay, when eternity, all-important eternity is at stake, even self-preservation

* Called therefore by the apostle, "fleshy wisdom," and opposed to the grace of God, 1 Cor. i. 12.

is scarce any longer a governing principle. What can be more deplorable? and, if we admit not the doctrine of original corruption, what so unaccountable?

Ther. This, I must confess, is true with regard to the unthinking rabble. To them may be accommodated the remark of Augustus, who, when he saw some foreign females carrying apes in their arms instead of infants, said to one of his courtiers, "Have the women of those countries no children, that they are so fond of such despicable animals?"—The vulgar are so immersed in secular cares, that one might indeed be tempted to ask, "Have those people no souls, that buying and selling, eating and drinking, engross their whole concern?" But persons of rank and education think in a more exalted manner.

Asp. Do you then imagine, that an elevation of circumstances sets the affections on things above? or that it is the peculiar infelicity of the vulgar to grovel in their desires? Gold, I believe, is more likely to increase, than to dissipate the fog on the mind. Abundance of possessions, instead of disengaging the heart, fasten it more inseparably to the earth. Even superior attainments in learning, if not sanctified by grace, serve only to render the owner somewhat more refined in his follies. But comparisons between the various classes of mankind, are as useless as they are invidious. None in either condition, attend to the things which make for their peace till they are awakened from their lethargy by the quickening Spirit of Christ; and even then, we cannot but observe evident indications of much remaining blindness.

How apt are such persons to mistake the way of salvation! to place their own works for a foundation of hope, instead of Christ the Rock of Ages! thinking by their own performances to win, not seeking from unmerited grace to receive, the inheritance of eternal glory; which is more absurdly vain than to offer toys as an equivalent for thrones, or to dream of purchasing diadems with a mite.—They are also prone to misapprehend the nature of holiness; are zealous to regulate the external conduct, without attending to the renovation of the heart; in outward forms elaborate; with respect to inward sanctity, less if at all exact: a labour just as preposterous, as to skin over the surface of a wound while it festers at the bottom, and consumes the bone.

Give me leave to ask, Theron, When our Lord declares, "unless a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," John iii. 3; when he speaks of "eating his flesh, and drinking his blood," John vi. 54; when you hear or read of union with the blessed Jesus, or communion with the most high God; is there not a cloud, if not total darkness, on your mind? How erroneous was the Psalmist himself in his judgment concerning the divine disposals: "So foolish was I and ignorant, even as it were a beast," or as the veriest beast, "before thee," Psalm lxxiii. 22. The voice of experience therefore will attest, what the word of revelation has averred,—that the natural man, be his intellectual abilities ever so pregnant, or ever so improved, "cannot know the things of the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 14: he has no sight to discern their beauty, no taste to relish their sweetness. Nay, though they are the purest light, and the most perfect wisdom, to him they appear not only dark and obscure, but even foolishness itself.

Would this be the case if the understanding was not greatly depraved? Should it be difficult for your ear to distinguish the diversity of sounds, or for your eye to discern the variety of colours, would you not conclude, that the organs were very much impaired?

Ther. I think you have treated the understanding as Zopyrus served his own body*, when he went over to the enemy. Do you intend to mangle the other faculties at the same unmerciful rate?

Asp. That nobleman made the wounds which disfigured his flesh; I have only probed the sores which were found in the understanding. If I have touched the quick, and put the patient to pain, it is only to facilitate the operation of medicine, and make way for a cure.—But permit me to ask, Wherein does the excellency of the human will consist?

Ther. In following the guidance of reason, and submitting to the influence of proper authority.

Asp. The will, I fear, rejects the government of reason; and it is undeniably certain, that it rebels against the authority of God.

Plough your eye upon that team of horses, with which yonder countryman is ploughing his fallow-ground. No less than five of those robust animals are linked together, and yield their submissive necks to the draught. They have more strength than twenty men, yet are managed by a single lad. They not only stand in awe of the lash, but listen to the voice of their driver. They turn to the right hand or to the left; they quicken their pace, or stop short in the furrow, at the bare intimation of his pleasure. Are we equally obedient to the calls, to the exhortations, the express injunctions of our heavenly Lord? The blessed Jesus spoke at the beginning, and the world was made. He speaks by his providence, and the universe is upheld. When he shall speak at the last day, the heavens will pass away, and the earth be dissolved. Yet he speaks to us in his divine word, and we turn a deaf ear to his address. He speaks in tender expostulations, and no melting of heart ensues. He speaks in precious promises, and no ardent desires are onkindled. The will, which in these cases ought to be turned as wax to the seal, is unimpressed and inflexible as an iron sinew!

Ther. The human will is constantly inclined to preserve, accommodate, and make its possessor happy. Is not this the right position, in which it should always stand? or the most desirable direction that can be given to its motions?

Asp. I should be glad if fact bore witness to your assertion. But fact, I apprehend, is on the contrary side. I took notice, as we came along, of some ants busily employed on a little hillock. Have you made any observations, Theron, on this reptile community?

Ther. It is a little republic. They inhabit a kind of oblong city, divided in various streets. They are governed by laws, and regulated by politics, of their own. Their magazines are commodiously formed, and judiciously guarded against the injuries of the weather. Some are defended by an arch made of earth, and cemented with a peculiar sort of glue: some are covered with rafters of slender wood, and thatched with rushes or grass. The roof is always raised with a double slope, to turn away the current of the waters, and shoot the rain from their store-houses. They all bestir themselves

* See ROLLIN'S *Ancient Hist.* vol. iii. p. 46.

with incessant assiduity, while the air is serene, while the roads are good, and abundance of loose grain lies scattered over the fields. By these precautions they live secure when storms embroil the sky, they want no manner of conveniency even when winter lays waste the plains.

Asp. Do we improve, so diligently, our present opportunities? This life is the seed-time of eternity. Do we husband the precious moments like persons sensible of their unspeakable importance? sensible, that if we trifle and are indolent, they will be irrecoverably gone, and we irretrievably ruined?

Sickness, we know not how soon, may invade us, pain may torment us, and both may issue in our final dissolution. Are we duly aware of these awful changes, and properly solicitous to put all in order for their approach? We walk (alarming thought!) upon the very brink of death, resurrection, and judgment. Do we walk like wise virgins, with our loins girt, with our lamps trimmed, in a state of continual readiness for the heavenly Bridgroom's advent?

Those ants "have no guide, overseer, or ruler; yet prepare their meat in the summer, and gather their food in the harvest," Prov. vi. 7. We have all these, yet neglect the time of our visitation. We have God's unerring word to guide us; God's ever-watchful eye to oversee us; God's sovereign command to rule and quicken us. Notwithstanding all these motives, is not the speech of the sluggard the very language of our conduct? "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep." The most supine indifference, where all possible diligence is but just sufficient! This, you must allow, is the true character of mankind in general. And does this demonstrate the rectitude of their will?

Ther. The understanding may be said to carry the torch, the will to hold the balance. Now the perfection of a balance consists in being so nicely poised, as to incline at the least touch, and preponderate with the slightest weight. This property belongs, without all dispute, to the human will.

Asp. What if one of your scales should descend to the ground, though charged with trifles that are light as air? if the other should kick the beam, though its contents be weightier than talents of gold? Is not this an exact representation of our will, when the fleeting pleasures of sense, or the gay interests of time, excite our wishes; even while the solid delights of religion, and the immensely rich treasures of immortality, can hardly obtain our attention? However, let us quit the metaphor, and examine fact. Suppose I make it appear, that, instead of chusing the most eligible objects, the will is so deplorably vitiated as to loathe what is salutary, and be fond of what is baneful.

Ther. If you prove this to be universally the case, you will prove your favourite point with a witness.

Asp. When Providence is pleased to thwart our measures, or defeat our endeavours; to bring us under the cloud of disgrace, or lay upon us the rod of affliction; what is our behaviour? Do we bow our heads in humble resignation? Do we open our mouths in thankful acknowledgments?—Observe the waters in that elegant octangular basin. They assimilate themselves, with the utmost readiness, and with equal exactness, to the vessel that contains them. So would the human will, if it were not extremely froward and foolish, conform itself to the divine; which is uner-

ringly wise, and of all possible contingencies incomparably the best. Yet how apt are we to fret with disquietude, and struggle under afflictive dispensations, "as a wild bull in a net!"

Ther. This is a very imperfect proof, *Aspasio*, and corresponds only with part of your accusation. We may dislike what is wholesome, especially if it be unpalatable, yet not be fond of our bane.

Asp. Should you see a person who thirsts after the putrid lake, but disrelishes the running fountain; who longs for the poisoned berries of the nightshade, but abhors the delicious fruit of the orchard; would you applaud the regularity of his appetite? I do not wait for your answer. But I more than suspect this is a true picture of all unregenerate people. How do they affect dress and external ornament; but are unwilling, rather than desirous, to be "clothed with humility," 1 Pet. v. 5, and "to put on Christ," Rom. xiii. 14. Amusement will engage, play animate, and diversion fire them; but as to the worship of the living God, O "what a weariness is it!" Mal. i. 13. This is attended, if attended at all, with languor and a listless insensibility. Frothy novels and flatulent wit regale their taste, while the marrow and fatness of the divine word are as "their sorrowful meat," Job vi. 7. What is all this but to loathe the salutary, and long for the baneful?

Let me, from the same comparison, propose one question more, which may be applicable both to the will and to the understanding. Should you hear of another person, the state of whose stomach was so disposed that it turned the most nourishing food into phlegm, and derived matter of disease from the most sovereign supports of health; what would you think of his constitution?

Ther. I should certainly think it very much distempered.

Asp. Without the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, our souls turn every occurrence into an increase of their sinful depravity. Our very table is a snare, and, instead of exciting us to gratitude, is a provocative to gluttony. How difficult is it, when we flow in plenty, not to be elated; when we are oppressed with poverty, not to repine! Have we business in the world? it cumburs our thoughts, or tempts us to avarice. Have we no business to manage? we sink into sloth, and settle on the lees of voluptuousness. If our schemes are prosperous, it is odds but they attach us to the interests of time: if they prove unsuccessful, we too often are chagrined with the disappointment, and sin against meekness. Even the holy commandment, instead of restraining sin, or producing obedience, irritates the inbred depravity, and renders it more restless, more impetuous, more ungovernable, Rom. vii. 8. Those very things which should have been for our welfare, (so malignant and raging is our corruption!) are converted into an occasion of falling.

Ther. The will is under no necessity of misemploying her powers. She is free to act in this manner or in that; and if a spendthrift, is not a slave.

Asp. In actions which relate to the animal economy, the will is unquestionably free. She can contract the forehead into a frown, or expand it with a smile. In the ordinary affairs of life, she is under no control. We can undertake or decline a journey, carry on or discontinue an employ, just as we please. In the outward acts of religion also, the will is her own mistress. We can read the word of God, or go to the place of divine worship, without any extraordinary aid from above.—But, in matters which are more intimately connected with our salvation, the case is different. Here, as our liturgy expresses it, "we are tied and bound with the chain of our sins."

Would you have a person delight himself in the Lord, take pleasure in devotion, set his affections on things above?—All this is both his duty and his happiness. But, alas! he is alienated from the life of God; his inclinations gravitate quite the contrary way; his will is in the condition of that distressed woman, who was “bowed down with a spirit of infirmity, and could in no wise lift up herself,” Luke xii. 11. Corruption, like a strong bias, influences, or rather like a heavy mountain oppresses, his mind. Neither can he shake off the propensity, or struggle away from the load, until grace, almighty grace, interposes for his release. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there,” and there alone, “is liberty,” 2 Cor. iii. 17. that sacred and glorious liberty, which is not the common privilege of all men, but the high prerogative of the children of God.

Would you have a person apply to the great Redeemer—apply with a real ardour of desire, as Bartimæus of old, or the Syrophœnician mother?—His will is like the withered arm, cannot stretch forth itself to the all-gracious Saviour; cannot hunger and thirst after his everlasting righteousness and infinite merit, till the Saviour himself speaks power into the enfeebled, the perverted faculty.—If you think otherwise, try the experiment. Persuade men to this necessary practice. Urge the most weighty arguments; devise the most pathetic expostulations; let zeal summon all her force, and rhetoric employ all her art. Without being a prophet, I dare venture to foretell the issue. Disappointments, repeated disappointments, will convince you that our divine Master knew what he said when he solemnly declared, “No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him,” John vi. 41. Our church, in conformity to this and other scriptures, has taught us to pray, “Turn thou us, O good Lord,” for nothing but thy omnipotent agency is capable of doing it, “and so we shall be turned.”

Ther. Are we slaves then? Will Christianity send us to seek our brethren in the mines or in the galleys?

Asp. Christianity does not send but find us there: There, or in a worse slavery*.—It is doubtless a most abject state, to wear the yoke, and trundle in chains. Yet such, I apprehend, is the state of our minds by nature. To prove this, we need not go down to the lowest ranks of life. “These,” you might say with the prophet, “are poor; these are foolish; they have not known the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God—I will get me therefore to the great men,” Jer. v. 4, 5. and examine their disposition.

Have you not known persons of the greatest intrepidity, and firmest resolution, hurried away by their lusts, as “a rolling thing before the whirlwind?” Isa. xvii. 13. Perhaps they were bold enough to face danger, and defy the sword in the field of battle; yet were no more able to withstand the wanton allurements of beauty, or the soft solicitations of pleasure, than the moth can forbear fluttering about the flame, even though it singes her wings, and is scorching her to death. Others, possessed of a refined

* St. Paul says of Christians, and reckons himself in the number, that naturally they served (not *διακονοῦντες*, but *δουλοῦντες*, were absolute slaves to) “diverse lusts and pleasures,” Tit. iii. 3. The whole verse is very remarkable, and nothing can be more apposite to Aspasio’s purpose. It shews us, what they were by nature, who through grace became living images of the blessed God.

This mortifying doctrine is often acknowledged by our church: Thus begins one of her public supplications, “Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful man.” It seems, we cannot determine our own wills, nor regulate our own affections. What is this but bondage?

imagination, disdain the gross indulgences of sensuality; yet are slaves to their own domineering passions. They are blown into the most intemperate rage, and pushed on to the most extravagant actions, by every little ruffling accident. They see the meanness which such an ungovernable spirit argues; they feel the misery which such internal tempests create; nay, they resolve to suppress the impetuosity of their temper: yet are borne away by the torrent, and upon the very first provocation are as furiously resentful as ever. Will you call these persons free, because their task-masters and their tyrants are lodged within? because the fetters are forged, not for the meaner, but for the immortal part of their nature?

Ther. Let us pass to the affections. These are to the soul what wings are to the eagle, or sails to the ship. These always stand ready to receive the gales of interest, and to spring at the signal of reason.

Asp. Oh, that they did!—but if the wings are clogged with mire, if the sails are disproportioned to the ballast, what advantage will accrue, either to the animal or to the vessel? The one will probably be upset in the voyage, the other will lie grovelling on the ground.

Ther. Desire seems to be first, which “opens the mouth, or moves the wing, or peeps,” Isa. x. 14. Desire is active as a flame, and ever in pursuit of happiness.

Asp. What if your flame, instead of shooting upwards, should point its inverted spires to the earth? Would not this be strange, and a sign of great disorder?—God is the centre of perfection, and the source of felicity. All that is amiable in itself, is comprehended in God. All that is beneficial to us, proceeds from God. Do our desires uniformly tend to this superexcellent Being? Do our wishes terminate in the enjoyment of his ever-glorious Majesty? Alas! we are naturally estranged from him. We covet no communion with him. We are wedded to trifles, and dote upon vanity: but to God we say—it is evidently the language of our conduct—“Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,” Job xxi. 14.

If desire is the first-born among the affections, observe it in children. There it appears in its dawn, and has most of pure nature. See how those flies, exulting in the sunny gleam, vibrate with all the rapidity of motion their little wings: so prompt and expedite are the desires of children to any corrupting diversion. See how sluggishly that snail, crawling forth amidst the refreshing moisture, drags her slow length along: so dull, if not reluctant, are the dispositions of our children to any improving exercise. Rewards will hardly win them to the latter; the rod can hardly deter them from the former: and none, none but God, “by his special grace preventing them, can put into their minds good desires*.”

Is our love under better regulation? How easily are we captivated with a fair complexion and graceful form, especially when set off with the decorations of dress; but how little affected with the beauty of internal character, with the ornaments of virtue and the graces of Christianity? Can it be supposed that the pulse of the soul beats regularly, when there is such a passionate fondness for fading embellishments, and such a cold indifference for the most substantial endowments? How ready are we to be enamoured with well-proportioned clay, often to our apparent prejudice, sometimes to our utter ruin? yet how backward to love that infinitely loving and lovely

* Collect for Easter-day.

Redeemer, who would die himself rather than we should become a prey to death! Tinder we are, perfect tinder, to the sparks of irrational and dissolute affection; harder than adamant, colder than ice, to this heavenly flame.

Ther. If our love is blind, our fear has not lost her eyes. Fear is quick of apprehension; and instead of being stupidly insensible, is ready to "rise up at the voice of a bird," Eccl. xii. 4.

Asp. The passion of fear is sufficiently active, but deplorably misapplied. We fear the reproach of men: but are we alarmed at the view of that everlasting shame which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall pour upon the ungodly? We shudder at the drawn dagger, and stand appalled at the headlong precipice: but how often have we defied the sword of almighty vengeance, and sported upon the brink of irretrievable perdition?

Sin is the most pernicious of all evils. Sin violates the divine command, and provokes the divine Majesty. Sin offers despite to the blessed Spirit, and tramples upon the blood of Jesus. For sin the transgressor is banished from the blissful presence of God, and doomed to dwell with inextinguishable burnings. Do we dread this grand destroyer of our happiness? dread it more than any calamities, more than all plagues?—Take one of those fine may-dukes, which glow with so beautiful a scarlet on yonder espalier: offer it to the blackbird that serenades us from the neighbouring elm. The creature, though fond of the dainty, will fly from your hand, as hastily as from a levelled fowling-piece. He suspects a design upon his liberty; and therefore will endure any extremity, will even starve to death, rather than taste the most tempting delicacy in such hazardous circumstances. Are we equally fearful of an infinitely greater danger? Do we fly with equal solicitude from the delusive but destructive wiles of sin? Alas! do not we too often swallow the bait, even when we plainly discover the fatal hook? Do we not snatch the forbidden fruit, though conscience remonstrates, though God prohibits, though death eternal threatens?

Ther. Conscience then, according to your own account, has escaped the general shipwreck. Conscience is God's vicegerent in the soul, and executes her office faithfully. Even the Gentiles "show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another," Rom. ii. 15.

Asp. If there be any remains of the divine image, perhaps they are to be found in the conscience. But even this is not exempt from the common ruin.—Consider its light. It is like a dim taper, feebly glimmering, and serving only to make the darkness visible. Or if it discovers any thing, it is an obscure something, we know not what, which instead of informing tantalizes us, and instead of guiding bewilders us, as false and delusory lights on the shore put a cheat upon the mariner, and lead him on to ruin*.—Consider its operations. It is either dumb or dead, or both. Dumb! or else how vehemently would it upbraid us for our shocking ingratitude to the supreme omnipotent Benefactor? how loudly would it inveigh against our stupid neg-

* This seems to have been the case with the bulk of the Heathen world. Conscience arraigned, and found them guilty. This put them upon practising their abominable, sometimes their inhuman idolatries. Nay, this induced them to give the most scandalous and impious mis-representations of the Deity. That they might sheath the sting of conscience, and find some salvo for their own iniquities, they made even the objects of their worship the patrons and the precedents of their favourite vices.

lect of spiritual interests, and eternal ages? Dead; otherwise how keenly would it smart when gashed with wounds, numerous as our repeated violations of the divine law, deep as the horrid aggravations of our various iniquities?

Ther. Do you call this an answer to my objection, Aspasio? If it be an answer, it resembles, in point of satisfactory evidence, the light which you ascribe unto the conscience.

Asp. The Gentiles, you allege, show the work but not the love of the law, written on their hearts. Some leading notices of right and wrong they have, some speculative strictures of good and evil; but without a real abhorrence of the one, or a cordial delight in the other: which, far from ennobling their nature, far from vindicating their practice, argues the exceeding depravity of the former, and renders the latter absolutely without excuse.

No; you say, conscience excuses the heathens. Rather; their conscience bears witness to the equity of the law, while their thoughts make some weak apology for the tenor of their conduct. This is far from acquitting, far from justifying them. Besides, these weak attempts to excuse are always founded on ignorance. Did they know themselves, their duty, or their God, conscience would, without the least hesitation, bring in her verdict Guilty. The apostle assures us that till faith, which is a divine principle, takes place in our breasts, "both the mind and the conscience are defiled," Tit. i. 15: here and elsewhere very plainly intimating, that the conscience is evil, and ever will be evil, till it is "sprinkled with the blood of Christ," Heb. x. 22.

It accuses some, I acknowledge, and it ought to accuse, yea, to condemn all. But even here it evidences itself to be corrupt, for its accusations are sometimes erroneous, and no better than false witnesses, sometimes partial, and suborned by appetite; and very, very often ineffectual. Nay, when they do take effect, they produce no fruit that is truly good. They work not a genuine humiliation, or an unfeigned repentance, but either a slavish dread of God as a severe judge, or hatred of him as an inexorable enemy.

Ther. Hatred of God! Astonishing impiety! Is it possible for the human heart to admit such enormous, almost incredible wickedness?

Asp. You may well be astonished, Theron; and God may justly demand, "What iniquity have my people found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity?" Jer. ii. 5. "I created you out of nothing, and endowed you with an immortal soul. As a father, I have provided for you: as a nurse, I have cherished you. I have consigned over to your possession the earth, and the fulness thereof. All my creatures do you service, and even my angels minister unto your good. Do you desire greater demonstrations of my love? I have given what was dearer to me than all angels, than all worlds: I have given my Son from my bosom, to die in your stead. Would you have farther evidences of my tender, my distinguished regard? Behold! I touch the mountains, and they smoke: I look upon the earth, and it trembles: I cast even the princes of heaven, when they break my law, into chains of darkness. But to you, O men, I condescend to act as a supplicant! Though highly injured, and horribly affronted, I beseech you, again and again I beseech you, to be reconciled."

To hate* such a God is indeed the most detestable impiety. Yet man, foolish

* *Hatred of God* is so shocking an expression, that one would almost wish never to hear or read it. But it occurs in our unerring book: is too often exemplified in common

man, practises this impiety, whenever, for the sake of a vile lust, an ignoble pleasure, or an unruly passion, he transgresses the command of his Creator.

Shall I exemplify the doctrine in another of the affections?

Ther. In truth, Aspasio, I begin to be sick of the subject. If human nature is so ulcerated, the less you touch it the better. However, let us not quite omit the irascible appetite.

Asp. Of this we have already taken a side-view: if you choose to see it in full proportion, make your observation on Fervidus. Fervidus comes home in a rage. His cheeks are pale, and his lips quiver with excess of passion. Though he can hardly speak, he vows revenge, and utters imprecations. What is the cause of all this wondrous ferment? A neighbour, it seems, has dropped some reflecting hint, or a servant has blundered in some trifling message. Such usage, Fervidus says, is intolerable, and such negligence unpardonable. This same Fervidus has offered numberless affronts to his Maker, he has most scandalously neglected the will of his almighty Lord, yet feels no indignation against himself. He is all fury when his own credit is touched, but when the interest of Christ is wounded he can sit unconcerned, or pass it off with a laugh. Anger, I acknowledge, is sometimes becoming and useful. But is this its right temperature? this its proper application?

Ther. This is the practice only of some few turbulent spirits. To saddle their qualities upon every person, is a procedure just as equitable, as the mad-man's * calculation was reasonable, who took an account of every ship which entered the harbour, and set it down for his own.

Asp. The latter part of my charge, I fear, is applicable to more than a few. However let us consider the most calm and sedate minds. How are they affected under injuries? Do they never aggravate failings into crimes? Do they find it easy to abstain from every emotion of ill-will? easy to love their enemies, and do good to those who hate them? These god-like tempers, if our nature was not degenerated, would be the spontaneous produce of the soul. But now, alas! they are not raised without much difficulty; seldom come to any considerable degree of eminence; never arrive at a state of true perfection. An undoubted proof that they are exotics, not natives of the soil.

Now we are speaking of plants, cast your eye upon the kitchen garden. Many of those herbs will perfume the hard hand which crushes them, and embalm the rude foot which tramples on them. Such was the benign conduct of our Lord: he always overcame evil with good. When his disciples disregarded him in his bitter agony, he made the kindest excuse for their ungrateful stupidity, *Matt. xxvi. 41.* When his enemies, with unparalleled barbarity, spilt his very blood, he pleaded their ignorance as an extenuation of their guilt, *Luke, xxiii. 34.* Is the same spirit in us which was also in our divine Master? Then are our passions rightly poised, and duly tempered. But if resentment kindles, and animosity rankles in our hearts; this is an infallible sign that we swerve from our Saviour's pattern, consequently, are fallen from our primitive rectitude.

Ther. What say you of the fancy? This, sure, if no other, retains the primitive rectitude. What pictures does she form, and what excursions does she make? She can dive to the bottom of the ocean, can soar to the height of the stars, and walk upon the boundaries of creation.

Life; is engraven by corrupt nature, on every human heart. See *Rom. i. 30*; *Exod. xx. 5*; *John xv. 25*; *Rom. viii. 7.*

* *Thrasylus*, an Athenian.

Asp. That the fancy is lively and excursive, I readily grant. It can out-travel the post, or out-fly the eagle. But if it travel only to pick up shells, or fly abroad to bring home mischief; then I apprehend, though you should admire the faculty, you will hardly be in raptures with its agency. This is the real truth. Our fancy, till divine grace regulate and exalt its operations, is generally employed in picking painted shells, or culling venomous herbs; "weaving (as the prophet very elegantly, and no less exactly, describes the case) the spider's web, or hatching cockatrice eggs," Isa. lix. 5; busied in the most absurd impertinencies, or acting in speculation the vilest iniquities. That which should be "a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed," Cant. iv. 12, for the Prince of Peace, is the thoroughfare of vanity. And even when we are renewed from above, O! how necessary is it to keep an incessant watch, and exercise a strict discipline, over this volatile, variable, treacherous vagrant!

The memory, as well as the fancy, is impaired, or if not impaired, is debauched. Why else does it so firmly retain the impressions of an injury, but so easily let slip the remembrance of a benefit? Any idle fopperies which sooth our vanity, and increase our corruption, cleave to the thoughts, as the vexatious burr to our clothes; while the noble truths of the gospel, and the rich mercies of a gracious God, slide away from the mind, and leave no lasting trace behind them. This double perverseness is very emphatically, and too truly represented by Jeremiah: "can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number," Jer. ii. 32. If we hear a loose hint, or read an immodest expression, they are almost sure to fasten themselves on our memory. If shaken off, they follow us with a troublesome importunity. If excluded as unwelcome visitants, they force themselves again and again upon our imagination. They dog us to the closet; they haunt our most retired hours; and too often disturb our very devotions. Tell me now, can that faculty be upright and uncorrupted, which is a perforated sieve to transmit the beneficial, but a thirsty sponge to imbibe the pernicious?*

Ther. Well, my friend, whatever guilt I or others have contracted, flattery, I dare be positive, is none of yours. Human nature has received no heightening or adulatory touches from your pencil. You have portrayed her foolish and beastly, and every thing bad, but devilish.

Asp. And this, even this abomination I must not secrete, I dare not except. † Envy is a devilish disposition. It subsists nowhere but in damned spirits and fallen souls: yet, infernal as it is, it has been found in persons of the most exalted character. The magnanimous Joshua felt its cankerous tooth, Numb. xi. 29. The disciples of the blessed Jesus were soured with its malignant leaven, Matt. xx. 24. An apostle declares, that "the spirit which dwelleth in us lusteth to envy," James iv. 5; is impetuously prone to that detestable temper.

Lying is confessedly a diabolical practice; yet how unaccountably forward are our children to utter falsehood? As soon as they are born, they go astray; and as soon as they speak, they speak lies.—I said unaccountably;

* This, I think, suggests an unanswerable confutation of that specious argument, frequently used in behalf of some fashionable but dissolute diversions: "They are interspersed," say their admirers, "with sentiments of virtue, and maxims of morality." Should we admit the truth of this plea, yet the depraved disposition of mankind is pretty sure to drop the morality and carry away the ribaldry.

but I recall the expression: the cause is evident—they have lost the image of the God of truth, and are become like that apostate spirit, “who is a liar and the father of it,” John viii. 44.

What think you of malice, of hate, and revenge? Are they not each a species of murder, and the seed of the old serpent? Unless, therefore, we are entirely free from all these hellish emotions, we must, we must acknowledge, “that the prince of this world,” John xiv. 30, has his party within us. May the almighty hand of our God extirpate and subdue it day by day!

You tell me I am no flatterer. Should a person who professes himself the friend of his fellow creatures, soothe them into a false peace? should he bolster them up in a groundless conceit of their excellency, when they really are no better than “an unclean thing?” shall the surgeon assure his patient, “all is well,” even when the mortification has taken place, and the gangrene is spreading? This were to refine the first out of all benevolence, and to flatter the last into his grave.

A disputant of less complaisance than my Theron would probably ask, with a contemptuous sneer, “Have you then been drawing your own picture?”—To whom I would reply with confusion and sorrow, “I have;” alleging this only to moderate my confusion, that I am daily seeking, by prayer and watchfulness, more and more “to put off this old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” Eph. iv. 22. And to alleviate my sorrow, I am endeavouring continually to remember, that however unworthy I am, however vile I may have been, my adored Redeemer’s righteousness is perfect; and in this righteousness every believer is to make his boast.

Ther. So then man is blind in his understanding; perverse in his will; disorderly in his affections; influenced by dispositions, which are partly brutal and partly diabolical.—I have often heard you extol, in terms of high admiration, the virtue of humility: you have lavished all the riches of eloquence when haranguing on poverty of spirit. If such be the condition of mankind, they have infinite cause to be poor in spirit. They must therefore have one excellency left, and, according to your own account, a very distinguishing one.

Asp. Scarce any thing displays in a more glaring light the extreme depravity of man than his strong propensity to pride, notwithstanding so much vileness and so many deformities.—Should the noisome leper admire the beauty of his complexion, or the impotent paralytic glory in the strength of his sinews, would they not be mistaken, even to a degree of sottishness and frenzy? Yet for man, fallen man, who has lost his original righteousness, which was the true ornament of his nature, who is become subject to base and sordid lusts, or as the apostle speaks “is earthly and sensual,”—for him to be proud, is still more absurdly wicked. And since this is the case, I cannot acquit him from the last and heaviest article of the sacred writer’s charge; I have a fresh and more convincing proof that we do him no wrong, when we call his nature, his disposition, his wisdom—“devilish,” Jam. iii. 15.

Ther. Why do you reckon pride an universally prevailing corruption? I see no ground for such a dishonourable suspicion. I hope I myself am an instance to the contrary. To unguarded sallies of passion, to several other faults, I confess myself subject; but cannot think that I am proud.

Asp. Ah, Theron, if you was not proud, you would not be passionate.

Unreasonable anger always proceeds from an overweening opinion of our own worth. One who, besides his acquired knowledge of human nature, had the supernatural gift of discerning spirits, is observed to join "humility" and "meekness," Eph. iv. 2; intimating, that they are amiable twins, and where one exists the other cannot be absent. Always consistent with himself, he links together the opposite vices, "heady and high-minded," 2 Tim. iii. 4; not obscurely hinting, that those who are easily provoked are certainly proud. Shall I add, without offence, if we fancy our minds to be clear from the weeds of vanity, and our thoughts free from the workings of self-admiration, it is a most pregnant symptom, that we are overrun with the former, abandoned to the latter, and blinded by both.

Pride was the first sin that found entrance into our nature, and it is perhaps the last that will be expelled. What are all our afflictions, but a remedy provided for this inveterate disease; intended to "hide pride from man?" Job xxxiii. 17. What is the institution of the gospel, but a battery erected against this stronghold of Satan; ordained to "cast down every high imagination?" 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Though that remedy is often applied, though this battery is continually playing, yet the peccant humour is not entirely purged off, nor the elatement of spirit totally subdued, till mortality is swallowed up of life.

Pride is the sin which most easily besets us. "Who can say, I have made my heart clean," Prov. xx. 9, from this iniquity? It defiles our duties, and intermingles itself with our very virtues. It starts up, I know not how, in our most solemn hours and our most sacred employa. The good Hezekiah, whose prayers were more powerful than all the forces of Sennacherib, was not proof against the wiles of this subtle sorceress, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. Even the great apostle, who had been caught up into the third heavens, was in danger of being puffed up with pride; in such great danger, that it was necessary to put a lancet into the gathering tumour; or, as he himself expresses it, to fix a "thorn in his flesh, and permit the messenger of Satan to buffet him," 2 Cor. xii. 7.

How pathetically is this corruption lamented, and how truly described, by "a sweet singer of our Israel!"

But pride, that busy sin,
Spoils all that I perform;
Cursed pride! that creeps securely in,
And swells a haughty worm.

Thy glories I abate,
Or praise thee with design;
Part of thy favours I forget,
Or think the merit mine.

The very songs I frame
Are faithless to thy cause;
And steal the honours of thy name,
To build their own applause.—WATTS' *Hor. Lyr.*

Ther. Now, I presume, you have given the last touches to your distorted portrait.

Asp. There are other disagreeable and shocking features; but these I shall cast into shades, or hide under a veil. One particular you must allow me to add, which, like a sullen air in the countenance, throws aggravated horror over the whole: I mean an inclination to be fond of our slavery.

In other instances, the "captive exile hasteth to be loosed," Isa. li. 14. but here we prefer bondage to freedom, and are loath to leave our prison. Of this our backwardness to self-examination is both a consequence and a proof. Self-examination, under the agency of the Spirit, would open a window in our dungeon; would shew us our wretched condition, and teach us to sigh for deliverance. Why have we such a dislike to reproof? Because we hug our chains, and choose darkness rather than light. Reproof is more grating than the harshest discord, though it tends to dissolve the enchantment, and rescue us from the tyranny of sin; while flattery, which abets the delusion, and strengthens the spell, is music to our ears. Is not our reason, which would arraign and condemn every irregularity, forward to invent excuses, and to spare the favourite folly? Reason, which should unsheath the dagger, superinduces the mask; and instead of striking at the heart of our vices, veils them under the cover of some plausible names. A wicked habit is called a human infirmity, ensnaring diversions pass for innocent amusements, a revengeful disposition is termed spirit, gallantry, and honour. Thus our reason (if, when so egregiously perverted, it deserves the name) is ingenious to obstruct our recovery, and rivets on the shackles which our passions have loosed.*

This the eternal Wisdom foresaw, and therefore uttered the tender exhortation, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?"—even the inestimably precious knowledge of an all-atoning and completely justifying Saviour; who preaches, who has purchased and who works deliverance—preaches in his word, has purchased by his blood, and works by his Spirit, deliverance for the captives, the wretched captives of ignorance, sin, and death. This I take to be the most flagrant and deplorable effect of human depravity—our aversion to the doctrine, the privileges, the grace of the gospel. Beware, dear Theron, lest you prove my point by—shall I speak it? would you suspect it?—your own practice. Zealous as I am for my tenets, I should be sorry, extremely sorry, to have such a demonstration of their truth.

Ther. You are highly obliging, Aspasio, to single me out for your evidence. Yet why should the honour be appropriated to myself? It belongs, upon the foot of the preceding calculation, not to your friend only, but to the whole species. If you was aiming at none but the licentious and abandoned, you would have none to oppose you but persons of that character. Your arrows of satire would then be rightly levelled, and might be serviceable to mankind; whereas, to put all in the black list, to mark all with the villain's brand—this can never be Christian charity, this is insufferable censoriousness.

Asp. Let me beseech you, Theron, not to misapprehend my design. I speak not as a malevolent satirist, but would imitate the faithful physician. I am opening the sore, that it may admit the healing balm: and should I perform the operation with an envenomed instrument? My soul abhors the thought. I must entreat you likewise to remember the distinction between a state of nature and a state of grace. We are all naturally evil. Such we should for ever continue, did not a supernatural power intervene; making

* Perhaps this is what our Lord means, when, developing the human heart, and discovering its latent enormities, he closes the dark account with *απορουν foolishness*; implying that stupidity which has no sense of its misery, that perverseness which has no inclination for a recovery; both which render all the other evils far more inveterate. Mark vii.

some to differ, both from their original selves, and from the generality of their neighbours. Are they refined in their temper, and reformed in their life? I grant it. But then it is the influence of the sanctifying Spirit which purges away their dross, yet not without leaving some alloy.

Ther. Here, Aspasio, you certainly strain the bow till it breaks; since Scripture itself celebrates some persons as absolutely perfect. What says Moses, the inspired historian? "Noah was perfect in his generation," Gen. vi. 9. What says the God of Moses, who can neither deceive nor be deceived? "Job was a perfect man and an upright," Job i. 1. Consequently their nature must be entirely cleansed from this hereditary defilement; and their character confutes your derogatory representations of mankind.

Asp. Those eminent saints were perfect; that is, they were sanctified throughout, sanctified in all their faculties; no one grace of religion was lacking. As in the new-born infant there is a human creature complete; no constituent part of the vital frame is wanting; though each is tender, all are very feeble, and none arrived at the full size.

They were upright. This word seems to be explanatory of the preceding; and signifies an unfeigned desire, joined with a hearty endeavour, to obey the whole will of God; excluding, not all defect, but all reigning hypocrisy and wilful remissness. The interpretation, thus limited, is of a piece with their conduct. If stretched to a higher pitch, it is evidently inconsistent with the narrative of their lives.

Pray, what was your motive for decorating the silvan retirement (which sheltered us yesterday) with the statue of Elijah?

Ther. Because I thought his solitary life and gloomy temper suited that sequestered bower; because the memorable adventure there represented, is with me a favourite portion of sacred history.

Are we pleased with spirited and delicate raillery? Nothing exceeds his pungent sarcasm on the stupid and despicable dupes of idolatry. Every sentence is keen as a razor, and pointed as a dagger, yet wears the appearance of the most courtly complaisance. We may truly say, in the beautiful language of the Psalmist, "His words are smoother than oil, and yet be they very swords*."

Are we delighted with instances of magnanimity? A single prophet, unsupported by any human aid, maintains the cause of truth against the king, his grandees, and hundreds of the apostate priests. He ventures to stake all his credit, to risk his very life, and (what was dearer to him than personal credit, or bodily life) the honour of the true God, and interests of his holy religion; to risk all on the immediate interposition of a most surprising miracle.

Do we admire the triumphs of faith? His faith was, in a manner, omnipotent. He prays, and torrents of fire descend from the sky to devour his adversaries, 2 Kings i. 10. He prays again, and the sluices of heaven are shut; there is neither dew nor rain for several years, 1 Kings xvii. 1. A third time he prays, and the windows from on high are opened; abundance of showers water the earth, James v. 17. On another occasion he presents his supplications, and God makes his feet like harts' feet, insomuch that an aged prophet outruns the royal chariot, 1 Kings xviii. 46.

* 1 Kings xviii. 27. "And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a God. Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."

Asp. I commend your taste, Theron; and am particularly pleased with the reasons of your choice. But do not you remember, that even the wonder-working Tishbite failed in his resignation, and failed in his faith? Eminent as he was for mortification, he gave way to unreasonable discontent; and, though a champion for the living God, he yielded to unbelieving fear*. "The man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth," Numb. xii. 3; yet he, even he was provoked in his spirit, and spake unadvisedly with his lips, Psal. cvi. 33. Was not Peter the hero among our Lord's followers? Yet he trembles, more than trembles, at the shaking of a leaf; he denies his divine Master, scared by the voice of a woman.

Look wherever we will, we find proofs of human depravity; reigning uncontrolled in some, making frequent insurrection in all. It is written on our own hearts by the pen of experience; the finger of observation points it out in the practice of others—even in the practice of those who have been saints of the first rank, and of the highest endowments. Yet they were defective;—defective, too, in that very quality which was their distinguishing gift, in which they particularly excelled.

Ther. While we are talking, the day has insensibly stole itself away, and left us surrounded with twilight; which is a sort of lustre intermingled with darkness—no part wholly lucid, no part wholly obscure. An emblem, according to your representation, of the renewed soul, and its imperfect holiness.

Asp. A very just one. Even where the gospel shines, still there is an incurrent gloom of corruption. Ignorance mixes itself with our knowledge, unbelief cleaves to our faith; nor is our purity free from all contamination. The prophet Zechariah, foretelling the establishment of the gospel kingdom, and describing the state of its spiritual subjects, says, "It shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark †." This, as to its literal sense, we now see exemplified in the circumambient atmosphere. With regard to its spiritual meaning, every true believer feels it accomplished in his own breast.

Ther. While you are so vehement in decrying all human attainments, consider, *Aspasio*, whether you do not check and dispirit us in the pursuit of exalted virtue.

Asp. I suppose you never expected to be such an adept in geometry as Archimedes, nor so profound an astronomer as Newton; yet this did not check your application to the study of mathematics, or the contemplation of the heavens. Your brother, the merchant, I presume, has no prospect of amassing the wealth of a Croesus, or the immense treasures of a Kouli-Khan; yet this does not dispirit him in prosecuting the business, which brings him both opulence and honour.

* Elias, or rather Elijah, "was a man subject to like passions as we are," James v. 17. Upon which passage an eminent commentator makes the following remark: "This probably is said with respect to his fear and discontent, manifested 1 Kings xix. 3, 4." *Quærens* must, I think, imply a state liable to the irregular workings of passion; not free from the sinful infirmities of nature. Otherwise, it is an instance foreign to the purpose, does by no means answer the end designed; which is to encourage the heart, and strengthen the faith, even of frail, corrupt, offending creatures. See verse 16.

† Zech. xvi. 6; 1 Cor. xiii. 9. "For we know in part." Perhaps this declaration of the apostle may be a key to the prophet's meaning. However, it is a sufficient confirmation of *Aspasio's* sentiment.

However, Theron, so long as you deny the imputation of Christ's righteousness, I must acknowledge you act a consistent part in being zealous for the perfection of personal obedience. You ought either to acquire the one, or to accept the other: therefore I shall produce no more arguments for your discouragement, but shall comprise the whole of my answer in the motto to an Irish nobleman's arms—TRY. Or, if this be too concise, I will subjoin, with a very little alteration, the words of a king; "When you have attained what you pursue, bring me word again, that I may go and possess it also," Matth. ii. 8.

Ther. According to your account, the most advanced and established Christians are but like a company of invalids. Does not this extremely derogate from the honour of our Lord, considered as the Physician of souls? It seems to make a mere nothing of sanctification, and would swallow up Christ the King in Christ the Priest.

Asp. Invalids they are*; and such will continue till they are dismissed from this great infirmary, and admitted into that holy, happy, blessed world, where "the inhabitants shall no more say, I am, either in soul or in body, sick," Isa. xxxiii. 24.

If the cure was never to be completed, this doubtless would be dishonourable to our almighty Physician. But the spiritual recovery, begun on earth, and advancing through time, will be perfected in heaven, and prolonged to eternity. Does this make a mere nothing of sanctification? No; but it makes room for a continual progress, and affords cause for continual humiliation. It reserves a most exalted prerogative for the heavenly state and beatific vision; and perpetually reminds us of a most important truth,—That our present blessedness consists, not in being free from all sin, but in having no sin imputed to us, Psalm xxxii. 2.

This imperfection of our obedience, instead of confounding, maintains a proper distinction between Christ the King and Christ the Priest: whereas, if we were perfect in piety, the priestly office, with regard to us, would be superseded. What need of an intercessor to recommend our prayers? what occasion for a high-priest to "bear the iniquity of our holy things †," if some taint of the original leaven did not pollute our best services?

Neither does this detract from the wisdom, from the goodness, or from the power of Christ. It rather administers to the advantageous display of all these divine attributes: of his wisdom; in conducting the affairs of his church with such exact propriety, that the righteousness of faith may have its due honour, and the sanctification of the Spirit its proper esteem: of his goodness,

* The best of men lament their ignorance of the divine perfections, their slowness of heart to believe the divine promises, and the languor of their gratitude for inestimable, for innumerable gifts of the divine goodness.—Do they not frequently feel deadness in their devotions, disorder in their affections, and various other relics of the original leaven?—Do they not often complain, in the language of the apostle, "When I would do good, evil is present with me:" And say with the earliest Christians, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened;" burdened, not so much with affliction—those heroes in Christianity had learned to rejoice in tribulation—but burdened with a sense of their spiritual infirmities, and with the workings of their inbred corruption; which, to a tender and lively believer, are the heaviest of crosses, and the most galling of loads. Nay, do not the heirs of glory wash their very robes, even their fairest deeds and their brightest graces, in the blood of the Lamb? which, if they were free from spot, and void of impurity, need not be made white in this sacred fountain. See 2 Cor. v. 4.; Rev. vii. 14.

† Exod. xxviii. 38. "Id est, expiare peccata, quibus sanctissimæ cæteroquin actiones nostræ inquinatæ sunt." Wirs. de *Æcon.*

is carrying on the work of grace amidst so much infirmity, and so many corruptions; and in crowning, with consummate happiness, such frail undervaluing creatures: of his power, in extracting a variety of benefits even from—

Ther. Benefits, Aspasio! Can anything beneficial proceed from an evil, which, according to your own representation, is so incorrigibly malignant?

Asp. It will tend to make us lowly in our own eyes, when we remember that by nature we are altogether become abominable; that the remains of natural depravity still adhere to our minds. How must such a view of ourselves cover us with shame, and lay us low in abasement! "Less than the least of all thy mercies," Gen. xxxii. 10. will be the language of such a man's very soul.

It will dispose us to compassionate others. How can we take a brother by the throat, and require faultless perfection in his behaviour, when we ourselves in many things offend, in all things fall short? Every such consideration rebukes what I may call spiritual unmercifulness: it pleads for tenderness and forbearance to our fellow-creatures; it is a monitor within, and whispers that affecting remonstrance, "Oughtest not thou to have compassion upon thy fellow-servant, since thy almighty Lord hath" such renewed, such unwearied "pity on thee?" Matth. xviii. 33.

It will teach us to admire the riches of grace. Shall fallen creatures, that are taken from the very dunghills of sin, and rescued from a hell of inward iniquity—shall they, notwithstanding their deplorable depravity, and innumerable deficiencies—shall they be admitted into the bosom of eternal love? shall they be exalted to the thrones of glory, and numbered with the princes of heaven? This is grace, transcendently rich, and divinely free indeed!

Will it not reconcile us to the approach of death? This, methinks, like wormwood on the nipple, or gall in the cup, must tend to wean us from the world. How can we be enamoured with such a land of darkness, and such a vale of tears? Or why should we covet, when Providence gives the signal for our departure, to prolong our abode in these territories of disorder? Surely this must incline us to leave them, every day, more and more in our affections; and at last to leave them, without any reluctance, by final dissolution: leave them for that better country, where our personal righteousness will no longer be defective, like the waning moon, but shine forth with consummate lustre, like the meridian sun, in the kingdom of our Father.

It will endear the blessed Jesus in every capacity; as the stings of the fiery flying serpents, and the dearth of the waste howling wilderness, endeared to the Israelites both their miraculous antidote, and their bread from heaven. They who believe this truth, must see their inexpressible and incessant need of Christ's Spirit. The protestation of Moses, on a particular occasion, will be the daily, the hourly breathing of their souls: "Carry us not up hence, unless thy presence, thy Spirit go with us," Exod. xxxiii. 15. For without his aid we can discharge no duty aright, nor successfully resist any temptation. They will be exceedingly cautious not to "grieve" (Eph. iv. 30) that sacred guest, lest he depart from them, and abandon them to the power of their lurking corruptions; knowing that if he abandon them, when such foes are within, and so many snares without, their case will be worse than Samson's, when his locks were shaven, and the Philistines all around him.

How highly will such persons value the blood of the covenant, and the

intercession of their great High-priest ! They will no more presume to enter into the presence of the most high God, without a fiducial reliance upon that atoning and interceding Saviour, than the sons of Jacob would have ventured to appear before the viceroy of Egypt, without the company of their young brother, Gen. xliii. 5. In all, in all their intercourse with Heaven, the great Propitiation will be their plea, and the great Advocate their confidence. The impotent man waited at the pool of Bethesda, and the Syrian general dipped seven times in Jordan. These persons will not only wait, but live by the "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," Zech. xiii. 1. They will wait in the sacred sanctifying stream, not seven times only, but seventy times seven.

And when such sentiments possess the mind, how dear, O how dear a desirable will our Lord's obedience be!—I called, some time ago, our own works worm-eaten things: and must not these corruptions, if they remain ever so little in the heart, tarnish our graces, and debase our duties? Must they not be depreciatory to all our accomplishments, and too much like corroding vermin in the substance of our timber, or at the core of our fruits?—Should we not then renounce, utterly renounce, these tarnished worm-eaten things; and rely, wholly rely, for everlasting acceptance, on our divine High-priest, who, in his mediatorial works, as well as in his wonderful person, is altogether light and perfection*? And neither in him nor in them is there any deficiency, or any darkness at all.

Excuse me, Theron; I fear I have been preaching. The importance of the text must form my apology. It is an introduction, not to the records of history, or the transactions of philosophy, but to the riches of Christ.

Ther. If my Aspasio has been preaching, I can assure him for his comfort that his audience has been very attentive; and though the sermon was somewhat copious, the hearer neither slept nor gaped. However, I should be glad to have the whole reviewed and summed up, that if it has been large as the pyramid, it may, like the pyramid, terminate in a point.

Asp. This then is the state of our nature. The image of the Creator is lost; blindness is in the understanding, disorder in all the affections.—In the will, enmity against God, the sovereign good; inability to all that is spiritual and heavenly; with a propensity to whatever is sordid and earthly. The whole soul is deformed, distempered, rebellious. And shall such a creature lay claim to those amiable and sacred endowments, which may be a proper recommendation to infinite holiness? Is such a creature qualified to perform those righteous acts, which may approve themselves to the demand of God's law, and to the inflexibility of his justice?

Should he conceive the vain hope, or make the vainer attempt, I would now address him as Jehoshaphat formerly answered Amaziah. Amaziah king of Judah, elated with the little victories he had obtained over the Edomites, began to fancy himself invincible. Prompted by this foolish imagination, he

* *Light and perfection.*—This is the meaning of that mysterious ornament, which, in the grand officiating robes of the Jewish high-priest, was annexed to the breast-plate, and styled Urim and Thummim; only the Hebrew words are in the plural number, and denote every degree of illumination, and all kinds of perfection.—Does not this very significantly teach sinners whence to seek their wisdom, and where to look for their perfection? There never was, in all ages, more than one Urim and Thummim, and only one person in each generation was appointed to wear it. And who is there, in all worlds, that can give us heavenly knowledge, but the Spirit of Christ? What is there in ourselves, or all creatures, that can present us unblamable before God, but the obedience of Christ?

challenges Jehoash king of Israel to meet him in a pitched battle, and receives his ironical apologue by way of reply; which, for gallantry of spirit and efficacy of wit, for poignancy of satire and propriety of application, has seldom been equalled, perhaps never exceeded: "The thistle that was in Lebanon, said to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son for a wife; and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle," 2 Kings xiv. 9. What are we, when we offer to establish our own righteousness, or presume to justify ourselves before the most high God, but despicable thistles, that fancy themselves stately cedars! And is not every temptation, is not each corruption, a wild beast of the desert, which will trample on the impotent boaster, and tread his haughty pretensions in the dust?

DIALOGUE XIV.

ASPASIO was employed in preparing for his journey. Theron, free from business, and disengaged from company, had the greatest part of the day to himself, which he spent in reviewing the substance of their late conferences, not without intermingling aspirations to God for the guidance of his divine Spirit.

At evening he went, like the patriarch of old, "into the field to meditate," Gen. xxiv. 63; amidst the calm of nature to meditate on the grace of the gospel. The sky was peculiarly beautiful, and perfectly clear; only where the fine indigo received an agreeable heightening by a few thin and scattered clouds, which imbibed the solar rays, and looked like pensile fleeces of purest wool. All things appeared with so mild, so majestic, so charming an aspect, that, intent as he was upon a different subject, he could not but indulge the following soliloquy.

"How delightful are the scenes of rural nature! especially to the philosophic eye, and contemplative mind. I cannot wonder that persons in high life are so fond of retiring from a conspicuous and exalted station, to the covert of a shady grove, or the margin of a cooling stream; are so desirous of quitting the smoky town and noisy street, in order to breathe purer air, and survey the wonders of creation, in the silent, the serene, the peaceful villa.

"It is true, in the country there are none of the modish, I had almost said, meretricious ornaments of that false politeness, which refines people out of their veracity; but an easy simplicity of manners with an unaffected sincerity of mind. Here the solemn farce of ceremony is seldom brought into play, and the pleasing delusions of compliment have no place. But the brow is the real index of the temper, and speech the genuine interpreter of the heart.

"In the country, I acknowledge, we are seldom invited to see the mimic attempts of human art: but we everywhere behold the grand and masterly exertions of divine power. No theatre erects its narrow stage, surrounds it with puny rows of ascending seats, or adorns it with a shifting series of gorgeous scenery: but fields extend their ample area, at first lightly clad with a scarf of springing green, then deeply planted with an arrangement of spindling stalks; as a few more weeks advance, covered with a profusion of bearded or husky grain; at last, richly laden with a harvest of yellow plenty.

“ Meadows disclose their beautiful bosom, yield a soft and fertile lap for the luxuriant herbage, and suckle myriads of the fairest, gayest flowers ; which, without any vain ostentation, or expensive finery, outvie each other in all the elegance of dress. Groves of various leaf, arrayed in freshest verdure, and liberal of their reviving shade, rise in amiable, in noble prospect all around. Drove of sturdy oxen, strong for labour, or fat for the shambles ; herds of sleeky kine, with milk in their udders, and violets in their nostrils ; flocks of well-fleeced sheep, with their snowy lambkins frisking at their side — these compose the living machinery. Boundless tracts of bending azure, varnished with inimitable delicacy, and hung with stary lamps or irradiated with solar lustre, form the stately ceiling ; while the early breezes, and the evening gales, charged with no unwholesome vapours, breeding no pestilential taint, but fanning the humid buds, and waving their odoriferous wings, dispense a thousand sweets, mingled with the most sovereign supports of health. And is not this school of industry, this magazine of plenty, incomparably more delightful, as well as infinitely less dangerous, than those gaudy temples of profuseness and debauchery, where sin and ruin wear the mask of pleasure, where Belial is daily or nightly worshipped with what his votaries call modish recreation, and genteel amusement ?

“ Here indeed is no tuneful voice to melt in strains of amorous anguish, and transfuse the sickening fondness to the hearer’s breast : No skilful artist, to inform the lute with musical enchantment, to strike infectious melody from the viol, and soothe away the resolution and activity of virtue in wanton desires or voluptuous indolence. But the plains bleat, the mountains low, and the hollow circling rocks echo with the universal song. Every valley re-murmurs to the fall of silver fountains, or the liquid lapse of gurgling rills. Birds, musicians ever beauteous, ever gay, perched on a thousand boughs, play a thousand sprightly and harmonious airs.

“ Charmed, therefore, with the finest views, lulled with the softest sounds, and treated with the richest odours, what can be wanting to complete the delight ? Here is every entertainment for the eye, the most refined gratifications for the ear, and a perpetual banquet for the smell, without any insidious decoy for the integrity of our conduct, or even for the purity of our fancy.

“ O ye blooming walks and flowery lawns, surrounded with dewy landscapes ! how often have patriots and heroes laid aside the burden of power, and stolen away from the glare of grandeur, to enjoy themselves in your composed retreats ! * Ye mossy couches, and fragrant bowers, skirted with cooling cascades ! how many illustrious personages, after all their glorious toil for the public good, have sought an honourable and welcome repose in your downy lap ! † Ye venerable oaks and solemn groves ! woods that whisper to the quivering gale, cliffs that overhang the darkened flood ! who can number the sages and saints that have devoted the day to study, or resigned a vacant hour to healthy exercise, beneath your sylvan porticoes and waving arches ? that, far from the dull impertinence of man, have listened to the instructive voice of God, and contemplated the works of his adorable hand

* ——— “ *Mihi me reddentes agelli,* ” — says Horace of his little country-seat.

† ——— “ *Lucis habitamus opacis,*

Riparumque toros, et prata recentia rivis

Incolimus. ”

VIRGIL.

amidst your moss-grown cells and rocky shades? How inelegant, or how insensible is the mind, which has no awakened lively relish for these sweet recesses, and their exquisite beauties!"

But whither am I carried? Is not this rural enthusiasm? I find myself talking to trees, and forget the momentous question which waits for our decision. Here, then, let my rhapsody end, and my inquiry proceed.—Does it betray a want of true delicacy, to be insensible of nature's charms? My *Aspasio* thinks it argues as wrong a taste in practical divinity, not to acquiesce in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. To this doctrine I have been always extremely averse. I set myself to oppose it with objections, drawn from the reason of things, and from various passages of Scripture; to all which my friend replied. And though I was scarcely convinced, yet I was silenced by his answers.

I pleaded for the sufficiency of our sincere obedience, especially when accompanied with repentance, and recommended by the merits of Christ. *Aspasio* was this attempt successful: his arguments, somewhat like the flaming sword planted at the entrance of paradise, "turned every way," Gen. iii. 24. and precluded all access to life on the foot of our own duty.

At length, *Aspasio* quitted the defensive, and attacked me in his turn. He explained the precepts, and enforced the threatenings of the divine law. So exact its tenor, that it demands a perfect and persevering conformity to every injunction. So extensive its authority, that it reaches the inmost thoughts; and requires obedience, not barely in the actions of the life, but the very intentions of the heart. So inexorable its severity, that it condemns every the smallest offence, and curses every the least offender.

This remonstrance had some of the terror, and almost all the effect, of a masked battery. It was quite unexpected, and alarmed me considerably. To push his advantage, he enlarged upon the infinite purity of God: a God, glorious in holiness, who cannot look upon evil with any connivance, or without the utmost abhorrence; before whom the heavens are unclean, and who will in no wise clear the guilty.

To complete his victory, he played off the doctrine of original guilt, and original depravity: that, besides the imputation of Adam's apostasy, besides the commission of numberless iniquities, we were born in sin; are, by nature, enmity against God; in all our faculties corrupt; in every imagination evil; and even when renewed* by grace, are still, still tainted with some base remains of the old leprosy.

After all, he bid me consider—what fruits must spring from such a nature; how they must appear, when compared with such a law; what they must deserve, when tried before such a God. These, I must confess, are very weighty and startling queries. If these representations are true, the face of human affairs carries a most gloomy aspect; or rather, a most dreadful storm is hanging over the children of men. *Aspasio* urges me to fly, without any delay, to the covert of Christ's meritorious obedience. This, he says, was wrought out in my name and in my stead; this will be admitted, both at the throne of grace and the bar of judgment, as my justifying righteousness. This, he adds, opens a way, on God's part, for the largest emanations, and

* "Even when renewed."—For a display of this important truth, and a remedy against this stubborn evil, let me refer the reader to a little treatise published by Dr. Owen, and entitled, "The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of the Remains of Indwelling Sin in Believers."

most honourable exercise of mercy. On man's part, it founds a title to pardon, to life, and every spiritual blessing. This doctrine, especially in such a connexion, begins to put on a more recommending appearance. My prejudices are really wearing away. I am almost a convert.

Aspasio overheard the close of these reflections. Unwilling to interrupt his friend in so serious an inquiry, and desirous to observe the issue of so interesting a debate, he had hitherto concealed himself. But thinking this a favourable minute, he stepped forward and said,—

Asp. Almost! and why not altogether a convert? What should hinder my dear Theron from submitting to so rational a scheme with the most entire acquiescence? What should hinder him from embracing so comfortable a doctrine with the utmost complacency? Why should he not subscribe, both with hand and heart, that divine decree, "Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord?" Isa. liv. 17.

Ther. If by this doctrine the claims of the law are answered—if the perfections of God are glorified—if the interests of morality are secured—I must acknowledge, it will be more worthy of acceptance than I could once have imagined.

Asp. And if these points are not gained, gained too in the most eminent manner, I solemnly declare, that I will never plead for imputed righteousness more.

But the claims of the law are all answered. For there is nothing in its sacred injunctions, which Christ did not perform; and nothing in its awful threatenings, which Christ did not sustain. He fulfilled all its precepts, by an unspotted purity of heart, and the most perfect integrity of life. He exhausted its whole curse, when he hung upon the cross, abandoned by his Father, and a bleeding victim for the sins of his people. This obedience brings higher honour to the divine law, than it could have received from the uninterrupted duty of Adam, and all his posterity, in all their generations.

The perfections of God, which were dishonoured by our rebellion, are glorified. He appears, by this method of justification, inconceivably rich in shewing mercy, yet steady, inflexibly steady, in executing vengeance. The sceptre of grace, and the sword of justice, have each its due exercise, each its full scope. The holiness of the divine nature, and the dignity of the divine government, are not only maintained, but most magnificently displayed. Indeed, it is the peculiar excellence of this wonderful expedient, that it renders all the divine attributes supremely venerable, and supremely amiable.

Ther. But are the interests of morality secured?—This is what I am strongly inclined to doubt. And, to say the truth, this is now my principal objection to your scheme.

Asp. I shall never blame my friend for being vigilant and jealous over the interests of morality. If our doctrine had a malignant aspect on true morality, I would give my voice against it, and use all my endeavours to suppress it. But it is formed with every tendency to awaken the utmost dread of sin, and affect us with the warmest sense of our Creator's love. And is not that the strongest barrier against the encroachments of vice? Is not this the sweetest inducement to the practice of virtue?

I am glad to find that a jealousy for the interests of morality is the chief obstacle in the way of your assent; because I am persuaded it is much of

the same nature with those forbidding and mistaken apprehensions which our ancestors entertained concerning the ocean. They looked upon it as an unsurmountable obstruction to universal society : whereas it is, in fact, the very cement of society ; the only means of accomplishing a general intercourse, and the great highway to all the nations of the earth. What is here affirmed may, on some future occasion, be proved. At present let me desire you to imagine, rather may the blessed Spirit enable you to believe, that your sins are expiated through the death of Jesus Christ—that a righteousness is given you, by virtue of which you may have free and welcome access to God, the merit of which you may plead for obtaining all the blessings of time and eternity. Then let me ask, will this alienate your affections from your Almighty Benefactor ? will this irritate evil concupiscence, or send you to carnal gratifications in quest of happiness ? Quite the reverse. When this faith is wrought in your heart, nothing will be so powerful to produce holy love and willing obedience, to exalt your desires and enable you to overcome the world.

What says the apostle ? “ I through the law am dead to the law,” Gal. ii. 29. Being made to understand its spirituality and perfection, I have no longer any hope of justification from my own conformity to its precepts. Did this prompt him, did this imbolden him to neglect or violate his duty ? Hear the sacred writer’s own declaration :—I am released from the rigour and bondage of the law ; I am directed to Christ for righteousness and salvation ; “ that I may live unto God ;” that my whole life may be devoted to his honour, who has brought me into a state so delightful, into a liberty so glorious.

Ther. This liberty, I am afraid, will be of very little service to the licentious and gay world.

Asp. I shall be in no pain even for the gay world, if once they cordially receive this grace, and are vitally influenced by this doctrine ; which, far from dissolving the least obligation to obedience, or weakening any one principle of piety, adds to every other motive, the endearing engagements of gratitude and the winning persuasives of love.

Nay, I verily believe, that multitudes in the gay and licentious world are held fast in the fatal snare, by their ignorance of this sweet, alluring consolatory truth. They find themselves deeply obnoxious to divine justice, and feel themselves strongly bound with the chains of sensuality. They think it is impossible to clear the enormous score of their guilt ; impossible to deliver themselves from the confirmed dominion of sin : therefore, like desperate debtors, they stifle every serious thought ; lest a consciousness of their long arrears, and a prospect of the dreadful reckoning, should “ torment them before the time.” Matth. viii. 29.

But if they were informed, that the infinitely merciful Son of God has undertaken to redeem such undone and helpless sinners ; that he has thoroughly expiated the most horrid transgressions, and procured, even for ungodly wretches, all the needful supplies of strengthening grace ; that, instead of being prohibited, they are invited to partake, freely to partake, of these unspeakable blessings : were they acquainted with these glad tidings of the gospel, surely they would burst their chains, and spring to liberty. These truths, if once revealed in their hearts, would, of all considerations, be most effectual to “ make them free,” John viii. 32.

What shall I say more to obtain my Theron's approbation? Shall I point out and plead the most illustrious precedents?—God the Father is well pleased with this righteousness of our Redeemer. He expresses his complacency by the most emphatical words: "Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth," Isa. xlii. 1. In Christ and his righteousness, God is not only pleased, but "delighted;" his "very soul," every perfection of the Godhead, with ineffable satisfaction, rests and acquiesces in them.—I said ineffable; for he has declared this, in a manner superior to all the energy of language, by raising our crucified Surety from the dead, by exalting him to the heaven of heavens, and placing him at his own right hand in glory.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is well pleased. He esteems it his honour to shine forth as the everlasting righteousness of his people: it is the brightest jewel of his mediatorial crown. In this he "sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied:" accounting himself fully recompensed for all the labours of his life, and all the sorrows of his death, when sinners are washed from their guilt in his blood, and presented faultless by his obedience.

The Holy Spirit is equally pleased with this great transaction, and its noble effects. It is his peculiar office, and favourite employ, to convince the world of their Saviour's righteousness: not only that his nature was spotlessly pure, and his conversation perfectly holy; but that from both results a righteousness of infinite dignity and everlasting efficacy; sufficient, throughout all ages sufficient, for the acceptance and salvation of the most unworthy creatures.

Since then this method of acceptance and salvation is excellent and glorious in the eyes of the adorable Trinity; since it magnifies the law, and yields the most exalted honour to its divine Author; since it makes ample provision for the holiness of a corrupt, and the happiness of a ruined world; why should my friend any longer dislike it, oppose it, or treat it with a cold indifference? Surely, all these grand recommendations are enough to overrule any little objections which may arise from the suspicions of timidity, or may be started by the artifices of sophistry.

Ther. I know not how it is, *Aspasio*; but I cannot reconcile myself to this doctrine of imputed righteousness, notwithstanding all the pains you have taken to make me a convert.

Asp. The disappointment is mine, but the loss is yours, *Theron*. However, let me entreat you not to reject my sentiments absolutely, nor to condemn them prematurely. Suppose it possible, at least, that they may be true, and weigh them in an even balance. Learn wisdom from your *Aspasio's* folly. I was once exactly in your situation; saw things in your light, and through your medium.

Conversing, I well remember, with a devout, but plain person, our discourse happened to turn upon that solemn admonition, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself," Matth. xvi. 24. I was haranguing upon the import and extent of the duty; shewing, that merely to forbear the infamous action, is little. We must deny admittance, deny entertainment at least, to the evil imagination; and quench even the enkindling spark of irregular desire. When I had shot a random bolt, my honest friend replied, "There is another instance of self-denial to which this injunction extends, and which is a very great moment in the Christian religion: I mean the instance of

renouncing our own strength, and our own righteousness ; not leaning on that for holiness, nor relying on this for justification." I thought the old man, I must confess, little better than a superstitious dotard ; and wondered at (what I then fancied) the motley mixture of piety and oddity in his notions. But now I discern sense, solidity, and truth in his observation : Now I perceive, that we ourselves are often the dreamers, when we imagine others to be fast asleep.

Ther. I shall not forget your caution, and will endeavour to avoid the rock on which my Aspasio struck, but happily, it seems, escaped shipwreck. You may likewise assure yourself, that, upon a subject of exceeding great and eternal consequence, I shall not fail to use the most attentive and impartial consideration. An indolent supineness or a bigoted obstinacy in this great crisis of affairs, would be of all errors the most inexcusable, and must prove of all miscarriages the most fatal.

Asp. But still you cannot reconcile yourself. And no wonder. For this way of salvation runs directly counter to the stream of corrupt nature. It puzzles our reason, and offends our pride. What ? shall we not work, but "believe unto righteousness ?" Rom. x. 10. Shall we receive all freely, and reckon ourselves no better than unprofitable servants ? This is a method to which we should never submit ; this is a proposal which we should always spurn, were not our sentiments rectified and our hearts new-moulded by sovereign grace.

Let me remind you of a little incident which you must have read in the Grecian history. A certain stranger came one day to dine with some Lacedemonians. They, you know, always sat down at a public table, and were content with the plainest food. The gentleman, accustomed to higher eating, could not forbear expressing his disgust at the homely provision. Sir, said the cook, you do not make use of the sauce. What do you mean ? replied the guest. You do not use hard exercise, nor habituate yourself to long abstinence, nor bring a sharpened appetite to the meal.—And you, my dear friend, I am apprehensive, have not the sauce ; have not the proper preparative for this salutary doctrine, which is indeed the bread of life, and the very marrow of the gospel.

Ther. What preparative ?

Asp. A sense of your great depravity, your extreme guilt, and your utterly undone condition.—While destitute of these convictions, our souls will be like the full stomach, that loathes even the honeycomb. So long as these convictions are slight, and hover only in the imagination, we shall be like Gallio,* listless, indifferent, and "caring for none of these things." But when they are deep and penetrate the heart, then the righteousness of a Redeemer will be sweet, tasteful, and inviting ; as myrrh and frankincense to the smell, as milk and honey to the palate, as gold and treasures to the ruined bankrupt.

* Acts xviii. 17. A late commentator, of distinguished eminence, has attempted to vindicate Gallio's conduct, and would represent it as an amiable instance of prudence and moderation.

According to my apprehension, this Roman governor acted a part both irreligious and unjust: *Irreligious*, because he refused to hear the apostle's defence, which was the most likely means of his conversion and salvation. *Unjust*, because he permitted Sosthenes, then an innocent person, afterwards a disciple of Christ, (1 Cor. i. 1.) to be so illegally treated, and outrageously abused, without interposing for his rescue.

Ther. What method would you advise me to use, in order to get these convictions impressed on my heart?

Asp. Endeavour to understand God's holy law. Consider how pure, how extensive, how sublimely perfect it is. Then judge of your spiritual state, not from the flattering suggestions of self-love, nor from the defective examples of your fellow-creatures, but by this unerring standard of the sanctuary. Above all, beseech the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to send his enlightening Spirit into your soul. For, indeed, without the enlightening influences of the Spirit, we may have the divine law in our hand, we may comprehend its grammatical meaning, yet be like blind Bartimeus under the meridian sun. It is the blessed Spirit alone who can rend the veil of ignorance from our minds, and shew us either "the wonderful things of God's law," or the glorious mysteries of his gospel. In this sense, our polite poet speaks a truth as singularly important as it is elegantly expressed :

He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,
And on the sightless eye-ball pour the day.

POPE'S *Messiah*.

Will you give me leave to propose another expedient, which I believe may be considerably serviceable in this particular case,—which I am assured will be greatly advantageous in many other respects?

Ther. Backward as I am to adopt your doctrine, I am no enemy to my own interest; therefore shall not only give you leave to propose, but give you thanks for communicating so valuable an advice.

Asp. It is, in reality, none of mine. It was long ago recommended by your old acquaintance Horace.* It consists in keeping a diary.

Compile a secret history of your heart and conduct. Take notice of the manner in which your time is spent, and of the strain which runs through your discourse; how often the former is lost in trifles, how often the latter evaporates in vanity. Attend to the principle from which your actions flow; whether from the steady habitual love of God, or from some rambling impulse, and a customary propensity to please yourself. Minute down your sins of omission; how frequently you neglect to glorify your Creator, to edify your fellow-creatures, and to improve yourself in knowledge and holiness. Observe the frame of your spirit in religious duties—with what reluctance they are undertaken, and with what indevotion performed; with how many wanderings of thought, and how much dulness of desire; how often, in the common affairs of life, you feel the inordinate sallies of passion, the workings of evil concupiscence, or the intrusion of foolish imaginations.

Register those secret faults, to which none but your own conscience is privy, and which none but the all-seeing eye discerns. Often review these interesting memoirs. Frequently contemplate yourself in this faithful mirror. An artist some time ago took a survey of your estate, drew the form and measured the dimensions of each enclosure, pictured out every hedge, and scarce omitted a single tree that grew upon the premises. Act thus with

* "Ille velut fidis arcana sodalibus olim
Credebat libris; neque si male cesserat usquam
Decurrens alio, neque si bene: quo sit, ut omnis
Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella
Vita senis."

HORAT. *Sat.*

your will, your understanding, your affections. These are your noble internal demesne, of which none but yourself can be a competent surveyor.

Ther. It is unreasonable and preposterous, I must acknowledge, to be minutely exact in meaner matters, and use no accuracy of inspection in the most momentous affairs; to have a correct draught of our lands, which are a transient inheritance, and no map of that everlasting possession—the soul.

Asp. Gratify me then, my dear Theron, in this particular. As I purpose to set out very early in the morning, I shall insist upon it that you do not rise before your usual time to compliment my departure. But I now make it my last wish, and my parting request, that you will for some months at least keep a diary.

You have wondered at my opinion concerning the corruption of our nature, and the insufficiency of our own righteousness. This may seem strange, this may appear shocking, to a mind unacquainted with itself. But when you have searched your heart by this probe—when you have felt the pulse of your soul by self-examination—then you will be better able to judge of my sentiments, and enter into the reasons of my faith.

By this means we shall also discover the sins that most easily beset us, which most frequently elude our vigilance, and baffle our resolution. We shall learn how to post our guard, when to exercise the strictest watch, and where to direct the artillery of prayer. In a word, we shall learn, better than from ten thousand volumes, to *know ourselves*: a knowledge which was supposed by the ancient philosophers to descend from heaven, and which, I believe, our Christian divines will allow, has a happy tendency to lead people thither; because, of all other preparatives, it best disposes them for that blessed Redeemer, who is the way, the only way, to those blissful mansions.

Now I have mentioned a way, let me suppose you travelling through an unknown country. You come to a place where the road divides itself into two equally inviting parts. You are at a loss which track to pursue. Whose direction will you chuse to follow? That man's who has passed through neither of them; that man's who has passed through one of them only; or that man's who has passed and repassed them both? To wait for an answer, would be an affront to your judgment. Only let me observe, that the last is your Aspasio's case. He has travelled long, and proceeded far, even in your path. All that circumspection and assiduity, all that prayer and self-denial, all that fasting and alms, and every other means of grace could do, in order to establish a righteousness of his own, has been done: but to no purpose. He has also trod every step in the way which he recommends to his beloved friend. He has made the trial; can set his *probatum est* to whatever he advises; and may very truly say, with his divine Master, "We speak that we do know," John iii. 11. and testify that we have experienced.

Ther. I am sorry to observe, that the night is coming on, and our conversation almost at an end. My regret is increased, by the consideration of your intended journey. Though business obliges you to depart, it will, I hope, afford you leisure to write. This will be some compensation for the want of your company.

Yonder sun is sinking below the horizon, and just taking his leave of our earth. To retard the departing radiance, at least to alleviate the approaching loss, those western clouds catch the rays, and reflect them to our view in

most amusing diversity of colours. By this means we enjoy the great luminary in his beams, even when his orb is withdrawn from our sight.—An epistolary correspondence has something of the same nature. Letters may be called the talk of absent friends. By this expedient, they communicate their thoughts, even though countries, kingdoms, or seas intercept their speech. You must therefore promise me this satisfaction; and let me converse with my Aspasio by the pen, when I can no longer have an intercourse with him in person.

Asp. You have anticipated me, Theron. Otherwise what is now my promise, would have been my request.

I cannot but take notice of another particularity in that magnificent assemblage of clouds. How they varied their appearance, as the lamp of day changed its situation! A little while ago, these curtains of the sky were streaked with orange, or tinged with amber. Presently, they borrowed the blush of the rose, or the softened red of the pink. Ere long, they glow with vermilion, or deepen into crimson. Soon succeeds the purple tintured robe of majesty; and as soon (thus transient is all sublunary grandeur!) gives place to the sable veil of evening, or the gloomy pall of night. Such, I trust, will be the issue of my Theron's present apprehensions. All his splendid ideas of human excellency and self-righteousness will become faint, will lose their imaginary lustre, till at length they fade away, and darken into absolute self-abasement. Then the Sun of Righteousness will be amiable, will be desirable, as the beauties of the dawn breaking upon the shades of night.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,—I am now at the seat of my worthy friend Camillus, where business and inclination will fix me for some weeks. This evening we had a most pleasant ramble. I have met with nothing so agreeable since I left your house, and lost your company.

The time was just arrived, and the scene was fully opened, which furnished our great poet with his fine description:

Now was the sun in western cadence low,
From noon; and gentle airs, due at their hour,
To fan the earth now waked, and usher in
The evening cool.

At this juncture, Camillus invited me to take the air. We walked several times along a close shady alley, arched with the foilage of filberts. Here, hid from every eye, and the whole world withdrawn from our view, we seemed like monks strolling in their cloisters. Turning short at the end, we enter a parallel range of majestic and uniformly spreading walnut-trees. This transition was somewhat like advancing, through a low porch, into the aisles of a magnificent cathedral. The broad leaf and large trunk of those lordly trees, their very diffusive spread, added to their prodigious height, give them an air of uncommon dignity. It swells the imagination with vast ideas, and entertains us with a romantic kind of delight, to expatiate amidst such huge columns, and under such superb elevations of living architecture.

Quitting our cathedral, we turn once again, and pass into a grand colonnade of oaks; so regular in their situation, so similar in their size, and so remarkably correspondent in every circumstance, that they looked like the twins of nature, not only belonging to the same family, but produced at the same birth. Through these lay a walk, straight, spacious, and gracefully long, far exceeding the last in the extent of its area, though much inferior in the stateliness of its ceiling. It put me in mind of that divine benignity, which has allowed us six days for the prosecution of our own comparatively low affairs, and set apart but one for the more immediate attendance on the sublime exercises of devotion.

This walk was covered with the neatest gravel, and not a weed to be seen, nor one spire of grass, through the whole extended surface. It stole into a continual ascent, yet so very gradually, that the rise was scarce discernible, either by the searching eye, the toiling feet, or the panting breath. At the extremity, a handsome summer-house shewed a flight of steps, and half a Venetian door. The rest of the building was hid by the clustering branches.

As soon as we enter the apartment, Camillus throws open the left-hand sash, and with it the most enlarged and amusing prospect. The structure appeared situate on the brow of a considerable eminence, whose sides were partly confused and wild with broken rocks, partly shagged and perplexed with thorny shrubs. The spectator is agreeably surprised to find himself accommodated with so elegant a mansion, on the summit of so rude and ruinous a spot. But how greatly is his surprise and satisfaction augmented, when he casts his eye forward, and beholds the beautiful meads which, from the foot of this rugged hill, stretch themselves into a space almost unmeasurable!

Through the midst of this extensive vale, which was decked with the finest verdure, and replenished with the richest herbage, a river rolled its copious flood—rolled in a thousand serpentine meanders, as though it had lost its way in the flowery labyrinth, or made repeated efforts of flowing back to its source, till at last, having wandered more than twice the length of the meadows, having held a mirror to the aspiring poplars and bending willows, having paid a welcome salute to several ornamented villas, and passed through the arches of two or three curiously pendent bridges, it seemed to meet the sky, and mingle with the horizon.

Opposite to the front window, a cascade fell from the adjacent stream. It flashed and foamed along the broad slope, indented with small pits, and jagged with protuberant stones. The current, vexed and embarrassed, seemed to rave at the intervening obstacles, and forcing its rapid, indignant, sonorous way, struck the ear with a peal of liquid thunder. These fretful waters—let our angry passions observe the admonition, and follow the example—soon were pacified, soon forgot to chide. Collected into a little rivulet, they ran off in calm and silent lapse, till they lost themselves amongst beds of osier and plantations of alder.

The river, widening as it flowed, was parted here and there by several little islands; some tufted with reeds, and the resort of swans; some adorned with stately porticoes, and splendid alcoves, the graceful retreats of rural pleasure; some furnished with green embowering walks, fitted for studious retirement and sedate contemplation. On either side of the charming valley.

towns and villages lay thick, and looked gay, adding ornament and variety to the scene, and receiving innumerable advantages from the passing wave.

The whole recalled to an attentive observer's mind that amiable and august spectacle, which the Syrian soothsayer could not behold without a rapture of delight, Numb. xxiii. 7; "From the top of the rocks I see the tribes of Jehovah, and from the hills I behold the habitations of his chosen people. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth; as gardens by the river's side; as trees of exquisite fragrance*, which the Lord hath planted; as cedars of stateliest growth, flourishing beside the waters."

We had but just looked about us when a messenger came for Camillus. As he was called to settle some private affairs, I chose to stay in this inviting retreat; and determined to make myself amends for the loss of Camillus's company, by beginning a correspondence with my Theron. We have pen, ink, and paper, in all our rural retirements, that if any thing is started in discourse, or occurs in meditation, worthy to be remembered, it may immediately be committed to writing.

I could not but observe to my friend, that, fine as the prospect appeared, there was one decoration wanting; if some grand deformity may be called a decoration. The ridges of a bleak and barren mountain, or the skirts of a sun-burnt tawny heath, would give additional liveliness to the ornamented parts of the landscape, and make their beauties strike with double vigour. This also, by shewing us what wretched abodes and inhospitable quarters might have fallen to our share, would awaken in our hearts a more fervent gratitude to the Supreme Disposer of things; who has cast our "lot in a fairer ground, and given us a more goodly heritage."

So, a proper knowledge of the divine law—of its sublime perfections and rigorous sanction—joined with a conviction of our own extreme deficiency and manifold transgressions;—all this would endear the blessed Jesus to our affections, and powerfully recommend his righteousness to our desires. The remainder of this epistle, therefore, shall turn upon some instances of duty enjoined in that sacred system: by which it may be highly useful to examine our conduct and sift our hearts; in which, I believe, we have all fallen short, and are all become guilty; from which we may learn the imperfection of our best services, and see the inexpressible need of a better righteousness than our own.

The knowledge of God is the foundation of all vital religion, and indeed is the consummation of human happiness. It is not only matter of present duty, but the very essence of our future bliss: "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3. Yet, important and obligatory as it is, are we not very defective in this divine science? Have we duly acquainted ourselves with the marvellous excellencies of the Lord Jehovah? his uncontrollable power, and all-comprehending wisdom; his unbounded goodness, and unwearied patience; his immaculate holiness, and inflexible justice; his never-failing faithfulness, and

* Numb. xxiv. 5, 6. It is well known that the original word is used in the sacred writings, to denote either a delightful perfume, Prov. vii. 17. or that aromatic plant which produces it, Cant. iv. 14. For which reason, I think it very justifiable to render the expression, "trees of exquisite fragrance," and am persuaded it will be far more intelligible to the generality of readers, than "trees of lign-aloes."

riable veracity? Have we, according to the direction of our inspired
 tor, pursued this sacred study on our knees? James i. 5; and sought
 most noble of all intellectual endowments, not merely from books, but
 principally at the throne of grace? Have we sought it, like that ancient
 Jewish student, with an early application and with incessant assiduity, even
 from the flower till the grape was ripe?" Eccl. li. 15.

Is that scanty ray of knowledge, which perhaps has forced itself through
 original darkness, operative on our affections? "Have we loved the
 our God with all our heart?"—"This is the first and great command-
 ment!" Matt. xxii. 38. Have we constantly entertained the most magnifi-
 cant and honourable thoughts of his sublime perfections? Is our esteem for
 an immensely great and most blessed Being, high, superlative, matchless?
 somewhat like that expressed by the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven
 thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee,"
 Psalm lxxiii. 25. Have we been affectionately concerned for his glory, and
 anxious to advance his holy religion? troubled, very sensibly troubled, when
 our Maker's honour has been trampled in the dust, by licentious tongues or
 impious deeds?

Have we made it our ruling care to approve the whole of our life, and the
 most secret transactions of our breast, to his all-seeing eye? resolved, deli-
 cately resolved, to sacrifice not only our darling lusts, but even our most
 valuable interests, whenever they stand in competition with the good pleasure
 of his will? In a word, as the hart panteth after the water brooks, with such
 ardour and inextinguishable ardour have we thirsted after a brighter
 manifestation of his divine attributes, some sweeter assurances of his special
 favour, and an ever-increasing conformity to his holy image?

Such was the temper of those excellent men, who are characterized in the
 Scriptures of truth as children of the Highest, and patterns for our imitation.
 This is their language: "The desire of our soul is unto thy name, and to the
 remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea,
 with my spirit within me will I seek thee early," Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. Neither is
 the warmth of love and fervour of desire any needless or extravagant pitch
 of devotion, but a reasonable service, indispensably due from all intelligent
 creatures to the great Author of their being, in whom all possible perfections,
 with the utmost exaltation and dignity, reside; from whom all manner of
 blessings, in the most copious and never-failing communications, flow.

When we receive from an absent friend rich and repeated presents, casks
 of generous wine, or jars of delicious fruit, we feel ourselves enkindled into a
 grateful affection. We honour, we love the person who allows us such a
 distinguished place in his heart, and expresses his cordial regard by such a
 series of active and tender benevolence. The blessed God is a friend to us
 all, infinitely powerful, and equally munificent. We are the constant objects
 of his more than friendly—of his parental cares. Every passing moment is
 a messenger of his patience, and charged with some token of his bounty.
 For our sake he has diffused blessings over all the face of the earth, and
 commanded every element to concur in ministering to our accommodation.
 He has not only adapted his benefits to our several wants, but has given
 them a diversification large as the scope of our wishes, and an enrichment far
 beyond all that our fancy could conceive. Profuse liberality! yet small and
 scanty compared with his most adorable benignity in Christ Jesus.

What if God, willing to manifest the superabundant riches of his kindness had made bare the arm of his omnipotence, and struck a most miraculous reef through the surges of the ocean, to afford us a safe passage:—if, to accommodate us in our travels, he had brought waters out of the flinty rock; and if the ravens bring meat to our hands, bid the winds convey manna to our doors:—if, to furnish us with a commodious settlement, he had dethroned mighty kings, dispossessed populous nations, and made the walls of impregnable cities fall to the ground;—if, to further the dispatch of our business or facilitate the conquest of our enemies, he had arrested the sun in his meridian career, and laid an embargo upon the moon, setting out on his nightly tour:—in short, if to promote our welfare he had suspended the powers, and controlled the laws of universal nature; had wrought all the miracles exhibited in the land of Egypt, or recorded in the volumes of inspiration;—should we not think ourselves under the most inviolable engagement to love the Lord our God, “who had done so great things for us?” to love him unfeignedly and ardently, to love him with a supreme affection, above every other amiable object? Yet we have greater, incomparable greater, obligations to our almighty benefactor. For (hear, O heavens wonder, O earth! and let eternity dwell upon the stupendous truth!) “God spared not his Son,—his own Son”—his transcendently glorious and divine excellent Son,—but delivered him up to the deepest humiliation, and to the most accursed death, for us men, and our salvation.

O, Theron, have we been impressed with wonder at the contemplation of this goodness? Have our hearts glowed with gratitude under a sense of these mercies? Surely no man need be convicted of any other crime at this great tribunal, than insensibility of such love, and ingratitude for such favours. This, without the accession of horrid impieties, is enough to leave him absolutely inexcusable. This is enough to prove him one of the most disingenuous and detestable of creatures.

Have we exercised ourselves in frequent thanksgiving? Many are the exhortations to this honourable duty. “Praise thy God, O Zion,” Psal. cxlvii. 12; “praise him for his mighty acts,” Psal. cl. 2; “praise him according to his excellent greatness.” Innumerable are the incitements abroad in this pleasant service. Every comfort has a voice, and cries in the ear of reason, “O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness. Every deliverance enforces the address, and furnishes fresh materials for the heavenly employ. The man after God’s own heart declares, as an inviting example for our practice, “I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth,” Psal. xxxiv. 1. “Yea, as long as I have any being, I will sing praises unto my God,” Psal. cxlvi. 2. Indeed when we consider the inexhaustibly rich bounty of God our Creator, and the inconceivably tender mercy of God our Redeemer, it is both strange and deplorable that the love of God is not always prevailing in our hearts, and the language of praise ever flowing from our lips.

I will not suppose our character so irreligious, that we have neglected the daily worship of God, either in our closet or in our family: but have we prayed with that profound reverential awe, which is due to the high and lofty One “who inhabiteth eternity?” Have we made our supplications with that fervent importunity which may, in some measure, correspond with the extreme indigence of our state, and the invaluable worth of the blessing

we crave? Have our petitions been attended with that steady affiance, which may glorify the goodness, the power, the veracity of the Lord? may evidently declare that he "is rich in mercy to all that call upon him," Rom. x. 12; that he "is the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength," Isa. xxvi. 4; "that he is the God of truth, and faithful for ever," Deut. xxxii. 4. We call him Father; but have we trusted in him with that unsuspecting, cheerful, filial confidence, which a child reposes on the fidelity and indulgence of such an earthly relative? Have we not entertained, too often entertained, narrow, dishonourable, beggarly apprehensions, concerning the treasures of his liberality, and the bowels of his pity; rating them even lower than our parents, our friends, or our own?

Have we been careful to carry the spirit of our prayers into our ordinary conversation, and waited at the door, as well as approached to the throne of grace? Amidst the intervals of our solemn devotions, have we cultivated an ejaculatory intercourse with heaven? How highly would the ambitious courtier prize, and how frequently would he use a privy key, which should give him, at all hours, free admittance to his sovereign. This key of admittance, only to an infinitely more exalted Potentate, we all possess in the practice of mental aspirations to God. It is certainly the noblest employ, and will be the richest improvement of our thoughts, to send them in such short embassies to the King of kings; and to derive, by such occasional sallies of faith * a renewed supply from the Fountain of all good. How great a loss then must it be to our spiritual interests, and how contemptuous a disregard of the ever-present Jehovah, to omit entirely, or long to discontinue, this most beneficial practice of habitual adoration?—Can you, my dear Theron, acquit yourself on this article of inquiry? Has not every day of your life been a day of negligence in this respect; been a perpetual disobedience to our Saviour's injunction, "Men ought, in this manner, always to pray, and not to faint?" Luke xviii. 1.

Have we sanctified the Sabbath? Has the Lord's day, with all its solemn and sacred offices, been our delight? Have we remembered that distinguished portion of our time, as Jacob remembered the delightful interview at Peniel? Have we expected it, as merchants expect the arrival of a richly laden vessel? Have we improved it, as husbandmen improve the shining hours of the harvest? Have we wholly laid aside every earthly engagement, "not

* We have, in Scripture, very remarkable instances of the success which has attended ejaculatory prayer. Observe Nehemiah: he stands before Ahasuerus, apprehensive of the monarch's displeasure, yet desirous to solicit him in behalf of Jerusalem. To be delivered from his fears, and to obtain his desires, what method does he use? The mean and servile arts of flattery? No; but the manly and devout expedient of prayer. I prayed, says the patriot, to the God of heaven.—We cannot suppose, that he fell on his knees, or spoke with his lips, while he continued in the royal presence. But he darted up his soul in silent supplication; which supplication pierced the clouds, reached the eternal throne, and returned not again till a blessing was sent; such as totally averted the wrath he dreaded, and procured favour and assistance much larger than he expected. Neh. ii. 4.

† When David heard that Ahithophel, the ablest politician in his kingdom, was revolted to Absalom; sensible what a loss his affairs had sustained, what an advantage the rebellious party had acquired, he betook himself to his God. He staid not for an opportunity of retirement, but instantly and upon the spot cried, "O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!"—A short address, but very efficacious. He who disappointeth the devices of the crafty, sent a spirit of infatuation among the rebels; and inclined them to reject the advice of that judicious statesman. Which false step brought upon their horrid enterprise the ruin it deserved, and chagrined the wretched traitor, even to rage, frenzy, and suicide. 2 Sam. xv. 31. xvii. 23.

speaking our own words," Isa. lviii. 13, nor allowing ourselves in gratifications that may interrupt our communion with the Father of Spirits. Has "one day in his courts been preferable to a thousand," Psalm lxxxiv. spent either in the works of our calling, or in the scenes of recreation? Have the memorials of our Redeemer's dying merits, and the seals of his unchangeable loving-kindness, been relished as a feast, and prized as a portion?

Have we honoured God's holy word? What greater mark of disrespect than to despise a person's discourse, and not to think his speech worthy our notice? especially when he addresses us with very great seriousness, and with the utmost affection. In our Bible, the God of glory speaks to creatures, speaks with the most persuasive energy, and with all the yearning of paternal tenderness. Have we listened to our Creator with reverence and delight; and rejoiced with trembling at—"Thus saith the Lord?"

Have we searched the oracles of truth, not merely as scholars, but as sinners; not from a spirit of curiosity, or with an air of formality, but with solicitude and ardour becoming persons who inquire after the Saviour of the lost souls? Have we submitted our inmost thoughts to their impartial scrutiny; to receive conviction of sin from their awful remonstrances, and to hear the sentence of condemnation at their righteous bar? Have we been willing to suffer the reproach of conscious baseness, while they have ripped up the disguises of falsehood, laid open our secret iniquities, and brought our evil ways to remembrance? Thus Josiah acted: "His heart was tender, and he humbled himself before the Lord: he rent his clothes, and wept before the Lord, when he heard the words of the book of the law," 2 Chron. xxxiv. 9.

Have we hid the glad tidings of the gospel within our memories, without our hearts? Have we been diligent to suck this "honeycomb" (Cant. v. 2) of grace, by concomitant meditation, and subsequent prayer? Have we valued the precious promises, as gentlemen of wealth value the writings of their private estates; or as enfranchised bodies esteem the charter of the public privileges? Have we, like the princely patriarch, longed for the words of edification, exhortation, and comfort, more than for our necessary food? Job xxiii. 12; and, like the royal prophet, prevented the night-watches, that we may be occupied in those statutes and ordinances of heaven? Psalm cxix. 148.

We have hitherto confined the examination to a few instances of the affirmative kind: how dreadfully will the dark account be swelled, if, instead of love and obedience, there be hatred and opposition—hatred of the name and glory, and worship of God—opposition to his interest, kingdom and service.

God is infinite perfection, worthy of all admiration, exalted above all praise. Yet do not our thoughts more frequently, or more naturally, turn upon our own accomplishments, than upon the adorable and shining attributes of the Almighty? This is, in itself, the most shameful dotage; and, in God's sight, the most abominable idolatry. Yet let us observe what passes within, and we shall probably find, that as damps arise in the mines, or fog in the fenny grounds, so naturally and so copiously do these overweening reflections arise in our depraved minds.

God is an everlasting King. Have we not too often resisted his authority? Have we not, as far as in us lay, deposed the omnipotent Sovereign, and exalted self into the throne? made self-will our law, and self-pleasing our end? thus adding sacrilege to rebellion?

God is transcendently gracious and amiable. Have we not turned our backs upon him, by forgetting his mercies? Nay, have we not spurned him from our affections, by being "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God?" 2 Tim. iii. 4. Awake, conscience! bear thy impartial testimony; and I am persuaded, the Pharisee in our breasts, like the man unfurnished with the wedding garment, must be struck dumb, must be covered with confusion.

Is our heart warm with brotherly love? Good manners will put expressions of civility into our mouths; but has a power from on high implanted the royal law of charity in our breasts? The character of a gentleman requires a deportment accessible, obliging, and courteous; has the spirit of Christianity taught us to love, "not in word," or plausible appearance only, "but in deed and in truth?" 1 John iii. 18. Do we love our neighbours, not merely on account of some relation they bear us, or some services they have done us; but because they are creatures of the blessed God, are the objects of his providential care, and capable, at least, of being conformed to his image? Do we love them, because we hope that the Lord Jesus Christ has bought them with his blood; is willing to make them partakers of his Spirit, and members of his mystical body?

Are we sincerely concerned for their present welfare and their eternal happiness? Do we embrace all opportunities of promoting both the one and the other? embrace them with the same alacrity, and improve them with the same zeal, which actuate us in seeking our own felicity? If they exceed us in all that is amiable, and all that is prosperous, do we contemplate their superior excellence with a real complacency, and their more abundant success with a real satisfaction?

Do we dislike to hear, and abhor to spread, defamatory tales, even when our adversaries are the men whom they tend to blacken? When rudely affronted, or causelessly abused, do we pity the offenders for the wrong done to their own souls, rather than kindle into resentment at the indignity offered to ourselves? When greatly injured, are we slow to anger, and not easily provoked? Are we much more willing to be reconciled, than to foment displeasure and prosecute revenge? In a word, do we "love our enemies; bless them that curse us; do good to them that hate us; and pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us?" Matth. v. 44. Without this loving and lovely disposition, we abide, says the apostle, in death, 1 John iii. 4; are destitute of spiritual, and have no title to eternal life*.

Let me add—all our graces, and all our works, "clothed with humility?" This should be the dress in which they severally appear, as well as the bond of connexion which unites them all. Do we maintain a very low opinion of our own accomplishments, and "in honour prefer others to ourselves?" Rom. xii. 10; habitually sensible that we are less than the least of the divine mercies, and the very chiefest of sinners?

I might easily have branched out the preceding subjects into a much greater variety of interrogatory articles. But I intend only to present you with a specimen. Your own meditations will enlarge the sketch, and supply what is defective. Only let me beg of you, my dear friend, to try your state

* What manner of love is this? How disinterested! how extensive! how triumphant! Must not all the boasted benevolence of the philosopher and moralist strike sail to this evangelical charity? Must not both moralist and philosopher acknowledge the necessity of a divine operation, thus to enlarge, exalt, and refine their social affections?

by this touchstone, to prove your conduct by this standard. And may the Father of lights give you an understanding to discern the exact purity and sublime perfection of his holy law!

Have you lived in the uninterrupted observance of all these duties, avoiding whatever is forbidden, and obeying whatever is commanded? Your outward behaviour, I know, has been free from notorious violations; but has your inward temper been preserved from all ungodly motions, and from every irregular desire? Is there no enmity in your heart to any of the precepts; nor any backwardness, nor any failure in performing each and every injunction?

When you put these questions to yourself, remember that if you fail in one point, or in any degree, you are guilty of all; James ii. 10. If your conformity be not persevering as well as perfect, you incur the penalty, and are abandoned to the curse; Gal. iii. 10. You stand charged, before the Judge of the world, with all the guilt of all your sins, both original and actual; and there is not one circumstance, nor one aggravation, of any of your iniquities, overlooked or forgotten—unless, renouncing all your personal performances, you place your whole affiance on a Saviour's atonement and a Saviour's righteousness. I think you will not dare to put the issue of your everlasting state upon the former footing, which is not only hazardous, but must be inevitably ruinous. You will infinitely rather chuse to acknowledge yourself a poor insolvent, and plead the unsearchable riches of your Redeemer's obedience.

To those who believe, the law, though strict, is not terrible, because, be its precepts of holiness ever so extensive, they have been most completely fulfilled by their glorious Surety. Be its penal sanctions ever so rigorous, they have been satisfied to the utmost by their great Mediator. Believers, therefore, may make their boast of their adorable Sponsor; they "may sit under his shadow with great delight," Cant. ii. 3; while the thunderings of Mount Sinai, and all the terrors of the legal dispensation, tend only to increase and quicken the refreshing sense of their safety: just as the possessor of a plentiful estate, in some peaceful and prosperous country, reposes himself under the shade of his vine, or the shelter of his fig-tree; and, hearing of the wars which embroil, or the plagues which depopulate other nations, tastes with augmented relish his own felicity.

Let me close with the affectionate and emphatical wish of an inspired epistolary writer—"That the Lord of Peace may give" my dear Theron "peace—always by all means!" 2 Thess. iii. 16. Then I shall think my wishes are accomplishing, and this blessing is at the door, when he sees the purity of the divine law—sees the depravity of his own nature—and the impossibility of being justified without an interest in the great Mediator's righteousness: that righteousness which, as it is the only hope and the constant joy, is therefore the darling theme, of your ever faithful

ASPASIO.

P. S. Shall I abridge the preceding letter, and contract the whole into those two great commandments which made the first awakening impressions on my own mind? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Amazing! said your Aspasio. Are these the commands of God? as obligatory as the prohibition of adul-

tery, or the observation of the Sabbath? Then has my whole life been a continual act of disobedience: not a day, no, nor an hour, in which I have performed my duty. This conviction struck me, as the hand-writing upon the wall struck the presumptuous monarch. It pursued me as Saul pursued the Christians, not only to my own house, but even to distant cities; nor ever gave up the great controversy, till, under the influences of the Spirit, it brought me "weary and heavy laden to Jesus Christ."

LETTER II.—THERON TO ASPASIO.

DEAR ASPASIO,—More than three weeks are elapsed since you favoured me with your improving company, during which interval I have frequently recollected the most material parts of our late discourses. I have carefully considered both the doctrines you advanced and the answers you returned to my several objections. I have often reviewed your valuable letter, have used it as a touchstone to examine my state, and have with great punctuality observed your parting advice. I have sat every evening for a picture of my mind, and have endeavoured to take a true unflattering draught of all its distinguishing qualities. And if the diary is a faithful mirror, if it does not aggravate the deformity of my features, I shall be absolutely out of conceit with myself: I shall ever entertain the meanest opinion of my own, either moral or religious, qualifications.

Where is that intense and supreme love of God which his transcendent perfections challenge, and his ineffable goodness claims? Where that firm and joyful reliance on Christ Jesus in any degree proportioned to his infinite merits and inviolable promises? Where that cordial and tender affection for my fellow Christians, which is due to the servants of a divine Redeemer; the people whom he ransomed by his agonies, and purchased with his very blood? Where is the incense of holy contemplation and refined desire? where the flame of fervent devotion and ever active zeal; such as become the living temple of God, in which his most immaculate and glorious Spirit vouchsafes to reside? These fundamental graces, like the grand organs in the animal system, should impart health to the soul, and spread the beauty of holiness through all the conversation. But these, alas! far from beating with a vigorous and uniform pulse, hardly heave with life; only just struggle, now and then, with some faint, intermitted, uneven throes.

How seldom do my actions spring from gratitude to the everlasting Benefactor, or aim at the glory of his superexcellent majesty? In addressing the King immortal, invisible, how languid are my affections, and how wandering is my attention! how great my unbelief, and how little my reverential awe! I receive innumerable mercies; but where are my returns of correspondent thankfulness? I am visited with many gracious chastisements; but without proper resignation, or due improvement. Alas, for my heartless devotions, my lifeless virtues, and the multitude of my refined iniquities! Hid behind the mask of outward decency, and some customary forms of religion, I was altogether unacquainted with my spiritual state. I fancied myself "rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing;" even while I was "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," Rev. iii. 17.

If I look back, and review the years of youth and manhood, what has b

the tenor, what is the aspect of my life? More like a desolate and horrid wilderness than a cultivated garden, or a fruitful vineyard. In youth, what sordid gratifications of appetite! In manhood, what base compliances with a wicked world! In both, what shoals of evil inclinations have polluted my heart! what swarms of vain imaginations have debased my thoughts! what frothy and unprofitable words have dropped from my lips! By all which, how have I disobeyed, and how dishonoured God! how have I denied, and how crucified the Lord Jesus Christ! and yet supposed myself, all the while, to be good enough!

It is something unaccountable, that a person of my inquisitive disposition should, through the course of so many years, be such an utter stranger to himself. I wonder at my own preposterous folly! To travel into foreign countries, and visit the most renowned cities of Europe; yet never step over the threshold, nor look within the apartments of my own breast! To carry on a correspondence with my friends, even in the remotest nations; and never enter upon a conference, nor hold any intelligence with my own heart! To inquire after news from the fleet, news from the army, news from the court: yet exercise neither curiosity nor care with regard to the hope of heaven, and the concerns of eternity! What egregious misconduct is this! A most pernicious error in the economy of religious life!

Sometimes I have cast a transient glance on my outward behaviour, but never extended my search to the delinquent, the traitor, the rebel within. And even my outward behaviour has been surveyed with as much erroneous partiality as superficial levity. It has been compared, not with that exact and sublime standard, the Scriptures of truth; but, as in the case of the self-deceiving Pharisee, with the unjust, extortionate, adulterous practices of some other people. From whence I most unwarrantably concluded, that being not quite so abandoned as the most profligate creatures, my character must be good, and my condition safe. But, thanks to your last friendly letter, and the searching expedient it recommended, I am now in a different way of thinking.

It is strange to recollect, and indeed it is shameful to confess, the many artifices which I have used to put a cheat upon myself. Sometimes I have fancied that the divine law could never be so strict as to condemn us inexorably, if we continue not in all its precepts. Sometimes I have pleaded the infirmity of our nature, and endeavoured to make the works of darkness appear only as pitiable failings. Sometimes I have taken refuge in the excellency of our church, and plumed myself with the borrowed feathers of a religious profession. At other times I have soothed my conscience to rest, by a punctuality of attendance on places, or a zealous attachment to forms. And all this to seduce, cajole, and betray myself;—betray myself, first into a vain conceit of my own endowments, then into a contemptuous disregard of Christ, and at last into eternal destruction. But now I see my guilt, I apprehend my danger, and feel my helpless condition.

Indeed, my Aspasio, I am now convinced that the darkest colours cannot be too dark for the portrait of my spiritual state. I see myself overspread with an habitual depravity, and cannot forbear crying out, with the abashed seer, "Unclean! unclean!" Lev. xiii. 45. The sacred oracles in no wise misrepresent fallen man, when they describe him as altogether become abominable, Job xv. 16. They are far from underrating human works, when

they denominate them "filthy rags*." Rags they are, if we consider their great imperfections; filthy rags, if we advert to their manifold defilements. And since the nature of God is so irreconcilably averse to all contamination, since the law of God requires such unspotted perfection, O! "who can stand before this holy Lord God," 1 Sam. vi. 20, in any accomplishments of their own?

When I farther reflect that I have only a very obscure glimpse of the divine purity, and am a mere novice in the knowledge of my own heart, how am I amazed at the lofty apprehensions which I once formed concerning the dignity of my nature and the integrity of my conduct! All owing to ignorance, the grossest ignorance, of myself and the Scriptures. How do I shudder to think, that, in expecting justification from the law, I was resting the welfare of my immortal soul, not on the foundation of a rock, but on the point of a dagger. I was going to the decisive tribunal, flushed with the falsest hopes, and charged with a set of glittering sins; going, like poor deluded Uriah, 2 Sam. xi. 14, 15, not with any valid credentials, but with "the ministration of death," 2 Cor. iii. 9, in my hand.

Though I cannot but acknowledge the arrogance of these pretensions, yet loath, very loath, is my pride to renounce the pleasing absurdity. Self-love has searched, and searched again, for something excellent. It would fain make a better appearance, and can hardly brook the humiliation of imploring all *sub forma pauperis* †. With what reluctance is a sinner brought to confess himself sinful in every capacity? Strange perverseness! But the charge is undeniable. However unwilling, I must plead guilty. "Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting," Dan. v. 27, is evidently written on all I am, all I have, all I do. And if I am thus defective, even in my own estimation; if I am utterly condemned at the bar of my own conscience, "what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?" Job xxxi. 14.

I now see the necessity of an imputed righteousness. Without some such object for my trust, I am undone. I long, therefore, to hear your arguments in its behalf. And I must declare to you, if it can be satisfactorily proved from the Scriptures, it is the most comfortable doctrine in the world, and worthy of all acceptance.

A letter upon this subject would be a singular favour, and I hope an equal blessing to your obliged and affectionate

Theron.

* Isa. lxi. 6. Does not Theron misapply this text? Can it be intended to discredit the qualifications of the upright? Is it not rather a brand set upon the works of the wicked, whose very sacrifices are an abomination to the Lord? Or, a rebuke given to the specious performances of the hypocrite, who is precise in the form, but destitute of the power of godliness? Or, may it not refer to ritual observances, in contradistinction to moral duties and spiritual accomplishments?

The disparaging character must not, I think, be confined to ritual observances; because it is expressly said, *all our righteousness*, including every kind of religious duty: neither can it be appropriated to the formal hypocrite, much less to the notoriously wicked; because those very persons who are the subject of this assertion declare, in the context, "Lord, we are thy people; thou art our Father; we shall be saved." So that it seems intended to stain the pride of all human glory.

† That is, under the character of a poor destitute, or as a beggar sues for his alms.

LETTER III.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,—Though all your letters give me pleasure, none was ever so highly pleasing as your last. I look upon it with the same secret joy as a compassionate physician observes some very favourable symptoms in the crisis of a beloved patient's distemper.

What you ask, I shall, without any farther preface, attempt to execute. If my attempt proves satisfactory to your judgment, I am sure it will be the most likely means of healing your conscience, and calming your fears. When we perceive the odious depravity of our nature; when we discern the horrible iniquity of our lives, and are sensible of that tremendous wrath and everlasting vengeance which are due to such guilty creatures; then nothing can be found that will speak effectual peace, nothing that will administer solid comfort, but only the vicarious sufferings and the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

To this purpose speaks one of the wisest and best of spiritual guides: "Has sin abounded?" as undoubtedly it has, in our heart and our life; "grace has much more abounded," in the obedience and the merits of our Redeemer. Nay, "has sin reigned?" exerted its malignant power in the most extensive and most destructive manner, rendering us subject unto death, both temporal and eternal? "Even so has grace reigned;" exerted its benign efficacy, and in a manner yet more triumphant; not only rescuing us from guilt and ruin, but restoring us to everlasting life and glory; and all this through the righteousness, the complete meritorious righteousness, brought in "by Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. v. 21.

You inquire after the proofs of this imputed righteousness. From a multitude I shall select a few; sufficient, I hope, to make it appear, that this is the declared doctrine of our church, and the avowed belief of her most eminent divines; that it is copiously revealed through the whole Scriptures, revealed in many express passages, and deducible from a variety of instructive similitudes.

Hear the language of our Common Prayer, in a very affecting and solemn address to the Almighty: "We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness." If we may not, if we dare not, rely on our own righteousness when we approach the eucharistic table, much less may we depend upon it when we are summoned to the decisive tribunal. Should you ask, on what we are to depend? The exhortation to the communion furnishes an answer: "On the meritorious death and passion of Christ, whereby alone we obtain remission of sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven."

The Collect appointed for the festival of circumcision has this remarkable introduction: "Almighty God, whose blessed Son was obedient to the law for man." In what sense, or with what propriety, can this be affirmed, unless Christ's perfect obedience be referable to us, and accepted instead of ours? On any other interpretation, I should think he was obedient, not for man, but for himself.

Should the artful critic give some other turn to these passages, it will avail him but little; because the church, her own best expositor, has explained the meaning of such phrases, and put the matter beyond all doubt. In her

eleventh article she says, "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The doctrine relating to pardon of sin had been stated in a preceding article. This displays the method whereby sinners may appear righteous in the eye of God and in the court of heaven, so as to recover the divine favour and obtain a title to eternal bliss. This is done, not by any native righteousness, not by any acquired righteousness, but by an imputed righteousness. Were we justified by either of the former methods, it would not have been said, we are *accounted*, but we *are* righteous. They are so far from constituting our reconciling and justifying righteousness, that they have no share in it, contribute nothing towards it, are totally excluded from it. We are accounted righteous, and accepted as such, *only*, (mark the expression) *only* through the meritorious obedience, and propitiating blood of our great Mediator.

The Homilies are, if it be possible, still more explicit and more cogent. In the Homily concerning the salvation of mankind, we read the following words: "The apostle toucheth three things, which must go together in our justification: on God's part, his great mercy and grace: on Christ's part, the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption, by the offering of his body, and the shedding of his blood, with fulfilling of the law perfectly; on our part, true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours, but by God's working in us." You see, according to the judgment of our venerable reformers, not only the offering of Christ's body, and shedding of Christ's blood, but also his perfect fulfilling of the law, are the adequate price of our redemption. All these act conjointly; they sweetly harmonise in the great and glorious work. To suppose their disunion, is a doctrinal mistake, somewhat like that practical error of the Papists, in severing the sacramental wine from the sacramental bread; administering to the laity the symbols of the slaughtered body, but withholding the symbols of the streaming blood.

There are other clauses in the same Homily, which set the seal of the church to our sentiments. I shall content myself with transcribing one from the conclusion. "Christ," says that form of sound words, "is the righteousness of all them that do truly believe. He, for them, paid their ransom by his death. He, for them, fulfilled the law in his life. So that now, in him, and by him, every true Christian man may be called a fulfiller of the law; forasmuch as that which their infirmity lacked, Christ's righteousness hath supplied." This authority is as clear, as the doctrine authorised is comfortable. May the former sway our judgment! may the latter cheer our hearts!

The Homily on Christ's nativity informs the reader, that the design of our Lord's incarnation was—"to give light unto the world, and call sinners to repentance; to fulfil the law for us, and become the propitiation for our sins; to cast out the prince of this world, and destroy the works of the devil." We have all broke the law; we are all unable to keep the law; therefore the blessed Jesus fulfilled the law; fulfilled it in each and every of its demands; fulfilled it in the highest degree of perfection; and what is of all considerations most delightful, fulfilled it for us. His obedience took the place of what we were obliged to perform under the covenant of works; and is not only the meritorious, but also the constituent cause of our justification.

So that, if there be any worthiness in our Lord's most holy nature, any merit in his exercise of the sublimest virtues, completed by his submission to

the most ignominious sufferings and tormenting death ; then, according to this standard system of orthodox divinity, these are the ground, these are the substance of a sinner's justification. And, according to the dictates of the most unbiassed reason, they are the best, the surest ground that can either be wished or imagined.

Does it not from the preceding quotations appear, that the doctrine of justification, through the imputed righteousness of our Redeemer, is far from being disclaimed by the established church ? I am sorry, but constrained to own, that we rarely find any considerable strictures of this great evangelical peculiarity in our modern theological discourses. Yet there have been preachers of the highest repute for learning, for judgment, and for piety, who professedly maintained this grand truth of the gospel.

The devout Bishop Beveridge, in his "Private Thoughts," has left upon record the following very remarkable acknowledgment, which, if it suited his state of eminent holiness, cannot be too humbling, my dear Theron, for your lips and for mine. "I do not remember, neither do I believe, that I ever prayed, in all my lifetime, with that reverence, or heard with that attention, or received the sacrament with that faith, or did any work with that pure heart and single eye, as I ought to have done. Insomuch, that I look upon all my righteousness but as filthy rags ; and it is in the robes only of the righteousness of the Son of God, that I dare appear before the Majesty of heaven."

The fervent and affectionate Bishop Hopkins* speaks in perfect consonance with his brother of St. Asaph. "The law was given us, not that we should seek justification by the observance of it, but finding it impossible to be justified by fulfilling it, we should thereby be driven to Christ's righteousness, who hath both fulfilled it in himself, and satisfied for our transgressing of it ; and therefore saith the apostle, 'The law was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.' To this end it was promulged, that seeing the strictness of its precepts, the rigour of its threatenings, and wthal being convinced of our impotence to fulfil its commands, we might be urged by its terrors to fly to Christ, and find that righteousness in him which may answer all the demands of the law."

Bishop Reynolds†, styled by his contemporaries, and not without reason, "a walking library," bears his testimony in the following words : "Christ as our surety paid our debt, underwent the curse due to our sins, and bare them all in his own body on the tree ; became subject to the law for us, and representatively in our stead fulfilled all the righteousness the law required, active and passive. For sin being once committed, there must be a double act to justification ; the suffering of the curse, and the fulfilling of righteousness anew. The one, a satisfaction for the injury we have done to God as our Judge ; the other, the performance of a service which we owe unto him as our Maker."

To this illustrious triumvirate, let me join Bishop Davenant, who for his great abilities and unquestionable integrity, was appointed one of our religious plenipotentiaries at the renowned synod of Dort. In his very valuable exposition of the Epistle to the Colossians, he writes to this effect : "Ye are complete in Christ. Ye are furnished, in that all-sufficient Redeemer, with whatever is requisite to everlasting salvation. With wisdom ; since it is the

* See his Sermon on John vii. 19.

† See his treatise entitled, *The Life of Christ*.

consummation of this noble endowment, to know Christ, and him crucified. With righteousness; because he has perfectly satisfied the law*, and thoroughly expiated our guilt. With sanctification; because his Spirit, dwelling in our hearts, mortifies our corrupt affections, and renews the soul after the image of its Creator."

Let me bring up the rear with a testimony, which for clearness, solidity, and a full representation of the evangelical doctrine, might very justly have claimed a place in the van. It is taken from an author, whom the general consent of our nation has distinguished with the title of "judicious." The judicious Hooker, in a treatise on justification, says—"It is a childish cavil or adversaries so greatly please themselves with, exclaiming, that we tread all Christian virtues under our feet, because we teach, That faith alone justifieth. Whereas, by this speech, we never meant to exclude either hope or charity from being always joined as inseparable mates with faith in the man that is justified; or works from being added, as necessary duties required of every justified man; but to shew, that faith is the only hand which putteth a Christ to justification; and Christ the only garment which, being so put on, covereth the shame of our defiled nature, hideth the imperfection of our works, and preserveth us blameless in the sight of God: before whom, otherwise, the weakness of our faith were cause sufficient to make us culpable, yea, to shut us out of the kingdom of heaven, where nothing that is not absolute can enter."

You will allow the sagacious Bishop Sanderson † to sum up the evidence; or rather, to make an important remark on the whole of the controversy. That great light of the church, both in casuistical and practical divinity, observes—"The tidings of a Redeemer must be blessed and welcome news, to those that are sensible of their own poverty, and take it of grace." Our eagle-eyed divine penetrates into the true cause of the prevailing averseness to this evangelical doctrine. It is founded on the state of the heart, more than upon any force of argument. People are but little, if at all, sensible of their spiritual and moral indigence; of the defects which depreciate, and the defilements which sully, whatever they have, and whatever they do. Nay, strongly tinctured with pride, they would be themselves the Alpha, and suffer the blessed Jesus to be no more than the Omega, in procuring their eternal salvation. Therefore they can hardly be reconciled to the humbling character of an eleemosynary; one who lives wholly upon the alms of the gospel, and is dependent upon grace for his all.

Whereas, was this grand obstacle once removed; were men convinced of sin, of exceeding sinfulness in their worst estate, and of remaining sinfulness in their best; they would soon be "convinced of righteousness," John xvi. 8. of the absolute necessity and inestimable worth of a Redeemer's righteousness. They would no longer dispute against it, but cordially receive it; entirely rely on it; and adore the goodness, the transcendent and unutterable goodness of God, in providing it.

I think, in one of our conferences, I undertook to produce my vouchers from the ancient fathers. Let me now subjoin two or three attestations of this kind. From one of which you will perceive, that those early writers

* In this respect principally are believers complete; because, though destitute of any righteousness that may properly be called their own, Christ has graciously enriched them with his. *Vid. DAVENANT in epistol. ad Coloss. cap. ii. com. 10.*

† See his Sermon on Isa. lii. 3.

had a considerable degree of clearness upon the point. From the other you will see, that far from rejecting the doctrine, they embrace it with delight and rapture.—And if you will admit of the last, you cannot be startled at anything which I shall advance upon the subject. Let me only premise, in general, that if those authors are not so copious and explicit with regard to the imputation of active righteousness, they abound in passages which evince the substitution of Christ in our stead; passages which disclaim all dependence on any duties of our own, and fix the hopes of a believer entirely upon the merits of his Saviour. When this is the case, I am very little solicitous about any particular forms of expression; and far from being angry, even though the words which I think most significant are not retained.

Clemens—an intimate acquaintance of St. Paul's, and whose "name was in the book of life," Phil. iv. 3. in his truly excellent epistle to the Corinthians, assures that people *, "We are not," in any respect, or in any degree "justified by ourselves," but wholly by Jesus Christ; "not by our own wisdom or prudence," which could never find out the way; "not by the piety of our hearts, or works of righteousness performed in our lives," which could never be sufficient for the purpose; "but by faith:" the one invariable method, "by which the Almighty Sovereign has justified all" his people, "ever since the world began."

Justin, who was first a Gentile philosopher, then an eminent Christian, and at last a martyr for the truth, speaks more fully to the point †:—"What else could cover our sins, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ? By what possible means could we, unrighteous and unholy creatures, be justified, but only by the interposition of the Son of God in our behalf?"—Having in this clause made a profession of his faith, the good man, on the contemplation of such a privilege, breaks out into a kind of holy transport: "O sweet and delightful exchange! a dispensation unsearchably wise and gracious! benefits quite unexpected, and rich beyond all our hopes! that the sin of many should be hid by one righteous Person, and that the righteousness of one should justify many transgressors!"

The following words are remarkably strong, and the sentiments peculiarly bold. But they come from the pen of the finest writer in ecclesiastical antiquity. They have the great name and venerable character of St. Chrysostom for their recommendatory preface ‡. "Fear not," says he, "on account of any of thy past transgressions of the law, when once thou hast fled by faith to Jesus Christ. The most enormous and the most destructive violation of the law is, to be withheld, by the consciousness of any guilt whatever, from believing on Christ. When thou actest faith on him, thou

* Ου δι' ἑαυτῶν δικαιοσύνης, οὐδὲ διὰ τῆς ἡμετέρας σοφίας, ἢ συνέσιως, ἢ ἐπιβουλίας, ἢ ἐργῶν ἢ καταργησασαμιδα ἢ ἐσισησῆτι καρδίας· ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς πίστεως, δι' ἧς πάντας τοὺς ἀπ' αἰῶνος ὁ παντοκράτωρ Θεὸς ἰδικαιοῦσιν. 1 *Epist. ad Corinth.* This quotation is explained, as well as translated. But that every reader may distinguish the text from the paraphrase, the first is printed with inverted commas.

† Τί ἄλλο τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν ἠδυνήθη καλυφθῆναι, ἢ ἐκεῖνον δικαιοσύνη; Ἐν τίνι δικαιοσύνην ἔδοξατο τοὺς ἀνομοῦς ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀσέβεις, ἢ ἐν τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ; Ἡ ΤΗΣ, ΓΑΤΚΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΤΑΛΛΑΛΗΣ, ἢ τῆς ἀνέχουσιαν δειμουργίας, ἢ τῶν ἀπρὸς δακτύλων δι' ἐνὸς πολλοῦς ἀνομοῦς δικαιοσύνη. *Epist. ad Diogn.* Though Du Pin questions the authority of this epistle, he allows it to have been written by an ancient hand. Dr. Cave, as capable a judge, thinks there is no reason to doubt but it is the genuine work of Justin.

‡ Μη τῶν φοβῆσθαι, ὡς τοὶ νεμὸν παρακαλοῦνται, ἐπιδαῖν τῆς πίστεως προσέλην· ὅτι γὰρ αὐτοὶ παρακαλοῦνται, ὅτι δι' αὐτοῦ τῷ Χριστῷ μὴ πιστεύσῃς· ὡς ἀν' ἐπίστευσης αὐτῷ, κακίον ἐπληρώσῃς καὶ πολλὰ πλεον ἢ ἐκίλευσι· πολλὰ γὰρ μύζοντα δικαιοσύνην ἔλαβες. *Homil. xvii. in x. ad Rom.*

not fulfilled, I might say more than fulfilled, the law: for thou hast received a better righteousness than it could ever require; thou art possessed of a better obedience than any creature could possibly pay."

Two or three witnesses of distinguished ability, and undoubted veracity, are a sufficient confirmation of any cause. For this reason, and to avoid a prosing prolixity, I have set aside a multitude of voices, which, from the writings of our own and foreign divines, are ready to pour their united evidence; and lest the business of quotation, though sparingly managed, should seem dry and tedious, I will relieve your weariness, and enliven the selection, by an extract from the prince of English poetry. Michael, the prophetic archangel, mentioning the destructive consequences of the fall, and ascribing the Godhead of that glorious Person who undertook to be the repairer of this deadly breach, adds,

Which he, who comes thy Saviour, shall secure,
Not by destroying Satan, but his works,
In thee and in thy seed. Nor can this be
But by fulfilling (that which thou didst want)
Obedience to the law of God, imposed
On penalty of death; and suffering death,
The penalty to thy transgression due;
And due to theirs, which out of thine will grow,
So only can high justice rest appaid. MILTON, xii. 393.

Here then is the express determination of our Homilies, supported by the authority of our Articles, established by the concurrence of our Liturgy, still better ratified by the unanimous attestation of several celebrated divines, whose lives were the brightest ornament to our church, and whose writings are the most unexceptionable interpretation of her meaning. As a capital to crown and complete this grand column, supervenes the declaration of the ancient fathers, those who flourished, and with the highest renown, in the first and purest ages of Christianity. So that, if great authorities carry any weight, if illustrious names challenge any regard, this tenet comes attended and dignified with very considerable credentials.

Yet I will venture to affirm, that all these, considerable as they appear, are the least of those testimonials which recommend the doctrine to my Theron's acceptance, and which have gained it admittance into the heart of, his most affectionate

ASPASIO.

LETTER IV.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,—The family in which I have the satisfaction to reside, though remarkable for their genteel figure and ample fortune, are still more amiably distinguished by their benevolence, hospitality, and charity. As they live at a distance from the market-town, the lady has converted one apartment of her house into a little dispensatory, and stocked it with some of the most common, the most needed, and most salutary medicines, which, in cases of ordinary indisposition, she distributes to her indigent neighbours with singular compassion, and with no small success. This fine morning, Emilia has ordered some skilful hands into the fields, to cull their healing simples, and lay up a magazine of health for the afflicted poor. Camillus is withdrawn to receive his rents, and settle accounts with his tenants.

Suppose we act in concert with these valuable persons. Suppose we

range the delightful fields of Scripture, and form a collection, not of salutiferous herbs, but of inestimable texts; such as may be of sovereign efficacy to assuage the anguish of a guilty conscience, and impart saving health to the distempered soul. Suppose we open the mines of divine inspiration, and enrich ourselves, not with the gold of Ophir, but with the unsearchable treasures of Christ; or with that perfect righteousness of our Redeemer, which is incomparably more precious than the revenues of a county, or the produce of Peru.

In the pleading for imputed righteousness, we have already urged the authority of our established church, and the suffrage of her most eminent divines. The opinion of excellent writers, which has been the result of much learning, great attention, and earnest prayer, is no contemptible evidence. Yet we must always reserve the casting voice for those infallible umpires, the prophets and apostles. "If we receive," with a deferential regard, "the witness of men; the witness of God is greater," 1 John v. 9, and challenges the most implicit submission; which remark naturally leads me to the intended subject of this epistle, or rather calls upon me to fulfil my late engagement, and shew that the above-mentioned doctrine is copiously revealed through the whole process of the Scriptures.

Let me detach a very significant portion from the epistle to the Romans; which, though little inferior to a decisive proof, is produced only as an introduction to others: "Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe," Rom. iii. 21, 22. The righteousness of God signifies, that righteousness which the incarnate God wrought out in his own all-glorious person. It is styled the righteousness of God by way of superlative pre-eminence, in opposition to any righteousness of our own, and in contradistinction to the righteousness of all creatures whatever. This righteousness is without the law. Its efficacy has no dependence on, its merit receives no addition from, any conformity of our practice to the divine law; being complete, absolutely complete in itself, and altogether sufficient to procure the reconciliation and acceptance of sinners. This righteousness is "witnessed by the law and the prophets;" receives an uniform attestation from the various writings of the Old Testament. To investigate which attestation, to examine its pertinency, and weigh its sufficiency, is our present pleasing business.

We may begin with that gracious declaration made to the first transgressors: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," Gen. iii. 15; shall destroy the works of the devil, and retrieve whatever was lost by his malicious artifices. How could this be effected, but by restoring that righteousness which for a while our first parents possessed; which they ought always to have held fast; but from which they so soon and so unhappily swerved. Take the position in the right sense, and Christianity is, if not entirely, yet very nearly as old as the creation. It was comprehended in this blessed promise, as the stamina of the largest plants are contained in the substance of their respective seeds; every subsequent revelation being no more than a gradual evolution of this grand evangelical principle; acting like the vegetative powers of nature, which in rearing an oak, with all its spread of branches, only expand the tunicles, and fill up the vessels of the acorn.

This doctrine seems to have been typically taught by the remarkable manner of clothing our first parents. All they could do for their own covering was like the patched and beggarly mantle of fig leaves: this they relinquish, and God himself furnishes them with apparel, Gen. iii. 21. Animals are slain, not for food but sacrifice; and the naked criminals are arrayed with the skins of those slaughtered beasts. The victims figured the atonement of Christ's death; the clothing typified the imputation of his righteousness. In perfect conformity, perhaps with a reference, to the passage thus interpreted, the apostle just now expressed himself: "Even the righteousness of God, which is not only made over to all believers as a rich portion, but put upon all as a beautiful garment," Rom. iii. 22*, whereby alone their moral deformity can be covered, and their everlasting damnation prevented. Milton, it is certain, speaking of this memorable transaction, considers it in the same spiritual sense:—

Nor he their outward only with the skins
Of beasts, but inward nakedness (much more
Opprobrious!) with his robe of righteousness
Arraying, covered from his Father's sight.

"In thy seed," says the great Jehovah to his servant Abraham, "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. xxii. 18. That the seed here mentioned is Christ, the apostle places beyond all doubt†. Both Scripture and reason declare that true blessedness must necessarily include the pardon of sins and the favour of God, the sanctification of our souls, and the inheritance of life eternal. None of which are to be acquired by any human performances, but all are to be sought, and all may be found, in the root and offspring of Abraham, Jesus Christ; who is therefore most pertinently styled, "The Desire of all nations," Hag. ii. 7; the actual desire of every enlightened nation, and the implicit desire of all nations whatever; because, without any exception, covet what is to be derived only from Jesus Christ the righteous, real happiness.

The patriarchal age, and the legal economy, bore their testimony to this truth, by typical persons, emblematical miracles, and figurative usages. Indeed, the whole ceremonial service was a grand series of types, representing Christ and his everlasting righteousness. In all which this was the unanimous though silent language; "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." These I shall not stay to discuss, because proofs of a more explicit and positive nature wait for our consideration; only would just make a transient observation, relating to one very remarkable constitution in the Jewish ritual.—The high-priest had on the front of his mitre a plate of pure gold, engraven with that venerable motto, "Holiness to the Lord," Exod. xxviii. 36, 37. which was always to be on his forehead when he performed the solemn ministrations of the sanctuary; and for this important reason, that the people "might be accepted before the Lord," Exod. xxviii. 38. Did not this most clearly foreshow the immaculate holiness of our great High-priest? and with equal clearness imply, that his holiness should procure acceptance for all his followers?

* ΕΙΣ ΤΙΣΤΑΣ, ΕΠΙ ΠΑΝΤΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΠΙΣΤΙΟΥΝΤΑΣ.

† See St. Paul's comment upon this invaluable promise, Gal. iii. 8, &c. This commentator, we all allow, was guided by the Spirit, and knew the mind of God. According to his exposition of the text, it is pregnant with the doctrine of justification by faith, and contains an abridgment of the gospel.

In the book of Job we have several hints of this truth, and one passage very express to our purpose. Elihu describes an unconverted person under the chastising hand of Providence, "whose life," through the extremity of his disease, "drew near to the grave, and his soul," through the multitude of his iniquities, was ready to become a prey "to the destroyers." In this deplorable condition if there be present with him the messenger* of the covenant of peace, that great interpreter* of the divine counsels, and for his superexcellent wisdom is justly deemed "one among a thousand," rather "the chiefest among ten thousand;" if he, by his enlightening Spirit, vouchsafe to shew unto the afflicted man his own perfect righteousness, and his most meritorious uprightness on which alone a sinner may depend, both temporal and eternal salvation; then the poor distressed creature, attending to this instruction, and applying this righteousness, is made partaker of pardon. God, the sovereign Lord of life and death, is gracious unto him, and saith, in the greatness of his strength, as well as in the multitude of his mercies, "Deliver him from going down into the pit" of corruption, and pledge of his deliverance from the pit of perdition; for "I have found ransom" sufficient to satisfy my justice: I have received an atonement behalf of this once obnoxious, now reconciled transgressor.

But why do I select one particular paragraph? It seems to be the main design of the whole book to overthrow all pretensions of any justified righteousness in man, that the wretched sinner, nay, that the greatest saint, stripped of every personal plea, may rely only on the merits of a Redeemer. This is the final issue of all those warm debates which pass between the afflicted hero and his censorious friends. This is the grand result of Elihu's calm reasoning, and of God Almighty's awful interrogatories. The apparent centre this, (see Job xlii. 6.), in which all the lines terminate; justly therefore to be considered as the principal scope of the whole work.

I must not omit an excellent observation, which I find in some critical and explanatory notes † on the last words of David. The judicious author proves that this song relates to Christ; that it displays the dignity of the Redeemer, under the character of "The King," and "The Just One," and as an explication of the last amiable and glorious title—"Our Lord Jesus Christ is so called, not so much for having fulfilled all righteousness in his own person, and performed an unsinning obedience to the will of God, because, by his righteousness imputed to us, we also, upon the terms of the gospel, are justified, or accounted righteous before God."

I think we may evidently discern the same vein of evangelical doctrine running through many of the Psalms. "He shall convert § my soul," Ps.

* See Job xxxiii. 22. &c.—Christ is called מַלְאָךְ, the angel of the divine presence, Mal. lxi. 9. The messenger of the covenant, Mal. iii. 1. He is also, in the most familiar sense of the phrase, מְפָרֵשׁ, the interpreter of the divine counsels; he to whom the Father hath given the tongue of the learned, and by whom he makes known the otherwise unsearchable mysteries of the gospel.

† By Dr. Grey. See 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. &c.

‡ That is, freely; or, as the prophet speaks, "without money and without price."

§ I am sensible the word שׁוּבֵר may signify to refresh or restore; may answer to the Greek phrase ἀναψύξις, and denote the comforts of the Holy Ghost. This verb may also bear the same signification with the participle ἀναψύχων, in our Lord's exhortation to Peter, when thou art converted; not describing the first grand revolution in the heart by which a new determination is given to the judgment, and a new bias to the affection, but expressing those subsequent operations of the divine Spirit, by which we are recovered from our various relapses, and healed of our daily infirmities.

ii. 3; turn me not only from sin and ignorance, but from every false confidence, and every deceitful refuge. "He shall bring me forth in paths righteousness;" in those paths of imputed righteousness, which are always trod with the trees of holiness, are always watered with the fountains of salvation, and always terminate in everlasting rest. Some, perhaps, may say, why I give this sense to the passage? Why may it not signify the paths of duty, and the way of our own obedience? Because such effects are here mentioned as never have resulted, and never can result, from any duties of our own. These are not "green pastures," but a parched and blasted heath. These are not "still waters," but a troubled and disorderly* stream. How can these speak peace or administer comfort when we pass through the valley and shadow of death. To yield these blessings, is the exalted prerogative of Christ, and the sole prerogative of his obedience.

Admitting that this obedience is of sovereign advantage during the years of our life, and in the hour of death, it may still occur to the serious and inquiring mind, what will be our safeguard after the great change? When the Redeemer departs, and our place on earth knows us no more—when the body is dissolved and we shall all stand before the judgment-seat—what will then avail us? The same righteousness of our divine Lord. This, if I mistake not, is displayed in the very next Psalm; which begins with a solicitous inquiry, and is followed by a satisfactory answer, and closes with a most pertinent but rapturous ascription of praise. This is the inquiry, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall rise up in his holy place?" This is the answer, "Even they that have clean hands and a pure heart. He shall receive the blessing of plenary remission "from the Lord, and righteousness also from the God of his salvation:" even that perfect righteousness, which is not acquired by us, but bestowed by Jehovah; which is not performed by the saint, but forgiven by the sinner; which is the only solid basis to support our hopes of happiness, the only valid plea for an admission into the mansions of joy. It then follows the apostrophe: the prophet foresees the ascension of Christ and the entrance of his saints into the kingdom of heaven. He sees his Lord marching at the head of the redeemed world, and conducting them into regions of honour and joy. Suitably to such a view, and in a most beautiful strain of poetry, the prophet addresses himself to the heavenly portals: "Lift up your heads, O ye everlastings, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory," with the heirs of his grace and righteousness, shall make their triumphant entry; "shall enter in," and go out no more.

Having shewn the powerful and extensive influence of our Redeemer's righteousness—its efficacy in this world to justify, in the other world to glorify—well may the sweet singer of Israel profess his supreme value for it, and his entire dependence on it. "I will go forth in the strength of the Lord, and will make mention of thy righteousness only †." As though he

* *Blasted, disorderly.*—Let not these words grate on the ear; or, if they grate on the ear, let them humble the heart. What were Job's duties? Zealous and exemplary; distinguished from his very youth; and neither equalled nor excelled by any person on earth. † These, in point of justification, were not a whit better than Aspasio represents. Let us hear the last words of this matchless saint, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." From this confession we learn, that with all his furniture of personal obedience, he had just enough to be ashamed, confounded, undone.

† Psal. lxxi. 16. There is, in the Hebrew original and in the new translation, a very emphatical repetition; which adds weight to the sentiment, and demands a peculiar attention from the reader: "Thy righteousness, even thine only."

had said, I will have recourse to no other righteousness for the consolation of my soul. I will plead no other righteousness for the recommendation of my person. I will fly to no other righteousness for my final acceptance and endless felicity. This is that "raiment of needle-work and clothing of wrought gold," Psal. xlv. 13, in which the king's daughter is introduced to him "sitteth in the heavens over all." This is that "garment for glory and beauty," which clothed our great High-priest, and descending to his feet, Rev. i. 13. clothes and adorns the lowest members of his mystical body.

Recollecting all the foregoing particulars, justly, and on the most rational ground, does our royal author declare, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted," Psal. lxxxix. 15, 16. They are truly blessed, they alone happy, who "know the joyful sound" of the gospel; not only receive it into their ears, but admit it into their very hearts, so as to partake of the peace and spiritual liberty which it proclaims. "They shall walk in the light of thy countenance;" they shall enjoy such communications of grace, and such manifestations of thy love, as will constitute the serenity and sunshine of their souls. In thy name, O Lord Jesus Christ, in thy glorious person, and thy infinite merit, "shall they rejoice:" and not occasionally but habitually; not barely at some distinguished intervals, but "all the day." Their joy shall be as lasting as it is substantial. "And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted;" set above the tantalizing power of temporal things; placed beyond the slavish fear of the last enemy; and raised, when time shall be no more, to a state of celestial glory and consummate bliss.

How thoroughly evangelical is this seraphic writer! He has joy, he has blessedness, and he looks for everlasting exaltation; yet not from his father's repentance, and his own sincere obedience. According to this, which is the modern scheme, faith, instead of receiving, would supplant the Lord Jesus; repentance, instead of being the gift of Christ, would become his rival; and sincere obedience, which is for the praise and glory of God, would eclipse and impoverish his grace. But David adopts no such sentiments; David maintains no such doctrine. This is the invariable language of his heart: "All my springs of hope, of trust, and consolation, O thou adored Emanuel! are in thee," Psal. lxxxvii. 7.

This sense is the less precarious, I had almost said the more certain, as it exactly corresponds with the analogy of faith, and coincides with the explicit declarations of other Scriptures. Isaiah is styled the evangelist of the Jewish church, because more frequently than any of the prophets he celebrates, and more copiously explains, this and other peculiarities of the gospel. In the very first chapter, he preaches these glad tidings: "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness." Zion, the Jewish church, composed of fallen creatures, sometime disobedient to their God, enslaved to Satan, shall be redeemed; redeemed, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold," but by severe judgments executed on their guilty head and gracious representative; and not by these only, but by righteousness also, by the perfect and most meritorious righteousness of the eternally and divinely excellent Person.

Our sacred author bears his testimony with warmer zeal and brighter

dence as he proceeds in his incomparable discourses. "Surely, shall one say," (or, as it may be rendered, *only*) "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength," Isa. xlv. 24. Please to observe, Theron, it is not said, in my own works, in my own repentance, no, nor in my own faith, but "in the Lord Jesus have I righteousness;" righteousness for justification, and strength for sanctification; an imputed righteousness, to procure my acceptance; an imparted strength, to produce my holiness: the first constituting my title to the everlasting inheritance, the last forming my personal preparation for its enjoyment. "Surely," which expresses a firm persuasion, and an unshaken assurance. "Only," which denotes an utter renunciation of all other confidence, and excludes every other ground of hope. "Righteousnesses*," the original is in the plural number, which seems to be used, not without an important design, to enlarge the significancy of the word, and make it correspond with the richness of the blessing, so that it may imply the fulness and supereminent excellency of this gift of grace, as comprehending whatever, either of suffering or of obedience, is requisite to the justification of sinners. Inasmuch that, in the Lord Jesus Christ, and his all-perfect righteousness, the seed of Israel shall not only be justified, but rejoice, and not only confide, but glory, Isa. xlv. 25.

What he had just now asserted, he exemplifies in his own, and in the person of every true believer. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness," Isa. lxi. 10. True believers are compared, in one of our sacred eclogues, to a "company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot," Cant. i. 9; to horses, than which no animal is more stately and graceful; to Egyptian horses, which were the best and completest then in the world; to those in Pharaoh's chariot, which doubtless were a choice set, selected from thousands, and finest where all were fine. Here, methinks, I see the comparison realized. Christians endued with such a spirit as breathes in this animated text, are like a collection of those gallant and majestic steeds—not destined to low drudgery, but appointed to run in the royal chariot; all life, full of fire, champing the bit, and eager for the chase. Nothing can more beautifully describe a state of exultation and ardour, than the preceding similitude, or the following words: "I will rejoice; I will greatly rejoice; my very soul, and all that is within me, shall be joyful in my God." Wherefore? Because he has clothed me, undone sinner as I am, with the garments of salvation; because he hath covered me, defective as all my services are, with the robe of righteousness: A robe, which hides every sin that, in thought, word, or deed, I have committed; a robe, which screens from the sword of justice, the curse of the law, and all the vengeance my iniquities have deserved; a robe, which adorns and dignifies my soul, renders it fairer than the moon, clear as the sun, and meet for the inheritance of saints in light.

Having represented this righteousness in a variety of grand and charming views, the prophet farther characterizes it, as the unalterable and never-failing origin of our justification and happiness. This he displays by a train of images, bold and sublime to the last degree. "Lift up your eyes to the

* *δικαιοσυνας*, parallel to which, both in construction and signification, is the phrase used by St. John, *δικαιοσυνην*, Rev. xix. 8. "The fine linen is the righteousness (properly, the righteousnesses) of the saints."

heavens, and look upon the earth beneath ; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment ; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished," Isa. li. 6. Observe the vast dimensions, and the firm foundations, both of the upper and the lower world, how strong, how steadfast they all appear ! Yet these, indissoluble as they may seem, shall perish. This majestic globe, on which mountains rise, and oceans roll, shall lose its beautiful gloss, and be laid aside, like a decayed useless garment. Even that more majestic concave, in which stars are fixed, and planets revolve, shall be deprived of its very superior lustre : and vanish away, like the dissolving smoke. Whereas "my salvation," with all the spiritual and heavenly blessings included in it, shall subsist and flourish for ever : "And my righteousness," which is the meritorious cause of all, shall be an immovable foundation for repose and happiness. In short, whether there be moral virtues, they shall be found wanting ; whether there be Christian graces, they shall prove ineffectual ; but my conformity to the law, and my obedience unto death, neither need addition, nor admit of change : they are all-sufficient in their merit, and in their virtue everlasting.

When day arises on our benighted hemisphere, it breaks and spreads by a gradual increase—forming, first the grey twilight, next the blushing morn, then the shining light, till all is heightened into the blaze and glow of noon. When spring revisits our wintry clime, she also advances by gentle degrees ; first swells the bud and protrudes the gem, then expands the leaf and unfolds the blossom : the face of things is continually changing for the better, and nature shews herself, almost every hour, in some new and more engaging dress. This leisurely process renders the strong effulgence of the celestial orb more supportable, and the lovely expansions of the vegetable creation more observable.

So progressive and increasing are the displays of Jesus Christ exhibited in the Scriptures, whose appearance is unspeakably more delightful to the soul than the emanations of orient light are to the eye, or the entertainments of the vernal season to our other senses. The gloom of fallen Adam was alleviated by a ray from this Sun of Righteousness. Abraham and the patriarchs saw afar off the blessed Jesus, "as the morning spread upon the mountains," Joel ii. 2. The psalmist and the prophets beheld his nearer approaches, like the sun upon the point of rising. To the apostles and evangelists, he arose in perfect lustre and complete beauty. The grace and the privileges which dawned under other dispensations of religion, are brought even to meridian light by the gospel. This I mention, just to intimate what you may expect from a following letter.

In the meantime, let us attend to the prophet Daniel. He records a message from heaven, which is more clearly descriptive of this great evangelical blessing than all the foregoing texts. He had been under much distress, and in great perplexity ; afflicted for his own and his countrymen's sins ; anxious for the welfare of the chosen nation, and the prosperity of true religion ; when an angel was dispatched to the holy mourner with this most cheering news, which, received by faith, is the richest balm to a wounded conscience, and the only remedy for a guilty world : "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city ; to finish the transgression, and make an end of sin ; to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting

righteousness," Dan. ix. 24. This prophecy relates to the Messiah. It foretells that, in the fulness of time, he should "finish the transgression;" restrain and suppress the power of corruption, by purifying to himself a peculiar people;—should "make an end of sin," by sealing up or secreting its guilt, and totally abolishing its condemning power;—should "make reconciliation for iniquity," by sustaining the vengeance due to sinners, and fully satisfying the divine justice for all their offences;—should not barely publish, but accomplish and "bring in a righteousness*," that it may be presented both to God and man: to God for the reparation of his violated law; to man, for the justification of his obnoxious person. That this righteousness should be everlasting; not such as may be compared to the morning-cloud, which passeth away; or to the early dew, which is soon dried up; but such as will outlast the hills, on which the latter shines; and outlast the skies, through which the former sails: a righteousness, whose merits extend to every period, and every action of our lives; and when once made ours by imputation, remains, and will remain, our unalienable property. To this, all the saints who in ancient generations pleased God, owe their acceptance; on this, all the children of men who in future ages hope for his mercy must rely; by this, the whole assembly of the blessed will be invariably and eternally precious in his sight. Exalted character! Can it be applicable to anything less than the righteousness of the incarnate God? Surely none can imagine that Daniel would speak in such a magnificent strain of any human righteousness, since, in this very chapter, he professedly depreciates himself, his fellow-saints, and all human performances whatever.

I forgot, in the proper place, to consult the prophet Jeremiah. Let us now refer ourselves to his determination. Celebrating the Saviour of Judah and Israel, he says, "This is his name, whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness:" a determination so clear and satisfactory, as not to leave, one would almost conclude, any room for appeal. Should the sense of the passage be questioned, I think there cannot be a more authentic explication than the preceding extracts from Isaiah and Daniel. And having the unanimous attestation of two inspired penmen, we may venture to abide by such authority, even in opposition to some respectable names. In the verse immediately foregoing, the essential holiness of the Redeemer is displayed under the character of the Righteous Branch. The sanctity which he will impart to his subjects, is intimated by his "executing judgment and justice in the earth." In the clause we have quoted, his imputed righteousness is foretold and promised. Thus the several sentences are distinct; the description of the Saviour is complete; and he appears perfectly suited to the exigencies of a wretched world; in their worst estate enslaved to Satan, and in their best falling short of the glory of God. This, therefore, I take to be the grand and extensive meaning of the prophet: the righteous Lord; not barely, the Lord who infuses righteousness into sinful souls; but the incarnate Jehovah, Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. Whose mediatorial righteousness is, by an act of gracious imputation, ours, to all the intents of justification and salvation;

* לְחַבֵּא, I think, must signify more than to *publish* or *preach*. Had this been all that the angel was commissioned to declare, לְבַשֵּׂף, or לְאָרֹר, would probably have been used. The word implies such a *bringing in*, (the original is the same), as when Abel brought his sacrifice to the altar for the divine acceptance, and Esau brought his venison into the chamber for his father's use, Gen. iv. 4; xvii. 31.

ours, as much ours, for these blessed purposes, as if we had wrought it each in his own person.

Foreseeing and contemplating these blessings, the enraptured Zechariah cries out, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter Jerusalem; behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass," Ze ix. 9. He addresses himself to Zion and Jerusalem, to the ecclesiastical and civil community. Persons of all ranks, and of every character, are exhorted to "rejoice;" to rejoice "greatly;" nay, to express the joy of their hearts by loud hallelujahs and triumphant exclamations. What is the cause of this general delight? what can fill both church and state with such high satisfaction? "Thy King cometh unto thee;" even that glorious King who rules in heaven, and rules in the heart; whose service is freedom, and whose laws are love. "He is just;" divinely righteous in his nature, and cometh to fulfil all righteousness in thy stead. "Having salvation;" here procuring salvation for his people; deliverance from sin, from death and hell from every evil thou deservest, and from every misery thou fearest. That none may be discouraged, and none deterred, from applying to this Prince of Peace, he is, amidst all the honours of his sovereignty, "lowly;" does not abhor the basest, will not despise the meanest; to the poor his gospel is preached; and for the guilty his benefits are intended. As an emblem, a proof of this most amiable and condescending goodness, "he will ride," not like the conquerors of old, in a triumphal chariot, or on a richly-caparisoned steed, but upon the most mean and despicable of all animals, "an ass;" and what is still more despicable, on a rude undisciplined "colt, the" wayward "foal of an ass*."

And now, since my Theron confesses himself to be miserable, and poor and naked; since the eyes of his understanding are enlightened to see the impurity of his heart, the imperfection of his righteousness, and that he is himself a lost undone sinner; what advice, cheering and salutary, shall I suggest? O! let him listen to an Adviser infinitely more able and compassionate; listen to him who is the Ancient of Days, and the wisdom of God. "I counsel thee," says the blessed Jesus, "to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed."

* Because profane scoffers have presumed to ridicule this very remarkable incident in our Lord's life, some interpreters have endeavoured to rescue it from their abusive attempt by observing, "That the eastern asses are much larger and more graceful than ours; the patriarchs and judges thought it no disgrace to ride upon them." This observation has fear, more of false delicacy, than of real truth, or Christian simplicity. In the patriarchal ages, persons of high distinction thought it no dishonour, in their journeys and processions to appear on this animal; but I very much question whether the same fashion subsisted or the same way of thinking prevailed, in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar. See James iii. —Nay, I find that Solomon had four thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and two thousand horsemen; and that horses were brought to him out of Egypt, and divers other countries, 1 Kings iv. 26; x. 28, 29. From this period, it is probable, none but the poor and inferior sort of people rode upon asses. Well, therefore, might the prophet say, "wonder and delight, 'lowly, and riding upon an ass!'"

Was it a mean attitude? I make no scruple to grant it; nay, I make my boast of it. It is for the honour of our Lord's condescension; it is for the utter confusion of worldly pomp and grandeur; and it is for the unspeakable comfort of my sinful soul. They who would dignify this action, any otherwise than from its ever-to-be-admitted abasement, seem to have forgotten the stable and the manger. They who are offended at this circumstance, and ashamed to own their Lord in his deep humiliation, have but very imperfectly learned the apostle's lesson, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ Jesus, my Lord."

Rev. iii. 18. Gold! what can this denote, but all those spiritual treasures which are hid in Christ? which are in measure unsearchable, in value inestimable, in duration eternal. "White raiment!" Surely this must signify the righteousness of our Redeemer, which is all purity, and all perfection; which clothes the soul, as a most suitable and commodious garment; which covers every deformity and every sin; and presents the believer, free from shame and free from blemish, before the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

This, to use the delicate language and amiable images of Isaiah—this doctrine, embraced by a realizing faith, is the only pillow of rest, "wherewith we may cause the weary and heavy laden soul to find repose;" and this is the sovereign cordial prepared by infinite mercy for the refreshment of anxious and desponding transgressors. O! let us not be in the number of those proud and refractory creatures, who, though they infinitely needed, "yet would not hear" the gracious news, Isa. xxviii. 12, nor receive the unspeakable benefit. In this respect, and in this most eminently, is that other saying of the same sublime teacher true, "The Lord of Hosts, shall be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, to the residue of his people," Isa. xxviii. 5. Shall we tear from our temples, or reject with disdain, this unfading and heavenly ornament, in order to substitute a mean and tawdry chaplet of our own?

Let me add a pertinent passage from one of our celebrated dramatic writers, which, if proper in his sense, will be incomparably more so according to our manner of application:

—— It were contemning,
With impious self-sufficient arrogance,
This bounty of our God, not to accept,
With every mark of honour, such a gift.

I might proceed to urge this expostulation of the poet, as I might easily have multiplied my quotations from holy writ. But, studious of brevity, I leave both, without further enlargement, to your own meditation. Yet more studious of my friend's happiness, I cannot conclude without wishing him an interest, a clear and established interest, in this everlasting righteousness of Christ. For so, and so only, can he have "everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace."—I am, my dear Theron, inviolably yours,

ASPASIO.

P. S.—Opposite to the room in which I write, is a most agreeable prospect of the gardens and the fields; these, covered with herbage and loaded with corn; those adorned with flowers and abounding with esculents; all appearing with so florid and so beautiful an aspect, that they really seem, in conformity to the Psalmist's description, even to "laugh and sing." Let me just observe, that all these fine scenes, all these rich productions, sprung—from what? From the dissolution of the respective seeds. The seeds planted by the gardener, and the grain sowed by the husbandman, first perished in the ground, and then the copious increase arose.

Much in the same manner a true faith in Christ and his righteousness arises—from what? From the ruins of self-sufficiency, and the death of personal excellency. Let me therefore entreat my Theron still to take the diary for his counsellor; still to keep an eye on the depravity of his nature and the miscarriages of his life. The more clearly we see, the more depl.

we feel our guilt and our misery, the more highly shall we value the obedience of our blessed Surety. In such a heart faith will flourish as a rose, and lift up its head like a cedar in Lebanon. To such a soul the great Redeemer's righteousness will be welcome, as waters to the thirsty soil, or as rivers in the sandy desert.

LETTER V.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,—Give me leave to relate an uncommon accident which happened a little while ago in this neighbourhood, and of which I myself was a spectator. The day was the Sabbath; the place appropriated to divine worship was the scene of this remarkable affair.

A boy came running into the church breathless and trembling. He told, but in a low voice, those who stood near, that a press-gang* was advancing to besiege the doors, and arrest the sailors. An alarm was immediately taken. The seamen, with much hurry, and no less anxiety, began to shift for themselves. The rest of the congregation, perceiving an unusual stir, were struck with surprise. A whisper of inquiry ran from seat to seat, which increased by degrees into a confused murmur. No one could inform his neighbour, therefore every one was left to solve the appearance from the suggestions of a timorous imagination. Some suspected the town was on fire: some were apprehensive of an invasion from the Spaniards: others looked up, and looked round, to see if the walls were not giving way, and the roof falling upon their heads. In a few moments the consternation became general. The men stood like statues, in silent amazement, and unavailing perplexity. The women shrieked aloud; fell into fits; sunk to the ground in a swoon. Nothing was seen but wild disorder; nothing heard but tumultuous clamour. Drowned was the preacher's voice. Had he spoke in thunder, his message would scarce have been regarded. To have gone on with his work amidst such a prodigious ferment, had been like arguing with a whirlwind, or talking to a tempest.

This brought to my mind that great tremendous day, when the heavens will pass away, when the earth will be dissolved, and all its inhabitants receive their final doom. If at such incidents of very inferior dread our hearts are ready to fail, what unknown and inconceivable astonishment must seize the guilty conscience, when the hand of the Almighty shall open those unparalleled scenes of wonder, desolation, and horror! when the trumpet shall sound—the dead arise—the world be in flames—the Judge on the throne—and all mankind at the bar!

“The trumpet shall sound,” 1 Cor. xv. 52, says the prophetic teacher. And how startling, how stupendous the summons! Nothing equal to it, nothing like it, was ever heard through all the regions of the universe, or all the revolutions of time. When conflicting armies have discharged the bel-lowing artillery of war, or when victorious armies have shouted for joy of

* The reader, it is hoped, will excuse whatever may appear low, or savour of the plebeian, in any of these circumstances. If Aspasio had set himself to invent the description of a panic, he would probably have formed it upon some more raised and dignified incident. But as this was a real matter of fact, which lately happened in one of our sea-port towns, truth, even in a plain dress, may possibly be no less acceptable than fiction tricked up with the most splendid embellishments.

the conquest, the seas and shores have rung, the mountains and plains have echoed. But the shout of the archangel and the trump of God will resound from pole to pole; will pierce the centre, and shake the pillars of heaven. Stronger, stranger still! it will penetrate even the deepest recesses of the tomb. It will pour its amazing thunder into all the abodes of silence. The dead, the very dead, shall hear.

When the trumpet has sounded, "the dead shall arise." In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the graves open, the monumental piles are cleft asunder, and the nations under ground start into day. What an immense harvest of men and women, springing up from the caverns of the earth, and the depths of the sea! Stand awhile, my soul, and consider the wonderful spectacle. Adam formed in Paradise, and the babe born but yesterday; the earliest ages, and latest generations, meet upon the same level. Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and Barbarians, people of all climes and languages, unite in the promiscuous throng. Here those vast armies, which like swarms of locusts, covered countries, which with an irresistible sweep overrun empires—here they all appear, and here they are all lost—lost like the small drop of a bucket, when plunged into the unfathomable and boundless ocean.—O the multitudes! the multitudes which these eyes shall survey, when God "callethe the heavens from above, and the earth, that he may judge his people." What shame must flush the guilty cheek! what anguish wound the polluted breast! to have all their filthy practices, and infamous tempers, exposed before this innumerable crowd of witnesses!—Fly, my Theron; and fly, my soul; instantly let us fly, earnestly let us fly, to the purifying blood of Jesus; that all our sins may be blotted out; that we may be found "unblamable and unreprouable" in the presence of the assembled world, and, what is infinitely more to be revered, in the sight of the omnipotent God.

When the swarm issues, the hive will burn: there is no more need of this habitable globe. The elect have fought the good fight, and finished their course: the wicked have been tried and found incorrigible. The important drama is ended, every actor has performed his part; now, therefore, the scenes are taken down, and the stage demolished. "Wo be to the earth, and to the works thereof!" Its streams are turned into pitch, its dust into brimstone, and the breath of the Almighty, like a torrent of fire, enkindles the whole. See! see how the conflagration rages, spreads, prevails over all! The forests are in a blaze, and the mountains are wrapt in flame. Cities, kingdoms, continents, sink in the burning deluge. London, Britain, Europe, are no more. Through all the receptacles of water, through all the tracts of land, through the whole extent of air, nothing is discernible but one vast, prodigious, fiery ruin.—Where now are the treasures of the covetous? where the possessions of the mighty? where the delights of the voluptuary? How wise, how happy are they, whose portion is lodged in heavenly mansions! Their "inheritance is incorruptible and undefiled;" such as the last fire cannot reach, nor the dissolution of nature impair.

But see! the azure vault cleaves; the expanse of heaven is rolled back like a scroll; and the Judge, the Judge appears! "He cometh," cries a mighty seraph, the herald of his approach, "he cometh to judge the world in righteousness, and minister true Judgment unto the people!" He cometh, not as formerly in the habit of a servant, but clad with uncreated glory, and magnificently attended with the armies of heaven. Angels and archangels

stand before him, and ten thousand times ten thousand of those celestial spirits minister unto him. Behold him, ye faithful followers of the Lamb and wonder and love! This is he who bore all your iniquities on the ignominious cross: this is he who fulfilled all righteousness for the justification of your persons.—Behold him, ye despisers of his grace, and wonder, and perish! This is he whose merciful overtures you have contemned, and of whose precious blood you have trampled.

The great white throne, Rev. xx. 11, beyond description august and formidable, is erected. The King of heaven, the Lord of glory, takes his seat on the dreadful tribunal. Mercy on his right hand displays the olive-branch of peace, and holds forth the crown of righteousness: Justice on his left poises the impartial scale, and unsheathes the sword of vengeance: while wisdom and holiness, brighter than ten thousand suns, beam in his divine aspect. What are all the preceding events to this new scene of dignity and awe? The peals of thunder, sounding in the archangel's trumpet; the blaze of a burning world, and the strong convulsions of expiring nature; the unnumbered myriads of human creatures, starting into instantaneous existence, and thronging the astonished skies; all these seem familiar incidents, compared with the appearance of the incarnate Jehovah. Amazement, more than amazement, is all around. Terror and glory unite in their extremes. From the sight of his majestic eye, from the insupportable splendours of his face, the earth itself, and the very "heavens, flee away," Rev. xx. 11. How then, O how shall the ungodly stand! stand in his angry presence, and draw near to this consuming fire!

Yet draw near they must, and take their trial, their decisive trial, at his righteous bar. Every action comes under examination; for each idle word they must give account. Not so much as a secret thought escapes this exact scrutiny.—How shall the criminals, the impenitent criminals, either conceal their guilt or elude the sentence? They have to do with a sagacity too keen to be deceived, with a power too strong to be resisted, and (O terrible, terrible consideration!) with a severity of most just displeasure, that will never relent, never be entreated more. What ghastly despair lowers on their pale looks! What racking agonies rend their distracted hearts! The bloody axe and the torturing wheel are ease, are down, compared with their prodigious woe. And (O holy God! wonderful in thy doings! fearful in thy judgments!) even this prodigious woe is the gentlest of visitations, compared with that indignation and wrath which are hanging over their guilty heads, which are even now falling on all the sons of rebellion, which will plunge them deep in aggravated and endless destruction.

And is there a last day? and must there come
A sure, a fix'd irrevocable doom?

Surely then, to use the words of a pious prelate*, it should be "the main care of our lives and deaths, what shall give us peace and acceptance before the dreadful tribunal of God. What but righteousness? What righteousness, or whose? Ours, or Christ's? Ours, in the inherent graces wrought in us, in the holy works wrought by us? or Christ's, in his most perfect obedience and meritorious satisfaction, wrought for us, and applied to us? The popish faction is for the former: we protestants are for the latter. God is as

* Bishop Hall.

direct on our side as his word can make him; every-where blazoning the defects of our own righteousness, every-where extolling the perfect obedience of our Redeemer's."

"Behold!" says the everlasting King, "I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone; a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth, shall not make haste," Isa. xxviii. 16. As this text contains so noble a display of our Saviour's consummate ability for his great work; as it is admirably calculated to preserve the mind from distressing fears, and to settle it in a steady tranquillity; you will give me leave to touch it cursorily with my pen, just as I should descant upon it in conversation, was I now sitting in one of your agreeable arbours, and enjoying your more agreeable company.

How beautiful the gradation! how lively the description! and how very important the practical improvement; or, I might say, the inscription, which is engraven on this wonderful stone—"Behold!" Intended to rouse and fix our most attentive regard. The God of heaven speaks. He speaks, and every syllable is balm, every sentence is rich with consolation. If ever, therefore, we have ears to hear, let it be to this Speaker, and on this occasion.

"A stone."—Every thing else is sliding sand, is yielding air, is a breaking bubble. Wealth will prove a vain shadow, honour an empty breath, pleasure a delusory dream, our own righteousness a spider's web. If on these we rely, disappointment must ensue, and shame be inevitable. Nothing but Christ, nothing but Christ, can stably support our spiritual interests, and realise our expectations of true happiness. And, blessed be the divine goodness! he is, for this purpose, not a stone only, but

"A tried stone."—Tried, in the days of his humanity, by all the vehemence of temptations, and all the weight of afflictions; yet, like gold from the furnace, rendered more shining and illustrious by the fiery scrutiny. Tried, under the capacity of a Saviour, by millions and millions of depraved, wretched, ruined creatures, who have always found him perfectly able, and as perfectly willing, to expiate the most enormous guilt—to deliver from the most inveterate corruptions—and save, to the very uttermost, all that come unto God through him.

"A corner-stone."—Which not only sustains, but unites the edifice, incorporating both Jews and Gentiles, believers of various languages, and manifold denominations—here, in one harmonious bond of brotherly love—hereafter, in one common participation of eternal joy.

"A precious stone."—More precious than rubies; the pearl of great price, and the desire of all nations.—Precious, with regard to the divine dignity of his person, and the unequalled excellency of his mediatorial offices. In these and in all respects, greater than Jonah—wiser than Solomon—fairer than all the children of men—chiefest among ten thousand—and to the awakened sinner, or enlightened believer, "altogether lovely," Cant. v. 16.

"A sure foundation."—Such as no pressure can shake; equal, more than equal, to every weight, even to sin, the heaviest load in the world. "The Rock of Ages:" such as never has failed, never will fail, those humble penitents who cast their burden upon the Lord Redeemer! who roll * all their

* *Roll*.—This is the exact sense of the sacred phrase, כָּל־אֶבֶן יָרוּחַ, Psalm xxii. 8; xxxvii. 5; Prov. xvi. 3. I am not ignorant, that some people have presumed to censure, and many have been shy of using, this bold and vigorous metaphor: which nevertheless

guilt, and fix their whole hopes, on this immoveable basis ; or, as the original words may be rendered, “ a foundation ! a foundation ! ” There is a full spirit of vehemency in the sentence, thus understood. It speaks the language of exultation, and expresses an important discovery. That which mankind infinitely want ; that which multitudes seek, and find not ; it is here ! it is here ! This, this is the foundation for their pardon, their peace, their eternal felicity.

“ Whosoever believeth,” though pressed with adversities, or surrounded by dangers, “ shall not make haste : ” but, free from tumultuous and perplexing thoughts, preserved from rash and precipitate steps, he shall possess his soul in patience ; knowing the sufficiency of those merits, and the fidelity of the grace, on which he has reposed his confidence, shall quietly, and without perturbation, wait for an expected end. And not only amidst the perilous and disastrous changes of life, but even in the day of everlasting judgment, such persons shall stand with boldness. They shall look up to the grand Artificer—look round on all the solemnity of his appearance—look forward to the unalterable sentence—and neither feel anxiety, nor fear damnation.

Such, in that day of terrors, shall be seen
To face the thunders with a godlike mien.
The planets drop ; their thoughts are fix'd above :
The centre shakes ; their hearts disdain to move.

This portion of Scripture, which I hope will both delight and edify my friend, recalls our attention to the subject of my present letter—to those propitiatory sufferings, and that justifying righteousness, which, imputed to sinners, are the ground of their comfort, and the bulwark of their security. And what say the writers of the New Testament upon this point ? they, whose understandings were opened by the “ Wonderful Counsellor,” to discern the meaning of the ancient oracles ; who must therefore be the most competent judges of their true import, and our surest guides in settling their sense. Do they patronise our interpretation of the prophets ? do they set their seal to the authenticity of our doctrine ?

St. Luke, in his ecclesiastical history, has preserved this weighty declaration of the apostles : “ We believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they,” Acts xv. 11. Here the thing is implied,—St. Peter, in the introduction to one of his theological epistles, thus addresses his happy correspondents : “ To them that have obtained like precious faith, in the righteousness * of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ,” 2 Pet. i. 1. Here the point is expressly asserted.—With equal clearness is the doctrine delivered by Matthew the evangelist : “ Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” Matt. vi. 33. What can the “ kingdom of God ” mean ? An experience of the power, and an enjoyment of the privileges of the gospel. What are we to understand by “ his righteousness ? ” Surely, the righteousness which is worthy of this grand appellation, and peculiar to that blessed institution.

Would we learn what is the great and distinguishing peculiarity of the appears to me of all others, the most just, the most significant, and therefore the most truly beautiful.

* The phrase is *δικαιοσυνη* in *δικαιοσυνη*. If we retain the common translation, it proves another very momentous truth : that “ the righteousness of our God, even of our Saviour Jesus Christ,” is the one meritorious procuring cause of all spiritual blessings ; of faith, as well as of fruition ; of grace, as well as of glory.

gospel? St. Paul informs us: "Therein the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith." As this text leads us into the Epistle to the Romans; as this epistle is, for the propriety of its method, as well as for the importance of its doctrine, singularly excellent; it may not be amiss to examine its structure, and inquire into its design.

The apostle writes to a promiscuous people, who had been converted partly from Judaism, partly from Gentilism. His aim is, to strike at the very root of their former errors respectively—to turn them wholly to the superabundant grace of God, and establish them solely on the all-sufficient merits of Christ.

The Gentiles were, for the most part, grossly ignorant of God, and stupidly negligent of invisible interests. If any among them had a sense of religion, their virtues, they imagined, were meritorious of all that the Deity could bestow. If they fell into sin, sin they supposed might easily be obliterated by repentance, or compensated by a train of sacrifices. A few of their judicious sages taught, that the most probable means of securing the divine favour, was a sincere reformation of life.

The Jews, it is well known, placed a mighty dependence on their affinity to Abraham; and the covenant made with their fathers; on their adherence to the letter of the moral law, and their scrupulous performance of ceremonial institutions:—Gentiles and Jews agreeing in this mistake, that they looked for the pardon of guilt, and the attainment of happiness, from some services done, or some qualities acquired, by themselves.

Against these errors the zealous apostle draws his pen. He enters the lists like a true champion of Christ, in the most spirited and heroic manner imaginable: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ;" for, however it may be deemed foolishness by the polite Greeks, or prove a stumbling-block to the carnal Jews, "it is the power of God unto salvation," Rom. i. 16; it is the grand instrument which he has ordained for this blessed purpose, and which he will certainly crown with the desired success. Whence has the gospel this very peculiar power? Because therein a righteousness is revealed—a true and perfect righteousness, which obliterates all guilt, and furnishes a solid title to eternal life. What righteousness is this? The righteousness, not of man, but of God; which was promised by God in the Scriptures, was introduced by God in the person of his Son, and, on account of its consummate excellency, is both acceptable and available in his sight.

This righteousness is "from faith to faith," Rom. i. 17; held forth, as it were, by a promising God, and apprehended by a believing soul—who first gives a firm assent to the gospel, then cordially accepts its blessings—from a conviction that the doctrine is true, passes to a persuasion that the privileges are his own. When this is effected, a foundation is laid for all happiness; a principle is wrought, to produce all holiness.

But why was it requisite that such a righteousness should be provided by God, and revealed in the gospel? Because both Gentile and Jew neither possessed, nor could attain, any righteousness of their own; and this righteousness, though so absolutely necessary for their fallen state, was infinitely remote from all human apprehensions. The latter assertion is self-evident; the former is particularly demonstrated.—First, with regard to the Gentiles: the generality of whom were abandoned to the most scandalous excesses; and they who had escaped the grosser pollutions, fell short in the duties of

natural religion. Next, with regard to the Jews: many of whom lived in open violation of the external commandment; and not one of them acted up to the internal purity required by the Mosaic precepts. From which premises this conclusion is deduced—that each of them had transgressed even their own rule of action; that all of them were, on this account, utterly inexcusable: therefore, by the works of the law, whether dictated by reason or delivered by Moses, “no mortal can be justified,” Rom. iii. 20, in the sight of God.

Lest any should imagine, that righteousness may be obtained, if not by a conformity to the law of nature, or the law of Moses, yet by an observation of evangelical ordinances, he farther declares, that sinners are justified freely, without any regard to their own endowments, “through the redemption, the complete redemption, of Jesus Christ,” Rom. iii. 24; after such a manner, as may lay them low in humiliation, even while it exalts them to the kingdom of heaven; after such a manner, as may bring life and salvation to their souls, while all the glory reverts to God the Father, and his son Jesus Christ.

In the prosecution of this very momentous subject, our sacred disputant removes an objection which is as common as it is plausible. “Do we make void the law through faith?” Do we render it a vain institution, such as never has been, never will be, fulfilled? “God forbid!” This were a flagrant dishonour to the divine Legislator and his holy commandments; such as we would abhor, rather than countenance. On the contrary, “we establish the law*,” Rom. iii. 31; not only as we receive it for a rule of life, but as we expect no salvation without a proper, without a perfect conformity to its injunctions. How can this be effected? by qualifying its sense, and softening it into an easier system? This were to vacate the law; to deprive it of its honours, and hinder it from attaining the due end, either of obedience or condemnation. No, but we establish the law, by believing in that great Mediator who has obeyed its every precept, sustained its whole penalty, and satisfied all its requirements in their utmost extent.

Farther to corroborate his scheme, he proves it from the renowned examples of Abraham and David. The instance of Abraham is so clear, that it wants no comment: any paraphrase would rather obscure than illustrate it. The other, derived from the testimony of the Psalmist, may admit the commentator's tool; yet not to hammer it into a new form, but only to clear away the rubbish; to rescue it from misrepresentation, and place it in a true light. “Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sins are covered: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin,” Rom. iv. 6, 7. Here is imputation asserted—the imputation of righteousness—of righteousness without works; without any respect to, or any co-operation from any kind of human works. It is a blessing vouchsafed to the ungodly; not founded on a freedom from sin, but procuring a remission of its guilt.

Some, I know, have attempted to resolve all the force of this passage into an argument for the sameness of pardon and justification; whereas the apostle undertakes to prove, not that forgiveness and justification are identically the same, but that both are absolutely free. To maintain which

* An incontestable proof, that the apostle treats of the moral law.

position he argues : " This doctrine is as true as it is comfortable. It agrees with the experience, and has received the attestation of David. When he speaks of the blessed and happy man, he describes him, not as an innocent, but guilty person ; not as having any claim to the divine favour, on account of deserving performances, or recommending properties ; but as owing all his acceptance to that sovereign grace, which forgives iniquities and blots out sin. Such is the case with regard to that evangelical justification which we preach ; even as it is in the manner of its vouchsafement perfectly similar to the blessedness celebrated by the Psalmist." The apostle's eye is not so directly upon the nature of the privilege, as upon the freeness with which it is granted : nor can any infer from the tenor of his reasoning, that to be forgiven is the same as to be justified ; only that both are acts of infinitely rich mercy, designed for sinners, promised to sinners, bestowed on sinners ; who have nothing, nothing of their own, either to boast or to plead.

In the fifth chapter, from verse the twelfth to the end, the sacred penman points out the cause, and explains the method of justification : of which this is the sum—That Christ, in pursuance of the covenant of grace, fulfilled all righteousness in the stead of his people : that this righteousness being performed for them, is imputed to them : that by virtue of this gracious imputation they are absolved from guilt and entitled to bliss ; as thoroughly absolved, and as fully entitled, as if in their own persons they had undergone the expiatory sufferings and yielded the meritorious obedience. Lest it should seem strange in the opinion of a Jew or a Gentile, to hear of being justified by the righteousness of another, the wary apostle urges a parallel case, recorded in the Jewish revelation, but ratified by universal experience* ; namely, our being condemned for the unrighteousness of another. In this respect, he observes, Adam was a type of our Lord, or " a figure of him that was to come," Rom. v. 14. The relation is the same, but the effect is happily reversed. Adam the head of his posterity ; Christ the head of his people. Adam's sin was imputed to all his natural descendants ; Christ's righteousness is imputed to all his spiritual offspring. Adam's transgression brought death into the world, and all our woe ; Christ's obedience brings life, and all our happiness †. The whole closes with this very obvious and no less weighty inference : " Therefore, 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 of life," Rom. v. 18.

I do not recollect any other similitude which the apostle so minutely sifts, and so copiously unfolds. He explains it, he applies it, he resumes it, he dwells upon it, and scarcely knows how to desist from it. I am sure you will not blame me if I imitate the sacred author, revert to the subject, and quote another passage from the same paragraph. " Much more shall they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, reign in life by one, Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 17. Here I am ready to think the inspired writer puts a difference between the two grand blessings purchased by Emmanuel—remission and righteousness. For who are the persons which receive abundance of grace ? They, I apprehend, that, having sinned much,

* By the pains and death which infants in every nation endure ; which are unquestionably punishments, and to which they are doomed by the righteous judgment of God.

† " As the sin of Adam," says Bengelius, " without any concurrence of the sins which we ourselves respectively commit, occasioned our ruin ; so the righteousness of Christ, abstracted from all consideration of our personal obedience, procures our recovery.

have much forgiven. Who are the persons which receive abundance of the gift of righteousness? They that, having in their own conduct wrought out none which will bear the test of God's impartial scrutiny, have one placed to their account which the all-seeing eye of Heaven approves. However, whether the distinction I have ventured to propose be fanciful or substantial, of this I am persuaded, that the gift of righteousness* must signify a righteousness not originally their own, but another's; not what they themselves have acquired, but what was fulfilled by their Surety; and is, by an act of heavenly indulgence, consigned over to them. Accordingly it is represented, not as a work, but as a gift; and those who are interested in it are styled, not workers, but receivers.

I should but faintly copy the apostolic example, if I did not once again avail myself of this important topic. Suffer me, therefore, to transcribe one more verse from this admirable chapter. "As by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners; so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous," Rom. v. 19. The "disobedience of one," is the disobedience of Adam, his actual transgression of the divine law. Hereby "many were made sinners;" sinners in such a sense as to become obnoxious unto condemnation and death. All this, I think, is, from the apostle's own words, indisputable. And if we would preserve the propriety of his antithesis, or the force of his reasoning, we must allow, that the obedience of one is the obedience of Christ; his actual and complete performance of the whole law. Hereby "many are made righteous;" righteous in such a sense, as to be released from condemnation, and vested with a title to life eternal. How clear and easy is this meaning! how just and regular this argumentation! What subtlety of evasion must be used, to give a different turn to the instructive text!

This is the most consistent sense in which I can understand Rom. viii. 5. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit:" That the righteousness required by the holy, but broken law, might be thoroughly accomplished; accomplished by our public Representative, and in our human nature; so as to be deemed, in point of legal estimation, fulfilled for us and by us†. This, I say, is most consistent with the tenor of St. Paul's arguing, and with the exact import of his language.—With the tenor of his arguing; for he undertakes to demonstrate the impossibility of our justification by any personal conformity to the law; whereas, if we could satisfy its penalty, and obey its precepts, or, in other words, fulfil its righteousness, this impossibility would cease.—With the exact import of his language; for the original phrase denotes, not a sincere, but a complete obedience; not what we are enabled to perform, but what the law has a right to demand; which, every one must acknowledge, is not fulfilled in any mere man since the fall, but was fulfilled by Jesus Christ, for our good and in our stead. This interpretation preserves

* I cannot but wonder at the assertion of a late writer, who roundly declares, "That there is not one word in this whole chapter relating to the antecedent obedience of Christ's life, but expressing only his passive obedience." Must then this group of expressions—δικαιοσύνη—δικαιώματα—πραξίαι—be confined barely to the sufferings of our Lord? To put such a sense upon the words of the apostle, is, according to my apprehension, not to acquiesce in the sacred oracles, but to make them speak our own meaning.

† It is remarked by a judicious critic, and very valuable expositor, that the preposition *in* sometimes signifies *by* or *for*; and is so translated, Matth. v. 34; Heb. i. 1. See Dr. Guyse's Exposition of the New Testament.

the sentences distinct, and makes a very natural introduction for the following clause, where the persons interested in this privilege are described by their fruits, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" implying, that justification and sanctification are, like the ever-corresponding motion of our eyes, inseparable concomitants; and we vainly pretend to the former, if we continue destitute of the latter.

We have produced positive proofs of our doctrine: we have heard an apostle declaring the assured happiness and complete justification of true believers: let us now observe the same sagacious judge of men and things discovering the danger of those self-justiciaries who reject the Redeemer's righteousness.

He is filled with the darkest apprehensions concerning his brethren the Jews. He is impressed with melancholy presages relating to their eternal state, Rom. ix. 2. What was the cause of this tender solicitude? Had they cast off all religion, and given themselves over to gross immoralities? On the contrary, they were worshippers of the true God; and had, in their way, not only a regard, but a zeal for his honour, Rom. x. 2. Wherefore, then, does this compassionate father in Israel feel the same trembling uneasiness for his kinsmen according to the flesh, as Eli felt for the endangered ark? Himself assigns the reason: because "they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. Not knowing that immaculate holiness, which the perfect nature, and equally perfect law of the most high God require; being wilfully ignorant of that consummate obedience which an incarnate God vouchsafed to perform for the justification of his people; they sedulously, but foolishly, endeavoured to establish their own righteousness; to make it, scanty and decrepit as it was, the basis of their hopes. Thus were they resting their everlasting all on a bottom, not precarious only, but irreparably ruinous. A boundless eternity the fabric! yet they build (wonder, O heavens!) on the foam of the waters! and (which added stubbornness to their folly) in avowed contempt of that strong and sure foundation laid by God's own hand in Zion. For this the good apostle was afflicted with "great heaviness and continual sorrow." For this he made the prophet's pathetic complaint his own, "O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might bewail day and night," (Jer. ix. 1,) the incorrigible perverseness of my people! "For my people have committed two evils:" in not thankfully submitting to the righteousness of God, "they have forsaken the fountain of living waters;" in attempting to establish their own righteousness, "they have hewed themselves out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jer. ii. 13.

Having showed their fatal error, he strengthens his representation, by displaying the happy success of the Gentiles. "What shall we say then?" This, however improbable it may seem, we confidently affirm, "That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness," who had no knowledge of it, and no concern about it; even they "have attained to righteousness." Strange assertion! how is this possible? Doubtless, the righteousness which they attained could not be any personal righteousness. Of this they were total destitute. Instead of practising moral virtues, or religious duties, they were immersed in sensuality, and abandoned to idolatry. It must therefore

the evangelical, the imputed righteousness, "even that which was wrought by Christ, and is received by faith."

Israel, in the mean time, the nominal Israel, who with great pretensions to sanctity, and many costly oblations, "followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." Attained! they have done nothing less. They are fallen vastly short of it; they are pronounced guilty by it; they stand condemned before it*. Wherefore did they so grossly mistake, and so grievously miscarry? Because they forsook the good old way, in which Abraham, David, and their pious ancestors walked. They adopted a new scheme; and would fain have substituted their own, instead of relying on a Saviour's righteousness. They sought for justification, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law," Rom. ix. 30, 31, 32. A method which their fathers knew not; which their God ordained not; and which proved, as it always will prove, not only abortive but destructive. At this stone they stumbled; on this rock they split. Let their ruin be a way-mark, and the apostle's observation a light-house to my Theron.

Our zealous writer tries every expedient: he mingles hope with terror. Having pointed out the rock on which the Israelites suffered shipwreck, he directs us to the haven in which sinners may cast anchor and find safety. He gives us a fine descriptive view of the Christian's complete happiness. He opens (if I may continue the metaphor) a free and ample port for perishing souls; not formed by a neck of land or a ridge of mountains, but by a magnificent chain of spiritual blessings; all proceeding from, and terminating in, that precious corner-stone, Jesus Christ, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30:—"wisdom," to enlighten our ignorant minds; "righteousness †," to justify our guilty persons; "sanctification †," to renew our depraved natures; "redemption," to rescue us from all evil, and render us, both in body and soul, perfectly and eternally happy. Let it be remarked, how carefully our inspired writer sets aside all sufficiency, as well as all merit in man. He represents the whole of our salvation, both in its procurement and application, as a work of freest grace. Christ is, and not we ourselves, the author of this glorious restoration, the cause of this great felicity. He is made all this unto us. How? Not by our own resolution and strength; but of God, by the agency of his mighty power and blessed Spirit. He shows us the all-sufficient fulness of Christ. He brings us by ardent longings to Christ. He implants us into Christ, and makes us partakers of his merits.

In the process of the same epistle, the sacred penman enumerates the constituent parts of that great salvation which the Son of God has procured for ruined sinners. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11. "Ye are washed;" cleansed from the filth, and discharged from the guilt of all your iniquities. "Ye are sanctified;" delivered from the death

* This, I apprehend, is the purport of the apostle's speech, when he tells us, that his countrymen "had not attained unto the law of righteousness." He uses the figure *justification*, and means more than he expresses: somewhat like the prophet in the close of this chapter, who assures the believers in Jesus, "They shall not be ashamed," that is, they shall be "encouraged, emboldened, established."

† "Righteousness and sanctification;" the former imputed, the latter inherent. This preserves a distinction between the noble articles, and assigns to each a grand share in the economy of salvation.

of sin, and endued with a living principle of holiness. "Ye are justified;" restored to a state of acceptance with God, and invested with a title to eternal glory. All which inestimable prerogatives are conferred upon the true believer, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;" in consideration of his atoning blood and meritorious righteousness. "By the Spirit of our God;" through the efficacy of his operation, revealing Christ, and working faith in the heart.

Some gentlemen have talked of a new remedial law; whereas the apostle declares, "that Christ is the end of the" old, the unalterable, the Mosaic law, for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. x. 4. Follow the course of a river, it will constantly lead you to the ocean. Trace the reins of the body, they invariably unite in the heart. Mark likewise the tendency of the law; it no less constantly and invariably conducts you to Christ, as the centre of its views, and the consummation of its demands. The moral law aims at discovering our guilt, and demonstrating our inexpressible need of a Saviour. The ceremonial points him out as suffering in our stead, making reconciliation for iniquity, and purging away every defilement with his blood. They both direct the wretched transgressor to renounce himself, and fly to the Redeemer, who alone has paid that perfect obedience, and brought in that everlasting righteousness, which the sinner wants, and the law exacts; who is therefore the only proper accomplishment of the one, and the only suitable supply for the other.

What is the grand design of the whole Scriptures? St. Paul, displaying their sublime origin, and enumerating the gracious purposes they are intended to serve, writes thus: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine," to declare and establish religious truth; "for reproof," to convince of sin, and to refute error; "for * correction," or renovation of the heart, and reformation of the life; "for instruction in righteousness," in that righteousness which could never have been learned from any other book, and in which alone sinful men may appear with comfort before their God.

We have seen the principal scope of the law, and the leading design of the Scriptures; let us add one inquiry more. What is the chief office of the Spirit? If all these coincide, and uniformly terminate in the imputed righteousness of Christ, we have a confirmation of its reality and excellence, great as man can desire, I had almost said, great as God can impart. What says our Lord upon this point? "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged," John xvi. 8—11. Is it possible for words to be more weighty and comprehensive? Here is a summary of Christian faith and of Christian holiness. Not that superficial holiness which is patched up of devotional forms, and goes no farther than external performances; but that which is vital, and springs from the heart; consists in power, not in mere profession; whose

* 2 Tim. iii. 16. Προς καταβολήν.

† "He shall convince," seems to be the most proper translation of ελεγχει, as it implies the sure success which attends the operation of the divine Spirit. Man may reprove, and no conviction ensue, whereas that Almighty Agent not only reproveth, but reproveth with power; so as to determine the judgment and sway the affections.

praise, if not of men who are smitten with pompous outsides, is sure to be of God, who distinguishes the things which are excellent.

“He shall convince the world of sin,” of original and actual sin, the sin of their nature, as well as the sin of their life; the sin of their best deeds, no less than their criminal commissions and blameable omissions. Above all, of their sinning against the sovereign, the only remedy by unbelief; “because they believe not on me.” He shall convince “of righteousness;” of the divine Redeemer’s righteousness, which the foregoing conviction must render peculiarly welcome; convince them, that it was wrought out in behalf of disobedient and defective mortals; that it is absolutely perfect, and sufficient to justify even the most ungodly. Of all which an incontestable proof is given, by his resurrection from the dead, his triumphant ascension into heaven, and sitting at the right hand of his Father: “Because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.” He shall convince “of judgment.” Those who are humbled under a sense of guilt, and justified through an imputed righteousness, shall be taught by happy experience, that the prince of this world is condemned and dethroned in their hearts; that their souls are rescued from the tyranny of Satan, are made victorious over their corruptions, and restored to the liberty, the glorious liberty, of the children of God.

You wonder, perhaps, that I have not strengthened my cause by any quotation from the epistle to the Galatians. What I design, my dear Theron, is not to accumulate, but to select arguments. However, that I may not disappoint an expectation so reasonable, I proceed to lay before you a very nervous passage from that masterly piece of sacred controversy. Only let me just observe, that the epistle was written to persons who had embraced Christianity, and professed an affiance in Christ; but would fain have joined circumcision, would fain have superadded their own religious duties to the merits of their Saviour, in order to constitute, at least, some part of their justifying righteousness. Against which error, the vigilant and indefatigable assertor of “the truth as it is in Jesus,” remonstrates: “We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law*, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ: that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,” Gal. ii. 15, 16.

“We, who are Jews by nature,” the descendants of Abraham, and God’s peculiar people, have the tables of his law, and the ordinances of his worship; we who in point of privileges are greatly superior to the Gentile nations, and have all possible advantages for establishing (if such a thing were practicable) a righteousness of our own; what have we done? “We have believed on Jesus Christ;” we have renounced ourselves; disclaimed whatever is our own, and depended wholly on the righteousness of Christ. For what end? That by this “faith in Christ,” which receives his righteousness; pleads his righteousness; and presents nothing but his righteousness before the throne, “we might be justified.” What motive has induced us to this practice? A

* To express his ardent concern for the truth and purity of the gospel, the works of the law are mentioned no less than three times by the apostle, and as often excluded from the affair of justification. The faith of Christ likewise is thrice inculcated, and as often asserted to be the only method of becoming righteous before God.

firm persuasion, that by "the works of the law," by sincere obedience, or personal holiness, "no man living has been, and no man living can be justified before God."

Are you tired, Theron? have I fatigued your attention instead of convincing your judgment? I will not harbour such a suspicion. It is pleasing to converse with those who have travelled into foreign countries, and seen the wonders of creation. We hearken to their narratives with delight. Every new adventure whets our curiosity, rather than palls our appetite. Must it not then afford a more sublime satisfaction to be entertained with the discourses of a person, who had not, indeed, sailed round the world, but made a journey to the third heavens? who had been admitted into the paradise of God, and heard things of infinite importance and unutterable dignity? This was the privilege of that incomparable man, whose observations and discoveries I have been presenting to my friend. And I promise myself he will not complain of weariness, if I enrich my epistle with one or two more of those glorious truths.

"God hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might" not be put into a capacity of acquiring a righteousness of our own, but "be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21. In this text the double imputation of our sin to Christ, and of Christ's righteousness to us, is most emphatically taught and most charmingly contrasted. Most emphatically taught: for we are said, not barely to be righteous, but to be made righteousness itself; and not righteousness only, but (which is the utmost that language can reach) the righteousness of God. Most charmingly contrasted: for one cannot but ask, In what manner Christ was made sin? In the very same manner we are made righteousness. Christ knew no actual sin; yet, upon his mediatorial interposition on our behalf, he was treated by divine justice as a sinful person. We likewise are destitute of all legal righteousness, yet, upon our receiving Christ, and believing in his name, we are regarded by the divine Majesty as righteous creatures. This, therefore, cannot, in either case, be intrinsically, but must be, in both instances, imputatively. Gracious, divinely gracious exchange! pregnant with amazing goodness, and rich with inestimable benefits. The incessant triumph of the strong, and sovereign consolation of the weak believer.

Cease your exultation, cries one, and come down from your altitudes. The term used in this verse denotes, not so properly sin, as an offering for sin.— This is a mere supposal, which I may as reasonably deny as another affirm; since the word occurs much more frequently in the former signification than in the latter; and since, by giving it the latter signification in the passage before us, we very much impair, if not totally destroy, the apostle's beautiful antithesis.

However, not to contend, but to allow the remark; I borrow my reply from a brave old champion* for the truths of the gospel: "This text," says he, "invincibly proveth, that we are not justified in God's sight by righteousness inherent in us, but by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us through faith." After which he adds, what I make my answer to the objection, "That Christ was made sin for us, because he was a sacrifice for sin, we

* See Dr. Fulk's annotation on the place, in that valuable piece of ancient controversy and criticism, "The Examination of the Rhemish Testament." Would the young student be taught to discover the very sinews of Popery, and be enabled to give an effectual blow to that complication of errors, I scarce know a treatise better calculated for the purpose.

must confess ; but therefore was he a sacrifice for sin, because our sin was imputed to him, and punished in him." The poor delinquents under the Mosaic dispensation, who brought their sin-offering to the altar of the Lord, were directed to lay their hand on the devoted beast ; signifying, by this usage, the transferring of guilt from the offerer to the sacrifice. Conformably to the import of this ceremony, Christ assumed our demerit ; like a true particular victim, suffered the punishment which we had deserved ; and which, without such a commutation, we must have undergone. So that our Lord, being made a sin-offering for us, does by no means invalidate, but very much confirm our doctrine. It necessarily implies the translation of our iniquity to his person, and, on the principles of analogy, must infer the imputation of his righteousness to our souls.

One passage more permit me to transcribe into my paper, and, at the same time, to wish that it may be written on both our hearts ; written not with ink and pen, no, nor with the point of a diamond, but with the finger of the living God. " Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him ; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith," Phil. iii. 8, 9.

Be pleased to observe, that in this confession of faith, and with reference to the case of justification, the apostle renounces all those acts of supposed righteousness which were antecedent to his conversion. Nor does he repudiate them only, but all those more excellent services by which he was so eminently distinguished, even after his attachment to Christ, and engagement in the Christian ministry. As though he should say, " The privilege of being a Hebrew by birth ; the prerogative of being a Pharisee by profession ; together with a behaviour exemplary, and a reputation unblameable ; all these, which were once reckoned my highest gain, as soon as I became acquainted with the glorious perfections of Christ, ' I counted* loss for him.' And now, though I have been a disciple many years ; have walked in all holy conversation and godliness ; have endured for my divine Master's name tribulations above measure ; have laboured more abundantly, and more successfully, than all the apostles ; yet even these, and all other attainments, of what kind, or of what date soever, I count† but loss, for the transcendent excellency of Christ Jesus my Lord. ' Yea, doubtless‡ ;' it is my deliberate and steadfast resolution ; what I have most seriously adopted, and do publicly avow, that specious as all these acquirements may seem, and valuable as they may be in other respects, I reckon them but dung, that I may win Christ§. They fade into nothing, they dwindle into less than nothing, if set in competition with his matchless obedience ; and were they to supersede my application to his merits, or weaken my reliance on his mediation, they would be, not contemptible only, but injurious—irreparably injurious—loss itself."

* *ἠγούμαι*, " I have counted."

† *ἠγούμαι* relates to the present time, and comprehends present attainments, " I do count."—Not some, or the greatest part, but " all things."

‡ Perhaps *ἀλλὰ μύθως* may be translated, " but truly." As if he had said, " But why should I mention any more particulars ? In truth, I count all things," &c.

§ *Δια Χριστου—δια το υπερισχον—ια Χριστου κερδηναι*—plainly imply this comparative or relative sense.

You will ask, If he rejects all his own righteousness, on what are his hopes fixed? On a foundation, extensive as the obedience of the Redeemer's life and death, unshaken as the dignity of his eternal power and Godhead. They are fixed on "the righteousness which is of God;" the righteousness which God the Father, in unsearchable wisdom, provided; and which God the Son, in unutterable goodness, wrought. Do you inquire how he came to be invested with his righteousness? The answer is ready and satisfactory. It was by the application of the divine Spirit, and the instrumentality of faith. Lest any should imagine that this faith might be substituted instead of his own obedience to the law, he puts an apparent difference between the righteousness which justifies, and the faith by which it is received; not the righteousness which consists in, but is "through, the faith of Christ." To show the great importance of this distinction, how earnestly he insisted upon it as a preacher, how much it tended to his consolation as a Christian, he repeats the sentiment, he re-inculcates the doctrine, "the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Will you now, Theron, or shall I, poor unprofitable creatures, presume to rely on any performances or any accomplishments of our own, when that distinguished saint,—a perfect prodigy of gifts, of graces, and of zeal,—indefatigable in labours, unconquerable by afflictions, and of whose usefulness there is neither measure nor end;—when he denies himself in every view, depreciates all, disavows all, and makes mention of nothing but the incomparable righteousness of his "obedient, dying, interceding Saviour?"

What shall I say more? Shall I attempt to play the rhetorician, and borrow the insinuating arts of persuasion? This, after all the cogent testimonies produced, and all the great authorities urged, would be a needless parade. When our pen is a sunbeam, there is but little occasion to dip it in oil.

Instead of such an attempt, give me leave to make a frank and honest confession. I would conceal nothing from my friend. He should have a sash to my breast, throw it up at his pleasure, and see all that passes within. Though I never had any temptation to that pernicious set of errors, which passes under the character of Socinianism, yet I had many searchings of heart, and much solicitous inquiry, how far we are indebted to Christ's active righteousness. Thoroughly persuaded, that "other foundation can no man lay, save that which is laid, even Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11; and that "there is no other name given under heaven, whereby men can be saved," Acts iv. 12; yet, whether we were not to confine our believing regards to a dying Saviour, was matter of considerable doubt. At first, I was inclined to acquiesce in the affirmative. After long consideration and many prayers, my faith fixed upon the whole of Christ's mediatorial undertaking; which begun in his spontaneous submission to the law, was carried on through all his meritorious life, and issued in his atoning death. This is now the basis of my confidence, and the bulwark of my happiness. Hither I fly; here I rest; as the dove, after her wearisome and fruitless roving, returned to Noah, and rested in the ark.

This scheme first recommended itself to my affections, as making the most ample provision for the security and repose of a guilty conscience; which, when alarmed by the accusations of sin, is very apprehensive of its condition; and will not be comforted, till every scruple is satisfied, and all the obstructions to its peace are removed. Thus I reasoned with myself: "Though

there is undoubtedly something to be said for the other side of the question, yet this is evidently the safest method. And in an affair of infinite consequence, who would not prefer the safest expedient? Should the righteousness of Jesus Christ be indispensably requisite as a wedding-garment, what will they do, when the great immortal King appears, who have refused to accept it? whereas, should it not prove so absolutely necessary, yet such a dependence can never obstruct our salvation. It can never be charged upon us as an article of contumacy or perverseness, that we thought too meanly of our own, too magnificently of our Lord's obedience. So that, let the die turn either way, we are exposed to no hazard. This scheme takes in all that the other systems comprehend, and abundantly more. In this I find no defect, no flaw, no shadow of insufficiency. It is somewhat like the perfect cube, which, wherever it may be thrown, or however it may fall, is sure to settle upon its base. Supposing, therefore, the important beam should hang in equilibrium with respect to argument, these circumstances cast into the scale, may very justly turn the balance."

Upon a more attentive examination of the subject I perceived, that this is the doctrine of our national church; is enforced by the attestation of our ablest divines; and has been in all ages the consolation of the most eminent saints: that it is the genuine sense of Scripture, and not some inferior or subordinate point, incidentally touched upon by the inspired writers, but the sum and substance of their heavenly message; that which constitutes the vitals of their system, and is the very soul of their religion. On which account, the whole gospel is denominated from it, and styled "the ministration of righteousness." I was farther convinced, that this way of salvation magnifies, beyond compare, the divine law; is no less honourable to all the divine attributes; and exhibits the ever-blessed Mediator in the most illustrious and the most delightful view. All these considerations, under the influence of the eternal Spirit, have determined my judgment, and established my faith. So that, I trust, neither the subtillies of wit, nor the sneers of ridicule, nor any other artifice, shall ever be able to separate me from the grace and righteousness which are in Jesus Christ.

Let me now, by way of conclusion, review that awful subject which introduced the letter. Let me suppose the Judge, who "is at the door," actually come; the great and terrible day, which is hastening forward, really commenced. Hark! the trumpet sounds the universal summons. The living are struck with a death-like astonishment; the dead start from their silent abodes. See, the whole earth takes fire; the sun is turned into darkness, and the stars fall from their spheres! Behold, the Lord Jesus comes with myriads of his angels! The judgment is set, and the books are opened.

Observe those exemplary Christians, whose sentiments I have been collecting. They renounce themselves, and rely on their glorious Surety. Methinks I hear them say, each as they quit their beds of dust, "I will go forth from the grave in thy strength, O blessed Jesus; and at the decisive tribunal will make mention of thy righteousness only." At the same time will you, Theron, or shall I, stand forth and declare, before the innumerable multitude of anxious sinners and adoring scraphs, "Let those pusillanimous creatures fly for refuge to their Saviour's righteousness: we will confide in works, in accomplishments of our own. We are the men who have personally kept the divine law, and want no supposititious obedience from another. Let

the eye that glances through immensity, and penetrates the recesses of the heart; let that holy and omniscient eye examine our temper, and sift our conduct. We are bold to risk our souls, and all their immortal interests, on the issue of such a scrutiny?"

Perhaps your mind is impressed with this solemn scene, and your thoughts recoil at such daring presumption. If so, it will be proper for me to withdraw, and leave you to your own meditations. At such moments to intrude on your company, would render me the troublesome and officious, rather than the respectful and affectionate

ASPASIO.

LETTER VI.—THERON TO ASPASIO.

DEAR ASPASIO,—The last evening was one of the finest I ever saw. According to my custom, I made an excursion into the open fields, and wanted nothing to complete the satisfaction but my friend's company. I could not but observe how much your improving conversation heightened the charms of nature. When religion applied philosophy, everything was instructive as well as pleasing. Not a breeze swept over the plains, to clear the sky and cool the air, but it tended also to disperse our doubts, and enliven our faith in the supreme all-sufficient Good. Not a cloud tinged the firmament with radiant colours, or amused the sight with romantic shapes, but we beheld a picture of the present world—of its fading acquisitions and fantastic joys—in the mimic forms and the transitory scene. Even the weakest of the insect tribe, that skim the air in sportive silence, addressed us with the strongest incitements, and gave us the loudest calls to be active in our day, and useful in our generation. They cried, at least when you lent them your tongue,

Such is vain life, an idle flight of days,
A still delusive round of sickly joys;
A scene of little cares, and trifling passions,
If not ennobled by the deeds of virtue.

How often, at the approach of sober eve, have we stole along the cloisters of a sequestered bower, attentive to the tale of some querulous current, that seemed to be struck with horror at the awful gloom, and complained with heavier murmurs, as it passed under the blackening shades, and along the root-obstructed channel! Or else, far from the babbling brook, and softly treading the grassy path, we listened to the nightingale's song; while every gale held its breath, and all the leaves forbore their motion, that they might neither drown nor interrupt the melodious wo. From both which pensive strains, you endeavoured to temper and chastise the exuberant gaiety of my spirits. You convinced me that true joy is a serious thing; is the child of sedate thought, not the spawn of intemperate mirth; nursed, not by the sallies of dissolute merriment, but by the exercise of serene contemplation.

Sometimes, at the gladsome return of morn, we have ascended an airy eminence, and hailed the new-born day; and followed, with our delighted eye, the mazes of some glittering stream. Here, rushing with impetuous fury from the mountain's side, foaming over the rifted rocks, and roaring down the craggy steep; impatient, as it were, to get free from such rugged paths, and mingle with the beauties of the lower vale: there, slackening its headlong

career, and smoothing its eddies into an even flow: while, deep embosomed in the verdant mead, it glides through the cherished and smiling herbage; sometimes lost amidst closing willows; sometimes emerging with fresh beauty from the leafy covert; always roving with an air of amorous complacency as though it would caress the fringed banks and flowery glebe. Reminded by this watery monitor, of that constancy and vigour with which the affections should move towards the great centre of happiness, Christ Jesus; and that determined ardour with which we should break through the entanglements of temptation, and obstacles of the world, in order to reach our ever lasting rest; and of the mighty difference between the turbulent, the frothy, the precipitate gratifications of vice, and the calm, the substantial, the permanent delights of religion.

Or else, with eager view, we have surveyed the extensive prospect, and wandered over all the magnificence of things—an endless variety of graceful objects and delightful scenes! each soliciting our chief regard; every one worthy of our whole attention; all conspiring to touch the heart with mingled transport of wonder, of gratitude, and of joy. So that we have returned from our rural expedition, not as the spendthrift from the gaming table, cursing his stars, and raving at his ill luck, gulled of his money, and the derided dupe of sharpers; not as the libertine from the house of wantonness, surfeited with the rank debauch, dogged by shame, goaded by remorse, with a thousand recent poisons tingling in his veins. But we returned as ships of commerce from the golden continent, or the spicy islands, with new accessions of sublime improvement and solid pleasure; with a deeper veneration for the Almighty Creator; with a warmer sense of his unspeakable favours; and with a more inflamed desire “to know him now by faith, and after this life to have the fruition of his glorious Godhead.”

Sometimes, with an agreeable relaxation, we have transferred our cares from the welfare of the nation to the flourishing of the farm; and instead of enacting regulations for the civil community, we have planned schemes for the cultivation of our ground and the prosperity of our cattle. Instead of attending to the course of fleets and the destination of armies, we have directed the plough where to rend the grassy turf, or taught the honeysuckle to wind round the arbour, and the jessamine to climb upon the wall. Instead of interposing our friendly offices to reconcile contending kingdoms, we have formed a treaty of coalition between the stranger scion and the adopting tree; and by the remarkable melioration of the ensuing fruit, demonstrated (would contending empires regard the precedent!) what advantages flow from pacific measures and an amicable union. Instead of unravelling the labyrinths of state, and tracing the finesses of foreign courts, we have made ourselves acquainted with the politics of Nature, and observed how wonderfully, how mysteriously, that great projectress acts. In this place she rears a vast trunk, and unfolds a multiplicity of branches from one small berry. She qualifies, by her amazing operations, a few contemptible acorns, that were formerly carried in a child's lap, to bear the British thunder round the globe, and secure to our island the sovereignty of the ocean. In another place she produces, from a dry grain, first the green blade, then the turgid ear, afterwards the full-grown and ripened corn in the ear, Mark iv. 28; repaying, with exact punctuality, and with lavish usury, the husbandman's toil and the husbandman's loan; causing, by a

most surprising resurrection, the death of one seed to be fruitful in the birth of hundreds.

But I forget your caution, Aspasio; forget how kindly you have checked me, when I have been haranguing upon, I know not what, powers and works of nature; whereas it is God who "worketh hitherto," John v. 17; who to this day exerts, and to the end of time will exert that secret but unremitting energy, which is the life of this majestic system, and the cause of all its stupendous operations. Let this show you how much I want my guide, my philosopher, and friend. Without his prompting aid, my genius is dull, my reflections are awkward, and my religious improvements jejune; somewhat like the bungling imitations of the tool, compared with the masterly effects of vegetation. However, I will proceed; yet not from any view of informing my Aspasio, but only to draw a bill upon his pen, and lay him under an obligation to enrich me with another letter upon the grand and excellent subject of his last.

Art is dim-sighted in her plans, and defective even in her most elaborate essays. But Nature, or rather Nature's sublime Author, is indeed a designer, and "a workman that need not be ashamed," 2 Tim. ii. 15. His eye strikes out ten thousand elegant models, and his touch executes all with inimitable perfection. What an admirable specimen is here of the divine skill, and of the divine goodness! This terraqueous globe is intended not only for a place of habitation, but for a storehouse of conveniencies. If we examine the several apartments of our great abode, if we take a general inventory of our common goods, we shall find the utmost reason to be charmed with the displays, both of nice economy, and of boundless profusion.

Observe the surface of this universal message. The ground, coarse as it may seem, and trodden by every foot, is nevertheless the laboratory where the most exquisite operations are performed; the shop, if I may so speak, where the finest manufactures are wrought. Though a multitude of generations have always been accommodated, and though a multitude of nations are daily supplied by its liberalities, it still continues unexhausted—is a resource that never fails, a magazine never to be drained.

The unevenness of the ground, far from being a blemish or a defect, heightens its beauty, and augments its usefulness. Here it is scooped into deep and sheltered vales, almost constantly covered with a spontaneous growth of verdure, which, all tender and succulent, composes an easy couch, and yields the most agreeable fodder for the various tribes of cattle. There it is extended into a wide, open, champaign country, which, annually replenished with the husbandman's seed, shoots into a copious harvest; a harvest, not only of that principal wheat which is the staff of our life and strengthens our heart, but of the "appointed barley," Isa. xxviii. 25, and various other sorts of grain, which yield an excellent food for our animals, and either enable them to despatch our drudgery, or else fatten their flesh for our tables.

The furrows, obedient to the will of man, vary their produce. They bring forth a crop of tall, flexile, slender plants*, whose thin filmy coat, dried, attenuated, and skilfully manufactured, transforms itself into some of the most necessary accommodations of life, and genteelest embellishments of society. It is wove into ample volumes of cloth, which, fixed to the mast, give wings to our ships, and waft them to the extremities of the ocean. It

* Flax and hemp.

is twisted into vast lengths of cordage, which add nerves to the crane, and lend sinews to the pulley; or else, adhering to the anchor, they fasten the vessel even on the fluctuating element, and secure its station even amidst driving tempests. It furnishes the duchess with her costly head-dress, and delicately fine ruffles. No less strong than neat, it supplies the ploughman with his coarse frock, and the sailor with his clumsy trousers. Its fibres, artfully arranged by the operations of the loom, cover our tables with a graceful elegance, and surround our bodies with a cherishing warmth. On this the painter spreads the colours which enchant the eye; in this the merchant packs the wares which enrich the world.

Yonder the hills, like a grand amphitheatre, arise. Amphitheatre! All the pompous works of Roman magnificence are less than mole-banks, are mere cockle-shells, compared with those majestic elevations of the earth. Some clad with mantling vines; some crowned with towering cedars; some ragged with mishapen rocks, or yawning with subterraneous dens, whose rough and inaccessible crags, whose hideous and gloomy cavities, are not only a continual refuge for the wild goats, but have often proved an asylum to persecuted merit*, and a safeguard to the most valuable lives.

At a greater distance, the mountains lift their frozen brows, or penetrate the clouds with their aspiring peaks. Their frozen brows arrest the roving, and condense the rarefied vapours. Their caverned bowels collect the dripping treasures, and send them abroad in gradual communications by trickling springs; while their steep sides precipitate the watery stores, rolling them on with such a forcible impulse, that they never intermit their unwearied course till they have swept through the most extensive climes, and regained their native seas.

The vineyard swells into a profusion of clusters, some tinged with the deepest purple, and delicately clouded with azure; some clad with a whitish transparent skin, which shows the tempting kernels lodged in luscious nectar. The vine requires a strong reflection of the sunbeams, and a very large proportion of warmth. How commodiously do the hills and mountains minister to this purpose! May we not call those vast declivities the garden-walls of nature? which, far more effectually than the most costly glasses, or most artful green-houses, concentrate the solar heat, and complete the maturity of the grape, distending it with a liquor of the finest scent, the most agreeable relish, and the most exalted qualities! such as dissipate sadness, and inspire vivacity; such as make glad the heart of man, and most sweetly prompt both his gratitude and his duty to the munificent Giver. I grieve and I blush for my fellow-creatures, that any should abuse this indulgence of Heaven, that any should turn so valuable a gift of God into an instrument of sin—turn the most exhilarating of cordials into poison, madness, and death.

The kitchen-garden presents us with a new train of benefits. In its blooming ornaments, what unaffected beauty! In its culinary productions, what diversified riches! It ripens a multitude of nutrimental esculents, and almost an equal abundance of medicinal herbs; distributing refreshments to the healthy, and administering remedies to the sick. The orchard, all fair and ruddy, and bowing down beneath its own delicious burden, gives us a

* To David from Saul's malice; to Elijah from Jezebel's vengeance; to many of the primitive Christians, from the rage of persecuting emperors: "They wandered in deserts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth," Heb. xi. 38.

fresh demonstration of our Creator's kindness ; regales us first with all the delicacies of summer fruits ; next, with the more lasting succession of autumnal dainties.

What is nature but a series of wonders, and a fund of delights ! That such a variety of fruits, so beautifully coloured, so elegantly shaped, and so charmingly flavoured, should arise from the earth, than which nothing is more insipid, sordid, and despicable ! I am struck with pleasing astonishment at the cause of these fine effects, and no less surprised at the manner of bringing them into existence. I take a walk in my garden, or a turn through my orchard, in the month of December : there stand several logs of wood fastened to the ground : they are erect, indeed, and shapely, but without either sense or motion : no human hand will touch them, no human aid will succour them ; yet in a little time they are beautified with blossoms, they are covered with leaves, and at last are loaded with mellow treasures, with the downy peach and the polished plum, with the musky apricot and the juicy pear, with the cherry and its coral pendants, glowing through lattices of green ;

——— and dark

Beneath her ample leaf, the luscious fig.

I have wondered at the structure of my watch ; wondered more at the description of the silk-mills ; most of all at the account of those prodigious engines invented by Archimedes. But what are all the inventions of all the geometricians and mechanics in the world, compared with these inconceivably nice automata * of nature ! These self-operating machines despatch their business with a punctuality that never mistakes, with a dexterity that cannot be equalled. In spring they clothe themselves with such unstudied, but exquisite finery, as far exceeds the embroidery of the needle, or the labours of the loom. In autumn they present us with such a collation of sweetmeats, and such blandishments of taste, as surpass all that the most critical luxury could prepare, or the most lavish fancy imagine. So that those coarse and senseless logs first decorate the divine creation, then perform the honours of the table.

If, amidst these ordinary productions of the earth, God appears so "great in counsel, and mighty in work," Jer. xxxii. 19, what may we expect to see in the palaces of heaven, in the hierarchies of angels, and in that wonderful Redeemer who is, beyond all other objects, beyond all other manifestations, the "wisdom of God, and the power of God ?" 1 Cor. i. 24.

The forest rears myriads of massy bodies, which, though neither gay with blossoms, nor rich with fruit, supply us with timber of various kinds, and of every desirable quality. But who shall cultivate such huge trees, diffused over so vast a space ? The toil were endless. See, therefore, the all-wise and ever-gracious ordination of Providence. They are so constituted, that they have no need of the spade and the pruning-knife. Nay, the little cares of man would diminish, rather than augment, their dignity and their usefulness. The more they are neglected, the better they thrive, the more wildly grand and magnificent they grow.

When felled by the axe, they are sawed into beams, and sustain the roofs of our houses ; they are fashioned into carriages, and serve for the conveyance

* *Automata*, or self-operating machines : not meant to set aside the superintendency of Providence, but only to exclude the co-operation of man.

of the heaviest loads. Their substance so pliant, that they yield to the chisel of the turner, and are smoothed by the plane of the joiner; are wrought into the nicest diminutions of shape, and compose some of the finest branches of household furniture. Their texture so solid, that they form the most important parts of those mighty engines which, adapting themselves to the play of mechanic powers, despatch more work in a single hour than could otherwise be accomplished in many days. At the same time, their pressure is so light that they float upon the waters, and glide along the surface, almost with as much agility as the finny fry glance through the deep. Thus, while they impart magnificence to architecture, and bestow numberless conveniences on the family, they constitute the very basis of navigation, and give expedition, give being, to commerce.

Amidst the inaccessible depths of the forests, an habitation is assigned for those ravenous beasts, whose appearance would be frightful, and their neighbourhood dangerous to mankind. Here the sternly majestic lion rouses himself from his den, stalks through the midnight shades, and awes the savage herd with his roar. Here the fiery tiger springs upon his prey, and the gloomy bear trains up her whelps. Here the swift leopard ranges, and the grim wolf prowls, and both in quest of murder and blood. Were these horrid animals to dwell in our fields, what havoc would they make? what consternation would they spread? But they voluntarily bury themselves in the deepest recesses of the desert; while the ox, the horse, and the serviceable quadrupeds, live under our inspection, and keep within our call; profiting us as much by their presence, as the others oblige us by their absence.

If at any time those shaggy monsters make an excursion into the habitable world, it is when man retires to his chamber, and sleeps in security. The sun, which invites other creatures abroad, gives them the signal to retreat. "The sun riseth, and they get them away, and lay them down in their dens," Psal. civ. 22. Strange! that the orient light, which is so pleasing to us, should strike such terror on them! should, more effectually than a legion of guards, put them all to flight, and clear the country of those formidable enemies!

If we turn our thoughts to the atmosphere, we find a most curious and exquisite apparatus of air, which, because no object of our sight, is seldom observed, and little regarded; yet is a source of innumerable advantages; and all these advantages (which is almost incredible) are fetched from the very jaws of ruin. My meaning may be obscure, therefore I explain myself.

We live plunged, if I may so speak, in an ocean of air, whose pressure, upon a person of moderate size, is equal to the weight of twenty thousand pounds. Tremendous consideration! Should the ceiling of a room, or the roof of a house, fall upon us with half that force, what destructive effects must ensue! Such a force would infallibly drive the breath from our lungs, or break every bone in our bodies. Yet so admirably has the divine wisdom contrived this aerial fluid, and so nicely counterpoised its dreadful power, that we receive not the slightest hurt—we suffer no manner of inconvenience—we even enjoy the load. Instead of being as a mountain on our loins, it is like wings to our feet, or like sinews to our limbs. Is not this common ordination of Providence, thus considered, somewhat like the miracle of the burning bush, whose tender and combustible substance, though in the midst of flames, was neither consumed nor injured? Exod. iii. 2. Is it not almost

marvellous as the prodigy of the three Hebrew youths, who walked into the fiery furnace without having a hair of their heads singed, or so much as the smell of fire passing on their garments? Dan. iii. 27. Surely we have reason to say unto God, "O! how terrible," yet how beneficent, "art thou thy works!"

The air, though too weak to support our flight, is a thoroughfare for innumerable wings. Here the whole commonwealth of birds take up their abode. Here they lodge and expatiate, beyond the reach of their adversaries. Were they to run upon the earth, they would be exposed to ten thousand dangers, without proper strength to resist them, or sufficient speed to escape them; whereas, by mounting the skies, and "lifting themselves up on high, they are secure from peril; they scorn the horse and his rider," Job xxxix. 18. Some of them perching upon the boughs, others soaring amidst the firmament, entertain us with their notes; which are musical and agreeable when heard at this convenient distance, but would be noisy and importunate if brought nearer to our ears. Here many of those feathered families reside, which afford us a delicious treat; yet give us no trouble, put us to no expense, and, at the moment we want them, are wholly out of our way.

The air, commissioned by its all-bountiful Author, charges itself with the administration of several offices, which are perfectly obliging, and no less serviceable to mankind. Co-operating with our lungs, it ventilates the blood, and refines our fluids. It qualifies and attempers the vital warmth, promotes and exalts the animal secretions. Many days we might live, or even whole months, without the light of the sun, or the glimmering of a star; whereas, if we are deprived, only for a few minutes, of this aerial support, we sink, we faint, we die. The same universal nurse has a considerable share in cherishing the several tribes of plants. It helps to transfuse vegetable vigour into the trunk of the oak, and a blooming gaiety into the spread of the rose.

The air undertakes to convey to our nostrils the extremely subtile effluvia which transpire from odoriferous bodies. Those detached particles are so imperceptibly small, that they would elude the most careful hand, or escape the nicest eye. But this trusty depository receives and escorts the invisible vapours, without losing so much as a single atom: entertaining us, by this means, with the delightful sensations which arise from the fragrance of flowers; and admonishing us, by the transmission of offensive smells, to withdraw from an unwholesome situation, or beware of any pernicious food.

The air, by its undulating motion, conducts to our ear all the diversities of sound, and thereby discharges the duty of a most seasonable and faithful monitor. As I walk across the streets of London, with my eye engaged on other objects, a dray, perhaps, with all its load, is driving down directly upon me; or as I ride along the road, musing and unapprehensive, a chariot and six is whirling on, with a rapid career, at the heels of my horse. The air, like a vigilant friend in pain for my welfare, immediately takes the alarm; and, while the danger is at a considerable distance, despatches a courier to advertise me of the approaching mischief. It even thunders in my ear; and, with a clamorous but kind importunity, urges to be upon my guard, and provide for my safety.

The air wafts to our sense the modulations of music, and the more agreeable entertainments of refined conversation. When Myrtilia strikes the

silver strings, and teaches the willing harpsichord to warble with her Creator's praise; when her sacred sonata warms the heart with devotion, and wins our desire to heaven:—when Cleora tunes her song, or the nightingale imitates her enchanting voice; when she heightens every melodious note with her adored Redeemer's name, and so smooths her charming tones, breathes her rapturous soul, "that God's own ear listens delighted:"—when wisdom takes its seat on Mitio's tongue, and flows, in perspicuous periods and instructive truths, amidst the chosen circle of his acquaintance:—when benevolence, associated with persuasion, dwell on Nicander's lips, and plead the cause of injured innocence or oppressed virtue:—when goodness, leagued with happiness, accompany Eusebius into the pulpit, and reclaim the liberties from the slavery of his vices, disengage the infidel from the fascination of his prejudices, and so affectionately, so pathetically invite the whole audience to partake the unequalled joys of pure religion:—in all these cases, the air conveys every musical variation with the utmost exactness, and delivers the speaker's message with the most punctual fidelity. Whereas, without the internuncio, all would be sullen and unmeaning silence: we should lose both the pleasure and the profit; neither be charmed with the harmonious, nor improved by the articulate accents.

The breezes of the air, when vague and unconfined, are so very gentle that they sport with the most inoffensive wantonness amidst Ophelia's locks, and scarce disadjust a single curl. But, when collected and applied by the contrivance of man, they act with such prodigious force, as is sufficient to whirl round the hugest wheels, though clogged with the most encumbering load; they make the ponderous millstones move as swiftly as the dancer's heel, and the massy beams play as nimbly as the musician's finger.

If we climb, in speculation, the higher regions, we find an endless succession of clouds, fed by evaporations from the ocean. The clouds themselves are of a kind of ocean, suspended in the air with amazing skill. They travel in detached parties, and in the quality of itinerant cisterns, round all the terrestrial globe. They fructify, by proper communications of moisture, the spacious pastures of the wealthy, and gladden, with no less liberal showers, the cottager's little spot. Nay, so condescending is the benignity of their great Proprietor, that they "satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and cause, even in the most uncultivated wilds, the bud of the tender herb to spring forth," Job xxxviii. 27; that the natives of the lonely desert, those savage herds which know no master's stall, may nevertheless experience the care, and rejoice in the bounty of an all-supporting Parent.

How wonderful! that the water, which is much denser and far heavier than the air, should rise into it, make its way through it, and take a station in the very uppermost regions of it! This, one would imagine, were almost as impossible as for the rivers to run back to their source. Yet Providence has contrived a way to render it not only practicable, but matter of continual occurrence.

How wonderful! that pendent lakes should be diffused, or fluent mountains heaped over our heads, and both sustained in the thinnest parts of the atmosphere! We little think of that surprising expedient which, without conduits of stone or vessels of brass, keeps such loads of water in a buoyant state. Job and Elihu considered this, and were struck with holy admiration "Dost thou know the balancing of the clouds?" how such ponderous bodies

made to hang with an even poise, and hover like the lightest down? These are the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge," Job xxvii. 16. "He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud," though nothing is more loose and fluid, becomes, by his almighty order, strong and tenacious as casks of iron: it "is not rent," Job xxvi. 8, under the weight.

When the sluices are opened, and the waters descend, we might reasonably expect that they should burst forth in cataracts, or pour out themselves in torrents. Whereas, instead of such a disorderly and precipitate effusion, which would be infinitely pernicious, they coalesce into globules, and are dispersed in gentle showers. They are often attenuated into the smallness of a hair; they spread themselves, as if they were strained through the pores of the finest watering-pot, and form those "small drops of rain, which the clouds distil upon man abundantly," Job xxxvi. 28. Thus, instead of drowning the earth, and sweeping away its fruits, they cherish universal nature; and in conformity to the practice of their great Master, distribute their humid stores to men, to animals, and vegetables, "as they are able to bear them," Mark iv. 33.

Besides the reservoirs of water, here are cantoned various parties of winds, mild or fierce, gentle or boisterous, furnished with breezy wings, to fan the glowing firmament, and diffuse refreshment on a fainting world; or else fitted to act as an universal besom, and, by sweeping the chambers of the atmosphere, to preserve the fine aerial fluid free from feculencies. Without this wholesome agency of the winds, the air would stagnate, become putrid, and surround us, in the literal sense of the words, "with darkness that might be felt," Exod. x. 21. London, Paris, and all the great cities in the world, instead of being the seats of elegance, would degenerate into sinks of corruption.

At sea, the winds swell the mariner's sails, and speed his course along the watery way; speed it far more effectually than a thousand rowers, heaving to their strokes, and tugging at the oar. By land, they perform the office of an immense seedman, and scatter abroad the reproductive principles of a multitude of plants, which, though the staff of life to many animals, are too small for the management, or too mean for the attention of man. "He bringeth the winds out of his treasures," Psalm cxxxv. 7, is a very just observation, whether it relate to God's absolute and uncontrollable dominion over this most potent meteor, or to its welcome and salutary influence on all the face of nature.

Here are lightnings stationed. Though dormant at present, they are in act to spring, and launch the livid flame, whenever their piercing flash is necessary to destroy the sulphureous vapours, or dislodge any other noxious matter which might be prejudicial to the delicate temperature of the ether, and obscure its more than crystalline transparency.

Above all is situate a radiant and majestic orb, which enlightens the tracts, cheers the inhabitants, and colours all the productions of this habitable globe. While the air, by a singular address in managing the rays, amplifies their usefulness, its reflecting power * augments that heat which is the life of

* The air is a curious cover, which, without oppressing the inhabitants of the earth with any perceivable weight, confines, reflects, and thereby increases the vivifying heat of the sun. The air increases this kindly heat, much in the same manner as our garments by

nature, its refracting power prolongs that splendour which is the beauty of the creation. These emanations of light, though formed of inactive matter, yet (astonishing apparatus of almighty wisdom!) are refined almost to the subtilty of spirit, and are scarce inferior even to thought in speed. They which means they spread themselves, with a kind of instantaneous swiftness through the circumference of a whole hemisphere; and though they pervade wherever they pervade, yet they straiten no place, embarrass no one, encumber nothing.

These give the diamond its brilliancy, and the velvet its gloss; to the cheerful eye is obliged for its lively sparkle, and the modest cheek for its rosy blush. These, attending the judicious touches of the pencil, the drapery flow and the embodied figure arise; bid the countenance wear the calm serenity of thought, or be agitated with the wild transports of passion.—Without this circumstance of colour, we should want all the entertainments of vision, and be at a loss to distinguish one thing from another. We should hesitate to pronounce, and must take a little journey to determine, whether yonder enclosure contains a piece of pasturage, or a plot of arable land. We should question, and could not very expeditiously resolve, whether the next person we meet be a soldier in his regimentals, a swain in his holiday-suit; a bride in her ornaments, or a widow in her weeds. But colour, like a particular livery, characterises the class to which every individual belongs. It is the label which indicates, upon the first inspection, its respective quality. It is the ticket which guides our choice and directs our hand*.

We have cursorily surveyed the upper rooms of our great habitation, and taken a turn along the ground-floor; if we descend into the subterraneous lodgments, the cellars of the stately structure, we shall there also find the most exquisite contrivance acting in concert with the most profuse goodness. Here are various minerals, of sovereign efficacy in medicine; which rectify the vitiated blood, and quicken the languid spirits; which often rekindle the fading bloom in the virgin's complexion, and reinvigorate the enfeebled arm of manhood. Here are beds fraught with metals of the richest value. From hence come the golden treasures, from hence the silver ores, which are the very life of traffic, and circulate through the body politic as the vital fluid through the animal frame; which, in the refining hand of charity, are feet to the lame, and eyes to the blind, and make the widow's heart sing for joy. Here are mines, which yield a metal of meaner aspect, but of a firmer cohesion,

day, or bed-clothes by night, give additional warmth to our bodies. Whereas, when the aerial vestment grows thin, or, to speak more philosophically, when the air becomes less in quantity, and more attenuated in quality, the solar warmth is very sensibly diminished. Travellers on the lofty mountains of America sometimes experience, to their terrible cost, the truth of this observation. Though the climate at the foot of those prodigious hills is hot and sultry, yet on their summits the cold rages with such excessive severity, that it is no unusual calamity for the horse and his rider to be frozen to death. We have, therefore, great reason to bless the Supreme Disposer of things for placing us in the commodious concavity, or rather under the cherishing wings, of an atmosphere.

* This, I believe, suggests the true sense of those noble metaphors used by the divine speaker: "It is turned as clay to the seal, and they stand as a garment:" It, the earth and all its productions, receive from the rising sun both colour and beauty; just as the soft clay and the melting wax receive an elegant impression from the seal.—"They (the morning and the day-spring, mentioned in a preceding verse) stand as a garment;" they act the part of a magnificent and universal clothing, give all visible objects their comely aspect and graceful distinctions; Job xxxviii. 14.

nd of superior usefulness—a metal, that constitutes almost all the imple-
ments with which art executes her various designs. Without the assistance
of iron, trade would be reduced to the lowest ebb; commerce would feel her
wings clipped; and every species of mechanic skill either utterly fail, or
be miserably baffled. Without the assistance of iron, it would be almost
impossible to rear the steady mast, to display the daring canvass, or drop
a faithful anchor. Destitute of this ever-needed commodity, we should
have no plough to furrow the soil, no shuttle to traverse the loom, scarce any
instrument for polite, or any utensil for ordinary life.

Here is an inexhaustible fund of combustible materials, which supply the
whole nation with fuel. These present their ministrations in the kitchen, and
holding themselves as aliment to the flame, render our food both palatable
and healthy. These offer their service at the forge, and with their piercing
heat mollify the most stubborn bars, till they become pliant to the stroke of
the hammer. The coals pour themselves likewise into the glass-houses.
They rage, amidst those astonishing furnaces, with irresistible but useful
violence. They liquefy even the obdurate flint, and make the most rigid
stances far more ductile than the softest clay or the melting wax; make
them obsequious, not only to the lightest touch, but to the impressions of our
very breath.

By this means we are furnished, and from the coarsest ingredients, with
the most curious, beautiful, and serviceable manufacture in the world—a
manufacture, which transmits the light and warmth of the sun into our houses,
yet excludes the annoyance of the rains, and the violence of the winds;
which gives new eyes to decrepit age, and vastly more enlarged views to
philosophy and science; which leads up the astronomer's discernment even to
the satellites of Saturn, and carries down the naturalist's observation as far as
the animalcule race; bringing near what is immensely remote, and making
visible what, to our unassisted sight, would be absolutely imperceptible.

We have also, when the sun withdraws his shining, an expedient to supply
his place. We can create an artificial day in our rooms, and prolong our
studies, or pursue our business, under its cheering influence. With beaming
tapers and ruddy fires, we chase the darkness, and mitigate the cold; we
cherish conversation, and cultivate the social spirit. We render those very
intervals of time some of the most delightful portions of our life, which other-
wise would be a joyless and unimproving void.

These obscure caverns are the birth-place of the most sparkling gems;
which, when nicely polished, and prodigal of their lustre, stand candidates for
a place on the royal crown, or a seat on the virtuous fair-one's breast; and, I
will not with our men of gallantry say, emulate the living brilliancy of her
eyes, but serve as a foil to set off the loveliness and excellency of her accom-
plished mind, and amiable conversation; “whose price,” according to the
unerring estimate of inspiration, is superior to sapphires, “is far above rubies,”
Prov. xxxi. 10.

Here are quarries stocked with stones, inferior in beauty to the jeweller's
ware, but much more eminently beneficial; which, when properly ranged,
and cemented with a tenacious mortar, form the convenient abodes of peace,
and build the strongest fortifications of war; defending us from the incle-
mencies of the weather, and the more formidable assaults of our enemies.
These constitute the arches of the bridge which convey the traveller, with

perfect security, over the deep and rapid stream. These strengthen the arms, the stupendous arms, of the mole; which stretch themselves far into the ocean, break the impetuosity of the surge, and screen the bark from tempestuous seas. These stony treasures are comparatively soft while they continue in the bowels of the earth, but acquire an increasing hardness when exposed to the open air. Was this remarkable peculiarity reversed, what difficulties would attend the labours of the mason? His materials could not be extracted from their bed, nor fashioned for his purpose, without infinite toil. Were the work completed, it could not long withstand the fury of the elements; but insensibly mouldering, or incessantly decaying, would elude the expectations of the owner; perhaps might prove an immature grave, instead of a durable dwelling.

Here are various assortments or vast layers of clay; which, however contemptible in its appearance, is abundantly more advantageous than the rocks of diamond, or the veins of gold. This is moulded, with great expedition and ease, into vessels of any shape, and of almost every size. Some are delicately fine, that they compose the most elegant and ornamental furniture for the tea-table of a princess: others so remarkably cheap, that they are ranged on the shelves, and minister at the meal, of the poorest peasant. All so perfectly neat, that no liquid takes the least taint, nor the nicest palate any disgust, from their cleanly services.

A multiplicity of other valuable stores are locked up, by Providence, in those ample vaults. The key of all is committed to the management of industry, with free permission to produce each particular species, as necessity shall demand, or prudence direct.

Which shall we most admire—the bountiful heart, the liberal hand, or the all-discerning eye of our great Creator? How observable and admirable is his precaution, in removing these useful but cumbrous wares from the superficies, and stowing them, in proper repositories, beneath the ground! Were they scattered over the surface of the soil, the earth would be embarrassed with the enormous load; our roads would be blocked up, and scarce any portion left free for the operations of husbandry. Were they buried extremely deep, or sunk to the centre of the globe, it would cost us immense pains to procure them; or rather, they would be quite inaccessible. Were they uniformly spread into a pavement for nature, the trees could not strike their roots, nor the herbs shoot their blades, but universal sterility must ensue. Whereas, by their present disposition, they furnish us with a magazine of metallic, without causing any diminution of our vegetable, treasures. Fossils of every splendid and serviceable kind enrich the bowels, while bloom and verdure embellish the face of the earth.

So judicious is the arrangement of this grand edifice; so beneficent the destination of its whole furniture*! in which all is regulated with consummate skill, and touched into the highest perfection! All most exactly adapted to the various intentions of Providence, and the manifold exigencies of mankind; to supply every want we can feel, and gratify every wish we can form.

Inso much that the whole system affords a favourite and exalted topic of praise, even to those distinguished beings who “stand on the sea of glass,

* No notice is taken of the ocean, in this little rent-roll of nature's wealth; because a distinct sketch is given of that grand receptacle, and its principal services, in Letter IX.

and have the harps of God in their hands." They lift their voice and
 "Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty," Rev. .
 And is there not reason, my Aspasio would say, infinite reason for us to join
 this triumphant choir, and add gratitude to our wonder, love to our halle-
 lujahs; since all these things are to us, not merely objects of contemplation,
 but sources of accommodation; not only a majestic spectacle, bright with the
 display of our Creator's wisdom, but an inestimable gift, rich with the emanations
 of his goodness? The heaven hath he set before the inhabitants of glory,
 "but the earth hath he given to the children of men," Psal. cxv. 16. Hav-
 ing given us ourselves, given us a world; has he not a right, a most unques-
 tionable and unrivalled right, to make that tender demand, "My son, give
 me thy heart?" Prov. xxiii. 26.

Shall I add another passage, which, viewed with any but the last para-
 graph, will be like the head of gold, eminent and conspicuous, on feet of iron
 and clay? It is taken from the finest philosophical oration that ever was
 made. I never read it but with a glow of delight, and with impressions of
 awe. It is, in short, inimitably spirited and sublime. You think, perhaps,
 I act an impolitic part in being so lavish of my praise; and that the quotation
 must suffer by such an aggrandising introduction. But I am under no appre-
 hensions of this kind: forbear to be delighted, if you can; cease to admire,
 if you can; when you hear Omniscience itself declaring, that on the sight of
 this universal fabric emerging out of nothing, "the morning-stars sang toge-
 ther, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," Job. xxxviii. 7. The system
 was so graceful, so magnificent, and in all respects so exquisitely finished, that
 the most exalted intelligences were charmed, were transported. They knew
 not how to express themselves on the great occasion, but in shouts of exulta-
 tion and songs of praise. Is it possible for imagination to conceive an en-
 comium so just, so high, so beautifully noble?—I am sure, after so much deli-
 cacy and majesty of sentiment, any thing of mine must be intolerably flat;
 unless you will except this one profession, that I am, with the most cordial
 sincerity, my dear Aspasio, inviolably yours,
 THERON.

LETTER VII.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

MY DEAR THERON,—If you write with such a view, and from such a
 motive, as are mentioned in your last, expect no more free-will offerings from
 my pen. In this one instance I shall think it my duty to be covetous. I
 shall act the miser out of principle; and hardly persuade myself to part
 with a single line, till it is become an undeniable debt. I must turn your own
 artifice on yourself, and lay you under a necessity of obliging, entertaining,
 and edifying me by your correspondence.

For, give me leave to assure you, that I am always delighted, and always
 improved by your epistles. They show me a multitude of beauties in the
 creation which I should not otherwise have discerned. They point out the
 infinite power, the unsearchable wisdom, and the charmingly rich goodness
 of the glorious Maker. Such a philosophy turns all nature into a school of
 instruction, and is an excellent handmaid to true religion. It makes every
 object a step, better than a golden step, to raise both our knowledge and our
 affections to the adorable and immortal Cause of all.

While I am roving heedlessly along, your remarks often interpose, like some intelligent faithful monitor who claps his hand upon my breast, and says, "Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God," Job xxxvii. 14. Willingly I obey the admonition: the Christian may, with peculiar complacency, consider this grand magazine of wonders, this copious storehouse of blessings, and all conscious of an interest in Jesus, has a right to call them, "his own," 1 Cor. iii. 2. He may look round upon present things, look forward unto future things, and, trusting in his Saviour's merit, may confidently say,—“Not one only, but both these worlds are mine. By virtue of my Redeemer's righteousness, I possess the necessary accommodations of this life; and on the same unshaken footing, I stand entitled to the inconceivable felicity of a better.”

Surely, then, it will be as pleasing an employ, and as important a search, to examine the validity of our title to future things, as to estimate the value of our present possessions. You have executed the one, let me attempt the other. You have surveyed material nature. It appears to be a fair and stately mansion, void of all defect; and, for the purposes which it is intended to answer, completely finished. Is not our Saviour's obedience, the provision made for indigent and guilty souls, equally rich, and equally perfect? Since this is everlasting and immutable; since the other is transient and perishable; doubtless we may argue with the judicious apostle; If "that which is to be done away," which will soon be consigned over to dissolution "is glorious; much more that which remaineth," whose blessed effects continue to eternal ages, "is glorious," 2 Cor. iii. 11.

We are every one "as an unclean thing," Isa. lxiv. 6. Our very nature is contaminated. Even sanctification, though it destroys the reigning, does not wholly supersede the polluting power of iniquity; so that, whatever graces we exercise, whatever duties we perform, (like the rays of light transmitted through coloured glass, or like generous wine streaming from a defiled cask,) they receive some improper tinge, or contract some debasing taint. But Christ was entirely free from this innate contagion. He had no erroneous apprehensions in his mind, no corrupt bias upon his will, nor any irregular concupiscence in his affections.

Being thus perfectly undefiled, "he did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," 1 Pet. ii. 22. All his thoughts were innocent, all his words were irreproachable, and every action blameless. The most accomplished among the children of men, when surprised in some unguarded moment, or assaulted on some weak side, have been betrayed into error, or hurried into sin. Even Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips, and Aaron, the saint of the Lord, warped to idolatrous practices. They were like some stagnating lake, in which, the dregs being subsided, the waters appear clean; but when stirred by temptation, or agitated by affliction, the sediment rises, and the pool is discoloured. Whereas Christ may be compared to a fountain that is all transparency, and pure to the very bottom; which, however shaken, however disturbed, is nothing but fluid crystal, permanently and invariably clear.

It was a small thing for the blessed Jesus to have no depraved propensity: he was born in a state of consummate rectitude, and adorned with all the beauties of holiness. "Holiness to the Lord" was inscribed, not on the mitre, but on the heart of our great High-priest: therefore he is styled, by the angelic harbinger of his birth, "That Holy Thing," Luke i.

35*. In the prophecy of Zechariah, the dignity of our Redeemer's nature, and the perfection of his obedience, are displayed, by the similitude of a stone, (Zech. iii. 9,) adorned with exquisite engraving, wrought not by Bezaleel or Aholiab, though divinely inspired artists, but by the finger of Jehovah himself; and more highly finished than it is possible for human skill to equal, or human thought to conceive.

The whole tenor of our Lord's conduct was a living exemplification of piety and morality, in their most extensive branches and most amiable forms. Saints of the highest attainments have fallen short of the glory of God; have been far from reaching the exalted standard of his precepts: but Christ failed in no point, came short in no degree. We formerly observed the great sublimity and vast extent of the divine law; from whence appears the extreme difficulty, nay the utter impossibility, of our justification on account of any duties performed by ourselves. How should we rejoice then to contemplate the vicarious righteousness of our condescending and adorable Surety! As the mercy-seat was exactly commensurate to the dimensions of the ark, so did our Lord's obedience most fully quadrate with all and every demand of the divine law. It flowed from those best of principles—supreme love to God, and unfeigned affection to mankind.

From these two capital sources, let us trace our Lord's obedience through some little part of its illustrious progress. His delight in God was conspicuous, even from his early years. The sacred solemnities of the sanctuary were more engaging to his youthful mind, than all the entertainments of a festival. When he entered upon his ministry, whole nights were not too long for his copious devotions. The lonely retirements of the desert, as affording opportunity for undisturbed communion with God, were more desirable to Christ than the applauses of an admiring world.

So ceaseless and transcendent was his love to God, that he never sought any separate pleasure of his own, but always did those things which were pleasing in his Father's sight. His own will was entirely absorbed in the will of the Most High, and "it was his meat and drink," refreshing and delightful as the richest food, or as royal dainties, "to finish the work that was given him to do," John iv. 34.

So entirely devoted to the honour of God, that a zeal for his house, and for the purity of his ordinances, is represented by the evangelical historian as "eating him up," John ii. 17. Like a heavenly flame glowing in his breast, it sometimes fired him with a graceful indignation, sometimes melted him into godly sorrow, and, by exerting itself in a variety of vigorous efforts, consumed his vital spirits.

So active and unremitted was the obedience of the blessed Jesus, that the sun did not enter upon his race with a more constant assiduity, nor despatch his business with greater expedition; and sure I am, that radiant luminary never dispensed beams half so bright, or a thousandth part so beneficial. Short was his span, but how grand and extensive were his services! So grand, that they bring more glory to God than all the administrations of Providence, and all the phenomena of nature. So extensive, that they spread, in their gracious efficacy, to the ends of the earth, and to the closing period of time. Nay, they will diffuse their blessed influence even to the

* Which is spoken in contradistinction to the state of all other births, and implies the universal prevalence of original corruption, this one instance only excepted.

celestial world, and have no other limits of their duration than the ages of eternity.

Most affectionately concerned for the welfare of mankind, he spent his strength, not barely in relieving them when his aid was implored, but in seeking the afflicted, and offering his assistance. With great fatigue, John iv. 6, he travelled to remote cities, and with no less condescension he visited the meanest villages,—that all might have the benefit and comfort of his presence. Though multitudes of miserable objects were brought to him from every quarter, yet he was pleased even to prevent the wishes of the distressed, and “went about doing good.”

He gave sight, and all the agreeable scenes of nature, to the blind; health, and all the choice comforts of life, to the diseased. He expelled malevolent raging demons, and restored, what is more precious than the light of the body, or the vigour of the constitution, the calm possession of the intellectual faculties. What greatly surpassed all the preceding blessings, he released the wretched soul from the dominion of darkness and from the tyranny of sin. He made his followers partakers of a divine nature, and prepared them for a state of never-ending bliss.

Such priceless treasures of wisdom and beneficence flowed from his tongue, and were poured from his hands! How different these triumphs of mercy from the trophies erected by wild ambition in the bloody field! If heathens celebrated those mighty butchers who made cities their slaughter-house, made half the globe their shambles, and measured their merit by the devastations they spread; how should Christians admire this heavenly Benefactor, who rose upon a wretched world “with healing under his wings!” who distributed far and near the unspeakably rich gifts of knowledge and holiness, of temporal happiness and eternal joy!

Nor were these righteous acts his strange work, but his repeated, his hourly, his almost incessant employ. Sometimes we hear him preaching in the temple, or publishing his glad tidings in the synagogues. Sometimes we see him teaching in private houses, or bringing forth the good things of his gospel on the deck of a ship. At other times he takes a mountain for his pulpit; the heavens are his sounding-board; and “all that have ears to hear” are invited to be his audience. Does he lay aside his solemn office, it is only to carry on the same design in a more condescending and familiar manner. If he meets with the Pharisees, he discovers their errors and reproves their vices; he confutes their objections, and (in case they are not absolutely inaccessible to wise counsel) rectifies their mistakes. If he vouchsafes to be present at a feast, he furnishes the richest, incomparably the richest, part of the treat. “Honey and milk are under his tongue,” Cant. iv. 11. He inculcates lowliness of mind on the vain, Luke xiv. 8; he recommends disinterested charity to the selfish, Luke xiv. 12; and promises pardon to the weeping penitent, Luke vii. 48. Is he retired from other company, and surrounded only by his chosen attendants? His conversation is a sermon. Whether he sit in the inner chamber, or travel on the public road, or walk through the corn-fields, he is still prosecuting his great work, training up his disciples for their sacred function, and imparting to them what they may communicate to others. Is he retired from all company? Even then he does not discontinue his labours of love, but adds the fervent intercessions of the night to the charitable toils of the day. Yes;

when all but himself lay sunk in soft repose, this advocate for a guilty world was engaged in an exercise of benevolence, which, though secret and unobserved as the falling dews, was far more beneficial to our best interests than those pearly drops to the languishing herbs.

Most charming and unparalleled benignity! He forgot his daily food, neglected his necessary rest, to spend and be spent for the salvation of mankind. Neither the hardships of continual self-denial, nor the calumnies of venomous tongues, could divert him from pursuing this favourite business. He sought none of your honours, coveted none of your rewards, O ye children of men! What he sought, what he coveted, was to wear out his life in your service, and lay it down for your ransom. This was all his desire, and this, indeed, he desired earnestly. He longed, (beneficent, blessed Being!) he longed for the fatal hour. He severely rebuked one of his disciples who would have dissuaded him from going as a volunteer to the cross. He was even straitened*, under a kind of holy uneasiness, till the dreadful work was accomplished; till he was baptised with the baptism of his sufferings, bathed in blood, and plunged in death.

By this most meritorious obedience and death, what did he not deserve? what did he not procure? He procured those inestimable blessings, the pardon of sin and reconciliation with God; procured them (O love unmerited and unmeasurable!) for prodigals, for traitors, for rebels! To this it is owing that we, who were enemies against God, may call the King of heaven our Father, may have free access to him in all our difficulties, and may hope to reign with him in everlasting glory.

Was ever goodness like this goodness†? were ever blessings comparable to these blessings, or purchased with such a price? Hide, hide your diminished heads, ye little transitory donations of silver and gold. The riches of a thousand mines, bestowed to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, are the most contemptible trifles, if mentioned with the charity of the teaching, the healing, the bleeding Jesus! Kingdoms given away in alms, if viewed with this infinitely noble beneficence, would make just the same figure as a spark from the summer-hearth under the potent and boundless blaze of noon. This is indeed "love that passeth knowledge," Eph. iii. 19.

Amidst all these miracles of power and of love, (any one of which would have entitled him to universal admiration and everlasting honour,) how humble was our Saviour! O humility—virtue dear to the most high God, and peculiarly amiable in men—never didst thou appear in so charming a dress, or so striking a light!

At his birth, not accommodated with a magnificent palace, but lodged in a stable and laid in a manger. As he advanced in years, not attended with a royal equipage, or supplied from a royal revenue, but labouring with his own hands, and earning his bread by the sweat of his brow. When he entered upon his ministerial office, not the least ostentatious parade appeared in the performance of all his wonderful works. So far, so very far from affecting the acclamations of the populace, that he often imposed silence on

* Luke xii. 50. The original word *συνίχεται* seems to express the condition of a person wedged in on every side by a tumultuous throng of people.

† Codrus, it is true, devoted himself to death for the Athenians; and Curtius threw himself into the yawning gulf for the preservation of the Romans. But these died being mere creatures, and guilty creatures; whereas the dying Jesus was perfectly innocent, and supremely glorious.

those unspeakably indebted lips which were ready to overflow with praise, and would fain have been the trumpets of his fame.

Though a voice from heaven proclaimed him the beloved of his almighty Father, he disdained not to own the ignoble character of a carpenter's son, Matth. xiii. 55. Though Prince of the kings of the earth, he condescended to wash the feet of mean fishermen and vile sinners, John xiii. 14. Though proprietor and lord of the whole world, he was content to be more destitute than the fowls of the air, or the foxes of the desert, Matt. viii. 20; more destitute (astonishing abasement!) than the most insignificant and most hated animals.

Grandeur, we find, is apt to beget expectations of superior regard; consequently gives a keener edge to every affront, and renders the mind more tenderly sensible of every disrespect. But our Lord's meekness was as great as his dignity; and that throughout a series of such insufferable provocations, as were equalled by nothing but the sweetness of his forgiving grace.

When rudely affronted, he calmly bore, and kindly overlooked the insult. When contradicted by petulant and presumptuous sinners, he endured, with the utmost serenity of temper, their unreasonable cavils and their obstinate perverseness. When his invitations, his most endearing invitations, were ungratefully and stubbornly rejected, instead of remitting, he renewed them; and, with still warmer affection, importuned his hearers not to forsake their own mercies, not to forego their own felicity. When all the winning arts of persuasion were ineffectual, he added his tears to his slighted entreaties, and lamented as a brother when scornfully repulsed as a teacher.

Though his disciples slept, stupidly slept, when his bitter cries pierced the clouds, and were enough to awaken the very stones into compassion, did their divine but slighted Master resent their unkindness? Did he refuse to admit an excuse for their neglect? yea, he made their excuse, and that the most tender and gracious imaginable: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," Matth. xxvi. 41. When his enemies had nailed him to the cross, as the basest slave and most flagitious malefactor; when they were glutting their malice with his torments and blood, and spared not to revile him even in his last expiring agonies; far, very far from being exasperated, this Hero of heaven repaid all their contempt and barbarity with the most fervent and effectual supplications in their behalf: "Father, forgive them," was his prayer; "for they know not what they do," was his plea; Luke xxiii. 34.

Nor was his resignation less exemplary than his meekness. He went out to meet afflictions, when they came in his Father's name, and commissioned from his Father's hand. He gave, without the least reluctance, his back to the smiters, "and hid not his face from shame and spitting." Though his soul, his very soul, was penetrated with the keenest sensations of anguish, yet no impatient thought discomposed his mind, no murmuring word forced its way from his lips. "Father, not my will, but thine be done," Luke xxii. 42, was his language, when the sorrows of death compassed him, and pains inexpressibly severer than the pains of dissolution, came upon him. "When they gaped upon him with their mouth, and smote him upon the cheek reproachfully: when his face was foul with spitting, and on his eyelids was the shadow of death: when God delivered him to the ungodly, and turned him over into the hands of the wicked: yea, when the Almighty set him for the mark of his arrows, and brake him with breach upon breach: when the

weapons of his wrath cleft his very reins asunder, and poured his gall upon the earth* :—Amidst all this exquisite distress, he sinned not by the least irregular perturbation ; but bowed his head, and dutifully kissed the divine rod, and cordially blessed his very murderers.

Thus did the whole choir of active and passive virtues abound and shine in our Lord ; abound with the richest variety, and shine with the highest lustre, infinitely surpassing that curious assemblage of costly gems which studded the Aaronic breast-plate, Exod xxviii. 17—20, and, as far as earthly things can represent heavenly, typified the splendour and perfection of our Redeemer's righteousness.

In all this, he acted and suffered as God's righteous servant, and as his people's righteous surety. By all this, he fulfilled every jot and tittle of the divine law ; nay, he more than fulfilled, he magnified it. He gave it (if I may apply the most beautiful allusion that ever was used, to the most momentous subject that was ever discussed) "good measure pressed down, and shaken together, and running over," Luke vi. 38.

He defied the most vigilant of his enemies to convince him of sin. A more malignant, a far more sagacious adversary than the Scribes and Pharisees, could detect no blemish in our Lord Jesus. "The prince of this world," that infernal tyrant who had deceived and enslaved all the nations of the earth, "came and found nothing in him," John xiv. 30 ; not the least corruption in his nature, not the least defect in his obedience.

"He hath done all things well," Mark vii. 37, was the general acclamation of mankind ; or, as the words may be rendered, "he hath done all things finely and gracefully," (*καλως*,) with every circumstance that can constitute the propriety and dignity, the utility and beauty of action.

"I have glorified thee on earth," John xvii. 4, was his own profession before the most high God. I have glorified thee in all that I acted, in all that I uttered, in all that I suffered. I have displayed the magnificence of thy majesty, the riches of thy grace, and the honour of all thy attributes. Insomuch, that "whoso seeth me, seeth the Father," John xii. 45 ; whoever is properly acquainted with my person and my work of redemption, sees the invisible and knows the incomprehensible Deity ; sees his venerable, his amiable, his adorable perfections, in the clearest mirror, and in the brightest light.

God also, who is the supreme standard, and unerring Judge of excellency, bore his testimony to our blessed Mediator. He spoke it once, yea twice, and with a voice from heaven. In the constitution of the material world, when it came forth from the Creator's hand, Omniscience itself could discern no flaw. Neither could Justice itself, upon the strictest inquiry, discover any failure in the obedience of our Surety. As, therefore, it was said concerning the works of creation, "They are all very good." Gen. i. 31, so it was said concerning our Saviour, and by the same Almighty Majesty, "In him I am well pleased," Matth. iii. 17.

You took notice, and very justly, how much the productions of nature exceed and eclipse the attempts of human skill. We are pleased with the performances of the painter ; but do they equal the native blush of the rose,

* These tragical images are borrowed from the book of Job, who was an eminent type of a suffering Saviour ; and though they are the very eloquence of woe, they do not exaggerate, they cannot express, that inconceivable anguish which wrung a bloody sweat from our blessed Master's body, and forced from his lips that melancholy exclamation—"My soul is sorrowful—exceeding sorrowful—sorrowful even unto death." See Job xvi.

or the artless glow of a pea-blossom? We are charmed with a fine piece of enamelling; but is it fit to be compared with the natural polish of a thousand shells which are formed in the ocean, or a thousand seeds which spring from the earth? We admire the virtues of the ancient saints, men "that were honoured in their generation, and the glory of their times, Eccl'us. xlv. We admire the meekness of Moses, and the magnanimity of Elijah; the exalted piety of Isaiah, and the enlarged wisdom of Daniel; the active spirit of Joshua, and the passive graces of Jeremiah. But what proportion, put them all together—what proportion do they all bear to his obedience "who is gone into heaven, angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him?" 1 Pet. iii. 22, "who is called the Holy One and the Just," Acts iii. 14, not only by way of emphasis, but by way of exclusion; because a person is worthy of the character, no duties deserve to be mentioned, while Christ and his merits are under consideration.

If then we talk of merit, what merit must there be in such immaculate sanctity of soul, and such exemplary holiness of conduct; such ardent zeal for God, and such compassionate good-will to men; such consummate worthiness and extensive usefulness; such as were utterly unknown before have been absolutely unequalled since, and never will nor can be paralleled throughout all ages!—O my Theron! what is the drop of a bucket to the unfathomable waves of the ocean? What is a grain of sand to the unmeasurable dimensions of the universe? What is an hour or a moment to the endless revolutions of eternity? Such are all human endowments and all human attainments, compared with his righteousness who is "fairer than the children of men," Psal. xlv. 2; "the chiefest among ten thousand," Cant. v. 10, and who receiveth not the Spirit by measure," John iii. 34.

Think not that what I have written is the language of rant. It is a paraphrase, though, I must confess, but a scanty paraphrase, on David's practice and David's faith. "My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day, for I know not the numbers thereof," Psal. lxxi. 15. The glorious righteousness of Christ, and the great salvation obtained thereby, he declares, shall be the chosen, the principal subject of his discourse. And not on a Sabbath only, but on every day of the week, of the year, of his life. And not barely at the stated returns of solemn devotion, but in every social interview, and "all the day long." Why will he thus dwell, perpetually and invariably dwell, on this darling theme? Because "he knew no end thereof." It is impossible to measure the value or exhaust the fulness of these blessings. The righteousness is unspeakable, the salvation is everlasting. To compute the duration of the one, numbers fail; to describe the excellency of the other, words are at a loss.

And is this righteousness designed for us? Is this to be our wedding-dress, this our beautiful array, when we enter the regions of eternity? Unspeakable privilege! Is this what God has provided to supply, more than supply, our loss in Adam! Boundless benignity? Shall we be treated by the Judge of the world as if we had performed all this unsinning and perfect obedience? Well might the prophet cry out, like one lost in astonishment, "How great is his goodness!" Is not your heart enamoured, my dear Theron, with a view of this incomprehensibly rich grace? What so excellent, what so comfortable, what so desirable, as this gift of a Saviour's righteousness? Though delineated by this feeble pen, methinks it has dignity and

glory enough to captivate our hearts and fire our affections; fire them with ardent and inextinguishable desires after a personal interest and propriety in it. O, may the eternal Spirit reveal our Redeemer's righteousness, in all its heavenly beauty and divine lustre! Then, I am sure, we shall esteem it above everything; we shall regard it as the "one thing needful;" we shall count all things, in comparison of it, worthless as chaff and empty as the sand.

To an immortal and fallen soul every thing else is empty as the wind; but we sinners may "suck and be satisfied with this breast of consolation;" and thousands and thousands of millions may "milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of its glory," Isa. lxvi. 11. Here we shall find the doctrine of supererogation no longer a chimera, but a delightful reality. Here indeed is an immense surplusage, an inexhaustible fund of merit, sufficient to enrich a whole world of indigent and miserable creatures; sufficient to make their cup run over with a superabundant fulness of peace and joy, so long as time shall last, and when time shall be no more. For, to use the apostle's weighty argument, "If, by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 17. One offence, committed by one mere man, made all his posterity chargeable with guilt, and liable to death; how much more shall the manifold instances of our divine Redeemer's obedience; of his long, uninterrupted, consummate righteousness;—how much more shall they absolve all his people from condemnation and punishment, and entitle them to the honours and joys of immortality!

Which will appear in a clearer light, if, to the perfection of his obedience, we add the majesty of his person. A proper subject this for some future letter.—In the mean time, let me desire my friend, the friend of my bosom, to contemplate our Lord Jesus under that lovely and august character, "Glorious in holiness," Exod. xv. 11. And, for my part, I will not cease to pray, that a sense of this supereminently grand and precious righteousness may be written on my Theron's heart. On those living tables may it be like figures cut on a rock of solid marble, or inscribed on the bark of a growing tree; be lasting in its duration as the former, and spreading in its influence as the latter. It will then be a sure proof, that his name is written in the book of life; and it shall then be a pleasing pattern for the affection, the gratitude, and the friendship of his

ASPASIO.

P. S.—You give a most astonishing account of the pressure of the atmosphere. Astonishing indeed! that we should be continually surrounded, continually overwhelmed with such a tremendous load, and not be crushed to death; no, nor be sensible of the least weight. This, I think, may serve to represent the state of a sinner unawakened from carnal security. Loads, more than mountainous loads of guilt, are upon his soul, and he perceives not the burden. For this reason, he is under no apprehensions of the vengeance and fiery indignation which he deserves: he has no superlative esteem for the atonement and merits of the Redeemer, which alone can deliver him from the wrath to come. But if once his conscience feels, what his lips perhaps have often repeated, "We do earnestly repent us of these our misdoings, the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is

intolerable ;” then how will he prize such a text, “The Lord laid on Christ the iniquity of us all !” How will he long for an interest in the Lamb of God, “which taketh away the sin of the world !” Then that Jesus who has “finished the transgression, and brought in everlasting righteousness” will be all his salvation, and all his desire.

LETTER VIII.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,—I have just been reading that exquisitely fine piece of sacred history, the life of Joseph : a history filled with surprising incidents and unexpected revolutions ; adorned with the most heroic instances of triumphant virtue, both amidst the allurements of temptation and under the pressures of affliction ; animated with such tender and pathetic, such melting and alarming touches of natural eloquence, as every reader must feel, and every true critic will admire.

When I came to that remarkable injunction with which the general viceroy dismissed his brethren, “Ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt,” Gen. xlv. 13 ;—I paused—I pondered—I was struck. Certainly this was enjoined, not by way of ostentation, but on account of the pleasure which he knew it would yield the good old patriarch. Was it some kind of prompting angel, or the voice of gratitude and devotion, that whispered in my ear, “Should not the children of men likewise tell one another of all the glory *, which their Redeemer possesses in heaven and on earth ? Will not this afford them the sublimest pleasure here, and be a source of the most refined satisfaction for ever and ever ?”

Though I had almost determined to write no more, till you could make a demand upon the foot of value received, willingly I recede from my intended resolution, and obey this pleasing hint. “But who can declare the noble act of the Lord Jesus Christ, or show forth all his praise ?” However, if I may but blisp out his adorable name, and present my friend with a glimpse, or a broken view of his divine perfections, even this will be desirable and delightful ; far more desirable and delightful, than to behold Rome in its magnificence, St Paul in the pulpit, or King Solomon on his throne †.

Let me take the lark for my pattern ; which, as I was lately returning from an evening ramble, attracted my observation. Warbling her Creator’s praise, she mounted in the serene sky. Still she warbled, and still she mounted, as though she meant to carry her tribute of harmony unto the very gates of heaven. Having reached at last her highest elevation, and perceiving herself at an immense distance from the starry mansions, she dropped on a sudden to the earth, and discontinued at once both to sing and to soar. Not the morning appears, and is awakening the world, our little songster returns her throat, and re-exerts her wings. As I have endeavoured, very imper-

* To see the glory of Christ, is the grand blessing which our Lord solicits and demands for his disciples, in his last solemn intercession, John xvii. 24. It is that which will complete the blessedness of heaven, and fill its inhabitants with joy unspeakable and glorious. Surely, then, we should endeavour to anticipate, in some degree, that celestial bliss ; and habituate our souls to this sacred exercise, which will be our business and our reward to endless ages.

† These, if I remember right, are the three things which St. Augustine declared, would do more for all others, most eminently gratify his curiosity.

ly endeavoured, to strike out a shadowy draught of our Lord's complete adience; I would, though unequal to the task, once more resume my pen, and attempt—nothing like a display, but only a faint sketch of his essential deity.

First let me observe, that for some time past we have been visited with the most uncomfortable weather, dewless nights, and sultry days. The firmament is more like a glowing furnace than the region of refreshing rain. The earth lay parched with thirst, and chapped with heat. The meadows were dried of their humidity, and all the flowers hung their fading heads. The streams, which used to flow parallel with the verdant margin, abandoned their banks, and sunk diminished and discoloured to the bottom of their oozy channels. Nature in general seemed to be resigning the "robe of beauty for the garment of heaviness." Drought was in all our borders, and famine were not far behind. Though clouds of dust obscured the air, tarnished the hedges, and almost smothered the traveller, yet not one cloud of fleecy white appeared, to variegate the blue expanse, or give us hopes of a reviving power.

It reminded me of that awful threatening denounced by Moses on a wicked people: "The heaven, that is over thy head, shall be brass, and the earth, that is under thee, shall be iron," Deut. xxviii. 23. It made me apprehensive of that terrible state which the prophet so emphatically describes: "The field is wasted, and the land mourneth. The seed is rotten under the clods, and the harvest perisheth. The garners are laid desolate, and the barns are broken down. The new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth, and all the trees of the field are withered. How do the beasts groan! The herds of cattle are perplexed; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate: because the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness," Joel i. 10, &c. But, blessed be the divine Providence, our fears are vanished, and a most joyful change has taken place. The Lord hath sent a gracious rain upon his inheritance, and refreshed it when it was weary," Psalm lxxviii. 9.

Yesterday in the afternoon, the wind, shifting to the south, roused the dormant clouds, and brought some of those agreeable strangers on its wings. At first they came sailing in small, and thin, and scattered parties. Anon, the flying squadrons advanced in larger detachments, more closely wedged, and more deeply laden; till at last, the great rendezvous completed, they formed into a body of such depth, and extended their wings with such a sweep, as darkened the sun, and overspread the whole hemisphere.

Just at the close of day, the gales which escorted the spongy treasures retired, and consigned their charge to the disposal of a profound calm. Not a breeze shook the most tremulous leaf: not a curl ruffled the smooth expansive lake: all things were still, as in attentive expectation. The earth seemed to gasp after the hovering moisture. Nature, with her suppliant tribes, in expressive pleading silence, solicited the falling fruitfulness, nor pleaded long, nor solicited in vain.

The showers, gentle, soft, and balmy, descend. The vessels of heaven unload their precious freight, and enrich the penurious glebe. Through all the night, the liquid sweetness, incomparably more beneficial than trickling silver, distils, shedding herbs, and fruits, and flowers. Now the sun, mild and refulgent, issues through the portals of the east. Pleased, as it were, to

have emerged from the late aggravated darkness, he looks abroad with peculiar gaiety and the most engaging splendours. He looks through the burdened air, and finds a gladdened world, that wants nothing but all-cheering beams to render its satisfaction complete.

The glory comes!—Hail to thy rising ray,
Great lamp of light, and second source of day!
Who robe the world, each nipping gale remove,
Treat every sense, and beam creating love.—KIRKPATRICK.

At his auspicious approach, the freshened mountains lift their heads, and smile. The garden opens its aromatic stores, and breathes, as from a funeral altar, balm to the smell, and incense to the skies. The little hills, crowded with springing plenty, clap their hands on every side. The moistened plain and irriguous valleys, “laugh and sing; while their waters, lately exhausted again “are made deep, and their rivers run like oil,” Ezek. xxxii. 14.

The whole earth, saturated with the bounty of heaven, and flushed with humid life, wears a thousand marks of gratitude and complacency. Witness by the copious rain, how bright and vivid is the universal verdure! The green carpet below may almost vie with the blue canopy above. The foliage and every tree, burnish their colours, and array themselves in their finest apparel; which, as on a day of general festivity, is delicately decked with gems—gems of unsullied lustre, and of genial moisture. From every part of the grove, the voice of pleasure and of melody resounds; and the officious zephyrs waft the floating harmony, blended with native perfume—gently waft them to the senses, and touch the very soul with transport.

Could there be a more brilliant appearance, or more exuberant demonstrations of joy, even to celebrate the anniversary of nature’s birth? What admirable propriety has the Psalmist compared yonder orient sun, in his sparkling grandeur, to a young exulting “bridegroom,” Psal. xix. 5; comes forth, with every heightened ornament, from his chamber, to show himself in the most distinguished period of his life, and to receive the blessing which consummates his happiness!

This most charming and equally majestic scene recalls to my memory the fine description of the Messiah, extant in the last lovely strains of the Italian swan*: He shall be welcome and salutary “as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth,” to chase the malignant shades, and pour life through the reviving world. He shall be as the light of a morning the most serenely fair, without either storms to disturb, or clouds to obscure his glorious, the delightful dawn. Yea, his appearance shall be “more beautiful,” and his influence “more beneficial†, than the clear shining” of the grand luminary, after a night of settled gloom, and showers of incessant rain, when his beams shed animating warmth, and vital lustre, on the tender green imperaled with dews, and on all the green treasures of the teeming earth.

As we have already contemplated the blessed Jesus under the amiable character of the Just One, the foregoing passage of Scripture represents

* *Israelitish swan*.—In allusion to those well-known lines of the poet,
“*Multa Dircaëum levat aura cygnum.*”

And not without a reference to the popular notion, that the swan sings the most melodious notes in its last moments. “*Fuit hæc facundi senis quasi cygnea vox.*”—TULLY.

† “More beautiful, more beneficial than the clear shining,” 2 Sam. xxiii. 4. They have ventured to translate, or rather to paraphrase, the words כִּנְנֵגָה.

our faith in the more majestic quality of the Lord of Glory; or rather, cites the two grand peculiarities which render him unparalleled in his personal, and all-sufficient in his mediatorial capacity.

Great, unspeakably great and glorious, would our Saviour appear, if we had no other manifestations of his excellency than those which preceded his mysterious incarnation. In the ancient Scriptures, he stands characterised as the supreme object of God's ineffable complacency, vested with a glory prior to the birth of time, or the existence of things; even "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was," John xvii. 5. He is everywhere exhibited as the ultimate desire of all nations, the sole hope of all the kings of the earth, the seed of inestimable and universal importance, in whom all people, nations, and languages, should be blessed. In those royal, or other divine acts and monuments, he is publicly recognised as the Ruler of God's people: whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation. And how august, how venerable, is this reign! since it was the highest honour of the most eminent saints, and crowned monarchs*, to act as his harbingers. The splendour of the temple, the richness of its ornaments, and the solemnity of its services, were the signs of his grandeur—were his sacred regalia, intended to usher him into the world with becoming state.

Every inspired prophet was his herald; deputed to blazon his perfections, or to tell his coming. Let us hear one speaking the sentiments of all: "God the Saviour came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise," Hab. iii. Thunders sounded his trumpet, and lightnings waved his banners. "Before him went the pestilence," for the destruction of his enemies; but, for the deliverance of Israel, "he rode upon his horses and chariots of salvation. The mountains saw him, and they trembled; the everlasting hills, and they bowed their heads. The brass uttered her voice," and acknowledged his sovereignty through her deepestaverns; "the towering surges lifted up their hands," and remained in a suspended posture while his people passed through the opening lines. Indeed, in both depth, and height, and every creature, have paid him homage, and done him service. And shall not we, my dear Theron, "submit to his righteousness?" Submit! Shall we not embrace it; rely on it; and with joyful hearts, with triumphant tongues, say, "There is none, there is nothing like it!" 1 Sam. xii. 9.

Does not all mankind agree to estimate the merit of the practice according to the dignity of the person? If a neighbour of inferior rank visit some poor afflicted wretch in a coarse garret, and on a tattered bed, it is no very extraordinary favour; but if a lady of the first distinction, or a nobleman of the highest order, perform the same office, it is a much more remarkable, a much more admired instance of self-denying charity. On the foot of this calculation, to what a supereminent height will the worthiness of our Lord's obedience rise? It will rise, like some magnificent edifice, whose basis rests upon the centre, whose dimensions fill the hemisphere, and whose turrets glitter in the sky: or rather, it will extend itself to immensity; where length, and breadth, and all dimensions are lost. Especially, if we consider the names he bears,

* Moses, for instance, and Joshua, David, and Solomon, were types, strongly marked types, of our great Lawgiver and Deliverer, of our divine Ruler and Preacher.

and the honours he receives ; the works he has done, and those mightier he is appointed to do.

The names he bears.—The title by which Jesus of Nazareth is distinguished in the heavenly world ; the name written on his vesture, and on his is “ King of kings, and Lord of lords,” Rev. xix. 16. The description the incomprehensible Jehovah gives of the Surety for sinful men, in this exalted strain : “ The Man that is my fellow *,” Zech. xiii. 7 ; the apostle explains in that memorable and majestic clause : “ He that no robbery to be equal with God †,” Phil. ii. 6. The Holy Ghost, spoken by the prophet Isaiah, of the virgin’s son, enumerates several grand distinctions, both of his person and his office. He styles the child that she bore, “ the Wonderful Counsellor, the Everlasting Father, the Mighty the Prince of Peace,” Isa. ix. 6. The same inspired writer, though elevated above all orators, and more sublime than the loftiest poet, cries out in turbulent astonishment, “ Who can declare his generation ?” Isa. liii. 8. No pencil can portray, what language can express, his matchless excellencies. And may we not with equal propriety demand, Who can declare the numerous perfection of his righteousness ? It is precious beyond comparison beyond imagination, precious.

The honours which our Lord receives are proportioned to the illustrious characters which he sustains. John the Baptist, than whom a greater prophet or a better judge was not born of woman, professes himself unworthy “ to stoop down and unloose the latchet of his shoes,” Mark i. 7 ; unworthy though a burning and shining light in his generation, to perform the menial service to this Prince of heaven. Stephen, who leads the van in the army of Christian martyrs, beheld such a representation of his crucified Master’s glory, as enabled him to exult with divine delight, even amid furious assaults of his persecutors, and under the violent blows of his persecutors, Acts vii. 56. Assured that Jesus has all power in heaven and earth, by an act of the most solemn worship, he commits his departing soul to the most important of all trusts, to his Redeemer’s hand, Acts vii. 59. Not only the first martyr alone, but in all churches of the saints, and in every part of Christianity, has the Lord Jesus been addressed as the constant object of the people’s adoration, and acknowledged as the ever-faithful depository of the eternal interests.

When Isaiah beheld a visionary manifestation of Christ †, the first-beings of light were waiting around him, in postures of dutiful submission. The celestial beings, whose very feet are too bright for mortals to view, were gazing on his faces before his infinitely superior effulgence. The seraphs, who are pure spirit and all love, celebrate his perfections, and cry one to another, “ The earth is full of his glory.” And is not heaven also filled with his

* Contribulus vel coequalis, my fellow, or my equal. The original Hebrew occurs no where but in this verse of Zechariah, and in the book of Leviticus. The text it is explained by brother, or partaker of the same nature. In every other place where the word occurs, it signifies a neighbour, but an equal ; one who believe it will be found to signify, not barely a neighbour, but the common right upon the same level with regard to the claims of equity, and the common right of the Lord Jesus Christ. In either sense, it militates strongly for the divinity of our Saviour. Syget away this evidence † Some writers, I am aware, have endeavoured to interpret the text, and no less of the Lord’s divine nature ; but I think with great injury to the context, and no less of the phrase.

† Isa. vi. 1, 2, &c. compared with John xii. 41.

Does not heaven likewise resound with his praise? The beloved disciple, in a vision no less clear, and far more magnificent, beholds the Lamb that was slain, standing in the midst of a resplendent throne, most beautifully adorned with a circling rainbow, and terribly dignified by the blaze of lightnings and the sound of thunders. Before this august throne, and at the disposal of the once slaughtered Saviour, are "seven lamps of burning fire," expressive of the divine Spirit, in all the variety of his miraculous gifts and sanctifying graces, Rev. iv. 5. Four-and-twenty elders, clothed in white raiment, with crowns on their heads, and the harps of God in their hands, fall prostrate in deepest homage before the Lamb. They strike the golden strings, and sing that sublime eucharistic hymn, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us, unto our God, kings and priests," Rev. v. 9, 10.

Behold the hierarchies of angels: they are in number ten thousand times ten thousand.—Hark! they raise their voice, and awaken all the powers of harmony. Who is the subject, and what is the burden of their song? "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and blessing!" Nor these alone, but every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, join the immense chorus. They cry, in loud responsive strains of melody and devotion; "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!" Rev. v. 11, 12, 13.

This, you observe, is the devout acknowledgment, not only of the cherubim, the seraphim, and the spirits, of just men made perfect, but of every creature. The sun, the moon, and the stars, which garnish the heavens;—beasts and creeping things, mountains and hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, which replenish the earth;—metals and minerals, gems and fossils, the subterraneous riches of nature, or things which are under the earth;—even all those objects which my Theron lately contemplated, do, in their way, magnify the Lord Jesus. They bear witness to his power, as their Creator; they are subservient to his interests, as our Mediator; and in this manner they glorify his sacred name.

Under such views of the blessed Redeemer, enlarged and elevated even to astonishment, is it possible to overrate the worth of his mediatorial obedience? Is it possible to lay too much stress on his expiatory sacrifice, or ascribe too much efficacy to his vicarious righteousness?

To the honours which he receives, let us add the works which he has done. By these, in the days of his flesh, were displayed the greatness of his glory, and the might of his majesty.

"Behold!" says the almighty Father, "my servant"—he who condescends to become my servant in the matchless work of redemption—"shall deal prudently;" shall conduct himself with all the dignity and all the sanctity of wisdom. In consequence of which "he shall be exalted, be extolled, and be very high," Isa. lii. 13. The paraphrase of the Jewish commentators on this beautiful climax is, though inadequate, not contemptible. "The Messiah," they say, "shall be higher than Abraham, more illustrious than Moses, and exalted above the angels of light, even above the prime ministers*"

* *Prime ministers*; this is almost a literal translation of their words, כְּלֹאֲמֵי דְאֲשֵׁר הוּא.

of heaven." What follows, is an attempt to render this exposition somewhat less defective.

Here, could you open my chamber-door, and peep upon your friend, you would find him in the same attitude, and under the same perplexity, which were formerly observed in Phocion. Sitting one day, amidst an assembly of the people, and preparing to make a public oration, he appeared uncommonly thoughtful. Being asked the reason, "I am considering," said he, "how I may shorten what I shall have occasion to speak."—The compass of my subject would demand many volumes; whereas the limits of my letter will allow but a few paragraphs.

Our Lord gave sight to the blind. He poured day upon those hopeless and benighted eyes which had never been visited by the least dawning ray.—The dumb, at his command, found a ready tongue, and burst into songs of praise.—The deaf were all ear, and listened to the joyful sound of salvation.—The lame, lame from their very birth, threw aside their crutches, and full of transport and exultation leaped like the bounding roe*. He restored floridity and beauty to the flesh emaciated by consuming sickness, or incrustated with a loathsome leprosy. All manner of diseases, though blended with the earliest seeds of life, and rivetted in the constitution by a long inveterate predominancy—diseases that baffled the skill of the physician, and mocked the force of medicine—these he cured, not by tedious applications, but in the twinkling of an eye; not by costly prescriptions, or painful operations, but by a word from his mouth or a touch from his hand; nay, by the fringe of his garment, or the bare act of his will.

Any one of these miracles had been enough to endear the character, and eternize the memory of another person: but they were common things, matters of daily occurrence with our divine Master. The years of his public ministry were an unintermitted series of such healing wonders; or if any intermission took place, it was only to make way for more invaluable miracles of spiritual beneficence.

Behold him exercising his dominion over the vegetable creation. A fig-tree adorned with the most promising spread of leaves, but unproductive of the expected fruit, withers away at his rebuke. It is not only stripped of its verdant honours, but dried up from the very roots, Mark xi. 20, and perishes for ever: a fearful, yet significant intimation of that final ruin which will overtake the specious hypocrite, who, while lavish in outward profession, is destitute of inward piety.

His eye pierced through the whole world of waters, discovered the fish that had just swallowed a piece of silver coin, and guided its course to Peter's hook†. It is true when the gatherers of the sacred tax came to collect his share for the reparation of the temple, he had not a sufficiency of money to satisfy so small a demand‡; yet he takes occasion, from this most abject poverty, to manifest the immensity of his riches. He makes the great deep

* We have the finest representation of this event given us by the divine historian, Acts . 8. "And he, leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple;alking, and leaping, and praising God."

† Matth. xvii. 27. How wonderful is this seemingly little miracle! or rather, what a cluster of wonders is comprised in this single act! That any fish, with money in its mouth, should be caught.—with money just of such a value,—and in the very first fish that offered itself! What a pregnant display of omniscience to know, of omnipotence to overrule, all these fortuitous incidents!

‡ About fourteen-pence.

his revenue, and bids the scaly nations bring him their tribute. Never was such indulgence associated with such magnificence ! And never, never let us forget, that the indigence was ours, the magnificence all his own.

The waters themselves, it may be said, are far more unmanageable than their inhabitants. Who can control that outrageous element, which has destroyed so many gallant fleets, with the armies they bore, and which would laugh at the opposition of the united world ? The Lord Jesus walks upon its rolling surges*, and speaks its most tempestuous agitations into a calm. "The waves of the sea are mighty and rage terribly ?" but "yet the Lord," who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, "is mightier," Psalm xciii. 5.

The winds are yet more ungovernable than the madding ocean. When these are hurled† abroad to shatter the forests, and shake the shores, who can curb their rage ? what can withstand their impetuosity ? Even the boisterous winds hear the Saviour's voice ; and as soon as they hear obey. His voice, more powerful to restrain than brazen dungeons to confine, chides the furious whirlwind. The furious whirlwind is awed into immediate silence, Matth. viii. 26 ; Mark iv. 39. That which a moment ago heaved the billows to the clouds, and filled with outrage the howling firmament, now gently whispers among the shrouds, and scarcely curls the cool expanse.

Something there is, even within the narrow compass of our own breasts, which affords room for more signal exertions of Deity, than the turbulent billows of the resistless storm. Agreeably to the suggestion of a prophet, "For lo ! he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind : " and, as a more pregnant proof of divine perfection, "declareth unto man what is his thought, the God of Hosts is his name," Amos iv. 13 ; the possessor of such surpassing power and wisdom must unquestionably be the supreme Lord. And who is this but Jesus Christ ? "He knew what was in man," John ii. 25. He discerned the secrets of the heart ; discerned the latent purpose before it disclosed itself in action, even before it was uttered in speech ; nay, while it lay yet an unformed embryo in the mind.

His glance pierced into futurity ; espied events in all their circumstances, Mark xiv. 13, and with the greatest perspicuity, before they came into being. The hidden things of darkness were open, and the contingencies of to-morrow were present, to his all-pervading eye. Nay, the unthought of revolutions even of distant ages, the astonishing catastrophe of dissolving nature, and the awful process of everlasting judgment, he clearly foresaw, and particularly foretold.

Nor does he only penetrate the recesses, but over-rule the operations of the soul. He so intimidated a multitude of sacrilegious wretches, that they fled, not before his drawn sword or bent bow, but at the shaking of his scourge, John ii. 14. He so awed, by one short remonstrance, John viii. 7, an assembly of conceited and ostentatious Pharisees, that they could neither gainsay,

* "He treadeth upon the waves of the sea," is one of the prerogatives ascribed to the most high God, Job ix. 8. The original word בַּיָּם signifies "a sea, that rolls mountains high : " and such, we have reason to suppose, were the waves on which our Lord walked ; since the vessel to which he bent his course βασιλοζουσιον, "lashed, battered, tormented," by their vehement concussions, Matth. xiv. 24.

† This is the literal translation of that beautiful Hebrew phrase, which occurs Jonah i. 4. The sacred writ, describing the stormy messenger which was dispatched to arre a fugitive servant, says, הַיָּם, "The Lord hurled forth a great wind."

nor endure the energy of his discourse ; though, not to endure, was a tacit acknowledgment of guilt, and must cover them with public confusion. With a word, the most mild and gentle imaginable, John xviii. 6, he flung such terror into a band of armed men, as blasted all their courage, and laid them stunned and prostrate on the ground.

“ All hearts are in his hand. He turneth them as the rivers of water, whithersoever he will,” Prov xxi.; with as much ease, and with the same efficacious sway, as the current of the rivers is turned by every inflection of the channel. “ Follow me,” was his call to James and John : “ Follow me*,” Mark ii. 14, was all he said to Levi the publican. Though the first were engaged in all the ardour of business ; though the last was sitting at the very receipt of custom ; yet both he and they, without any demur, or the least delay, left their employ, left their nearest relations, and resigned their earthly all, to attend a poor and despised master. Their acquaintance, no doubt, would remonstrate a thousand inconveniences, their enemies would not fail to censure them as rash enthusiasts ; but all these considerations were lighter than dust, were less than nothing, when set in competition with two words only from Jesus of Nazareth. Impressed, deeply impressed by his powerful summons, such loss they counted gain, and such obloquy glory.

He planted bowels of compassion in the unfeeling avaricious wretch, and elevated, beyond the height of the stars, desires that lay grovelling even below the mire of the swine. The slaves of sin he restored to the liberty of righteousness ; and unhappy creatures, who were degenerated into the likeness of the devil, he renewed after the image of the blessed God. These were the effects of his personal preaching ; these are still the conquests of his glorious gospel : and do not these declare his dominion over the intellectual economy ? that the world of minds, as well as of material nature, is open to his inspection, and subject to his control ?

The dead seem to be more remote from human cognizance than the secrets of the breast ; less liable to any human jurisdiction than the warring elements. What potentate can issue a writ of release to the grave ? or cite the dislodged soul to re-enter the breathless corpse. Yet this, even this, our mighty Mediator executed. He opened the eyes which were sunk in their sockets, and sealed in the tomb. He bid the heart, that had forgot its vital motion, spring into renewed and vigorous life. The crimson flood, long congealed by the icy hand of death ; which had not only lost its pulse by stagnation, but likewise changed its very texture by “ putrefaction,” John xi. 39, circulates at his order, all florid and mantling with health, through the wondering veins. The spirit, which had taken its flight into the invisible state, had taken its place in eternal habitations, returns at our Redeemer’s signal to the tenement of mouldering clay ; and, by the amazing visit, proclaims his sovereignty over those unknown realms, and their mysterious inhabitants.

As he recalls from, so he admits into the abodes of future happiness. In

* He said in the beginning, “ Let there be light ;” there was light : “ Let there be a firmament ;” it was spread abroad : “ Let there be a world ;” it arose of nothing. In the days of his flesh, likewise, he speaks and it is done. His word is a work. He says to the disciples, “ Follow me ;” they come : to the leper, “ Be clean ;” he is cleansed : to the paralytic, “ Arise, take up thy bed and walk ;” it is all performed as soon as commanded. Surely then we must confess this is the voice of a God not of a man ! *Πρωτογεννητος* is our Lord’s usual word, when he grants a miraculous cure ; which exactly corresponds with that admired and magnificent expression in the original, Gen. i. 3.

the very lowest depths of his humiliation, he disposed of the seats of bliss, and the thrones of glory. His hands when swollen with wounds, and nailed to the tree, evidently sustained "the keys of hell and of death," Rev. i. 18. Then, even then, he opened and he shut either the gates of the grave or the portals of paradise. What he speaks to the penitent thief, is the language of supreme authority: "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." It is a royal mandamus, not an humble petition.

Does our Lord's superiority extend to those malignant beings, the devil and his angels? Even these, in spite of all their formidable strength and inextinguishable rage, he makes his footstool. He brake the teeth of those infernal lions, and rescued the helpless prey on which their bloody jaws were closing. At his command they abandoned their conquests, and relinquish, however indignant, however reluctant, their long accustomed habitations. His single command, more forcible than ten thousand thunderbolts, dispossesses a whole legion (Mark v. 9) of those fierce and haughty spirits; drives them, all terrified, and deprecating severer vengeance, to seek rest in solitary deserts, or to herd with the most sordid brutes.

As the blessed Jesus treads upon the necks of those powers of darkness, he receives the willing services of the angels of light. They that excel* in strength, and are active as flames of fire, even they fulfil his commandment, and hearken unto the voice of his words. They graced the solemnity of his birth; they attended him after his temptation in the wilderness; they were the first joyful preachers of his triumphant resurrection; and, now he is seated on the right hand of the Majesty in the highest,—

—They stand with wings outspread,
Listening to catch their Master's least command,
And fly through nature, ere the moment end.

Behold him now doing according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; swaying the sceptre over the legions of hell, and the powers of nature; exercising dominion in the hearts of men, in the territories of the grave, and mansions of disembodied spirits. Then let my Theron determine—under such views of our Saviour's unequalled majesty and unbounded sovereignty, let him determine—whether it be safer to rest our infinite and eternal interests on our own righteousness rather than on his.

We have selected some few manifestations of our Redeemer's excellent greatness. Even the evangelical historians give us no larger a proportion of his astonishing deeds, than the first-fruits bear to a copious harvest: yet, were they all particularly enumerated, and circumstantially displayed, they would appear inconsiderable, compared with those far more distinguished trophies of almighty power which he has decreed in some future period to erect †.

He will gather to his sacred fold the people of his ancient church, though

* Would any one see a sketch of the glory and excellence of the angelic nature? Let him see it in that inimitably fine stroke of the sacred pencil: "I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory," Rev xviii. 1.

† The dignity of our Lord, considered as the Creator and Preserver of all things, is mentioned here; because something of this kind is professedly attempted in the "Disc upon Creation," subjoined to the "Meditations among the Tombs," &c. to which I leave to refer my readers.

they are dispersed into all lands, and most inveterately prejudiced against the truth of his gospel. How mighty was his hand, how illustriously outstretched his arm, when he made a path through the surges of the ocean, drove the torrent of Jordan backwards, and fetched rivers of water from the flinty rock! Far more mighty will be its operations, when he shall remove the seemingly insurmountable obstructions to the general restoration of the Jews; shall throw all their religious apprehensions into a new channel; and cause tears of penitential sorrow to start from their stony eyes, confessions of unfeigned faith to issue from their blaspheming lips.—Yet thus it will assuredly be. In the volume of the divine book it is written, “They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn,” Zech. xii. 10. They shall adore as the Messiah, the once despised Galilean; and fix all their hopes of final felicity on that very person whom their fathers slew and hanged on a tree.

Amazing revolution in the religious world! Yet this, together with the destruction of antichrist, and the illumination of the benighted Gentiles, may pass for small incidents, compared with those stupendous events which will dignify and signalize the closing scene of affairs.

Then shall the Lord Jesus be manifested in unspeakable glory, and exert such acts of omnipotence as will be the terror of hell, the joy of heaven, the wonder of eternity. Then will he put an end to time, and bid the springs of nature cease to operate. Then shall his tremendous trumpet rend the universal vault, and pierce the dormitories of the dead. Then will he “shake the earth out of its place,” Job ix. 6. and before his majestic presence the “heavens shall flee away*.” Then shall, not a nation only, but multitudes, multitudes of nations, “be born in a day,” Isa. lx. 8; yea, rather, in an hour, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. All that are asleep in the beds of death; even those who, perishing in tempests, are sunk to the bottom of the ocean, or, swallowed up by earthquakes, are buried at the centre of the globe—all shall hear his voice; and hearing, shall awake; and

* How grand is the idea, when David prays! “Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.” Much grander is the image when he says, “The springs of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered, at thy chiding, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy displeasure.” Transcendently and inimitably grand is this description, though given us by the most plain and artless writer in the world: “I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the heavens and the earth fled away, and there was no place found for them,” Rev. xx. 11.

In Virgil’s admired representation, Jupiter hurls his thunder, and a mountain falls at a stroke:

—“Ille flagranti
Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
Dejicit.” *Georg. I. 331.*

In Homer’s more terror-striking piece, Neptune shakes the wide extended earth. The mountains tremble to their centre; the ocean heaves its billows; and cities reel on their foundations:—

—Αυτὰρ ἐνὶ θῆσι Ποσειδάων ἵπιναξί
Γαίαν ἀπειρίσειν, ὄρειον τ’ αἰπίνα κερνα.
Πάντι δ’ ἰσσιόντι ποδὶς πολυπίδακτου Ἰδῆς,
Καὶ κορυφαί, Τρωάντι πόλις, καὶ νηὶς Ἀχαιῶν.

Iliad Y. 57

Here, the Son of the eternal God appears only, and all nature is alarmed; nor heaven nor earth can keep their standing; they flee away, like the frightened roe. How grovelling are the loftiest flights of the Grecian and Roman muse, compared with this magnificence and elevation of the prophetic spirit!

awaking, shall come forth. Every human body, though ages have revolved since it gave up the ghost; though worms have devoured the flesh, and dissolution mouldered the bones; though its parts have been grinded by the teeth of beasts, or consumed by the rage of fire; dissipated in viewless winds, or scattered over the boundless globe; lost to our senses, and lost even to our imagination—yet will every human body then be restored; its limbs reassembled, and not an atom wanting; its frame rebuilt, and never be demolished more.

Then shall the unnumbered myriads of departed spirits return from their separate abodes; and, commissioned by him “who is the resurrection and the life,” reanimate each his organised system. Then shall Satan and his accomplices, those execrable and horrid criminals, be dragged from their dungeons of darkness, and receive their doom at the Redeemer’s tribunal. Then will misery and happiness, both consummate, and both everlasting, be awarded by the Saviour’s sentence. Then will he consign over the ungodly world, and the rebellious angels, to the flames of hell, and to agonies of despair. Then, will he invest the righteous with the inheritance of heaven, and instate them in the fulness of joy. His word is fate; immutability seals, and eternity executes, whatever he decrees.

And has this Jesus, so glorious, so majestic, so adorable—has he vouchsafed to take our nature, and become our righteousness? was he made under the law? did he fulfil all its demands? give perfect satisfaction to the penal, and yield perfect obedience to the preceptive? on purpose that the merit of all might be made over to us? Astonishing condescension! ineffable grace! What thanks are due to such infinitely rich goodness! What a remedy is here for the impotence and guilt of fallen man! What a sure foundation of hope, and what an abundant source of joy, to every one that believeth!

It is declared by the oracle of God, “That such an High-priest became us,” was absolutely necessary for our obnoxious and ruined condition, “who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,—and made higher than the heavens,” Heb. vii. 26. It appears, I flatter myself, from the letter already in your hand, that Christ fully answered the former character; and from this epistle I hope it will appear, that he is the very person described in the latter clause.

Estimate now, my dear friend, estimate if you can, the glory and excellency of this sublime person. Then may you learn how to state the worth of his righteousness, and the degree of affiance suited to his merits. Rather you will perceive, that his spotless birth, his perfectly obedient life, his exquisitely bitter death, are a satisfaction of unknown dignity; precious*, far beyond all the graces of men, and all the duties of angels; able to save to the uttermost all that rely on them, and come unto God through them.

Consonant to this are the sentiments of that penetrating critic and profound scholar, Dr. Lightfoot, who, treating of our Saviour’s obedience, says,—“Add to all this, the dignity of his person who performed this obedience; that he was God as well as man: and his obedience is infinite; such as in its validity subdued Satan, and in its all-sufficiency satisfied the justice of God.” After which, our celebrated author makes this important and delightful improvement: “Think, Christian, what a stock obedience and righteousness here is for thee, to answer and satisfy for thy disobedience and unrighteous-

* This is expressed by the sacred historian, with an energy which no translation can equal; *την τιμην του υπειρηνησεν, οτι επιμησαντο απο ουνου Ισραηλ.* Matth. xxvii. 9.

ousness, if thou become a child of the covenant. Here is enough for every soul that comes to him, be they never so many. Like the widow's oil in the book of Kings, there is enough and enough again, and as long as any vessel is brought to receive it*."

We need not wonder that Gentiles, who are ignorant of the Redeemer; that Jews, who treat him with contemptuous scorn; that professors of religion, who deny his eternal Godhead; place little, if any, confidence in his righteousness. But it is strange that Christians, who know the Saviour, and acknowledge his divinity, and believe him to be exalted above all blessing and praise—it is exceedingly strange, that they do not rejoice in him, and their boast of him, and say, with a becoming disdain, of every other dependence, "Get ye hence," Isa. xxx. 22.

Such an assemblage of divine perfections must warrant, must demand, most undivided and the most unbounded confidence. There never was, not in all ages nor in all worlds, any thing greater or richer, more dignified or exalted, than the obedience of our Lord. Nay, it is impossible to imagine what could be so suited to our wants, so proper for our reliance, or so sure an answer, more than answer, all our expectations.

Remember what the apostle affirms, and you will not wonder at my assertion: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." How comprehensive and exalted is this description! It collects into a point all the attributes of majesty and honour. It expresses in a sentence, I say, not whatever a pen has written, but whatever of dignity and excellence the Bible itself contains. "The Godhead," the nature and essence of the Deity: "the fulness of the Godhead;" unerring wisdom, almighty power, and whatever the great Jehovah challenges as his own: "all the fulness;" every adorable attribute in the most ample measure, and in the highest degree: all this "dwells," visits occasionally, but statedly, invariably, eternally resides; "dwells in Christ Jesus bodily," with an union inconceivably close and intimate; in such a manner that the Godhead inhabiting, and the manhood inhabited, make one and the same Person.

Therefore, adds the sacred disputant, "Ye are complete in him," Col. 2. 9, 10. Never was any conclusion more weighty in itself, or founded on more solid principles. Ye are not only pardoned, but reconciled; and not only reconciled, but justified; nay, ye are—and what can be said or desired more—"ye are complete:" and not barely before men or angels, but before infinity, purity, and omniscience itself. "Ye are made (amazing and charming truth!) the righteousness of God," 2 Cor. v. 21. in this wonderful Saviour. What a fountain is this, or rather what a sea of fathomless depth, to obliterate all sins, and supply all wants! What a mirror of God's stupendous grace and ever-to-be-adored loving-kindness!

Here let our meditations fix, and here let all our expectations centre. From this, not from any thing of our own, let us derive our peace, our joy, our supreme complacency. Into this subject we can never dive too deeply. In this subject we can never think too magnificently. The righteousness of Christ is the master-pillar, on which our eternal welfare rests. Nay, it is the only support which preserves us from sinking into endless perdition.

There hangs all human hope; that nail supports
Our falling universe.

This renders his intercession prevalent. He is an advocate, a successful advocate with the Father. Why? Because he is "Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John ii. 1.—From hence results his ability to justify. "He shall justify many," saith the Lord Jehovah. On what consideration? Because he is "my righteous servant," Isa. liii. 11. This, and no other, is the meritorious cause of our salvation. "Judah shall be saved;" shall escape damnation, and inherit glory. On what account? On account of "the righteous Branch raised up unto David*," Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.—Since, then, our acceptance, justification, and salvation; since our comfort in time, and our happiness to eternity, all depend upon the righteousness of Christ; how should we delight in contemplating its faultless, its matchless, its transcendent excellency! —Grand! all sufficient! in every respect perfect! Nothing equal to it, on earth, in heaven, throughout the universe! surpassing the enormity of our guilt! surpassing the reach of our imagination! surpassing all that we can express or conceive! being truly, properly, absolutely divine!

And is this righteousness mine? is this righteousness yours, Theron? is this righteousness free for every sinner? Pleasing, captivating, rapturous thought! Who can forbear exulting and triumphing in this boundless, this infinite blessing? On such an occasion, methinks, some sallies of enthusiasm, or even starts of tautology, are the language of sensibility, of propriety, of nature. "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord, the Lord himself, hath done it." Our justifying righteousness is finished; finished by Jehovah sojourning in human clay. "Shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains; O forest, and every tree therein. For the Lord hath most marvellously redeemed Jacob, and no less illustriously glorified himself in the recovery of Israel," Isa. xlv. 23. O for the tongue of a seraph! But even this would be defective; such ardour cold, and such energy languid.

I have done; I add no more; I leave it—to some future letter? to some more laboured essay? No; but to the hymns of heaven, and the adorations of eternity, to supply the deficiency of my acknowledgments. In the mean time, let me entreat my Theron to contemplate our Lord Jesus Christ under that most illustrious character described by the prophet, "A priest upon his throne," Zech. vi. 13. dignifying the sacerdotal censer by the regal diadem; adding all the honours of his eternal divinity to the sacrifice of his bleeding humanity. Then I promise myself, you will find it almost impossible not to adopt the emphatical and ardent protestation of the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory," that I should confide, "save only in the obedience and the cross of Christ Jesus my Lord!"

When you made the tour of France and Italy, and, crossing the Alps, gained the summit of some commanding ridge? when you looked round with astonishment and delight on the ample plains, which, crowded with cities and adorned with palaces, stretch their beauteous tracts below; when you surveyed the famous rivers that roll in silent but shining dignity, stating the boundaries of kingdoms, and wafting plenty through the gladdened nations; when you shot your transported view to the ocean, whose unmeasurable flood meets the arch of heaven, and terminates the landscape with inconceivable

* I believe it will be needless to observe, that the salvation mentioned in this, and other passages of like import, is not limited to a temporal deliverance, but extends to a state of spiritual and eternal happiness. The temporal is only a subordinate blessing; a kind of appendage to the other, somewhat like the halo round the globe of the moon, or that faint and secondary range of colours which frequently attends the glowing rainbow.

grandeur; did you then chuse to forego the pleasure resulting from such a prospect, in order to gaze upon the naked crag of some adjacent rock? or could you turn your eyes from those magnificent objects, and fasten them with pleased attention upon a shallow puddle that lay stagnating at your feet?

You who have beheld the scene, can accommodate the simile with peculiar advantage. For which reason I shall waive the application, and only beg leave to transcribe a wish that is now warm on my heart, and is often breathed in supplication from my lips:—May the Father of our spirits, and the Fountain of wisdom, give us an enlightened “understanding to know him that is true!” grant us the inestimable blessing, that we may be in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: for this Saviour is the true God, and that privilege is life eternal,” 1 John v. 20.

My Theron needs no argument to convince him, that such a prayer is an act of rational and real friendship—is the most genuine and substantial proof, that I am his truly affectionate

ASPASIO.

LETTER IX.—THERON TO ASPASIO.

DEAR ASPASIO,—Your two letters have reached my hand, and I hope they have not missed my heart. I might inform you what pleasure they gave me, and how highly I esteem them. But you desire no such compliments; you desire to see me impressed with the sentiments, and living under their influence. This would be most acceptable acknowledgment to my Aspasio, because it would be the most happy effect to his Theron. May every day, therefore, bring a fresh accession of such gratitude to me, and of such satisfaction to you!

To watch for my soul, and pray for my salvation, I am thoroughly convinced, is the truest instance of rational and exalted friendship. Every claim to that amiable character is defective and vain, if it does not extend to our spiritual interests and our everlasting welfare. For which reason, I need not entreat you to continue and perpetuate this best expression of social kindness. Or, if I do, it is rather to testify how much I prize the favour, than to prompt your affectionate and ready mind.

Your last found me at a friend's house, which lies pretty near the western ocean. Yesterday, waked by the lark, and rising with the dawn, I strolled into the fragrant air and dewy fields; while, as Shakspeare, with his usual sprightliness, expressess himself,

— — — Jocund day
 Stood tip-toe on the misty mountain's top.

Sweet was the breath of morn, and sweet the exhalations of the freshened flowers; grateful were the soft salutes of the cooling zephyrs, attended with the charm of earliest birds; delightful the sun, painting with his orient beams the chambers of the firmament, and unveiling the face of universal nature.

My mind, but little affected with these inferior entertainments, was engaged in contemplating an object of infinitely superior dignity; in contemplating that adorable Being, who raised, from nothing raised, this stupendous system of things, and supports, with his word supports, the magnificent

frame; who (to speak in the language of his own Spirit) "openeth the eyelids of the morning, and commandeth the day-spring to know its place, Job xxxviii. 12; commandeth the light, by its punctual and pleasing ministrations, to draw aside the curtain of darkness, and discover the skies shining with glories, and disclose the earth blooming with beauties.

"Father of light and life," said my transported mind,

————— Thou Good Supreme!

O teach me what is good! teach me Thyself.

Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,

From every low pursuit! and feed my soul

With faith, with conscious peace, and virtue pure,

Sacred, substantial, never-fading bliss.

THOMSON'S *Winter*.

Wrapt in wonder, and lost in thought, I rambled carelessly along, till I was insensibly brought to the shore, which in these parts is prodigiously high and strong, perfectly well fitted to stand as an everlasting barrier* against the impetuous stroke of conflicting winds, and the ponderous sweep of dashing surges. Not that the omnipotent Engineer has any need of these impregnable ramparts. Here, it is true, they intervene, and not only repress the rolling invader, but speak the amazing majesty of their Maker. In other places, all such laboured methods of fortification are laid aside. The Creator shews the astonished world that he is confined to no expedients, but orders all things "according to the pleasure of his own will." He bids a low bank of despicable sand receive and repel the most furious shocks of assaulting seas; and "though the waves thereof toss themselves" with incredible fierceness, yet can they not prevail; though "they roar," and seem to menace universal destruction, "yet can they not pass over," Jer. v. 22, this slightest of mounds.

A winding passage broke the declivity of the descent, and led me by a gradual slope to the bottom. The moon being in her last quarter, and the tide at its greatest recess, I walked for a while "where briny waves were wont to flow." The ebbing waters had left a vacant space several furlongs broad, equal in length to a very extended vista, smooth on its surface as the most level bowling-green, and almost as firm as the best compacted causeway. Inasmuch that the tread of a horse scarce impresses it, and the waters of the sea never penetrate it. Exclusive of this wise contrivance, the searching waves would insinuate themselves into the heart of the earth; the earth itself would be hollow as a honey-comb, or bibulous as a sponge; and the sea, soaking by degrees through all its cavities, would in process of time forsake its bed, and mingle with the plains and mountains. But this closely cemented or glutinous kind of pavement, is like claying the bottom of the universal canal; so that the returning tides consolidate, rather than perforate its substance, and prevent the sun from cleaving it with chinks. Such, I hope, will be the case with this soul of mine, and the temptations that beset me. Beset me they do, they will: but may they never win upon my affections, nor gain admittance into my heart! Let them make me humble, and

* These, doubtless, are "the doors and the bars," which the Almighty mentions in the course of his awful interrogatories to Job: the massy doors, which can never be forced; the solid bars, which can never be broke; and, I may add, the conspicuous columns on which his Providence has inscribed that sovereign mandate, "Ne plus ultra," or, as the prohibition runs in his own majestic words, Hitherto shalt thou go, but no farther, Job. xxxviii. 10.

keep me vigilant ; teach me to walk closely with my God, and urge me to an incessant dependence on Christ. Then, instead of being ruinous, they may become advantageous ; and instead of shattering, will only cleanse the rock on which they dash.

The mighty waters, restless even in their utmost tranquillity, with a solemn but placid murmur struck my ear. The billows, sometimes advancing to kiss the sand, sometimes drawing back their curly heads into the deep, whitened at their extremities into an agreeable foam, which, with the reflexive representation of the azure canopy, formed the appearance of a most spacious floating mantle, tinged with a beautiful blue, and edged with fringes of silver. Dignity and elegance, I find, are the inseparable characteristics of the Creator's workmanship ; as comfort and happiness, I sometimes perceive are the very spirit of his gospel, and the genuine produce of its commands.

On one side, the Atlantic main rolled its surges from world to world. Immense, immense diffusion of waters ! What a spectacle of magnificence and terror ! what an irresistible incitement to reverence and awe ! How it fills the mind, and amazes the imagination ! It is the grandest and most august object under the whole heavens. It reminds me of that apocalyptic vision which John, the enraptured seer, beheld ! "As it were a great mountain, burning with fire, was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood ; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died ; and the third part of the ships were destroyed," Rev. viii. 8, 9. I have not penetration enough to discover the spiritual meaning of this passage ; but I discern a most dreadful grandeur in its plain and literal sense. If we consider the wonderful compass and the terrible force of such an enormous mass of fire ; if we consider its horrible and destructive effects on such a vast body of waters as the third part of the ocean ; how tremendous and astonishing is the idea ! Surely nothing but divine inspiration could suggest these images, as none but an almighty Being can execute this vengeance ! Who would not fear an eternal King, that has such weapons, and such artillery "reserved against the day of battle and war ?" Job xxxviii. 23.

Spacious as the sea is, God has provided a garment to cover it. Profound as the sea is, God has prepared swaddling-bands to inwrap it. Ungovernable as it may seem to us, he overrules it with as much ease as the nurse manages a new-born infant, Job xxxviii. 8, 9. An infant it is before almighty power, and to an infant it is compared by Jehovah himself, though, to our apprehension, it raves like a stupendous madman. But if he command, it opens a peaceful bosom, and receives his people. It smooths the way for their passage, and stands as a bulwark for their defence. They march "through the midst of the sea upon dry ground, and the waters are a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left," Exod. xiv. 22. If he reverses his mandate, they drive down, with an irresistible sweep, upon the hosts of Pharaoh, and overwhelm the chariots and horses of Egypt. They pour confusion upon arrogance*, and disappoint the designs of persecution and cruelty. If he says,

* *Arrogance*.—This is described with exquisite delicacy in the *Enchiridion*, or triumphant song of Moses : "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil ; my lust shall be satisfied upon them ; I will draw my sword, mine hand shall destroy them." What swelling words of vanity are here ! How noble is the turn, and how exalted the sentiment which follows ! "Thou didst blow with thy wind ; the sea covered them, they sank as lead in the mighty waters."

"Be still," the bellowing surges are hushed, and the gentlest lamb is not so quiet. He says, "Destroy," even the quiescent waters kindle into rage, they rise in their maker's cause, and ten thousand lions, stung with hunger and rushing upon their prey, are not so fierce. When he bids them execute any other commission, the horse broke to the bit, the spaniel disciplined to the signal, are not all so dutiful and obsequious. And shall our passions be more wild than the winds, more turbulent than the billows? Forbid it, almighty Lord! Thou that rulest the raging of the sea, and the noise of his waves, restrain, subdue, and calm the madness of the people."

The eye travels hard; it wanders over a vast, vast length of fluctuating plains. It reaches the limits of the hemisphere, where skies and waves seem to mingle. Yet it has scarce made an entry upon the world of waters. What it here discerns is no more than the skirts of the great and wide sea. Tracts incomparably broader are still behind, and tracts of unbounded extent are behind even those. Great then, O my soul, inconceivably great, is that adored and glorious Sovereign, who sitteth upon his flood as upon a throne! Psalm xxix. 10; nay, who holds it, diffused as it is from pole to pole, in the hollow of his hand; and before whom, in all its prodigious dimensions, it is but as the drop in a bucket. How shall reptiles of the ground sink low enough in their own apprehensions! What humiliation can be sufficiently deep for sinful mortals, before this high and holy One! Yet how may they rise on the wings of hope! how may they soar on the pinions of faith! when, in the language of his prophet, and in his own Son's name, they thus address the everlasting God. "Awake! awake! put on strength, O arm of the Lord! awake for our succour and security, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it, which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?" Isa. li. 9, 10.

How grand, surprisingly grand and majestic, are the works, as well as the attributes of an omnipotent Being! What are all the canals in all the countries of the earth, compared with this immense reservoir! What are all the superb edifices erected by royal munificence, compared with yonder concave of the skies! And what are the most pompous illuminations of theatres and triumphant cities, compared with the resplendent source of day! They are a spark, an atom, a drop.—Nay, in every spark, and atom, and drop, which proceeds from the hand of the Almighty, there is the manifestation of a wisdom and a power absolutely incomprehensible.

Let us examine a single drop of water, the very least quantity that the eye can discern, only so much as will just adhere to the point of a needle. In this almost imperceptible speck, a famous philosopher computes no less than thirteen thousand globules. Amazing to conceive! impossible to explicate! If then, in so small a speck, abundantly more than ten thousand globules exist, what myriads of myriads must float in the unmeasured extent of the ocean!—Let the ablest arithmetician try to comprehend in his mind, not the internal constitution, but only the number of these fluid particles. As well may he grasp the winds in his fist, or mete out the universe with his span, as execute the task. If, then, we are utterly unable to number (which is the most superficial of all researches) even the most common works of the great Jehovah; how can we pretend to lay open the secrets, and penetrate the

recesses of his infinite mind! How can we pretend to investigate the w process, and solve all the difficulties of that highest and deepest of the di schemes—redemption!

I have sometimes been offended, I must confess, when you have enla upon the mysterious truths of Christianity. But I perceive the beam in my own eye, when I fancied the mote was in my friend's. Is there every ray of light, and in every particle of matter, a depth of contrivance fathomable by the line of any human understanding? And shall ther nothing abstruse or profound, nothing but what is level to our scanty ap hensions, in the "great things" (Hos. viii. 12) of God's law, and the "rious things" (Acts ii. 11) of his gospel? To expect this, is just as wi itself, and just as congruous to nature, as to expect a sea, whose cav might have been digged by our spade;—a sky, whose arches are measur by our compass; a sun, whose orb may be included in our lanterns.

When, therefore, I read of One uncreated and eternal Being subsistin three divine persons; when I hear of an infinitely pure and perfect God i flesh for the redemption of sinful men; when I meditate upon the right and universal Judge, reconciling the world unto himself by the death o own Son; when a thousand curious and inquisitive thoughts are read arise on the occasion; I will bid them first sound the depths of a single c and then apply their plummet to the boundless ocean. This, I am very is not weak credulity, nor wild enthusiasm, but the maturest dictate of son, and the very precision of truth. Let then the great Creator make sublime declaration: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so ar ways than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts," Isa. lv. 9. every human creature add that humble acknowledgment: "O the dept the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchabl his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom. xi. 33; and not c tion only, but reason and truth will say "Amen" to both.

You see, Aspasio, how I am trying to adopt your spirit. You will ob the willing scholar, though not the great proficient. But stay! Is this ri to divert from such commanding subjects, and take notice of mere puncti My friend may spare his frowns: I am surprised and angry at myself. A with the little arts of self-recommendation. Self should be forgot, shou swallowed up and lost in devout astonishment, when we are viewing magnificence, and meditating on the wonders of creation.

Behind me, and far off to the north, Cambria's dusky coasts just, but just, emerged. Lost were all her woods and mountains. Inste ornamented towns and cultivated plains, a confused mist, or a low- cloud, seemed to hover on the ocean's remotest brim. Behind me! Rer brance is roused at the expression, and conscience sharpens her sting. how often and how long have I treated in this very manner, the no scenes and the sublimest joys! have turned my back—ungrateful and bes creature!—upon the heavenly country, and wandered from the regions o finite delight! Therefore, now they appear dim. I have scarcely a gli of their transcendent excellencies. Or if I see them by faith, it is with quent intermissions, and much obscurity. Turn me, O thou God of salvation, turn me from pursuing phantoms, and attach me to thy blessed Let me henceforth steer an invariable course to Emmanuel's kingdom. its treasures, as I advance, open to my view, and its glories brighten in

eye. O! may some odours, better, far better than Sabæan spicy odours, exhale from the delectable hills and the celestial shores! But chiefly, thou eternal Spirit, breathe upon my soul, both by thy convincing and comforting influences! nor ever cease to swell my sails, and speed my progress, till I arrive at "the land that is very far off, and see the King," the King of grace and of glory, "in all his ineffable beauty," Isa. xxxiii. 17.

On my left hand, a range of mountainous cliffs rose in a perpendicular direction. The huge pile extended, as far as the sight could discern, its black boundaries. Here bending inwards to the land; there bellying out into the deep; everywhere projecting a shade several leagues across the ocean.

The height of these cliffs so prodigious, that every human creature who comes near the summit, starts back terrified and aghast. Only a few straggling goats venture to graze on the top; and these to a person walking below, appear but as specks of moving white; while the sea-mews, that winnow the air about the middle steep, look like winged animalcules pursuing their little sports in a different region. The aspect of these cliffs, so wild and horrid, it is impossible to behold them without a shivering dread. The spectator is apt to imagine, that nature had formerly suffered some violent convulsions, or been shattered by the flaming bolts, and that these are the dismembered remains of the dreadful stroke; the ruins, not of Persepolis or Palmyra, but of the world!

Amazing! What adventurous daring creature is yonder, gathering samphire from the cavities of the rocks! He has let himself down several fathoms beneath the black and dizzy summit. He gleans a poor livelihood, from the edges of danger shall I say? rather from the jaws of death. I cannot discern the rope to which he clings. He seems to be suspended over the tremendous precipice by a thread, by a hair, by nothing. I will look no longer. The very sight chills my veins. While I view his perilous elevation, I can think of nothing but a headlong downfall and fractured bones; of brains left to reek on the pointed crags, and blood streaming on the discoloured beach.

Suppose (if the mind can bear so shocking a supposition) some poor wretch, exposed on the brow of this stupendous promontory; without any support for his feet; and cleaving only to a weak slender shrub, which but just adheres to the interstices of the rock. What tumultuous throbbings seize his breast! what a dying paleness invades his cheeks! and what agonies of fear rend his heart, as he hangs projecting over the ragged precipice, and surveys the ocean, deep, wondrous deep, below! The bough gives way. His only hope fails. It yields more and more to his weight. Good heavens, he sinks! he sinks!—O! for some friendly hand, to snatch him from perishing! Millions, millions of gold, were the cheap purchase of such a mercy. There was a time, my soul, when thou wast in a situation, equally, shall I say? infinitely more dangerous; tottering, not only on the verge of life, but on the very brink of hell. Remember that compassionate arm, which was stretched out, in the very article of need, to rescue thee from imminent and everlasting perdition. Never forget that gracious voice which said, in accents sweeter than the music of the seraphic choir, "Deliver him from going down into the pit. Let his health be restored, and his day of grace be prolonged."

In some places, the hideous ruins not only tower to the skies, but lean over the strand. Prominent and frightfully pendulous, they nod horror, and threaten destruction on all below. A person congratulates himself when he

has got clear of the bending precipice, and can hardly forbear thinking that the enormous load is withheld by some unseen hand, till the execrable wretch, doomed to a most astonishing vengeance, is come within reach of the blow. And truly, if he had the strength of the elephant, or the firmness of the behemoth, this must grind him to powder, or even crush him into atoms.

How awful to consider, that there is a day coming, when wicked potentates and haughty monarchs will beg of yonder seas to yawn compassionately deep, and hide them in their darkest abysses—hide them from the piercing eye and avenging sword of inflexible justice: that there is a day coming, when the soft voluptuary, the wanton beauty, and all the ungodly of the earth, will beseech these tremendous ridges, with all their unsupportable burden of craggy rocks, to rush down upon their guilty heads! Rev. vi. 16; if by this means they may be screened from the infinitely more dreaded weight of divine indignation.

Vain are their cries; and vainer still would be their refuge, should their passionate requests be granted. Can floods conceal the impious wretches, when the caverns of the ocean shall be laid bare, and the foundations of the world be discovered? Can rocks secrete an obnoxious rebel, when rocks, with all their marble quarries and adamantine entrails, shall dissolve like melting wax? when hills, that plunge their roots to the centre, and lose their towering heads in air, shall start from their affrighted base*, and flee away like a withered leaf? Good God! † what racking anguish must they feel! what inexpressibly severer torment must they fear! who can implore, ardently implore as a most desirable favour, what imagination itself shudders to conceive.

In some places, these mountainous declivities lift their brow aloft, plant their basis deep, and, instead of portending a fall, defy the fury of the most impetuous elements. Firmly consolidated, and steadfastly established, they have withstood the united, the repeated assaults of winds and waves, through a long series of revolving ages. The sacred writers, I observe, select almost all the striking images which the whole creation affords, in order to communicate their heavenly ideas with the greatest advantage. Isaiah, describing the security of the righteous, takes his comparison from the grand spectacle before my eyes: "He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks," Isa. xxxiii. 16; inaccessible as those lofty ridges, immoveable as their everlasting foundations.

Should it be asked, what these munitions of rocks may signify? I find two places of refuge and safeguard pointed out in Scripture; to either of which, I believe, the metaphor is applicable. "He had horns," says one of the divine pindarics, "coming out of his hand; there was the

* This brings to our remembrance a most sublime description of the divine power which arises in a beautiful climax, and terminates in this grand idea: "The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation, the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn," Psal. xxix. 4—6.

† Good God!—This exclamation is introduced on a very serious occasion, and used with an apparent air of reverence. Under which circumstances, perhaps, it may be sometimes allowable, and not dishonourable to the divine Majesty. But when it is admitted into ordinary conversation, on trifling occurrences, and with a levity of temper, it is itself a very great offence, and discovers a very irreligious spirit.—It is so great an offence, that the God of heaven and earth declares himself the avenger of all such transgressors: "He will not hold them guiltless."

hiding of his power," Hab. iii. 4*. Uncontrollable and omnipotent power was lodged in the great Jehovah's hand; and this was the sure defence, this the impregnable garrison, for all his people. The church of Christ is said to be "in the clefts of the rock," Cant. ii. 14; that "spiritual Rock," of which the Israelites drank in the wilderness; whose sacred clefts were opened when the bloody spear tore up the Redeemer's side, and cut a wide and deadly passage to his heart. Surely "the inhabitants of this Rock have reason to sing," Isa. xlii. 11. What should disquiet them? Who can destroy them? Why should not the voice of joy be in their dwellings, and that hymn of holy triumph in their mouths, "We have a strong city. Salvation hath God appointed," salvation itself, "for walls and bulwarks?" Isa. xxvi. 1. Happy should I think myself, if I was interested in this Saviour, and established on this Rock.

Yonder, on the summit of the most conspicuous cliff, is erected a grand and stately pile. At the top, my glass discovers a superb lantern; at the foot, are huts of fishermen, surrounded with various sorts of nets. It is, I suppose, a light-house; intended to apprise the sailor of devouring gulfs, and destructive shoals; or else to conduct him into a safe road and secure harbour.

Both the situation and design of the building read me a lesson; the one of awful admonition, the other of comfortable instruction.—Comfortable instruction: how massy and ponderous is the edifice! yet there is not the least reason to be apprehensive of a failure in the foundation. Was the structure ten thousand times larger, the solid rock would support it with the utmost ease, and the utmost steadiness. Such is Christ, such are his merits, such his glorious righteousness, to those wise and blessed souls who rest all the weight of their everlasting interests on him alone. Such, did I say? Much surer. For, "the mountains may depart, and the hills may be removed," Isa. liv. 10; but this divine basis can never sink, can never be shaken.—Awful admonition: for it recalls to my memory that alarming yet welcome text †, which you styled the spiritual light-house; which has been as serviceable to my distressed mind and bewildered thoughts, as such an illuminated watch-tower to the wandering and benighted mariner. May I often view it; ever attend to its faithful direction; and be led by its influences into the haven, the desired haven, of peace and salvation!

Let me once again survey those vast but noble deformities; those rude but majestic elevations of stone. Fortifications, reared by an almighty hand, to protect us at once from warring elements and invading enemies. Ramparts, which overlook and command the ocean; which, viewed by distant mariners, seem to touch and prop the sky; which have surrounded our isle ever since the universal deluge, and will be her never-failing defence even to the general conflagration. If some opinionated engineer should take it into his head to suspect the stability of these unshaken and everlasting bulwarks; if he should make proposals for strengthening them with buttresses, or girding them round with cramping-irons, how would his project be received? with

* Horns were an emblem of strength. "A horn of salvation," is put for a mighty and effectual salvation, Luke ii. 69. "Thou hast heard me from among the horns of the unicorns;" thou hast rescued me from the most potent and formidable enemies, Psal. xxii. 21. Here the word seems to denote that power of Jehovah, to which nothing is impossible.

† See Rom. ix. 30—32; and above, Letter V.

approbation and applause, or with contempt and indignation? "Fool that he is, to think of enlarging, corroborating, or improving the finished and magnificent works of nature, by the puny piddlings of art!" Such, so foolish and preposterous, was my once favourite conceit, of adding my own performances in order to increase the justifying efficacy of Christ's obedience. What a disparagement was this to the great, the divine foundation! which, for the support and security of burdened and endangered sinners, is sufficient—self-sufficient—is all-sufficient.

How changeable is the face of this liquid element! Not long ago, there was nothing, from this stony boundary to the horizon's utmost verge, but the wildest tumult and most horrible confusion. Now the stormy flood has smoothed its rugged brow, and the watery uproar is lulled into a profound tranquillity. Where rolling mountains rushed and raged, threatening to dash the clouds and deluge the earth; there the gentlest undulations play, and only just wrinkle the surface of the mighty basin. Where the dreadful abyss opened its wide and unfathomable jaws, to swallow up the trembling sailor and his shattered vessel; there a calm and clear expanse diffuses its ample bosom, alluring the fish to bask in the sun, and inviting the sea-fowl to watch for their prey.

In this fair-floating mirror, I see the picture of every cloud which passes through the regions of the sky. But in its uncertain and treacherous temperature, I see more plainly the unconstant and ever-variable condition of human affairs. I durst not be surety to the mariner for peaceful seas and soothing gales: I could not ascertain the continuance of this halcyon weather so much as a single day, or even to the next hour: and let me not fondly promise myself an uninterrupted tenor of serenity in my mind, or of prosperity in my circumstances. Sometimes, indeed, my heart exults under the smile of heaven and the favour of God: but soon, ah! too soon, I am clouded with fear, and oppressed with corruption. I sigh out that passionate acknowledgment, "Wretched man that I am!" and add that wishful inquiry, "Who shall deliver me?" For this disordered state of things, the afflicted patriarch's complaint is the most apposite motto, and the most wholesome memento: "Changes and war are around me," Job x. 17. But there is a world, where disastrous revolutions will be known no more; where our enjoyments will no longer fluctuate like the ocean, but be more steadfast than the rocks, and more immoveable than the shores.

Here I see an immense collection of waters in a state of deep repose. Could I extend my view to some remoter tracts, I should behold everything smoother and calmer still. Not a furrow sinks, nor a ridge swells the surface of the ocean: it is all like a glassy plain. The waves are asleep: echo is hushed: not a gale stirs: the sea stagnates: the mariner is becalmed; and the vessel scarcely creeps. Whereas, could I survey the Straits of Magellan, or the Gut of Gibraltar, I should find a very striking difference. There the waters press in with vehemence, and rush forwards with impetuosity. All is there in strong agitation and rapid progress. The ship is whirled through the narrow passage, and rides, as it were, on the wheels of the surge, or on the wings of the wind. This, my dear Aspasio, is a true image of what I have been, and of what I am. Some months ago, when I was insensible of guilt, all my prayers were listless, and all my religion was a spiritual lethargy. I felt not in my heart what I uttered with my tongue. Hosan-

nals were but an empty ceremony, and confessions froze on my formal lips. But since the Spirit of God has awakened me from my dream, and convinced me of my sinfulness, I can no longer be satisfied with indolent and yawning devotions. Trials and temptations put strong cries into my mouth. My soul mourns before the Lord; my desires plead with the blessed God; and I am ready to say, as the patriarch of old, "I cannot, I must not, I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me," Gen. xxxii. 26.

I see no flocks of sheep, with sober assiduity, nibbling the grassy plains. No sportive lambs, with innocent gaiety, frisking along the sunny banks. Here are no stables for the generous steed, nor pastures for the lusty heifer. Nevertheless these watery regions are stocked with colonies of proper and peculiar inhabitants, who are clothed and accoutred in exact conformity to the clime; not in swelling wool or buoyant feathers, not in a flowing robe or a full-trimmed suit, but with as much compactness, and with as little superfluity as possible. They are clad, or rather sheathed in scales, which adhere closely to their bodies, and are always laid in a kind of natural oil: than which apparel nothing can be more light, and at the same time, nothing more solid. It hinders the fluid from penetrating their flesh, it prevents the cold from coagulating their blood, and enables them to make their way through the waters with the utmost facility. They have each a curious instrument*, by which they increase or diminish their specific gravity; sink like lead, or float like a cork; rise to what height, or descend to what depth they please.

This is the abode of leviathan, hugest of living creatures; before whom the broad-limbed elephant and the tall-necked camel are mere shrimps; a stretched-out promontory when he sleeps, a moving island when he swims; "making the sea to boil like a pot," when, unwieldily wallowing, he takes his prodigious pastime. Here the voracious shark, that tyrant of the fluid kingdoms, and assassin of the finny nations, roams and commits his ravages, imbrues his horrid fangs, and marks his rapid path with blood. Here dwelt that great, and greatly surprising fish, whose fierceness and avidity the almighty Sovereign employed, as his pursuivant, to arrest a fugitive prophet; whose ample jaws, or capacious entrails, were the dungeon to confine a rebellious subject, and the cabin to lodge a penitent offender; whose bulk, and strength, and speed, were a kind of vessel, transporting this convict to "the bottom of the mountains, and the bars of the earth," Jonah ii. 6. After the criminal was sufficiently chastised, and properly humbled, they served as a galley with oars to convey him safe to land.

In the same element resides (at least takes up part of his residence) that formidable monster, who is made without fear, and "has not his like upon earth." He esteemeth the pointed iron as straw, and ponderous brass as rotten wood. His heart is as hard as a piece of the nether-millstone, and his scales are a coat of impenetrable mail. Strength not to be resisted, much less to be subdued, lies intrenched in his sinewy neck. His eyes are like the eyelids of the opening day; and when he rolls those glaring orbs, there seems to be another morn risen on mid-noon. His teeth are terrible; jagged for rapine and edged with death. His throat is as a burning furnace; clouds of smoke are poured from his nostrils, and flakes of fire issue from his mouth.

* The air-bladder.

None, no not the most resolute, dares provoke him to the combat, or even stir him up from his slumbers. He laugheth at the shaking of the spear, "and sorrow marcheth in triumph before *," Job xli. 22. Whenever he raiseth himself, the mighty are afraid; wherever he advanceth, ruin is there. If a mere creature is capable of spreading such alarm and dread, how greatly is the Creator himself to be feared! who can turn the most harmless inhabitant of the ocean into a ravenous alligator, or a horrid crocodile! who can arm every reptile of the ground with all the force and rage of a lion!

It is impossible to enter on the muster-roll, those scaly herds, and that minuter fry, which graze the sea-weed or stray through the coral groves. They are innumerable as the sands which lie under them; countless as the waves which cover them. Here are uncouth animals, of monstrous shapes †, and amazing qualities ‡: some that have been discovered by the inquisitive eye of man; and many more, that remain among the secrets of the hoary deep. Here are shoals and shoals, of various characters, and of the most diversified sizes; from the cumbrous whale, whose flouncings tempest the ocean, to the evanescent anchovy, whose substance dissolves in the smallest fricassee. Some, lodged in their pearly shells, and fattening on their rocky beds, seem attentive to no higher employ than that of imbibing moist nutriment. These, but a small remove from vegetable life, are almost rooted to the rocks on which they lie reposed; while others, active as the winged creation, and swift as an arrow from the Indian bow, shoot along the yielding flood, and range at large the spacious regions of the deep.

* לפנן תרץ רמסה. "Mœror," says Bochart, "præcedit tanquam metator et comes, tumidique ante ambulo regis." Terror and anguish are a kind of advanced guard to this monarch among the reptiles; or, they go before the monster, as the man bearing a shield went before the Philistine giant.—The original word occurs in no other part of the divine book. I cannot recollect any expression which so fully represents its meaning, as Homer's κρόδιον, or Xenophon's γαυραϊσθαι; both which are intended to describe the ardour and action of a high-mettled prancing steed. The whole paragraph is a sketch of the crocodile's picture.

† *Monstrous shapes*.—Such as the sword-fish, whose upper jaw is lengthened into a strong and sharp sword, with which he sometimes ventures to attack ships, and is capable of piercing their sides though ribbed with oak. This may be called the champion of the waters; who, though never exceeding sixteen feet in length, yet, confiding in a weapon at once so trusty and so tremendous, scruples not to give battle even to the whale himself. The sun-fish has no tail; seems to be all head; and was it not for two fins, which act the part of oars, would be one entire round mass of flesh. The polypus, remarkable for its numerous feet, and as many claws; by which it has the appearance of a mere insect, and seems fitted only to crawl. At the same time an excrescence, arising on the back, enables it to steer and pursue a steady course in the waves; so that it may pass under the twofold character of a sailor and a reptile.

‡ *Amazing qualities*.—Among these may be reckoned the torpedo, which benumbs on a sudden, and renders impotent, whatever fish it assaults; and, which is a more extraordinary property, strikes even the fisherman's arm, when he offers to lay hold on it, with a temporary deadness. By this means, it possesses the double advantage, of arresting its prey, and securing itself.—The cuttle-fish, furnished with a liquid magazine of a colour and consistence like ink; which, when pursued by an enemy, the creature emits and blackens the water. By this artifice, the foe is bewildered in the chase; and while the one vainly gropes in the dark, the other seizes the opportunity, and makes his escape.—The nautilus, whose shell forms a natural boat. The dexterous inhabitant unfurls a membrane to the wind, which serves him instead of a sail. He extends also a couple of arms, with which, as with two slender oars, he rows himself along. When he is disposed to dive, he strikes sail, and, without any apprehension of being drowned, sinks to the bottom. When the weather is calm, and he has an inclination to see the world, or take his pleasure, he mounts to the surface; and, self-taught in the art of navigation, performs his voyage without either chart or compass; is himself the vessel, the rigging, and the pilot.—For a more copious illustration of this amusing and wonderful subject, see *Nature Displayed*, vol. iii.

Here is the tortoise, who never moves but under her own portable pent-house: the lobster, which, whether he sleeps or wakes, is still in a state of defence, and clad in jointed armour: the oyster, a sort of living jelly, engarrisoned in the bulwark of native stone; with many other kind of sea-reptiles, or, as the Psalmist speaks, "things creeping innumerable," Psal. civ. 25. I am surprised at the variety of their figure, and charmed with the splendour of their colours. Unsearchable is the wisdom, and endless the contrivance, of the all-creating God! Some are rugged in their form, and little better than hideous in their aspect. Their shells seem to be the rude production of a disorderly jumble, rather than the regular effects of skill and design. Yet we shall find, even in these seeming irregularities, the nicest dispositions. These abodes, uncouth as they may appear, are adapted to the genius of their respective tenants, and exactly suited to their particular exigencies: neither the Ionic delicacy, nor the Corinthian richness, nor any other order of architecture, would have served their purposes half so well as this coarse and homely fabric.

Some, on the other hand, are extremely neat: their structure is all symmetry and elegance. No enamel in the world is comparable to their polish. There is not a room of state, in all the palaces of Europe, so brilliantly adorned as the dining-room and the bed-chamber of the little fish that dwells in mother-of-pearl. Such a lovely mixture of red, and blue, and green, so delightfully staining the most clear and glittering ground, is no where else to be seen. The royal power may covet it, and human art may mimic it; but neither the one nor the other, nor both united, will ever be able to equal it.

But what I admire more than all their streaks, their spots, and their embroidery, is the extraordinary provision made for their safety. Nothing is more relishing and palatable than their flesh; nothing more heavy and sluggish than their motions. As they have no speed to escape, neither have they any dexterity to elude the foe. Were they naked or unguarded, they must be an easy prey to every freebooter that roams the ocean. To prevent this fatal consequence, what is only clothing to other animals, is to them a clothing, a house, and a castle. They have a fortification, that grows with their growth, and is a part of themselves. By this means, they live secure amidst millions and millions of ravenous jaws: by this means, they are imparked, as it were, in their own shell; and, screened from every other assault, are reserved for the use and pleasure of mankind.

This is the birth-place of cod, the standing repast of Lent. This is the nursery of turbot, for its exquisite relish justly styled *the pheasant of the waters*. Hence comes the sturgeon, delicious even in pickle, and a regale for royal luxury; hence the flounders, dappled with reddish spots, and a supply for vulgar wants. Here dwell the mackerel, decked, when haled from their native element, richly decked with the most glossy dyes; the herring, whose back is mottled with azure, and his belly sleek with silver; the salmon, in plainer habit, but of larger substance, and higher esteem, than either or both the preceding. These, when shotten and lean, wander wildly up and down the vast abyss; when plump and delicate, they throng our creeks, and swarm in our bays—they repair to the shallows, or haunt the running streams. Who bids these creatures evacuate the shores, and disperse themselves into all quarters, when they become worthless and unfit for our service? Who

rallies and recalls the undisciplined vagrants, as soon as they are improved into desirable food? Who appoints the very scene of our ambushes to be the place of their rendezvous, so that they come like volunteers to our nets? Surely, the furlough is signed, the summons issued, and the point of reunion settled, by a Providence ever indulgent to mankind, ever studious to treat us with dainties, and "load us with benefits," Psalm lxxviii. 19.

We have wondered at* our Saviour's penetration and power:—his penetration, which, though the sea was at a distance, and walls intervened, discerned the fish that had just swallowed a piece of money;—his power, which without any delay, brought the lawless rambler, charged with the silver spoils to Peter's hook. But is it not equally wonderful, to observe such innumerable multitudes of finny visitants annually approaching our shores and crowding our banks? which furnish our tables with a wholesome and delicate repast, at the same time that they yield to our nation a revenue, more certain and no less considerable than the mines of Peru?

These approach, while those of enormous size and tremendous appearance abandon the shores. The latter might endanger the fisherman's safety, and would certainly scare away the valuable fish from our coasts. They are therefore restrained by an invisible hand, and abscond in the abysses of the ocean just as the wild beasts of the earth, impelled by the same overruling power, hid themselves in the recesses of the forest. A ship, infected with a pestilential distemper, is obliged to keep off at sea, and not permitted to enter the port till she has performed her quarantine. In like manner, these monsters of the deep, whose very business is destruction, are laid under a providential interdiction; only with this very desirable difference, that, as their presence would always be pernicious, they are never suffered to come near—their quarantine is perpetual.

"Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee," Job xii. 7, 8, that the Lord is gracious; that his tender mercies are over all his works; that to us he is superabundantly and profusely good, having ordered all things in the surges of the ocean, as well as on the surface of the ground, for our rich accommodation and for our greatest advantage.

One circumstance relating to the natives of the deep is very peculiar, and no less astonishing. As they neither sow nor reap, have neither the produce of the hedges nor the gleanings of the field, they are obliged to plunder and devour one another for necessary subsistence. They are a kind of authorized banditti, that make violence and murder their professed trade. By this means prodigious devastations ensue; and without proper, without very extraordinary recruits, the whole race must continually dwindle and at length be totally extinct. Were they to bring forth, like the most prolific of our terrestrial animals, a dozen only, or a score at each birth, the increase would be unspeakably too small for the consumption: the weaker species would be destroyed by the stronger; and, in time, the stronger must perish even by their successful endeavours to maintain themselves. Therefore, to supply millions of assassins with their prey, and millions of tables with their food, yet not to depopulate the watery realms, the issue produced by every breeder is almost incredible. They spawn, not by scores or hundreds

* See Letter VIII.

by thousands and by millions*. A single mother is pregnant with a nation. By which amazing, but most needful expedient, a periodical reparation is made, proportionable to the immense havock.

As the sea is peopled with animated inhabitants, it is also variegated with vegetable productions. Some soft as wool; others hard as stone. Some rise like a leafless shrub; some are expanded in the form of a net; some grow with their heads downward, and seem rather hanging on, than springing from, the juttings of the rocks. These may, with much greater propriety than the famous plantations of Semiramis, be called pensile gardens. But as my walk reached no farther than the purlieu of the ocean; as neither you nor I have ever taken a single turn among those submarine groves; as Moses, Joshua, and Jonah, the only writers that ever made the wonderful tour, intent upon more important themes, have left us no memoirs of this curious point; I shall not venture to advance anything particular on the subject. Only one remark I would offer in general:—

The herbs and trees which flourish on the dry land, are maintained by the juices that permeate the soil and fluctuate in the air: for this purpose they are furnished with leaves to collect the one, and with roots to attract the other. Whereas the sea-plants, finding sufficient nourishment in the circumambient waters, have no occasion to detach a party of roots into the ground, and forage the earth for sustenance. Instead, therefore, of penetrating, they are but just tacked to the bottom; and adhere to some solid substance, only with such a degree of tenacity as may secure them from being tossed to and fro by the random agitation of the waves.

We see from this, and numberless other instances, what a diversity there is in the operations of the great Creator's hand. Yet every alteration is an improvement, and each new pattern has a peculiar fitness of its own. The same economy takes place, such a difference of administration, I mean, in his government of the rational world. In "chusing an heritage for his people," and assigning a condition to each of his servants, there is a great variety with respect to individuals, yet a perfect uniformity and complete harmony with respect to the whole. Some he calls out to a course of distinguished labours: they make an illustrious figure in life, and appear "as a city set on a hill," Matth. v. 14. Others he consigns over to obscurity: they are like the prophets whom good Obadiah hid in a cave, and are styled "his secret ones," Psal. lxxxiii. 3. Those, the cedars which stand conspicuous on the top of Lebanon; these, the voilets which lie concealed at the foot of a brier.

St. Paul was eminently qualified for busy scenes, and the most extensive services. He is introduced, therefore, into places of concourse. His ministry lies amidst the most renowned and populous cities. Even his imprisonment at Rome seems to have been a providential expedient for fixing him, as it were, on the stage of public observation, and in the very centre of universal intelligence; where his preaching was like plunging a stone into the midst of a smooth canal, which affects not only the neighbouring parts of the surface, but spreads the floating circles over all the wide expanse. Whereas, the beloved John, being less fitted to bustle among a crowd, is sent into the

* Mr. Petit found 342,144 eggs in the hard roe of a carp, sixteen inches long. Mr. Lwenhoeck counted, in a cod of an ordinary size, 9,384,000 eggs. A fecundity perfectly amazing! but admirably adapted to the pressing exigencies of the watery world; admirably contrived for the benefit and delight of mankind.

unfrequented solitary island, there to indulge the flights of heavenly contemplation, and receive, with uninterrupted attention, the mysterious visions of God.—Job shall have thorns in his path; have the dunghill for his seat and be exposed as a mark to all the arrows of tribulation. Solomon shall dip his foot in oil; shall be elevated on the throne of royalty, and surrounded with the most lavish caresses of heaven.

In all this seeming, this more than seeming contrariety, there is a display not only of sovereign authority, but of consummate propriety. The great head of the church acts like a judicious general, and appoints such a station to each of his soldiers as corresponds with the ability he gives. He acts like the most skilful physician, and prescribes such a remedy for all his patients as is most nicely suited to their respective cases. He knows the precise point of time, the particular place of abode, the peculiar circumstances of condition, which are most proper for each and every of his children; and, like a tender as well as an unerring father, what he knows to be best, that he constantly allots. I said, like a general, like a physician, like a father. But the comparison is low; the language is inexpressive. Christ is all that is implied in these relations, and unspeakably more. O that we may rejoice in the superintendency of such a Saviour! and not only resign ourselves to his will, but thank him for managing the helm; thank him for steering our course through the changes of time and the uncertainties of futurity since, whatever our froward and petulant passions may suggest, the Lord's ways are so far from being unequal, that they have all possible fitness and propriety—they are ordered “in number, weight, and measure.”

All is so very different from the prospects which lately presented themselves, that I can hardly forbear asking, Whether I am not translated into a new world? Where are the waving hillocks covered with the Creator's bounty? where are the fruitful valleys made vocal with his praise? No cultivated field, no opening blossom, not so much as a green leaf appears. None of my late entertainments remain, but only the cooling zephyrs; which are no longer perfumed with the breath of flowers, but impregnated with the freshness of the ocean. Yet though all those lovely landscapes are withdrawn—though the gurgling fountain is silenced, and the blooming garden lost—I am not far from the origin, both of the odours which exhale from the one and of the crystal which flows from the other. I am now upon the margin of that grand reservoir which supplies the country with its fertility, and the plain with its beauty. The sea is the inexhaustible cistern of the universe; the air and sun constitute the mighty engine, which works without intermission to raise the liquid treasure: while the clouds serve as so many aqueducts, to convey the genial stores along the atmosphere, and distribute them at seasonable periods, and in regular proportions, through all the regions of the globe.

I question whether the united application of mankind could, with their utmost skill, and with all possible percolations, fetch a single drop of perfect sweet water* from this unmeasurable pit of brine. Yet the action of the

* I have not forgotten what was lately affirmed in our public papers, that a certain ingenious gentleman, I think in the city of Durham, had found out the art of sweetening sea-water. What he produced might probably approve itself to the taste, and not without its usefulness; yet I cannot but query, whether it will be found to have all those fine, balmy, salutiferous qualities, which distinguish and recommend the rain-water which has been exhaled by the kindly warmth of the sun; has been filtrated by passir

solar heat draws off every hour, every minute, millions and millions of tons, in vaporous exhalations; which, being skilfully parcelled out, and securely lodged in "the bottles of heaven *," are sent abroad, sweetened and refined, without any brackish tincture or the least bituminous sediment: sent abroad upon the wings of the wind, to distil in dews, or pour themselves in rain; to ooze from the orifices of fountains; to trickle along the veins of rivulets; to rise in the cavities of wells; to roll in many a headlong torrent from the sides of mountains; to flow in copious streams amidst the bosom of burning deserts, and through the heart of populous kingdoms, in order to refresh and fertilize, to beautify and enrich, every soil, in every clime.

How amiable is the goodness, and how amazing is the power, of the world's adorable Maker! How amiable his goodness, in distributing so largely what is so absolutely necessary and so extensively beneficial! That water, without which we can scarce perform any business or enjoy any comfort, should be every one's property; should spring up from the soil; should drop down from the clouds; should stream by our houses; should take a journey from the ends of the earth, and the extremities of the ocean, on purpose to serve us! How amazing his power, that this boundless mass of fluid salt, so intolerably nauseous to the human taste, should be the original spring which deals out every palatable draught to mankind, and quenches the thirst of every animal! Doubtless, the power by which this is effected can extract comfort from our afflictions, advantage from our calamities, and "make all things work together for our good," Rom. viii. 28.

Vast and various are the advantages which we receive from the liquid element; vast, as its unbounded extent; various, as its ever mutable surface. The sweet waters glide along the earth in spacious currents, which not only exhilarate the adjacent country by their humid train and exhaling moisture, but, by giving a brisk impulse to the air, prevent the unwholesome stagnation of their own vapours. They pass by opulent cities, and, receiving all their filth, rid them of a thousand nuisances, which, when once committed to these fluid scavengers, are as effectually secreted as if they were buried ever so deep in the earth. Yet, though they condescend to so mean an employ, they are fitted for more honourable services. They enter the gardens of a prince, and compose some of the most delightful ornaments of the place. They glitter upon the eye as they float in the ample canal. They amuse the imagination as they ascend in curious *jets d'eau*. They yield a nobler entertainment, as, forming themselves into sheets of sloping silver, they fall in graceful or in grand cascades. If, instead of beautifiers, we think proper to make use of them as drudges, they ply at our mills, they toil incessantly at the wheel, and, by working the hugest engines, take upon themselves an unknown share of our fatigue, and save us a proportionable degree of expense.

So forcibly they act when collected, and most surprisingly they insinuate when detached. They throw themselves into the body of a plant, they penetrate the minutest of its organised tubes, and find a passage through meanders, too small for the eye to discern, too numerous and intricate even for imagination to follow. How difficultly does a labourer that serves the and repassing through the regions of the air; has been clarified in the highest and purest tracts of the atmosphere; has been further refined and perfected by the searching agency of the winds. I should very much wonder, if the puny alembic could equal this grand apparatus of nature.

* So the clouds are elegantly styled in Job xxviii. 37.

mason push his way up the rounds of a ladder, bending under the burden mortar on his head! while these servants in the employ of nature carry the load to a much greater height, and climb with the utmost ease, even without the assistance of steps or stairs. They convey the nutrimental stores, vegetation, from the lowest fibres that are plunged into the soil, to the very topmost twigs that wave amidst the clouds. They are the caterers for the vegetable world, or (if I may be allowed the expression) the sutlers, who attend the whole host of plants, to furnish them with seasonable refreshment and necessary provision. By means of which "the trees of the Lord are full of sap, even the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted," Psalm civ. 1 and, notwithstanding their vast elevation and prodigious diffusion—though they are abandoned by man, and deprived of all cultivation—yet not a single branch is destitute of leaves, nor a single leaf of moisture.

Besides the salutary, cleanly, and serviceable circulation of the rivers, the sea has a libration no less advantageous, and much more remarkable. Every day this immense collection of waters, for the space of five or six hours, flows towards the land, and after a short pause retires again to its inmost cavern taking up nearly the same time in its retreat as it required for its approach. How great is the power which sets the whole fluid world in motion! who protrudes to the shores such an inconceivable weight of waters, without a concurrence from the winds, frequently in direct opposition to all their force! How gracious also is the Providence which bids the mighty element perform its tumbling revolutions with the most exact punctuality! Was it sufficient to advance with a lawless and unlimited swell, it might sweep over kingdoms, and deluge whole continents. Was it irregular and uncertain in its approaches, navigation would be at a stand, and trade become precarious. But, being constant at its stated periods, and never exceeding its appointed bounds, it creates no alarm to the country, and affords very considerable aid to traffic.

The tide, at its flow, rushing up our large rivers, clears, and deepens the passage, in many places spreads a copious flood, where a dry and empty waste lay before. Is the sailor returned from his voyage, and waiting at the mouth of the channel? The flux is ready to convey his vessel to the waters of the owner, and without any hazard of striking on the rocks, or being fastened in the sands. Has the merchant freighted his ship? would he have it transferred to the ocean? The reflux tenders its service, and bears away the load, with the utmost expedition, and with equal safety. Behold, man! how greatly thou art beloved, how highly favoured by thy Maker. In what part of his works has he forgotten or overlooked thy welfare? Show me a creature, point out a spot, in the formation or disposition of which he has not been mindful of thy interests? "He has made thee to have dominion over the works of his hands, and has put all things in subjection under thy feet. All sheep and oxen, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and the surges "of the sea," Psalm viii. 6—8, are subservient to thy benefit. Even these, wild and impetuous as they are, yield their willing backs to receive thy load; and, like an indefatigable beast of burden, carry to the place which thou shalt nominate.

What preserves this vast flood in a state of perpetual purity? It is the universal sewer, into which are discharged the refuse and filth of the whole world. That which would defile the land, and pollute the air, is transmitted

to the ocean, and neither mischief nor inconvenience ensue. Those swarms of locusts which, while living, were a plague to Pharaoh by their loathed intrusion, and, when dead, might have caused a more dreadful plague by their noisome stench, swept into the sea, were neither pestilential nor offensive. How then is this receptacle of every nuisance kept clean? Why does it not contract a noxious taint, and diffuse a destructive contagion? such as would render it a grave to the aquatic, and bane to the terrestrial animals? It is owing, partly to its incessant motion, partly to its saline quality. By the one, it is secured from any internal principle of corruption; by the other, it works itself clear from every adventitious defilement.

A directory this, and a pattern for me! Thus may divine grace, like the penetrating power of salt, cure the depravity of my heart, and rectify the disorders of my temper! season my words, and make all my conversation savoury! Thus may a continual course of activity, in my secular and my sacred vocation, prevent the pernicious effects of indolence! Let me daily exercise, or be attempting to exercise, the graces of Christianity, lest faith become feeble, lest hope contract dimness, and charity wax cold.

Now the tide begins to flow. Wave rises upon wave, and billow rolls over billow. Nothing can divert, nothing retard its progress, no, not for a moment. Though Canutus be in the way*, though his royal authority and strict prohibition, nay, though all the forces of his kingdom oppose, it will never discontinue the advancing swell, till it has reached the destined point. So may I always abound in communion with God, or in beneficence to men, resigning one religious or charitable employ only to enter upon another, and be thus pressing forward, still pressing forward, to the prize of my high calling in Christ Jesus; differing from these regular vicissitudes of the ocean only in one particular, that my endeavours never ebb, my soul never draws back: Since this would be, if temporary, to my grievous loss; if final, to my aggravated perdition.

Consider the sea in another capacity, and it connects the remotest realms of the universe, by facilitating an intercourse between their respective inhabitants. What short-sighted beings are mankind! how extremely superficial their views! how unavoidable therefore their frequent mistakes! The ancients looked upon this bottomless deep as an unpassable gulf: If our forefathers were so egregiously mistaken in this instance, let us not too

* Alluding to a memorable and instructive story recorded of King Canutus, who, probably without having read, had nevertheless thoroughly learned, that excellent lesson of Horace:

*Regum timendorum in proprios greges,
Reges in ipsos imperium est Jovis.*

Some of his abject and designing flatterers had the impious assurance to tell him, "his power was more than human." To convince them of their folly, and rebuke them for their falsehood, he ordered his chair of state to be placed on the extremity of the shore, just as the tide began to flow. Here he took his seat, in the presence of the parasites, and many other attendants. Then, with all that dignity of air, and severity of accent, which sovereign authority knows how to assume, he said, "Thou sea, the land on which I sit is mine; nor has any one dared to invade my rights, or disobey my commands, without suffering the deserved punishment. I charge thee, therefore, on pain of my highest displeasure, not to enter these territories, nor touch the feet of England's monarch."—When the rude waves made bold to enter on the forbidden ground; nay, when those uncourtly things presumed to rush upon the royal seat, and even to dash his majesty's person, he started from his throne, and bid every beholder observe the impotence of earthly kings; bid them remember, that he alone is worthy of the name, whom winds, and waves, and universal nature obey.

peremptorily pronounce upon any difficult or mysterious point, lest succeeding generations, or a more enlightened state, should cover us with the dull confusion of childish ignorance and foolish conceit.

We have clearly demonstrated, and happily experienced, the very reverse of that grey-headed surmise to be true. The ocean, instead of being a line of separation, is the great bond of union. For this purpose, it is never exhausted, though it supplies the whole firmament with clouds, and the whole earth with rains; nor ever overflows, though all the rivers in the universe are perpetually augmenting its stores, and pouring in their tributary floods.—By means of this element we travel farther than birds of the strongest pinion fly, and discover tracts which the “vulture’s eye has never seen.” Job xxviii. 7. We make a visit to nations that lie drowned in their midnight slumbers, when every industrious person on this part of the globe is bestirring himself in all the hurry of business. We cultivate an acquaintance with the sun-burnt Negro and the shivering Icelander. We cross the flaming line, we penetrate the frozen pole, and wing our way even round the world.

This is the great vehicle of commerce. Not to mention the floating castles which contain whole armies, which bear the thunder, the fiery tempests, and all the dreadful artillery of war; what a multitude of ships, of the largest dimensions and most prodigious burden, are continually passing and re-passing this universal thoroughfare! ships that are freighted, not with sacks, but with harvests of corn; that carry not pipes, but vintages of wine; that are laden, not with bars of iron, blocks of marble, or wedges of gold, but with whole quarries of massy stone, and whole mines of ponderous metal! These, which, lodged in these volatile storehouses, and actuated by the breath of heaven, are wafted to the very ends of the earth; wafted, as enormous and as wildly as they are, more expeditiously than the light berlin bowls along the road; almost as speedily as the nimble-footed roe bounds over the hills*.

Astonishing ordination of eternal wisdom! yet most graciously contrived for the benefit of mankind! I can hardly satisfy my view in beholding this rolling chaos; I can never cease my admiration in contemplating its amazing properties. That an element, so unstable and fugitive, should bear up such an immense weight as would bend the firmest floors, or burst the strongest beams! That the thin and yielding air should drive on, with so much facility and speed, bodies of such excessive bulk as the strength of a legion would be unable to move! That the air and the water, acting in conjunction, should carry to the distance of many thousand miles, what the united force of men and machines could scarcely drag a single yard! Puny and despicable are our attempts; but great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord Almighty! “If thou wilt work,” says the prophet, who or what “shall it?” Isa. xliii. 13. Neither the meanness of the instrument, nor the greatness of the event. A sling and a stone shall lay the gigantic bravo in dust, 1 Sam. xvii. 50. An ox-goad shall do more execution than a battery of cannon, Judges iii. 31. Even “a worm shall thresh the mountains, beat them small, and make the hills as chaff,” Isa. xli. 14, 15. God is sufficient in his name, and out of weakness he maketh his strength per-

* A ship, under a brisk and steady gale, will sail at the rate of 216 miles in 24 hours, persevering, if the wind continues favourable, in the same rapid career for several days together: a course which, considering both its swiftness and duration, cannot be equaled by the ablest horse, perhaps not by the nimblest creature that treads the ground.

that we, my dear Aspasio, that I especially, may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might! Then, as the light air is made to act with a more forcible impulse than the most vigorous engines; as the fluid water is made to sustain more ponderous loads than the most substantial works of masonry; so we, who in ourselves are nothing but impotence, shall be enabled to triumph over the legions of hell, and tread down all the temptations of the world.

How are the mariners conducted through this fluid common, than which nothing is more wide, and nothing more wild? Here is no track to be followed, no posts of direction to be consulted, nor any shepherd's hut where the wandering traveller may ask his way. Are they guided by a pillar of fire in the night, or a moveable cloud in the day, as the sons of Jacob and Joseph were escorted through the eastern deserts? No; but by a mean, contemptible, and otherwise worthless fossil. The apostle James mentions it as a very remarkable fact, that the "ships, which are so great, and driven of fierce winds, yet are turned about with a very small helm whithersoever the governor listeth," James iii. 4. Is it not equally wonderful, that they should be led through such a pathless and unmeasurable waste by so small an expedient as the intervention of the loadstone*? Till this surprising mineral was discovered, and its properties were improved, navigation lay in its cradle; was but a mere infant, that crept timorously along the coasts; was obliged to keep within sight of the shores, and, if driven out beyond the narrow sphere of her landmarks, could neither ascertain her situation nor pursue her voyage. But this guide, when every beacon on the top of the hills is vanished from the remotest ken; where nothing but skies are seen above, and seas alone appear below—this guide points out the proper passage. This communicates an intelligence which shines clear in the thickest darkness, and remains steady in the most tempestuous agitations. This has given, not indeed birth, but maturity to navigation, and turned her swaddling-bands into wings. This has emboldened her to launch into the heart of the ocean, and enabled her to range from pole to pole.

Thus does God, both in the operations of nature and the administrations of providence, accomplish the most important ends by the most inconsiderable means. When the formidable Sisera is to be cut off, the blow shall be given, not by some puissant champion, but by the hand of a woman, Judges iv. 9. When Jericho is to be demolished, those impregnable fortifications shall fall, not beneath the stroke of battering engines, but before the sound of rams' horns, Josh. vi. 3. When 100,000 Midianites are to be routed, the Lord of hosts will gain this signal victory, not by numerous legions completely armed, but by a handful of Israelites, accoutred only with trumpets, lamps, and pitchers, Judg. vii. 19. Who would have thought, that from the root of Jesse, a root out of a dry ground, should arise that great tree, which "stretches her boughs unto the sea, and her height unto the heavens, and her branches unto the ends of the earth?" That the despised Galilean and the carpenter's son should be the Saviour of the world, and the Heir of all things? Nay,

I am aware that other expedients are used for shaping a proper course on the ocean, as making observations from the sun by mathematical instruments. But these, I believe, are only subordinate aids to the needle. The grand regulator is the magnet. I have heard an experienced sailor declare, he would rather be without his quadrant than without a compass.

that a person humbled like the meanest of slaves, and executed like the vilest of malefactors; nailed to a cross, and laid prostrate among the dead; that he should restore life and immortality to ruined sinners; should open the gate of grace and glory on lost mankind? That a few illiterate creatures, taken from the barge, the oar, and the net, should confute philosophers, and conquer kings; should overthrow the strong-holds of idolatry, and plant Christianity on its ruins! This is a circumstance which, though a stumbling-block to some people, has considerably strengthened my faith. It is perfectly agreeable to the Almighty's manner. It is (if I may so speak) the distinguishing turn of his hand, and the peculiar style of his works. Whence does he raise the charmingly beautiful flower? whence the magnificent myriads of forest oaks? whence the boundless and inestimable stores of harvest? From principles which bear not the least proportion to their effects. Besides, this more emphatically speaks the God. It "shows the lighting down of his arm" Isa. xxx. 30; and absolutely precludes all the pretensions of human arrogance or finite power. It appropriates the honour to that supreme Agent, before whom the easy and the arduous are both alike. All men that see it must confess, This hath God done.

Through this channel are imported to our island the choice productions, and the peculiar treasures, of every nation under heaven. So that we can breakfast upon a dissolution of the American kernel*, and see the rich nutriment liquor froth in our cups, without ever tempting the foaming brine. We can steep the delicately-flavoured Chinese leaf in the waters of our own well; spend the afternoon in our own parlour, and be regaled with an infusion of the finely-scented Arabian berry. We can season the friendly bowl with the juices of the orange, or refresh our clammy palate with the pulp of the tamarind, without feeling that fervent heat which imparts such a poignant relish to the former, without suffering those scorching beams which give a few cooling virtues to the latter. We can pile upon our salvers a pyramid of Italian figs; fill the interstices with the sky-dried raisins of Malaga; and form a summit for the inviting structure with the pistacio-nut of Aleppo. Thus the eastern spices exhale their odours on our tables, and the west Indian canes transfuse their sweetness into our viands. We clothe our bodies with the vegetable fleeces of the south†, and line our apparel with warm furs and spoils from the north. We can wear the pearl polished in the abysses of the Persian Gulf; and walk on the carpets manufactured in the dominions of the Great Mogul; yet neither expose ourselves to the rage of boisterous seas, nor the more dreaded treachery of barbarous people. In short, by this grand and beneficial expedient of navigation, every tide conveys into our ports the wealth of the remotest climes, and brings the abundance of the universe to unladen on our quays. London becomes a mart of nations; and almost every private house in the kingdom is embellished or accommodated from the quarters of the globe.

Almost every private house—Is not this more like rhetorical flourish than real truth? Are not all the advantages I have mentioned the peculiar portion of the rich? Is not the sea, like high life and the gay world, somewhat

* Called the cocoa, which affords the principal ingredient of chocolate, and grows on a small tree in America.

† Cotton, which is a sort of wool encompassing the seed of a tree

capricious and partial? bestowing lavishly her favours on the wealthy, at the same time that she neglects the needy? Quite the reverse. Like her most exalted, yet most condescending Creator, she is no respecter of persons. She deals out her liberalities to all: to the wealthy, such as are suitable to their circumstances; to the indigent, such as are best adapted to their condition. If she ornaments the bodies of the first, she employs the hands of the last; furnishes these with useful labour, those with elegant accommodations. What a multitude of industrious people acquire a livelihood by preparing the commodities intended for exportation! and what a multitude of dexterous artificers maintain their families by manufacturing the wares imported from abroad!

It is reckoned a valuable species of beneficence to provide proper work for the poor. This withdraws them from many temptations, and preserves them from much wickedness. It hinders them from being a burden to themselves, and a nuisance to the public. They might otherwise be idle, and as vermin on the body politic; or even mutinous, and as vipers in the bowels of the nation: whereas, by exerting themselves in a due subordination, and with becoming diligence, they are the very sinews of the community; or like the grand wheel in the machine of state, whose incessant activity distributes plenty, and pours innumerable conveniences through the whole. What a master then, or rather what a mistress is the sea! how extensive her correspondence, and how large her demand for workmen! Into what branch of trade does she not enter? What kind of ingenious science, or useful toil, does she not befriend? How many millions of honest but needy persons are engaged in her service? and how amply are they repaid for their pains? "They that go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters, these men see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." They also that dwell among their own people, and abide in the villages, even they enjoy the bounty, and share the advantages of the ocean. For, though it is false philosophy to suppose the waters themselves strained through subterranean passages into the inland countries; yet it is an undeniable truth, that their beneficial effects are transfused into every town, every hamlet, and every cottage.

Surely the inhabitants of our isle have reason to turn the prediction of Moses, concerning the tribe of Joseph, into a devout and grateful acknowledgment:—"Blessed of the Lord is* our land. Blessed with the precious things of heaven, with the dew, and with the deep that coucheth beneath. With the precious things brought forth by the sun, and with the precious things thrust forth by the moon. With the chief things of the ancient mountains, and with the precious things of the everlasting hills; and with the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof," Deut. xxxiii. 13—16. May we also enjoy "the good will of him who dwelt in the bush," Deut. xxxiii. 16; and the grace of him who hung on the tree! May the eternal God be our refuge, and his everlasting arms underneath both us and our interests! Happy then wilt thou be, thrice happy, O England! Thy temporal advantages and thy spiritual privileges considered, it may be truly said, "Who," or what nation "is like unto thee?"

* *Is*, (so I would translate the original,) not *be*; in the predictive, not precatory form. This implies a fulness of faith, and distinguishes prophecy from prayer; best suits the extraordinary illumination of Moses, and does most honour to the omniscient Spirit

This for my country ; now let me wish for myself :

God of all worlds ! source and supreme of things !
 From whom all life, from whom duration springs !
 Intense, O ! let me for thy glory burn,
 Nor fruitless view my days and months return.
 Give me with wonder at thy works to glow,
 To grasp thy vision, and thy truths to know :
 O'er time's tempestuous sea to reach thy shore,
 And live, and sing, where time shall be no more.

You see, Aspasio, I have been studying the volume of nature ; endeavouring to read its capital characters, and learn some of its instructive lessons. The sea has been the page ; but how superficial is my perusal, and no less scanty my knowledge ! Little, very little have I seen or conceived, relating to those works of wonder which the vast unfathomable deep contains ; the plants it produces and the creatures it nourishes : its stupendous rocks and subterranean caves ; the heaps of pearl, which are its native growth ; and the loads of gold, which it has gained by shipwreck. So superficial are my views of Christ ; so scanty is my acquaintance with the gospel.

You, I presume, are sitting at the feet of that sublime Teacher, and attending to the dictates of his mouth, in “ whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” Col. ii. 3. Let me promise myself a communication of your thoughts, as I have freely transmitted a specimen of mine. And I will make no scruple to acknowledge the superiority of the exchange that I receive.

Χρυσία χαλκίων, ἰκαστοὶ ἐνταβίων.

Or, as the eloquent Isaiah speaks : “ For brass you will bring gold, and for iron you will bring silver,” Isa. lx. 17 ; rendering me, by this intercourse, your more obliged, though it is scarce possible for me to be more than I already am, your affectionate

THERON.

P.S.—M. Pascal, who was remarkably fond of brevity, makes an odd excuse for transgressing, on a particular occasion, his favourite rule. He entreats his friend to pardon the unusual length of his epistle, by assuring him, “ that he had not time to make it shorter.” I cannot, it must be confessed, adopt this philosopher's apology. For I have purposely lengthened my letter, with a view of setting, in this one circumstance, a pattern for my Aspasio.

LETTER X.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,—I thank you for your letter, because it entertains and improves me : I thank you for your postscript, because it is my encouragement and my apology. I am set down to write, with a copious stock of materials. It will be far more difficult to contract than to enlarge. I must therefore acknowledge myself obliged to your candour for assigning me the easier task. That prolixity which, in others, might be ungentle and faulty, is in me an act of complaisance, and matter of duty.

Though absent from you, I went with you in your late ramble. Your descriptive pen has made me partaker of the ideal delight ; may divine grace enable me to share in the spiritual improvement ! When you displayed

the beauties of the morn, breaking forth from the obscurity of night ; when you adopted that noble aspiration from our philosophic poet, I could not forbear adding : " Thus may the gracious God, who commands the light to shine out of the midnight darkness, shine into our hearts, and give that incomparably glorious knowledge, the knowledge of his blessed Self ! which, though discernible through all the tracts of creation, and derivable from every work of his almighty hand, yet nowhere beams forth with such complete and such amiable lustre as in the person of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. Here we behold all the sublime perfections of the Deity, not only manifested with inimitable splendour, but operating for our own advantage. We behold them, as Job speaks, " for ourselves," Job xix. 27 ; and cannot but receive inexpressible refreshment and joy from the view.

When you walked beneath the shade of those huge, horrid, and enormous cliffs, both amused and alarmed at their stupendous magnitude and frightful irregularity ; when you cast your eye upon the wide expanded surface of the ocean ; when you surveyed the far more unmeasurable arches of the sky, and meditated, in that awful solitude, on the wildest and most magnificent appearances of nature—I felt the same kind of devout astonishment with yourself. While the soul was wrapt in " pensive stillness, and pleasing dread," methought I heard a voice, or something like a voice, from the silent spheres, as well as from the sounding seas. It seemed to echo back, what the mighty angel whom John saw flying in the midst of heaven once proclaimed : " Worship him, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water," Rev. xiv. 7. " Worship him, who stretched out that azure pavilion with such amazing grandeur ; who measured yonder world of waters in the hollow of his hand ; and before whom this immense range of mountainous cliffs is but as dust upon the scale."

When you described the dismal situation of a wretch, exposed on the edges of the tremendous precipice, hanging over the ragged rocks and the unfathomable gulf, and cleaving only to a slender treacherous breaking bough ; how heartily did I join in your adoring acknowledgments to that kind, interposing, blessed hand, which rescued us both from an infinitely more threatening and dreadful danger ! rescued us as slaves from the dominion of the devil ; snatched us as brands from the inextinguishable burnings ; and bid us, (O marvellous superabundant goodness !) bid us possess the liberty of righteousness,—bid us inherit the kingdom of heaven.

When you mention the past indolence, and the present fervour of your prayers, I could not forbear reiterating my praises to God on your behalf. This is a proof, my dear Theron, that you are going in the way, everlasting ; for it is written, " They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them," Jer. xxxi. 9. This is the work of the Holy Ghost, dwelling in your heart ; for what saith the Scripture ? " I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplication," Zech. xii. 10. And our Lord himself mentions this as the indication of a true conversion : " Behold he prayeth," Acts ix. 11. Had not Saul prayed before ? Yes ; and made long prayers too. But he never, till that instant, was sensible of his undone and damnable condition ; never cried to God from the depths of his distress, or from the depths of his heart ; nor ever solicited the throne of grace, in the all-prevailing name of Jesus Christ. His prayers, till then, were somewhat like the notes which fluctuate to and fro in the air, without any vigorous

impulse or any certain aim ; but, in that hour, they were like the arrow which springs from the strained bow, and, quick as lightning, flies to the mark.

I was pleased to find you, in the process of your letter, insensibly forgetting the narrative, and so engaged by the subject, that you spoke not as the relator but as the beholder. Thus may we always be affected, when we study the oracles of truth—study them, not as cold unconcerned critics, who are only to judge of their meaning, but as persons deeply interested in all they contain ; who are particularly addressed in every exhortation, and directed by every precept ; whose are the promises, and to whom belong the precious privileges. When we are enabled thus to realize and appropriate the contents of that invaluable book, then we shall taste the sweetness, and feel the power of the Scriptures. Then we shall know, by happy experience, that our divine Master's words are not barely sounds and syllables, but “they are spirit, and they are life,” John vi. 63.

I was still more agreeably entertained with your picture of commerce, and of the advantages we receive from navigation. One advantage, however, I can specify, which is greater than any, greater than all you have celebrated ; an advantage, which will endear and ennoble navigation, so long as the sun and moon endure. The gospel, my dear friend, the glorious gospel, came to our island through this channel. The volume that comprises it, and the preacher that published it, both were imported by shipping. And may we not say, with the enraptured Isaiah, “How beautiful are the feet of them that bring good tidings, that publish peace, that bring good tidings of good that publish salvation, that say unto Zion, Thy God reigneth ?” Isa. lii. 7. It is pleasant to hear their voice, pleasant to contemplate their message and pleasant even to behold the ground on which they trod, or the very waves over which they sailed. This made the holy prophet rejoice in spirit, when he foresaw the extensive spread of his Master's glory, and the certain commencement of our happiness. This put into his mouth that affectionate and congratulatory address, which, in a very particular manner, is directed to us and our countrymen : “Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the ends of the earth ; ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein ; ye isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice ; let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains ! Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare his praise in the islands !” Isa. xlii. 10—12.

We read in Ezekiel, of the most magnificent fleet that ever ploughed the seas. The masts were of cedar, Ezek. xxvii. 5, &c. and the benches of ivory Fine linen, beautified with embroidery, floated to the winds, and formed the sails. Blue and purple rigged the vessel, and clothed the meanest mariner. Let us suppose, that the freight of this splendid navy was proportioned in value to its sumptuous tackling. Yet how poor, how despicable were either were both, if estimated with the treasures of the gospel ; those divine treasures which spring from the imputation of our Redeemer's righteousness, and which have much the same kindly influence on religious practice, as navigation, with all her improvements, has upon traffic ! Give me leave to confirm this assertion, by selecting a few instances, and applying them in a few interrogatories.

One of the benefits proceeding from the imputation of Christ's righteousness, is pardon : pardon, not partial, but complete ; a pardon of each s

be it ever so heinous ; a pardon of all sins, be they ever so numerous. For thus saith God the Lord, who sent both his prophets and apostles, preaching peace by " Jesus Christ, I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me," Jer. xxxiii. 8. To learn the desirable nature of this blessing, let us step back into the annals of history, and attend a traitorous unhappy nobleman to his vindictive exit. His body is demanded by the ministers of justice. Reluctant and trembling he is conducted to the scaffold. There the alarmed criminal sees the mourning block, sees the glittering axe, sees the coffin prepared for his corpse, sees thousands of anxious spectators, waiting, with eager looks and throbbing hearts, the fearful catastrophe. In a word, he sees death advancing, with all the solemnities of horror and woe. Time elapses. The preparatory ceremonies are despatched. The fatal moment is arrived. No longer respite can be allowed. He must submit to immediate execution. Accordingly he prostrates himself to receive the stroke ; but, seized with new terrors at the poised axe and approaching blow, he starts from the dangerous posture. Again he bends, and again snatches his neck from the impending edge. A third time he lifts his pale countenance to the pitying crowds and departing light. Once more he bows to the block, and once more raises his head, in wishful expectation of the royal clemency. Had a messenger appeared at the critical instant, with a shout of joy upon his tongue, and a sealed pardon in his hand, O how transporting the news ! inexpressibly welcome the favour !—What was denied to his passionate desires, denied to the importunate solicitations of his friends, is freely offered to us in the gospel of Christ ; a pardon of infinitely higher consequence, which obliterates millions and millions of rebellious acts ; which extends its blessed effects, not merely through the little span of life, but beyond the gates of the grave—beyond the boundaries of time—through all the ages of eternity.

How unfathomable is that immense flood on which my Theron lately exercised his contemplation ! The toiling plummets, with all their length of cordage, are unable to find a bottom. Were the hugest millstones, or the highest towers, or the most spacious cities, cast into that prodigious gulf, they would be totally overwhelmed, and irrecoverably lost. Therefore the inspired prophet, to show the boundless extent of the divine mercies in Jesus Christ, and to denote the fulness of their pardon who are cleansed in the Redeemer's blood, hath illustrated both by this grand similitude : " Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," Mic. vii. 19 ; not one, or a few, but all their sins ; not barely behind thy back, but into the sea ; and not into the shallow parts, but in the very depths of the ocean ; so that they shall never rise up in judgment—never be taken notice of, no, nor ever be remembered any more.

With an act of total indemnity, let us join a thorough restoration to favour. If the wrath of an earthly king be as " the roaring of a lion," Prov. xix. 12, how much more tremendous is his indignation who is able to cast both body and soul into hell ! If the favour of an earthly sovereign be " as dew upon the grass," how much more desirable and delightful his loving-kindness, whom all things in heaven and earth obey ! By the righteousness of Jesus Christ, we are freed from all foreboding apprehensions of the former, and established in the comfortable possession of the latter. The gospel renews and ratifies that joyful proclamation of the angelic host, " Peace on earth,

and goodwill to men." Luke ii. 14. God is not only pacified toward believers, but well pleased with them in his dear Son. They are the object of his complacential delight, and he rejoices over them to do them good.

Nay, they are made children, "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty 2 Cor. vi. 18; "and if sons, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. The chief captain mentioned in the Acts, purchased his freedom of the imperial city Rome with a great sum of money, Acts xxii. 28. If such a little transient immunity was so valuable in his esteem, who can express the worth, who can conceive the dignity, of this divine adoption? Yet it belongs to those who receive the gospel, and are interested in Christ. They have access to the Omnipotent Being, such free and welcome access as a beloved child to an indulgent father. To him they may fly for aid in every difficulty; and from him obtain a supply in all their wants. God, as the sacred charter runs, "is their God." All his lovely, all his adorable perfections, are their glorious inheritance, and exceeding great reward. That eternal power, to which nothing is impossible, exerts itself as their guard; and that unerring wisdom, from which nothing is concealed, acts as their guide. His very justice is no longer an incensed adversary, demanding vengeance and meditating destruction; but a faithful guaranty, to provide for the punctual execution of the Redeemer's treaty, and their complete enjoyment of its various blessings. What a privilege is this! Rather, what a cluster of privileges is here! Weigh the kingdoms of the world; cast all the glories of them into the scale; and they will be found, when compared with these divine prerogatives, emptier than the bubble that bursts, lighter than the spark that expires.

In the gospel are given exceeding great and precious promises: of such value, that they were procured by the blood of Christ; of such certainty, that they are ratified by the oath of Jehovah, Heb. vi. 17. So durable, though "all flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the grass, this word of our God abideth for ever," 1 Pet. i. 23; so efficacious, that there are no such cordials to revive our fainting, and no such bulwark to secure our endangered souls. With these the Bible is as richly replenished as the clear midnight sky is bespangled with stars. They "are all yea and amen," consigned over as a sure unalienable portion, "to them that are in Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. i. 20.

Another benefit, given in consequence of the Redeemer's righteousness, is the sanctifying Spirit. A most comprehensive blessing this! Our Saviour intimates, that it includes every heavenly gift, is an assemblage of all good things*. How singular a comfort must it be to blind Bartimeus to have his eyes opened, and behold the all-cheering light of the sun! Mark x. 52. So, and far more comfortable, are the enlightening influences of the blessed Spirit, when they shine upon the wretched creature who sits in darkness and the shadow of death. How peculiar a mercy for the impure and abhorrent leper, to be healed of his inveterate disease! to feel the soothing sensation of ease, where sores rankled and pain raged! Instead of enfeebling languor and loathsome deformity, vigour braces his limbs, and comeliness blooms in his countenance, Matt. viii. 3. Equally benign, and equally salubrious, is the agency of the divine Spirit on our depraved, polluted, sensual minds. How signal was the recovery, and how welcome the change, when that unhappy creature, so wildly agitated by a mischievous demon, was reinstated in

* Compare Matth. vii. 11. with Luke xi. 13.

the peaceful possession of himself and his faculties! when, instead of unnaturally cutting his own flesh, or committing barbarous outrages on innocent travellers, he sat composed and attentive at the feet of Jesus, Mark v. 15. receiving heavenly instruction from his lips, and learning the meekness of wisdom from his example. So salutary and beneficial is the transforming power of the Holy Ghost the Comforter; softening the rugged, sweetening the morose, and calming the passionate temper. It is undoubtedly the utmost improvement, and the highest happiness of our nature, to have the image of the blessed God reinstamped on our hearts. This is an earnest, and an anticipation also, of endless felicity; a bud which will open in heaven, and spread into immortal glory; a dawn which will shine more and more, till the Sun of Righteousness arises, and brightens it into everlasting day. This bud the sanctifying Spirit ingrafts, this dawn the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ diffuses, in the barren and benighted soul.

In a word, receive this righteousness, and you have a title to all blessings, whether they be present or future, bodily or spiritual, temporal or eternal. From the necessary conveniencies of bread to eat and raiment to put on, even to the crowns of glory and the fulness of joy, all, all are owing to our Redeemer's righteousness. You see now, Theron, that our scheme has no tendency to impoverish your spiritual condition, or diminish your true riches, any more than those tracts of water which surround our island are detrimental to the wealth of its inhabitants. Detrimental! No; they are an inexhaustible source of treasure. They convey to our use the choicest accommodations and the most elegant delights; such as would in vain be expected, if the whole ocean was converted into the finest meads and most fertile pastures. So—but to apply this comparison, would forestal your principal question.

“Do not these favours, though unspeakably precious in themselves, tend to the introduction or support of ungodliness?”—Quite the reverse. Have we redemption through our Saviour's blood, even the forgiveness of our sins? We are redeemed, not that we may sink in supineness, or launch into licentiousness, but that we may be a “peculiar people, zealous of good works,” Tit. ii. 14. Are we made the children of God? Then “let our light so shine before men, that others, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven,” Matt. v. 16. This is the genuine consequence of such a doctrine, and the proper effect of such a benefit. Are we vested with sacred privileges? These admonish us, these urge us to walk worthy of him “who hath called us to his kingdom and glory,” 1 Thess. ii. 12. Shall the citizens of heaven be animated with no higher views than the slaves of appetite and drudges of the world? Are we constituted heirs of the promises? The grace which they ascertain is intended to make us partakers of a divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4; and the encouragement which they administer incites us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, incites us to perfect holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Such high immunities are a most endearing persuasive, not to disgrace, but magnify—not to provoke, but please—their unspeakably beneficent Author.

I might farther observe, that holiness is one of the most distinguished blessings in our system; nay, is the very central blessing, to which all the others verge, in which they all terminate. Were we chosen from eternity? It was for this purpose, that we may “be holy and unblamable in love,” Eph i. 4. Are we called in time? It is to this intent, that we may “shew forth

the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. Are we "created again in Christ Jesus?" It is, to capacitate us for acceptable service, and to furnish us unto every good work, Eph. ii. 10. "I will put my Spirit within you, saith the Lord." For what end? "That ye may walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them," Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Here comes in my Theron's favourite endowment—sincere obedience. Far, very far from discarding sincere obedience, we would only introduce it under its due character, and in its proper order. Under its due character; as the fruit, not the cause, of our interest in Christ's righteousness: in its due order; as following, not preceding the gift of justification.

These privileges, my dear friend, are salutary as the pool of Bethesda, John v. 4. They are restorative as the waters of Siloam, John ix. 7; or like that sacred stream flowing from the sanctuary, which healed the rivers, healed the sea, and made even the desert flourish, Ezek. xlvi. 8, 9. If justification by the righteousness of Christ had a tendency to subvert the foundation of holiness, to confirm the hypocritical professor in his neglect of moral duties, or discourage the sincere convert from the pursuit of real virtue; it would, doubtless, be unworthy of any acceptance, or rather, worthy of universal abhorrence. But I dare appeal, not only to the nature of the doctrine and the reason of things, but to the experience of all; yes, of all who "have tasted that the Lord is gracious," 1 Pet. ii. 3. "Speak, ye who are enabled to believe that God is reconciled, has received the all-satisfying atonement, and placed his Son's righteousness to your account! that he regards you as his children, and will receive you to his glory! Have you not, under such convictions, felt your hearts exulting with conscious joy; and every power of your souls springing forward to glorify your heavenly Father—glorify him by every instance of obedience, fidelity, and zeal?"

Can such invaluable benefits have a prejudicial influence on our practice, if, to the consideration of their superlative worth, we add that unequalled price by which they were purchased? He who is high above all height, humbled himself to be made of a woman, and born in a stable; that we might be admitted into the family of God, and exalted to the mansions of heaven. And will this great humiliation, which is the basis of our happiness, prompt us to look down with contempt on others, or entertain arrogant thoughts of ourselves?"

The Only Begotten and the supreme delight of the Father, was numbered with transgressors and ranked with felons, that we might be joined to the innumerable company of angels, and associated with saints in glory everlasting. And will any one make this a precedent or a plea for "walking in the counsel of the ungodly; for standing in the way of sinners, or sitting in the seat of the scornful?" Psal. i. 1.

All manner of evil was spoken of the faultless Jesus; his blessed name was vilified by blaspheming tongues, and his unblamable conduct blackened with the foulest aspersions; on purpose that we may be applauded when we are judged, and each hear those transporting words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!" Will this imbolen us to dishonour our Lord, and stain our holy profession? Shall we from hence be induced to open the mouths of his enemies, and furnish them with occasion to speak reproachfully?

He went, galled with the lashes of the scourge, and penetrated with the

pruigent thorns; he went loaded with the execrable cross, and marking the way with his precious blood; thus he went to his ignominious and tormenting exit, that we may enter into Zion with songs of triumph on our lips, and with everlasting joy on our heads. Does this invite us to go, crowned with rose-buds, to the house of riot; or go, muffled in disguise, to the midnight revel? Will it not rather incline us to sit down at his pierced feet, and bathe them with our tears, and take delight* in mourning for our crucified Lord?

Behold! he hangs on the cursed tree. There, there he hangs; rent with wounds, and racked with pain. He pours his groans, and spills his blood. He bows his head, his patient princely head, and dies—astonishing, ravishing consideration! he dies for you and me. And will this harden our hearts, or arm our hands, to crucify him afresh by any allowed iniquity? Does not reason suggest, and Christianity dictate, and all that is ingenuous enforce, the apostle's important inference? "If one died for all, then they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them," 2 Cor. v. 15, 16.

He thought upon us long before the foundations of the world were laid; he remembers us, now he is exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; and will never, never forget us, through all the revolutions of eternity. And is this a motive to forget his name, to disregard his word, or to imitate the shameful neutrality and indifference of Gallio? Impressed with a sense of this invariable and everlasting kindness, surely we shall declare ourselves as those captives in Babylon concerning their dear native city Jerusalem: "If I forget thee," O blessed Jesus, "let my right hand forget her cunning; If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth," Psal. cxxxvii. 5, 6.

—Remember thee!

Ay, my dear Lord, while memory holds a seat

In this devoted breast—Remember thee!

Yes, from the table of my memory

I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,

Which youth and observation copied there,

And thy remembrance all alone shall live

Within the book and volume of my brain.—SHAKESPEARE.

Is it possible, Theron, for the contemplation of such goodness, to weaken the motives, or relax the springs of obedience? As soon may lenient balms kill, and rankest poisons cure. Is such a belief calculated to discourage duty and patronise licentiousness! Just as much as vernal showers are fitted to cleave the earth with chinks, or summer suns to glaze the waters with ice. When Antony made an oration to the soldiers on occasion of Cæsar's death; when he showed them their honoured master's robe, transfixed with so many daggers; when he reminded them of the victories they had won under their assassinated commander; when he farther informed them, that their murdered general had remembered them in his will, had bequeathed all his fine gardens and beautiful walks to their use and delight;—heavens! how they took fire! Revenge sparkled in their eyes; revenge

* The sorrow arising from such tender and grateful views of the crucified Jesus, is that evangelical godly sorrow, which "worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of," 2 Cor. vii. 10. And is there not reason,—when we consider the pains he felt, the curse he bore, and the blood he shed,—is there not abundant reason to say, with Homer's afflicted hero, *Τεταραμένος εἰς γυροῖς*? *Iliad*, γ.

flamed in their bosoms; revenge was all their cry. They flew to the houses of the conspirators; laid them even with the ground; and, had they met the owners, would have torn them limb from limb. Some such resentment against sin will a sense of our adored Redeemer's sufferings excite; especially when set home by his blessed Spirit, and considered in connexion with those detestable iniquities which caused them, and with those invaluable blessings which were procured by them. Nothing, nothing is so effectual to beget the most irreconcilable abhorrence of all ungodliness, to make the remembrance of it bitter as wormwood, the temptations to it horrible as hell.

Let me remind you of an incident related by your favourite historian Xenophon. Cyrus had taken captive the young prince of Armenia, together with his beautiful and blooming princess, whom he had lately married, and of whom he was passionately fond. When both were brought to the tribunal, Cyrus asked the prince, what he would give to be reinstated in his kingdom? He answered, with an air of indifference, "That as for his crown, and his own liberty, he valued them at a very low rate: but, if Cyrus would restore his beloved princess to her native dignity and hereditary possessions, he should infinitely rejoice; and would pay, (this he uttered with tenderness and ardour,) would willingly pay his life for the purchase." Could such a declaration, so highly endearing, alienate the affections of the princess, or induce her to violate her fidelity? Let her own conduct answer the query. When all the prisoners were dismissed with freedom, it is impossible to express how they were charmed with their royal benefactor. Some celebrated his martial accomplishments; some applauded his social virtues; all were prodigal of their praises, and lavish in grateful acknowledgments. And you, said the prince, (addressing himself to his bride), what think you of Cyrus? I did not observe him, replied the princess. Not observe him! Upon what then was your attention fixed? Upon that dear and generous man who declared, "he would purchase my liberty at the expense of his very life*." Was her heart impressed, were all her thoughts engrossed by that benevolent offer? And shall ours be less affected with the incomparably more tender and endearing love of Christ? He was not only willing, but actually laid down his life for us; a life immensely precious, and of higher dignity than all heavens. He laid down his life, not for amiable persons or worthy creatures, but for vile earth and miserable sinners; purchasing thereby for us and our children, privileges of inestimable worth and of everlasting duration.

Will not such beneficence, so unmerited, so unequalled, win the most reluctant, and melt the most obdurate heart? The heart which is not wrought upon by this miracle of divine compassion, must be steel, must be adamant—quite impenetrable and absolutely incorrigible. "O thou ever-blessed, thou all-gracious Redeemer, 'thy love to us is wonderful; passing,' I will not say, 'the love of women,' 2 Sam. i. 26, but the power of language and the reach of thought! Who can hold out against such charming attractions? who can resist such heavenly goodness? Only let a sense of thy love be always warm, always operative on our minds. This shall be instead of a thousand arguments to engage, instead of ten thousand motives to quicken

* Εγώ μιν παν της ψυχης πραιμην ωστε μηποτε λατρευσαι ταυτην.—XENOPH. *de Cyri Instit.* lib. iii.

our obedience." Other motives may produce external services, or hypocritical performances; terrors may extort the drudgery of the hand, bribes may purchase the adulation of the tongue; but this conciliates the will, this proselytes the affections, this captivates the soul, and makes all its powers "like the chariots of Aminadab," Cant. vi. 12, ready, expedite, and active in duty.

Hear the holy apostle giving an account of himself and his spiritual state. He speaks in language somewhat similar, though greatly superior, to the profession of the Armenian princess: "So great is the glory, so rich is the grace, so superabundant are the merits of my Redeemer, that I am determined to know nothing but Christ Jesus, and him crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2. Ask the same zealous apostle, what prompted him to such indefatigable diligence, and animated him with such invincible fortitude? Why did he decline no toil, and dread no danger; rejoice in tribulation, and glory in reproach*; welcome persecution, and defy death? This is his reply, "The love of Christ constraineth me; beareth me on, with much the same strong, steady, prevailing influence, which winds and tide exert when they waft the vessel to its destined harbour."

Shall we hear what another disciple, one of the most advanced proficient in divine love, says upon the subject? one who learned his knowledge, not in the school of philosophy, but on his Saviour's bosom? "This is the love of God, that we walk after his commandments," 2 John, ver. 6. This is the natural fruit, this the certain evidence, of love to that glorious, transcendent, and adorable Being. What? Not that we supinely neglect, much less that we profanely violate, his sacred precepts; but that, with assiduity and delight, we make them the rule of our conduct. "Charity edifieth," 1 Cor. viii. 1; this divine love, far from razing the foundations, far from demolishing the structure, "buildeth up," (*Οικοδομει*) the fair fabric of universal godliness.

Let me borrow an illustration from your own letter. When a pebble is cast into the smooth canal, it moves the centre and forms a circle. The first creates a second, the second breaks into a third; they continue to multiply and expand themselves, till the whole surface is covered with circular undulations. Thus, the love of an all-gracious Redeemer, when "shed abroad in the soul by the Holy Ghost," Rom. v. 5. will diffuse itself through every intellectual faculty, and extend to every species of duty, till the whole heart is filled with the image, and the whole behaviour regulated by the law of the blessed God. So that I am persuaded there is a great deal of truth and solidity, as every one must acknowledge there is a peculiar spirit and beauty, in the apostrophe of our poet;

Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding love!

Thou maker of new morals to mankind,

The grand morality is love of Thee.—*Night Thoughts*, No. iv.

* That supreme affection to the blessed Jesus, which reigned in the hearts of his primitive disciples, could never have been so emphatically displayed by any strokes of eloquence, as by their own cheerful and heroic manner of expressing themselves, with relation to their sufferings. Far from regretting, "I take pleasure (says the apostle) in afflictions," 2 Cor. xii. 10. "To you," adds the same apostle, "it is given (*ισχυρισθη*) as a desirable privilege, to suffer for the adorable Jesus," Phil. i. 29. St. Luke, recording the outrage committed on two disciples, for preaching boldly in the name of Christ, uses a phrase remarkably gallant and spirited: "They departed from the council rejoicing, *οτι καταξωδη αντιμαρτυρησαι*, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame," in so venerable and glorious cause.

You mentioned the loadstone, as most signally and most extensively serviceable in the seafaring business. Such is faith, so efficacious in practice, Christianity. This, perhaps, you think a scanty and defective principle. The property of showing the northern part of the world, may seem equally mean and inconsiderable. But as the one is the very soul of navigation, the other is the very life of holiness. It is somewhat like the stone, which the Babylonian monarch saw in his dream, "cut from the rock without hands" Dan. ii. 34; which, though despicable to human appearance, was mighty in operation; destroyed the superb statue; became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. Thus will faith exert and diffuse its kindly yet triumphant energy, to every corruption, that it may be subdued; to every virtue, that may be cherished.

Faith is a real persuasion, that the blessed Jesus has shed his blood for me and fulfilled all righteousness in my stead; that, through this great atonement and meritorious obedience he has purchased, even for my sinful soul, reconciliation with God, sanctifying grace, and every spiritual blessing*.

When the Almighty sunk the cavities of the ocean, and replenished them with the liquid element, he provided an inexhaustible source of moisture for the refreshment of every animal, and the nutriment of every vegetable. In like manner, wherever he works this true faith, he plants the seed of universal holiness, and provides for the propagation of every virtue. This persuasion of the divine good-will overcomes our natural reluctance, and excites a fervent desire to please our most merciful Father. This experience of the abundant grace of Christ attracts and assimilates the soul; turning it into his amiable likeness, "as the wax is turned to the imprinted seal." What will be the language of such a person?

"Did my exalted Master empty himself and become poor, that his most unworthy servant might be filled with all the fulness of God? Eph. iii. 1. And shall not I cheerfully deny myself the expensive pleasures of the world that I may have somewhat to bestow on his needy children? Has the death of Christ, as a punishment, satisfied the most rigorous justice for my sins; and as a price, has it redeemed me from every evil; and, as a sacrifice, made me at peace with God most high? And shall I not, by these mercies of my dying Lord, be induced to present all the members of my body, and all the faculties of my soul, as a living sacrifice to his honour, Rom. xii. 1, to be employed in his service, and resigned to his will? Do I believe that my Saviour has not only rescued me from hell, but established my title to all the blessings included in the promises, and all the felicity laid up in heaven? And can I neglect to seek those invaluable blessings, or forbear to aspire after that immense felicity? Can I be so ungrateful as to affront, so insensible as to forget, the infinitely beneficent Author of both? Am I persuaded that the Prince of Peace is entered into glory as my forerunner, Heb. vi. 20, and has prepared mansions of bliss for my final reception? And shall I not follow him thither in my hopes and my affections? be as a pilgrim below, and have my conversation above? Is not this a most sweet and effectual method of gaining my heart, and if my heart, then all my powers, to his blessed Self?

* This definition of faith may possibly, at the first view, dissatisfy and alarm even some pious people, including, as they apprehend, too great a degree of assurance. But if they please to take it in connexion with the explanation and adjustment delivered in the sixteenth Dialogue, I hope all cause of disapprobation or surprise will vanish. I flatter myself, that the sentiment will be found, not only comfortable for the sinner, but agreeable to Scripture; and truly unexceptionable, as well as highly desirable.

Such, my dear Theron, will be the effects of faith. Therefore it is not in vain, much less to the discouragement of real virtue, that the Scripture lays such a stress upon faith; so frequently urges the importance and necessity of faith; represents faith as the principal work of the divine Spirit, and the great instrument of receiving salvation: because it is a sure, a sovereign means of "purifying the heart," Acts xv. 9, and never fails to "work by love," Gal. v. 6. Was faith, as some people are apt to imagine, like a candle put under a bushel, or like the lamps which burn in sepulchres; it would then be an insignificant labour to inculcate it, and no better than an empty flourish of words to celebrate it. But nothing is more certain than that faith is a vital, an operative, a victorious principle.

Christ is a storehouse of all good. Whatever is necessary to remove our guilt, whatever is expedient for renewing our nature, whatever is proper to fit us for the eternal fruition of God, all this is laid up in Christ; and all this is received by faith, for application, use, and enjoyment. Accordingly, when Zaccheus believed, he commenced a new man; his bowels yearned with compassion; the rapacious publican became a friend of the needy, and a father to the poor, Luke xix. 8. When the Macedonians believed, how eminently was their spirit ennobled and their practice improved! Though pressed with afflictions, their souls overflowed with joy; and, even in the deepest poverty, they signalized themselves by the abundance of their liberality*. When the first converts believed, the change in their behaviour was so remarkable, the holiness of their lives so exemplary, that they won the favour and commanded the respect of all the people, Acts ii. 47. In short, it is as impossible for the sun to be in his meridian sphere, and not to dissipate darkness or diffuse light, as for faith to exist in the soul, and not to exalt the temper and meliorate the conduct. That my dear Theron may be established in faith, may increase in faith, may abound in faith, is the most affectionate wish that thought can suggest, or friendship adopt. May his faith therefore be established like the mountain oaks, increase like the progressive stream, till it spreads and abounds like the overflowing flood!

I intended to have closed my letter, and confirmed my point, by a very memorable story. But however your patience may persevere, my time fails, and my hand is weary. The next post, if nothing unexpected intervenes, shall bring you the sequel. May it, when brought to my friend, be as "a nail fastened in a sure place," and give the rivet of conviction to all these important truths! In the meantime, or rather at all times, I remain cordially and invariably yours,

ASPASIO.

LETTER XI.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,—Faith in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, is a fundamental principle in that invaluable system of sacred and divine philosophy—the gospel; by which the heavenly Teacher is continually training up millions of rational and immortal creatures for the true perfection of their nature, for the final fruition of their God; or, in other words, for a state of consummate happiness and everlasting exaltation. In this school, may you

* 2 Cor. viii. 2. Here is, especially in the original, as fine an antithesis, perhaps, as ever was penned.

and I be humble students and daily proficient! While others are ambitious of glittering distinctions and sounding titles, may it be our highest aim, our greatest glory, to answer the character of believers! By this character, the supreme Lord distinguishes his chosen people, and denominates the heirs of salvation. This character stands fairest in the book of life, and brightest in the annals of eternity. This character, however neglected or disesteemed among men, will be remembered and had in honour when the pompous name of statesman and generalissimo are known no more.

As faith is of such singular and extensive efficacy in genuine Christianity methinks I would have all our meditations terminate on its glorious object and be calculated to invigorate so beneficial a principle. When we reflect on that stupendous act, the creation of the world out of nothing; let us remember, it was his act, who "obtained eternal redemption for us." When we contemplate that immense theatre of wonders, the heavens and their shining hosts; let us not forget that they are all his works, who "brought in everlasting righteousness" for us. Do we turn our thoughts to the ocean, the spacious and magnificent canal which covers more than half the globe? I was formed by his word, and is obedient to his will, who "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Do we take a view of the earth that grand and inexhaustible magazine, which furnishes such a multiplicity of conveniences for so many millions of creatures? It is all his property, and wholly at his disposal, who "emptied himself" (*εκενώσεν εαυτον*) for our sake and "had not where to lay his head," Phil. ii. 7: for thus saith the inspired philosopher, thus saith the oracle of revelation, "All things were made by him, and for him," Col. i. 16.

The great Creator has enriched this habitable globe with a profusion of good. He has adorned it with a variety, an order, and a beauty, which are perfectly charming. He has ennobled it with a dignity, a sublimity, and grandeur, which are at once delightful and astonishing. In all this, reason cannot but discern a clear manifestation of power, a bright display of wisdom and a rich demonstration of benignity. But will the Creator himself vouch safe to be made flesh, on purpose that he may obey and die for his guilty creatures? This is what neither the utmost penetration of men, nor the very superior intelligence of angels, could ever have demonstrated, discovered, or conceived. This exceeds whatever the elements have produced, whatever the sun has beheld, as much as the extent and magnificence of the planetary system exceed the dimensions and furniture of a shepherd's hut. To reveal this, is the blessed peculiarity of the gospel. To know and believe this, is the distinguishing prerogative of a Christian. To apply this, to dwell upon this, to connect this with all our observations of the universe, should be our favourite and habitual employ. This will improve wonder into devotion, and raise the entertainments of science into the joy of salvation. This will render every philosophical speculation a strengthener of our faith, and make the various scenes of nature a guide to grace, and a step to glory. When this is done, then all things attain their proper end; and as they are by Christ, so they are for Christ.

But I forget myself, my business, and my promise. I am to establish this point by incontestable fact, not to embellish it by loose harangue. With pleasure I address myself to discharge the obligation; and exemplify, in every memorable instance, the power of faith on religious practice. Fro

whence shall I fetch my exemplification? From the memoirs of the indefatigable apostle of the Gentiles. Here I find one, most concisely, and at the same time most forcibly displayed.

"After these things were ended," says the sacred historian, "Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome," Acts xix. 21. Who can observe, and not admire, this plain unambitious manner of relating a series of labours, the most signally successful, and most extensively useful? Nothing in human conduct ever surpassed the greatness of the one, and perhaps nothing in historical composition ever equalled the implicity of the other.

St. Paul had already reduced Ephesus and Asia to the obedience of Christ. He had already brought Macedonia and Achaia into subjection to the gospel. He had long ago erected the standard, and spread the triumphs of Christianity to the regions of Arabia. Yet, as if he had hitherto achieved nothing, he sends his forces towards Jerusalem. Then he marks out Rome for the seat of his spiritual warfare. After this he forms the same beneficent design upon Spain; including in his comprehensive plan the metropolis and the boundaries* of the known world. The universe is but just large enough to be the scene of his action; he never discontinues the charitable campaign but with the last breath of his life; and he speaks of this unintermitted course of arduous and dangerous services, as if he was only going to make a friendly visit, or join a party of innocent pleasure: "After I have been at Jerusalem, I must also see Rome†."

Which of your Alexanders, which of your Cæsars, which of all the heroes renowned in Grecian or Roman story, can vie with the zeal and magnanimity of this poor despised tent-maker? so poor, that he was constrained to work with his own hands for a morsel of bread; so despised, that he was frequently treated as the offscouring of all things. Notwithstanding all these discouragements, what did he not attempt, what did he not accomplish, for the honour of his Master and the good of his fellow-creatures? He embarks in a shallop; he has neither shield nor spear; yet he purposes to command the ocean, and conquer the globe. What greatness of soul was here! he expects (Acts xx. 3) nothing but poverty, contempt, and death; yet his heart is big with the hopes of enriching, ennobling, and saving ages and generations. What benevolence of temper was this! Should you inquire concerning this illustrious champion of the cross, Who were his potent auxiliaries? None but the divine Spirit. What were his mighty weapons? Nothing but the word of truth and grace. Whence proceeded his intrepid, his enterprising, his all-conquering resolution! Only from faith, a lively faith in Jesus Christ.

This, I think, is a sufficient confirmation of my doctrine. Nevertheless, I have another instance to produce; one that was exhibited in an age when the glorious object of our faith shone with dim lustre and with distant beams; yet it may justly be admired, and will hardly be eclipsed, by the most enlightened among the Christian saints. To keep you no longer in suspense,

* Spain was then supposed to be the boundary of the western, as the Ganges was reckoned the extremity of the eastern world:

Omnibus in terris quæ sunt a Gadibus usque
Auroram et Ganges.

Juv. Sat. x.

† I am quite charmed, I must confess, with this very simple, but incomparably gallant manner of the apostle's speaking. Far beyond all the pomp of panegyric, it displays the hero.

the case I mean is that which Moses records, and the apostle celebrates: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son," Heb. xi. 17.

As this is so singular an example of the efficacious and triumphant operation of faith, unequalled in any nation of the world or under any dispensation of religion, you will give me leave to dwell a little on some of its marvellous circumstances.

Abraham was an eminent and distinguished servant of the most high God, favoured with peculiar manifestations of the divine will, and dignified with the honourable title of his Maker's friend, 2 Chron. xx. 7; Isa. xli. 8. Yet even this man is harassed with a long succession of troubles; and, which was reckoned in those ages the most deplorable calamity, "goes childless*."

Long he waits, worshipping God with the most patient resignation. At length an oracle from the Lord gives him hope, gives him assurance of a son. Joyfully he receives the promise, and rests in humble expectation of its accomplishment. Several years run their rounds, but no pleasing infant prattles in his arms, or is dandled upon his knees. At last the handmaid becomes pregnant. But what a disappointment was here! This is the son of the bond-woman, not of the free.

How afflicting the case of this excellent person! His kinsfolk and acquaintance see their olive-branches flourishing round about their tables. Even his ungodly neighbours have children at their desire, and leave the residue of the substance for their babes. But Abraham, the worshipper of the Almighty, the favourite of heaven; this Abraham is destitute of an heir to support his name, to propagate his family, and inherit the blessing. O the straits to which the believer is sometimes reduced! How does a sovereign providence try his faith, as it were in a furnace of fire! not that it may be consumed, but refined, and come forth with augmented lustre, to the praise of ever-faithful all-sufficient grace.

God is pleased to renew the grant, and assure him more explicitly that Sarah shall have a son. But this notice comes at a very late period in life when Sarah is advanced in years, and too old, according to the course of nature, to conceive. However, the pious patriarch "staggers not through unbelief, but hopes even against hope," Rom. iv. 18—20. Is it improbable is it difficult? nay, is it to all human appearance impossible? So much the fitter for the exertion, and so much the more proper for the display of almighty power.

At last the gift so earnestly desired is vouchsafed. Sarah has a child—son—an Isaac; one who should be a source of consolation and delight to his parents; should "fill their mouth with laughter †, and their tongue with joy," Psal. cxxvi. 2. With tender care, doubtless, this pleasant plant is reared. Many prayers are put up for his long life, and great happiness. His fond parents watch over him as over the apple of their own eye. Their life is bound up in the life of the lad, Gen. xlv. 30. He grows in grace as I

* There was so much gall in this calamity, that it embittered every other species of happiness. Visited by this affliction, the patriarch seems to have been incapable of relishing any other comfort: "What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" Gen. xv. 2. I would entreat the reader to take particular notice of this circumstance. It will have the same effect upon the representation of Abraham's obedience, and the whole series of his difficulties, as a magnifying glass has upon the objects to which it is applied.

† This is the import of the Hebrew name Isaac.

grows in stature. So amiable is his temper, and so engaging his behaviour, we could not fail of endearing him even to a stranger; how much more to such indulgent parents, after so long a state of barrenness, and so many expectations so frequently frustrated!

Now, methinks, we are ready to congratulate the happy sire, and flatter ourselves that his tribulations have an end; that the storms which ruffled the noon of life are blown over, and the evening of his age is becoming calm and serene. But let "not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off," 1 Kings xx. 11. Our warfare on earth is never accomplished till we bow our head and give up the ghost. The sharpest, the severest trial is still behind. God, the supreme and uncontrollable God, demands the child. It is the will of Heaven that he make his exit, just as he arrives at manhood. "Where now, Abraham, are all thy pleasing prospects? How often didst thou say, in thy fond delighted heart, 'This same shall comfort us concerning our trouble?' Gen. v. 29. Many have been my sorrows; but this child shall dry up my tears, and bring me to my grave in peace. Alas! this lovely flower is to be cut down, in its fairest, fullest bloom. All thy shining hopes are overcast in a moment."

"Abraham *!" says God.—Abraham knows the voice. It is the voice of descending goodness. He had often heard it with a rapture of delight. Instantly he replies, "Here I am. Speak, Lord! for thy servant is all attention!" hoping, no doubt, to receive some fresh manifestation of the divine good-will to himself and his family; or some new discovery of the method in which the divine wisdom would accomplish the promises, "I will multiply thy seed: I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

"Take thy son," adds God. And might not Abraham reasonably expect, that, since his son was advanced to years of maturity, he should be directed how to settle him in the world with honour and advantage; where to find a virtuous and fruitful partner of his bed? He is commanded, not barely to take his son, but his only son, his son Isaac, whom he loved. How must these affecting images awaken all that soft complacency, and all that tender triumph, which are known only to the fondly feeling heart of a parent! Must not such an introduction, so remarkably endearing, heighten his expectation of some signal mercy to be conferred on the beloved youth; and would it not render the blessing peculiarly acceptable, more than doubly welcome?

Was he not then startled, was he not horribly amazed, when, instead of some renewed expression of the divine favour, he received the following orders? "Take now thy son—thy only son—Isaac—whom thou lovest,—and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of," Gen. xxii. 2.

Was ever message so alarming? each word more piercing to parental ears, than the keenest dagger to the heart. Every clause brings an additional

* The sentence with which the inspired historian introduces this affecting narrative is unhappily translated in our Bibles, נִסָּה אֱת אַבְרָהָם, "God did tempt Abraham." This expression cannot but sound harsh to those ears which have been accustomed to understand, by *tempter* and *tempting*, persons utterly odious and practices extremely pernicious. Whereas the true and natural signification of the original is, "he tried or explored." God sounded the depth, and measured the height of his servant's faith, in order to erect an everlasting monument of the victorious efficacy of this sacred principle, and exhibit an illustrious pattern to all them who should hereafter believe.

load of misery ; till the whole command swells into the most accumulated and aggravated woe.

“ Abraham, take thy son.” Who but Abraham could have forborn remonstrating and pleading on such an occasion?—Ananias, being charged with a commission to Saul the persecutor, takes upon him to argue the case with his almighty Sovereign : “ Lord, I have heard by many concerning this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem ; and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name,” Acts ix. 13, 14. Sure, it can never be safe or expedient to present myself voluntarily before him, who came hither breathing out threatenings and slaughter against me ! What is this but to court danger, and run with open eyes into ruin ? Thus Ananias : and with how much greater appearance of reason might Abraham have replied,—“ Lord, shall I lose my child ? lose him, almost as soon as I have received him ? Didst thou give him only to tantalize thy servant ? Remember, gracious God, the name he bears. How shall he answer its cheering import ? how shall he be a source of satisfaction to his parents, or the father of many nations, if thou takest him away in his unmarried state, and in the very prime of his years ?

“ If sin lies at the door, let me expiate the guilt. Let thousands of rams, let every bullock in my stalls bleed at thy altar. My wealth, blessed Lord ! and all my goods, are nothing in comparison of my Isaac. Command me to be stripped of my possessions ; command me to roam as a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth, and I will magnify thy holy name. Only let my child, my dear child, be spared.

“ Or, if nothing will appease thy indignation but human blood, let my death be the sacrifice. Upon me be the vengeance. I am old and grey-headed. The best of my days are past, and the best of my services done. If this tottering wall tumbles, there will be little or no cause for regret. But if the pillar of my house, and the foundation of my hopes,—if he be snatched from me, what good will my life do me ? “ O my son ! my son ! would God I might die for thee ! ” 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

“ If it must be a blooming youth, in the flower of his days, be pleased, most merciful God, to select the victim from some fruitful family. There are those who abound in children. Children are multiplied unto them ; and, though many were removed, yet would their table be full. There are those who have flocks and herds, whereas I have only this one little lamb, 2 Sam. xii. 3, the very solace of my soul, and the stay of my declining years ; and shall this be taken away, while all those are left ? ”

Yes, Abraham ; it is thy son, and not another's, that is marked for the victim. What distress, had he not been supported by faith, what exquisite distress must have overwhelmed this affectionate parent ! How could he refrain from crying out, and with a flood of tears,—“ If the decree cannot be reversed, if it must be the fruit of my own body, Oh ! that Ishmael, the son of the handmaid—How shall I speak it ? my heart bleeds at the thought ; at the thought even of his expiring agonies, and untimely death ! But as for Isaac, the son of my beloved spouse, the son of my old age, the crown of all my labours ; how, how shall I survive such a loss ? The blow that goes to his heart, must be fatal to us both.

“ Yet, if he must die, and there is no remedy ; may he not at least expire by a natural dissolution ? May not some common distemper unloose the

cords of life, and lay him down gently in the tomb? May not his fond mother and myself seal his closing eyes, and soften his dying pangs by our tender offices?"

No, Abraham. Thy son must be slaughtered on the altar. He shall have no other bed of death than the pile of hewn wood; no other winding-sheet than his own clotted gore. The sacrificing knife, and not any common disease, shall bring him to his end. And think not to satisfy thy sorrowing fondness, by paying him the last honours of a decent interment. It is the Lord's will that he be cut in pieces, consumed to ashes, and made a burnt-offering; so that nothing shall remain to be preserved or embalmed. It shall not be in thy power to soothe thy grief, by resorting to his grave, and weeping at his sepulchre, and saying, "Here lies Isaac."

"But if all must be executed, God grant these eyes may never behold the dismal tragedy! If my Isaac must be bound hand and foot for the slaughter, if he must receive the steel into his bosom, and welter in his own innocent blood, heaven forbid that I should behold so killing a spectacle!"

Even this mitigation cannot be granted. Thou must not only be an eye-witness of his agony, but be the executioner of thy Isaac. Thy hands must lift the deadly weapon; thy hands must point it to the beloved breast; thine own hands must urge its way through the gushing veins and shivering flesh, till it be plunged in the throbbing heart. God will not permit the work to be done by another. The father, the father must be the butcher.

Is not the wretched father stunned and thunderstruck? does he not stand fixed in horror, and speechless with grief? What words can be mournful enough to express his sorrows? Unheard of, shocking affair! Nature recoils at the very thought! How then can the best of fathers perform the deed? How shall he answer it to the wife of his bosom, the mother of the lovely youth? How can he justify it to the world? They will never be persuaded that the God of goodness can delight in cruelty, or authorise so horrid an action. Will they not take up a taunting proverb, and say at every turn, "There goes the man, the monster rather, that has imbrued his hands in his own son's blood! This is he that pretends to piety, and yet could be so savage as to assassinate, coolly and deliberately assassinate, an only child!" Might not thousands of such reflections crowd into his thoughts, and rack his very soul?

But God is unchangeable. Positive is his word, and must be obeyed; obeyed immediately too. Take now thy son. The Lord's commandment requireth speed. No time is to be lost in bidding adieu to his relations, or in fruitless supplications for revoking the doom. Nay, cheerfully, as well as instantly, must this command be fulfilled. The great Jehovah expects alacrity in his service.—Prodigious trial indeed! Yet not too great for a faith which the divine Spirit infuses, and the divine Spirit sustains.

The patriarch knew full well, that obedience is no obedience, unless it be willing and cheerful. Therefore he consults not with flesh and blood. He is deaf to the arguings of carnal reason, and regards not the yearnings of paternal affection. Without a murmuring word, without a moment's delay, he sets forward on his journey; not so much as betraying the least uneasiness, to alarm his wife; nor heaving the least sigh, to surprise his attendants. And canst thou, Abraham, canst thou persist in thy purpose? canst thou heart firmly resolve, canst thou hand steadily execute, this inexpressibly sev-

task? Most triumphant faith indeed! Deservedly art thou styled "the father of the faithful," Rom. iv. 18. Thy faith is stronger than all the ties of affection; stronger than all the pleas of nature, or all the terrors of death even of a death far more dreadful than thy own.

And now must he travel during three tedious, and, one would think, more melancholy days, with his Isaac constantly before his eyes; with the blood scene continually in his apprehensions; and nothing to divert his mind from dwelling on every bitter circumstance, and all the grievous consequences. "On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and beheld afar off the appointed place." His servants are ordered to keep their distance; while himself, with the fire and the knife in his hands; and his son, with the burden of wood on his shoulders, "went both of them together." Who does not pity the sweet youth, toiling under that load which must soon reek with his blood, and soon reduce him to ashes? Meanwhile the intended victim, wondering to see all those preparations made, and no proper animal near, asks this pertinent question, "My father, behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Sure, this endearing speech, which discovered such a knowledge of religion, and such a concern for its duties must rouse the father's anguish, and shake his determination. How can he be the death of so much innocence, and so much piety?

Faith overcomes all difficulties. Unmoved, and inflexible, the patriarch replies, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering, my son." After this he discloses the strange, the startling secret: "Thou thyself, my dear child, art destined to this purpose. The God who bestowed thee on my longing desires is pleased to require thee again at my hand. The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away; let us both adore the name of the Lord. Let us confide in his promised goodness, and unanimously profess, Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." It does not appear that the amiable youth resisted or gainsaid. He had strength enough to oppose, and speed enough to escape*, the attempts of an aged father. Either or both of which, the law of self-preservation might seem to dictate, and the light of reason to justify. But Isaac knew that his father was a prophet. In this prophetic character, he sees and acknowledges the warrant of Heaven. And since his Creator calls, he is content to go. Excellent Isaac! who does not admire thy courage? who is not charmed with thy resignation? and must we, in a few minutes, must we see thee a pale, a bloody, a breathless corpse?

Methinks, I shudder as we draw near the direful catastrophe. The altar is built; the wood laid in order; all things are ready for the solemn service; and Isaac offers his willing throat to the knife. Nevertheless, that the work of destiny may be sure, and no one particular relating to a sacrifice omitted, "Abraham binds his son." I have known a stubborn malefactor quite unalarmed when sentenced to the ignominious tree; not at all impressed with the most awful representations of eternal judgment; yet, when a person came to measure him for his coffin, the hardened wretch was hard no longer. He started, turned pale and trembled in every joint. Even such a circumstance makes no impression on Abraham; neither alters his purpose, nor

* According to Josephus, Isaac was, when he submitted himself to the slaughter, about twenty-five years old. Others think his age was thirty-three; which makes him more exactly resemble his suffering Lord. Then his father must be above a hundred and thirty years old. Either account will justify Aspasio's supposition.

changes his countenance. He measures his Isaac; measures those limbs which he had so frequently and so tenderly caressed; and if not for the coffin, yet for immediate slaughter.

Having bound him—surprising resolution!—bound him for the sword and for the flame, he “lays him upon the altar, on the wood.” There now lies Isaac; the dear, the dutiful, the religious Isaac! Abraham’s joy: Sarah’s delight; the heir of the promises! there he lies, all meek and resigned; expecting every moment the stroke of death to fall. O parents! parents! do not your bowels yearn? is not humanity itself distressed at the scene? Say, thou who art a father, what thinkest thou of Abraham’s obedience? couldst thou, to such a son, have acted such a part?

See! the father, resolute to the very last, unsheaths the murdering blade; makes bare the innocent bosom; and marks the place where life may find the speediest exit. “His heart is fixed!” he stretches his arm; and now, even now, is aiming the mortal blow; when,—rejoice, ye worshippers of a gracious God! break forth into singing, ye that are in pain for the tried parent!—the Lord Almighty interposes in this article of extreme need*. The Angel of the covenant speaks from heaven, and withholds the lifted hand, in the very act to strike. God, who only intended to manifest his faith, and make it honourable, bids him desist. God applauds his obedience; substitutes another sacrifice in Isaac’s stead; renews his covenant with the father; and not only reprieves the life of the son, but promises him a numerous and illustrious issue; promises to make him the progenitor of the Messiah, and thereby a public blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Tell me now, Theron, was there ever such an astonishing effort of obedience? such a perfect prodigy of resignation? “Yet this hath faith done †.” If you should ask, How was it possible for Abraham to perform all this, in the manner described? The answer is obvious: because Abraham believed; or, in other words, was fully persuaded, that the God who had given him this son from the barren womb, was able to raise him again from the smoking ashes ‡. As the same God who required this sacrifice had expressly declared, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called,” the patriarch doubted not but the promise would, in a way known to infinite Wisdom, be punctually accomplished. Hence he made no dispute, and felt no reluctance. His faith banished every uneasy apprehension; and neither fear nor sorrow had place in his breast. By faith he was enabled, speedily and cheerfully, without so much as a parting tear, to obey this unparalleled precept.

* Upon this most seasonable interposition, the inspired historian makes a very judicious and edifying remark; which seems to be greatly obscured, if not entirely spoiled, by our translation: “In the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen.” I must confess, I have always been puzzled to find, not only a pertinent sense, but any sense at all, in these words. Whereas the original is as clear in its signification, as it is apposite to the purpose. “In the mount the Lord will be seen;” or “In the mount the Lord will provide.” *q. d.* “This memorable event gave rise to, at least is an eminent exemplification of, that proverbial expression which is commonly used at this day. In the mount of difficulty, or in the very crisis of need, when matters seem to be irretrievable and desperate, then the Lord appears as a present help. Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.” See Gen. xxii. 14.

† Heb. xi. 17. “By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac.” The faith, of which such glorious things are spoken, to which such admirable achievements are ascribed, through this whole chapter, was a faith in “the seed of the woman,” the promised Messiah.

‡ He seems to have expected not only the certain, but the immediate restoration of his slain son; that he should be revived on the very spot, before he left the place, so as to accompany his return. For he says to his servants, not I, but we will go, and worship and return, ver. 5.

And if all this, which would otherwise have been utterly impracticable, was wrought by faith, you need not suspect of weakness and insufficiency, if you have approved a principle. Far from enervating, it will invigorate every good disposition; and instead of damping, will give life to every religious duty. Cherish faith, and you will of course cultivate obedience. Water this root, and the branches of universal godliness will assuredly partake the beneficial effects; will spread their honours, and bring forth their fruits. Through the power of faith, the saints have wrought righteousness, in all its magnanimous and heroic acts. The doctrine of faith is called by St. Paul "the doctrine according to godliness," 1 Tim. vi. 3; exquisitely contrived to answer all the ends, and secure every interest, of real piety. The grace of faith St. Jude styles "our most holy faith," Jude ver. 20; intimating, that it is not only productive of holiness, but that the most refined and exalted holiness arises from this stock.

Let us then be diligent to exercise, and careful to increase, faith in Jesus Christ. Let us maintain the same zealous solicitude for this leading capital grace, as the renowned Epaminondas expressed for his shield. When that gallant general was, in an engagement with the enemy, struck to the ground, his soldiers carried him off, breathless and fainting, to his tent. The very moment he opened his eyes, and recovered the use of speech, he asked—*not* whether his wound was mortal, nor whether his troops were routed, but whether his shield was safe?—May we be enabled, my dear friend, to keep our shield safe! May we be strong, be steady, be lively in faith! Then I doubt not we shall give glory to God, receive comfort to ourselves, and abound in the works of the Lord.

Nothing can be more pertinent to my purpose than the apostle's prayer: "That we may know what is the hope of our calling in Christ Jesus, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to themward who believe." And nothing can be more expressive of the very soul of your affectionate

ASPASIO.

LETTER XII.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,—It is very probable, while I am reading yours, you are perusing mine. But how unlike is my friend to the representation he receives! How unlike the satisfied, unsuspecting, cheerful Abraham! Why this dejected air in your temper? why those pensive strokes in your letter? Let me anticipate your reply, and make answer to myself. This gloom, I trust, is a sign of approaching day. Just before the morning dawn, the nocturnal darkness is blackest: and just before the appearance of the Sun of Righteousness, the penitent's distress is frequently the deepest. I promise myself, the hour is at hand which will "put off your sackcloth, and gird you with gladness."

Another favourable presage is, that you take the direct and certain way to obtain substantial comfort. The righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, after which you inquire, about which you are solicitous, is a never-failing spring of consolation: because it acquits from all sin: secures from all condemnation; and renders the believer unblamable and unreprouvable in the sight of God. Therefore says the Holy Ghost, "His name is as ointment poured forth," Cant. i. 3; even that divinely precious name, by which he has been celebrated in the preceding epistles; by which he is distinguished in the Scriptures of truth; by which, I hope, he will be more and more revealed

my Theron's mind, — "The Lord our Righteousness." The discovery of him under this most aimable and glorious capacity, will indeed be like breaking open a vial of the richest unguents; which not only fill the room, and regale the nose with their delightful fragrance, but refresh the spirits, and "rejoice thy heart." Might my writing, or my discourse, be as the alabaster box, to contain, to convey, and present these reviving odours; how highly should I think myself honoured, and how signally my endeavours blessed!

You ask, "How this righteousness of the divine Redeemer becomes ours?" It is a question which I receive with the utmost pleasure; and, with equal pleasure, shall attempt an answer. Or rather, as the Spirit of our God prompted the first, may the same unerring guide suggest the last! This he has abundantly done by his prophets and apostles; so that I need only have recourse to their writings, and collect some of the hints which lie treasured up in those storehouses of wisdom.

There we are often told of union with Christ. Believers are said to be "in Christ," Col. i. 2; and to be "one with Christ," Heb. ii. 11. What is still higher, and implies a greater degree of nearness, they are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," Eph. v. 30. And, which denotes the most intimate connexion imaginable, "They that are joined to the Lord Jesus are one Spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17.) with him! As these expressions appear dark, and their sense lies deep, it has pleased our all-condescending Instructor to illustrate them by a variety of significant types and lively similitudes. This remark very opportunely reminds me of an engagement which, some time ago, I undertook to execute, but have hitherto omitted — to make it evident, that the blessed doctrine for which we have been pleading, is "deducible from several Scripture images." A short descant upon some of the principal, will, I hope, at once discharge my former obligation, and satisfy your present inquiry.

This was shadowed forth by the costly, odoriferous, flowing unguent, poured upon Aaron's head; "which ran down upon his beard, and descended to the skirts* of his clothing," Psal. cxxxiii. 2. So the merits of our great High-priest are derived down to all the faithful; even those of the meanest station in life, and the lowest attainments in religion.

Was it not typified by that instructive vision which the prophet Zechariah saw? "I have looked, and behold! a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which were upon the top thereof; and two olive-trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof; which, through two golden pipes, empty the golden oil out of themselves," Zeck. iv. 2, 3, 12. The bowl and the lamps were a proper emblem of believers; who we, by nature, dry vessels, and destitute of all good; yet should shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. The olive-trees, arrayed in verdure, and abounding with sap; always emptying themselves, yet ever full; are a very just representation of Christ, of his unchangeable love, and his inexhaustible grace. The golden pipes, through which the olive-branches transmit their oil, seem to be figurative of faith, in its various and repeated actings. By these channels of conveyance, the unspeakable benefits of a Redeemer are communicated to our souls, and replenish those empty basins.

* What we render *skirts*, is, in the original, *the mouth*, or, as the word is translated Job cii. 18. *the collar of his garments*.

Another type the apostle mentions: "The first Adam," he says, "was a figure of him that was to come," Rom. v. 14. So eminent a figure, and corresponding in so many instances, that he styles our "Lord Jesus the last Adam," 1 Cor. xv. 45. And why? Because, like the first, he was a covenant-head to his people, and transacted in their stead. Inasmuch that what he did, and what he suffered, both are placed to their account. Is Adam's sin imputed to all his natural offspring? So is Christ's righteousness to all his spiritual seed. The consequences of both render the doctrine more intelligible, and the truth more undeniable. All men are "judged, condemned, dead," Rom. v. 15, 16; doomed inevitably to the death of the body, and justly liable to the death of the soul, on the score of Adam's transgression. All believers are "acquitted, justified, saved," Rom. v. 19, 21; saved from the first death, and made heirs of the resurrection; saved from the second death, and entitled to life eternal, by virtue of Christ's obedience.

This union with Christ was not only prefigured by types, but is displayed by a variety of similitudes taken from the most familiar occurrences of life; by which it appears to be our divine Master's will, that we should live under the habitual belief of this momentous truth, and in the constant enjoyment of this distinguished privilege.—You cannot visit a friend, or view your children; you cannot enter your garden, discourse with your spouse, or contemplate your own body, without a representation and a remembrancer of this precious blessing.

Christ says to his disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends," John xv. 15. Friends are a second self. St. Paul, speaking of Onesimus, uses this remarkable phrase, "Receive him as myself;" and, which is still more emphatical, "Receive him, that is mine own bowels," Philem. 12, 17. Is not Christ's friendship of the most tender and exalted kind? Doubtless it must be equal, doubtless it must be superior to Jonathan's.—Jonathan loved David as his own soul: but Christ loved sinners with a love stronger than death. They were dearer to him than his own inestimable life.—Jonathan exposed himself to imminent danger in vindicating David's conduct. Jesus surrendered himself to certain death in making reconciliation for our offences.—Jonathan interceded once and again with his father in David's behalf. Christ ever liveth, to plead his blood, and make intercession for transgressors.—"Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, to give it to David, and his garment, even to his sword, and his bow, and his girdle," 1 Sam. xviii. 4. Our Redeemer, without stripping himself has clothed us (such is the prerogative of a divine person!) with the robe of his righteousness, and with the garment of his salvation. He has consigned over to us all the merit of his holy life and propitiatory death.

Christ stands related to his people, not as a friend only, but as a parent. He is called by a prophet, "The everlasting Father," Isa. vi. 9; and we are said by an apostle to be his "children," Heb. ii. 13. Children look upon themselves as interested in the wealth of their parents. They expect, and not without reasonable ground, to reap benefit from it while the parents live, and to become possessors of it when they die. Accordingly, the father says in the gospel, "Son, all that I have is thine," Luke xv. 31. Since the high and holy Emmanuel vouchsafes to be our Father, can we suppose him less generous than an earthly parent? or can we imagine that his children shall have less to hope than the heirs of an earthly progenitor? May we not, ought

we not, to regard all his communicable goods, all the benefits resulting from his meritorious sufferings and perfect obedience, as our portion? Especially, since he is the testator also, Heb. ix. 17; has bequeathed them to us by will, and, having submitted to death, they become legally ours.

"I am the vine," says our Lord, "ye are the branches," John xv. 5. They who believe, are ingrafted into Christ. Take notice of a scion. What are the consequences of its ingrafture? It is embodied with the substance of the tree, and partakes of its fatness. The sap, imbibed by the root, circulates into it, gives it vegetable life, fills it with buds, decks it with blossoms, and loads it with fruit. If then we are one with Christ, as much as the branch is one with the stock, it must follow, even upon the principles of common experience, that his wisdom is ours, to enlighten us; his righteousness is ours, to justify us; his Spirit is ours, to sanctify us; his redemption is ours, to make us completely and eternally happy.

Christ is united to his people by a tie closer and dearer than the parental. They are not only his children, but his spouse. He is often called their bridegroom, and is not ashamed to avow the tender engagement: "I will betroth thee to me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness," Hos. ii. 19. 20. The condescending God multiplies, diversifies, accumulates his words; and this with admirable propriety, as well as surpassing goodness. The honour is so high, and the favour so great, we should hardly know how to believe it, and hardly venture to apply it. Lest, therefore, by a single expression, it should not be sufficiently established, it stands ratified by repeated asseverations, and with all the energy of language; so, that, be the grace ever so astonishing, we are assured the fact is equally certain: he that is our Maker, is also our Husband, Isa. liv. 5.

Let us consider what follows upon such a union. We may take for an example the case of Boaz and Ruth. Soon as their nuptials were solemnized, she that was poor became rich; from a gleaner in the field, she commenced mistress of the harvest; and from abiding by the maidens, had a seat at the master's table. And if we are united to Christ by a marriage-contract, the same effects will take place. We that were poor, are rich in him; we who had nothing, possess all things in Christ; we that dwell in dust, are made to sit together with our divine Husband in heavenly places, Eph. ii. 6.

If you choose some modern exemplification, what can be more pertinent than the remarkable instance of your neighbour Arietta? She was lately left a widow by the dissolute and extravagant Bellario; her circumstances miserably embarrassed, and the little estate deeply mortgaged; her friends looked shy, and her creditors became clamorous; scarce a day passed but it made some new discovery of debts contracted by the deceased; so that the affairs of the survivor appeared with a more melancholy aspect, and in a less retrievable condition. But having won, first the compassion, then the affection, of the wealthy and illustrious Philander; how happily is the face of things altered! All her debts devolve upon him, and all his dignity is derived to her. He stands responsible for whatever she owes; and she is a sharer in whatever he possesses. Though little less than ruined by her late husband, she is more than restored by her present; and has reason to rejoice in his affluence, and to glory in his honours. Have not we also reason to

rejoice in our heavenly Bridegroom—since a far more glorious exchange subsists between him and his mystical spouse? He has borne the curse, that we may inherit the blessing. Sin was charged on him, that righteousness might be imputed to us. In a word, he has sustained all our miseries, that he might impart to us all his benefits. Has the law any demand? It must go to him for satisfaction. Have we any wants? We may look to him for a supply; to him Theron, “in whom it has pleased the Father, that all fulness should dwell,” Col. i. 19.

If any thing can express a union more intimate and inseparable than the conjugal, it is that of the members with the head. And this image is used by the Holy Ghost, to shadow forth the connexion between Christ and the faithful. He is the “head over all things,” with respect to rule and supremacy, but a head of union and influence, with respect “to the church,” Eph. i. 22. The head and the members constitute one natural, Christ and his church compose one mystical body. What kindness is done, what injury is offered to the members, the head regards them as done to itself. Accordingly, Christ says to the outrageous Saul, who made havoc of the church, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Acts ix. 4. He declares, concerning those indigent Christians to whose necessities we administer relief; “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto them, ye have done it unto me,” Matth. xxv. 40. The animal spirits formed in the head, are formed for the benefit of the whole body, and designed for the use of all the members. So the righteousness wrought by Jesus Christ, is wrought out for his whole mystical body, and intended for the advantage of all his people; to be the cause of their justification, and the purchase of their salvation.

Being then so nearly related, so closely united to the blessed Jesus, it is no wonder that believers are now loved with the same fatherly love, and will hereafter be partakers of the same heavenly glory. What might we not expect from the divine Redeemer, if he vouchsafed to acknowledge but one of these endearing names? Since he has engaged himself to us by all the ties of affinity and affection, may we not promise ourselves, and with the assurance of hope, every good thing; “even all the fulness of God,” our Saviour? Eph. iii. 19. Does not each of these tender relations, subsisting between Christ and his saints, imply an entire property in one another, and a mutual participation of all that belongs to either?—“My beloved is mine, and I am his,”—I dare not say, is the posy of the mystical ring; but it is the undoubted effect of this divine union.

How pleasing, yet how amazing the thought! Shall we, who say to corruption, “Thou art my father;” and to the worm, “Thou art my mother and my sister,” Job xvii. 14; shall we be permitted to say, concerning the Head of all principality and power, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones?” Eph. v. 30. What a mercy might we esteem it, not to be confounded before a Majesty so exalted and sublime! What a favour, to obtain the least propitious regard from the King immortal and invisible! What an honour, to be admitted into his family, and numbered among the meanest of his servants! But to be his adopted children; to be his espoused bride; to be the members of his sacred body; to have him for our everlasting Father, him for the bridegroom of our souls, him for our heavenly head, who is the maker of all worlds, and the Sovereign of all creatures! What words can duly celebrate, what heart can sufficiently admire, the condescen-

on and the love of our adorable Jesus? or who can justly question the merits of such a fellowship, and the consequences of such a union? Question them! No, the fruits are infallibly sure, as the privilege is inexpressibly great.

Let me once again introduce a great and venerable witness of both these truths: "Laban spake high when he said 'These children are mine, and these things thou seest are mine.' But how high and glorious is that which may be said of a justified person: all thou hearest of Christ is thine; his life is thine, his death is thine, his obedience, merit, spirit, all thine *!" Rich and important words! than which nothing can give us a juster or fuller explanation of the apostle's assertion, "We are partakers of Christ," Heb. 14.

When some foreign ladies, of the first quality, paid a visit to Leonidas' queen, the talk turned upon their rich clothes, their costly jewels, and splendid equipage. After they had severally displayed each her own grandeur, they inquired after her majesty's finery—what she had to distinguish her from the vulgar? She replied, "My illustrious husband." What else? "My illustrious husband." And as often as they repeated the same question, she returned the same answer. Could this queen speak in such admiring, rejoicing, self-gratulating terms of her royal consort? And shall not vile sinners look upon their Redeemer—that all-glorious, yet all-condescending Redeemer, who is full of grace and truth, full of merit and righteousness—shall not they much more look upon him as their honour and their joy; the object of their dependence, and the cause of their boasting?

I should find it difficult to refrain from the farther prosecution of so engaging a topic, did I not propose to wait upon my Theron very speedily. Then I shall have an opportunity of pouring into his bosom all the fulness of my heart with regard to this delightful subject. In the mean time, let me exhort my dear friend to be of good comfort. "Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," Psal. xxx. 5. This sorrow, of which you complain, may be the seed of spiritual and eternal consolation.

While I am writing, there appears full in my view one of the finest rain-bows I ever beheld. "It compasseth the heavens with a glorious circle;" so glorious, that it is no disparagement of the Almighty Creator to say, "The hands of the Most High have bended it," Eccl'us. xliiii. 12. On what foundation, would I ask, is that stately and beautiful arch raised? from what source do all its radiant and lovely colours spring? It is raised on a gloomy assemblage of vapours, and all its rich tinctures spring from a lowering cloud. Thus does the blessed God, on a conviction of guilt and a sense of ruin, spread faith, plant holiness, and diffuse gladness. May all these, ere long, arise in my Theron's breast! and each be bright as that resplendent bow; lasting as the sun that creates it!

In the mean time, it is the ardent wish of my soul, and shall be my frequent prayer to God, "That both our hearts may be comforted, being knit together in love, unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding," Col. ii. 1. in this great mystery of godliness. What vigour of expression, what exuberance of ideas, and above all, what distinguished privileges are here!—*Assurance*,—full assurance,—*riches* of the full assurance,—*all* riches of the full assurance of understanding,—in reference to our union with Christ, and

* See Dr. Lightfoot's Works, vol. ii. p. 1077.

its unutterably precious effects! Can the orator express more? can the minister desire more? can the saint—I had almost said, can the archangel enjoy more?—May this be the portion of my dear Theron, and of his ever faithful

ASPASIO.

DIALOGUES.

DIALOGUE XV.

ASPASIO had taken leave of his friend Camillus, and was come to revisit Theron, whose thoughts seemed to be in a state of much fluctuation, and not without small anxiety; hoping that some proper conversation on the grace and privileges of the everlasting gospel might compose and comfort his mind; might, while his heart was softened by humbling convictions, fix the stamp of genuine Christianity, and deliver his whole soul into the mould* of evangelical religion.

When sorrows would the breast, as ploughs the glebe,
And hearts obdurate feel her softening shower,
Her seed celestial then glad Wisdom sows—
Her golden harvests triumph in the soil.

Night Thoughts.

He arrived pretty late in the evening, and being somewhat weary with the journey, soon withdrew to his repose. The next morning, as Theron walked abroad to taste the cool delights of the dawn, he was agreeably surprised by meeting Aspasio.

Ther. So soon awake, my worthy friend! and after so much fatigue of the preceding day! I had not the least expectation of your company till breakfast. Then, indeed, I promised myself a double regale; the refreshments exhibited on the table, and those “wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ,” 1 Tim. vi. 3. which, more precious than manna, drop—

Asp. How, Theron! Have you also learned those soothing arts which polish the speech, to deprave our sentiments? Could I have suspected the enchanting wiles of flattery from my sincere, my tried, my bosom friend!

Ther. Your friend is still sincere, and his words are very remote from flattery.—How welcome to the wind-bound mariner, weary with expectation and sick with disappointments, is the visit of a propitious gale! How welcome to the fields, parched with drought and gasping for moisture, are copious showers of rain! How acceptable to the Israelites, travelling through the inhospitable desert, and pining away for want of the fruits of the earth, was the miraculous supply of heavenly bread! Yet neither propitious gales to the wind-bound mariner, nor copious showers to the thirsty soil, nor heavenly bread to the famished Israelites, could be more welcome than your late conversation, and later correspondence, to my anxious soul.

Asp. Why, I thought you looked upon my notions as chimerical. Is Theron also become credulous? Like one of us weak-headed believers, has

* *Deliver into the mould.*—This is the literal translation, and exact sense of St. Paul’s phrase, *Εἰς τὴν σκευὴν ἡμῶν κατασκευάζετε*, Rom. vi. 17, which, as it contains a beautiful allusion, conveys also a very instructive admonition; intimating, that our minds, all pliant and ductile, should be conformed to the refined precepts of the gospel, as liquid metals take the figure of some elegant mould into which they are cast.

quitted the strongholds of reason? is he vanquished by the sling-stone of truth? or can he submit to this strange method of salvation, by embracing righteousness and relying on the obedience of another?

Ther. I find my reason was a feeble guide, or I myself not faithful to its true dictates. I was blinded with prejudice; I was intoxicated with pride; a vain conceit of my moral powers betrayed me, as I fear it has betrayed many, into a contempt of the evangelical righteousness. I held that I thought an honour to human nature. I now retract my opinion: I now perceive, that as my natural light could not discover the way, neither my personal obedience put me in possession of life and salvation. My true glory, and real happiness, I would henceforth derive from the blessed Jesus. No more banter, *Aspasio*:—have done:—I am serious, and very much in earnest; so much in earnest, that if all my acquaintance of the sarcastical turn, or if all my brothers of the smile, should rally me on the subject, I would frankly acknowledge my error, and as freely sign my recantation.

Asp. My dear *Theron*, I applaud your resolution. You have no more cause to be ashamed of such a practice, than *Philip* had to be ashamed of the imperfection in his limbs; when, being observed to go lame with a wound received in battle, he had this consolation suggested by one of his courtiers: "Never blush, my royal Sir, for a defect which puts you in mind of your glorious every step you take." To sacrifice our prejudices in the search of truth, is no less honourable than to be marked with a scar in the defence of our country.

I beg pardon for my pleasantry. Since you are so very serious, a gay air was quite unseasonable. You cannot often complain that I am guilty of this fault. Nor can you easily imagine the satisfaction I shall enjoy, if either my letters or my discourse have administered any advantage to my friend. I shall note it down among the distinguished blessings of my life; and have an additional obligation to love the beneficent Author of all good.

But as I cannot be a furtherer of your happiness without the greatest delight, so I cannot be a witness of your solicitude without a painful regret. You must therefore permit me to ask the cause of that unusual vehemence which I observe in your speech, and of that deep concern which I read in your countenance.

Ther. I have been considering very attentively, what is the present state, and what is likely to be the final condition of my soul.

——— My hopes and fears
Start up alarm'd; and o'er life's narrow verge
Look down—on what? A fathomless abyss,
A vast eternity.

My sins, at the same time, like an armed host, are set in dreadful array, and surround me on every side. Justice, like an injured and incensed foe, unsheathes the sword, and makes a loud demand for vengeance. No righteousness of my own presents itself, to which I may fly for refuge. The method of salvation, in which I formerly confided, is a bridge broken down; and leaves me, without any possibility of escape, abandoned to the approaching enemy.

To a person in such deplorable circumstances, how reviving, how delightful, is the very thought of being interested in the great Redeemer's righteousness!

I do not wonder now at a saying of Luther's, which I have sometimes exploded as strangely extravagant: "That upon the discovery of this glorious righteousness, the gates of Paradise seemed to fly open before him, and the dawn of heaven was all in view."

Talking in this manner, they came to an elevated terrace; which, about an hour before, had been shaved by the scythe, and emitted all the freshness of new-mown herbage. On one side, a fine champaign country stretched its wide dimensions; on the other, a flower-garden exhibited the last ornaments of the year. Here you might still see the tufted vermilion, and the full-blown ivory, glittering through spangles of liquid crystal. There you might trace the footsteps of the early cattle, by many a recent print on the dewy lawn. On the walls and espaliers autumn had spread her stores, and was beginning to beautify their rinds with many a ruddy streak, or to breathe over their glossy skins her delicate and inimitable bloom.

Asp. See, said Aspasio, the wisdom and benignity, which, in amiable and inseparable conjunction, display themselves through the whole economy of the universe: "God has made everything beautiful in his time," Eccl. iii. 11, everything serviceable in its place. A little while ago, the flowery meads delighted our eyes, and the melodious birds charmed our ears; now, the tasteful fruits are preparing their dainties, and presenting us with a collation to regale our palate. The whole earth, and all the seasons, are rich with our Creator's goodness. Yea, the whole earth, and all that replenishes it, all that surrounds it, are full of his presence. He it is who

Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow in the stars, and blossoms in the trees;
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent. *POPE'S Eth. Epist.*

An habitual belief of this truth gives nature her loveliest aspect, and lends her the consummate power to please. The breath of violets, and the flush of roses; the music of the woods, and the meanders of the stream: the aspiring hill, the extended plain, and all the decorations of the landscape then appear in their highest attractives, then touch the soul with the most refined satisfaction, when God is seen, when God is heard, and God enjoyed in all. Is Theron lost in thought, and deprived of speech? Is he alone silent while all things speak their Maker's praise? Does faith throw a shade over the works of creation? Does it not heighten their beauties and enliven their graces? The religious is the only true philosopher; and the pleasures of imagination never acquire their proper relish, till they are ripened by the exercise of devotion. With this view then, since my friend forbears, let me attempt to speak; not to increase his knowledge, but to cherish faith, and cultivate devotion in us both.

The spacious canopy* over our heads is painted with blue; and the ample carpet under our feet is tinged with green. These colours, by their soft and cheering qualities, yield a perpetual refreshment to the eye: whereas, had the face of nature glistened with white, or glowed with scarlet; such ardent and dazzling hues would, instead of exhilarating, have fatigued the sight. Besides, as the several brighter colours are interspersed, and form the

* What Aspasio calls the *canopy*, Isaiah describes by כַּרְק, which we translate "as a curtain;" but the exact signification is, *Sicut tenebrae, vel tenuissimum quid*; "Like some finely-attenuated expanse."

shows in this magnificent piece, the green and the blue constitute an admirable ground, which shows them all in their highest lustre, and to the most advantage.

Had the air been considerably grosser, it would have dimmed the rays of the sun, and darkened the cheerful day; our lungs had been clogged in their functions; men had been suffocated, without the strangling noose; or perished, without the overwhelming flood. Was it several degrees more rare, birds would not be able to wing their way through the firmament; could the clouds be sustained in so attenuated an atmosphere. It would be the organs of respiration; we should gasp for breath, with as much facility, and with as little success, as fishes out of their native element.

The ground also is wrought into the most proper temperature. Was it of a denser consistence, it would be impenetrable to the plough, and unmanageable by the spade. Was it of a laxer composition, it would be incapable of supporting its own furniture. The light mould would be swept away by driving winds; or the oozy glebe soaked into sloughs by the descending rains. Because every situation suits not every plant, but that which is a curse to one often proves a stepmother to others; therefore the qualities of the earth are so abundantly diversified, as properly to accommodate every species of vegetation. We have a variety of intermediate soils, from the loose jointed sand, to the stiff cohesive clay; from the rough projections of the rocky cliff, to the softly swelling bed of the smooth parterre.

The sea carries equal evidences of a most wise and gracious ordination. Was it larger, we should want land for the purposes of pasturage and the operations of husbandry. We should be destitute of sufficient room for mines and forests; our subterranean warehouses and our aerial timber-yards. Was it smaller, it would not be capable of recruiting the sky with a proper quantity of porous exhalations, nor of supplying the earth with the necessary quota of fructifying showers.

Do we not discern very apparent strokes of skill, and the most pregnant proofs of goodness, in each individual object? in the various tenants of the globe, and the several appurtenances of this great dwelling? It is needless to expatiate upon the more eminent and conspicuous beauties—all that shines in the heavens, and all that smiles on the earth. These speak to every ear, these show to every eye, the adorable munificence of their Maker. It is needless to launch into the praises of the valleys, delicately clothed with verdure; or of the fields, richly replenished with corn. Even the ragged rocks, which frown over the flood; the caverned quarries, which yawn amidst the land; together with the mountains, those shapeless and enormous protuberances, which seem to load the ground and encumber the skies; even these contribute their share to increase the general pleasure, and augment the general usefulness. They variegate the prospect; raise an agreeable horror in the beholder; and inspire his breast with a religious awe. They add new charms to the wide level of our plains; and shelter, like a screen, the warm lap of our vales.

We are delighted with the solemn gloom and magnificent aspect of the forest. One who saw the cedars of Lebanon, was transported with admiration at their ample trunks and towering heads, their diffusive spread and verdant grandeur; compared with which the stately elm is but a reed, and the branching oak a mere shrub. Was our sight qualified for the search,

we should discover a symmetry and a dignity altogether as perfect, and more wonderful, in those groves of moss * which adhere to the rude stones we should contemplate with greater surprise, if not with greater rapture, than the diminutive plantations, which strike their hasty roots in the mouldy confederation, or wave their curious umbrage over the perished pickle †.

Who is not charmed with the vine and its generous warming juices with the melon, and its delicious cooling pulp? Yet were all our trees to produce fruits of such exalted qualities, or of such an agreeable relish, what would become of the birds? How small a scantling of such choice delicacies would voracious man resign to their enjoyment? That provision may be made for the meanest vagrant of the air, as well as for the most renowned sovereign of a nation, there is, in all places, a large growth of shrubs, covered annually with a harvest of coarse and hardy berries; so coarse in their taste, that they are unworthy of the acceptance of man; so hard in their make, that they endure the extremest severities of the weather, and furnish the feathered tribe with a standing repast, amidst all the desolation of winter.

The fir, with her silver bark and shapely cone; the beech ‡, with her quivering leaves and embowering shade, are stately decorations of our rural seats. But, if there were no entangling thickets, no prickly thorns, what would the farmer procure fences so closely wattled, or so strongly armed? How could he guard the scene of his labours, or secure his vegetable wealth from the flocks and the herds—those roving plunderers, which accede to no treaty, but that of forcible restraint; submit to no laws, but those of the coercive kind?

Most people are fond of the purslane's fleshy leaves, and the ramified fatness of the brocoli; the potato's mealy orbs, and the lentile's succulent pods. We spare no toil, we grudge no expense, to have them flourish in our gardens, and served up at our tables. But there are innumerable herbs, which pass under the contemptible character of weeds, and yet are altogether as desirable to many classes of creatures as these culinary gifts to mankind. Who shall be at the pains to plant, to water, to cultivate, such despicable productions? Man would rather extirpate than propagate these encumbrances of his acres. Therefore Providence vouchsafes to be their gardener. Providence has wrought off their seeds into such a lightness of substance, that they are carried abroad with the undulations of the air; or, if too heavy to be wafted by the breeze, they are fastened to wings of down, which facilitate

* See, for a proof of this remark, the explanation of the tenth plate in the "Micrographia Restaurata;" where our author compares the size of this little vegetable, with the dimensions of those vast trees which grow in the vigorous climates of Guiana and Brazil the trunks of which are, according to the report of travellers, twenty feet in diameter, whereas the body of this minute plant measures no more than the sixtieth part of an inch. So that, upon a calculation, the thickness of the former exceeds that of the latter 2,985,984 times. So prodigiously various are the works of the Creator.

† That whitish kind of down, which shags the putrefying pickle, which incrusts the surface of some corrupted liquors, and constitutes what we call mouldiness, is really a cluster of little plants. Each has a root and a stalk; each spreads its branches, and produces seed in abundance.

Radices que suas habet, exilemque coronam,
Frondesque, fructumque gerit, velut ardua quercus.

‡ The fir, the beech, and such like trees, are called in Hebrew, כחללים, Isa. vii. 19. Which word is rendered, but I think very improperly, *bushes*. It rather signifies the grand and most admired plants.

air flight; or else are enclosed in a springy case, which, forcibly bursting, shoots and spreads them on every side. By some such means the reproductive principle is disseminated, the universal granary is filled, and the universal board furnished. The buzzing insect, and the creeping worm, have each his bill of fare. Each enjoys a never-failing treat, equivalent to our best venison, or to "the fat of kidneys of wheat*," Deut. xxxii. 14.

As the seeds of some plants are most artfully scattered abroad when ripe, the seeds of others are most carefully guarded till they come to maturity; and, by both contrivances, every species is not barely preserved, but in a manner eternised. Some are lodged in the centre of a large pulp, which is once their defence and their nourishment. This we find exemplified in the delicious apple and the juicy pear. Some, besides their surrounding pulp, are enclosed in a thick shell, hard and impenetrable as stone. We cannot pluck and eat one of those downy peaches or encrimsoned nectarines, which so beautifully emboss the wall, without finding a proof of this precaution. Cast our eye upon the walnuts, which stud the branches of that spreading tree. Before these are gathered, the increase of the cold, and the emptiness of the gardens, will sharpen the appetite of the birds. To secure the fine kernel from the depredations of their busy assailing bills, it is fortified with a strong enclosure of wood, and with the addition of a disgusting bitter rind.

If grass was as scarce as the Guernsey lily, or as difficultly raised as the delicate tuberose, how certainly and how speedily must many millions of quadrupeds perish with famine! Since all the cattle owe their chief subsistence to this vegetable, by a singular beneficence in the divine economy, "it waiteth not," like the corn-field and the garden-bed, for the annual labours of man, Mic. v. 7. When once sown, though ever so frequently cropped, it survives with the returning season, and flourishes in a kind of perennial verdure. It covers our meadows, diffuses itself over the plains, springs up in every glade of the forest, and spreads a sideboard in the most sequestered nook.

Since the nutriment of vegetables themselves lies hid under the soil, or floats up and down in the air; beneath, they plunge their roots into the ground, and disperse every way their fibrous suckers, to explore the latent, and attract the proper nourishment; above, they expand a multitude of leaves, which, like so many open mouths, catch the rains as they fall, imbibe the dews as they distil, and transmit them, through their nice orifices, to the heart of the plant, or the lobes of the fruit.

I have touched upon the insensible creation, and pointed out the care of a condescending Providence, exercised over these lowest formations of nature. The animal world, Theron, falls to your share. It is yours to descant upon those higher orders of existence; and show us the goodness of God extending his indulgent regards to them and their interests, as tenderly, as officiously, as a hen spreadeth her wings over her infant brood.

Ther. The subject is in good hands. Let part the second be of the same

* A sentence rich with elegance! such as would have shone in Pindar, or been admired by Longinus. Yet, I believe, its principal beauty consists in an allusion to a remarkable Jewish rite. In every sacrifice, the fat of the kidneys was, as the most delicious part of the victim, set apart for God, and consumed on his altar. Here even the common people were treated like the Deity. They lay under no restraint, either from the divine prohibition, or the scarcity of the grain; but were copiously supplied, and freely regaled themselves, with the choicest and finest part of this first and best of vegetables.

strain with part the first, and there will be no occasion to wish for a new speaker. As to myself, I have very little inclination to talk. But I have my ear open and attentive to your discourse.

Asp. You put me in mind of the philosopher who presumed to read a lecture on the art of war in the presence of Hannibal. But his impertinence was voluntary, mine is constrained. Since you enjoin me this office, let it pass from the vegetable to the animal world. Here we shall find no tribe no individual neglected. The superior classes want no demonstration of their excellent accomplishments. At the first glimpse, they challenge our approbation, they command our applause. Even the more ignoble forms of animated existence are most wisely circumstanced, and most liberally accommodated.

They all generate in that particular season which is sure to supply them with a stock of provision, sufficient both for themselves and their increasing families. The sheep year, when there is a profusion of nutrimental herbage on the soil, to fill their udders and create milk for their lambs. The birds lay their eggs, and hatch their young, when myriads of new-born tender insects swarm on every side; so that the caterer, whether it be the male or female parent, needs only to alight on the ground, or make a little excursion into the air, and they find a feast ready dressed, and all at a free cost, for the clamorous mouths at home.

Their love to their offspring, while they continue in a helpless state, is invincibly strong; whereas, the very moment they are able to shift for themselves; when the parental affection would be attended with much solicitude and productive of no advantage, it vanishes, as though it had never been. The hen which marches at the head of her little brood, would fly in the eye of a mastiff, or even encounter a lion in their defence. Yet, within a few weeks, she abandons her chickens to the wide world, and not so much as knows them any more.

If the God of Israel inspired Bezaleel and Aholiab with "wisdom, an understanding, and knowledge in all manner of workmanship," Exod. xxx. 3, the God of nature has instructed the wild and warbling inhabitants of the bough. The skill with which they erect their houses, and adjust their apartments, is inimitable. The caution with which they secrete their abodes from the searching eye, or intruding foot, is admirable. No general, though fruitful in expedients, could plan a more artful concealment. No architect, with his rule and line, could build so commodious a lodgment.

Give the most celebrated artificer the same materials which these weak and inexperienced creatures use; let a Jones, or a De Moivre, have only some rude straws or ugly sticks; a few bits of dirt, or scraps of hair; a sorry lock of wool, or a coarse sprig of moss; and what works, fair with delicacy, or fit for service, could they produce?

We extol the commander who knows how to take advantage of the ground who can make the sun and wind fight for him, as well as his troops; and by every circumstance, embarrasses the forces of the enemy, but expedites the action and advances the success of his own. Does not this praise belong to our feathery leaders, who pitch their tent, or (if you please) fix their pensile camp, on the dangerous branches that wave aloft in the air, or dance over the eddies of the stream? By which judicious disposition, the vernal gales rock their cradle, and the murmuring waters lull their young; while both concur

to terrify the shepherd, and keep the schoolboy at a trembling distance. Some hide their little household from view, amidst the shelter of entangled furze; others remove it from reach, in the centre of a thorny thicket; and, by one stratagem or another, they are generally as secure and unmolested in their feeble habitations, as the foxes, which intrench themselves deep in the earth, or as the conies, which retire to the rock for their citadel, Prov. xxx. 26.

If the swan has large sweeping wings, and a copious stock of feathers, to spread over her callow brood, the wren makes up, by contrivance, what is deficient in her bulk. Small as she is, she intends to bring forth, and will be obliged to nurse up, a very numerous issue. Therefore, with the correctest judgment she designs, and with indefatigable assiduity finishes, a nest proper for her purpose. It is a neat rotund, lengthened into an oval, bottomed and vaulted with a regular concave. To preserve it from rain, it has several coatings of moss; to defend it from cold, it has but one window, and only a single door; to render it both elegant and comfortable, it has carpets and hangings of the softest finest down. By the help of this curious mansion, our little lady becomes the mother of multitudes. The vivifying heat of her body is, during the time of incubation, exceedingly augmented. Her house is like an oven, and greatly assists in hatching her young; which no sooner burst the shell, than they find themselves screened from the annoyance of the weather, and most agreeably reposed, amidst the ornaments of a palace, and the warmth of a bagnio.

Perhaps we have been accustomed to look upon the insects as so many rude scraps of creation, and to rank them amongst the refuse of things; whereas, if we examine them without prejudice, and with a little attention, they will appear some of the most polished pieces of divine workmanship. Many of them are decked with a profusion of finery. Their eyes are an assemblage of microscopes, whose mechanism is inconceivably nice, and finished in the highest perfection. Their dress has all the variety and lustre of colours; it is set with an arrangement of the most brilliant gems, and bordered with fringes richer far than the most costly silks. Their wings are the finest expansions imaginable; cambric is mere canvass, and lawn is coarse as sackcloth, compared with those inimitable webs. The cases which enclose their wings glitter with the most glossy varnish; are scooped with ornamental flutings; are studded with radiant spots; or pinked with elegant holes. Not any among them but are equipped with weapons, or endued with dexterity, which qualify them to seize their prey, or escape their foe; to despatch the business of their respective station, and enjoy the pleasures of their particular condition.

Now I am in a talking humour, give me leave to celebrate the endowments and assert the honours of my puny clients; yet not so much to support their credit, as to magnify their all-gracious Creator. What if the elephant

* The common fly, for instance; who is surrounded with a multitude of dangers, and has neither strength to resist her enemies, nor a place of retreat to secure herself. For which reason, she had need to be very vigilant, and always upon her guard. Yet her head is so fixed, that it is incapable of turning, in order to observe what passes either behind or around her. Providence therefore, surprisingly wise in its contrivances, and equally bountiful in its gifts, has furnished her, not barely with a retinue, but with more than a legion of eyes. Inasmuch, that a single fly is supposed to be mistress of no less than eight thousand, every one of which is lined with a distinct optic nerve. By means of this costly and amazing apparatus, the little creature sees on every side, with the utmost ease, and with instantaneous speed; even without any motion of the eye, or any flexion of the neck.

is distinguished by a huge proboscis? His meanest relations of the reptile line are furnished with curious antennæ; remarkable, if not for their enormous magnitude, yet for their ready flexibility and acute sensation, by which they explore their way even in the darkest road; they discover and avoid whatever might defile their neat apparel, or endanger their tender lives.

Every one admires that majestic creature the horse; his graceful head, and ample chest; his arching neck, and flowing mane; his cleanly-turned limbs, and finely-adjusted motions. With extraordinary agility he flings himself over the ditch; and with a rapid career pours himself through the plain. With unwearied application he carries his rider from one end of the country to another; and, with undaunted bravery, rushes into the fiercest rage, and amidst the thickest havoc of the battle. Yet the grasshopper springs with a bound altogether as brisk, if not more impetuous. The ant, in proportion to its size, is equally nimble, equally strong; and will climb precipices which the most courageous courser dares not attempt to scale. If the snail is slower in her motions, she is under no necessity of treading back the ground which she has passed—because her house is part of her travelling-equipage, and whenever she departs, she is still under her own roof; wherever she removes, is always at home.

The eagle, it is true, is privileged with pinions that outstrip the wind; elevated on which, she looks down on all that soars, and sees flying clouds, and straining wings, far below; her optic nerve so strong, that it meets and sustains the dazzling beams of noon; her wide-surveying glance so keen, that, from those towering heights, it discerns the smallest fish which skulks at the bottom of the river. Yet neither is that poor outcast, the grovelling and gloomy mole, disregarded by divine Providence. Because she is to dig a cell in the earth, and dwell, as it were, in a perpetual dungeon, her paws serve her for a pickaxe and a spade. Her eye, or rather her visual speck, is sunk deep into a socket, that it may suffer no injury from her rugged situation: it requires but a very scanty communication of light, that she may have no reason to complain of her darkling abode. I called her subterranean habitation a dungeon; and some people, perhaps, may think it a grave; but I revoke the expression. It yields her all the safety of a fortified castle, and all the delight of a decorated grotto.

Even the spider, though abhorred by mankind, is evidently the care of all-sustaining Heaven. She is to live upon plunder; to support herself by trepanning the idle, insignificant, sauntering fly. Suitably to such an occupation, she possesses a bag of glutinous moisture. From this she spins a clammy thread, and weaves it into a tenacious net. Expert as any practised sportsman, she always spreads it in the most opportune places. Sensible that her appearance would create horror, and deter the prey from approaching the snare, when watching for sport she retires from sight; but constantly keeps within distance, so as to receive the very first intelligence of what passes in the toils, and be ready to launch, without a moment's delay, upon the struggling captive. And what is very observable, when winter chills the world, and no more insects ramble amidst the air, foreseeing that her labour would be vain, she discontinues her work, and abandons her stand.

I must by no means forget the little monarchy which inhabits the hive. The bees are to subsist, not as a lawless banditti, but as a regular community. It is theirs to earn a decent livelihood by honest industry, not to glut themselves with carnage, or enrich themselves by rapine. For which reason they

are actuated by an invariable inclination to society. They possess the truest notions of domestic economy, and have enacted the wisest laws for political government. Their indulgent Creator has made them a present of all necessary implements, both for constructing their combs, and for composing their honey. They have each a portable vessel, with which they bring home their collected sweets; and they all have the most commodious storerooms, in which they deposit their delicious wares. Though made for peace, they know how to use the sword. They can take up arms with the utmost resolution and intrepidity, when arms are requisite to guard their wealth or repel their foes. Without going through a course of botany, they can readily distinguish every plant which is most likely to yield the materials proper for their business. Without serving an apprenticeship in the laboratory, they are complete practitioners in the art of separation and refinement. They are aware, without borrowing their information from an almanack, that the vernal gleams, and summer suns, continue but for a season. Mindful of this admonition, they improve to the utmost every shining hour; and lay up a stock of balmy treasures, sufficient to supply the whole state, till the blossoms open afresh, and their flowery harvest returns.

Let the peacock boast, if he pleases, his elegant top-knot and lofty mien; his neck adorned with varying dyes, and his train bespangled with a round of stars. Yet let him know, that the despised butterfly, and even the loathed caterpillar, display an attire no less sumptuous, and wear ornaments altogether as genteel, if not quite so magnificent. Does beauty sit in state on that lordly bird? She shines in miniature on the vulgar insect. Is the master of this lower creation ennobled with the powers of reason? The meanest classes of sensitive existence are endued with the faculty of instinct; which gives them a sagacity that is neither derived from observation, nor waits for the finishings of experience; which, without a tutor, teaches them all necessary skill, and enables them, without a pattern, to perform every needful operation; and, what is far more surprising, never misleads them, either into erroneous principles or pernicious practices; never fails them, in the nicest and most arduous of their undertakings.

Can you have patience to follow me if I step into a different element, and just visit the watery world? Not one among the innumerable myriads which swim the boundless ocean, but is watched over by that exalted eye whose smiles irradiate the heaven of heavens. Not one but is supported by that almighty hand, which crowns angels and archangels with glory. The condescending God has not only created, but beautified them. He has given the most exact proportion to their shape, the gayest colours to their skin, and a polished smoothness to their scales. The eyes of some are surrounded with a scarlet circle; the back of others is diversified with crimson stains. View them when they glance along the stream, or while they are fresh from their native brine, and the burnished silver is not more bright, the radiant rainbow is scarce more glowing, than their vivid, glistening, glossy hues.

Yet, notwithstanding the finery of their apparel, we are under painful apprehensions for their welfare. How can the poor creatures live amidst the suffocating waters? As they have neither hands nor feet, how can they help themselves, or how escape their enemies? We are soon freed from our fears by observing that they all possess the beneficial, as well as ornamental furniture of fins. These when expanded, like masts above, and ballast below,

poise their floating bodies, and keep them steadily upright. We cannot forbear congratulating them on the flexible play and vigorous activity of their tails, with which they shoot themselves through the paths of the sea, more swiftly than sails and oars can waft the royal yacht. But we are lost in wonder at the exquisite contrivance and delicate formation of their gills; by which they are accommodated, even in that dense medium, with the power of breathing, and the benefits of respiration. A piece of mechanism this, indulged to the meanest of the fry; yet surpassing, infinitely surpassing, in the fineness of its structure and the felicity of its operation, whatever is curious in the works of art or commodious in the palaces of princes.

Ther. Some persons, Aspasio, have the art of giving dignity to trivial, and spirit to jejune topics. I cannot but listen with a pleased attention to your discourse, though it descends to the lowest scenes and meanest productions of nature.—To make such philosophical remarks, was usually my province; to add the religious improvement, yours. But my thoughts at present are wholly taken up with the consideration of my Saviour's righteousness. I can hardly turn my views or divert my speech to any other subject. All those amiable appearances of the external creation which I was wont to contemplate with rapture, afford but a languid entertainment to my mind. Till my interest in this divine Redeemer is ascertained, the spring may bloom, the summer shine, and autumn swell with fruits; but it will be winter, cheerless, gloomy, desolate winter in my soul.

Asp. You say, Theron, you attended to my cursory hints. Then your own superior discernment could not but perceive, how every part of the exterior world is adjusted in the most excellent and gracious manner. Not the coarsest piece of inactive matter but bears the impress of its Maker's fashioning skill. Not a single creature, however insignificant, but exhibits evident demonstrations of his providential care. His hand is liberal, profusely liberal, to all that breathes, and all that has a being.

Let me only ask;—and to introduce this question with the greater propriety, to give it a more forcible energy on our minds, was the principal design of the preceding remarks;—let me ask, “Does God take care for oxen?” 1 Cor. ix. 9. Is he a generous benefactor to the meanest animals, to the lowest reptiles? Are his munificent regards extended farther still, and vouchsafed even to the most worthless vegetable? And shall they be withheld from you, my dear friend, and from me? Not one among all the numberless productions which tread the ground, or stand rooted to the soil, wants any convenience that is proper for its respective state. And will his heavenly Father deny Theron what is so necessary to his present comfort, and his final happiness? Impossible!

Ther. I wish for, but I can hardly hope to partake of that spiritual blessing; which always included my whole happiness, and now engrosses my whole concern.

Asp. “Not hope to partake of!”—What foundation, what shadow of pretence has this desponding temper, either in reason or in Scripture? Is it not evident from the whole book of revelation; is it not apparent through the whole compass of nature, that the almighty Lord “who governeth the world with the palm of his hand,” Eccl'us xviii. 3, is remote, infinitely remote, from a niggardly disposition? He not only provideth for the wants, but even “satisfieth the desire of every living thing,” Psal. cxlv. 16.

Consider those stately poppies, which are now the principal ornament of the garden. They have no tongue to request the least favour. Yet the ever-gracious Maker clothes them from his own wardrobe, and decks them with exquisite beauty.—Observe the young ravens, which sit carelessly croaking on yonder boughs. Do they cry for food? Psal. cxlvii. 9. It is in hoarse inarticulate accents: yet the all-supporting God overlooks their ignorance; hears meaning in their noise; and supplies their every need from his own spontaneous bounty. If he accommodates the former, though incapable of asking; if he attends to the latter, though insensible of their benefactor; can he disregard our pressing wants? will he reject our earnest petitions? especially when we seek such pure and exalted gifts, as it is both his delight and his honour to bestow.

O! my friend, look abroad into universal nature, and look away every disquieting thought.

Ther. Did you inquire what pretence I have for this desponding temper? Alas! I have more than a pretence. I have reason; a reason too obvious—my great unworthiness!

Asp. Pray, where was the worthiness of the stiffnecked Israelites? Yet the Lord “bare them, and carried them, all the days of old,” Isa. lxii. 9. Where was the worthiness of Saul the blasphemer? Yet the blessed Jesus made him a chosen vessel, and set him as a signet on his right hand. You deserve nothing at the hand of God our Saviour: neither did Joseph’s brethren deserve any kindness from the viceroy of Egypt. Yet he delivered them from famine, who sold him to slavery; he settled them in the choicest territories, who cast him into the horrible pit. He showed himself a friend and a father to those unnatural relations who were his actual betrayers, and his intentional murderers. And can you persuade yourself, will you harbour a suspicion, that Christ is less compassionate than Joseph? Shall a frail mortal outvie Emmanuel in beneficence?

Ther. Is not some righteousness of our own indispensably required, in order to our participation of the righteousness of Christ?

Asp. Yes, such a righteousness as the Samaritan woman (John iv. 18.) and Zaccheus the publican possessed; or such as the Philippian jailor and the profligate Corinthians might boast, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Zaccheus was a man of infamous character, and chief among the extortioners. The jailor was a barbarous persecutor, and in purpose a self-murderer. Yet our Lord says of the former, “This day,” without enjoining any course of previous preparation, “is salvation come to thine house,” Luke xix. 9. St. Paul directs the latter, without insisting upon any antecedent righteousness, “to believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ;” and assures the poor alarmed sinner that in so doing he should “be saved,” Acts xvi. 31.

So that nothing is required in order to our participation of Christ and his benefits, but a conviction of our need, a sense of their worth, and a willingness to receive them in the appointed way; receive them as the freest of gifts, or as a matter of mere grace. “Come and take freely,” Rev. xxii. 17, is our Master’s language; without staying to acquire any graceful qualities, is his meaning.

Ther. Surely, to come without any holiness, without any decent preparative, must be a gross indignity to the divine Jesus. Whoever presents a petition to any earthly sovereign, will think it absolutely necessary not to

appear in a slovenly dishabille, much less in filthy raiment. Does not our Lord himself, in the parable of the wedding garment, inculcate this very point, and caution us against a presumptuous approach?

Asp. In the parable you mention, Christ is both the bridegroom, the feast, and the wedding garment, Matth. xxii. 11. And who are invited to an union with this bridegroom? to be guests at this feast? to be arrayed with this wedding garment? The messengers are sent, not to the mansion-houses of the rich, or the palaces of the mighty, but to the highways and hedges; where misery mourns, and poverty pines, and baseness hides her head. To whom is their message addressed? To the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, Luke xiv. 21; persons who have no amiable or recommending endowments, but every loathsome and disgusting property. Yet these (mark the passage, my dear friend; mark well the encouraging circumstance), these are not only not forbidden, but entreated, importuned; and by all the arts of persuasion, by every weighty or winning motive, compelled to come in. And after all this, surely, it cannot be an act of presumption to accept, but must be a breach of duty to refuse, the invitation.

Ther. You take no notice of the man who was found without a wedding garment, which is by far the most alarming incident, and that which gives me no small uneasiness.

Asp. And does my Theron take proper notice of the divine declaration? "I have prepared my dinner," says the King eternal. "All things are ready," Matth. xxii. 4. "Whatever is necessary for the justification, the holiness, the complete salvation of sinners, is provided in the merit and the grace of my Son. Let them come, therefore, as to a nuptial banquet, and freely enjoy my munificence, and feast their souls with the royal provision."

The man without a wedding garment, denotes the specious superficial professor, who is "called by Christ's name," but has never "put on Christ Jesus by faith." Shall I tell you more plainly whom this character represents? You yourself, my dear Theron, was some months ago in the state of this unhappy creature, when you trusted in yourself, and thought highly of your own, thought meanly of your Saviour's righteousness.

I congratulate my friend on his happy deliverance from so dangerous a condition. You and I are now like the returning prodigal. Let us remember, that he came with no recommendation, either of dress, of person, or of character. None but his nakedness, his misery, and an acknowledgment of vileness, which had every aggravating, not one extenuating circumstance. Yet he was received,—received with inexpressible indulgence; and clothed with that first, that best, that divinest robe, Luke xv. 22, the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Let us accustom ourselves to consider this incomparable robe under its evangelical character. It is not a matter of bargain, nor the subject of sale, but a deed of gift: "The gift of righteousness," says the apostle. And gifts, we all know, are not to be purchased, but received.

Ther. Is nothing then, nothing to be done on our part? no heavenly-mindedness to be exercised? no victory over our lusts gained? no fruits of sanctification produced?

Asp. These legal apprehensions, how closely they cleave to my Theron's mind! But I hope the word of God, which pierceth to the dividing asunder the soul and spirit, will give the severing blow. And what says that sacred

word? It describes the gospel as a will or testament*, Heb. ix. 16, 17; and all its glorious blessings, as legacies bequeathed by the dying Jesus. When your old acquaintance Charicles left you a handsome legacy, what did you do to establish your title, and make it your own?

Ther. My title was pre-established by my friend's donation. I had nothing to do but to claim, to accept, and to possess.

Asp. Do the very same in the present case. They who believe are heirs, undoubted "heirs, of the righteousness which is by faith," Heb. xi. 7. Surely you cannot suppose that Christ's kindness is less sincere, or that Christ's donations are less valid, than those of an earthly testator.

Ther. This illustration hardly reaches the point. I speak not of doing anything by way of merit, but by way of qualification.

Asp. If there be any qualification, I think it is our extreme indigence. This indeed it will be proper to have; and this, I presume, you are not without. Other qualification, neither reason prescribes nor Scripture requires.

"Reason prescribes no other."—The gifts of the great eternal Sovereign are intended, not to recognise our imaginary worth, but to aggrandise our views of his mercy and grace. To answer such a design, the unworthy and the sinners are duly qualified; nay, are the only qualified persons.

"Scripture requires no other."—The ever-merciful Saviour says not, They are unqualified for my merits; they have no valuable or noble acquirements. But this is his tender complaint: "They will not come to me,"—just as they are—with all their sins about them, with all their guilt upon them—"that they may have life," John v. 40. Pray take notice of this text, and you will see things placed in a new light, ranged in a new order. Sanctification, heavenly-mindedness, and a victory over our lusts, are not so much the qualities which he requires, as the blessings which he will confer.

Ther. "The unworthy and sinners the only qualified!" Of this expression I cannot but take particular notice. Then Judas should stand in the first rank of qualified persons; and the devout centurion, "whose prayers and alms had come up as a memorial before God," was thereby unqualified for the favour of heaven.

Asp. If you observed my expression, I spoke in the hypothetical manner; made a supposition rather than advanced an assertion. If there be any qualification, this is the only one. But, strictly speaking, there is no such thing. The impulsive or inclining cause of all God's favour shown, of all God's goodness exercised, is—from the creature? No; but from himself, himself alone. "He has mercy," not because this or that person is amiable, is meet, or qualified, but "because he will have mercy." And as for our need of mercy and reconciliation, arising from our sinfulness, this can no more constitute a real qualification for the blessings, than an act of rebellion can qualify for the first honours of the state.

* This notion not only runs through the Scriptures, but stands conspicuous even in their title-page.—What are they called? The Old and The New Testament. What is a testament? An authentic deed, in which estates are transmitted, and legacies bequeathed. In other testaments, some earthly possession; in this, the heavenly patrimony, even all the riches of grace, and the everlasting inheritance of glory. Did we consider the Scriptures in this light, it would be a most engaging invitation, to search them with assiduity and pleasure. What child is willing to continue ignorant of a deceased parent's last will and testament? Who does not covet to know, what honours, hereditaments, and wealth devolve to his enjoyment, by such an interesting and venerable conveyance?

But this we must allow, that such need, such misery, such sinfulness, illustrate the freeness, and manifest the riches of grace. And this we should never forget, that God's first and leading purpose, in all his favourable dispensations to fallen man, is to demonstrate the sovereignty, and advance the glory of his grace. The Lord, promising a very extraordinary deliverance to Israel, says, "Not for your sakes, be it known unto you, do I this" (Ezek. xxxvi. 32,) signal act of kindness. What then is the inducement? We find it in the following declaration: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out your transgressions, for my own sake *," and according to the good pleasure of my will," Isa. xliii. 25. What is the end of all? "It is for the praise of the glory of his grace," Eph. i. 6. A proper motto this for all the displays of divine goodness to sinful men. It has been inscribed by the hand of truth and inspiration. Time and eternity, instead of erasing the lines, will only stamp them deeper, and open them wider.

Ther. This is such a gift! To be interested in all the merits of Christ! to have his immaculate righteousness imputed to my soul! So that from henceforth there shall be no fear of condemnation, but a comfortable enjoyment of freest love, and a delightful expectation of completest glory!

Asp. If this rich donation surpass your very thoughts, and fill you with grateful astonishment, it is so much the better adapted to display what the Scripture very emphatically styles the "abundant," the "superabundant," the "exceeding abundant †," grace of our God. God hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. He is a boundless ocean of love; ever flowing, yet absolutely inexhaustible. See! what an innumerable variety of benefits are transmitted from yonder sun, to gladden all the regions of nature! Yet the sun is but a spark; its highest splendour no more than a shade; its uninterrupted and most profuse communications of light; a poor diminutive scantling, compared with the riches of divine benignity.

The servant in the parable, who owed ten thousand talents, craved only some merciful forbearance; whereas his generous lord remitted the whole sum, and gave him an acquittance in full: "I forgive thee all that debt," Matth. xviii. 32. You wonder, and very deservedly, at such vast generosity. But what had been your admiration to see the noble master admitting this obnoxious slave to a share in his dignity? what if he had made so worthless a wretch the chief of his family, and the heir of his estate? This, perhaps you would say, exceeds the bounds of credibility. Yet God Almighty's stupendous beneficence exceeds all this. He not only spares guilty creatures, but makes them his children; makes them inheritors of his kingdom; and as an introduction to all, or rather as the crown of all, makes them partakers of his Son, Heb. iii. 14.

Ther. The gift is inestimable; of more value than all worlds: it will render me blessed and happy, now and for ever. And may so unworthy a creature look for a blessing thus superlatively excellent?

Asp. Unworthy? my dear friend, dwell no longer upon that obsolete topic. The greatest unworthiness is no objection in Christ's account, when the soul

* Which teaches us that God, and nothing in the creature, is the original, entire, sole cause of all grace, and every gracious vouchsafement. It is not only by him, and through him, but to him; for the honour of his benign perfections, that we are pardoned, accepted, saved.

† Τριβαλλουσα χαρις, 2 Cor. ix. 14. Περιπερισσους η χαρις, Rom. v. 20. Περιπερισσους η χαρις, 1 Tim. i. 14.

is convinced of sin, and the heart desirous of a Saviour. And as for worthiness, this is as much disavowed by the gospel, as equivocal generation* is exploded by the discoveries of our improved philosophy.

Nay, farther, this notion is diametrically contrary to the gospel, and totally subversive of the covenant of grace.

Ther. In what respect?

Asp. Because it would make our own duty and obedience the terms; whereas the terms were Christ's suffering, and Christ's obedience. These are the hinge on which that great transaction turns, and on which the hope of the world hangs.

Ther. Be more particular, Aspasio.

Asp. The first covenant was made with Adam, for himself and us. Breaking it, he lost his original righteousness, and became subject to death; was at once a bankrupt and a rebel. Now you cannot suppose, that the Almighty Majesty would enter into a fresh covenant with an insolvent and attainted creature. It pleased, therefore, the Second Person of the adorable Trinity to undertake our cause, to become our Surety, and put himself in our stead. With him the second covenant was made. He was charged with the performance of the conditions; thereby to obtain pardon and righteousness, grace and glory, for all his people. "I have made a covenant with my Chosen One," Psalm lxxxix. 3, is the language of the Most High. And the terms were, (you will permit me to repeat the momentous truth,) not your worthiness or mine, but the incarnation, the obedience, the death of God's ever-blessed Son.

Ther. Has man then no office assigned, no part to act, in the covenant of grace?

Asp. He has; but it is a part which my friend seems very loath to discharge. His part is to accept the blessings, fully purchased by the Saviour, and freely presented to the sinner. His part is, not to dishonour the Redeemer's gracious interposition, and infinitely sufficient performance, by hankering after any merit of his own. His part (why will you constrain me to reiterate in this manner?) is, not to bring money in his hand, with the ten brethren; but, with an empty hand, and like an impoverished Lazarus, "to take hold of God's covenant," Isa. lvi. 4.

Ther. If this be the nature of the new covenant, I must confess I have hitherto been ignorant of the gospel.

Asp. And from hence arises your present distress; from hence your averseness to receive comfort. You are a philosopher, Theron, and have been accustomed to examine nicely the proportion of objects, rather than to weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary. Here you find all proportion swallowed up and lost. This quite overthrows all your conclusions drawn from the fitness of things. Here man is nothing, less than nothing, while grace is all in all. And should we not, however unworthy in ourselves, magnify the grace of our God?

Ther. Most certainly.

Asp. How can this be done, but by expecting great and superlatively

* The ancients imagined, that many vegetables and insects were produced by, I know not what, plastic power in the sun, and other elements. This is called *equivocal* generation. Whereas the modern philosophers maintain, that every individual of this kind derives its being from some parent vegetable or parent animal. This is styled *univocal* generation.

precious blessings from his hand? Alexander, you know, had a famous but indigent philosopher in his court. Our adept in science was once particularly straitened in his circumstances. To whom should he apply but to his patron, the conqueror of the world? His request was no sooner made than granted. Alexander gives him a commission, to receive of his treasurer whatever he wanted. He immediately demands, in his sovereign's name, a hundred talents*. The treasurer, surprised at so large a demand, refuses to comply; but waits upon the king, and represents the affair; adding withal, how unreasonable he thought the petition, and how exorbitant the sum. Alexander hears him with patience; but, as soon as he had ended his remonstrance, replies: "Let the money be instantly paid. I am delighted with this philosopher's way of thinking. He has done me a singular honour; and showed by the largeness of his request, what a high idea he has conceived, both of my superior wealth and my royal munificence."

Thus, my dear Theron, let us honour what the inspired penman styles "the marvellous loving-kindness of Jehovah." From the King, "whose name is the Lord of Hosts," let us expect—not barely what corresponds with our low models of generosity, much less what we suppose proportioned to our fancied deserts, but what is suitable to the unknown magnificence of his name, and the unbounded benevolence of his heart. Then we shall cheerfully and assuredly trust, that Christ Jesus will be "made of God to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:" that he who hath given himself for us, Eph. v. 2, will give us of his Spirit, John iv. 13, and will give unto us eternal life, John x. 28.

Ther. Yes, upon condition that we fight the good fight, and finish our course of duty. "Henceforth," says the apostle, after this is done, "there is laid up for me," and for other victorious soldiers, for other faithful labourers, "a crown of righteousness."

Asp. To such persons the crown will assuredly be vouchsafed. But is it vouchsafed on account of their successful warfare, or persevering obedience? If so, "Israel may vaunt themselves, and say, Mine own hand," not the Redeemer's interposition, "hath saved me," Judges vii. 8.

Not to repeat what has already been alleged in opposition to this opinion; not to produce what might farther be urged from a variety of scriptural testimonies; I shall only desire you to observe, what the apostle himself adds in this very place: "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." But is this the pay proportionate and due to his own services? is it what he claims and demands on the foot of duty performed? The very title of the reward implies the contrary. It is "a crown of righteousness," because purchased by the meritorious and consummate righteousness of Christ. The action of the Judge declares the contrary: "which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." It is, you see, an act of favour; the issue of unmerited bounty; what neither saint, nor martyr, nor apostle enjoys, but only by way of gracious donation, 2 Tim. iv. 8.

I would fain have my Theron form more honourable apprehensions concerning the mercy and the bounty of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will bestow what you suppose he exacts. He is really a benefactor, where you would represent him as a task-master. "The Lord will give grace as well as

* About ten thousand pounds.

glory." He knows you have neither strength nor merit ; therefore he will supply your want of both from his own unfathomable fulness.

Ther. Ah, my Aspasio ! you do not know my state. I have not only no merit, but great guilt ; was, by nature, a child of wrath ; have been, by practice, a slave of sin ; and what is worse, am still corrupt, have still a carnal heart. And has not such a wretch forfeited all title to the divine favour ? Nay, does he not deserve the vengeance of eternal fire ?

Asp. That we all deserve this misery, is beyond dispute. I am truly glad that we are sensible of our demerit. Here our recovery begins. Now we are to believe, that the Lord Jesus has satisfied divine justice ; has paid a glorious price, on purpose to obtain for such ill-deserving, such hell-deserving creatures, all pardon, all holiness, and everlasting happiness. According to the import of that charming Scripture, "When we were enemies (and what is there in an enemy to bespeak favour or deserve benefits ?) we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," Rom. v. 10.

You have great guilt. But is this a reason why you should be excluded from the blessings of the covenant ? Contemplate the state of that forlorn and wretched outcast, described in Ezekiel, chap. xvi. An infant "in its blood : " this represents a sinner, who has nothing to excite love, but all that may provoke abhorrence. Yet what says the Holy One of Israel ? "When I saw thee"—not washed and purified, and made meet for my acceptance, but—"polluted in thy blood * ;" loathsome with defilement, and laden with iniquity ; then, even then, "I said unto thee, Live : I spread my skirt over thee ; and thou becamest mine." This is the manner of his proceeding, not barely to one nation, but to all his people ; not in one period of time only, but through all generations.

You are still corrupt, one that is sensible of his corruption, and acknowledges his sinfulness ! Then you are the very person for whom the Saviour's righteousness is intended ; to whom it is promised.—You are a governor of the county hospital, Theron. You have been industrious in promoting, and are active in supporting that excellent institution ; where medicine with her healing stores, and religion with her heavenly hopes, act as joint handmaids to charity. What are the circumstances which render any persons the proper objects for an admission into your infirmary ?

Ther. Their poverty and their distemper. Without poverty, they would not need ; and, free from distemper, they would not prize, the benefit of our modern Bethesda.

Asp. Apply this to the case under consideration. The whole world is in a state of spiritual disorder. Christ is styled by the inspired writer, "the Lord our healer," Exod. xv. 26. The gift of his righteousness, the balm of his blood, and the influences of his Spirit, are the sovereign restorative. And sure it cannot be a fanciful persuasion of our health, but a feeling conviction of our disease, which renders us proper objects of his recovering grace. "He came not to call the righteous," the righteous in their own eyes, "but sinners," Matth. ix. 13, self-condemned and ruined sinners, to give them repentance, and pardon, and newness of life.

* The words are peculiarly emphatical ; not only doubled, but redoubled ; to denote, at once, the strangeness of the fact, yet the certainty of the favour. "When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live ; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live," Ezek. xvi. 6.

Ther. But if any foolish and refractory patients have abused our beneficence, it is a standing unalterable rule of the house, never to admit them a second time, however pressing their exigencies, or however powerful their recommender. I have not once only, but through the whole course of my life, abused the marvellous loving-kindness of the Lord.

Asp. And is not the Lord superior to all his creatures, in acts of pardon as well as of power? Yes, as those heavens are higher than this prostrate earth, so much more enlarged and extensive is the divine clemency—that the widest sphere of human kindness, shall I say? rather than the boldest flights of human imagination. Your statues are inexorable, in case of our notorious irregularity committed: “But the free gift of a Redeemer’s righteousness is vouchsafed, notwithstanding many offences, unto justification, Rom. v. 16. It is the glory of our almighty Ruler, and redounds to the honour of his crucified Son, to pass over (Prov. xix. 11), not a single transgression only, but a multitude of provocations; to be altogether as unequalled in mercy, as he is absolutely supreme in majesty.

As it is the grossest pride to entertain high notions of our own accomplishments, or to expect eternal life on the score of our own obedience; so it will be the greatest affront to the grandeur of Christ’s merits, and the freeness of his grace, if we suppose our crimes too heinous to be forgiven, or our person too vile to be accepted.

[Theron paused.—These considerations seemed to operate; this anodyne to take effect. Desirous to improve the favourable juncture, and impart the needed consolation, Aspasio added:—]

How often did the inhabitants of Jerusalem disregard the warnings, and reject the counsels of our blessed Lord! How justly might he have sworn in his wrath, “They shall never hear the joyful sound of my gospel more. The blessings which they have so wantonly despised, and so wickedly abused shall be irrevocably withdrawn.” Instead of passing such a sentence, this is the charge which, after his resurrection, he gives to his apostles: “Let repentance and remission of sins be preached in my name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem,” Luke xxiv. 47. “At Jerusalem, Lord! Have not the men of that ungrateful and barbarous city been deaf to thy tender importunities? Did they not persecute thee unto condemnation and death. Are not their weapons still reeking, as it were, with thy blood; and their tongues still shooting out arrows, even bitter words, by which they would murder thy character, as they have already crucified thy person?” Yet these wretches (and could any be more inhuman? could any be more unworthy?) are not only not abhorred, but unto them is the message of grace and the word of salvation sent. Nay, to shew the unparalleled freeness of our Redeemer’s grace, these are first upon the heavenly list. The glad tidings of pardon and life, which are to be published through the world, must begin, (amazing mercy!) must begin at Jerusalem.

Ther. Thus much I may venture to profess in my own behalf,—that I long for this blessing; I pray for this blessing; but I cannot see my title to this comprehensive and inestimable blessing clear.

Asp. I behold it perfectly clear. Some days ago a worthy clergyman, who lately came to settle in the neighbourhood, did himself the honour of making one at your table. After dinner you showed him your library; we took a walk in your garden, and made the agreeable tour of the fish-ponds: then

with that amiable frankness of mien and accent, which is so peculiar to my friend, and exceedingly endears all his favours, you told him, "That he was as welcome to any book in your study, as if the whole collection was his own ; but if, on a visit from some acquaintance of superior rank, he should wish to be accommodated with a more delicate entertainment than usual, the productions of your waters, and of your hot-beds, were entirely at his service ; and that his acceptance of your offers, without the least shyness or reserve, would be the most pleasing compliment he could pay you on the occasion."

What says the great Proprietor of all good ? "If any man," however unworthy his person, or obnoxious his character, "thirst,"—thirst for the blessings of my evangelical kingdom,—“let him come unto me,” the fountain of these living waters, “and drink his fill,” John .vii. 37. You yourself acknowledge that you long for the sacred privileges of the gospel. Your heart is awakened into habitual and lively desires after the salvation of Christ. What is this but, in the spiritual sense, to thirst ? To you, therefore, the promise is made, to you the riches of this benign dispensation belong.

That clergyman has not the least suspicion of being disappointed, in case we should send for a brace of carp from your canal, or a fine melon from your garden. Why is he so confident ? Because he has done you any signal service ? No ; but because you have passed your word, and made the generous offer. And why should you harbour the least doubt concerning the divine veracity ? Why should you call in question your right to these heavenly treasures : since it is founded on a grant altogether as free, altogether as clear, as your own indulgent concession, and infinitely more firm than any human engagement ? founded on the fidelity of that sublime Being, who “remembers his covenant and promise to a thousand generations.”

Ther. It is impossible to confute, yet difficult to believe, what you urge.

Asp. What I urge is not the voice of a few dubious passages, nicely culled from the book of God, or forcibly wrested by the interpretation of man. The whole tenor of inspiration runs, with the greatest perspicuity and the greatest uniformity, in this delightful strain. Let me, out of a multitude, produce another express from the court of heaven. “Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, even he that hath no money. Come ye, buy and eat ; yea come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price,” Isa. lv. 1. Wine and milk undoubtedly signify the pardon of our sins, and the justification of our persons ; the communications of sanctifying grace, and the hope of eternal glory. These are nourishing and refreshing to the soul, as milk, the richest of foods, and as wine, the best of cordials, are to the body. These you see are to be obtained “without money, and without price,”—without any merit of our own, without any plea deduced from ourselves—by poor, undone, perishing bankrupts. They are to be enjoyed by every one who unfeignedly esteems them, and humbly seeks them. No exception is made ; no exclusive clause added. It is not said, any one that is worthy, but “every one that thirsteth.” To leave no room for any misgiving apprehensions, the kind invitation is repeated : “Buy and eat ; buy wine and milk.” The invaluable yet free tender is confirmed again and again : “He that hath no money—without money—without price.” And both are pressed upon us with a very remarkable, with the most affectionate vehemence : “Come ye ; come ye ; yea come.”

Had our heavenly benefactor permitted us to draw up this instrument of conveyance, and word it according to our own wish, what language could we have contrived, to render either the grant more free, or our claim more secure?

Ther. These are cheering truths. They amount to little less than a demonstration. And I am ready to declare, in the language of Agrippa, Almost thou persuadest me to commence a believer.

Asp. And why, my dear friend, why not altogether? Can you distrust the sincerity of the divine overtures? If the overtures are real, your title is unquestionable. Nay, there is more than an overture: you have an actual gift from the almighty Majesty. "To us," says the prophet, including all that wait for the redemption of Christ, and the consolation of Israel, "a child is born," Isa. ix. 6. "To us," he repeats the precious truth, to declare his exuberant joy, and denote the absolute certainty of the thing (see Gen. xli. 32), "a son is given;" even God's own Son, the ever-blessed Jesus, to be our propitiation, our surety, our complete redeemer.

Just cast a look upon yonder neat lodge. Though placed in the centre of a spacious field, it seems to be contiguous with the extremity of the vista. The eye, travelling over such a length of ground, has almost lost the windows, and the decent ornaments of the front. But I shall not soon lose the idea of that amiable munificence, which, as I was rambling one pleasant morning, and accidentally called at the house, I learned from its present owner. He was, I find, one of your servants; had spent several years in your family: when he settled in the world, you bestowed upon him that commodious box, and a pretty adjacent farm; to possess, without molestation or control, during his life. Does he not reckon the little estate, by virtue of your donation, to be his own? as much his own for the time prescribed, as if he had paid an equivalent in money? Since the Lord Jehovah has given us his Son, and all his unutterable merits; why should we not, with an assurance of faith, receive the incomparable gift? Why should we not confide in it, as firmer than the firmest deed; and far more inviolable than any royal patent? Especially since it has been sealed to us in every sacramental ordinance, and witnessed by every good motion of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

Ther. My servant never affronted my authority. If he had vilified my character, or insulted my person, should I then have been inclined to make the same advantageous settlement?

Asp. Herein appears the infinite superiority of the divine bounty. God is rich in mercy, not only to the obedient and grateful, but to the unthankful and unworthy. "To the Lord our God," says the prophet, "belong mercies and forgivenesses;" in measure superabundant, and in continuance unwearied: and this, "notwithstanding we have" offended him by our manifold failures in duty; nay, have "rebelled against him" (Dan. ix. 9) by flagrant violations of his law.

In sweet concert with this prophetic lesson, sings the transported Psalmist: "Thou, Lord," in thy sacred humanity, "hast ascended up on high;" ascended, from the low caverns of the tomb, to the highest throne in the highest heavens. "Thou hast led captivity captive;" hast abolished death, that universal tyrant; and subdued those powers of darkness which had enslaved the whole world. Like a glorious and triumphant conqueror, thou hast also "received gifts;" not merely for thy own fruition, but to confer on others, by way of honorary and enriching largess. What are those gifts, Theron?

Ther. The gifts of the gospel, I suppose ; pardon of sin, the influences of the Holy Spirit, and those other privileges of Christianity, which constitute the present happiness of mankind, and prepare them for future bliss.

Asp. You rightly judge. And for whom were those royal, those heavenly donatives received ? If you have an inclination to bestow a sword set with diamonds, a finely wrought piece of plate, or an exquisitely finished picture—what names present themselves to your thoughts ? what persons are the objects of your choice ? The approved friend, or distinguished favourite, I make no question. But for whom (let me ask again, since it is a point of the last importance) were those heavenly donatives received ?

Ther. Let me recollect :—"Thou receivest gifts," not for fallen angels, but "for men ;" and not for thy friends, but for thy "enemies ;" yea, "for the rebellious also," Psal. lxxviii. 18. Merciful heaven ! What a word is this ! And does it come from the God of truth ? Gifts ! divine gifts ! gifts of unspeakable value and eternal duration ! and these to be conferred on enemies, on the rebellious ! wretches who are destitute of all gracious qualifications ; who deserve not the least favour ; but have reason to expect the frowns of indignation, and the sword of vengeance !

Asp. Thus it is written in those sacred constitutions, which are far more steadfast and unalterable than the laws of the Medes and Persians. Thus it is spoken, by the mouth of that almighty Being, with whom there is no variableness, nor the least shadow of turning. Let us not, my dear friend, by unreasonable unbelief, frustrate all these promises, and reject our own mercies. Let us not, by an evil heart of unbelief, make God a liar ; and make ourselves, of all creatures, most miserable.

But see ! The clouds, which hung their agreeable sables to damp the ardour, and abate the glare of day, are departing. The sun has been colouring their fleecy skirts, and spreading over the floating screen a variety of interchangeable hues. Now he begins to edge them with gold, and shine them into silver ; a sure indication, that (like the glittering, but transitory toys, which they represent) they will soon be swept from the horizon, and seen no more. The bright orb, while we are speaking, bursts the veil, and, from a voluminous pomp of parting clouds, pours a flood of splendour over all the face of nature. We shall quickly perceive this open situation too hot to consist with pleasure, and must be obliged to seek for shelter in the shady apartments of the house.

Will you admit me, Theron, into those shady apartments ?

Ther. Admit you, Aspasio ! I am surprised at your question. I thought you had known me better ; and I am sorry it should be needful to assure you, that my house is as much your own as it is mine. The more freely you command it, the more highly you will oblige me.

Asp. May I believe you, Theron ? Do you speak from your heart ? or must I conclude, that you plausibly profess what you have no intention to perform ? Would you be pleased, if I should obstinately persist in these dishonourable suspicions, notwithstanding all your friendly protestations ?

Ther. My dear Aspasio, I see your design. I see, and am ashamed ; ashamed to think that I should fancy myself more punctual in my professions than God is true to his word. "Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief !"

DIALOGUE XVI.

OUR friends had agreed upon a visit to Philenor. They rode through a fine open fruitful country ; which was covered with crops of ripened corn, and occupied by several parties of rustics gathering in the copious harvest.

The rye, white and hoary as it were with age, waved its bearded billows, and gave a dry husky rustle before the breeze. The wheat, laden with plenty, and beautifully brown, hung the heavy head, and invited, by its bending posture, the reaper's hand. Plats of barley, and acres of oats, stood whitening in the sun. Upright, and perfectly even, as though the gardener's shears had clipped them at the top, they gratified the spectator's eye, and gladdened the farmer's heart. Beans, partly clad in native green, partly transformed and tawny with the parching ray, were preparing the last employ for the crooked weapon. Some of the grain lay flat, in regular rows, on the new made stubble. Some was erected in graceful shocks along the bristly ridges. Some, conveyed homewards on the loaded waggon, nodded over the groaning axle.

The villages seemed to be empty, and all their inhabitants poured into the plains. Here were persons of each sex, and of every age. The lusty youths, stooping to their work, plied the sickle, or swept with their scythes the falling ranks. The sprightly females followed, binding the handfuls into sheaves, or piling the swaths into hasty cocks. Dispersed up and down were the children of the needy, gleanng the scattered ears, and picking their scanty harvest. Nor were the old people absent ; but crawling into the sun, or sitting on a shady eminence, they beheld the toils, the pleasing toils, they once sustained.

This is the most joyful period of the countryman's life ; the long expected crown of all his labours. For this he broke the stubborn glebe, and manured the impoverished soil : for this he bore the sultry beams of summer, and shrunk not from the pinching blasts of winter : for this he toiled away the year, in a round of ceaseless but willing activity ; knowing that * " the husbandman must labour, before he partakes of the fruits," 2 Tim. ii. 6. And will not the blessed hope of everlasting life, will not the bright expectation of consummate bliss, animate us with an equally cheerful resolution, both to resist the temptations, and discharge the duties of our present state.

Short seemed the way, and quick passed the time, as they travelled through such scenes of rural abundance and rural delight. Before they were aware, the horses stopt at Philenor's seat ; where they found, to their no small disappointment, that the master was gone abroad. They alighted, however, and took a walk in the gardens.

The gardens, at proper intervals, and in well-chosen situations, were interspersed with pieces of statuary. At the turn of a corner, you are—not shocked with a naked gladiator, or a beastly Priapus,—but agreeably surprised with the image of Tully. He is just risen from his seat, and upon the point of addressing himself to some important oration. A reverential awe appears

* Beza thinks, that in settling the construction of this verse, the adverb *πρὸ τούτου* should be connected with the participle *κωνινοῦσα*.

in his countenance ; such as silently acknowledges that he is going to plead before the rulers of the world. Sedate, at the same time, and collected in himself, he seems conscious of superior eloquence, and imboldened by the justice of his cause. His thoughtful aspect, and gracefully expanded arm, speak to the eye before the tongue has uttered a syllable.

You enter an alley, lined on either side with a verdant fan ; and having no variety of objects to diversify the intermediate space, your view is conducted to a magnificent building at the end. As you walk along, contemplating the masterly performance in architecture, an unexpected opening diverts your attention, and presents you with some striking imitation of virtuous or heroic life. Not the Macedonian madman, nor Sweden's royal knight-errant, nor Cæsar, infamously renowned for his slaughtered millions—but the truly gallant Czar : a drawn sword in his hand, and a commanding majestic sternness on his brow. The weapon is held in the most menacing posture ; and many a spectator has been observed to start back, with apprehensions of fear. It is that gloriously severe attitude, in which the grateful citizens of Narva beheld him, and in which all posterity will admire him, when he turned upon his victorious but ungovernable troops, and threatened to drench the dagger in their hearts, if they did not immediately desist from rapine * and slaughter ; immediately allow quarter to their vanquished foes.

Under a circular dome, supported by pillars of the Doric order, and in a spot where several walks centre, stands—not the Venus de Medicis, corrupting while it captivates the world—but a Spartan mother. Her habit decent and graceful ; somewhat like the Juno Matrona of the Romans, as she is finely depicted in Mr. Spence's *Polymetis*. Her air stately and resolved ; expressive of dignity, yet mingled with softness. She holds a shield ; is in the act of delivering it to her son, a youth setting out for the army, and going to hazard his life in the defence of his country. She is supposed to add that spirited and magnanimous exhortation, which is engraven on the protuberance of the buckler,—*ἦ ταν, ἦ ἐπὶ τας*—“Bring it back my son, as thy trophy ; or be brought back upon it, as thy bier.”

I am particularly pleased, said Theron, with the contrivance of this last ornament. It is regulated by one of the most refined rules of art, Not to lavish away all the beauty at a single view, but to make a skilful reserve for some future occasion. The dome and the columns afford pleasure, when beheld at a considerable distance ; the fine animated figure in the midst displays its graces on a nearer approach ; by which means the attention is kept awake, and the entertainment continues new.

But what I principally admire, is the spirit or style of the decorations in general. They put me in mind of a very just remark, which Mr. Pope has somewhere made. It is, if I remember right, to this effect :—“A man not only shows his taste, but his virtue, in the choice of his ornaments. A proper piece of history, represented in painting on a rich man's walls (or exhibited in imagery amidst his gardens), is very often a better lesson than any he could teach by his conversation. In this sense, the stones may be

* “As soon as the soldiers were masters of the town (Narva), they fell to plunder, and gave themselves up to the most enormous barbarities. The Czar ran from place to place, to put a stop to the disorder and massacre. He was even obliged to kill with his own hand several Muscovites, who did not hearken to his orders.”—VOLTAIRE'S *Hist. Charles XII.*

said to speak, when men cannot, or will not." All but the comparative or satirical part of the observation, I would apply to the prospect before us, and its worthy owner.

Asp. Philenor's gardens are, I think, more chaste and delicate in their ornaments than a certain collegiate church. In the latter place, we might reasonably expect the strictest adherence to purity, if we should not meet with the symbols of piety and incitements to religion. What then would be the reflections of a judicious observer, if, in such a solemn and venerable edifice, he should see a huge brawny fellow stuck up against the wall, with his posteriors half bare, his whole body more than half naked, and in an attitude none of the most decent *? Excuse me, Theron. I confess myself ashamed even to rehearse the description. How then can the spectacle itself become the house of divine worship?

Ther. But perhaps this same brawny fellow may represent a Heathen demigod; one of the idols worshipped by antiquity; the tutelary deity of valour.

Asp. And will this justify the practice? Does not this add profaneness to immodesty? Are we Christians to thank Hercules for the valour of our warriors, and make our acknowledgments to Pallas for the conduct of our generals? Shall we Christians behold with admiration, or recognize as our benefactors, what the apostle has stigmatized under the character of "devils?" 1 Cor. x. 20.

If he who overthrew the tables of the money-changers, had taken a walk in these famous cloisters, I am apt to suspect he would have paid no very agreeable compliment to this fine piece of statuary. "Take these things hence," would probably have been his command; and, "make not the precincts of your temple a chamber of Pagan imagery," his rebuke, John ii. 16. Neither is it at all unlikely, that the image itself, notwithstanding its inimitable workmanship, might have shared the fate of its kinsman Dagon,

—————when the captive ark
Maim'd his brute image, head and hands lopp'd off
In his own temple, on the groundsell edge
When he fell flat, and shamed his worshippers.—MILTON, i. 458.

Ther. But how should the artist represent the great achievements and the shining qualities of his hero, if you will not allow him to make use of these significant emblems?

Asp. I question whether they are so very significant. The mirror seems to characterize a fop, rather than a soldier. It leads us to think of a soft Narcissus admiring himself, rather than a sagacious general planning the operations of the campaign. Besides, is sacred literature so destitute of proper emblems, that we must borrow the decorations of our churches, and the trophies of our conquerors, from the dreams of superstition or the delusions of idolatry? How just and expressive are those emblematical representations exhibited in Ezekiel's vision; where activity and speed are signified by hands in conjunction with wings; and the deep, the complicated, yet ever harmonious schemes of Providence, by "a wheel in the middle of a wheel?"

* Referring to the monument lately erected for Major-General Fleming, in Westminster-Abbey; where under the General's bust, are placed Hercules and Pallas. Hercules with his club and lion's skin, in the manner related above; Pallas, with a mirror and serpent at her side. The reader may see a picture and an explanation of this monument in the Gentleman's Magazine for August 1754.

With what propriety and force are the noblest endowments pictured in the revelations of St. John, and their grand machinery ! Superior wisdom and benevolence of heart, are described by the face of a man ; strength of mind and intrepidity of spirit, by the visage of a lion ; calmness of temper and indefatigable application, by the features of an ox ; a penetrating discernment and an expeditious habit of acting, by the form of a flying eagle, Rev. iv. 7.

These hieroglyphics are graceful, are pertinent, and such as every spectator will understand. Whereas the devices of our new monumental enconium are, I presume, to the unlearned, hardly intelligible ; to the serious, little better than profane ; and to every beholder, indelicate, if not immodest. Philenor, I imagine, would blush to admit them into his walks or avenues. And I am sorry to find them received into the most ancient*, most renowned, and most frequented church in the kingdom.

Talking in this manner, they come to a curious grove, formed on that uncommon plan proposed by Mr. Addison in one of his Spectators. It consisted wholly of evergreens. Firs, clad in verdant silver, pointed their resinous leaves, and shot aloft their towering cones. Laurels, arrayed in glossy green, spread their ample foliage, and threw abroad their rambling boughs. Bay-trees were expanded into a fan, that no weather could tarnish ; or rounded into a column, that knew not how to moulder. While the laurustinus ran out into a beautiful irregularity of shape, and compacted her reddening gems, in order to unfold her whitening bloom. In one place lay a dale, gently sinking, and coated with the chamomile's natural frieze ; which never changes its colour, never loses its gloss. Near it, and scooped, you would imagine, from the same hollow, arose a mount, softly swelling, and shagged with furze ; gay with perennial verdure, and generally decked with golden blossoms. Here you are led through a serpentine walk, and hedges of box ; and find, perhaps, a solitary pyramid or a capacious urn, each composed of unfading yew. There you look through a straight alley, fenced on either side, and arched over head, with mantling philyra ; and see, at the extremity, an obelisk sheathed in ivy, and ornamented with its sable clusters as with wreaths of living sculpture. Scattered up and down were several sorts of holly ; some striped with white, some spotted with yellow, some preparing to brighten and beautify the scene with berries of glowing scarlet.

The heads of the trees, arising one above another in a gradual slope, from the diminutive mezereon to the lofty cypress ; the several shadings of their green attire, greatly diversified and judiciously intermixed, afford, especially in the winter season, a most enlivened and lovely prospect. As the sunshine is, by the frequenters of this grove, usually more coveted than the shade, it is so disposed as to admit, in one part or another, every gleam of fine weather which exhilarates the winter.

Asp. There must be something unspeakably pleasing in a plantation, which appears lively and fruitful when all its neighbours of the woodland race are barren, bleak, or dead. But how much more cheering and delightful must it

* Some antiquarians trace back the origin of this church, even to the reign of Lucius ; which is more than the space of 1500 years. Others suppose, that Sebert, King of the East Saxons, about the year of our Lord 605, built the first religious structure on this spot. All agree, that it was re-edified and enlarged by Edward the Confessor ; and that the present stately and magnificent fabric was founded by Henry III.

be, when decrepit age or bodily infirmities have impaired the vigour and laid waste the gratifications of our youthful prime, to find a solid undecaying pleasure in the favour of God and the hope of glory! Now, indeed, the feathered tribes resort to the more flowing umbrage of the poplar and the ash; but, amidst December's cold, you shall observe them forsaking the leafless woods, and flocking to this friendly receptacle; hopping across the sunny walks, or sheltering themselves, in the wet and stormy day, under these trusty boughs. So the many thoughtless creatures, who turn their back upon religion amidst the soft and soothing caresses of prosperity, will want, extremely want, its sovereign supports under the sharp and distressing assaults of adversity, sickness, and death. This collection, it is true, may not equal the groves of annual verdure in floridity of dress; but it far exceeds them in the duration of its ornaments. Ere long, yonder showy branches will be stript of their holiday clothes; whereas, these will retain their honours, when those are all rags or nakedness. Thus it will be with every refuge for our poor, imperfect, sinful souls; excepting only the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Everything else "will fade as a leaf," Isa. lxiv. 6. This, my Theron, and this alone, is an evergreen; always free for our acceptance, and always effectual to save.

Ther. An evergreen it is. But, like the ruddy and inviting fruits which hang on the uppermost boughs of those lofty trees in the orchard, it seems to be quite out of my reach.

Asp. Are you sensible that you need the immaculate and perfect righteousness of our Saviour?

Ther. Was Jonah sensible how much he needed the cooling shelter of his gourd, when the sun smote fiercely upon his temples, and all the fervours of the fiery east were glowing around him? So is your Theron sensible, that without a far better righteousness than his own, he must inevitably be condemned by the sentence of the law, and cannot possibly stand before the high and holy God.

Asp. Remember then what our Lord says to such persons: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matth. xi. 28. How gracious is the invitation! Come unto me, the Father of compassions, and the Giver of every good gift. How extensive as well as gracious! All that are "weary" (*Κοπιῶντες*), toiling in a fruitless pursuit of happiness, and spending your labour for that which satisfieth not. All that are "heavy laden" (*Πεφορτισμένοι*), oppressed with the servitude of sin, or bowed down under a load of misery. These, all these, are called; and you, my friend, in the number. They have not a ticket, a bond, or some inferior pledge, to ascertain their success; but they have a promise from faithfulness and truth itself. "I will give you rest," says the Strength of Israel; whose will is fate, and his word the basis of the universe. And if Christ will give you rest, he will wash you in that blood which atones, and invest you with that righteousness which justifies; since nothing short of these mercies can afford any satisfaction to the guilty conscience, or true satisfaction to the restless soul. Permit me to ask further, Do you earnestly desire this righteousness?

Ther. Will yonder hirelings, when fatigued with the heat and burden of a long, laborious, sultry day, desire the shades of the evening, and the repose of the night? I can truly, on this occasion, adopt the words of the pro-

phet: "The desire of my soul is to thy name," blessed Jesus, "and to the remembrance" of thy righteousness. The very mention of this spotless righteousness is music to my ears. Every fresh, though distant discovery of it, gleams pleasure upon my mind. And that would be a welcome day, a day greatly to be distinguished, which should bring it near to my view, and home to my soul.

Asp. Say not then, my dear friend, that Christ, and the blessings of his purchase, are beyond your reach. They are now, even now, at your door. You need not argue anxiously and despondingly, "Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring down Christ from above? or who shall descend into the deep, to bring up Christ from beneath?" Rom. x. 6, 7. There is no such impossibility, no such difficulty in the thing. Christ and his righteousness, Christ and his salvation, are brought nigh in the word of promise. And, "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus," as dying on the cross for thy redemption; "if thou shalt believe in thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead" for thy justification, "thou shalt be saved," Rom. x. 9. In so doing, thou shalt receive remission of sin, and power to withstand its temptations.

Have you never, in your travels, been overtaken by the dark and tempestuous night? When, chilled with the cold, and almost drowned in the rain, you arrived at the house of some valued friend, was you not willing to gain admittance?

Ther. Willing! I was desirous, I was almost impatient; I thought every moment an hour till the hospitable door opened—till I exchanged the dismal gloom and the driving storm, for the cheerful light and the amiable company within.

Asp. The adored Emmanuel professes himself equally willing to come unto you. "Behold!" says the Saviour of the world, "I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me," Rev. iii. 20. Like one exposed to all the inclemencies of the air, whose "head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night," Cant. v. 2, he is not only willing but desirous to enter. "He stands at the door," with great long-suffering and perseverance, till all obstacles are removed, or rather till that one grand obstacle is taken out of the way, unbelief. "He knocks," by the preaching of his word, and the promise of his gospel, like one who solicits admission, and will take no denial. Hear then his soliciting voice, and "he will sup with you;" will make his abode with you, will manifest his glories in you, and communicate his grace to you. Believe his promising word, and "you shall sup with him:" this will be refreshing to your distressed soul, as the most sumptuous banquet to the famished stomach and craving appetite.

Ther. I cannot open my heart.

Asp. Christ has the key of David. "He openeth, and none can shut; he shutteth, and none can open," Rev. iii. 7. He is able to make all grace, not only to exist in you, but abound towards you, 2 Cor. ix. 8; and what is still more encouraging, he is professedly "the author and finisher of our faith," Heb. xii. 2. Since he has claimed this character to himself, since he has undertaken to execute this office, why should we harbour the least distrust? Will he not fulfil his own office, and act agreeably to his own character? I not, my dear Theron, be not faithless, but believing.

Ther. This I believe—that I am a lost sinner ; under the curse of the law, and liable to the wrath of God ; that there is no relief for my distress but in Christ and his transcendent merits. He, and he alone, is able to save me from my guilt, and all its dismal train of miseries. He is a Saviour fully proportioned to my wants ; exactly suited to my several necessities. I believe, and am persuaded, that if I was interested in the divine Jesus, my soul should live.

Asp. Be persuaded, likewise, that there is no clogging qualification, no worth to be possessed, no duty to be performed, in order to your full participation of Christ and his riches. Only believe, and they are all your own. “Christ dwelleth in our hearts,”—how ? by legal works, and laborious prerequisites ? No ; but “by faith,” Eph. iii. 17. “He that believeth on the Son, hath”—a chimerical ? far from it—a real and a substantial happiness, even “everlasting life,” John iii. 36.

Ther. Ah ! my Aspasio ! I cannot believe. I feel my impotency. My mind is, as you formerly hinted, like the withered arm.

Asp. It is no small advantage, Theron, to be convinced of our inability in this respect. This is, if not the beginning of faith, the sign of its approach ; and shows it to be, if not in the soul, yet at the very door. Fear not, my friend. He who bids you stretch out, will strengthen the withered arm. He first makes us sensible of our weakness, and then “fulfils all the good pleasure of his will, and the work of faith with power,” 2 Thess. i. 11.

Can you doubt of his willingness ? Then go to Mount Calvary. There listen to the “sounding of his bowels and of his mercies towards you,” Isa. lxiii. 15. Has not every drop of blood a tongue ? Cannot you read a language in each streaming wound, and hear a voice in every dying pang ? Do they not all speak his infinite love even to wretched sinners ? Do they not all address you with that tender remonstrance, “O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt ?” Matth. xiv. 31. Nay, do they not all declare, with an energy superior to the force of words, that he will deny you no manner of thing that is good ?

Who gave his blood, what gift will he withhold ?

Ther. I am ashamed to recollect, what mistaken notions I once entertained concerning the easiness of believing ; as though it were to be performed, like the act of rising from our seat, or stepping into a coach, by our own strength, and at our own time. What a stranger was I then to the blindness of my understanding, and the hardness of my heart ; to my bondage under unbelief, and averseness to the way of salvation “by grace through faith !”

Asp. Since you are sensible of your impotence, beware of the contrary extreme. Because you cannot by your own strength exercise faith, let not this occasion a tame resignation of yourself to infidelity. You must endeavour, diligently endeavour, to believe ; and wait, and pray, for the divine Spirit. Though it is his office to testify of Christ, “and bring near the Redeemer’s righteousness,” Isa. xlvi. 1 ; yet his influences are not to supersede, but to encourage our own efforts. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ;” here is our duty. “For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do,” Phil. ii. 12, 13 ; here is our encouragement ; and O what a glorious encouragement, to have the arm of Omnipotence stretched out for our support and our succour !

Ther. How, or in what manner, does the divine Spirit work faith in the heart of a sinner? You wonder, perhaps, that I ask such a question. But my apprehensions are strangely dull, and my views very dim, with regard to spiritual things. If in this respect I have any sight, it is like his who "saw men as trees walking;" saw these several objects, but so obscurely, so confusedly, that he could not distinguish one from the other, only by the circumstance of motion.

Asp. The most enlightened minds see only in part; and all have reason to make the blind beggar's supplication their own request: "Lord, that I may receive my sight!" The operation of the Holy Spirit in producing faith, is thus described by a master in Israel: "The divine Spirit brings Christ and his righteousness nigh unto us in the promise of the gospel; clearing at the same time our right and warrant to intermeddle with all, without fear of vitious intromission; encouraging and enabling to a measure of confident application, and taking home all to ourselves, freely, without money, and without price."

You was once, Theron, a zealous advocata for good works. Now you seem to have abandoned your clients. Remember, my dear friend, what our Lord Jesus Christ says, John vi. 29. "This is the work of God," of all works most acceptable and most honourable to the divine Majesty, "that you believe on him whom he hath sent."

Ther. The true belief, according to your notion, Aspasio, is so refined and exalted a virtue, that I very much question whether I shall ever be able to attain it.

Asp. If you are unable to attain it, is the Lord unable to give it? Our sufficiency for this and every good work, is not in ourselves, but in God. And to him difficulties are easy: before him mountains are a plain. You will please to remember, that sinners are said to believe, not through their own ability, but through the power of grace: and you will permit me to ask, how you became acquainted with my notion of faith?

Ther. I am not so inattentive a reader of your letters, as to forget your definition of this momentous article. Faith, you say "is a real persuasion that the blessed Jesus has shed his blood for me, and fulfilled all righteousness in my stead: that through this great atonement and glorious obedience he has purchased, even for my sinful soul, reconciliation with God, sanctifying grace, and all spiritual blessings*."

Asp. I am obliged to you, Theron, for the honour you do my letter; and I hope you will pay an equal regard to the determination of our church. You once apprehended that my attachment to the church of England was unsettled and wavering. Judge now who has most thoroughly imbibed her doctrines, and is most invariably tenacious of her true interests. In the first part of the Homily concerning the sacrament, we have this definition of faith: "It is a

* See Letter X. Here is, it must be acknowledged, a total omission of all preparatory or rather impulsive dispositions; such as convictions of sin, and hungering after salvation. Here is likewise a total silence concerning all causes, instrumental or efficient, such as the power of the divine Word, and the agency of the divine Spirit. No mention is made of the fruits or concomitants; such as love to Christ, love of the brethren, or purity of heart. Nothing is exhibited to view but the form and essence of faith, or that particular act which characterises and constitutes real faith, which distinguishes it from the hypocritical pretension and the historical notion. This simple view is given, that the mind may fix upon the grand point, and not be embarrassed with a multiplicity of ideas.

belief, not only that the death of Christ is available for the remission of sins, and reconciliation with God, but also that he made a full and sufficient sacrifice for thee, a perfect cleansing for thy sins*."

My notion of faith, you see, is evidently the voice of the establishment; and I think it gives us a clear intelligible sense, suited to the most common acceptation of the word; such as would naturally arise in the mind of a stranger, who, without any bias on his judgment, should inquire into the purport of our religion, or consider the language of our Bible.

Ther. How suited to the most common acceptation of the word?

Asp. When you sent a message to your tenant, who, in his last sickness, expressed so much uneasiness on account of his numerous family and embarrassed circumstances, assuring him that you had cancelled the bond, and forgiven his debt; when you told the poor woman whose husband fell from the loaded waggon, and broke both his legs, that you would order a surgeon to attend him, and would continue his weekly pay; how did they regard, how receive your promised kindness?—So let us credit the gracious declarations of our God, so accept his faithful promise, and then we shall answer the import of the word—then we shall truly believe.

Ther. Where is there in Scripture any thing parallel or similar to these instances?

Asp. Have you never read the words of Micah: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression?" Mic. vii. 18. Here is the gracious declaration.—"He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities," Mic. vii. 19. Here is the faithful promise.—And why, my friend, why should we pay less credit to the ever-living Jehovah, than to a "man whose breath is in his nostrils?" Is there treachery with the Holy One of Israel? Does the Lord make, and then violate his promise? "Ask now of the days that are past, ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether such a thing hath ever been?"

Ther. God has never violated his promise, when it was expressly made, and particularly applied. But in this circumstance there is a wide difference between the case of your friend, and the case of his poor people. I named the object of my compassion in one of the instances, and made a personal application in the other: neither of which is done in the Scriptures.

Asp. Though we are not particularly named, yet we are very exactly described, by our family, our inclination, our practice. What says eternal Wisdom, when she makes a tender of her inestimable blessings? "To you, O men," not to fallen angels, "I call; and my voice is" not to this man or than man exclusively, but "to the sons of men" indefinitely, Prov. viii. 4. What says the holy apostle, when he publishes the counsels of heaven? "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save"—the upright? the unblamable? Was this the case, our hopes would be covered with a cloud, or rather totally and finally eclipsed. But see! they are clear as the light, and conspicuous as the noon-day. For he came, (cheering, charming word!) he came to save "sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15.

Consonant to all which is the declaration of another sacred envoy: "He,"

* Answerable to this was the doctrine of the primitive church; *HE SACRIFICIUM UNIVERSALE* TO
ΘΕΟΥ.—CHRYSOST.

the Prince of peace, the Monarch of the universe, "suffered"—for whom? They in whose behalf this matchless ransom was paid, must have an undeniable right to look upon redemption as their own: and blessed, for ever blessed be God, it is most peremptorily said, he suffered—"for the unjust," 1 Pet. iii. 18.

That no part of our character might be omitted, and no part of our misery pass unrelieved, it is farther declared, "When we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly," Rom. v. 6. When we were ungodly, and considered only as ungodly creatures; neither possessed of any thing amiable, nor having the least ability to acquire it; nay, when we were chargeable with horrid guilt, and incapable of expiating a single offence; then, even then, Christ died—and for such abominable wretches he died. Are we not of the human family? Are we not unjust towards our fellow-creatures, and ungodly towards our great Creator? Are we not in all relations, and in every respect, sinners? If we are (and upon these questions incredulity itself will scarcely demur), let us not frowardly reject, rather let us thankfully receive those spiritual treasures, which, by virtue of the afore-cited conveyance, belong to such people; which, by several other clauses in the will and testament of our crucified Lord, evidently devolve to such persons.

Ther. Is it possible, *Aspasio*? Can we be warranted and encouraged to receive these treasures, in a capacity, and under a denomination which I should think more likely to exclude us, disinherit us, and overthrow all our pretensions?

Asp. This may seem strange, but it is true. All the blessings of the gospel proceed upon a supposition of sinfulness. Christ is made wisdom unto his people; but what occasion for the accession of wisdom, unless it be in the case of ignorance and folly? Christ is made righteousness; but who can stand in need of a justifying righteousness, if they are not in themselves unprofitable and guilty? Christ is made sanctification; and does not this imply a state of corruption to be remedied, a body of sin to be destroyed? Christ is made redemption; and from what are persons redeemed but from chains and bondage, from misery and ruin, from all manner of evil?

It is also a most precious and invaluable truth; such as I would hold fast, and never, never let go. When I search for my own endowments, I find nothing that I dare venture to plead, being in my best moments, and amidst my choicest duties, a sinner. As this is, at all times, my undoubted character, I have at all times, an undoubted warrant to say, The uncreated Wisdom calleth me; the blessed Jesus came to save me; the great Messiah suffered death for me.

Let me illustrate the point. Romulus, you know, the founder of the Roman empire, was a poor prince, had but a handful of subjects, and very scanty territories. What expedient could he devise to enlarge the boundaries of the one, and augment the number of the other? He issued a proclamation, addressed to outlaws and criminals, all that were involved in debt or obnoxious to punishment, promising that as many as would settle under his dominion, should be secured from prosecution and vested with considerable privileges.—We will suppose a person in those distressed circumstances. Upon hearing the welcome invitation he hangs down his head, and, with a dejected air cries, "I am a debtor, I am a criminal, and therefore unworthy of the royal protection." What answer should be made to such a dispirited

complainer? Make the same to yourself, whenever you are inclined to renew the present objections: Remembering, that the infinite and eternal Sovereign, to display the magnificence of his majesty, and manifest the riches of his goodness, has commissioned his ambassadors to publish in every nation under heaven, "That all unhappy sinners, who are oppressed by the devil, and liable to damnation, may come to Christ, and rely on Christ may in this manner obtain pardon, righteousness, and all the privileges of children."

Ther. At this rate the vilest miscreants have as clear, nay, have the very same warrant to believe in Christ, and receive his salvation, as the highest saints.

Asp. The very same. In this respect there is no difference. All have sinned, and must sue for spiritual blessings, not as deserving, but as guilty creatures; must receive them, not as the recompense of their own worth, but as the issues of infinite mercy. The vilest miscreants are blinded by the devil, and enslaved to their lusts: therefore they see no beauty in a Saviour that they should desire him. Whereas when the divine Spirit opens their eyes, and inclines their hearts, they discover and make use of just the same right to Christ and his merit as the highest saints;—a right founded not on their awakened desires, not on any thing in themselves, but purely, solely, entirely, on the free grant of a Saviour.

Should you ask the highest saints, On what their hopes are grounded. This, or something to this effect, would be their reply:—"On the free exhibition of Christ and his salvation, recorded in the word of truth. There we find it written, 'To you,' though Gentiles and idolaters, 'is preached the remission of sins,' Acts xiii. 38. 'The promise is to you,' even to you, 'whose wicked hands have crucified and slain the Lord of life;' and not to you only, but 'to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God,' by the message of his everlasting gospel, 'shall call,' Acts ii. 39. We remember, Theron, though you seem to have forgotten, the wretched outcast, polluted in its blood, yet accepted by the Holy One of Israel. We remember the heavenly gifts, received by the triumphant Redeemer, for enemies, and for the rebellious. Nor can we easily forget the promise of forgiveness which was made, and the blessing of forgiveness which was vouchsafed, even to the murderers of the Lord of glory*."

Ther. This is a pleasing supposition. But it would be more satisfactory, if you should produce any of the saints speaking in this manner.

Asp. Isaiah, you will allow, was a saint of no inferior rank. Yet he breathes the spirit I am describing, and acts the part I am vindicating. Turn to that epitome of the gospel, his fifty-third chapter. There you may observe him claiming a share in the greatest of all privileges, salvation through the blood of Christ. How does he advance and maintain his claim? Not in the capacity of a sanctified, but under the character of a sinful person. These are his words: "The Lord hath laid on him," on his Son Jesus Christ, "the iniquity of us all," Isa. liii. 6. Of me, and of my brethren in piety, does he mean? No; but of me, and of my fellow transgressors. This is evidently implied in the clause I have quoted. In the preceding part of the verse the prophet explains himself, and leaves no room for hesitation.

* Referring to Dialogue XV.

All we, like sheep, have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own ways ;" yet our transgressions, our iniquities, the God of all mercy has transferred from us, and charged upon our Redeemer. As the vilest sinners are indispensably obliged to confess the former, they have a free and full right to profess, to assert, and to believe the latter.

At this you may probably wonder ; at this we ought all to wonder. This that amazingly rich grace, which will be the wonder of saints and angels through a boundless eternity. Yet, though we wonder, let us not murmur. It is not the elder brother to repine, because the young prodigal enters at the same door, and is admitted to the same table with himself.

To this testimony of the saints, shall I add the decision of their King ? God so loved the world," even the fallen, the wicked, the apostate world, that in the fulness of time " he gave his only-begotten Son," John iii. 16, to bring in a perfect righteousness, and obtain eternal redemption. And he will give him, with all his saving benefits, in the promise of the gospel.

Ther. Does this general gift warrant a sinner to make a particular application of all to himself ?

Ans. It warrants, it demands, and in other instances obtains, a particular application. When Jonah, in pursuance of the divine command, " cried and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown ;" there was no particular mention of man, woman, or child. Neither the king, nor the nobles, or the commons were specified ; much less was each and every inhabitant named by name. Nevertheless, this general denunciation alarmed them all ; was influential on them all. Insomuch that " the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least," Jonah iii. 5. " They believed ;" hence we learn the true nature of believing : " God speaks to me, and what he speaks he will perform ;" is its genuine profession. Hence we likewise discover, who they are which ought in this manner to apply the general word : " All, from the least even unto the greatest, believed."

Ther. The case is not parallel, Aspasio. This was a denunciation of vengeance, not a promise of grace.

Ans. And can you suppose, that God is more liberal of vengeance than he is communicative of grace ? Vengeance is his strange work, but in mercy and loving-kindness he delighteth. Are we bound to believe and apply his dreadful threatenings ? not allowed to believe and apply his precious promises ? Surely, the Lord's ways are not so unequal. When the law says, " Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things," Gal. iii. 10, should not every hearer take this to himself, and submit to the sentence of just condemnation ? When the gospel says, " He came to save that which was lost," Matth. xviii. 11, should not every hearer take this also to himself, and embrace the tender of free salvation ?

However, if you dislike my instance, I will give you another ; which is not of the vindictive, but of the beneficent kind. When the manna made its first appearance in the wilderness ; when the Israelites know neither what it was, nor for whom intended ; both these particulars were explained by Moses : " This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat," Exod. xvi. 15. No mention is made of any individual person. Yet the whole congregation looked upon this as an undoubted permission, both for themselves and their children, to gather, to fetch home, and to use the miraculous

food. And here, Theron, here lies the principal difference between the vile miscreant and the exalted saint: not that the one was originally better than the other; not that the one has a clearer grant of Christ than the other; but the latter has gathered the heavenly manna, and uses it to his unspeakable advantage: whereas it lies round about the tents of the former; and whoever will, may take, may eat, and his soul shall live.

Ther. God gave the manna to all the Israelites, both good and bad. But does he give Christ with this unlimited freeness?

Asp. Our Lord himself, alluding to this very miracle, vouchsafes you an answer: "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven," John vi. 32. My Father giveth you his incarnate Son, and his divinely excellent righteousness. These are bread indeed; bread which came down from the regions of heaven; and bread which nourisheth the soul for the joys of heaven. This my Father giveth you; though not in actual possession, yet in right to possess. This he giveth you, in the free indefinite grant of his word; without which grant, any attempt to possess, even in the most upright of men, would be illegal and presumptuous; by virtue of which grant, even the poor sinner has an unquestionable warrant to receive and possess the riches of Christ.

Ther. Unquestionable! is not this expression too peremptory? That such a grant should be made to believers, I can easily conceive: but is it made to sinners—to any sinners—to the most abandoned sinners?

Asp. Yes, Theron, to sinners. And when sinners receive the grant, then they commence believers. Was it made to believers only, no man living would inherit the blessing; because all men are, by the depravity and impotence of their nature, originally concluded under sin and unbelief.

What said our Lord? "My Father giveth you;" that is, the people who stood around, and heard his gracious voice; many of whom were in a carnal state habitually, and even then were in a murmuring, wicked frame, John vi. 26. 41. What says his prophet? "To us a Son is given;" not to us who were antecedently children of the light, but who "walk in darkness, and dwell in the shadow of death," Isa. ix. 2. 6. What saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out? "I will give thee," meaning his beloved Son, "for a covenant;" it is not said, of believers, but "of the people;" it is not said, of new creatures, but "of the Gentiles;" who were the vilest of all creatures, or, as you have properly spoke, the most abandoned sinners. That we may understand more clearly the signification of these terms, and see the true extent of this gift, it is added, I will give thee "to open the blind eyes, and to bring out the prisoners from the prison," Isa. xlii. 6, 7. Miserable and guilty wretches, blinded by the devil, and enslaved to their lusts; these are the patentees in the heavenly grant. To these the great Surety is given, together with all the benefits of his covenant.

Here then the grant and the gift are mentioned; the persons for whom they are designed are specified, and expressly named. They are sinners; blinded and enslaved sinners; or, if there be any other more obnoxious sort, they are all comprehended in this one word, Gentiles. Only allow these texts to be true; only allow the divine speaker to be sincere and faithful; then we may boldly affirm, that any, that every poor sinner is authorized to say, "God gives me his Son, to be my covenant surety. I take him at his word. The Surety and all his merits are mine. Divinely rich bounty! O

let us not refuse what, on this consideration, the unerring Spirit calls "our own mercy," Jonah ii. 8. Let us adore the beneficence of our God; let us believe his promising word; and in this sweet, this easy manner, obtain both present and final salvation.

Ther. Let me recollect:—Christ is given for the world, the apostate world, to believe on: Christ has died, not for the righteous, but for the ungodly: Christ came in the flesh to save sinners, even the chief of sinners. Well, *Aspasio*, if these things are true, (and how can they be otherwise, since they are the express doctrine of Scripture?) it is pity but they were more generally known. For my part, I must confess they are not only new, but strange to me. Though I have read them in the Bible, yet when I come to consider them, and compare them with what passes in my breast, I find they are quite contrary to my usual ways of thinking.

Asp. You remind me of a valuable person, whom I once numbered among my acquaintance, and whose way of thinking was somewhat similar to your own. Will you give me leave to relate his case?

Ther. Most gladly. It will be some kind of consolation to hear that others have laboured under the same difficulties with myself, and been subject to the same distresses. If I am informed of their deliverance from those distresses, it will be like showing me an opened door for effecting my own escape. If I am likewise acquainted with the manner of their deliverance, this will furnish me with a clue to guide my steps.

Asp. This person was roused from a habit of indolence and supineness, into a serious concern for his eternal welfare. Convinced of his depraved nature and aggravated guilt, he had recourse to the Scriptures, and to frequent prayer. He attended the ordinances of Christianity, and sought earnestly for an assured interest in Christ; but found no steadfast faith, and tasted very little comfort. At length he applied to an eminent divine, and laid open the state of his heart. Short, but weighty, was the answer he received: "I perceive, Sir, the cause of all your distress. You do not, you will not come to Christ as a sinner. This mistake stands between your soul and the joy of religion. This detains you in the gall of bitterness; and take heed, O! take heed, lest it consign you over to the bond of iniquity!" This admonition never departed from the gentleman's mind; and it became a happy means of removing the obstructions to his peace.

Remember this little history, *Theron*; and may it prove as efficacious for your good, as it is pertinent to your circumstances! Remember, that the free grant of Christ, made in the word of truth, and addressed to sinners of mankind, is the only basis and ground-work of faith. An apostle, after all the labours of his exemplary life, can have no better: and a *Magdalene* or a *Manasseh*, as a motive and encouragement for their turning to the Lord, have the very same.

But we digress from the principal subject. Since you disapprove my account of faith, I must desire you to favour me with a description more correct and unexceptionable: for, as you justly observed, this is a very momentous article. Is not Christ the source of all spiritual good, and faith the main channel of conveyance? Surely then it should be made and kept as clear as possible. Is not Christ the foundation of all true godliness, and faith the master-arch in this sacred structure? Surely then it should be raised and turned with the utmost care.

Ther. Palæmon's account is this—Faith, he says, is a firm persuasion, that Jesus Christ has shed his blood, and fulfilled all righteousness; has sustained the punishment due to sin, and obtained full reconciliation with God: that all this grace, and each of these benefits, are free, perfectly free—for you, for me, for others. In consequence of this persuasion, the sinner flies to Christ, comes to Christ, and trusts in Christ for his own salvation.

Asp. I have the highest regard for Palæmon's judgment: and I cannot but think my opinion is confirmed even by his. The act of flying to Christ is an appropriating act. It implies an intention to get out of danger; it implies a discovery of Christ as the appointed safety; and consists in making use of him as such. How can this be done, but by a persuasion that he is mine? that his sufferings were in my stead, and that his death is my safeguard? What is meant by coming to Christ, we may learn from Jeremiah: "Behold! we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God," Jer. iii. 22. Coming, you see, includes a real persuasion that the Lord is our God. While we are wholly destitute of this persuasion, we stand at a distance, and our souls are afar off. We are never brought nigh; we never come, in the prophet's sense, till we are taught to say, each one for himself, "Thou art the Lord my God." The act of trusting in Christ is much of the same nature: It presupposes that Christ is the trustee of the covenant of grace; it proceeds upon a conviction of his faithfulness in executing the office; and it is a solemn surrender or giving up the whole affair of our salvation into his hand; giving it up, not in uncertainty of success, (this would be mistrusting rather than trusting), but with a certainty in some measure suitable to the fidelity and ability of him with whom we have to do.

If you still are doubtful whether any such persuasion is implied in trusting, let us chuse a referee. Let us carry our controversy to the king of Israel. Inquire of David, why he trusts in the Lord, and what he means by trusting? To both these inquiries he answers distinctly and fully: "The Lord is my high tower, my shield, and he in whom I trust," Psalm cxliv. 2. "He is—he is my shield; of this I am persuaded, and therefore I trust in him: or, this I believe, and, in so doing, I trust on him."

Ther. There is an air of assurance in your representation of faith, which sounds harsh in my ear, and appears presumptuous in my eye. It is as if people pretended to know their seat in heaven before the judgment-day.

Asp. The Papists, I own, take great offence at this expression, and utterly explode this doctrine. But they are no infallible guides for us to follow; neither are they very inviting patterns for us to imitate. You and I, Theron, cannot be offended at the expression or the doctrine, if we recollect what we have been taught in the first stage of life, and what is professed in the last scene of mortality. We are taught, even from our infancy, that the sacrament of the Lord's supper is not only a sign of spiritual grace, but a pledge to assure us thereof. At the interment of the dead, we profess our sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life. That this is always applied, with due propriety, in our burial service, I will not venture to assert; that it sufficiently countenances my sentiments, none will undertake to deny. And if this countenances, the apostle authorises them, when he addresses us with this very remarkable exhortation: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith;" with a firm persuasion of acceptance; with a certain expectation of success.

However, if you dislike the word *assurance*, we will change it for the more softened, and more modestly sounding term *appropriation*.

Ther. You change it for a more softened, not for a more intelligible term. *must* desire to know what you mean by the word *appropriation*.

Asp. To appropriate, in the theological sense, is to take home the grace of God, which lies in the common indefinite grant of the gospel. Is Christ the treasure hid in the field? To appropriate this treasure, is to receive and use as our own portion. Is Christ the balm of Gilead, full of saving health? To appropriate this balm, is to take and apply it for the recovery of our own souls. And without such an appropriation, how can we either be enriched by the former, or healed by the latter?

Let me farther explain my meaning, and exemplify the position, by considering Christ in his several offices. Christ, as a Priest, is made to guilty creatures righteousness. When we appropriate the grace of our great High-priest, this is the language of our hearts, "In the Lord have I righteousness," *sa.* xlv. 24. Christ, as a Prophet, is made unto ignorant creatures wisdom. When we appropriate the benefits of our unerring Prophet, this is the persuasion of our souls, "Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me," *Mic.* vii. 8. Christ, as a King, is made unto depraved creatures sanctification. When we appropriate the munificence of our almighty King, this is our comfortable trust, "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work," *2 Tim.* iv. 18. This is what I mean by appropriation. That something of this kind is included in the essence of faith, is the sentiment I would maintain. Which sentiment might be confirmed, if such confirmation were demanded, by a multitude of the most illustrious witnesses: witnesses so illustrious, that they were a blessing to the world, and an honour to human nature; so numerous, that, without giving an abstract of their testimonies, it might seem tedious only to recite their names*.

Ther. I will dispense with your recital of their names, only let me have a specimen of their testimonies.

Asp. First, then, let me present you with Dr. Owen, than whom England has produced few writers either more judicious or more devout. "Faith," he tells us in his catechism, "is a gracious resting upon the free promises of God in Jesus Christ for mercy, with a firm persuasion of heart that God is a

* If the reader should inquire after their names, he will find some of them enumerated in the following catalogue:—Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Beza, Bullinger, Bucer, Knox, Craig, Melvil, Bruce, Davidson, Forbes, &c. Ursinus, Zanchius, Junius, Piscator, Rollock, Danæus, Wendelinus, Chamierus, Sharpus, Bodius, Pareus, Altingius, Triglandii (Gisbertus et Jacobus), Arnoldus, Maresius; the four professors at Leyden, Wallæus, Rivetus, Polyander, Thysius; Wollebius, Heidegerus, Essenius, Turretinus, &c. Many eminent British divines; Bishops, Babington, Davenant, Hall; Messrs. Perkins, Pemble, Willet, Gouge, Rogers, Burgess, Owen, Marshall, &c.

If we were apparently and demonstrably in an error, yet, to err with such company, and in the footsteps of such guides, must very much tend to mitigate the severity of censure. But, I believe, few serious persons will venture to charge error and delusion upon such a venerable body of Protestant divines; so eminent for their learning, and so exemplary for their holiness; whose labours were so remarkably owned by God, and whose sentiments, on this particular subject, have been adopted by so many reformed churches. The declarations of the English and Palatine churches are produced in the dialogue. I have in my hand an extract from the confessions and standard doctrines of the church—of Scotland—of Ireland—of France—of Helvetia; with all which *Aspasio* has the happiness to agree. Only some of them are much stronger in displaying and maintaining the special *fiducia*, or the appropriating persuasion of faith. To quote them, would dignify and strengthen the cause. But, to avoid prolixity, I forego this advantage.

reconciled Father to us in the Son of his love." Next let me introduce the learned and justly celebrated Altingius, professor of divinity at Heidelberg. "Faith," he says, "is a knowledge of the grace of God in Christ, together with a fiduciary reliance on it, or an application of it to a man's own self." To these let me add the unanimous suffrage of the churches of the Palatinate. It is asked, in the twenty-first question of their public catechism, "What is true faith?" To which this answer is returned: "It is not only an assent to all the truths which God has revealed in his word; but it is an assured trust wrought by the Holy Spirit in my heart, that remission of sins, complete righteousness and eternal life are given, freely given, not to others only, but to myself; and all this from the mere mercy of God, through the alone merits of Christ."

These testimonies are but as the tithe to the whole crop: yet these are more than enough to exempt me from the charge of singularity. You will not wonder, therefore, if I still abide by the good old Protestant doctrine, which is espoused by so many of the ablest judges; which was the darling tenet of almost all our reformers; which has been so signally instrumental in demolishing the superstitions of Popery, and is so evidently conducive to the holiness and the happiness of Christians. Especially, as I apprehend, the determinations of Scripture, and the experience of scriptural saints, are all on my side.

Ther. You have now brought the cause to the proper bar. When a question so important is debated, and an interest so momentous is concerned, I cannot acquiesce in any authority less than divine. I cannot, and indeed I think we ought not. Nothing should satisfy us on such an occasion but the word, which is unerring and decisive; the word by which we are to stand or fall eternally. Whence does it appear that the determinations of this divine word are on your side?

Asp. From the noblest description of faith which language itself can form. The writer to the Hebrews, having mentioned the life of faith, the perseverance of faith, and the end or reward of faith, proceeds to a definition of this leading grace. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. "The evidence," exhibiting not a faint surmise, but a clear demonstration, both of invisible blessings, and of our right to enjoy them. "The substance," realising what is promised; and giving us, as it were, a possession of good things that are remote, a present possession of good things that are future.

Ther. What are those blessings, and these good things?

Asp. I will inform my Theron; and in such a manner, from such passages, as shall farther ascertain my representation of faith. What says the apostle of the Gentiles? "I preached unto you the gospel," 1 Cor. xv. 1. And what is the substance of this evangelical dispensation? "Christ died for our sins," 1 Cor. xv. 3. That so exalted a person as the Son of God, and Lord of glory, should die, is wonderful! That he should die for sins, the most abominable objects, and for sinners, the most detestable creatures, is abundantly more wonderful! That he should die, not for sins in general, but for our sins in particular, this is inexpressibly wonderful, and at the same time inexpressibly comfortable. Here we have the gospel and its capital blessing expressed in this proposition, "Christ died for our sins." Here we have faith and its principle expressed in this proposition, "Christ died for our sins." Till the

former is preached, the doctrine is not gospel; till the latter is believed, it should seem, from St. Paul's account, the conviction is not faith.

Let me introduce another instance, extracted, like the preceding, from the rolls of heaven: "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life." 1 John v. 11; not proposed it, on I know not what condition, but hath given—freely and fully, without any reserve, and with a liberality suited to his inconceivable goodness, hath given the richest of all prizes; and not to some only, or to others, but to us, even to us.

Ther. Us, that is, the apostles and exalted saints.

Asp. Was eternal life given them because they were apostles? No, verily; but because Christ died for them. Did Christ die for them, because they were exalted saints? In no wise; but because they were miserable sinners. Eternal life was purchased for them when they were sinners. It was consigned over to them when they were sinners. And neither the purchase nor the gift were founded on their being saints, but aimed at making them so.

That "Christ died for our sins," that "God hath given to us eternal life;" these are the blessings of which faith is the evidence; these the good things of which faith is the substance. This is the honey in the evangelical hive; and I am at a loss to conceive how we can taste the honey, without some appropriation of the good things to ourselves. This, if I mistake not, is comprehended in all those figurative descriptions of faith which occur in holy writ.

Ther. Favour me with some of those descriptions. I begin to see a peculiar beauty, and an unequalled richness, in the figures of Scripture. Nothing yields me a more refined pleasure, than to investigate and discover the exact sense of those instructive images. It is somewhat like kindling the consecrated incense; which, when rising in a flame, diffused light; when spreading in clouds of fragrance, distributed refreshment.

Asp. Faith is styled, "a looking unto Jesus." But if we do not look unto Jesus as the propitiation for our sins, what comfort or what benefit can we derive from the sight? "A receiving of Christ." But can I have any pretence to receive him, or take possession of his merits, unless I am convinced that they are intended for me? This is what neither the dictates of conscience will allow, nor the laws of reason authorise. "A resting upon Christ." But how can we rest on a surety, if he has not interposed on our behalf? or how confide in a payment, which we believe to be made for others, not for ourselves? Surely, Theron, when I rest upon an object, I use it as my support: when I receive a gift, I take it as my own property. And when the Israelites looked unto the brazen serpent, they certainly regarded it as a remedy, each particular person for himself.

Ther. To cast ourselves upon Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour, and rely upon him for our whole salvation—is not this real faith? This is what I heard some time ago from a celebrated pulpit.

Asp. If you rely on the all-sufficiency of his will, as well as of his power; if you take the comfort and appropriate the benefit resulting from both; you practise the very thing I recommend. This is what was taught from the pulpit of infallibility; and by those first of preachers, who spake as the Holy Ghost gave them utterance. Let the convinced sinner, and the afflicted soul, "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Let him not only reverence Christ as the incarnate God, and therefore mighty to save; but look

upon Christ as his God, and therefore willing to save. Thus let him "lean upon the Rock of ages," Isa. l. 10, without indulging a doubt concerning his right to make use of it, or the possibility of its failing him.

To "cast ourselves upon Christ: to cast our burden," or "to cast all our care (*Ἐπιρροψαρες*) upon the Lord," 1 Pet. v. 7; are metaphors, which may receive some elucidation from an incident recorded in the Acts. When the mariners and passengers which sailed with St. Paul, saw their vessel shattered, saw the waves prevailing, saw no hope of safety from continuing in the ship, they cast themselves (*Ἀπορροψαρες*) upon the floating planks, Acts xxvii. 43. They cast themselves upon the planks without any scruple, not questioning their right to make use of them; and they clave to those supporters with a cheerful confidence, not doubting but, according to the apostle's promise, they should escape safe to land. Be this what people mean when they speak of venturing or casting themselves upon Christ, and I approve the expression, I subscribe the doctrine. It speaks what I wish for my friend, for myself, and for my fellow-sinners.

Let us shift our situation, and view the point in another light. Consider the blessed and glorious object of our faith. Christ is represented by the similitude of bread, heavenly bread for the hungry soul. Faith is characterised by eating the food. And can this be done without a personal application? Christ is held forth under the image of living waters, ever running, and always free for the thirsty appetite. But let them run ever so copiously, let them be presented ever so freely, all this will neither quench the thirst, nor refresh the spirits, unless they are drank. To do this is the business of faith. Christ is described as a garment, to accommodate destitute, and beautify deformed creatures. Faith is expressed by putting on this commodious garment, and wearing this beautiful robe. And can any idea, or any expression, more strongly denote an actual appropriation?

Ther. It is evident that many holy people, in former ages, were not possessed of assurance. What is the language of David? It is all despondency: "I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes." To the same melancholy tune is the harp of Asaph strung: "Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore?" The same jealous and distrustful air breathes in the complaint of the church. "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Why then should my *Aspasio* set up a rule stricter and higher than those eminent saints attained?

Asp. You should rather ask, Why have the best judges and the most exemplary Christians, in their several writings set up this rule? Why have the apostles of our Lord, and the Spirit of our God, speaking in the Bible, set up this rule? To which I might reply, Because it is, of all precepts, the most beneficial. Therefore they have not so much set it up under the notion of a strict rule, as they have set it forth under the character of a choice blessing.

Your complaint, when put into its proper language, seems to run thus: "Why must we be obliged to trust in Christ alone? Why must we be obliged to assure ourselves of salvation by him?" Whereas, instead of a complaint, it should be matter of exultation, and we should rather express ourselves in this manner: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, that a sinner, such a vile sinner, should be allowed to take Christ and all his salvation as my own; and thus to assure myself of pardon, holiness, and glory."

This blessing was certainly enjoyed by the holy men of old ; but, like every other species of felicity in this world, it was enjoyed after an imperfect manner. They had an assured persuasion of God's present favour, and of their own final happiness. Nevertheless, this assured persuasion was liable to the assaults, both of outward temptations and of inward corruptions, which might for a while impair its vigour, though not destroy its being ; as under a transient swoon the spirits fail, the colour departs, but the vital principle subsists.

You may farther observe, concerning those pious persons, that, when they cease to exercise this confidence of faith, they lament the failure : " I said, This is my infirmity," Psalm lxxvii. 10. They chide themselves for it : " Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? " They encourage themselves against it : " Hope in God," Psalm xlii. 5 ; it is thy unquestionable privilege. How could they do this—on what grounds, or from what motive—if they had not a secret persuasion that their ransom was paid, and their God reconciled ; consequently, that all their doubts were an injury to his fidelity and to his goodness ?

Nay, the church, even under her darkest apprehensions, still speaks the sentiment, still retains the grace, for which I am pleading : " My Lord," uttered with her lips, argues an applicatory faith in her heart. So copious and pregnant are the evidences of this precious doctrine ! It is confirmed by that very passage which was produced for its confutation.

Ther. If this be the sentiment of the church in general, is it also the temper of her particular members ? Was each of them animated by this firm and lively faith ?

Asp. Let these particular persons appear, and answer for themselves. Hear the declaration of the Psalmist : " Bless the Lord, O my soul ; and all that is within me, bless his holy name," Psalm ciii. 1, 2. What is the cause of this holy transport and devout praise ? Is it, because God possibly may ; because he probably will ? No ; but because he actually does, forgive : " Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Take notice of Job's belief, and Job's support, amidst his unexampled sufferings : " I know that my Redeemer liveth : " not only that there is a Redeemer, but that he is, together with all his saving benefits, mine ; which, being a truth so sweet and delightful, is expressed a second time : " Whom I shall see for myself," Job xix. 25—27 ; to my own advantage and for my own comfort : see him exerting his almighty power and infinite mercy, to rescue my body from the grave, and to deliver my soul from hell. What was Habakkuk's security, amidst the threatening, the tremendous, the triumphant malice, of his own and his country's enemies ? " The Lord God is my strength." He says not, I wish, I pray, for the divine favour and the divine succour ; but I am persuaded they both are mine ; my inestimable portion, and my inviolable safeguard. " He will make my feet like hinds' feet," that I shall perfectly escape from all danger ; " and he will make me walk upon mine high places," beyond the reach of every evil, Hab. iii. 19.

Ther. Is this the language of v ers under the New Testament dispensation ?

Asp. Under every dispensation, Theron. They who lived before the law, " were persuaded " (*Πεπεισμενοι*) of the promises ; had not the least distrust with regard to the certainty of their performance ; nay, they " embraced

them" (Ἀσπασαμένοι) as their own; they hugged them, as it were, to their very souls; Heb. 11, 13. They who lived under the law could say, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us," Psalm ciii. 12. And can you imagine, in the days of the gospel, when our advantages are greater, and our light is clearer, that our faith should be weaker, or our hope fainter? St. Peter makes a profession, which excludes all doubting: "I am a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed," 1 Pet. v. 1. St. Paul answers in the same heroic strain: "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that neither life, nor death, nor any creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord," Rom. viii. 39. With both which, the confession of faith recorded by St. Luke is exactly correspondent: "We believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they," Acts xv. 11.

Ther. Was not this a privilege peculiar to the apostles?

Asp. By no means. All believers are brethren, and have "like precious faith." Hear how St. Peter exhorts all his people: "Gird up the loins of your mind, and hope to the end;" or, as the word should rather be translated, hope perfectly, hope assuredly, "for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*," 1 Pet. i. 13. Maintain, not a dim, but a bright hope; not a wavering, but a steady expectation of eternal life; that free but grand gift of which the Lord Jesus, at his second coming, shall put you in full possession. The apostle, writing to his Hebrew converts, encourages them all to "hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of hope, firm unto the end," Heb. iii. 6. From whence it is deducible, that a trust amounting to confidence, and the joy which naturally results from such a trust, were the common portion of Christians; possessed, not barely by some few exalted saints, but by the followers of Jesus in general. I might bring many more instances. But why should I multiply proofs, since the beloved disciple declares, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that ye have eternal life?"

Ther. True, Aspasio. This coincides with my apprehensions. The Scriptures are written,—first, that we may believe, and be entitled to eternal life;—next, that we may have the knowledge of our belief, and a consciousness of our title. The apostle supposes his correspondents to possess the former, yet not to have attained the latter.

Asp. Is it certain that he makes such a supposition? He writes, I imagine, not with the view of leading them to either, but of confirming them in both. He intimates, that the privilege and the comfort should go together. If we believe that Christ is our surety; we should be persuaded, that he has paid our debt, and satisfied justice to the very uttermost farthing. If we believe that Christ is our bridegroom; we should rest assured, that his righteousness, his inheritance, and his kingdom, are ours. And why should we take pains to separate what God's word and the very nature of things have united? Will this turn to our advantage? must it not issue in our loss? Besides, according to your own interpretation, whoever falls short of this cheering knowledge, falls short of one great end for which the Scrip-

* *Εἰς τέλος* or *μέχρι τέλους*, signify "to the end." But *τελειως*, as far as I can recollect, is never used in this sense, either by sacred or profane writers. It may be rendered *perfecte, integre*, in this connexion, *cum firma fiducia*, with a firm affluence.

tures were written. He receives not his full reward : he only gleans where he might reap ; is tossed on the ocean of uncertainty : whereas " they that have believed " have gained the port, have dropped their anchor, and " enter into rest." Heb. iv. 3.

Ther. Believed ! What ? that our sins are laid upon Christ ? that he was obedient in our stead ? that all spiritual blessings are thereby procured for our—even for our enjoyment ?

Asp. The blessings you mention are evidently the purport of the gospel. And I know of no other justifying faith, but that which relates to the gospel, and believes its report, Isa. liii. 1. Nor can I think, that any other belief will administer the tranquillity, or produce the rest, specified by the apostle. But here, I find, lies the core and root of our controversy. This is the precise point to be settled, What it is to believe ? what is included in this very important word ?—This question might renew our dispute, and cause the past arguments to recur : whereas, I would gladly get rid of disputation. We have already been too long detained in these disagreeable paths. However, since you have given the occasion, I may just touch upon another text or two. For I would willingly drive this nail to the head, and not leave my friend unconvinced on a subject of the utmost consequence.

The Lord declares, by his prophet, " I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions." To believe, is to subscribe this declaration ; to subscribe with our hand, and profess from our heart, " Lord, it is done, as thou hast said." Faith is, if I may so speak, the echo of the divine voice. It eagerly catches, and punctually reverberates, the joyful sound. Does God say, " Thou art my people ? " Faith replies, " Thou art my God," Hos. ii. 23 ; not barely desiring, but confidently averring, an interest in his favour. This explanation of faith is given us by a wisdom which cannot be deceived, by a fidelity which cannot deceive. Once more : our Lord bears this testimony concerning Thomas, " Thomas, thou hast believed." Now then, I think, we have got an infallible touchstone. Let us examine what that is which Jesus Christ calls believing. Whatever it be, it is the determination of truth itself ; and should pass for a verdict, from which there lies no appeal. And this, this is the confession of Thomas, " My Lord and my God," John xx. 28, 29. This, this expresses what our divine Master calls believing. When therefore, we confess with our lips, and are persuaded in our hearts, that Jesus is our Lord, who bought us with his blood ; that Jesus is our God, who will exert all his adorable perfections for our good ; then we truly believe. We believe, in our Saviour's sense of the word ; we have that faith which he allows to be genuine.

Ther. Is this the constant language of faith ? According to this account, there is no difference between the infant and the adult ; between the newborn babe, and the full-grown man, in Christ. Your spiritual children, *Aspasio*, must be men from their birth ; nay, born in all the vigour of manhood : whereas, the apostle makes an evident difference between the babes, the young men, and the fathers ; between faith, the assurance of faith, and the full assurance of faith. If we are told of a patriarch, who was " strong in faith," we read of some Roman converts, who were " weak in the faith " and we hear our Lord speaking to disciples, who were " fearful, and little faith."

Asp. Between faith, and the full assurance of faith, the apostle mak'

difference. The one is the most exalted pitch, where the other is but an inferior elevation. Yet both are rounds of the same ladder. I do not remember, that the sacred writer any where distinguishes between faith and assurance. Πίστις and Περουθήσις, *faith* and *confidence*, are joined in the epistle to the Ephesians. It is the opinion of the best critics, that the sense of the latter is included in the former. The critics' opinion is confirmed by the apostles' declaration, "We have access with confidence through faith," Eph. iii. 12. Could yonder sun diffuse warmth through the air, if it had no warmth in itself? No more could faith produce confidence in the believer, if in its own nature it did not contain the same.

The case of little faith, I think, may be explained from our Lord's own expostulation: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Here was a faith, not only in Christ's power, but also in his will. Nay, here was an appropriating faith, by which the apostle applied both to himself: "I verily believe, that my divine Master is able to preserve me, even though I venture to tread upon this tempestuous sea. I am persuaded likewise, that he will uphold me, and not suffer his servant to perish in the hazardous enterprise." Nothing less than this could have produced that hazardous enterprise, or have imboldened him to walk upon the rolling billows.

Do you not discern, in this instance, some degree of personal application, some real assurance of faith? It is true, this faith was violently assaulted by doubts, and greatly enfeebled by fears*. Yet still it was of the applicatory kind. "He can, he will," were expressive of its nature; though the boisterous winds, and the terrifying appearance of things, almost drowned its voice, or stifled the words in their utterance.

Ther. If you allow no difference between faith and confidence, I am very sure St. John puts a difference between babes, young men, and fathers.

Asp. He does, Theron; and so would I. Neither can I think of any thing more proper to explain my meaning, or establish my tenet, than your own comparison. In some fruitful family, you may see one child in leading-strings; another able to walk by itself; a third come home, improved and cultivated from the school of literature. Observe their speech. One lisps out a few broken sentences; another talks intelligibly, but very incorrectly: the last has learned to express himself with tolerable propriety. Yet each speaks the same language, notwithstanding the various degrees of fluency in their utterance, or purity in their diction. So faith always speaks one and the same uniform language. Whether she lisps or stammers; whether she whispers in faint accents, or raises her voice in a more manly tone; this is still the unvaried import of her speech: "God, even our own God, will give us his blessing." Can you forget how St. John addresses even his little children? "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven," 1 John ii. 12.

Ther. Will not this account discourage some, and offend others, who are not arrived at such an exalted pitch?

* I must beg of the candid reader to take particular notice of this limitation; and must entreat the impartial examiner, not to forget this concession. We no where suppose, that a freedom from all fears, or a superiority to all doubts, are included in the nature of faith. We only affirm, that an appropriating persuasion or assurance are necessary to the being of faith. This assurance may be encumbered with doubts, and may conflict with fears. But still it is assurance—real assurance—and proves itself to be such, by opposing and struggling with the contrary principle.

Asp. I would not offend the meanest, nor discourage the weakest of my Redeemer's servants. As for offence, that cannot be given, and ought not to be taken, when all we advance is strictly conformable to the unerring oracles. Whereas, to qualify and attenuate the scriptural descriptions of faith, in complaisance to our experience; to make the unhappy fluctuations and unworthy suspicions, which possess the breasts of some particular Christians—to make them the rule of explaining, or the measure of enforcing so capital a duty—this, sure, would be an offence to God, an injury to his word, and detrimental to the welfare of souls.

With regard to discouragement, I cannot conceive how this should ensue from informing the poor sinner that he has a right to apply Christ, and all Christ's merits, to himself; or from exhorting the poor sinner to do this, without any hesitation, and with a resolute dependence. In this case, to doubt is to be discouraged: as much as you want certainty, so much you want consolation. The proper way to comfort these distressed people is, not to allow, but to dissipate their doubts; to blow away those dead ashes, that the smothered embers may shine and glow.

Were we to inquire after the cause of that disquietude and despondency which are so common among modern professors, I am inclined to suspect we should find it lying hid in their wrong apprehensions, both of Christ and of faith. They look upon Christ as a rigorous and forbidding monarch, who insists upon some hard terms and high qualifications. Whereas, his heart and his arms are ever open; his heart as open, as infinite love can set it; his arms as open, as infinite merit can make them. They look upon faith as containing a possibility only, or, at most, a probability, of salvation through his name. It is with them a kind of peradventure; a situation of mind fluctuating and pendulous. "Perhaps I may succeed and be eternally blessed: perhaps I may be rejected and eternally ruined." Such a state of suspense, in an affair of everlasting consequence, cannot but create uneasiness and anxiety.

This uneasiness and anxiety seem to have been little known in the earlier and better days of the church. And why? Because Christians were then exposed to the rage of persecution? Because they were placed nearer the time of Christ's sojourning on earth? I rather think, because they were taught this particular and comfortable application of Christ and his righteousness. They exercised a confident affiance on Jesus, as their own Redeemer; and were shewn a more direct way to obtain this assurance, than merely to search after their own renewed qualities.

Ther. Surely, *Aspasio*, in this particular you differ, not from me only, but from the generality of the orthodox.

Asp. I am sorry to find myself under a necessity of differing from any worthy persons, much more of disagreeing with the generality. This I can safely aver, that it is not from any affectation of novelty, or any fondness for disputing, but from a disinterested regard to the truth of the gospel. I should be glad to have the concurrence of all the serious, and all the pious; but I dare not purchase their approbation, I dare not attempt a coalition of sentiments, by diminishing the boundless riches of grace, or restricting the absolute freeness of salvation by Christ.

You are pleased to remind me of the orthodox. Pray, my dear friend, what is the standard of orthodoxy? Is it the word of revelation? This

speaks once, yea twice, nay, some hundreds of times, in our favour. Is it the doctrine of our reformers from Popery? With these we jar not, but exactly harmonise. Is it to be taken from the old confessions of faith, and the catechisms of Protestant churches? To these we appeal, and have the sanction of their authority. Has the modern way of treating and stating this momentous subject so much to allege for its support?

Let me farther ask,—Are we better than our fathers? Is Christianity in a thriving condition, or practical religion on the advancing hand? The reverse, the melancholy reverse, is undeniably true. When our writers enforced, and our preachers urged what I am defending, professors were alive, and animated with the power of godliness: Whereas now we seem to be degenerated into the mere form; we “have a name, to live, but are” languid, listless, and if not “dead,” Rev. iii. 1. yet ready to die. It behoves us therefore to consider whether the declension, the decays, the unfruitfulness, so justly lamented in the present age, be not owing to the absence of this appropriating belief, or this assured persuasion.

A sweet assurance of pardon, a comfortable persuasion of our reconciliation with God, an established hope of eternal glory through Jesus Christ; these will be operative in the soul, as “a torch in the sheaf.” These will enkindle love, and increase watchfulness; these will beget the true humility of mind, and work an unfeigned abhorrence of sin; these will enlarge the heart with charity, and exalt the affections above the world. These are the proper, and the only effectual means of “making the man of God perfect,” that is, “thoroughly furnished to every good work*.”

But the doubting frame is not fitted to yield any of these fruits. Nay, I am apprehensive there are several graces which can hardly be exercised, several duties which can scarcely be performed, so long as this spirit of diffidence prevails.

Ther. Name them, Aspasio.

Asp. I am afraid, lest I should seem to arrogate the office of a teacher; which neither becomes my condition, nor is agreeable to my temper.

Ther. I beseech you, my dear friend, let us waive ceremony, and have nothing to do with compliments. My soul is in jeopardy. My present comfort, and my everlasting happiness are at stake. And shall we suffer any little punctilios to overbear such weighty considerations?

Suppose you are a teacher; I have great need, and am very desirous, to become your scholar. For I freely confess, that, knowing as I may seem in other instances, I am very ignorant in the great peculiarities of the gospel. Nay, though I have read the Scriptures in a critical view, I have been an utter stranger to their spiritual meaning. Here I am uninstructed as a babe: here, therefore, I ought to be teachable as a babe. Yes, in this respect I would become as a little child, that I may enter into the knowledge, and possess the privileges, of the kingdom of heaven.

* For the display and confirmation of these points, I do, with great pleasure and without any diffidence, refer to Mr. Marshall's “Gospel Mystery of Sanctification;” which I shall not recommend in the style of a critic, or like a reader of taste, but with all the simplicity of the weakest Christian; I mean, from my own experience. It has been made one of the most useful books to my own soul: I scarce ever fail to receive spiritual consolation and strength from the perusal of it. And was I to be banished into some desolate island, possessed only of two books beside my Bible, this should be one of the two, and perhaps the first, that I would choose.

Asp. Your answer, Theron, shall be a law. "Love to God" is the first commandment; and, without all peradventure, is the principal grace. But is it easy, is it possible, to love God, before we have any persuasion of his love to us? This is what the apostles did not, could not do. And, if it exceeded their ability, it will doubtless be above the reach of our capacity. The thing may be attempted; the practice may be urged; we may see the necessity of it, and desire to perform it; but we shall never, never be able to exercise it, till we have some comfortable apprehension of God's reconciliation and good-will to us. "We love him." Wherefore? from what inducement? "Because he first loved us," 1 John iv. 10; and because this love hath been made evident to our consciences by the light of faith.

What think you of "delight in God?" This also is a Christian grace. But "how can two walk together, except they be agreed?" We never covet an intimacy with the person who declares himself our enemy. Nay, if there be only a suspicion that he bears us a secret ill-will, we shall be jealous of trusting him, and averse to approach him. This was the case of our first parents, immediately after the fall. Instead of drawing near to their Creator with pleasure and gratitude, they fled from him with anxiety and terror. And why? Because they were under the alarming apprehensions of his displeasure. Whereas, let us once believe what the apostle affirms, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," Rom. v. 10; let us cordially credit what the prophet repeatedly declares, "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you," Isa. xxx. 18; then we shall seek his face with alacrity; our affections will be on the wing to salute their almighty Benefactor; we shall "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Ther. To the enjoyment of so many spiritual consolations, and the exercise of several delightful graces, I acknowledge, an assured faith is necessary; but—

Asp. Ay, Theron, you may well hesitate. It will be difficult to fill up the chasm in your discourse. For my part, I know not any duty of holiness which can be performed aright, without some degree of this confiding faith. We are to "walk worthy of him who hath called us to his kingdom and glory," 1 Thess. ii. 12; but if we doubt whether we in particular are called, how can this influence our conversation? We are to be "followers of God, as his dear children," Eph. v. 1. But if we do not, cannot, will not believe, so as to cry, "Abba, Father," how can such a consideration sway our hearts? Nay, upon what principles can such a person address himself to discharge any office of the Christian life? We are to "abound in the works of the Lord," from the animating prospect of a glorious resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 58. This he cannot do; because he apprehends himself to have no lot or portion in the blessed hope. We are to open our hands in charity to others, from a view of that heavenly kingdom which was prepared for us from the foundation of the world, Matt. xxv. 34. We are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, on account of those precious promises which are freely given to us in Christ Jesus, 2 Cor. vii. 1. But where unbelieving doubts predominate, these endearing and invigorating motives are lost. The man has no interest in the encouraging promises, has no title to the blissful inheritance; consequently, these sinews of evangelical obedience, with respect to him, are benumbed, withered, dead.

Ther. Such a man may make prayers and supplications. Though he cannot rejoice in the privileges, he may request them at the throne of grace.

Asp. Prayer is a great duty, and as great a privilege. I wish my dear Theron the spirit of grace and supplication. This will be better, incomparably better, and more advantageous, than a key to hidden treasures. But how can you pray with humble boldness, or with lively hope, unless you believe? believe that Christ is your High-priest—is your intercessor with the Father, and with the incense of his infinite merit, presents your petitions? Then, and then only, can you have what the apostle calls “boldness and access with confidence*,” Eph. iii. 12. Take notice of these vigorous expressions, and at your leisure consider whether they countenance the suspicious and misgiving temper. At present observe how yonder lark warbles and mounts in the firmament, as if she was bidding adieu to the earth, and going to mingle with the skies! An image this of believing prayer.—Should a fowler shoot the soaring songster through the wing, how would she fall from her elevation, and flutter on the ground! An emblem that of distrusting prayer.

I know not how to leave this subject, without attending to the testimony of St. James, than which nothing can be more awful, or more decisive. It should really alarm the doubting disposition as much as any solicitation to the most horrid sin. It should alarm the whole religious world as much as the beacons suddenly kindled, and all on a flame, would alarm the inhabitants of the maritime coasts. “Let him pray in faith, nothing doubting†; for he that doubteth is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind, and tossed,” James i. 6. Nay, the apostle adds,—and it is an addition greatly to be regarded; it should abide with weight on our consciences; for it comes from a casuist who could neither be too indulgent, through an excess of compassion, nor too rigorous, through an extravagance of zeal,—“Let not that man,” the doubting supplicant, “think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.”

Never then, my worthy friend, never more be an advocate for doubtings. Pursue them with fire and sword. Give them no quarter. Deal with them as Saul was commanded to treat the Amalekites.

Ther. If we are grieved at the remembrance of past sin, and feel an aversion to all sin; if the prevailing bias of our affections be to the divine Redeemer, and the habitual breathing of our souls after a conformity to his image; may we not suppose ourselves possessed of the truth and reality, though we have not the confidence and rejoicing, of faith? I say we, because I apprehend this is not my peculiar case, but common to myself and many other Christians of the weaker sort. I ask, therefore, in their name

* *Προσπαύω*, “access with a cheering and graceful assurance;” such as those petitioners enjoy who are introduced to the royal presence by some distinguished favourite. *Παύω*, “a boldness or unrestrained liberty of speech;” such as children use when they present their addresses, and make known their requests, to an indulgent father. *Ἐπιστάθηναι*, “with a well-grounded and steady confidence,” that we shall both obtain a favourable acceptance and a gracious answer. And all this “through the faith of Christ; through the worthiness of his person, and the prevalence of his intercession.

† “Nothing doubting,” is the apostle’s explanation of faith. *Μηδὲν διακρινόμενος* is, in our translation, “nothing wavering.” But the very same expression is rendered, Acts x. 20. “nothing doubting.” The sense is either way alike: Though I think “nothing wavering” corresponds too nearly with the comparison, “like a wave;” makes something of a disagreeable jingle; and flattens the force, or supersedes the necessity, of the following illustration.

and in my own, May we not humbly suppose our condition safe, though we do not presume to use the language of the spouse, "My beloved is mine, and I am his?"

Asp. So you are still inclined to spare Agag, because delicately and speciously disguised under the appearance of tenderness to weak souls. I should have thought the text from St. James must have done execution like the prophet Samuel's sword; but since corrosives succeed not, let us make trial of lenitives.

When the great Jehovah is pleased to say, "I am the Lord thy God;" then, upon this authentic warrant, to use the language of the spouse is neither more nor less than to declare, "I am persuaded that Christ is faithful and true, that he speaks what he thinks, and will do what he says." Whereas, to deny this by downright unbelief, or to question this by living in suspense, is not humble duty, but proud disobedience. Might not the Lord Jesus justly complain, "What iniquity have sinners found in me?" what unkindness, or what unfaithfulness, that they are so much afraid of confiding in my grace, and of believing my word?

You ask, whether the state of these persons is safe, and their faith real? I answer, why should not their state be happy, and their faith assured? Why should you, or they, or any one, plead the cause of unbelief, and veil it with the plausible pretext of humility? Let these persons know, whatever their names or their circumstances are, that they have as good a right to adopt the words of the spouse, as we have to walk in these gardens, and enjoyed their refined delights. Yet they will do well to remember, that those qualifications, however amiable, are by no means the ground of their right. They are to advance their claim, and hold fast the blessing, not as men ornamented with fine endowments, but as poor, indigent, guilty sinners. For such the Saviour is provided; to such his benefits are proposed, and on such his grace will be magnified.

Ther. Do you elude my question, or give up your point? One or the other my *Aspasio* certainly does.

Asp. Since my friend so peremptorily affirms, I will not have the ill manners to deny. I will own the former charge; the latter I cannot admit. I will own, that at present I had much rather act as a comforter than as a disputant. On some other occasion I will undertake to consider, and endeavour to answer, all your objections. In the mean time, I am far from giving up the point, barely by inquiring, why such persons should lose their time, and perhaps embarrass their minds, in these less profitable suppositions, when there is a direct, a compendious, and a certain method of obtaining peace, by appropriating Christ and his merits, without recurring to any such qualifications?

Nevertheless, if you insist upon a positive reply, I am obliged to declare, that faith consists in none of those qualifications which you describe. The language of faith is not—"I feel such an aversion; I am actuated with such a bias; or I breathe such a desire:" but—"God has freely loved me; Christ has graciously died for me; and the Holy Ghost will assuredly sanctify me in the belief, the appropriating belief, of those precious truths *."

* If the reader finds this Dialogue too long, here he will have a convenient resting-place.

But see, Theron! Yonder black and low-hung cloud points this way. It seems big with a shower; it marches on apace, and will soon be over our heads. We must instantly fly to shelter.

Ther. It is well we have this summer-house for our shelter. The thickest boughs would be insufficient to screen us. I think, I never saw a more impetuous burst of rain. A shower! No, it is a descending deluge. The large, rosy, reeking drops, came down like a torrent. Surprising! What a dreadful flash was there! A sheet of sulphureous fire launched from the dismal gloom, and wrapping the whole skies in a blaze. Not a moment's interval between the lightning's rage and the thunder's roar. How sudden and vast the explosion! What a deep, prolonged, tremendous peal ensues! It seems as if the poles of earth and the pillars of nature cracked.

See, my dear Aspasio, see the direful havoc, the horrid effects, of this elementary tumult. Yonder oak, which reared its towering head aloft, and spread wide its graceful branches, is, in the twinkling of an eye, turned into a naked trunk. There it stands, singed and torn; stript of its verdant honours*, and surrounded by its own shattered fragments. How fearful is the artillery of heaven!

Asp. And why—why did not the blow fall on this guilty breast? Why was not the fiery bolt, which flew so near, commissioned to pierce our hearts? If our heavenly Father has been so tenderly careful of these perishing bodies, will he not be much more gracious to our immortal souls? Will he not clothe them with that immaculate robe, which is the only security from the stroke of eternal vengeance? And let me ask, Can this be a security to us, unless we are vested with it? Could this building, though very substantial, have secured us from the rushing rains, if we had not betaken ourselves to its friendly covert?

Christ is represented, in the prophecy of Isaiah, by this very image; as “a place of refuge, and as a covert from the storm and from rain,” Isa. iv. 6. That is, his merits and death are a sure protection from the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell. No fury of the elements so terrible as these: no bulwark of stone so impregnable as those. If this is a proper emblem of Christ, to what shall we liken faith? To a persuasion, that the shelter of the summer-house is free for our use? To a high esteem of its accommodation, an earnest desire after its protection, or an habitual tendency towards it? Would this defend us from the inclemencies of the weather? Would this keep us dry, amidst (what you call) the descending deluge? Would this esteem, desire, or tendency, unless carried into actual entrance and possession, be a proper safeguard, or indeed any manner of advantage to our persons?

Ther. No, Aspasio; neither would a persuasion that the summer-house is mine.

Asp. True; but a belief that Christ is mine, is like entering the summer-house. When the divine Spirit reveals the obedient and dying Saviour in my heart; when I am enabled to believe, that his death was the desert of my sins, and his obedience is the matter of my justification; when I live in the exercise of this appropriating faith, then I find that comfort, and I re-

* Does not this give us the most awful and grand sense of Psal. xxix. 9? “The voice of the Lord,” when uttered in thunder, and accompanied with lightning, not only “discovereth the thick bushes, but strips the forest;” lays bare the branching woods; reduces the most magnificent and flourishing cedars to naked and withered trunks.

ive that benefit, which correspond with the repose and security we now joy from this hospitable structure.

Ther. May I then, from this instant, look upon Christ, his glorious person, his perfect righteousness, and his precious death, as my certain inheritance? May I firmly believe, that through this grand and immensely meritorious sacrifice, I shall have pardon and acceptance, true holiness, and endless salvation?

Asp. Why should you not believe all this firmly? You have the same reason to believe with a steady confidence, as to believe with any degree of uncertainty. It is the free promise of the gospel, addressed to sinners, that warrants the latter; and the very same promise, under the same circumstances of merited munificence, authorises the former.

You have heard my opinion; hear now what our Lord himself says: "Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. He may partake of my spiritual and unspeakable blessings, as freely as he makes use of the most common refreshments; as easily as he drinks of the running stream. This is his royal proclamation: Hear his gracious invitation: "Look unto me, and be ye saved;" Isa. xlv. 1; saved from your disquieting fears, by justification; saved from your sinning and corruptions, by sanctification; saved from every evil, by complete and eternal redemption. To whom is this most affectionate call directed? Not to a few distinguished favourites only, but to "all the ends of the earth." None are excepted; none are prohibited; and can my Theron imagine that he is excluded?

Nay farther, hear our Lord's earnest entreaty; hear his tender and repeated opportunity: "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v. 20. Hark! It is the voice of infinitely condescending love, speaking by his ambassador:—"Sinners, accept my great salvation. Enjoy what I have purchased for you by my suffering agonies. Do not suspect my kindness, or refuse my gifts. This will wound me deeper than the spear which pierced my heart."—O! the grace of our exalted King. He bows from his celestial throne. He almost kneels to his guilty creatures. He begs, he even begs of obnoxious sinners, not to reject his mercies. After all this, can you entertain the least doubt, Theron, whether you have a permission to believe firmly?

Ther. This is extraordinary goodness indeed! I have often read these messages, but never saw them, till this hour, in a light so engaging and so encouraging.

Asp. Should not this threefold cord be strong enough to draw my dear friend, let me add (what must absolutely supersede all objections) the plain, express, peremptory command of the almighty: "This is his command, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23. Pray, examine the language; not he allows only, or barely advises, but commands. We are not only permitted, but strictly required. It is not only our privilege, but God's positive injunction. Upon the discovery of such a behaviour, methinks every heart should cry, "O that I might be allowed to approach him! to solicit an interest in him! How gladly would I wait, ever so long a time, in ever so mean a posture, if I might at the last receive him as my portion!" The superabundant goodness of God prevents our wishes, and exceeds our hopes. "I freely give my Son," saith the Lord,

“and all his riches, to you. I beseech you as a compassionate friend, not to refuse him. I enjoin you as an uncontrollable sovereign, to believe on him—How gracious! most amazingly gracious is this command! And give me leave to hint, it is the greatest and most important command that ever issued from the throne of glory. If this be neglected, no others can be kept; if this be observed, all others will be easy. Now, Theron, will you not receive Christ, and look upon his all-sufficient merits as your own? Is not your warrant clear and unexceptionable? nay, is not your obligation strong and indispensable?”

Ther. Truly, Aspasio, you put all my mistrustful apprehensions to rest. Here is a proclamation from the blessed God—seconded by his invitation—accompanied by his entreaty—and all enforced by his command. I know not what can be a fuller proof of your point, or a stronger inducement to believe.

Asp. Yes, my friend, I can produce (if such a thing be possible) stronger proof still; such as, I hope, will totally rout unbelief, and drive all her force from the field.

God has not only invited you, entreated you, and commanded you, to live under the sweet persuasion that his Son is your Saviour; but he has given you the grandest ratification of this precious truth. He has passed his word; he has made you a firm promise; nay, he has given you many and various promises of this inestimable blessing. And “God is not a man, that he should lie; or the Son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” Numb. xxiii. 19. Heaven and earth may drop into nothing, sooner than one promise, or indeed one jot or tittle of his promise, should fall to the ground.

Besides this, he has given you, if I may so speak, a note under his own hand. He has recorded his promises in the Bible, and written them with an everlasting pen; so that they will stand conspicuous and indelible, like a bill drawn upon heaven, and a basis laid for faith, so long as the sun and moon endure.

Nay, he has confirmed all by the most solemn sanction imaginable—by his oath; by his own oath; by the oath of a God. Though his word is sure and his promise immutable, he adds (astonishing condescension! adorable benignity!) he adds his oath to all. He not only speaks, but swears; swears by himself, swears by his own eternal existence, that his promises belong—to whom? Mark this particular with the most exact attention: to whom do those promises belong, which are ratified in this unequalled and inviolable manner? To the holy, the upright, the accomplished?—To those, says the Scripture, “who fly for refuge to the hope set before them,” Heb. vi. 17, 18, the hope set before them in the propitiation, the righteousness, the ineffable merits of Christ.

Ther. May I then believe, firmly believe, assuredly believe, that Jesus the Mediator, and all the rich benefits of his mediation, are mine? Pardon me Aspasio, for reiterating the question. I am really, with respect to the obedience of faith, too much like that Saxon monarch, who, for his remissness and inactivity, was surnamed “The Unready*.”

Asp. I do more than pardon my dear Theron: I feel for him, and I sym-

* Ethelred.

wise with him. If there is some of that Saxon prince's disease running in religion, I am sure there is too much of it in mine; and I fear it is an epigrammatic distemper. But let us reflect a moment.—Suppose any neighbour of substance and credit should bind himself, by a deliberate promise, to do you some particular piece of service; if he should add to his promise a note under his own hand—if he should corroborate both by some authentic pledge—if he should establish all by a most awful and solemn oath; could you suspect the sincerity of his engagement, or harbour any doubt with regard to its execution? This would be most unreasonable in any one; and to your generous temper, I am very certain, it would be impossible. Let us remember, that God has given us all this cause for an assurance of faith, and more. Nay, I will defy the most timorous and suspicious temper to demand, from the most treacherous person on earth, a greater, stronger, fuller security, than the God of infinite fidelity has granted to you and me. After all this, one would think diffidence itself could no longer hesitate, nor the most jealous incredulity demur. Shall we, can we withhold that affiance from the unchangeable Creator, which we could not but repose on a fallible creature?

Ther. You rouse and animate me, Aspasio. O! that I may arise, and, with the divine assistance, shake off this stupor of unbelief! Certainly, it can never be honourable to God, nor pleasing to Christ, nor profitable to ourselves.

Asp. If it be, then cherish it, maintain it, and never relinquish it. But how can it be honourable to God? It depreciates his goodness; it is a reproach to his veracity; nay, the apostle scruples not to affirm, that it "makes him a liar," 1 John v. 10. Whereas, they who believe his testimony, glorify his faithfulness, glorify his beneficence; and, as John the Baptist speaks, "set to their seal that God is true," John iii. 33. I have been informed, that, when the late Elector of Hanover was declared, by the parliament of Great Britain, successor to the vacant throne, several persons of distinction waited upon his Highness, in order to make timely application for the most valuable preferments. Several requests of this nature were granted, and each was confirmed by a kind of promissory note. One gentleman, particularly, solicited for the mastership of the rolls. Being indulged in his desire, he was offered the same confirmation which had been vouchsafed to other successful petitioners. Upon which he seemed to be under a pang of graceful confusion and surprise; begged that he might not put the royal donor to such unnecessary trouble; at the same time protesting, that he looked upon his Highness's word as the very best ratification of his suit. With this conduct, and this compliment, the Elector was not a little pleased. "This is the gentleman," he said, "who does me a real honour; treats me like a king; and, whoever is disappointed, he shall certainly be gratified." So, we are assured by the testimony of revelation, that the patriarch, "who staggered not through unbelief, gave," and in the most signal, the most acceptable manner, "glory to God," Rom. iv. 20.

Is it "pleasing to Christ?" Quite the reverse. It dishonours his merit; it detracts from the dignity of his righteousness; it would enervate the power of his intercession. Accordingly you may observe, there is nothing which our Lord so frequently reproveth in his followers, as this spirit of unbelief. What says he to his disciples, when he came down from the mount of transfiguration? "O faithless and perverse generation!" They were perverse,

* *Δυστροχμία*, Matth. xvii 17. A believing state of mind is like some well-arranged and beautiful system of limbs. Unbelief dislocates the parts, distorts the harmonious frame, and disfigures its comely proportion.

because faithless. What says he to the travellers, whom he overtook in their journey to Emmaus? "O fools, and slow of heart to believe!" Luke xxiv. 25. They were fools, because slow to believe. What says he to the apostles, after his resurrection? "Jesus upbraided them with their unbelief," Mark xvi. 14. He took no notice of their cowardly and perfidious behaviour; he inveighed against none of their other follies and infirmities; but he upbraided them with their unbelief. Not gently rebuked. No; this was a fault so unreasonable in itself, so reproachful to their Master, so pernicious to themselves, that he severely reprimanded them for it; with an air of vehemence, and with a mixture of invective.

Is it "profitable to ourselves?" Nothing less. It damps our love, and diminishes our comfort. It subjects us to that fear which hath torment; and disqualifies us for that obedience which is filial. In a word, this distrustful and unbelieving temper weakens every principle of piety, and impoverishes the whole soul. Whence come spiritual oscitancy and remissness? whence proceed sterility and unfruitfulness in the knowledge of Christ? St. Peter ascribes them all to an habitual unbelief. Such persons, he says, "have forgotten that they were purged from their former sins," 2 Pet. i. 8, 9. In the regenerate, where it remains, it is very detrimental; for "they that will not believe shall not be established," Isa. vii. 9. In the unregenerate, where it prevails, it is absolutely destructive; and though it may not kill like an apoplexy, it wastes like a consumption. "They could not enter in because of unbelief," Heb. iii. 19.

Let us then, my dear friend, cast away this sin, which so easily besets us both. It clogs our feet; it hampers all our powers; and hinders us from running, with alacrity and speed, "the race that is set before us." What says David? "God hath spoken in his holiness," Psalm lx. 6; hath made an express and inviolable promise, that I shall be ruler of his people Israel. "I will rejoice therefore;" away with every alarming apprehension; I will even exult and triumph. Nay more; "I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth;" I will look upon the whole land as my own. I will divide it, and dispose of it, just as if it was already in my possession. Why should not you and I also say, "God hath spoken in his holiness;" hath expressly and solemnly declared, The promise of an all-sufficient Saviour is to you? "We will rejoice therefore;" confiding in this most faithful word, we will bid adieu to all disquieting fears, and make our boast of this glorious Redeemer. Yes; notwithstanding all our unworthiness, Christ and his atonement, Christ and his righteousness, are ours. God hath passed his word; and amidst all our temptations his word is our anchor; its hold is firm, and its ground immovable.

Ther. I have heard some people distinguish between the faith of reliance, and the faith of assurance; between the reflex and the direct act of faith. Methinks I approve these sentiments, though I dislike the terms. The sentiments are happily adapted to the relief of human infirmity; though the terms are rather too abstruse for ordinary capacities to understand.

Asp. I cannot say that I am very fond either of the one or of the other. In my opinion, they both partake too much of the subtilty of the schools; and are more likely to create perplexity than to administer godly edifying. For which reason, I should chuse to drop the difficult phrase, and not to dwell on the nice distinctions. Yet, if we must not dismiss them without some notice, I would just remark—

That the faith of reliance, in its true scriptural sense, includes or presupposes a degree of assurance. Includes ; for what is reliance but a repose of the mind, which is attended with tranquillity, and excludes perturbation? How can this take place, if there be no sort of conviction that "the Lord is my light and my salvation?"—Presupposes : for who would rely on a satisfaction made, without being persuaded that the satisfaction is for him and his iniquities? Reliance, separated from this persuasion, seems to be neither comfortable nor reasonable.

As to those who insist upon what they call the reflex act of faith ; sure, they mistake the nature of the thing. This, if I understand them aright, is their way of arguing ; "I am a new creature ; I love the Lord Jesus in sincerity ; I have the fruits of the Spirit : from whence it is plain, that Christ and his salvation are mine." Now, in all this procedure I cannot discern the least footstep of faith ; no, not the least trace of receiving a testimony, or relying upon a Saviour. Here is nothing more than a logical deduction of one proposition from another ; a conclusion drawn from given premises. Grant the latter, and any person, without any aid from the Spirit, will infer the former. It may, therefore, more properly be reckoned an act of reasoning than of believing ; it is founded on what we ourselves feel, not upon the record of a faithful God ; and it is styled, by judicious writers, the assurance of sense rather than of faith.

When, in conformity to the aforementioned opinion, we are advised to prove our title to comfort, by genuine marks of conversion, and taught on this column to fix the capital of assurance, I would rather propose a question than advance objections. Is not this somewhat like placing the dome of a cathedral upon the stalk of a tulip ?

Ther. No, say they ; it was the practice of the apostle himself ; and he has left it upon record, as a pattern for all posterity to copy. "We know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

Asp. Observe, Theron, the process of the apostle's reasoning. It is like the form of an inverted cone ; where you have first the point, and from thence proceed to the base. So the sacred writer begins with the less, and ascends to the greater proof. He says, in one of the following verses, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life," 1 John iii. 16, not merely for sinners, but for us in particular. Here, you see, is assurance by the direct act of faith. From this truth believed, from this blessing received, the love of the brethren takes its rise ; which may very justly be admitted as an evidence that our faith is real, and our assurance no delusion : as yonder leaves may serve to distinguish the particular species, and ascertain the healthy state of the trees on which they grow.

When your tenants bring in their rent, this affords no contemptible evidence that the lands which they respectively occupy are yours. But this is a proof which does not occur every day, or every week ; it is occasional only, and of the subordinate kind. The grand demonstration, that which is always at hand, and always forcible, is your possession of the deeds of conveyance. Thus, the promise of God in his divine word is our charter, or the authentic conveyance of our right to pardon and salvation. Make just the same difference between this promise and your own holiness, as you make between the writings of your estate and the receipt of the revenues ; you will then judge aright, because your judgment will coincide with the apostle's.

Besides, this method of seeking peace and assurance, I fear, will perplex the simple-minded, and cherish, rather than suppress, the fluctuations of doubt. For, let the marks be what you please, a love of the brethren or a love of all righteousness, a change of heart or an alteration of life; these good qualifications are sometimes like the stars at noon-day, not easily, if at all discernible; or else they are like a glow-worm in the night, glimmering rather than shining; consequently will yield, at the best, but a feeble, at the worst, a very precarious evidence. If, in such a manner, we should acquire some little assurance, how soon may it be unsettled by the incursions of daily temptation, or destroyed by the insurrection of remaining sin! At such a juncture, how will it keep its standing! how retain its being! It will fare like a tottering wall before the tempest, or be "as the rush without mire, or the flag without water," Job viii. 11.

Instead, therefore, of poring on our own hearts, to discover, by inherent qualities, our interest in Christ, I should rather renew my application to the free and faithful promise of the Lord—assert and maintain my title on this unalterable ground: "Pardon is mine, I would say grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine. Why? because I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast? Rather because 'God hath spoken in his holiness;' because all these precious privileges are consigned over to me in the everlasting gospel, with a clearness unquestionable as the truth, with a certainty inviolable as the oath of God."

Cast your eye into yonder meadow. Take notice of that industrious fisherman, how intent he is upon the pursuit of his business. He has just thrown his net, and taken a considerable booty. You do not see him spending his time in idle triumphs, on account of his success: he does not stand to measure the dimensions of the fish, or compute the value of his prize; but having, without delay, secured the captives, he prepares for another cast, and hopes for another draught.

So let us, instead of exulting in any past acquisitions, seek afresh to the inexhaustible fulness of our Saviour for renewed communications. If we have been blessed with any taste of his goodness, or any tokens of his love, let us not too fondly dote upon the sweetness of such experiences. Let us not make them the foundation of our confidence, but only so many encouragements to persevere and advance in believing; that, having life and having peace from our divine Head, we may have them "more abundantly," John x. 10. Then will be fulfilled the saying which is written, The just—the righteous in Jesus Christ—shall live; shall not only be delivered from condemnation and death, but shall thrive in comfort, and flourish in holiness. How? by reflecting on their sanctification, or viewing their own attainments? No; but by the infinitely more encouraging views of their completeness in Christ, and by a fresh, a repeated, a never-ceasing exercise of faith (Rom. i. 17) on that Holy One of God.

This, I verily think, nay, this the apostle testifies, is the most effectual way of feeding that lamp, and quickening that flame, which, having cheered us in our earthly pilgrimage, will be brightened up into immortal glory in the heavens.

Here they went in, and after a slight refreshment took coach. As they were returning home, Theron observed, not without concern, the changed and melancholy aspect of things in the territories of the husbandman. The fields

of corn, which a little while ago were gracefully erect, or softly inclining to the breeze, lay sunk and flatted under the impetuous rains. Such, added *Aspasio*, such I apprehend will be our faith, if it aspires not after assurance, or if its assurance is erected on any endowments of our own.

Ther. If this is the case, what can be the reason why so many people are totally destitute of all religious assurance? have no notion of it, much less aspire after it? and as to full assurance, they would be much surprised, perhaps highly disgusted, at the very mention of such a doctrine.

Asp. If people never aspire after the assurance of faith, or an appropriating interest in Christ, I very much question whether they are truly awakened, or really in earnest. They are like the men of Ephraim, whom the prophet styles "a cake not turned," Hos. vii. 8; neither bread nor yet dough, neither absolute reprobates nor real saints; or, as our Lord explains the proverb, in his charge against the church of Laodicea, they are "neither hot nor cold," Rev. iii. 15. Not frozen in insensibility, it is true; at the same time not fervent in spirit, but indifferent and lukewarm in the concerns of religion. As to a full assurance, or the highest degree of this grace, was I to declare myself more explicitly upon this point, it should be in the calm and moderate words of a judicious divine: "I do not affirm, that without a full assurance there is no faith. But this I maintain, that wherever the latter exists, there will be a sincere pursuit of the former."

Among the reasons why so few persons attain this eminent blessing, we may reckon the following:—They understand not the perfect freeness of grace, nor the immense merits of Christ: they never consider the unspeakable value of an assured faith; neither are they aware that it is intended for the enjoyment of sinners: either they seek it not at all, or else they seek it where it is not to be found; from some works of righteousness in themselves, rather than from the gracious promise of God in his word; which is altogether as ill judged, and as sure to issue in disappointment, as if a person should go in quest of ice amidst the torrid zone, or expect to find spicy islands under the northern pole.

But whether people consider it or no, the value of an assured faith is indeed unspeakable. When this is wrought in the heart, peace will stand firm, and afflictions drop their sting. Prayer will return laden with treasures, and death will approach stripped of its terrors. The soul will be as a watered garden, and all her graces blossom as a rose. When this is wrought in the heart, the gospel of Christ will appear with new charms, and operate with new energy. Its hymns will no longer be a strange language to your ear, nor its privileges as forbidden fruit to your palate. You will then, as you peruse each sacred page, feel it to be the power of God, and "taste that the Lord is gracious," 1 Pet. ii. 3. You will reap a benefit, and enjoy a delight, as much superior to those of the doubting reader, as the pleasure of eating this delicious peach is superior to the mere description of its agreeable relish.

Bear with me a moment longer, *Theron*: for you can hardly imagine what an improvement and exaltation this will give to every truth you contemplate, and every object you behold. When you contemplate the rise of kingdoms, and the fall of empires; when you recollect the many great and astonishing events recorded in the history of nations; how highly delightful must it be to say, "All these passed under the superintendency of that hand which was

pierced with the bloody nail, and fastened to the cursed cross for me! When you behold the magnificence of creation, and the richness of its furniture—the grandeur of nature, and the variety of her works—what a heightened pleasure must they all impart, if, as you view the glorious scene, your thoughts make answer to your eyes, “All these were brought into existence by that adorable person who sustained my guilt, and wrought out my justifying righteousness!”

O that we may possess this “precious faith!” 2 Pet. i. 1; that it may grow incessantly, “grow exceedingly,” 2 Thess. i. 3, till it be rooted like those full-grown oaks under which we lately walked, and grounded * like that well-built edifice which is still in our view.

Ther. I join with my Aspasio in this wish; and must beg of him to inform me how I may attain so desirable a blessing.

Asp. You have entirely cured me, Theron, of making apologies: would to God I might be as successfully instrumental in delivering my friend from his doubts! that the gospel might come to us as it came to the Thessalonians, “not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance,” 1 Thess. i. 5.

Prayer is the first expedient. Every good gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights. Christ is not only the object, but the author and finisher of our faith. “Lord, increase our faith!” was the request of his disciples, and should be the prevailing language of our hearts.

Lay up many of the divine promises in your memory. Stock that noble cabinet with this invaluable treasure. “Faith cometh by hearing,” Rom. x. 17; by meditating on, by praying over this word of life, and word of grace. And never, never forget the freeness with which the promise is made, and its good things are bestowed. You are to receive the one, and apply the other, not with a full but with an empty hand; not as a righteous person, but as an unworthy creature.

Make the trial. Exercise yourself in this great secret of true godliness. I am satisfied it will be productive of the most beneficial effects. Look unto Jesus as dying in your stead, and purchasing both grace and glory for your enjoyment. Come unto God as a poor sinner, yet with a confident dependence; expecting all spiritual blessings through him that loved you, and gave himself for you. “He that believeth,” with this appropriating faith, “shall not be confounded,” 1 Pet. ii. 6, nor frustrated in his expectations. “He that believeth,” with this appropriating faith, “shall have the witness in himself,” 1 John v. 10. Nothing will bring in such light and peace, such holiness and happiness to his soul. The Ephesians, thus believing, “were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise†,” Eph. i. 13. The dispersed of Israel, thus believing, “rejoiced with joy unspeakable,” 1 Pet. i. 8. Those were marked out as rightful heirs, these were blessed with some delightful foretastes, and both were prepared for the complete fruition of life and immortality. O! that we may “be followers of their example, and sharers of their felicity!”

* Rooted and grounded, *ερριζωμένοι και τιθεμελιωμένοι*. These are the apostle’s beautiful ideas, or rather expressive similitudes, each comprehended in a single word, Eph. iii. 18.

† *πιστωσαντες εσφραγισθητε*, not “after that ye believed, ye were sealed;” but “believing ye were sealed.” In the way of believing, ye became partakers of this sealing and sanctifying Spirit.

As for those doubts which have given you so much perplexity, and cost us so long a disquisition, look upon them as some of your greatest enemies. Oppose them with all the resolution and all the vigour of your mind. Nay, look upon those unreasonable doubts, as some of your greatest sins. Confess them with the deepest shame; and pray against them with the utmost ardour. With equal assiduity and zeal, let us press after a steadfast, an immoveable, a triumphant faith. Faith is the vehicle and the instrument of every good: "All things are possible to him that believeth," Mark ix. 23. Faith is the immediate and grand end of the whole gospel: "These things are written, that ye might believe," John xx. 31. Let us therefore covet, earnestly let us covet, this best of gifts, and "shew all diligence to the full assurance of hope," Heb. vii. 11.

DIALOGUE XVII.

THE next morning Theron ordered a cold collation to be prepared, and his pleasure-boat to hold itself in readiness. Breakfast being despatched, and some necessary orders relating to the family given—Now, says he to Aspasio, let me fulfil my promise; or rather, let us execute our mutual engagement; and consign the remainder of this mild and charming day to a rural excursion.

We will take our route along one of the finest roads in the world: a road incomparably more curious and durable than the famous causeways raised by those puissant hands which conquered the globe: a road which has subsisted from the beginning of time; and, though frequented by innumerable carriages, laden with the heaviest burdens, has never been gulled, never wanted repair, to this very hour.—Upon this they step into the chariot, and are conveyed to a large navigable river, about three quarters of a mile distant from the house. Here they launch upon a new element, attended by two or three servants, expert at handling the oar and managing the nets.

Is this the road, replied Aspasio, on which my friend bestows his panegyric? It is indeed more curious in its structure, and more durable in its substance, than the celebrated Roman causeways; though I must assure you, the latter have a very distinguished share of my esteem. I admire them far beyond Trajan's pillar, or Caracalla's baths; far beyond the idle pomp of the Pantheon, or the worse than idle magnificence of the amphitheatre. They do the truest honour to the empire; because, while they were the glory of Rome, they were a general good*; and not only a monument of her grandeur, but a benefit to mankind.

But more than all these works, I admire that excellent and divinely gracious purpose to which Providence made the empire itself subservient. It was a kind of road or causeway for the everlasting gospel, and afforded the word of life a free passage to the very ends of the earth. The evangelical

* These roads ran through all Italy, and stretched themselves into the territories of France. They were carried across the Alps, the Pyrenean mountains, and through the whole kingdom of Spain. Some of them, towards the south, reached even to Ethiopia; and some of them, towards the north, extended as far as Scotland. The remains of several of them continue in England to this day; though they were made, it is probable, above 1600 years ago.

dove mounted the wings of the Roman eagle, and flew with surprising expedition through all nations. Who would have thought that insatiable ambition, and the most bloody wars, should be paving a way for the Prince of humility and peace? How remote from all human apprehension was such a design! and how contrary to the natural result of things was such an event! Most remarkably therefore was that observation of the Psalmist verified, "His ways are in the sea, and his paths in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known," Psalm lxxvii. 19.

Conversing on such agreeable subjects, they were carried by the stream through no less agreeable scenes. They pass by hills clothed with hanging woods, and woods arrayed in varying green. Here, excluded from a sight of the outstretched plains, they are entertained with a group of unsubstantial images, and the wonders of a mimic creation. Another sun shines, but stript of his blazing beams, in the watery concave; while clouds sail along the downward skies, and sometimes disclose, sometimes draw a veil over the radiant orb. Trees, with their inverted tops, either flourish in the fair serene below, or else paint with a pleasing delusion the pellucid flood. Even the mountains are there, but in a headlong posture; and, notwithstanding their prodigious bulk, they quiver in this floating mirror like the poplar leaves which adorn their sides.

Soon as the boat advances, and disturbs the placid surface, the waves, pushed hastily to the bank, bear off in broken fragments the liquid landscape. The spreading circles seemed to prophesy as they rolled, and pronounced the pleasures of this present state—the pomp of power, the charm of beauty, and the echo of fame—pronounced them transient, as their speedy passage; empty, as their unreal freight. Seemed to prophesy! It was more. Imagination heard them utter, as they ran,

Thus pass the shadowy scenes of life away!

Emerging from this fluid alley, they dart amidst the level of a spacious meadow. The eye, lately immured, though in pleasurable confinement, now expands her delighted view into a space almost boundless, and amidst objects little short of innumerable. Transported for a while at the numberless variety of beauteous images poured in sweet confusion all around, she hardly knows where to fix, or which to pursue. Recovering at length from the pleasing perplexity, she glances quick, and instantaneous, across all the intermediate plain, and marks the distant mountains; how cliffs climb over cliffs, till the huge ridges gain upon the sky; how their diminished tops are dressed in blue, or wrapped in clouds; while all their leafy structures, and all their fleecy tenants, are lost in air.

Soon she quits these aerial summits, and ranges the russet heath; here shagged with brakes, or tufted with rushes; there interspersed with straggling thickets or solitary trees, which seem, like disaffected partisans, to shun each other's shade. A spire, placed in a remote valley, peeps over the hills. Sense is surprised at the amusive appearance; is ready to suspect that the column rises, like some enchanted edifice, from the rifted earth. But reason looks upon it as the earnest of a hidden vale, and the sure indication of an adjacent town; performing, in this respect, much the same office to the eye as faith executes with regard to the soul, when it is "the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1.

Next she roves, with increasing pleasure, over spacious tracts of fertile glebe and cultured fields, where cattle, of every graceful form, and every valuable quality, crop the tender herb, or drink the crystal rills. Anon, she dwells with the utmost complacency on towns of opulence and splendour, which spread the sacred dome, and lift the social roof: towns, no longer surrounded with the stern forbidding majesty of unpassable entrenchments, and impregnable ramparts: but encircled with the delicate, the inviting appendages of gardens and orchards; those decked with all the soft graces of art and elegance, these blushing and pregnant with the more substantial treasures of fruitful nature. Wreaths of ascending smoke, intermingled with turrets and lofty pinnacles, seem to contend which shall get farthest from the earth, and nearest to the skies. Happy for the inhabitants, if such was the habitual tendency of their desires! if no other contention was known in their streets!

Villas, elegant and magnificent, seated in the centre of an ample park, or removed to the extremity of a lengthened lawn, not far from a beautiful reservoir of standing waters, or the more salutary lapse of a limpid stream. Villages, clad in homely thatch, and lodged in the bosom of clustering trees. Rustics singing at their works; shepherds, tuning their pipes as they tend their flocks; travellers, pursuing each his respective way, in easy and joyous security.

How pleasing, said *Aspasio*, is our situation! How delightful is the aspect of all things! One would almost imagine, that nothing could exceed it, and that nothing can increase it. Yet there is a method of increasing even this copious delight, and of heightening even this exquisite pleasure.—Let me desire my friend, answered *Theron*, to explain his remark; and not only to explain but to exemplify.—If we view, resumed *Aspasio*, our own prosperity, and compare it with the afflicted condition of others, the method I propose will be reduced to practice. Such a dark and mournful contrast must throw additional brightness, even upon the brightest scene.

Above, the skies smile with serenity; below, the fields look gay with plenty; all around, the sportive gales

Fanning their odoriferous wings, dispense
Native perfumes; and whisper, whence they stole
Those balmy spoils.

MILTON, B. iv.

With us, all circumstances are as easy as the wafture of the boat; as smooth as the flow of the stream. But let us not forget those grievous calamities which befall our brethren in some remote tracts of the earth, or distant parts of the ocean. How many sailors are struggling, vainly struggling, with all the fury of rending winds, and dashing waves! while their vessel, flung to and fro by tempestuous billows, is mounted into the clouds or plunged in the abyss. Possibly the miserable crew hear their knell sounded in the shattered mast, and see destruction entering at the bursting planks. Perhaps this very moment they pour the last, dismal, dying shriek; and sink, irrecoverably sink, in the all-overwhelming surge.—The traveller in *Africa's* barren wastes, pale even amidst those glowing regions, pale with prodigious consternation, sees sudden and surprising mountains rise; sees the sultry desert ascending the sky, and sweeping before the whirlwind. What can he do? whither fly? how escape the approaching ruin? Alas! when he attempts to rally his thoughts, attempts to devise some feeble expedient, he is overtaken by the choking storm, and suffocated amidst the sandy inun-

dation. The driving heaps are now his executioner, as the drifted heaps will soon be his tomb.

While we possess the valuable privileges, and taste the delicious sweets of liberty, how many partakers of our common nature are condemned to perpetual exile, or chained to the oar for life! How many are immured in the gloom of dungeons, or buried in the caverns of the mines, never to behold the all-enlivening sun again! While respect waits upon our persons, and reputation attends our characters, are there not some unhappy creatures, led forth by the hand of vindictive justice, to be spectacles of horror and monuments of vengeance? sentenced, for their enormous crimes, to be broken limb by limb on the wheel, or to be impaled alive on the lingering stake. To these, the strangling cord, or the deadly stab, would be a most welcome favour; but they must feel a thousand deaths, in undergoing one. And this, too probably, is but the beginning of their sorrows—will only consign them over to infinitely more terrible torment.

While ease and pleasure, in sweet conjunction, smooth our paths, and soften our couch, how many are tossing on the fever's fiery bed, or toiling along affliction's thorny road! Some under the excruciating but necessary operations of surgery: their bodies ripped open, with a dreadful incision, to search for the torturing stone; or their limbs lopt off by the bloody knife, to prevent the mortification's fatal spread. Some, emaciated by pining sickness, are deprived of all their animal vigour, and transformed into spectres even before their dissolution. These are ready to adopt the complaint of the Psalmist; "I am withered like grass; my bones are burnt up, as it were a firebrand; I go hence like the shadow that departeth." While health, that staple blessing, which gives every other entertainment its flavour and its beauty, adds the gloss to all we see, and the *goût* to all we taste; health plays at our hearts, dances in our spirits, and mantles in our cheeks, as the generous champaign lately sparkled in our glass.

We are blessed with a calm possession of ourselves; with tranquillity in our consciences, and an habitual harmony in our temper: whereas many, in the doleful cells of lunacy, are gnashing their teeth or wringing their hands; rending the air with volleys of horrid execrations, or burdening it with peals of disconsolate sighs. And O! what multitudes, even amidst courts and palaces, are held in splendid vassalage by their own domineering passions, or the vanities of a bewitching world! Far less innocently, far more deplorably disordered*, than the fettered madman, they are gnawed by the envenomed tooth of envy; they are agitated by the wild sallies of ambition; or feel the malignant ulcer of jealousy rankling in their breasts. In some, avarice, like a ravening harpy, gripes: in some, revenge, like an implacable fury, rages: while others are goaded by lordly and imperious lusts, through the loathsome sewers of impure delight; and left, at last, in those hated and execrable dens, where remorse rears her snaky crest, and infamy sharpens her hissing tongue.—

Why this long pause? replied Theron. Your observations are as useful as they are just. We should all be acquainted, at least in speculation acquainted, with grief; and send our thoughts, if not our feet, to visit the abodes of sorrow;—that in this school we may learn a sympathizing pity for

* "Give me any plague," says an apocryphal writer, "but the plague of the heart," Eccl'us. xxv. 13.

our distressed fellow-creatures ; and see in this glass our inexpressible obligations to the distinguishing goodness of Providence, which has crowned our table with abundance, and replenished our cup with delicacies ; permitting neither penury to stint the draught, nor adversity to mingle her gall. Go on, I must entreat you, with your description of comparative felicity. We have a large circuit still to make, before we arrive at our intended port ; and I could wish, that your discourse might keep pace with the current.

Since you approve the subject, answered Aspasio, I will pursue it a little farther.—We, the inhabitants of this favourite isle, breathe an air of the most agreeable temperature, and most wholesome qualities. But how many nations languish under brazen skies, vaulted as it were with fire ! They welter amidst those furnaces of the sun, till their “ visage is burnt, and black as a coal,” Lam. iv. 8. What is far more disastrous, beds of sulphur and combustible materials lie in subterraneous ambush, ready to spring the irresistible mine ; ere long, perhaps, on some day of universal festivity, or in some night of deep repose, to be touched by Heaven’s avenging hand. Then with what outrageous violence will they burst ! rock the foundations of nature ! wrench open the ponderous jaws of the earth ! and swallow up astonished cities in the dark, tremendous, closing chasm !

These earthquakes, it may be, both precede and portend “ the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the sickness that destroyeth at noon-day,” Psal. xci. 6. They are at once a fearful omen and a ruinous blow. The stagnating atmosphere, rank with malignant vapours, becomes a source of deadly infection ; or, replete with poisonous animalculæ, is one vast incumbent cloud of living bane. If the active gales arise, they arise only to stir the seeds of disease, and diffuse the fatal contagion far and near. Unhappy people ! The plague, that severer minister of divine indignation, fixes her head-quarters in their blasted provinces ; and sends death abroad, “ on his pale horse,” Rev. vi. 8, to empty their houses, depopulate their towns, and crowd their graves.

Our island is seldom visited with either of these dreadful judgments ; and has never sustained any very considerable calamity from the former. However, let us not be presumptuously secure. We have not long ago received an awful warning : the rod has been shaken ; or rather the sword has been brandished over our territories. Who can forget the general consternation which seized our metropolis, on occasion of the late earthquake ? And not without reason : for, of all divine visitations, this is the most terribly vindictive. The whirlwind is slow in its progress, war is gentle in its assaults, even the raging pestilence is a mild rebuke, compared with the inevitable, the all-overwhelming fury of an earthquake. When it begins, it also makes an end, 1 Sam. iii. 12 ; puts a period, in a few minutes, to the work of ages, ruins all without distinction ; and there is no defence from the destructive stroke.

Should Almighty vengeance stir up again those fierce subterranean commotions ; should the Most High God bid strong convulsions tear the bowels of nature, and make the foundations of the world tremble like a leaf ; what “ O ye careless ones,” Isa. xxxii. 11. what will you do ? Whither will you fly ? See ! the pavement sinks under your feet. Your houses are tottering over your heads. The ground, on every side, cracks and opens like a gaping grave ; or heaves and swells like a rolling sea. “ A noise of crashing

Zeph. i. 10. is heard from without, occasioned by the rending streets, and falling structures. Thunders, infernal thunders*, bellow from beneath, mingled with the despairing shrieks and dying groans from those wretched creatures, who are jammed between the closing earth, or going down alive into the horrible pit†.—Where now will you fly? To your strong towers? They are shattered in pieces.—To the strong rocks? They are thrown out of their place.—To the open fields? They are a frightful gulf, yawning to devour you.—Wherever you fly; in the wildness of your distraction, wherever you seek for shelter; it shall be, “as if a man fled from a lion and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand upon the wall, and a serpent bit him,” Amos v. 19.

Yet there is one place of refuge, which will prove an inviolable sanctuary, and a perfect security. I mean, the great, the gracious, the adorable Redeemer's righteousness. Hither let us betake ourselves. Now, before the day of desolation cometh, let us betake ourselves to this stronghold. Then shall we have no reason to fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. For thus saith God, the omnipotent and faithful God: “The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem. The heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord Jesus Christ will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel,” Joel iii. 15, 16. Or, if the true believer is involved in the same undistinguished ruin with the ungodly, even this shall turn to his gain. It shall exempt him from the lingering pains and the melancholy solemnities of a dying bed. Like Elijah's fiery chariot, it shall speedily waft his soul to the bosom of his Saviour; while the hideous cavern, that whelms his body in the centre, shall be its chamber of rest, till the beloved Bridegroom comes, and the day of resurrection dawns.

* Before the overthrow of Catania by an earthquake, a noise was heard, vast and horrid, as if all the artillery in the world was discharged at once.

† Very memorable, and equally tremendous, is the account of the earthquake that visited Sicily in the year 1693.—It shook the whole island. The mischief it caused is amazing. Fifty-four cities and towns, besides an incredible number of villages, were either demolished or greatly damaged. Catania, one of the most famous and flourishing cities in the kingdom, was entirely destroyed. Of 18,914 inhabitants, 18,000 perished.

Another earthquake, almost as dreadful, and in the same year, spread desolation through the colony of Jamaica. In two minutes' time, it shook down, and laid under water, nine-tenths of the town of Port Royal. In less than a minute, three quarters of the houses, and the ground they stood on, together with the inhabitants, were quite sunk; and the little part left behind was no better than heaps of rubbish. The shock was so violent that it threw people down upon their knees, or their faces, as they were running about for shelter. The ground heaved and swelled like a rolling sea; and several houses still standing were shuffled some yards out of their places. The earth would crack and yawn; would open and shut, quick and fast. Of which horrid openings, two or three hundred might be seen at once. In some whereof, the people went down, and were seen no more. In some they descended, and rose again in other streets, or in the middle of the harbour. Some swiftly closing, seized the miserable creatures, and pressed them to death; leaving their heads or half their bodies above ground, to be a spectacle of terror, and a prey to dogs. Out of others would issue whole rivers of water, spouted to a great height in the air, and threatening a deluge to that part which the earthquake spared. Scarce a planting-house or sugar-work was left standing in all the island. Two thousand lives were lost, and a thousand acres of land were sunk. The whole was attended with frightful noises, with brimstone blasts, and offensive smells. The noisome vapours belched forth, corrupted the air, and brought on a general sickness; which swept away more than three thousand of those who escaped the fury of the earthquake.—See CHAMB. *Dict.* on the word *Earthquake*.

We lift up our eyes, and behold the radiant colours which flush the forehead of the morning; we turn, and gaze upon the no less beautiful tinges which impurple the cheek of evening. We throw around our view, and are delighted with numberless forms of fertility, which both decorate and enrich our plains: whereas, other countries are overrun with immense swarms of locusts, which intercept, wherever they fly, the fair face of day; and destroy, wherever they alight, the green treasures of the ground.

Ah! what avails it, that the laborious hind sows his acres, or the skilful husbandman prunes his vineyard? that spring, with her prolific moisture, swells the bud; or, with her delicate pencil, paints the blossom? Nor grain, nor fruit, can hope for maturity, while these rapacious and baleful creatures infest the neighbourhood. They ravage the gardens, they strip the trees, and shave the meadows. Scarce a single leaf remains on the boughs, or so much as a single stalk in the furrows. "A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth; the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing can escape them," Joel ii. 3.

Now, let the dreadful artillery roar from all its iron throats, and discharge the heaviest glut of mortal hail. Now, ye sons of slaughter, men "skilful to destroy," Ezek. xxi. 31, now hurl the sulphureous globes, which kindle into a hurricane of fire, and burst in ragged instruments of ruin.—To no purpose. The linked thunderbolts are turned into stubble, the bursting bombs are accounted as straw. These armies of the air laugh at all the formidable preparations of war; "and when they fall on the sword, they shall not be wounded*." Surprising and awful destination of the everlasting God! at once to stain the pride and chastise the guilt of man! These are a despicable and puny race; clad in no coat of mail, but crushed by the slightest touch. They wear neither sword nor scimitar, nor any offensive weapon: yet, in spite of opposing legions, they carry on their depredations, and push their conquests. Terror marches in their front, and famine brings up the rear. They spread universal devastation as they advance; and frequently give the signal for the pestilence to follow. Potent armies lose their hands, and haughty tyrants tremble for their dominions.

O that the natives of Great Britain would bethink themselves! would break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities by cherishing the influences of the divine Spirit! lest "this overflowing scourge," under which some neighbouring kingdoms have severely smarted, should be commissioned to visit our borders, and avenge the quarrel of its Maker's honour. Distant as those countless legions are, with interposing seas between; yet, if God lift up a standard from far, or but hiss † unto them from the ends of the earth, "they come with speed swiftly." Who will convey this wish to the ears, who will transmit it to the hearts of my countrymen? that our land may

* The prophet Joel, foretelling the plague of locusts, gives, under the image of an embattled host, a most alarming display of their terrible appearance; their impetuous progress; the horrible dread they raise, as they advance; and the irreparable mischief they leave, as they depart.

† "Hiss unto them," Isa. v. 26. They come without a moment's delay, and from remotest regions of the earth, to execute all his pleasure. Formidable and innumerable they are, they come, I say not upon his repeated injunctions, or at his strict commands; but at the first, the very smallest intimation of his will; such as the shepherds use to their flocks; such as the bee-men of old, to their swarms; or such as we, in those cases, use to some of our domestic animals.

always appear as it does at present, like the darling of Providence; may always resound with the voice of joy, and be filled with the fruits of plenty; may always wear the robe of beauty, and be adorned with the smile of peace.

How great are the advantages of peace! said Theron. Peace, at her leisure, plans, and leads out industry to execute, all the noble and commodious improvements which we behold on every side. Peace sets the mark of property on our possessions, and bids justice guarantee them to our enjoyment. Peace spreads over us the banner of the laws, while we taste, free from outrage, and secure from injury, the milk and honey of our honest toil*. Amidst the tumultuous confusions of war, who could have a heart to contrive, or a hand to accomplish, any such works of dignity and use? In those days of darkness and distraction, how languid to the sight are all the dewy landscapes of spring? How insipid to the taste are all the delicious flavours of autumn? When the nation is overrun with armies, and embroiled in slaughter, "a trembling of heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind," Deut. xxviii. 65, are the dismal distinction of the times. Instead of a calm acquiescence in our portion, our very life hangs in continual suspense.

But what are all the benefits of external peace, though displayed in the fairest light, and enlivened by the strongest contrasts; what are they all, compared with the blessings of the gospel? by which sinners may have "peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

This, resumed Aspasio, suggests a fresh instance of happiness, which others want, and we possess; an instance never to be omitted in our catalogue of peculiar mercies; I might add, never to be forgotten by any Christian on any occasion. While many kingdoms of the earth are ignorant of the true God, and know neither the principles of piety nor the paths of felicity; the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give the knowledge of salvation, and to guide our feet into the way of peace. While millions of rebellious angels, cast from their native thrones, are reserved in chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day, we, though rebellious and apostate sinners of mankind, are delivered from the wrath to come. The holy Jesus (blessed be his redeeming goodness!) has endured the cross, and despised the shame, on purpose to rescue us from those doleful and ignominious dungeons, where the prisoners of almighty vengeance

—Converse with groans
Unrespited, unpitied, unreprieved,
Ages of hopeless end.

MILTON.

Yes, my dear Theron, let me repeat your own important words: "What are all the benefits of external peace, though displayed in the fairest light, and enlivened by the strongest contrasts—what are they all, compared with the blessings of the gospel?" This brings the olive-branch from heaven, and glad tidings of reconciliation with our offended God. This composes the tumult of the mind; disarms the warring passions; and regulates the extravagant desires. This introduces such an integrity of heart, and bene-

* "Pax optima rerum," says the Latin poet. But the Orientals, I think, discover the most superlative esteem for this blessing, by making it the constant form of their salutations, and the subject of their most cordial wishes for their friends: "Peace be unto thee." In this short sentence, they seem to have comprised a whole volume of mercies: meaning by their single שלום all that the Greeks expressed by their χαίρει, ευχαίρει, ιουπράκται; i. e. a confluence of that joy of mind, that health of body, that prosperity of outward circumstances, which complete the happiness of mankind.

volence of temper, as constitute the health of the soul. This spreads such an uniform beauty of holiness through the conduct, as is far more amiable than the most engaging forms of material nature.

O! that thou wouldst bow the heavens! that thou wouldst come down, celestial Visitant, and make thy stated, thy favourite abode in our isle! that every breast may be animated with thy power; and every community, every individual, may wear thy resplendent badge! Then shall it be the least ingredient of our public felicity, that the sword of slaughter is beaten into a plough-share, and the once bloody spear bent into a pruning-hook. It shall be the lowest upon the lists of our common blessings, that "violence is no more heard in our land, wasting and destruction within our borders. Our very officers will be peace, and our exactors righteousness. We shall call" (and the event will correspond with the name) "our walls salvation, and our gates praise." Then shall every harp be taken down from the willows, and every voice burst into a song.—"In other climes"—will be the general acclamation—

"In other climes, let myriads of curious insects spin the delicate thread, which softens into velvet, stiffens into brocade, or flows in glossy satin; which reflects a lovelier glow on the cheek of beauty, and renders royalty itself more majestic. We are presented with infinitely finer robes, in the imputed righteousness of our Redeemer, and the inherent sanctification of his Spirit; which beautify the very soul, and prepare it for the illustrious assembly—of saints in light—of angels in glory.

"Let eastern rocks sparkle with diamonds, and give birth to gems of every dazzling tincture. We have, hid in the field of our Scriptures, the 'Pearl of great price; the white and precious stone' (Rev. ii. 17) of perfect absolution; a diadem which will shine with undiminished lustre, when all the brilliant wonders of the mine are faded, extinguished, lost.

"Let richer soils nourish the noblest plants, and warmer suns concoct their exquisite juices;—the lemon, pleasingly poignant; the citron, more mildly delicious; or that pride of vegetable life, and compendium of all the blandishments of taste, the pine-apple. We enjoy far more exalted dainties, in having access to the "Tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations," Rev. xxii. 2; whose boughs are replenished with a never-failing abundance of heavenly fruits; and the nutriment they dispense, is bliss and immortality.

"Let Iberian vines swell the translucent cluster, and burst into a flood of generous wine; let the Tuscan olive extract the fatness of the earth, and melt into a soft mellifluous stream: we shall neither envy nor covet these inferior gifts, so long as we may draw water out of the wells of salvation; so long as we may receive that unction from the Holy One," 1 John ii. 20, those influences of the Comforter, which not only make a cheerful countenance, but gladden the very heart; imparting such a refined satisfaction, as the whole world cannot give—such a permanent satisfaction, as no calamities can take away.

"Let Ethiopian mountains be ribbed with marble, and Peruvian mines embowelled with gold: we want neither the impenetrable quarry, nor the glittering ore; having in our adored Messiah a sure foundation for all our eternal hopes, and an inexhaustible fund of the divinest riches.

"Be it so, that our Isis is but a creeping drop, and the Thames itself no

more than a scanty rivulet, compared with the magnificent sweep of the Ganges, or the stupendous amplitude of Rio de la Plata *. The wretched natives, even on the banks of those stately rivers, are at distance from all the springs of true consolation: whereas we have a fountain, we have a river, that issues from the ocean of eternal love. With incomparable dignity, and with equal propriety, it is styled, 'the river of life,' Rev. xxii. 1. It visits the house of the mourner, and revives the spirit of the sorrowful: it makes glad the city, and makes happy the servants of our God: it quickens even the dead; and every human creature that drinks of its water lives for ever.

"Let Asiatic islands boast their mountains of myrrh, and hills of frankincense: let Arabian groves, with a superior liberality, distil their healing gums, and ripen, for vigorous operation, their vital drugs. We have a more sovereign remedy than their most powerful restoratives, in the great Mediator's atoning blood; we have a more refreshing banquet than all their mingled sweets, in commemorating his passion, and participating his merits.

"In short, we have an equivalent, far more than an equivalent, for all those choice productions, which bloom in the gardens, or bask in the orchards of the sun. We have a gospel, rich in precious privileges, and abounding with inestimable promises: we have a Saviour, full of forgiving goodness, and liberal of renewing grace; at whose auspicious approach, fountains spout amidst the burning desert; under whose welcome footsteps, the sandy waste smiles with herbage; and beneath his potent touch, 'the wilderness buds and blossoms as a rose,' Isa. xxxv. 1. Or, to speak more plainly, the desolate and barren soul brings forth those fruits of the Spirit, which are infinitely more ornamental than the silken gems of spring; infinitely more beneficial than the salubrious stores of autumn.

"We have a Saviour,—tell it out among the Heathen, that all the nations on earth may partake of the gift, and join in the song,—a Saviour we have, whose radiant eye brightens the gloomy paths of affliction; whose efficacious blessing makes 'all things work together for the good of his people,' Rom. viii. 28. Death, gilded by his propitious smile, even death itself looks gay. Nor is the grave, under his benign administration, any longer a den of destruction; but a short and shady avenue to those immortal mansions, whose 'foundations are laid with sapphires; whose windows are of agate, the gates of carbuncle, and all the borders of pleasant stones,' Isa. liv. 11, 12.

Pardon my rhapsody, dear Theron. Your own remark, added to the grand and lovely views, have warmed, have animated, have almost transported me.—Theron answered not a word, but seemed fixed in thought.—While he is indulging his contemplation, we may just observe some other peculiarities of the prospect.

Here and there, a lonesome cottage scarcely lifts its humble head. No pompous swell of projecting steps surrounds the door; no appendant wings of inferior offices skirt the edifice; no stately hall, slabbed with marble, and roofed with sculpture, receives the gazing stranger: but young-eyed Health,

* This river is near two hundred miles broad, where it discharges itself into the sea. It pours such an immense quantity of the liquid element into the Atlantic Ocean, that fresh water may be taken up for the space of many a league. It continues thus amazingly vast through a course of six hundred miles; when it divides into two mighty branches, the Parana and the Paraguay, which, having run in separate channels, several thousand miles along the country, unite at last, and form, by their conflux, this magnificent and spacious stream, which is supposed to be the largest in the world.

and white-robed Innocence, with sweet-featured Contentment, adorn the habitation; while Virtue lends her graces, and Religion communicates her honours, to dignify the abode; rendering the blameless hut superior in real majesty to a dissolute court.

At some distance appear the hoary remains of an ancient monastery. Sunk beneath the weight of revolving years, the once venerable fabric is levelled with the dust. The lofty and ornamented temple lies rudely overgrown with moss, or still more ignobly covered with weeds. The walls, where sainted imagery stood, or idolized painting shone, are clasped with twining ivy, or shagged with horrid thorn. Through aisles, that once echoed to the chanter's voice, mingled with the organ's majestic sound, the hollow winds roar, and the dashing storm drives. Where are now the silent cells, the vocal choirs, the dusky groves, in which the romantic saints prolonged their lonely vigils by the midnight taper; or poured their united prayers, before the lark had waked the morn; or strolled, in ever-musing melancholy, along the moonlight glade? Surely those mouldering fragments now teach (and with a much better grace, with a much stronger emphasis) what formerly their unsocial and gloomy residentaries professed;—they teach the vanity of the world, and the transitory duration of all that is most stable in this region of shadows.

Behold on yonder eminence the rueful memorials of a magnificent castle. All dismantled, and quite demolished, it gives a shading of solemnity to the more lively parts of nature's picture; and attempers the rural delight with some touches of alarming dread.—War, destructive war, has snatched the scythe from the hand of Time, and hurried on the steps of Destiny. Those broken columns, and battered walls; those prostrate towers, and battlements dashed to the ground, carry evident marks of an immature downfall. They were built for ages; and for ages might have stood a defence and accommodation to generations yet unborn, if haply they had escaped the dire assaults of hostile rage. But what vigilance of man can prevent the miner's dark approach? or what solidity of bulwark can withstand the bellowing engine's impetuous shock?

Those, perhaps, were the rooms in which licentious Mirth crowned with roses the sparkling bowl, and tuned to the silver-sounding lute the syren's enchanting song. Those, the scenes of voluptuous indulgence, where Luxury poured her delicacies; where Beauty, insidious Beauty, practised her wiles, and spread, with bewitching art, her wanton snares. Now, instead of the riotous banquet, and intrigues of lawless love, the owl utters her hated screams by night, and the raven flaps her ominous wing by day. Where are the violet couches, and the woodbine bowers, which fanned with their breathing sweets the polluted flame? The soil seems to suffer for the abuses of the owner. Blasted and dishonoured, it produces nothing but ragged briars and noisome nettles, under whose odious covert the hissing snake glides, or the croaking toad crawls: fearful intimation of that ignominious and doleful catastrophe which awaits the sons of riot! when their momentary gratifications will drop like the faded leaf, and leave nothing behind but pangs of remorse, keener far than the pointed thorn, and more envenomed than the viper's tooth.

Perhaps they were the beautiful and honoured abodes where Grandeur and Politeness walked their daily round, attended with a train of gittles

delights ; where amiable and refined Friendship was wont to sit and smile, looking love, and talking the very soul ; where Hospitality, with Economy always at her side, stood beckoning to the distressed, but industrious * poor, and showered blessings from her liberal hand. But war, detested war, has stretched over the social and inviting seat "the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness," Isa. xxxiv. 11. Now, alas ! nothing but desolation and horror haunt the savage retreat. The ample arches of the bridge, which so often transmitted the wondering passenger along their pensile way, lie buried in the dreary moat.—Those relics of the massy portals, naked and abandoned, seem to bemoan their melancholy condition. No splendid chariots, with their gay retinue, frequent the solitary avenues. No needy steps, with cheerful expectation, besiege the once bountiful gate. But all is a miserable, forlorn, hideous pile of rubbish.

Since riches so often take to themselves wings, and fly away ; since houses, great and fair, reel upon their foundations, and so tumble into dust ; how wise, how salutary is our divine Master's advice ! "Make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness ; that when the world fails around you, when the springs of nature fail within you, they, as witnesses of your charity, and vouchers for the sincerity of your faith, may receive you into everlasting habitations," Luke xvi. 9. This is to lay up treasure "for ourselves," Matt. vi. 20 ; whereas, whatever else we amass, is for our heirs, for our successors, for we know not who. This wealth is truly and emphatically called "our own," Luke xvi. 12 ; it is an advowson ; we have the perpetuity. Whereas, whatever else we possess is ours only for a turn, or in trust.

See the dreadful, dreadful ravages of civil discord ! Wherever that infernal fury stalks, she marks her steps in blood, and leaves opulent cities a ruinous heap †.—What thanks then, what ardent and ceaseless, thanks, are due to that all-superintending, ever-gracious Lord, who has dashed the torch from her hand ; has broke her murderous weapons, and driven the baleful pest from our island !—May the same almighty goodness shortly banish the accursed monster from all lands !—banish the monster, with her hated associate Rapine, and her insatiable purveyor Ambition, to the deepest hell. Branded with everlasting infamy, and bound in adamant chains, there let them gnash their teeth, and bite the inevitable curb ! While Peace, descending from her native heaven, bids her olives spring amidst the joyful nations ; and Plenty, in league with Commerce, scatters blessings from her copious horn. While Gladness smiles in every eye ; and Love, extensive universal love, levelling the partition-wall of bigotry, cements every heart in brotherly affection.

* I say distressed, but industrious poor ;—because I would not be understood as encouraging, in any degree, the relief of our common beggars. Towards the former, I would cultivate a tender and ever-yearning compassion ; I would anticipate their complaints ; and, as a sacred writer directs, would even seek to do them good. But as to the latter, I frankly own that I look upon it as my duty to discourage such cumberers of the ground. They are, generally speaking, lusty drones ; and their habitual begging is no better than a specious robbing of the public hive.

Let us then unanimously join to shake off these dead weights from our wheels, and dislodge these swarms of vermin from our state. Let us be deaf to their most importunate clamours ; and assure ourselves, that, by this determined inflexibility, we do God, we do our community, we do them, the most substantial service.

† The effects of what Virgil calls *bella, horrida bella*, were never displayed in colours that glow, and with figures that alarm, like those which are used by the prophet Jeremiah, chap. iv. 19. &c.

Near those heaps of havock lies the spot, ever-memorable and still revered, on which an obstinate and fatal battle was fought. The husbandman, as he breaks his fallow land, or rends the grassy turf, often discovers the horrid implements, and the more horrid effects, of that bloody conflict. He starts to hear his coulter strike upon the bosses of a rusty buckler, or gride over the edge of a blunted sword. He turns pale to see human bones thrown up before his plough; and stands aghast to think, that in cutting his furrow he opens a grave.—The grey-headed sire often relates to his grandsons, hanging with eager attention on the tale, and trembling for the event—relates the dismal, the glorious deeds of that important day:—How the fields, now covered with waving crops, were then loaded with mangled and ghastly corpses; how the pastures, now green with herbage, were then drenched and incrimsoned with human gore.

“On that extended common,” he says, “where the busy shepherd is erecting his hurdled citadel, the tents were spread, and the banners displayed; the spears bristled in air, and the burnished helmets glittered to the sun.—On yonder rising ground, where the frisking lambs play their harmless frolics, stood the martial files, clad in mail, and ranged in battle array; stood war, with all its collected horrors, like some portentous cloud, ready to burst into an immediate storm.—On the nearer plain, where the quiet steed grazes in safety, and those sober oxen chew the juicy herb, the fierce encounter mixed. There the javelins, launched from nervous arms, and aimed by vengeful eyes, flew and re flew, whizzing with death. The arrows lightened * from the strings, and drenched their keen points, and dipped their feathery wings in blood.—Soon as this shower of missive steel ceased, instantly outsprung thousands of flaming swords. They clash on the brazen shields, they cut their way through the riven armour, and sheath their blades in many a gallant dauntless heart. Here, on this distinguished level, the proud presumptuous enemy, confident of victory, and boasting of their numbers, poured in like a flood. There, a bold determined battalion, of which myself was a part, planted themselves like a rock, and broke the fierce attack.

“Then,” adds the brave old warrior, “then the coward herd fled before the vengeance of our conquering arms. Then these hands strewed the plains with a harvest, different far from their present productions. Then the fathers, smitten with inexpressible dread, looked not back on their children †, though shuddering at the lifted spear, or screaming under the brandished sword. The fathers looked not back on their children, though they fell among the slain, gashed with deadly wounds; or lay expiring, in groans of agony, under our feet.”

* Hab. iii. 11. The original words, literally translated, present us with that beautifully bold figure, the “lightning of thy spear;”—which, with innumerable other graces of speech, that give dignity and spirit to our modern compositions, are borrowed from the language of Zion; are transplanted from the school of the prophets. If we start into a pleasing amazement at Homer’s *ἀρου μανιται*; have we not equal reason to be charmed and surprised at Nahum’s *החוללו הרברו*? every chariot raged with violence and impetuosity—was eager, was even mad to destroy. Nah. ii. 5.

† For this very striking, and most terrific image, we are obliged to the prophet Jeremiah; who, in a few words, but with all the pomp of horror, describes the din of approaching war, and the consternation of a vanquished people, Jer. xlvii. 3.

Virgil has imitated the prophet’s manner, in that very delicate descriptive touch, where, representing the prodigious alarm excited by the yell of the infernal Fury, he says,

“Et trepidæ matres pressere ad pectora natos.”

That is, “Each frightened mother clasped the infant to her fluttering bosom.”

We leave the warrior to repeat his shocking story, and enjoy his savage satisfaction. For calmer scenes and softer delights we willingly leave him. The eye is pleased with the elegant gaiety of the parterre; the ear is soothed with the warbling melody of the grove; but grand objects, and the magnificence of things, charm and transport the whole man. The mind, on such occasions, seems to expand with the prospect, and secretly exults in the consciousness of her greatness. Intent upon these large and excursive views, our friends scarce advert to the minuter beauties which address them on every side. The swan, with her snowy plumes, and loftily bending head, notwithstanding all her superb air and lordly state, rows by without exciting admiration or obtaining notice. Equally unnoticed is both the array and the action of the duck; her glossy neck, and finely chequered wings; her diving into the deep, or her darting up into day. The swallow, skimming the air in wanton circles, or dipping her downy breast in the flood, courts the observation in vain. Nor could the finny shoals attract their regard, though they played before the boat in sportive chase, or glancing quick to the surface, shewed their pearly coats bedropt with gold. Thus they, engaged in sublime, neglect inferior speculations. And if the sons of religion overlook the diminutive, transient, delusory forms of pleasure, which float on the narrow stream of time, or flit along the scanty bounds of sense, it is only to contemplate and enjoy a happiness in their God, which is elevated, substantial, and immortal; compared with which, whatever the eye can survey, from pole to pole, from the rising to the setting sun, is a cockleshell, a butterfly, a bubble.

From this open and enlarged scene they enter the skirts of a vast, umbrageous, venerable forest. On either side, the sturdy and gigantic sons of earth rear their aged trunks, and spread their branching arms. Trees, of every hardy make and every majestic form, in agreeable disorder, and with a wild kind of grandeur, fill the aerial regions. The huge, expansive, roaming boughs, unite themselves over the current, and diffuse "their umbrage, broad and brown as evening." The timorous deer start at the clashing of the waves. Alarmed with the unusual sound, they look up, and gaze for a moment; then fly into covert by various ways, and with precipitate speed, vanishing, rather than departing, from the glade.

How awful to reflect, as they glide along the shelving shores, and the moss-grown banks; as they sail under the pendent shades of quivering poplar, of whistling fir, and the solemn sounding foliage of the oak; how awful to reflect, "These were the lonely haunts of the Druids two thousand years ago! Amidst these dusky mazes and sympathetic glooms the pensive sages strayed. Here they sought, they found, and with all the solemnity of superstitious devotion, they gathered the mistletoe*. Here the visionary recluses shunned the tumultuous ways of men, and traced the mysterious paths of Providence. Here they explored the secrets of nature, and invoked their fabled gods."

Sometimes wrapt in a sudden reverie of thought, sometimes engaged in conversation on the solemn appearance of things, the voyagers scarce perceive their progress. Before they are aware, this venerable scene is lost, and they find themselves advanced upon the borders of a beautiful lawn. The forest,

* If the reader pleases, he may see these pompous solemnities described in *Vanicrii Præd. Rust.* p. 125. &c.; where the curious narrative of Pliny is embellished with the harmonious numbers of Virgil.

retiring to the right hand, in the shape of a crescent, composed what Milton styles, "A verdurous wall of stateliest aspect;" and left in the midst an ample space for the flourishing of herbage.

Here, said Theron, if you please, we will alight, and leave the bearer of our floating sedan to pursue his ceaseless course; to enrich the bosom of other valleys, and lave the feet of other hills; to visit cities, and make the tour of counties; to reflect the image of many a splendid structure which adorns his banks, and, which is far more amiable, to distribute all along his winding journey innumerable conveniencies both for man and beast; acquiring, the farther he goes, and the more benefits he confers, a deeper flow, and a wider swell; to the remarkable confirmation of that beneficent maxim, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth," Prov. xi. 24.

Theron and Aspasio, walking across the spacious amphitheatre seated themselves at the extremity of the bend. Before them lay a verdant area, quite even, perfectly handsome, but far from gay. Green was all the dress, without any mixture of gaudy flowers or glittering colours; only now and then, a gentle breeze, skimming over the undulating mead, impressed a varying wavy gloss on its surface. The whole seemed to resemble the decent and sober ornaments of maturer age, when it has put off the trappings and bid adieu to the levities of youth. The broad transparent stream ran parallel with the lips* of the channel, and drew a line of circumvallation, as it were, to guard the calm retreat. It appeared, where shaded with boughs, like a barrier of polished steel; where open to the sun, like a mirror of flowing crystal. The eastern edges of the river were barricaded with a kind of mountainous declivity, on whose rude and rocky sides the timorous rabbit burrowed, and the bearded goat browsed. Not far from the summit two or three fountains gushed, which, uniting their currents as they trickled down the steep, formed a natural cascade: here it was lost in the rushy dells, or obscured by the twisting roots; there it burst again into view, and, playing full in the eye of day, looked like a sheet of spouting silver.

In this romantic retirement, said Theron, we are quite sequestered from society. We seem to be in a world of our own; and should almost be tempted to forget that we are encompassed with a kindred species, did not the music of those silver-tongued bells, poured from a distant steeple, and gliding along the gentle stream, bring us news of human kind.

Escaped from man and his busy walks, methinks we are come to the house of tranquillity. Such a deep undisturbed composure reigns all around! It is as if some august personage was making his entrance, or some majestic being was upon the point to speak, and all nature stood fixed in attentive expectation. No place better fitted to cherish or to inspire a contemplative se-dateness.

Observe the simplicity and grandeur of those surrounding trees; the noble plainness of their verdure, and the prodigious stateliness of their aspect. What a speck are our gardens, and what a mere dwarf are our groves, compared with these vast plantations! Here is none of your nice exactness, but all is irregularly and wildly great. Here are no traces of the shears, nor any footsteps of the spade; but the handy-work of the Deity is apparent in all. Give me the scenes, which disdain the puny assistance of art, and are infinitely

* The Greek, which is above all languages happy in its beautiful variety of compound words, very neatly expresses this appearance by *ισχυμυλις ην γη*.

superior to the low toils of man. Give me the scenes, which scorn to bribe our attention with a little borrowed spruceness of shape, but, by their own native dignity, command our regard. I love the prospects, which, the moment they are beheld, strike the soul with veneration, or transport it with wonder, and cry aloud in the ear of reason, "Ascribe ye greatness to our God." Such, I think, in a very eminent degree, is the forest,

———High waving o'er the hills,
Or to the vast horizon wide diffus'd,
A boundless deep immensity of shade.

Asp. Solomon's refined genius seems to have been fond of the same situation, and delighted with the same objects. Therefore, at a great expense, and in the most curious taste, he built "the house of the forest." Isaiah's divine imagination was charmed with the same grand spectacle. More frequently than any of the prophets he derives his illustrations from it. One comparison I particularly remember: speaking of the Assyrian king and his military forces, he likens them to such an assemblage of trees: numerous, as their amazing multitudes! strong, as their massy trunks. Yet numerous and potent as they were, they should all be brought low, and laid in the dust. "For behold the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, shall lop the bow with terror, and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled; and he shall cut down the thickets of his forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one," Isa. x. 33. 34.

Then he passes by a most beautiful transition to his darling topic, the redemption of sinners. He gives us, together with one of the finest contrasts imaginable, a view of the Messiah and his great salvation. When those lofty cedars are levelled with the ground, "there shall come a rod," a twig shall spring "from the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots," Isa. xi. 1; which, notwithstanding its mean original and unpromising appearance, shall rear its head to the skies, and extend its shade to the ends of the earth.

Ther. You do well, Aspasio, to recall my roving thoughts. This magnificent solitude had captivated my imagination, and I was giving a loose to the usual sallies of my fancy; but with a willing compliance, I turn to a more excellent subject. Only I must assure you, that your remark awakens a painful idea in my mind, though a joyful one in your own: for my hopes, which were once high and lifted up, are now too much like that devoted prostrate forest.

Asp. My dear Theron, give me leave to say, they were never rightly founded. They were what Shakspeare calls, "the baseless fabric of a vision." Now the shadowy and transient hopes are demolished, that solid and everlasting joys may succeed. Let them rest on Christ, the infinitely glorious Redeemer, and they shall never be overthrown, never be removed any more.

Cast a look upon yonder ivy. What can be more feeble? It has not strength enough to withstand the slightest blast. Nay, if left to itself, its own weight would crush it to the earth. Yet, by twining around the oak,

* This fine contrast, and that artful transition, are, by the injudicious division of the two chapters, very much obscured, if not quite lost to many readers. The chapters, I think, should by no means be separated; but the tenth and the eleventh, as a continuation of the same prophecy, should be united.

ow high it rises, and how firm it stands! An emblem of our state, and a pattern for our imitation. Thus let us, who in ourselves are nothing, of ourselves can do nothing, let us fly to Christ—rely on Christ—and as Barnabas (that true son of consolation) speaks, “cleave to the Lord Jesus Christ with full purpose of heart,” Acts xi. 23. Let us determine to know nothing, to desire nothing, to depend on nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Let this be the motto for our faith, this the language of our souls, “Christ is all.” Then shall our virtues, though hitherto smitten with a blast, revive as the corn; then shall our hopes, though in themselves weaker than the ivy, mount like the cedars.

Ther. You can hardly imagine how a sense of guilt and unworthiness oppresses my mind. I am often discouraged, and cannot bring myself to be steadfast in faith, or joyful through hope.

Asp. You cannot bring yourself, but God Almighty’s power and grace can bring to pass these desirable effects. And hear what the prophet says farther upon the charming topic which introduced our discourse. Whenever the eloquent Isaiah undertakes to display a truth, he gives it all the energy, all the beauty, and every heightening touch which it is capable of receiving. This humble shoot, springing from the stem of Jesse, shall rise to such a pitch of elevation, that it shall be conspicuous far and near, and “stand for an ensign of the people.” It shall be seen, not like a beacon upon the top of a hill, by the Israelites only, or the natives of a single territory; but, like the great luminaries in heaven, shall be visible in every country, and by the whole inhabited world. “To it shall the Gentiles seek,” not only from the remotest, but from the most barbarous and idolatrous climes. These, even these persons, though savage in their nature, and detestable in their manners, shall be freely admitted, and find rest under his shadow. Nay, the refreshment which he yields, and the comfort which they receive, shall be not seasonable only, but of sovereign efficacy: “his rest shall be glorious,” Isa. xi. 10.

From this we learn, that all the blessings of Christ’s mediation are designed for Gentiles—for the most abandoned and abominable sinners; that they are so full and consummate, as to create a calm of tranquillity, a “glorious rest,” in the most troubled, afflicted, guilty consciences. And I dare challenge even my Theron’s misgiving mind, to specify any want which is not supplied, any grievance which is not redressed, by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. I formerly encountered your objections, let me now combat your scruples.

Ther. Sometimes I have a deep and distressing conviction of my extreme sinfulness. It is like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear. It is like the vilest filth, and renders me odious to myself: how much more loathsome to the all-seeing eye! It appears like a debt of ten thousand talents, and I have nothing, no, not any thing to pay. Then I experience what the Psalmist so pathetically laments: “My sins have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up; yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head;” and my heart is ready to fail; my hopes are upon the point to expire.

Asp. Then, Theron, fly to that just and righteous One, who is the strength of our hearts, the life of our hopes, and our portion for ever.

If sin is a sore burden; look unto Christ, who bore it all in his own body on the tree, and removed, entirely removed, that tremendous load, which

would otherwise have sunk the whole world into the nethermost hell. If sin renders us filthy; let us have recourse to that blood of sprinkling which cleanses, not from a few stains only, but from all guilt; by which the most defiled transgressors become fair as the fairest wool, nay, whiter than the virgin snows, Psal. li. 7. If sin is a debt*, subjecting us to wrath, and binding us over to punishment; let us confide in that gracious Surety who has taken the debt upon himself, and made it all his own; and not only so but has paid it to the uttermost farthing, to the very last mite; so that justice itself can demand no more.

Let me confirm and illustrate this comfortable truth by a scriptural similitude. No similitudes are more exact, and none so striking. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins," Isa. xlv. 22. A little while ago the whole expanse of yonder sky was covered with clouds. Nothing could more strongly represent a multitude of corruptions besieging the heart, and a multitude of iniquities overspreading the life. But where is now that immense arrangement of gloomy vapours? The sun has shone them, and the wind has swept them clean away. There are none, neither great nor small, remaining. From one end of the wide extended hemisphere to the other, we see nothing but the clear and beautiful blue of the firmament. So saith the Spirit of God to the true believer, so totally is your guilt, however horrid and enormous, done away through the dying Jesus.

Ther. It is not possible to conceive, nor will the whole creation afford a more exquisitely fine comparison. Perhaps nothing can so emphatically describe the most prodigious multitude, entirely obliterated, without the least trace of their former existence. But I am not only chargeable with past iniquities; I am also liable to daily miscarriages. I relapse into sin; and when I would do good, evil is present with me. Nay, my best hours are not free from sinful infirmities, nor my best duties from sinful imperfections, which, like a worm at the core of the fruit, eat away the vigour of my graces, and tarnish the beauty of my services.

Asp. Because, through the frailty of your mortal nature, you cannot always stand upright; because even the just man falleth daily, and daily contracteth defilement; therefore "a fountain is opened for sin and for uncleanness," Zech. xiii. 1. The blood and atonement of Christ are compared to a heavenly fountain, in which polluted sinners may wash daily, wash hourly, and be constantly, perfectly clean. A cistern may fail, may be broken or exhausted; but it is the property of a real fountain never to be dried up, always to yield its waters. Such is the efficacy of Christ's death; not to be diminished by universal and by incessant use. It "removes the iniquity of the land," Zech. iii. 9. "It takes away the sin of the world," John i. 29. It is new for our application every morning; new, for this blessed purpose, every moment. On which account it makes complete provision for our cleansing, our restoration, and our comfort. Especially, as it is not only sovereign in itself, and always free for our approach, but is ever pleaded by a great High-priest in our behalf. Therefore the inspired casuist directs us to this source of consolation under all the upbraidings of conscience, and all the remains of inbred depravity. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with

* By these three images the Psalmist displays the horrible and destructive malignity of sin, together with the free nature and invaluable worth of evangelical forgiveness.

be Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins," John ii. 1.

We:—St. John reckons himself in the number of those frail offending creatures, who stand in need of Christ as a perpetual Intercessor. This is written not to encourage us in the commission of sin, but that we may be less discouraged under a sense of our infirmities. We have:—not we possibly may, but we actually have. A soul burdened with guilt cannot be satisfied, cannot be eased, with a bare perhaps. It is therefore positively affirmed, as a matter of established certainty, of which we should not admit a doubt. We have for our advocate:—not a mean person, but him who received an illustrious testimony from the most excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son," 2 Pct. i. 17. Not a guilty person, who stands in need of pardon for himself, but "Jesus Christ the righteous." Not a mere petitioner, who relies purely upon liberality; but one who has merited, fully merited, whatever he asks: "he is the propitiation for our sins," has paid our ransom, and purchased our peace. In consequence of which he claims, rather than asks our renewed, our irrevocable forgiveness. This he claims, not from an unrelenting Judge, but from his Father and our Father. And can such a plea meet with a repulse? Can such an advocate miscarry in his suit? If the prophets of old were reckoned "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof*," 2 Kings ii. 12, xiii. 14, because, like their ancestor Jacob, they had power with God, and prevailed in prayer: O! what a defence, what a security, is the divinely-excellent and ever-prevailing intercession of Jesus Christ!

"Your graces," you complain, "are sullied, and your services defective." Then, my dear friend, renounce them in point of confidence; and gladly receive, cordially embrace, the all-perfect righteousness of your Lord. So shall your justification be complete; and your services, though deficient in themselves, be "accepted in the Beloved." I have somewhere seen, painted upon a flat surface, an awkward and disagreeable countenance! in which was nothing regular, nothing graceful, but every feature disproportionate. Yet this very face, reflected from a cylindrical mirror, has put off its deformity; the lineaments became well-adjusted; symmetry connected every part, and beauty smiled throughout the whole. Like the former our virtues appear, when compared with the immaculate purity of God, or the sublime perfection of his law; but they acquire the amiableness of the latter, when presented to the Father by our divine Mediator, and recommended by his inconceivably precious oblation †.

* There is a peculiar beauty, and most apposite significancy, in this proverbial saying, as used by the ancient Israelites. Horses and chariots were deemed in those ages, the principal strength of the battle, the most formidable apparatus of war. Of these the Israelites were entirely destitute. Their God had expressly forbidden them to multiply horses; and we never read of their bringing any considerable number of cavalry into the field. But, so long as they enjoyed the presence of their prophets, they wanted not this arm of flesh. They had more than an equivalent for chariots and horses, in the fervent, the effectual prayers of those holy men of God.

† "They," the persons and performances of frail men, "shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, saith the Lord," Isa. lx. 7; which is explained by St. Peter's comment, "Ye are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. ii. 5; and still farther ascertained by St. Paul's practice, who when he addresses the Majesty of Heaven with any petition, or presents the tribute of praise, presumes not to do either the one or the other but in the blessed Mediator's name; because, secluded from this grand recommendation, they would be offensive to the awful Jehovah, "as smoke in his nostrils; accompanied with it, they are acceptable" "as the sweet-smelling incense."

Milton, taking his hint from the revelations of St. John, represents our great High-priest in this glorious and delightful attitude ; represents him offering up the supplications and penitential duties of our first parents, mixing with them the incense of his own merits, and thus interceding before the throne:—

See, Father ! what first-fruits on earth are sprung
From thy implanted grace in man ! These sighs
And prayers, which, in this golden censer mix'd
With incense, I thy Priest before thee bring.

—Now therefore bend thine ear
To supplication ; hear his sighs though mute !
Unskilful with what words to pray, let me
Interpret for him ; me his advocate
And propitiation. All his works on me,
Good or not good, ingraft : My merit those
Shall perfect ; and for these my death shall pay.

Par. Last, b. xi. l. 22, &c.

The poet's words are very emphatical. Yet words can no more express the prevalence of our Lord's negotiation, than the picture of the sun can diffuse its splendour or convey its warmth.

Ther. My spiritual wants are many. I have many duties to discharge, and many temptations to withstand ; many corruptions to mortify, and many graces to cultivate, or rather to acquire. Yet have I no stock, and no strength of my own.

Asp. I rejoice that my Theron is sensible of his own indigence. The good Lord keep us both, in this respect as little children, whose whole dependance is upon their nurse's care, or their parents' bounty ! Then may we, having such a sense of our poverty, and having a great High-priest over the house of God, come boldly to the throne of grace. We may apply, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, for all needful succour, and for every desirable blessing. If Solomon could say, "Lord remember David, and all his trouble:" if Moses could say, "Lord, remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thy servants:" how much more confidently may we say, "Lord, remember Jesus, the Son of thy love ! remember Jesus, and all his sufferings ; Jesus, and all his merits. Shall they be sent empty away, who have their Saviour's obedience to plead ?" No, verily. Though they are altogether unworthy in themselves, "yet worthy is the Lamb that was slain," for whose sake their petitions should be granted, and their every necessity supplied.

Let me repeat to you a most beautiful and encouraging portion of Scripture, which you may look upon, under all your wants, as a *carte-blanche* put into your hand by God all-sufficient : "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh ; and having an High-priest over the house of God ; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith," Heb. x. 19—22.

The apostle in this place, and throughout this whole epistle, alludes to the Mosaic ordinances, in order to shew that the privileges of the Christian dispensation were typified by, yet are greatly superior to, those of the Jewish. Among the Jews, none but the high-priest was permitted to set a foot within the holy of holies ; and he only on the solemn day of expiation : whereas, all Christians are allowed to enter into the immediate presence of the most high God ; may have the nearest access to him who

dwells in the heaven of heavens ; and this, not once in the year only, but at all times, and on all occasions. The high-priest never made that awful approach but with the blood of a slaughtered animal : we have blood of infinitely richer value to atone for our failings and recommend our addresses, even the blood of the crucified Jesus. Aaron entered through the veil of the temple, a way which was soon to become antiquated, and for ever to be abolished : we enter by a far more noble way ; by the flesh of our blessed Redeemer, given as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins ; which way is both new and living, such as never waxes old, will subsist to the end of time, and leads to eternal life.—Trusting in this sacrifice, and entering by this way, which are consecrated on purpose for our use, we may not only draw near, but draw near “with boldness,” with an humble filial confidence ; and present our supplications with *faith*—with *assurance* of faith,—with *full assurance* of faith.

How strong is the contrast, and how fine the gradation ! how precious the doctrine, and how free the privilege ! What shall we fear, if we believe this doctrine ? what can we lack, if we improve this privilege ? And why should not we believe the former, why should not we improve the latter ; since they both are founded, not on any excellent endowments, not in any recommending actions of our own, but purely, solely, entirely on the blood of Jesus Christ ?

Ther. There may come seasons of desertion when all graces are languid, if not dead ; when the light of God’s countenance is suspended, if not turned into darkness ; and the man is more like a lifeless log than a zealous Christian. These frames of mind I have heard mentioned, and I begin to know something of them by experince.

Asp. Then, Theron, when you “walk in darkness and see no light” of sensible comfort, “trust in the name,” the unchangeable grace, “of the Lord ; and stay upon” the righteousness, the consummate righteousness, of “your God,” Isa. l. 10. This is not barely my advice, but the direction of an infallible guide. This agrees also with the character of a real Christian, as it is most exactly drawn by an unerring pen : “We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh* ; no reliance on any thing of our own, either for present joy or future glory.

To rely on the elevation of our spirits, or the enlargement of our devotion, is like building our house upon the ice ; which may abide for a season, but upon the first alteration of weather ceases to be a foundation, and becomes “water that runneth apace :” whereas, to derive our consolation from the Mediator’s righteousness and Jehovah’s faithfulness, is to build our edifice upon the rock, which “may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever.” The former of these, even amidst all our changes, is invariably the same ; the latter, notwithstanding all our unworthiness, is inviolably sure. Therefore the fruit of that righteousness is peace, and the effect of this faithful-

* Phil. iii. 3. *Exactly drawn.*—Perhaps there is no where extant a finer, a more complete, or so lively a picture of the true Christian. It is in miniature, I own ; but it comprehends all the master lines, and every distinguishing feature. “We are they, who worship God in the spirit ;” with the spiritual homage of a renewed heart ; with faith, love, resignation. “And rejoice in Christ Jesus ;” in him look for all our acceptance with God ; from him derive all the peace of our minds ; and on him place all the hope of our final felicity. “And have no confidence in the flesh ;” renouncing ourselves, in every view, as unprofitable servants ; disclaiming all our own works and attainments as defective services.

ness is, if not rapturous joy, yet "quietness and assurance for ever," Isa. xxxii. 17.

So that, when it is winter in my soul, and there seems to be a dearth of all my sensible delights, I would still say with the Psalmist, "Why art thou so disquieted, O my soul? Christ is the same amidst all thy derelictions." 'He is a green fir-tree,' Hosea xiv. 8, which never loses its verdure. Under his shadow thou mayest always find repose. His merit and atonement are still mighty to save; they constitute an everlasting and infinite righteousness. The promises of God, through his mediation, 'are yea, and amen,' 2 Cor. i. 20; are unquestionably and inalienably thine."

Ther. It is very probable I may meet with afflictions—death in my family, or disease in my person. Disappointment may frustrate my designs. Providence may wear a frowning aspect, as though the Lord had a controversy with his sinful creature, and was making him to possess the iniquities of his youth. And what will be sufficient to support and to cheer in such a gloomy hour?

Asp. The righteousness of Christ.—Nothing is so sovereign to calm our fears, and remove all apprehensions of the divine wrath. Apprehensions of the divine wrath would draw the curtains of horror around our sick-beds, and throw upon our languishing eyelids the shadow of death*; but a believing improvement of Christ's satisfaction for our offences, clears up the mournful scene, and takes away the sting of tribulation.

Attending to this great propitiation, the sufferer sees his sins forgiven, and his God reconciled. From whence he concludes, that the severest afflictions are only fatherly corrections; shall not exceed his ability to bear; and shall assuredly obtain a gracious issue. He can fetch comfort from that cheering word, "I will be with him in trouble;" and expect the accomplishment of that most consolatory promise, "I will deliver him, and bring him to honour," Psal. xci. 15. These supports have enabled the saints to kiss the rod, and bless the hand which chastised them; to possess their souls, not in patience only, but in thankfulness also; while they have looked inward, and discerned their absolute need of these bitter but salutary medicines; have looked upward, and beheld the cup in a most wise and tender Physician's hand; have looked forward, with a joyful hope, to that better world, where God will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more sorrow, nor any more pain.

Ther. The last occasion of need is the trying hour of death, and the tremendous day of judgment. Will this righteousness carry us with safety through the darksome valley, and present us with acceptance at the dreadful tribunal?

Asp. It will, it will.—This silences all the curses of the law, and disarms death of every terror. To believe in this righteousness, is to meet death at our Saviour's side; or rather, like good old Simeon, with the Saviour in our arms.—"They overcame," says the beloved disciple, they overcame the last enemy, not by natural fortitude, or philosophic resolution, but "by the blood of the Lamb," Rev. xii. 11; by a believing application of the victorious Redeemer's merit. "I know," adds the heroic apostle, "whom I have

* Alluding to that description of tribulation and anguish, which, I believe, no person of sensibility can read without shuddering: "My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death," Job xvi. 16.

believed," 2 Tim. i. 12 ; I am assured, that my Jesus is infinitely faithful, and will not desert me ; that his ransom is absolutely sufficient, and cannot receive me. Therefore, with a holy bravery, he bids defiance to death ; or rather, triumphs over it as a vanquished enemy : "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ !" 1 Cor. xv. 57. Nay, through the wonderful efficacy of Christ's propitiation, "death is ours," 1 Cor. iii. 22 ; not our foe, but our friend and deliverer. We may number it among our treasures ; and rest satisfied, that "to die, is gain."

What though our flesh see corruption ? though this body, vile at present, be made viler still, by dwelling amidst worms, and mouldering in the dust ? yet through his righteousness, who is the resurrection and the life, it shall shake off the dishonours of the grave ; it shall rise to a new and illustrious state of existence ; it shall be made like the glorious and immortal body of our triumphant Lord. If the body be so refined, so exalted, what will be the dignity, what the perfection of the soul ? or rather of soul and body both, when they are happily and indissolubly united at the resurrection of the last ?—Shall they have anything to fear when the judgment is set and the books are opened ? It is probable there will be no accusation, it is certain there is no condemnation, to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1. Who shall lay anything to their charge ? "It is God,"—not man, or angel, or any creature, but God—"that justifies them." The God whose law was broken, the God to whom vengeance belongeth, he himself pronounces them innocent, because their iniquities have been laid upon Christ ; he himself pronounces them righteous, because they are interested in the obedience of their Redeemer ; on these accounts, he himself pronounces them blessed, and gives them an abundant entrance into the joy of their Lord.

But what can express, or who can imagine their happiness, when they take up their abode in the palaces of heaven, amidst the choirs of angels, and under the light of God's countenance ! when they possess the "hope of righteousness," Gal. v. 5 ; when they wear "the crown of righteousness," 2 Tim. iv. 8 ; and receive that great, that eternal salvation, which is an adequate recompence for the humiliation and agonies of "Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John ii. 1.

Come then, my dear Theron, let us henceforth be as branches ingrafted into the heavenly Vine ; derive all our sap, all our moisture, all our consolation, from his fulness. Let us live upon our all-sufficient Redeemer, as the Israelites subsisted on their manna from heaven, and their waters from the rock, and not wish for other, as we cannot possibly enjoy better sustenance.

Ther. Is this the meaning of our Lord's exhortation, when he shows the necessity of "eating his flesh, and drinking his blood ?"

Ans. It is the very same. A repeated and incessant application of our Saviour's merits, for all the purposes of piety and salvation, is the kernel of this nut, the meaning of this metaphor. When we habitually advert to Jesus Christ, as dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification ; performing all righteousness, that we may be entitled to an eternal crown ; and interceding in heaven, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God ;—then we eat his flesh, and drink his blood ; then we derive a life of solid comfort, and real godliness, from his mediatorial offices ; just as we derive the continuance of our natural life from the daily use of alimentary recruits.

Ther. Your discourse brings to my remembrance that magnificent and

beautiful passage in Scripture, where Christ is called "the Sun of Righteousness." Your doctrine sets the comparison in a very advantageous light; gives it the utmost force and the greatest propriety.—The righteousness of Christ, according to your account, is as extensively useful in the Christian life, as the beams of that grand luminary are in material nature. The sun fills the air; where it diffuses light, and creates day. The sun penetrates the ocean; from whence it exhales vapours, and forms the clouds. In the vegetable creation, the sun raises the sap, and protrudes the gems; unfolds the leaves, and paints the blossom; distends the fruit, and concocts the juices. Turn we to the animal world; the sun delights the eye, and gladdens the heart; it awakens millions of insects into being, and imparts that general joy which every sensible creature feels. Indeed there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

Asp. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ, that true and only Sun of Righteousness, arises on his people "with healing in his wings," Mal. iv. 2; so various, so efficacious, and so extensive are his influences. Like a sun, he enlightens and enlivens; like wings, he cherishes and protects; like a remedy, he heals and restores; and all, by virtue of his righteousness, on account of his righteousness. Nor can we doubt, nor need we wonder, if we consider its nature and its author. Its nature; it is consummately excellent, has every kind and every degree of perfection. Its author; it is the righteousness and obedience of that incomparable Person, in whom "dwells all the fulness of the Godhead."

It must therefore—you will permit me to sum up in a word what has been displayed at large,—it must be fully answerable to the demands of the law, even in its highest purity and utmost exactness. It is infinitely superior to the demerit of sin, and entirely absolves from all guilt, entirely exempts from all condemnation. It is a most valid and never-failing plea against the accusations of Satan, and the challenges of conscience. It establishes an undoubted title to every blessing, whether in time or in eternity, whether of grace or of glory. It is a sure support for the Christian in an hour of desertion, and in the agonies of death. Casting anchor on this bottom, he may dismiss every fear, and ride out every storm. Leaning upon this staff, he may go down to the repose of the grave; and neither be appalled at the solemn harbingers of dissolution, nor terrified at its far more awful consequences. The merit of this righteousness, and the power of its divine Author, will unseal the tomb; will bring forth the sleeping dust from the chambers of putrefaction, and build up the whole man into immortality and glory. By this he will be presented "without spot," Eph. v. 27; presented "faultless," Jude 24; yea, be presented "perfect," Col. i. 28, and with "exceeding joy" before the throne.

What a gift then is the "righteousness of Christ!" Blessed be God for all the indulgent dispensations of Providence! Blessed be God for all the beneficial productions of nature! But, above all, blessed be God for the transcendent and unspeakable gift of Christ—for the unsearchable and infinite treasures of "his righteousness."

ASPASIO VINDICATED,

IN

ELEVEN LETTERS

FROM

MR. HERVEY TO THE REV. JOHN WESLEY.

II II *

EDITOR'S PREFACE TO ASPASIO VINDICATED.

THE following letters were written by my late Brother, in answer to a piece which was first sent him from the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, by way of private letter, containing some remarks which that gentleman had made on reading Theron and Aspasio. When my brother had read it over, he thought it best to be silent, as it contained nothing which could materially affect his judgment in regard to the work it censured. For this reason, as well as for peace sake, he laid it by him unanswered. Mr. Wesley then published a pamphlet, which he entitled, "A Preservative against Unsettled Notions in Religion;" in which he printed the above-mentioned letter.

This my brother looked upon as a summons to the bar of the public, and upon this occasion, in a letter to a friend, dated June 23, 1758, writes as follows:—

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I little thought, when I put Mr. Wesley's manuscript into your hand, that I should see it in print so soon. I took very little notice of it, and let it lie by me several months, without giving it an attentive consideration*. It seemed to me so palpably weak, dealing only in positive assertions and positive denials, that I could not imagine he would adventure it into the world, without great alterations. But it is now come abroad, just as you received it, in a two shilling pamphlet, entitled, 'A Preservative against Unsettled Notions in Religion.' Of this pamphlet, what he has wrote against me makes only a small part. Now, then, the question is, whether I shall attempt to answer it? Give me your opinion, as you have given me your assistance; and may the Father of mercies give you an increase of knowledge and utterance, of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Between this and the October following, my brother began the letters contained in this part of the volume, of which he thus speaks in another letter to his friend, dated October 24, 1758:—

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—Let me repeat my thanks for the trouble you have taken, and for the assistance you have given me in relation to my controversy with Mr. Wesley. He is so unfair in his quotations, and so magisterial in his manner, that I find it no small difficulty to preserve the decency of the gentleman, and the meekness of the Christian, in my intended answer. May our divine Master aid me in both these instances, or else not suffer me to write at all."

* Afterwards he read it again, and gave it, what he calls in the beginning of the first letter, "a careful perusal!"

When in the December following I was sent for to Weston, in the very last period of my brother's long illness, I asked him (the evening before he died) "what he would have done with the letters to Mr. Wesley; whether he would have them published after his death?" He answered, "By no means, because he had only transcribed about half of them fair for the press; but as the corrections and alterations of the latter part were mostly in short-hand, it would be difficult to understand them, especially as some of the short-hand was entirely his own, and others could not make it out; therefore, he said, as it is not a finished piece, I desire you will think no more about it."

As these were his last orders concerning these letters, I thought it right to obey them, and therefore I withstood the repeated solicitations of many of his friends who wanted to have them printed; alleging the service they might be of to allay the groundless prejudices which the *Preservative* might occasion in the minds of many against my brother's other writings, as well as the utility of them in general, as they contain so masterly a defence of "the truth as it is in Jesus."

But notwithstanding the regard I had for the person who solicited the publication, I could not be persuaded to print the letters; and they never had appeared in public with my consent, had not a surreptitious edition of them lately made its way from the press, and was I not under a firm persuasion that it will be followed by more.

As this is the case, I think it my duty to the memory of my late brother, to send forth as correct an edition as I possibly can; for as to that which has appeared (from what editor I know not) it is so faulty and incorrect, that but little judgment can be formed from it of the propriety and force of my brother's answers to Mr. Wesley.

As to the unfairness of publishing my brother's letters without my consent, and the injustice to his memory, in sending so mangled a performance out under his name, they are too apparent to need any proof: and though the editor, as I have been informed, gave away the whole impression, so that it is plain lucre was not the motive of his proceeding, and I would charitably hope he did it with a view of benefiting his readers, yet it is so like doing evil that good may come, as, in my opinion, to be quite unjustifiable.

However, as the only way now left to remedy in some sort what has been done, and to prevent a farther imposition on the public from worse motives than actuated this publisher, I have called a friend to my assistance, and by this means present the reader with as perfect a copy of these letters, as can possibly be made out from the original manuscript in my hands.

That the reader may judge more clearly of the state of the controversy between my late brother and Mr. Wesley, I have thought it right to subjoin Mr. Wesley's letter, word for word, as it stands in the "*Preservative*."

MR. WESLEY'S LETTER *.

DEAR SIR,—A considerable time since, I sent you a few hasty thoughts, which occurred to me on reading the Dialogues between THERON and ASPASIO. I have not been favoured with any answer. Yet upon another and a more careful perusal of them, I could not but set down some obvious reflections, which I would rather have communicated before those Dialogues were published.

In the first Dialogue there are several just and strong observations, which may be of use to every serious reader. In the second, is not the description often too laboured, the language too stiff and affected? Yet the reflections on the creation make abundant amends for this.

“Is justification more or less than God’s pardoning and accepting a sinner through the merits of Christ?” That God herein “reckons the righteousness and obedience which Christ performed as our own,” I allow, if by that ambiguous expression you mean only, as you here explain it yourself, “These are as effectual for obtaining our salvation, as if they were our own personal qualifications.”

“We are not solicitous as to any particular set of phrases. Only let men be humbled, as repenting criminals at Christ’s feet, let them rely as devoted pensioners on his merits, and they are undoubtedly in the way to a blissful immortality.” Then for Christ’s sake, and for the sake of the immortal souls which he has purchased with his blood, do not dispute for that particular phrase, the *imputed righteousness of Christ*. It is not scriptural, it is not necessary. Men who scruple to use, men who never heard the expression, may yet be humbled as repenting criminals at his feet, and rely as devoted pensioners on his merits. But it has done immense hurt. I have had abundant proof, that the frequent use of this unnecessary phrase, instead of furthering men’s progress in vital holiness, has made them satisfied without any holiness at all; yea, and encouraged them to work all uncleanness with greediness.

“To ascribe pardon to Christ’s passive, eternal life to his active righteousness, is fanciful rather than judicious. His universal obedience, from his birth to his death, is the one foundation of my hope.”

This is unquestionably right. But if it be, there is no manner of need to make the imputation of his active righteousness a separate and laboured head of discourse. O that you had been content with this plain scriptural account, and spared some of the Dialogues and Letters that follow!

The third and fourth Dialogues contain an admirable illustration and confirmation of the great doctrine of Christ’s satisfaction. Yet even here I observe a few passages, which are liable to some exception:

* The quotations from Theron and Aspasio are distinguished by *double* inverted commas.

"Satisfaction was made to the divine law." I do not remember any such expression in Scripture. This way of speaking of the law, as a person injured and to be satisfied, seems hardly defensible.

"The death of Christ procured the pardon and acceptance of believers, even before he came in the flesh." Yea, and ever since. In this we all agree. And why should we contend for anything more?

"All the benefits of the new covenant are the purchase of his blood. Surely they are. And after this has been fully proved, where is the need, where is the use, of contending so strenuously for the imputation of his righteousness, as is done in the fifth and sixth Dialogues?"

"If he was our substitute as to penal sufferings, why not as to justifying obedience?"

The former is expressly asserted in Scripture; the latter is not expressly asserted there.

"As sin and misery have abounded through the first Adam, mercy and grace have much more abounded through the second. So that none can have any reason to complain." No, not if the second Adam died for all; otherwise all for whom he did not die, have great reason to complain. For they inevitably fall by the first Adam, without any help from the second.

"The whole world of believers" is an expression which never occurs in Scripture, nor has it any countenance there: the *world* in the inspired writings being constantly taken either in an universal or in a bad sense; either for the whole of mankind, or for that part of them who know not God.

"In the Lord shall all the house of Israel be justified." It ought unquestionably to be rendered, *By or through* the Lord: this argument therefore proves nothing.—"Ye are complete in him." The words literally rendered, are, *ye are filled with him*. And the whole passage, as any unprejudiced reader may observe, relates to sanctification, not justification.

"They are accepted for Christ's sake: this is justification through imputed righteousness." That remains to be proved. Many allow the former, who cannot allow the latter.

"*Theron*. I see no occasion for such nice distinctions and metaphysical subtilities.

"*Asp*. You oblige us to make use of them by confounding these very different ideas, that is, Christ's active and passive righteousness."

I answer, We do not confound these: but neither do we separate them; nor have we any authority from Scripture, for either thinking or speaking of one separate from the other; and this whole debate on one of them, separate from the other, is a mere metaphysical subtlety.

"The righteousness which justifies us, is already wrought out." A crude, unscriptural expression! "It was set on foot, carried on, completed." O vain philosophy! The plain truth is, Christ lived and tasted death for every man; and through the merits of his life and death, every believer is justified.

"Whoever perverts so glorious a doctrine, shows he never believed." Not so: they who turn back as a dog to the vomit, had once escaped the pollutions of the world by the knowledge of Christ.

"The goodness of God leadeth to repentance." This is unquestionably true. But the nice, metaphysical doctrine of imputed righteousness, leads not to repentance, but to licentiousness.

"The believer cannot but add, to his faith, works of righteousness." During his first love, this is often true. But it is not true afterwards, as we know and feel by melancholy experience.

"We no longer obey, in order to lay the foundation for our final acceptance." No: that foundation is already laid in the merits of Christ. Yet we obey, in order to our final acceptance through his merits. And in this sense, by obeying we lay a good foundation, that we may attain eternal life.

"We establish the law; we provide for its honour, by the perfect obedience of Christ." Can you possibly think St. Paul meant this? that such a thought ever entered into his mind? The plain meaning is, We establish both the true sense and the effectual practice of it; we provide for its being both understood and practised in its full extent.

"On those who reject the atonement, just severity." Was it ever possible for them not to reject it? If not, how is it just to cast them into a lake of fire, for not doing what it was impossible they should do? Would it be just (make it your own case) to cast you into hell, for not touching heaven with your hand?

"Justification is complete the first moment we believe, and is incapable of augmentation."

Not so: there may be as many degrees in the favour as in the image of God.

"St. Paul often mentions a righteousness imputed: [Not a righteousness—never once; but simply righteousness.] What can this be, but the righteousness of Christ?" He tells you himself, Rom. iv. 5. 'To him that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, faith is imputed for righteousness.'—"Why is Christ styled Jehovah our righteousness?" Because we are both justified and sanctified through him.

"My death, the cause of their forgiveness; my righteousness, the ground of their acceptance."

How does this agree with, "To ascribe pardon to Christ's passive, eternal life to his active righteousness, is fanciful rather than judicious?"

"He commends such kinds of beneficence only as were exercised to a disciple as such." Is not this a slip of the pen? Will not our Lord then commend, and reward eternally, all kinds of beneficence, provided they flowed from a principle of loving faith? Yea, that which was exercised to a Samaritan, a Jew, a Turk, or a Heathen? Even these I would not term "transient bubbles," though they do not procure our justification.

"How must our righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees! Not only in being sincere, but in possessing a complete righteousness, even that of Christ!" Did our Lord mean this? Nothing less. He specifies, in the following parts of his sermon, the very instances wherein the righteousness of a Christian exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

"He brings this specious hypocrite to the test." How does it appear that he was an hypocrite? Our Lord gives not the least intimation of it. Surely he loved him, not for his hypocrisy, but his sincerity.

Yet he loved the world, and therefore could not keep any of the commandments in their spiritual meaning. And the keeping of these is undoubtedly the way to, though not the cause of, eternal life.

“By works his faith was made perfect—appeared to be true.” No: the natural sense of the word is, by the grace superadded while he wrought those works, his faith was literally made perfect.

“He that doeth righteousness is righteous—manifests the truth of his conversion.” Nay; the plain meaning is, he alone is truly righteous whose faith worketh by love.

“St. James speaks of the justification of our faith.” Not unless you mean by that odd expression, our faith being made perfect; for so the apostle explains his own meaning. Perhaps the word *justified* is once used by St. Paul for *manifested*; but that does not prove it is to be so understood here.

“Whoso doeth these things shall never fall into total apostacy.” How pleasing this to flesh and blood! But David says no such thing. His meaning is, whoso doeth these things to the end, shall never fall into hell.

The seventh Dialogue is full of important truths. Yet some expressions in it I cannot commend.

“One thing thou lackest, the imputed righteousness of Christ.” You cannot think this is the meaning of the text. Certainly the one thing our Lord meant, was the love of God. This was the thing he lacked.

“Is the obedience of Christ insufficient to accomplish our justification?” Rather, I would ask, is the death of Christ insufficient to purchase it?

“The saints in glory ascribe the whole of their salvation to the blood of the Lamb.” So do I; and yet I believe he obtained for all a possibility of salvation.

“The terms of acceptance for fallen men were a full satisfaction to the divine justice, and a complete conformity to the divine law.” This you take for granted; but I cannot allow.

The terms of acceptance for fallen men are repentance and faith: ‘Repent ye, and believe the gospel.’

“There are but two methods whereby any can be justified, either by a perfect obedience to the law, or because Christ hath kept the law in our stead.” You should say, ‘or by faith in Christ.’ I then answer, this is true. And fallen man is justified, not by perfect obedience, but by faith. What Christ has done is the foundation of our justification, not the term or condition of it.

In the eighth Dialogue, likewise, there are many great truths, and yet some things liable to exception.

“David, God himself dignifies with the most exalted of all characters.” Far, very far from it. We have more exalted characters than David’s, both in the Old Testament and the New. Such are those of Samuel, Daniel, yea and Job, in the former; of St. Paul and St. John in the latter.

“But God styles him a man after his own heart.” This is the text which has caused many to mistake; for want of considering, *first*, That this is said of David in a particular respect, not with regard to his whole character; *secondly*, The time at which it was spoken. When was David a man after God’s own heart? When God found him following the ewes great with young, when he took him from the sheep-folds, Psal. lxxviii. 71. It was in the second or third year of Saul’s reign that Samuel said to him, ‘The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and hath commanded him

to be captain over his people,' 1 Sam. xiii. 14. But was he a man after God's own heart all his life? or in all particulars? So far from it, that we have few more exceptionable characters among all the men of God recorded in Scripture.

"There is not a just man upon earth that sinneth not." Solomon might truly say so, before Christ came. And St. John might, after he came, say as truly, 'whosoever is born of God sinneth not.' But 'in many things we offend all.' That St. James does not speak this of himself, or of real Christians, will clearly appear to all who impartially consider the context.

The ninth Dialogue proves excellently well, that we cannot be justified by our works.

But have you thoroughly considered these words: "O children of Adam! you are no longer obliged to love God with all your strength, nor your neighbour as yourselves. Once indeed I insisted upon absolute purity of heart: now I can dispense with some degrees of evil desire. Since Christ has fulfilled the law for you, you need not fulfil it. I will connive at, yea, accommodate my demands to your weakness?"

I agree with you, that this doctrine makes the Holy One of God a minister of sin. And is it not your own? Is not this the very doctrine which you espouse throughout your book?

I cannot but except to several passages also in the tenth Dialogue. I ask, first,

Does the righteousness of God ever mean (as you affirm) the merits of Christ? I believe not once in all the Scripture. It often means, and particularly in the Epistle to the Romans, God's method of justifying sinners. When therefore you say, "The righteousness of God means, such a righteousness as may justly challenge his acceptance," I cannot allow it at all: and this capital mistake must needs lead you into many others. But I follow you step by step.

"In order to entitle us to a reward, there must be an imputation of righteousness." There must be an interest in Christ. And then every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

"A rebel may be forgiven, without being restored to the dignity of a son." A rebel against an earthly king may; but not a rebel against God. In the very same moment that God forgives, we are the sons of God. Therefore this is an idle dispute: for pardon and acceptance, though they may be distinguished, cannot be divided. The words of Job which you cite are wide of the question. Those of Solomon prove no more than this, (and who denies it?) That justification implies both pardon and acceptance.

"Grace reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life;" that is, the free love of God brings us, through justification and sanctification, to glory.—"That they may receive forgiveness, and a lot among the sanctified;" that is, that they may receive pardon, holiness, heaven.

"Is not the satisfaction made by the death of Christ, sufficient to obtain both our full pardon and final happiness?" Unquestionably it is, and neither of the texts you cite proves the contrary.

"If it was requisite for Christ to be baptized, much more to fulfill the moral law."

I cannot prove that either the one or the other was requisite in order to his purchasing redemption for us.

“By Christ's sufferings alone, the law was not satisfied.” Yes it was; for it required only the alternative, Obey or die. It required no man to obey and die too. If any man had perfectly obeyed, he would not have died.—“Where Scripture ascribes the whole of our salvation to the death of Christ, a part of his humiliation is put for the whole.” I cannot allow this without some proof. ‘He was obedient unto death,’ is no proof at all, as it does not necessarily imply any more, than that he died in obedience to the Father. In some texts there is a necessity of taking a part for the whole; but in these there is no such necessity.

“Christ undertook to do everything necessary for our redemption, namely, in a covenant made with the Father.” It is sure he did everything necessary: but how does it appear, that he undertook this before the foundation of the world, and that by a positive covenant between him and the Father?

You think this appears from four texts: *First*, From that, ‘thou gavest them to me.’ Nay, when any believe, the Father gave them to Christ; but this proves no such previous contract. *Second*, ‘God hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all.’ Neither does this prove any such thing. *Third*, That expression, ‘the counsel of peace shall be between them,’ does not necessarily imply any more, than that both the Father and the Son would concur in the redemption of man. *Fourth*, ‘According to the counsel of his will,’ that is, in the way or method he had chosen. Therefore neither any of these texts, nor all of them, prove what they were brought to prove. They do by no means prove, that there ever was any such covenant made between the Father and the Son.

“The conditions of the covenant are recorded: Lo, I come to do thy will.” Nay, here is no mention of any covenant, nor anything from which it can be inferred.—“The recompence stipulated in this glorious treaty.” But I see not one word of the treaty itself. Nor can I possibly allow the existence of it without far other proof than this.—“Another copy of this grand treaty is recorded Isaiah xlix. from the first to the sixth verse.” I have read them, but cannot find a word about it in all these verses. They contain neither more nor less than a prediction of the salvation of the Gentiles.

“By the covenant of works, man was bound to obey in his own person.” And so he is under the covenant of grace, though not in order to his justification.—“The obedience of our Surety is accepted instead of our own.” This is neither a safe nor a scriptural way of speaking. I would simply say, ‘We are accepted through the Beloved. We have redemption through his blood.’

“The second covenant was not made with Adam or any of his posterity, but with Christ, in those words, The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.” For any authority you have from these words, you might as well have said, It was made with the Holy Ghost. These words were not spoken to Christ, but of him, and give not the least intimation of any such covenant as you plead for. They manifestly contain, if not a covenant made with, a promise made to Adam and all his posterity.

“Christ, we see, undertook to execute the conditions.” We see no such thing in this text. We see here only a promise of a Saviour, made by God to man.

“It is true, I cannot fulfil the conditions.” It is not true: the conditions of the new covenant are, Repent and believe; and these you can fulfil, through

Christ strengthening you.—“It is equally true, this is not required at my hands.” It is *equally* true, that is, absolutely false, and most dangerously false. If we allow this, Antinomianism comes in with a full tide.—“Christ has performed all that was conditional for me.” Has he repented and believed for you? You endeavour to evade this by saying, “He performed all that was conditional in the covenant of works.” This is nothing to the purpose; for we are not talking of that, but of the covenant of grace. Now he did not perform all that was conditional in this covenant, unless he repented and believed. “But he did unspeakably more.” It may be so. But he did not do this.

“But if Christ’s perfect obedience be ours, we have no more need of pardon than Christ himself.” The consequence is good. You have started an objection which you cannot answer. You say indeed, “Yes, we do need pardon; for in many things we offend all.” What then? If his obedience be ours, we still perfectly obey in him.

“Both the branches of the law, the preceptive and the penal, in the case of guilt contracted, must be satisfied.” Not so; ‘Christ by his death alone (so our church teaches) fully satisfied for the sins of the whole world.’ The same great truth is manifestly taught in the 31st article. Is it therefore fair, is it honest, for any one to plead the articles of our church in defence of absolute predestination? Seeing the 17th article barely defines the terms, without either affirming or denying the thing: whereas the 31st totally overthrows and razes it from the foundation.

“Believers who are notorious transgressors in themselves, have a sinless obedience in Christ.” O siren song! Pleasing sound, to James Wheatley! Thomas Williams! James-Reily!

I know not one sentence in the eleventh Dialogue which is liable to exception: but that grand doctrine of Christianity, original sin, is therein proved by irrefragable arguments.

The twelfth likewise is unexceptionable, and contains such an illustration of the wisdom of God, in the structure of the human body, as, I believe, cannot be paralleled in either ancient or modern writers.

The former part of the thirteenth Dialogue is admirable. To the latter I have some objection.

“Elijah failed in his resignation, and even Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips.” It is true: but if you could likewise fix some blot upon venerable Samuel and beloved Daniel, it would prove nothing: for no Scripture teaches, that the holiness of Christians is to be measured by that of any Jew.

“Do not the best of men frequently feel disorder in their affections? do not they often complain, When I would do good, evil is present with me?” I believe not. You and I are only able to answer for ourselves.—“Do not they say, We groan, being burdened with the workings of inbred corruption?” You know this is not the meaning of the text. The whole context shows, the cause of that groaning was their longing to be with Christ.

“The cure” of sin “will be perfected in heaven.” Nay, surely, in paradise, if no sooner.—“This is a noble prerogative of the beatific vision.” No: It would then come too late; if sin remains in us till the day of judgment, it will remain for ever.—“Our present blessedness does not

consist in being free from sin." I really think it does. But whether it does or no, if we are not free from sin, we are not Christian believers: for to all these the apostle declares, 'being made free from sin, ye are become the servants of righteousness,' Rom. vi. 18.

"If we were perfect in piety [St. John's words are, *perfect in love*] Christ's priestly office would be superseded." No; we should still need his Spirit (and consequently his intercession) for the continuance of that love from moment to moment. Besides, we should still be encompassed with infirmities, and liable to mistakes, from which words or actions might follow, even though the heart was all love, which were not exactly right. Therefore, in all these respects we should still have need of Christ's priestly office: and therefore, as long as he remains in the body, the greatest saint may say,

Every moment, Lord, I need
The merit of thy death.

The text cited from Exodus asserts nothing less, than that iniquity cleaves to all our holy things till death.

"Sin remains, that the righteousness of faith may have its due honour." And will the righteousness of faith have its due honour no longer than sin remains in us? Then it must remain, not only on earth and in paradise, but in heaven also.—"And the sanctification of the Spirit its proper esteem." Would it not have more esteem if it were a perfect work?

"It [sin] will make us lowly in our own eyes." What! will pride make us lowly? Surely the utter destruction of pride would do this more effectually.—"It will make us compassionate." Would not an entire renewal in the image of God make us much more so?—"It will teach us to admire the riches of grace." Yea, but a fuller experience of it, by a thorough sanctification of spirit, soul, and body, will make us admire it more.—"It will reconcile us to death." Indeed it will not: nor will any thing do this, like perfect love.

"It will endear the blood and intercession of Christ." Nay, these can never be so dear to any, as to those who experience their full virtue, who are filled with the fulness of God. Nor can any feel their continual need of Christ, or rely on him in the manner which these do.

Dialogue 14. "The claims of the law are all answered." If so, Count Zinzendorf is absolutely in the right: neither God nor man can claim my obedience to it. Is not this Antinomianism without a mask?

"Your sins are expiated through the death of Christ, and a righteousness given you, by which you have free access to God." This is not scriptural language. I would simply say, 'By him we have access to the Father.'

There are many other expressions in this Dialogue, to which I have the same objection, namely, *first*, That they are unscriptural; *second*, That they directly lead to Antinomianism.

The first Letter contains some very useful heads of self-examination. In the second,

I read, "There is a righteousness which supplies all that the creature needs. To prove this momentous point, is the design of the following sheets."

I have seen such terrible effects of this unscriptural way of speaking, even on those 'who had once clean escaped from the pollutions of the world,' that I cannot but earnestly wish you would speak no otherwise than do the

oracles of God. Certainly this mode of expression is not momentous: it is always dangerous, often fatal.

Letter 3. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin had reigned unto death, so might grace [the free love of God] reign through righteousness [through our justification and sanctification] unto eternal life," Rom. v. 20, 21. This is the plain natural meaning of the words. It does not appear, that one word is spoken here about imputed righteousness: neither in the passages cited, in the next page, from the Common-Prayer and the Article. In the Homily likewise, that phrase is not found at all; and the main stress is laid on Christ's shedding his blood. Nor is the phrase (concerning the thing there is no question) found in any part of the Homilies.

"If the fathers are not explicit with regard to the imputation of active righteousness, they abound in passages which evince the substitution of Christ in our stead: passages which disclaim all dependence on any duties of our own, and fix our hopes wholly on the merits of our Saviour. When this is the case I am very little solicitous about any particular forms of expression." O lay aside, then, these questionable, dangerous forms, and keep closely to the scriptural.

Letter 4. "The authority of our church, and of those eminent divines, does not touch those particular forms of expression." Neither do any of the texts which you afterwards cite. As to the doctrine we are agreed.

"The righteousness of God signifies, the righteousness which God-man wrought out." No: it signifies God's method of justifying sinners.

"The victims figured the expiation by Christ's death; the clothing with skins, the imputation of his righteousness." That does not appear. Did not the one rather figure our justification, the other our sanctification?

Almost every text quoted in this and the following Letter, in support of that particular form of expression, is distorted above measure from the plain obvious meaning which is pointed out by the context. I shall instance in a few, and just set down their true meaning, without any farther remarks.

'To show unto man his uprightness,'—to convince him of God's justice, in so punishing him.

'He shall receive the blessing'—pardon, 'from the Lord; and righteousness'—holiness, 'from the God of his salvation,'—the God who saveth him both from the guilt and from the power of sin.

'I will make mention of thy righteousness only,'—of thy mercy. So the word frequently means in the Old Testament; so it unquestionably means in that text, 'In (or by) thy righteousness shall they be exalted.'

'Sion shall be redeemed with judgment,'—after severe punishment; 'and her converts with righteousness,'—with the tender mercy of God following that punishment.

'In (or through) the Lord I have righteousness and strength'—justification and sanctification. 'He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation,'—saved me from the guilt and power of sin: both of which are again expressed by, 'He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.'

'My righteousness (my mercy) shall not be abolished.'

'To make reconciliation for iniquity,'—to atone for all our sins; 'and to bring in everlasting righteousness,'—spotless holiness in our souls. And this righteousness is not human, but divine. It is the gift and the work of God.

'The Lord our righteousness,'—the author both of our justification and sanctification.

"What righteousness shall give us peace at the last day, *inherent* or *imputed*?" Both. Christ died for us, and lives in us, 'that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.'

Letter 5. 'That have obtained like precious faith through the righteousness, the mercy, of our Lord. 'Seek ye the kingdom of God and his righteousness, the holiness which springs from God reigning in you.

'Therein is revealed the righteousness of God,'—God's method of justifying sinners.

"We establish the law, as we expect no salvation without a perfect conformity to it—namely, by Christ." Is not this a mere quibble? And a quibble which, after all the laboured evasions of Witsius, and a thousand more, does totally make void the law? But not so does St. Paul teach. According to him, without holiness, personal holiness, no man shall see the Lord. No one, who is not himself conformed to the law of God here, shall see the Lord in glory.

This is the grand, palpable objection to that whole scheme. It directly makes void the law. It makes thousands content to live and die transgressors of the law, because Christ fulfilled it for them. Therefore, though I believe he hath lived and died for me, yet I would speak very tenderly and sparingly of the former (and never separately from the latter), even as sparingly as do the Scriptures, for fear of this dreadful consequence.

"The gift of righteousness must signify a righteousness not their own." Yes, it signifies the righteousness or holiness which God gives to, and works in them.

"The obedience of one, is Christ's actual performance of the whole law." So here his passion is fairly left out! Whereas his becoming obedient unto death, that is, dying for man, is certainly the chief part, if not the whole which is meant by that expression.

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, that is, by our representative in our nature." Amazing! But this you say "agrees with the tenor of the apostle's arguing; for he is demonstrating we cannot be justified by our own conformity to the law." No: not here. He is not speaking here of the cause of our justification, but the fruits of it. Therefore that unnatural sense of his words does not at all agree with the tenor of his arguing.

I totally deny the criticism on *δικαιοσύνη* and *δικαιώμα*, and cannot conceive on what authority it is founded. O how deep an aversion to inward holiness does this scheme naturally create!

"The righteousness they attained could not be any personal righteousness." Certainly it was. It was *implanted* as well as *imputed*.

"For instruction in righteousness, in the righteousness of Christ." Was there ever such a comment before? The plain meaning is, for training up in holiness of heart and of life.

'He shall convince the world of righteousness,'—that I am not a sinner, but innocent and holy.

"That we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Not intrinsically, but imputatively." Both the one and the other. God, *through him*, first *accounts*, and then *makes us righteous*. Accordingly, the righteousness which is of God by faith, is both imputed and inherent.

"My faith fixes on both the meritorious life and atoning death of Christ." Here we clearly agree. Hold then to this, and never talk of the former without the latter. If you do, you cannot say, "Here we are exposed to no hazard." Yes, you are to an exceeding great one: even the hazard of living and dying without holiness. And then we are lost for ever.

The sixth *Letter* contains an admirable account of the earth and its atmosphere, and comprises abundance of sense in a narrow compass, and expressed in beautiful language.

Gems have "a seat on the virtuous fair-one's breast." I cannot reconcile this with St. Paul. He says, "*Not with pearls:*" by a parity of reason, not with diamonds. But in all things I perceive you are too favourable, both to the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eye. You are a gentle casuist as to every self-indulgence which a plentiful fortune can furnish.

"Our Saviour's obedience." O say, with the good old Puritans, 'our Saviour's death or merits.' We swarm with Antinomians on every side. Why are you at such pains to increase their number?

'My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation,'—thy mercy which brings my salvation.

The eighth *Letter* is an excellent description of the supreme greatness of Christ. I do not observe one sentence in it which I cannot cheerfully subscribe to.

The ninth *Letter*, containing a description of the sea, with various inferences deduced therefrom, is likewise a masterpiece, for justness of sentiment as well as beauty of language. But I doubt whether "mere shrimps," be not too low an expression: and whether you might not as well have said nothing of "cod, the standing repast of Lent:" or concerning "the exquisite relish of turbot, or the deliciousness of sturgeon." Are not such observations beneath the dignity of a minister of Christ? I have the same doubt concerning what is said of "delicately-flavoured tea, finely-scented coffee, the friendly bowl, the pyramid of Italian figs, and the pistacio nut of Aleppo;" beside that the mentioning these in such a manner, is a strong encouragement of luxury and sensuality. And does the world need this? The English in particular?—*Si non insaniunt satis sua sponte instiga.*

Letter 10. "Those treasures which spring from the imputation of Christ's righteousness." Not a word of his atoning blood! Why do so many men love to speak of his righteousness, rather than his atonement? I fear, because it affords a fairer excuse for their own unrighteousness: to cut off this, is it not better to mention both together? At least, never to name the former without the latter?

"Faith is a persuasion that Christ has shed his blood for me, and fulfilled all righteousness in my stead." I can by no means subscribe to this definition. There are hundreds, yea thousands, of true believers, who never once thought one way or the other of Christ's fulfilling all righteousness in their stead. I personally know many, who to this very hour have no idea of it; and yet have each of them a divine evidence and conviction, Christ loved me and gave himself for me. This is St. Paul's account of faith: and it is sufficient. He that thus believes is justified.

"It is a sure means of purifying the heart, and never fails to work by love." It surely purifies the heart, if we abide in it; but not if we draw back to

perdition. It never fails to work by love, while it continues; but if itself fail, farewell both love and good works.

“Faith is the hand which receives all that is laid up in Christ.” Consequently, if we make shipwreck of the faith, how much soever is laid up in Christ, from that hour we receive nothing.

Letter 11. “Faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ, is a fundamental principle in the gospel.” If so, what becomes of all those who think nothing about imputed righteousness? How many who are full of faith and love, if this be true, must perish everlastingly!

“Thy hands must urge the way of the deadly weapon through the shivering flesh, till it be plunged in the throbbing heart.” Are not these descriptions far too strong? May they not occasion unprofitable reasonings in many readers?

Ne puerum coram populo Medea trucidet.

“How can he justify it to the world?” Not at all. Can this then justify his faith to the world?

“You take the certain way to obtain comfort, the righteousness of Jesus Christ.” What! without the atonement? Strange fondness for an unscriptural, dangerous mode of expression!

“So the merits of Christ are derived to all the faithful.” Rather the fruits of the Spirit; which are likewise plainly typified by the oil in Zechariah’s vision.

“Has the law any demand? It must go to him for satisfaction.” Suppose ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:’ Then I am not obliged to love my neighbour. Christ has satisfied the demand of the law for me. Is not this the very quintessence of Antinomianism?

“The righteousness wrought out by Jesus Christ, is wrought out for all his people, to be the cause of their justification, and the purchase of their salvation. The *righteousness* is the cause, the purchase.” So the death of Christ is not so much as named! “For *all* his people:” but what becomes of *all* other people? They must inevitably perish for ever. The die was cast or ever they were in being. The doctrine to pass them by has

Consign’d their unborn souls to hell,
And damn’d them from their mother’s womb!

I could sooner be a Turk, a deist, yea, an atheist, than I could believe this. It is less absurd to deny the very being of God, than to make him an almighty tyrant.

“The whole world, and all its seasons, are rich with our Creator’s goodness. His tender mercies are over all his works.” Are they over the bulk of mankind? Where is his goodness to the non-elect? how are his tender mercies over them? “His temporal blessings are given to them.” But are they to them blessings at all? are they not all curses? Does not God know they are? that they will only increase their damnation? Does he not design they should? And this you call *goodness*! this is *tender mercy*!

“May we not discern pregnant proofs of goodness in each individual object?” No; on your scheme not a spark of it in this world, or the next, to the far greater part of the work of his own hands!

“Is God a generous benefactor to the meanest animals, to the lowest reptiles? and will he deny my friend what is necessary to his present com-

fort, and his final acceptance?" Yea, will he deny it to any soul that he has made? Would you deny it to any if it were in your power?

But if you loved whom God abhorr'd,
The servant were above his Lord.

"The wedding-garment here means holiness."

"This is his tender complaint, 'they will not come unto me!'" Nay, that is not the case; they cannot. He himself has decreed, not to give them that grace without which their coming is impossible.

"The grand end which God proposes in all his favourable dispensations to fallen man, is to demonstrate the sovereignty of his grace." Not so; to impart happiness to his creatures, is his grand end herein. Barely "to demonstrate his sovereignty," is a principle of action fit for the great Turk, not the most high God.

"God hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. He is a boundless ocean of good." Nay, that ocean is far from boundless, if it wholly passes by nine-tenths of mankind.

"You cannot suppose God would enter into a fresh covenant with a rebel." I both suppose and know he did.—"God made the new covenant with Christ, and charged him with the performance of the conditions." I deny both these assertions, which are the central point wherein Calvinism and Antinomianism meet. 'I have made a covenant with my chosen;' viz. with David my servant. So God himself explains it.

"He will wash you in the blood which atones, and invest you with the righteousness which justifies." Why should you thus continually put asunder what God has joined?

"God himself, at the last day, pronounces them righteous, because they are interested in the obedience of the Redeemer." Rather, because they are washed in his blood, and renewed by his Spirit.

Upon the whole, I cannot but wish that the plan of these Dialogues had been executed in a different manner. Most of the grand truths of Christianity are herein both explained and proved with great strength and clearness. Why was anything intermixed which could prevent any serious Christian recommending them to all mankind? anything which must necessarily render them exceptionable to so many thousands of the children of God? In practical writings, I studiously abstain from the very shadow of controversy. Nay, even in controversial, I do not knowingly write one line to which any but my opponent would object. For opinions shall I destroy the work of God? Then am I a bigot indeed: much more, if I would not drop any mode of expression, rather than offend either Jew or Gentile, or the church of God. I am, with great sincerity, Dear Sir, your affectionate brother and servant,

J. W.

October 15, 1756.

I have but one thing more to add, which is, concerning the seasonableness of the following publication. It may perhaps be thought a needless revival of a dispute which happened long ago, and which is now probably forgotten. In answer to which, I can assure the reader, that the above is printed from an edition of the Preservative now on sale at the Foundry. The seasonable-

ness of this publication is therefore apparent ; for though my brother died December 25, 1758, the controversy did by no means die with him, but still subsists in the daily publication and sale of the *Preservative*, which also comes with a special * recommendation from Mr. Wesley, into the hands of all his preachers, to be by them first "carefully read, then to be recommended and explained to the several societies where they labour." So that the controversy is, in the most effectual manner, daily and hourly kept alive by Mr. Wesley himself. This proves very sufficiently the seasonableness, and as things have happened, the expediency, of the present appearance of the following Letters in public. How pertinent an answer they contain to Mr. Wesley's objections, is now to be left to the consideration of the candid reader.

W. HERVEY.

Miles-Lane, Dec. 5, 1764.

* See the last paragraph of a Tract, entitled, *Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England* ; printed also in the *Preservative*, p. 237.

LETTERS

TO

THE REV. MR. JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER I.

REVEREND SIR,—I received the letter you mention, containing remarks on the Dialogues between Theron and Aspasio. As, after a careful perusal, I saw very little reason to alter my sentiments, I laid aside your epistle without returning an answer, in hopes that my silence (which it seems you mistook for obstinacy) would most emphatically speak my advice; which, had it been expressed more plainly, would have been delivered in the apostle's words, *That ye study, or make it your ambition, to be quiet**.

Since you have, by printing these remarks, summoned me, though reluctant, to the bar of the public, it should seem that I ought not to discredit the truth once delivered to the saints, by a timid silence; and I am the more willing to answer for myself, as I have now the privilege of an unprejudiced judge, and an impartial jury. If my defence should be lost on my opponent, it may possibly make some useful impressions on the court, and candid audience. However, I will not absolutely despair of convincing Mr. Wesley himself; because it is written, "Give admonition to a wise man, and he will yet be wiser †." On some very momentous and interesting points, I may probably be a little more copious than the strict laws of argument demand, in order to exhibit some of the great truths of the gospel in so clear a light, that "he may run who readeth them;" in so amiable and inviting a light, that the believer may rejoice in them, and the sinner may long for them. For such digressions I promise myself an easy pardon, both from yourself and the reader.

Thus you open a debate: "In the second Dialogue, is not the description often too laboured, the language too stiff and affected?" I must confess, Sir, this animadversion seems to be as just, as the praise which you have here and elsewhere bestowed, appears to be lavish. The former, if not more pleasing, may be no less serviceable than the latter; for both I acknowledge myself your debtor; and if ever I attempt any thing more in the capacity of an author, I will be sure to keep my eye fixed on the caution you have given.

I am sorry that the next words bring on a complaint so close to my ac-

* 1 Thess. iv. 11. *φιλοτιμιασαι*, a beautiful word, rich with meaning, and not adequately translated by *make it your ambition*; still more inadequately by our common version.

† Prov. ix. 9. The original phrase is only *Give*.—which may signify, give *admonitions* as well as (what our version has supposed) *instruction*.

knowledge. "You cite the pages according to the Dublin edition, having wrote the rough draught of what follows in Ireland." But should you not, in complaisance to your readers on this side of the water, have referred to the pages of the *English* edition? For want of such reference, there is hardly distinction enough in some places to know which are your words, and which are Aspasio's. Should you not also, in justice to the author, before you transcribed the rough draught for the press, have consulted the *last* edition of his work? which, you well knew, was not the copy from which the Irish impression was taken, yet might reasonably suppose to be the least inaccurate.

When I read your next paragraph, I am struck with reverence, I am ashamed, and almost astonished, at the littleness of the preceding observations. Stiffness of style, and a thousand such trifles, what are they all compared with justification before the infinite and immortal God? This is a subject that commands our most awful regard, a blessing that should engage our whole attention. As this is the grand article to come under our consideration, I would desire to maintain an incessant dependance on the divine Spirit, that my thoughts may be influenced, and my pen guided, by the wisdom which cometh from above; that I may neither pervert the truth by any erroneous representations, nor dishonour it by an unchristian temper. It would be easy to make use of bitter satire and disdainful irony, the contemptuous sneer or the indignant frown. And indeed, Sir, you have laid yourself open to every attack of this kind; but these are not the weapons of a Christian's warfare—*Non defensoribus istis*;—we are to give a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear: *meekness*, with regard to those who interrogate or oppose us; *fear*, with regard to him whose cause we plead, and whose eye is ever upon us. "Is justification," you say, "more or less than God's pardoning and accepting a sinner, through the merits of Christ?" I somewhat wonder, Sir, that you should ask this question, when it is professedly answered by Aspasio, who has presented you with a very circumstantial definition of justification, explaining it, establishing it, and obviating several objections advanced against it. If you would animadvert with spirit and force, or indeed to any considerable purpose, should you not lay open the impropriety of this definition, showing from reason and Scripture, that it is neither accurate nor orthodox?

The reader may see Aspasio's account of justification, and find the words *imputation* and *righteousness of Christ* particularly explained; the latter denoting "all the various instances of his active and passive obedience." Accordingly it is affirmed, "the punishment we deserved, he endures; the obedience which we owed, he fulfils." What Aspasio here professes to understand by the righteousness of Christ, the reader is particularly requested to bear in his memory, that he be not misled by Mr. Wesley, who often forgets it, and complains, when the righteousness of Christ is mentioned, that his penal sufferings are quite omitted. I would not wish, Sir, to have a plainer proof that you do not discard the active, than Aspasio has hereby given that he never excludes the passive.

By your question, you hint a dislike, yet without informing us what it is, or wherein Aspasio's illustrations and proofs are deficient. You propose, and ~~propose~~ another definition. Well, then, to differ from you as little as ~~may~~, to agree with you as far as truth will permit, since you are

so loath to admit of our representation, we will accede to yours; especially if it be somewhat explained, and a little improved. For indeed the words, in their present form, are rather too vague to constitute any definition. *Pardoning* and *accepting* may happen to be only diversified expressions of the same idea. The *merits of Christ* will certainly comport either with Popish or Socinian notions. It abounds in writers of the former sort, and it is to be found in the latter. Therefore, to be more explicit—By *pardoning*, I mean God's acquitting a sinner from guilt of every kind, and of every degree: by *accepting*, I mean still more, God's receiving him into favour, considering and treating him as righteous, yea, perfectly and gloriously righteous. By the *merits of Christ*, I would always be supposed to signify his active and passive obedience; all that he wrought, and all that he suffered, for the salvation of mankind*. Interested in all this, the believer enters into the divine presence, and stands before the divine majesty, not like David's ambassadors, stealing themselves into Jericho; safe, indeed, but with the marks of Ammonitish insults on their persons: he rather enters like that illustrious exile, Joseph, into the presence of Pharaoh, when his prison garments were taken from him, and he was arrayed in vestures of fine linen, meet for the shoulders of those who appear before kings. With this explication, I am content that your definition takes place of mine†. I would further observe, that you have dropped the word *imputed*, which inclines me to suspect you would cashier the thing. But let me ask, Sir, how can we be justified by the merits of Christ, unless they are imputed to us? Would the payment made by a surety procure a discharge for the debtor, unless it was placed to his account? It is certain the sacrifices of old could not make an atonement, unless they were imputed to each offerer respectively. This was an ordinance settled by Jehovah himself, Lev. vii. 18. And were not the sacrifices, was not their imputation typical of Christ, and things pertaining to Christ? The former prefiguring his all-sufficient expiation, the latter shadowing forth the way whereby we are partakers of its efficacy. The righteousness (not right-ousness and obedience, Aspasio speaks otherwise) which Christ performed, is reckoned by God as our own. This you call an ambiguous expression; but if considered in conjunction with the foregoing and following enlargements, I should think it can hardly deserve the charge. Aspasio all along labours to be understood. In this place he more fully opens his meaning, by giving another view of the nature, and by specifying the effects, of imputation: the *nature*—it being the same as placing to our account something not our own: The *effects*—Christ's righteousness thus placed to our account being as effectual for obtaining our salvation, as if it was our own personal qualification. To the latter you expressly agree, to the former you make no objection: to the whole doctrine, thus explained, you elsewhere declare your assent.

If in all this we may depend upon you, Sir, must we not feel an alarming shock at your adjuration in the next paragraph?

* The merits of Christ is certainly an ambiguous phrase, and what I can by no means admire; but as it occurs in Mr. Wesley's letter, and in many valuable writers, I have, led by their example, used it in the following debate, still understanding it, and still using it, in the sense explained above.

† To gratify Mr. Wesley I have admitted his phrase, "the merits of Christ," though, as it is a phrase of dubious import, and what almost any sect or heresy will subscribe, I should much sooner choose to abide by Aspasio's language.

“For Christ’s sake do not”—What? surely nothing less can excite or justify this vehement exclamation, but the obtrusion of some doctrine that is most glaringly false, and absolutely damnable. Shall we have such a solemn firing, such a thunder of explosion, only to silence a particular phrase? In another person this would look like profane levity; in Mr. Wesley, the softest appellation we can give it is idle pomp. All this clamour merely against words! words too, the explication of which, and the doctrine contained in them, yourself allow. Dear Sir, what is a word or phrase? Can it do either good or harm, but as conveying right or wrong sentiments? Will the mere pronouncing or hearing of a word, (be it *abracadabra* or *kiggajan selak*, or *imputed*,) without its idea, poison the principles of men, and induce them to work all uncleanness with greediness? As you have been firing without an enemy, (Aspasio is owned for an ally), so you seem to be triumphing without a victory. Aspasio’s charity for those who are disgusted at the expression, and have no explicit knowledge of the doctrine, is guarded by the words immediately following, “Yet live under the belief of the truth, and in the exercise of the duty:” as well as by the annexed description of the persons, and their temper; who are far enough from fancying, that if they may but be pardoned for the sake of Christ, they can obtain the divine favour, and a title to futuro happiness, by their own good behaviour. Hence it will appear that he has been too cautious to part with the very thing for which he is contending. And this is more abundantly evident from the close of his charitable paragraph, wherein, though he allows such people to be safe, yet he laments their perplexity, and their deficiency in light, strength, and consolation. “The phrase is not scriptural.” Suppose it were not, this would afford but a slight reason for so passionate an outcry: however, this is certain, St. Paul uses the phrase *God imputeth*, Rom. iv. 6. and that *righteousness might be imputed*, Rom. iv. 11. Now, is it possible that there should be righteousness imputed, yet not an imputed righteousness? To assert this must argue either a wonderful subtle refinement, or an exceeding strong prejudice. “It is not necessary.” Perhaps so; but is it not necessary Mr. Wesley should either inform us what sense of the phrase it is which he apprehends so likely to mislead men, or else, instead of exclaiming against Aspasio, should join all his force with him in defending that sense which they both espouse? “It has done immense hurt.” When we are made sensible of the immense, or indeed of any real hurt done by the phrase *imputed*; when we see those who dislike it cordially warm for the sentiment expressed in other words, we will then consent to resign it for its equivalent, “reckoned as our own,” “placed to our own account,” “as effectual as if our own personal qualification.” Till then we must guard the casket for the sake of the jewel. We prefer the word *imputed*, because it says more at once than any other term we know, and because we are aware of a common practice used in all ages by the opposers of sound doctrine. They pretend a zeal only against the phrase, that by bringing this into disuse, they may cause that to be forgotten. Shall we not then dispute for imputed righteousness? Yes, Sir, we must dispute both for the doctrine and for the phrase, since there are persons who openly strike at the one, and we fear with a view to supplant the other. Shall we not dispute for *imputed righteousness*—though the words are a grand peculiarity of the Scriptures, and the thing, the very spirit and essence of the gospel? Not dispute for that which is better to us sinners

than all worlds, better than our hearts could wish or our thoughts conceive ; which, in short, is the best, the noblest, the completest gift that God himself can bestow ?

When such a gift, and such a righteousness, is the subject of disputation, we must not give place, no, not for an hour : we must maintain its matchless excellency so long as we have any breath, or any being. We must say, in direct opposition to your fervent, but unadvised zeal, "For Christ's sake," let us contend earnestly for imputed righteousness, because it is the brightest jewel in his mediatorial crown. "For the sake of immortal souls," let us hold fast and hold forth this precious truth, because it yields the strongest consolation to the guilty conscience, and furnishes the most endearing, as well as the most prevailing, inducement to universal obedience.

"To ascribe pardon to Christ's passive, eternal life to his active obedience, is fanciful rather than judicious." The remark is just, not so the quotation : *Aspasio* is somewhat disfigured by your distortion of his features ; he limps a little, by your dislocation of a limb. There is, in his language, guard enough to check every attempt either to dissolve the union, or sever the co-agency, of the different parts of our Lord's righteousness.

But let us give *Aspasio* a fair hearing. Thus he expresses himself : "To divide them (the active and passive righteousness) into detached portions, independent on each other, seems to be fanciful rather than judicious." To divide into detached portions, is more than to distinguish between the one and the other. The latter *Aspasio* practises, the former he disavows. "Independent of each other : " do these words stand for nothing ? have they no meaning, that here you show them no regard, and never recollect them throughout your whole epistle ? Had you honoured them with any degree of notice, several of your objections must have been precluded ; and if the more candid reader pleases to bear them in memory, several of your objections will at the very first view fall to the ground. Besides, the person who tells us the case seems to be so, is not so peremptory as he who roundly affirms it to be so : the former is all that *Aspasio* has advanced. Though I am willing that you should correct his style, yet I must beg of you, Sir, not to make him quite so positive ; let him have the satisfaction of being modest, even where he has the misfortune, in your opinion at least, to be erroneous.

"Christ's universal obedience from his birth to his death, is the one foundation of my hope," says *Aspasio*. To which you assent, and with a laudable vehemence reply, "This is unquestionably right." I wish, Sir, you would ponder your words before you speak, at least before you print, that there may be something fixed and certain on which we may depend, and by which you will abide. One would think, after this acknowledgment, pronounced with such an air of solemnity, you could never so far forget yourself, as to open your mouth against the obedience, the universal obedience of Christ, which surely must include both what he wrought and what he suffered. You confess it to be your foundation, the foundation of your hope, the only foundation of your hope : can you then, without the most amazing inconsistency, either wish to secrete the doctrine, or offer to discountenance the expression ?

"There is no manner of need to make the imputation of Christ's active righteousness a separate head of discourse." No manner of need ! even though you declare that this active righteousness, together with the expiatory

death, is the only foundation of your hope? Can you think it possible to treat of such a topic too particularly, too distinctly, too minutely? Aspasio has shown the need, or assigned the reason for this method of handling the subject; because it sets the fulness of our Lord's merit in the clearest light, and gives the completest honour to God's holy law. Have you alleged any thing to disprove, or so much as to invalidate his plea? Ought not this to have been done before your assertion can be valid, or even decent?

Besides, are there not persons in the world who fondly imagine, that if they can but have pardon through Christ, they shall by their own doings secure eternal life? When such persons are in danger of overlooking the active obedience of the Redeemer, why should you not, for their sakes, allow us to make the imputation of his righteousness "a separate head of discourse?" that, seeing the transcendent perfection of Christ's work, they may cease from confiding in their own, Heb. iv. 10; lest it be said to them another day, "I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works, that (for the grand purpose of justification) they shall not profit thee," Isa. lviii. 12.

We must therefore take leave to dwell upon the active righteousness of our Lord; we must display its perfection, in opposition to all the vain pretensions of human qualifications, endeavours, or attainments; we must demonstrate that, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so is this divine obedience higher than all the works of the children of men. Yea, so transcendent in itself, and absolutely perfect, as to be incapable of any augmentation. All the good deeds of all the saints, could they be added to it, would not increase in any degree its justifying efficacy: it is like all the other works of God, concerning which we are told, "nothing can be added to them." This brings to my remembrance a most beautiful and sublime representation, which you must have read in the evangelical prophet: "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." Here mountains are demolished, valleys are elevated, and the earth is levelled into a spacious plain, on purpose to accomplish what Mr. Wesley supposes unnecessary; on purpose to give the most clear, full, striking view of the great Redeemer, of his wonderful person, and glorious work; that he alone may be distinguished and exalted; may walk majestic and conspicuous through the midst of mankind, as being singly and completely sufficient for the recovery of sinners. That all flesh—not Jews only, but Gentiles also; not men of reputation only, but the meanest of mortals, the most infamous of wretches—may together see his glory, may on equal ground, without any pre-eminence of one above another, contemplate and partake of his precious death and perfect righteousness, which are the one object of divine complacency, and the sovereign glory of the Lord Redeemer. According to the import of this magnificent piece of imagery, all the differences which subsist between one man and another are abolished; nothing but Christ and his complete work are proposed as the cause of justification and the ground of hope. Faith beholds nothing but the divine Jesus: it never inquires, What have I done? what have I suffered? but, What has that most illustrious personage done, and what suffered? What has Jehovah manifested in our nature, wrought for the benefit and redemption of sinners? Faith

ever weary of viewing or reviewing either the active or passive obedience of our Saviour. Faith will declare, that neither of these points can be set in too strong or too recommending a light. Faith is ever desiring to know more and more of the Saviour's worthiness, that the soul may rejoice in his excellency, and be filled with all his fulness.

May you, dear Sir, abound in this faith, and live under such views of our Saviour; then I flatter myself you will be dissatisfied with your present opinion, and not be disgusted at the freedom of speech used by me, &c.

LETTER II.

REVEREND SIR,—I am particularly pleased at my entrance on this little, because it presents me with a view of Mr. Wesley in very good humour. Instead of rebuking, he commends. He puts off the frown of censure for the smile of approbation. I hope to follow the amiable example; to approve and applaud wherever opportunity offers, and truth permits. And though I shall be sometimes obliged to oppose or refute, yet I shall do both with all the tenderness and lenity which may consist with a proper vindication of the truth.

“The third and fourth Dialogues contain an admirable illustration and confirmation of the great doctrine of Christ's satisfaction.” This is generously acknowledged. Yet even here it so unhappily falls out, that complaisance gets the start of judgment. Did you advert, Sir, to the state of the controversy, or see the consequence of Aspasio's arguing, you must either give up a favourite tenet, or else dissent from his doctrine.

Aspasio maintains, that Christ's sufferings were punishment; real, proper punishment. Now, could Christ, an innocent person, be punished, without bearing sin—the very sin of others? Could Christ, a divine person, bear the sin of others, and not do it perfectly away? Or can they whose guilt was punished in Christ, and whose sin is perfectly done away by Christ, can they perish eternally? But I forbear. Yourself, and the judicious reader, will easily apprehend my meaning, and discern the point to which these questions lead. All the benefit I propose by this remark is, to convince Mr. Wesley that he is not incapable of a mistake; that he has tripped a little in what he commends, and therefore may possibly make a false step in what he condemns.

Unless I may be allowed to propose this additional advantage, the rectifying an impropriety in some people's apprehensions concerning our Lord's vicarious suffering. It is usual to say, “He bore the punishment, not the guilt; the penalty, not the fault:” which seems to be a distinction more scrupulous than judicious; answers no other end, but that of derogating from our Redeemer's grace, and weakening the foundation of our hopes.

The guilt of sin, I take to be what the apostle calls *ανομιαν*, the transgression of the law. From hence arises the obligation to punishment. This guilt our Lord so truly bore, that he was no less liable to the arrest of justice, and the infliction of vengeance, than if he himself had committed the most enormous crimes. “He bare (says the Holy Ghost) the sin of many.” But punishment cannot be reckoned the same as sin, any more than wages can be accounted the same as work. If, then, our Lord bore sin itself, he must bear

every thing criminal that is included in it; no circumstance of demerit or aggravation excepted.

He bore the *fault*; therefore he makes us without fault in the sight of God, and will present us faultless before the throne with exceeding joy. He bore the *guilt*; therefore our Lord's sufferings were real punishment, justly inflicted by the Supreme Judge; and, on principles of justice, discharge us from all punishment whatever. He bore the *filth*; therefore he felt what those wretched souls endure who die in their iniquities; his eternal Father forsook him, and hid his face from him as from an abominable object.

This renders our Saviour's propitiation great, wonderful, glorious. Seeing this, believing this, we have nothing to fear. Conscience is satisfied, and the accuser of the brethren is silenced. Nothing can be laid to our charge by the righteous law, and nothing remains to awaken the indignation of the righteous Judge. Whereas, if this was not done, we have reason to be terribly apprehensive. If Christ bore not the guilt, then sinners must bear it in their own persons; if he took not away the filth, then it must lie on transgressors, and render them loathsome for ever; if the fault was not transferred to him, then it must abide upon us, and be our everlasting ruin.

Neither does this doctrine in any degree detract from our Saviour's dignity. It rather gives him the honour due unto his name, Jesus. As in the scales of a balance, the lower the one descends, the higher the other mounts, so the deeper our Mediator's humiliation sinks, to the more exalted height does his glory rise. The more horrible the condition to which he submitted, the more illustriously his goodness shines, and the more clearly the perfection of his work appears.

"Satisfaction was made to the divine law," says Aspasio. "I do not remember any such expression in Scripture," replies Mr. Wesley. But do you not remember this expression in the Epistle to the Galatians, Christ 'was made under the law?' Gal. iv. 4*. Why was he made under the law, but to fulfil its precepts, and undergo its penalty? and is not this a satisfaction to its demands?

The truth is, the divine law was violated by our sins. It was absolutely impossible for us to make any reparation; therefore Christ, in our nature and in our stead, submitted to its obligations, that he might magnify its injured authority, and render it in the highest degree venerable; might make even its tremendous sanctions and rigorous requirements, the very basis of grace, mercy and peace. Divinely noble contrivance! unspeakably precious expedient! By this means, vengeance and forbearance have met together; wrath and love have kissed each other, in the redemption of sinners. The law says, I am fulfilled: Justice says, I am satisfied. While both concur to expedite and ascertain the salvation of a believer.

"This way of speaking of the law, as a person injured and to be satisfied, seems hardly defensible." Does not the apostle speak of the law as a person? a person that liveth, to whom some are married, and to whom others are

* There is, I think, something uncouth in this expression. *ἑνεκα*, it is true, very well comports with both the clauses, *in veritate* and *pro peccatis*. But in the English translation, the participle might, not ungracefully, be varied, perhaps in some such manner, "The Son of God was made of a woman, and became subject to the law."

† Rom. vii. l. 4. The word *ζω*, at the end of the first verse, is spoken of the law, not of the man, as Mr. Wesley and others have very justly observed. It should therefore be translated not *he*, but *it*.

lead? *Aspasio* will always think himself, and his manner of speaking, sufficiently defensible, so long as he has the apostolical practice for his precedent.

Having such a precedent, he wants no other; otherwise he might plead the authority of Mr. John Wesley; who, in his Explanatory Notes on the New Testament, says, "The law is here spoken of (by a common figure) as a person, to which, as to an husband, life and death are ascribed*." And if the law be an husband, may not an husband be injured? May not an injured husband insist upon being satisfied?

"All the benefits of the new covenant are the purchase of Christ's blood;" this is *Aspasio's* belief. To this you assent, "Surely they are." With pleasure I should receive your suffrage, was I not afraid that this is your meaning—They are so the purchase of his blood, as not to have any dependence on, or any connexion with, his most perfect obedience. I was alarmed by the close of your last paragraph, and my suspicions are increased by the following negative interrogation: "After this has been fully proved, where is the need, where is the use, of contending so strenuously for the imputation of his righteousness?"

Aspasio has informed you, Sir, in the second Dialogue. He has there shown the advantage of unfolding, circumstantially and copiously, this momentous truth. To give you farther satisfaction, he has quoted the words of an eminent divine, of which the following are a part: "Whoever rejects the doctrine of the imputation of our Saviour's righteousness to man, does, by so doing, reject the imputation of man's sin to our Saviour, and all the consequences of it." If you are not satisfied with Mr. Staynoe's reasons, you are remitted to St. Paul. In Rom. ch. v. (a chapter of distinguished dignity and importance) he teaches mankind that Christ died for the ungodly; that we are justified through his blood, are saved from wrath by his death. After all this had been fully proved, where was the need, where was the use of insisting largely upon that obedience of one by which many are made righteous? ver. 19. Or upon that righteousness of one, which is imputed to many for justification of life? Yet this the inspired writer evidently does.

Answer the foregoing question in behalf of the apostle, and you will answer it in behalf of *Aspasio*. Or if you decline the office, give me leave, Sir, to answer it on behalf of them both. The blood of Christ is never considered as independent on, or detached from, the righteousness of Christ. They united their blessed efficacy in accomplishing the work of our redemption: we always look upon them as a grand and glorious aggregate, in their agency inseparable, though in meditation distinguishable. Being thus distinguishable, at proper times we meditate upon each distinctly: we display each with all the particularity possible, and cannot but contend for the imputation of one, as well as of the other. The farther we dig into either of these spiritual mines, the greater fund of treasures we discover. The more we glorify the Saviour, the more we strengthen faith, and the greater addition we make to our comfort, our peace, our joy.

Aspasio inquires, If Christ was our substitute as to penal suffering, why not as to justifying obedience? You reply, "The former is expressly

* See Explan. Notes. Rom. vii. 1.

asserted in Scripture, the latter is not expressly asserted there." A small inaccuracy here, Sir: The former is no more a Scripture expression than the latter; while the latter is no less the doctrine and sense of Scripture than the former. A little piece of forgetfulness likewise; since you just now acknowledged, that "Christ's universal obedience was the one foundation of your hope." But how can his obedience be any foundation of your hope, if in this capacity he was not your substitute? Take away the circumstance of substitution, and there is no more ground for your reliance on the obedience of Christ, than for your reliance on the obedience of Gabriel. We are made the righteousness of God, because we are in him as our proxy and our head; because he wrought the justifying righteousness, not only in our nature, but in our name; not only as our benefactor, but as our representative.

"As sin and misery have abounded through the first Adam, mercy and grace have much more abounded through the second. So that now none can have any reason to complain." Here indeed we have Aspasio's words, but in a patched and disfigured condition. Let any one read the whole of these passages, and judge whether they can be fairly applied to the doctrines of election or predestination. Yet Mr. Wesley is resolved at all adventures, with or without occasion, to introduce these subjects of deep and perplexed disputation. Therefore he replies, "No, not if the second Adam died for all; otherwise, all for whom he did not die, have great reason to complain."

Here, Sir, do you not force an inference from Aspasio's words, foreign to his design? He is speaking of those who betake themselves to Christ, and are recovered through his righteousness. Such persons he particularly mentions, of such alone he discourses; without considering the case of others, who, despising or neglecting the Redeemer, reject the counsel of God against themselves. Would it not be as edifying to the reader, and as agreeable to your office, if you should join with Aspasio in displaying the free, superabundant, infinitely rich grace of our God; altogether as becoming this, as to divert his aim, and retard his steps, when he is pressing forwards to this prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus?

Aspasio's words are, "When we betake ourselves to Christ Jesus, we shall find, that, as sin and misery have abounded," &c. Please to observe, Sir, how he limits his discourse, consequently is obliged to defend nothing but what corresponds with such limitation.

Had the Israelites any cause to be dissatisfied with the provision made for their sustenance and their cure, when the serpent of brass was lifted up on the pole, and when the bread from heaven lay round about their tents? No more have sinners any cause to think themselves aggrieved, when the salvation of God is evidently set before them in the gospel—is brought to their very door in the preaching of the word—and they are allowed, importuned, commanded to receive it by faith. This is enough for me. Enough this for any transgressors, who want, not to gratify curiosity, but to inherit life. If they, or you, Sir, choose to pry further, and to intrude into the divine secrets, I must leave you to yourselves; saying as I depart, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and our children," "Deut. xxix. 29.

"The whole world of believers." "This is an expression which never

in Scripture." It affords me a kind of presumptive proof, that solid actions are not at hand, when such shadows are listed in the service. I could be under no pain if you could prove your charge beyond all contradiction. To what would it amount? Why, that Aspasio having occasion to mention a certain topic, happened not to make use of the very syllables and letters made use of in Scripture. And do you or I, Sir, in all our sermons, journals, preservatives, and Christian libraries, undertake to use but Scriptural expressions? Had we done this, one benefit might indeed have accrued to the public: It would considerably have reduced our expenses.—But I trifle, as well as Mr. Wesley. You proceed to enforce your censure by adding, "Neither has the expression any countenance from Scripture." I am really ashamed to detain our readers any longer upon so trivial a point. Therefore what I am going to reply is only a word to yourself. You, Sir, can tell who it is that affirms in a certain hymn,

For every man 'tis finished, 'tis past,
The world's forgiven for Jesus' sake.

the world forgiven? What, all the world? every child of Adam? They do believe not on Christ and die in their sins? This you cannot mean; as you dare not assert; this, I think, no mortal can suppose. You yourself therefore, by "the world," must intend "the believing world." And are you offended at Aspasio for commenting on your text? for expressing plainly what is implied in your own words?

"In the Lord shall all the house of Israel be justified." This text Aspasio quotes, and acquiesces in the common version, upon which you animadvert: 'It ought unquestionably to be rendered *by* or *through* the Lord.' How hard is Aspasio's lot! If he does not use the exact language of Scripture, he is arraigned at your bar—witness the preceding objection; if he does use the exact language of Scripture, as in the present instance, you indict him for an erroneous translation. So that it is next to impossible to escape your censure.

In the Lord, you affirm, is not the pure language of Scripture; it is a wrong translation, "and ought unquestionably to be rendered *by* or *through* the Lord." Yet, *Quisquis adhuc una partam colitasse Mineram*. Whoever has learnt Hebrew no more than a month, will assure our English reader, that the prefix *b* is the very first word in the Bible. Must it there be translated *by* or *through* the beginning? If our young scholar have only his psalter, he can show the same particle occurring three times within the first verse: *In* the counsel—*in* the way—*in* the seat. Twice in the second verse: His delight is *in* the law—*in* his law will he exercise himself. Three times more in the remainder of the Psalm: "Shall bring forth fruit *in* his season"—"shall not stand *in* judgment"—"neither *in* the congregation of the righteous." Now let the English reader judge for himself, whether the Hebrew prefix must "unquestionably be rendered" in all these places "*by* or *through*." *By* or *through* his season! *By* or *through* the congregation! But I stop; there is no need to apply all the passages. Neither is there any need of critical skill in languages to determine concerning any one of them. Common sense in this case is sufficiently qualified to be our critic and our arbitrator. I only wish, Sir, you had produced the evidence for the corrected version. Then the public might have seen on which side the

balance were likely to turn, and which were the most cogent logic : "Aspasio's doctrine is false, therefore the translation is wrong ; or, the translation is fair, therefore his doctrine is true."

By this time, I believe, the unlearned reader will begin to discern what degree of credit is due to your criticisms upon the original, and to your alteration of the common version, when they are supported by nothing more than your bare assertion. I also begin to be apprehensive that our canvassing the sense of words, and sifting the dead languages, will be no very agreeable entertainment to any reader : I will therefore for the future be more concise in the execution of this business ; especially as I have here given a specimen of what might be done. I will try if it is not possible to animate what would otherwise be dull, and to blend godly edifying with critical disquisition.

"Ye are complete in him." With this translation also Mr. Wesley finds fault : "The words literally rendered are, ye are filled with him." I am ready to grant that places may be found where the preposition *en* must be understood according to your sense. But then every one knows that this is not the native, obvious, literal meaning ; rather a meaning swayed, influenced, moulded by the preceding or following word. The literal signification of *en autro* is as we have rendered it. Nor is there the least occasion to depart from the received interpretation ; it is suitable to the context, and to the scope of the whole epistle.

However, we will suppose your criticism to be just. Does this destroy or enervate Aspasio's argument ? Would you have one meaning contradict or supplant the other ? "Ye are filled with him, therefore ye are not complete in him : " Does the former sense include or imply the latter ? Can you, or I, or any one, be filled with every requisite for our recovery and happiness, yet not be complete ? It seems therefore you get nothing by this criticism, but the satisfaction of doing violence to the phrase, without any improvement of the sense, or any advantage to your cause.

"The whole passage (you affirm) relates to sanctification, not to justification." Where is your proof, Sir ? This we always expect. This Mr. Wesley seldom, if ever, condescends to give. "Yes, (he says) any unprejudiced reader may observe it." A strange kind of proof ! reducible to no figure in logic, unless there be a figure styled *presumption*. Was I to answer for the unprejudiced reader, I think he would observe the very reverse. The words of the apostle are not a little forcible against your sense of the passage, as will appear from the transitive adverb *also*. The next and the subsequent verses, we allow, relate to sanctification : if this verse does the same, such is the manner of the apostle's reasoning, "In whom ye are sanctified, in whom also ye are sanctified." Whereas, if the first clause denotes the justification of the Colossian converts through the righteousness of Christ ; if the following periods describe their sanctification, as a consequence of this most happily operating privilege ; then the reasoning is just, and the transition graceful : "In him ye are completely justified, in him also ye are truly sanctified."

The whole passage is calculated to teach us, that Christ is the fulness of our sufficiency. In him, and in him alone, there is enough to answer all the purposes of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It is intended likewise to admonish us, that we should rest satisfied with him alone, in opposition to all the fond inventions of men, who would introduce

something else for the ground of our confidence, and the cause of our consolation; as though it was said,—

If indeed our Lord Jesus Christ had been an ordinary person, or merely a created being, ye might well be offended at my doctrine: ye might then, with some colour of reason, seek to the maxims of philosophy for wisdom, or to the works of the law for righteousness. But Christ is an immensely glorious person, “for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;” Christ is an incomparably exalted sovereign, “for he is the head of all principalities and powers:” yea, Christ is the supreme incomprehensible Jehovah, “for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Being therefore transplanted into him by faith, ye are complete; partakers of him, ye have every blessing and all good: thought cannot imagine, nor desire crave, anything farther, greater, higher.

Matchless privilege! Exalted felicity! O may the knowledge, the experimental knowledge of it, fill our hearts as the waters cover the abyss of the sea! Then will we sing the hymn which once expressed your sentiments, and still expresses mine:

Join, earth and heaven, to bless
The Lord our righteousness.
The mystery of redemption this,
This the Saviour's strange design;
Man's offence was counted his,
Our's his righteousness divine.

In him complete we shine,
His death, his life is mine.
Fully am I justified;
Free from sin, and more than free;
Guiltless, since for me he died;
Righteous, since he lived for me*.

The text lately quoted from Isaiah, is part of a paragraph eminent for its dignity and usefulness. We then considered a fragment of it in a critical view; let us now examine the whole of it with a devotional spirit. Thus examined, I trust it will be no longer a dry bone, but a feast of fat things full of marrow. Permit me to propose a correct translation of the original, to add a short illustration of the meaning, and then take my leave for the present.

“Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else †. By myself have I sworn; the word of righteousness ‡, goeth out of my mouth, the word shall not return. To me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear, saying, Surely in the Lord have I righteousness § and strength. To him shall men come; and all that are offended in him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and in him shall they glory.”

* See p. 56, of Hymns and Spiritual Songs: anonymous, indeed, but universally ascribed to Mr. Wesley.

† Not any person, nor anything. *No person* able to lend an helping hand: *No thing* capable of yielding the least assistance.

‡ “The word of righteousness,” signifies, if not the whole gospel, that precious doctrine which is the gospel in epitome.

§ *Righteousness*. This is the precise signification of the original, which being in the plural number, seems to denote *completeness*. A righteousness, perfect, entire, and lacking nothing: having every thing necessary for our pardon, our acceptance, our everlasting justification,

Here the Son of God presents himself in all the glories of his person, and all the riches of his grace : presents himself as the object of faith, and the author of salvation ; to be received by sinners without any recommendable qualities, or any pre-eminence of one above another. But hear his gracious words :—

“ Look unto me,” wretched ruined transgressors, as the wounded Israelites looked unto the brazen serpent. Look unto me dying on the cross as your victim, and obeying the law as your surety. Not by doing, but by looking and believing ; not by your own deeds, but by my works, and my suffering. “ be ye saved.” This is the mysterious, but certain way of salvation. Then shall ye be delivered from guilt, rescued from hell, and reconciled to God. Who are invited to partake of this inestimable benefit ? “ All the ends of the earth.” People of every nation under heaven ; of every station in life of every condition and every character, not excepting the chiefest of sinners.

Is it possible that the obedience of one should save innumerable millions ? It is not only possible, but indubitable. “ For I am God,” infinite in dignity and power ; therefore all-sufficient, yea, omnipotent to save—to save all that come unto me, be the multitudes ever so great, or their cases ever so desperate. Is nothing to be done by transgressors themselves ? Are no conditions to be fulfilled on their part ? None—“ There is nought beside me.” No person can take any share in this great transaction. Nothing can in the least degree co-operate with my merits. Should you add to my obedience and death all that saints have performed, and martyrs have endured, it would be like adding a grain to the sands of the ocean, or a moment to the days of eternity.

Such is my compassionate invitation, and this my inviolable decree. “ I have (not only spoken, but) sworn ;” sworn by myself and all my incomprehensible excellencies. “ The word of righteousness ;” that which relates to the grandest of all subjects, and most important of all interests, is planned, adjusted, and unalterably determined. Now, even now, “ it goes out of my mouth,” is declared with the utmost solemnity, and established by veracity itself. The word shall not return, either to be repealed by me, or frustrated by any other. What is the decree confirmed by this most awful oath ? We are all attention to hear it. “ To me every knee shall bow.” Every soul of man who desires to inherit eternal life shall submit to my righteousness, and as an unworthy creature, as an obnoxious criminal, obtain the blessing wholly through my atonement. “ To me every tongue shall swear.” Be man’s supposed virtues ever so various, or ever so splendid, all shall be disclaimed, and my worthiness alone shall stand. Renouncing every other trust, they shall repose the confidence of their souls on me alone, and make public confession of this their faith before the whole world. But we, O Lord, are ignorant, we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. This then shall be the form of your oath, such the tenor of your confession.—

Surely—It is a most wonderful, yet a most faithful saying, extremely comfortable and equally certain. *Only*—not in myself, not in a poor frail creature, but in the incarnate Jehovah alone, in his divinely excellent deeds, and unutterably meritorious sufferings, *I have righteousness*—a righteousness without spot, without defect, and in all respects consummate ; such as satisfies every requirement of the law, and most thoroughly expiates all my iniquities ; such as renders me completely accepted before my Judge, and entitles me to everlasting life. From the joyful knowledge, the personal appropriation,

the perpetual improvement of this inestimable privilege, I have strength my sanctification. Now do I indeed delight myself in the Lord, who, fully reconciled and infinitely gracious, has done so great things for me ; do I cordially love my neighbour, and being so happy myself, unfeignedly g for his eternal happiness, that he may be a partaker with me of this at salvation.

To this sovereign decree, the prophet sets as it were his seal, or else in a report of joy he foretels the accomplishment of it. Yes, my brethren, to s, even to his gracious Redeemer, *shall men come*. I see them flying as ads for multitude, as doves for speed. They believe the report of his pel, and receive of his fulness. Whereas *all they that are offended in him*, t cannot away with his doctrine, which pours contempt upon all human ellency, and will allow no righteousness to avail but that which is divine ; o refuse to come unto him, poor and miserable, and stript of every recom- adation ; all they *shall be ashamed*. The fig-leaves of their own duties, or n own endowments, shall neither adorn them for glory nor screen them n wrath, but shall abandon them to vengeance, and cover them with ble confusion. While, on the other hand, *all the seed of Israel*, every trueiever, shall be justified in the Lord. Against those persons no accusation ll be valid, no condemnation shall take place. So magnificent is the ajesty, so surpassingly efficacious are the merits of their Saviour, that in m they shall not only confide, *but glory* ; not only be safe, but triumphant. lothed with his incomparable righteousness, they shall challenge every dversary, and defy every danger. To this portion of Scripture I have led ack your thoughts, that I might not close with any disgusting sentiments, at might leave a sweet savour on your mind, on the reader's mind, and on he mind of, Reverend Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER III.

REVEREND SIR,—Let me now resume my observations on your epistle ; which I do, not for the sake of disputing, but for the cause of truth.

The gospel contains many sublime and glorious truths. But there is one which, beyond all others, characterizes its nature, its import, and design ; which makes it most eminently to differ from every other form of religion professed or known in the world ;—I mean, the doctrine of free justification, through the righteousness of Christ. This is to the religion of Jesus, what the particular features and turns of countenance are to each individual person.

I have sometimes amused myself with standing by a painter, and observing him at his work. Here I have been surprised to see, how much a very little stroke would alter the aspect of his draught ; would turn the gay into a melancholy, or the composed into a frantic countenance. Several of Mr. Wesley's touches are to appearance small ; but I fear they would be found to disfigure, more than a little, the heavenly portrait ; and give a new, not the native air, to the truth as it is in Jesus. But I proceed ; my business being to prove, not to blame.

Sinners who betake themselves to the all-sufficient Saviour for redemption, are fully accepted by God, for his beloved Son's sake. "This is justification through imputed righteousness," says Aspasio : "That remains to be proved,"

answers Mr. Wesley. I think it is pretty largely, and I would hope satisfactorily, proved through the whole book. Nay, I find Mr. Wesley himself ere long acknowledging, that "as to the doctrine we are agreed." Either therefore you have received the proof which you demand, or else you can submit without conviction, and agree without cause of agreement. Not to take advantage of such slips, I would rather enlarge upon what may be useful.

I would ask Mr. Wesley, in what other way sinners can be justified or accepted, save only through imputed righteousness?—Through their own good deeds, and holy tempers? This supposes the fruits to be good, while the tree is corrupt; and would make salvation to be of works, not of grace. Through their own faith standing in the law? Then they are justified before a perfect God by an imperfect endowment; and life eternal is obtained by the exercises of their own mind, not by the merits of Jesus Christ. Are they justified without any righteousness, either wrought by themselves or received * from another? This is an unworthy thought; this were an insufferable practice—Jehovah himself being Judge. "He that justifieth the wicked is an abomination †."

Say not, God is a free agent, and not bound to observe his own law. Say rather, The rule of righteousness revealed in the law is his most steadfast will, unchangeable as his nature. Consider also what this law requires: A satisfaction for sin, not defective, but completely sufficient; a performance of the command, not sincere only, but absolutely perfect. Will God, in justifying a sinner, disregard, contradict, overthrow his own law? In no wise. Since then it insists upon what no mortal can yield, must not all flesh perish for ever?

This would be the unavoidable consequence, if matters rested upon human abilities. But here the blessed gospel comes to our relief; showing us that God, in his immense mercy and unsearchable wisdom, has found out a way, at once to satisfy the unalterable law, and save insolvent man; to justify even the chief of sinners, yet without the least violation of justice, truth, or holiness. What is this way? His own Son accomplishes the great work. How? By relaxing the precepts of the law, that we may perform them? By disannulling the sentence of the law, that we may escape it? Heaven and earth shall pass away, before any such dishonourable expedient takes place. On the contrary, he gives satisfaction to the sentence, by suffering the tremendous punishment denounced; and he fulfils the precept, by yielding the sinless obedience required. Because this was to be finished in the nature which had transgressed, therefore he was made man; because this was to be truly, or rather infinitely meritorious, therefore the man was one person with the Godhead.

Still it may be inquired, how the obedience of another can relieve my distress? How indeed, but by God's transferring my guilt to him, and imputing his obedience to me. By this method, the thing is clearly and

* "They who receive the gift of righteousness." Rom. v. 17.

† Prov. xvii. 15. This is an invariable maxim. It is that word of God which endureth for ever. Yet it is no objection to his method of justifying the ungodly: because he first imputes his Son's righteousness unto them: thereby renders them truly and perfectly righteous; then pronounces them such; and, as such, receives them to pardon, to favour, and eternal life. Does not the text, thus considered, afford an incontestible argument for the necessity of an imputed righteousness?

pletely effected. In this method, I see a propriety and an efficacy that
 does my doubts, and comfort my heart. Accordingly, it is written in the
 scriptures, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not
 counting their trespasses unto them." *God*; the work was too arduous
 to be performed by a created agent; therefore God himself *was in Christ*.
 No less than the almighty Lord could execute the business. But if he
 undertake it, how successfully must it be carried on, and how gloriously
 finished! *Reconciling the world*; not setting poor transgressors to reconcile
 themselves, but himself contriving all, providing all, doing and suffering all,
 it was needful for this great purpose. Being himself the creditor, the
 debtor, and payer of the debt, how was all this brought to pass? By *not
 putting our trespasses unto us*; but taking them all upon himself; bearing
 them all, in his own body, upon the tree; and sustaining the vengeance due
 to all our crimes. Thus was the Holy One and the just "made sin for us";
 that we (sinful dust and ashes) might (in the very same manner) be made the
 righteousness of God in him." The former could be only by imputation;
 and so only can be the latter.

If men talk of being accepted for Christ's sake, yet reject the imputation
 of righteousness, they must have very inadequate notions concerning the
 relation which Christ bears to his people, and the nature of his mediatorial
 undertaking. Does this seem obscure? I explain myself: A person may con-
 tract himself so honourably and excellently, as, on account of his worthy deeds,
 to obtain favour in behalf of another; and this without being his surety, or
 anything like his proper righteousness. Witness the famous instance of the
 two brothers, Amyntas and Æschylus. The former was a gallant hero, who
 exposed his life, and lost his arm in the defence of his country: the latter
 was an abandoned and infamous profligate, whose crimes had brought him to
 the bar of public justice. The hero, on the day of trial, appeared as an
 advocate for his brother. He spoke nothing, but only lifted up to view the
 maimed and dismembered arm. This silent oratory struck the assembly, and
 pleaded so powerfully that the criminal was unanimously acquitted. Here
 was an acquittal of one, in consideration of the merits of another; but then
 the obnoxious party had no special interest in those merits. They were not
 acquired or exercised with a particular reference to his good. He could not
 say, They are mine. Neither did they make him, in any degree or in any
 sense, righteous. Whereas, the reverse of all this is true with regard to Jesus
 Christ and justified sinners. This you and I, Sir, have asserted. Let us
 never retract the good confession. But, as it is the truth of the gospel, let
 us still and for ever say,

In him complete we shine;

Because

Ours is righteousness divine.

Theron, speaking of the terms *inherent* and *imputed*, calls them nice dis-
 tinctions and metaphysical subtleties. Mr. Wesley makes Aspasio apply
 the depreciating remark to the active and passive righteousness of Christ.
 Whereas, he says no such thing; he means no such thing. He is treating
 of a subject totally different. And were he to maintain such a sentiment,
 every one must observe, it would entirely overthrow his whole scheme.

"You oblige us to make use of metaphysical subtleties, by confounding
 those very different ideas, that is, Christ's active and passive righteousness."

I could hardly believe my eyes for some time, though both of them attest that this was produced as a quotation from Aspasio. In which place, and for a considerable space before and after, the subject of debate is the *difference* between *inherent* and *imputed* righteousness. I was, I own, quite vexed to see Aspasio so maltreated; his discourse so misrepresented; and so little regard paid to literary justice. And glad I am, that I did not give vent to my thoughts just at that instant. I might have been too warm, and have spared the rod. But upon cooler consideration I began to recover, and the prescription of Horace was of service,

Amara lento temperat risu.

I began to call your conduct, not artifice or slight of hand, but incogitance or thought misapplied. As you had been thinking so long upon the other topic, it dwelt upon your imagination, kept this from your attention, and led you both to mistake and to miscall things. Like a certain preacher, who having lost his fortune in the bubbles of the year 1719, and having occasion to mention the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, told his audience that Pharaoh and his host were all drowned in the South Sea! Poor man! He meant the Red Sea.

Mr. Wesley proceeds: "We do not confound the active and passive righteousness." Does Aspasio, Sir? he that considers them particularly and distinctly? he that examines each with a critical and minute exactness? If this be to confound, order and confusion have changed their nature.

"Neither do we separate them." It is somewhat difficult to understand what you mean by separating the active and passive righteousness of our Lord. Separating them as to their influence? Then you must be sensible this is never done by Aspasio. You cannot but know, that he disclaims such a refinement. He protests against such a practice. Do you mean, treating them as things really distinct, though always uniting their agency? Then am I at a loss to reconcile Mr. Wesley with himself. For in the very next paragraph he thus expresses himself: "Through the merits of his life and death, every believer is justified." Are not the merits of his life here distinguished from the merits of his death? Does not the former expression denote his active, the latter his passive obedience? Or would you be understood to mean, "Through the merits of his life, which are nothing else but the merits of his death?" If you would not speak in this manner, so unworthy of your better judgment, you do the very thing which you blame. This is done still more apparently in one of your hymns, where we see, not only a separation, but a distinct use and application of the separated subjects:

Grant this, O Lord, for thou hast died
That I might be forgiven;
Thou hast the righteousness supplied,
For which I merit heaven.

I could easily excuse Mr. Wesley for being a little inconsistent with himself, did he not also venture to confront the apostle by the following assertion: "Neither have we any authority from Scripture, for either thinking or speaking of one separate from the other." Does not St. Paul in one passage speak of the obedience, in another of the death, of Christ? Does he not in one place enlarge upon the righteousness, in another upon the blood, of Christ?

no, we have an authority from Scripture, we have the example of the best apostle, for this way of thinking and speaking.

We have also a concurrent testimony from the genius and import of the final language. Do not *πικροτη* and *δικαιοσυνη* signify somewhat different *πικρα* and *θανατος*? Are there any approved writers who use these words miscuously, as so many synonymous and convertible terms? If not, the voice of grammar will vindicate the propriety of our conduct, while we assign a separate discourse to each subject, and exhibit them severally in the most distinct view.

Are not light and heat always united in the sun? Is the naturalist to me who considers them distinctly, and examines each property in a separate treatise? You would commend this practice in the philosopher, as a way to enter thoroughly into the knowledge of his subject; and why could you explode or censure it in the Christian divine? Are not theological truths as worthy of a circumstantial and accurate investigation as philosophical? Will they not as amply reward our diligence, and yield as much advantage to the serious inquirer?

"The righteousness which justifies sinners, is already wrought out," says Gasparius: "A crude unscriptural expression," replies Mr. Wesley. It may be so. But if the expression is plain and true, I will sit down content. You, however, will allow me to observe that it is no new one, and is not far from scriptural. *Worketh righteousness*, you know, is a scriptural phrase. Does the word *out* spoil it, or the word *already*? I suppose the latter may be most offensive. Yet you speak, in this very paragraph, of being "justified by the merits of Christ's life and death." Are not these matters already transacted? Is not the merit of them already perfect? Can any language express these things more clearly, and affirm them more strongly, than those emphatical words in one of your own hymns?—

Let us for this faith contend,
Sure salvation is its end:
Heaven *already* is begun,
Everlasting life is won.

Pardon me then, Sir, if I still suspect, that the doctrine and its consequences, rather than the expression and its crudity, awaken your jealousy. If this doctrine be admitted, if the justifying righteousness be already wrought, it must absolutely overturn all your prerequisites, qualifications, and conditions—conditions of repentance, obedience, and I know not what besides. We must say to every one of them, as Jehu said to the messengers of Joram, What hast thou to do with the grand article of justification? Get thee behind me. Could they be fulfilled, they would come a day too late; like the sickle, when the harvest is reaped. Could they be fulfilled in all their imaginary dignity, they would, in this relation, be needless; like a proposal for augmenting the splendour of the sun.

"The righteousness which justifies sinful man, was set on foot when God sent forth his Son from the habitation of his holiness and glory, to be born of a woman, and made subject to the law: it was carried on through the whole course of our Saviour's life, in which he always did such things as were pleasing to his heavenly Father. It was completed at that ever-memorable, that grand period, when the blessed Immanuel bowed his dying head, and cried with a strong triumphant voice, It is finished." Upon this extract from

Aspasio's discourse, Mr. Wesley exclaims, "O vain philosophy!"—Philosophy! This philosophy, Sir? Never did I hear, till this moment, such trines ascribed to philosophy. But this I have heard, and this I believe, the world, even the learned and philosophic world, by their boasted wisdom knew not God, nor God's method of salvation by the sufferings of an innocent and the obedience of a divine person. Their philosophy prejudiced them against it, puffed them up with a vain conceit of their own sufficiency, and set them at the greatest distance from submitting to the righteousness of God.

I wish, Sir, you would show me in which of the philosophers I might find these sacred sentiments; or a grain, or a spice, or a savour of them. I have for a considerable time laid aside my Plato, and have no more inclination to turn over my Seneca; because I can see nothing like this divinely precious truth adorning and enriching their pages. But if you will discover the golden vein in their works, I will immediately renew my acquaintance with them; and will do the philosophers a piece of justice which Mr. Wesley denies them; I will not call their philosophy vain, but the "wisdom of God, and the power of God." A righteousness wrought out, and a redemption obtained for us! The former divine! The latter eternal! These, rightly understood, make us, beyond all the treasures of literature, wise. They, habitually enjoyed, will, more effectually than all the delineations of morality or exhortations to virtue, render us holy.

A divine righteousness (pardon me for dwelling on my favourite topic already wrought! A great redemption perfectly finished! And this by the abasement, the ignominy, the indignities—by the cries, the agonies, the blood of our Saviour; yea, of our God, "in fashion as a man!" in the form of a servant, a slave, an execrable malefactor! What like this did a thousand philosophers teach? What like this do a thousand of their volumes contain, to stab our pride, to tame our fury, and to quench our lust; to kindle our benevolence, to inflame our devotion; to make us, in a word, "wise unto salvation?"

"The plain truth is, Christ lived and tasted death for every man." "To be sure, then, since every man is not saved by him, he lived and died only to make their salvation possible." From this, and other hints, I guess your opinion to be, that Christ, by his life and death, obtained only a possibility of salvation; which salvation is to become our own, upon performing terms and conditions, bringing with us prerequisites and qualifications. If I mistake you, Sir, in this case, you have nothing more to do than simply to deny my supposition. This exculpates you at once. I shall rejoice to hear you say, As Christ made us, and not we ourselves; in like manner, he saves us and not we ourselves. No human endowments, no human performances but Christ alone, is the author of eternal salvation.

Should you reply, True, Christ is the author of eternal salvation, but *to those only who obey him*: I must then ask, What obedience Christ requires? The law says, Do, and live. Christ, the end of the laws, says, Believe in me and live. Be verily persuaded, that I am sufficient for thy salvation, without any working of thine at all. Is not the Son, the Son of the most high God, given unto thee in the divine record? Be satisfied with *his* doing and suffering, without wishing for or thinking of any thing more, to procure thy final acceptance.—Let no one account lightly of this obedience. It is the

dience of faith ; the obedience suited to the name of Jesus ; obedience to first and great command of the gospel. Beyond all other expedients, it ludes boasting ; and at the same time produces that genuine love, that d fear, which the law of works requires in vain.

Only to make a thing possible, and to effect it, are widely different. When king fits out a fleet, and gives his admiral a commission to harass the nch coasts, and destroy the French shipping, he makes the thing pose ; but to carry the design into execution, to accomplish the enterprise r become practicable, is a far more arduous task, and a far more honourable ievement. How strangely do those writers derogate from the dignity and ry of the Redeemer, who would ascribe to him what corresponds with the ner, and attribute to man what bears a resemblance to the latter !

If Christ only made our salvation possible, then we are to execute the n ; we are to face the enemy, to sustain the charge, and silence the bat- y ; we are to climb the steep, to enter the breach, and bring off the ndards ; and so, in all reason, the honour and praise must be our own. hereas, the gospel gives all the honour to the Captain of our Salvation : e bore the heat and burden of the dreadful day : He made reconciliation for quity, and brought in everlasting righteousness : so that all our officious tempts, like a pinnacle arriving after the victory, should be told, 'it is ished ;' the great salvation is already wrought. And instead of being dis- tified or disappointed, methinks we should rejoice, unfeignedly rejoice, in e accomplishment of the glorious work.

If it should occur to the reader's mind, that the Christian life is repre- nted as a warfare ; and that we ourselves are commanded to fight, though der the banner of our divine Leader : to this doubt I would answer, The anaanite is still in the land ; we fight, not to gain the country, but only to bduce the rebels.

"Whoever perverts so glorious a doctrine, shews he never believed." his may be the substance of what Aspasio maintains, though not repre- nted so fully or so clearly as he has expressed himself ; however, such a nall wrong we will readily excuse. It was done with no sinister inten- ion, but for the sake of brevity.

To this position Mr. Wesley replies, "Not so." That is, they did really ad truly believe ; but after their belief they apostatised and fell from the aith : they were some time the members of Christ, and temples of the Holy host ; but, quickly severed from their divine head, they became the slaves of the devil, and brands for the everlasting burning : their names were ndeed written in heaven ; but it seems the heavenly records were less faith- ul than the parish register ; they were quickly crased, and their place in the ook of life knew them no more. Or thus : they did as really and truly elieve, as those who are now in the mansions of glory ; but, after their true knowledge of the name of the Lord Jesus ; after their full conviction of his suf- ficiency and faithfulness for their salvation, even such as inclined and enabled them to put their trust in him alone for their acceptance with God, they were disappointed. Though Christ called them his sheep, as thus hearing his voice, yet he did not give unto them eternal life according to his pro- mise, but suffered Satan to pluck them out of his hand.

These sentiments have no very probable, much less have they a pleasing or

recommending aspect. Let us inquire whether they *comport* with St. John's determination of the case. Speaking of such backsliders, he says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us." Mr. Wesley, to be consistent with himself, should say on this occasion, Not so; they were of you, but they fell away from you. The apostle proceeds, "For if they had been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us." Had they been really converted, they would most undoubtedly have continued in our doctrine and fellowship. Their revolt from our *doctrine*, is a manifest proof that they never truly received it, nor with their heart believed it. Their departure from our *fellowship* is an evident indication that they were, notwithstanding all their professions, still carnal, and never renewed by grace.

Mr. Wesley produces a text from St. Peter, with a view to support his objection. They who "turn back as a dog to his vomit, had once escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Christ." Here and elsewhere I perceive the cannon roar, but without feeling the ball. Before this piece of sacred artillery can be brought to play upon us, it will be necessary to prove, that the knowledge of Christ, or even believing in Christ, always signifies true faith. In some places it certainly does; in other places it signifies no such thing. "Though I have all knowledge, says the apostle, yet even with this specious endowment I may be nothing." There is knowledge, says the same author, which, instead of edifying, or establishing the soul in godliness, puffeth up with pride. We are likewise assured that Simon the sorcerer, though in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, yet had "knowledge of the things which concern the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ;" nay, that he also believed; yet had neither lot nor portion in the inestimable blessing.

Let us attend to the apostle's manner, and we shall be led to put the same interpretation upon the phrase, as it is used in the passage before us. These people are not described like the true believers to whom he addresses the epistle. Here is no mention of their being "partakers of a divine nature; or of being born again by the incorruptible seed; or of having their souls purified by the Spirit." They are only said to have "escaped the pollutions of the world." Again, The word expressive of these pollutions is *μασματα*, which denotes the grossest excesses, and most scandalous iniquities. Consequently, their abstaining from such abominations implies no more than what is called a negative goodness, or a mere external reformation. Their lusts had been restrained only, not subdued. Therefore the unhappy wretches were easily overcome by their old corruptions. It is farther observable, that St. Peter never considers these persons as new creatures. He calls them by no other name than the dog and the sow. Such they were at first; no better, under all their profession of Christianity; and no other, even in their foulest relapses. When they returned again to their vomit, or other filthy practices, they returned to their own.

There is, then, a knowledge of Christ, which is only superficial and notional, floats idly on the understanding, but neither penetrates nor sanctifies the heart. There is also a knowledge of Christ, which is wrought out by the Spirit, and ingrafted into the soul; which receives the gift of righteousness, and brings justification into the conscience: the comfort and joy of which mortify the love of sin, and produce the life of holiness. This know-

Sir, may you and I teach; in this knowledge may our hearers and all things pertaining to life and godliness. The goodness of God leadeth to repentance." "This is unquestionably says Mr. Wesley; "but the nice metaphysical doctrine of imputed righteousness—." Should you not rather have said, the nice metaphysical? since, as to the doctrine, we are, according to your own confession, bound, therefore, each of us equally bound, to clear it of the consequences with which it may be charged by the author of the Preservative, or other objector. And as to the phrase, I cannot understand by what deity Mr. Wesley calls it *metaphysical*. Theron, it is true, uses the word and applies it to the present subject; but does not Mr. Wesley know, Theron often personates an enemy, and speaks the language of unbelief? Please, Sir, to explain your term, and show in what sense it is compatible with this article of my faith: "I am acquitted and counted righteous by God, only through the imputation of my Saviour's obedience and death;" which is, both in style and sentiment, truly evangelical, but in no sense, that I can discern, metaphysical.

When Mr. Wesley adds, "This leads not to repentance, but to licentiousness," he speaks what we understand, not what we allow. Will any one say, that speculative reasoning upon the goodness of God, or contemplating it merely in our ideas, leadeth to repentance; but when we taste and enjoy, when we apply and appropriate, his profusely rich liberality in Christ, we are thereby prompted to neglect, abuse, and dishonour our great Benefactor? Or shall it be said, the divine goodness, manifested in common providence, and inferior instances, tends to awaken love, and work godliness; but the same divine goodness, shining forth in the most illustrious manifestation that men or angels ever knew; shining forth with a glory, a richness, a perfection, sufficient to transport heaven and earth with joy unspeakable—this goodness tends to excite contempt of God, and to cherish carnal indulgence? Such an insinuation, so depreciatory to the righteousness of the blessed Jesus, I had much rather have heard in a Jewish synagogue, than have seen in Mr. Wesley's writings.

No, Sir; this, and this alone, leadeth a sinner to repentance. Not all the munificence of the Deity, neither the rain from heaven nor fruitful seasons, neither the fatness of the earth nor the abundance of the seas, can take away the enmity of our nature, and reconcile our affections to God. Nothing, nothing but a sense of pardon and acceptance, through the work finished on Immanuel's cross. If you please to review the text, you will not affirm that the apostle is asserting the efficacious influence of providential goodness on the hearts of men. He is evidently inveighing against the gross and almost general abuse of such bounty. Though it ought, it does not produce gratitude and duty. It would indeed upon upright, but it does not thus operate upon depraved minds. No cause is adequate to this effect, but free justification through Jesus Christ.

"The believer cannot but add to his faith, works of righteousness." "During his first love," says Mr. Wesley, "this is often true; but it is not true afterwards, as we know and feel by melancholy experience." How, Sir! do you yourself feel this? Where, then, is your sinless perfection! Can they be perfect, whose love ceases to glow, and whose zeal loses its

activity? Does Mr. Wesley himself make this confession? Let him say with us, and let us say with invariable steadfastness, and with increasing gratitude, Blessed be God for perfection in Jesus Christ.

Do you learn, Sir, what is here acknowledged, by observations made upon others? Then those others, I apprehend, if they do not exercise themselves in good works, either have no faith, and deceive both you and themselves; or else they intermit and discontinue the exertion of their faith; which neither detracts from the efficacy of the principle, nor disproves Aspasio's opinion. It is not said, the believer never trips nor falters in the course of his obedience; but he always adds to his faith the duties and works of obedience. Whenever the former acts, the latter constantly ensue. So long as we live by the faith of the Son of God, we shall not fail to bring forth those fruits of righteousness which are through Jesus Christ.

This is strongly maintained by Aspasio in another place: "It is as impossible for the sun to be in his meridian height, and not dissipate darkness or diffuse light, as for faith to exist in the soul, and not exalt the temper and meliorate the conduct." This is very forcibly implied in our Lord's interrogation to his disciples, Where is your faith? It must be dormant and inactive, like the sap of the trees in winter, or like the faculty of reasoning in sleep; otherwise, it would banish your fears, even amidst the raging storm, and produce an undaunted confidence in God your Saviour. The design of all this is, to evince the wisdom of the gospel, which lays such a stress upon faith; so frequently urges the necessity of faith, above and before all things; representing it as the principal work of the divine Spirit, and the great instrument of receiving salvation. Hence it appears, that the sacred plan is not formed in vain; much less is it calculated to suppress or discourage real holiness.

"We no longer obey, in order to lay the foundation for our final acceptance;" These words I read with pleasure.—"That foundation is already laid in the merits of Christ:" These I contemplate with still greater satisfaction. But when I come to the following clause, "Yet we obey, in order to our final acceptance through his merits," with disappointment and regret I cry, How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!

A foundation, for what? Aspasio would reply, For pardon, for reconciliation, and for everlasting salvation; for peace of conscience, for access to God, for every spiritual and eternal blessing. A foundation, of what kind? In all respects perfect; incapable of any augmentation; not to be strengthened, enlarged, or improved by all the duties and all the deeds of prophets, apostles, martyrs; because it has omnipotence for its establishment. A foundation, for whom? For sinners; for the vilest and most miserable of sinners; that all guilty and undone wretches may come, and though ever so weary, ever so heavy laden, may cast their burden upon this Rock of ages, in full assurance of finding rest, and obtaining safety.

This is cheering; this is charming. What pity it is that such an illustrious truth should be clouded, such a precious privilege spoiled, by that ungracious sentence, "We obey in order to our final acceptance!" But is this, Sir, your constant profession? I must do you the justice to own, that you have happier moments, and more becoming apprehensions. When you join in public worship, this is your humble and just acknowledgment,

Although we be unworthy through our manifold sins to offer unto thee

any sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service." When you criticise upon Aspasio, the note is changed, and this is the purport of your strain, "We beseech thee to accept us on account of these our services, for we do them, O Lord, with a professed view to this end." To implore acceptance for our duties, confesses them to be mean and contemptible; whereas, to expect acceptance on their account, strongly intimates their excellency; that they are worthy in a very high degree, so as to obtain favour, not for themselves only, but for a miserable creature also, who confesses himself subject to manifold sins.

I said, "on account of;" for if you obey in order to your final acceptance, surely you must expect final acceptance and eternal life on account of your own obedience. A poor object displays his sores, and relates his distress, in order to obtain your alms: does he not then expect your alms on account of his sores, his distress, and his piteous tale? What a coalition is here between Mr. Wesley and the subjects of the triple crown! I find the whole council of Trent establishing his sentiments by their anathematizing decree. These are their words: "If any one shall say that the righteous ought not for their own good works to expect the eternal reward through the merits of Jesus Christ, let him be accursed," De Bon. Oper. Can. xxvi. Do you speak of the merit of Christ? So do they. Do you, in some sense, allow Christ to be the foundation? So do they. Are your works to rear the edifice, and perform the most respectable part of the business? So are theirs.

By this time, I believe, the thoughtful reader will guess the reason why you oppose and decry imputed righteousness. You are solicitous, it seems, not barely for works of obedience, but for their value and credit in the affair of salvation; for their significancy and influence in winning the good will of Jehovah. Since this is your notion, you may well be offended at Christ's imputed righteousness. This will admit of no partner or coadjutor. This, Sir, in the case of justification, pours contempt upon all your most laborious exercises, and admired attainments. Yea, this being divine and inconceivably excellent, pours all around a blaze of glory, in which all our puny doings are lost, as the stars in the meridian sunshine.

"We obey in order to our final acceptance. Methinks this discovers no more gratitude than wisdom. Is it not an officious indignity to that noble goodness which has set forth Jesus Christ for a propitiation? Is it not a contemptuous disregard of that heavenly voice which said, with so much solemnity, "in him I am well pleased," with the children of men. Does this exalt, does it not degrade, the Saviour? Does it mortify, does it not cherish, the pride of man? According to this scheme, the merits of our Lord are the foundation, not immediately of our acceptance, but of that situation only in which we are supposed capable of acquiring it ourselves. They are, in short, no more than a mere pedestal, on which human worth, or rather human vanity, may stand exalted, and challenge the favour of Heaven.

Ah, Sir! Acceptance with God is an immensely rich and glorious blessing; a high and transcendently precious privilege: incomparably too high and glorious to be obtained, in any degree, by such mean obedience as yours and mine. The pardon of rebels against the King of kings! The reception of leprous sinners into the bosom of heaven! Shall such effects—than which nothing can be greater; shall such benefits—than which nothing can be richer—be ascribed to human obedience? What but the very distraction of

our disease can have occasioned, or can account for, a thought so extreme in absurdity? [Shall we, sordid wretches, with our ulcerous sores, our withered limbs, and a stupor over all our faculties; shall we think ourselves able to do something for him who needeth not the service of angels? Nay, to do something considerable enough to found a claim to that transcendent honour and happiness, the light of his countenance?] Our adoration! Our thank-givings! Our praises! Our prayers! Our preaching! Our sacramental duties! What are they all but filthy rags (Isa. lxiv. 6,) compared with his inconceivable holiness and glory? What part of his work do we attempt, but we debase it with our deplorable imperfections, or pollute it with our very touch? Shame then belongs to us, shame and confusion of face, whenever we look to ourselves, or our own performances; while all our comfort, all our hope, is to be derived from the only righteous one, Christ Jesus.

If we know not enough of our own meanness and impotency, let us listen to the prophet, Isaiah xl. 15, 16, 17. In order to our acceptance with God, he informs us, Lebanon with all her stately cedars is not sufficient to burn, nor all the beasts that range through her extensive shades sufficient for a burnt-offering. Nations, whole nations, avail no more than single persons. Should they unite their abilities, and exert all their efforts, to do something which may recommend them to Jehovah; all would be mean, ineffectual, despicable. Mean, as the drop of a bucket which falls to the ground, and none regards it; ineffectual as the dust upon the balance, which wants even that small degree of impetus necessary to turn the most nicely poised scales; despicable as the atom that floats in the air, and has not weight enough to settle itself on any object. Should you reply, In all these things there is some, though very little substance: the prophet farther declares, that all nations in the world, with all their virtues, accomplishments, and works, would before the infinitely majestic God be as nothing, less than nothing, yea, vanity itself; incapable, absolutely incapable of winning his favour, or doing anything worthy of his notice. Blessed, therefore, for ever blessed be divine grace, that we have a great High-priest, in whom God is pleased, is well pleased, and his very soul delighteth; whose sacrifice and whose work have merited all the good that sinners can want, or the Almighty can bestow.

If we are not yet duly humbled, nor willing to profess ourselves beholden to divine grace alone; if we still resolve to be principals or partners with the one Mediator in the purchase of the inestimable jewel; let us fear, lest the Lord our righteousness resent such a dishonour done to himself, and swear in his wrath, that we shall have neither lot nor portion in this matter. Of this he has expressly warned us by his apostle: "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." What would St. Paul teach us by this solemn protestation? That no Jew can be saved? Himself was an Hebrew of the Hebrews, circumcised the eighth day. That a Christian would by receiving circumcision after his conversion to Christ, forfeit all his privileges? No; for he himself circumcised Timothy, to gain for him a fair hearing from the judaizing bigots. Or is circumcision here used by way of synecdoche for the ceremonial law; teaching us, that as the Mosaic rites were now abolished, an attempt to continue the observance of them would be an unpardonable opposition to the designs of Providence? The charitable compromise recorded in the xivth to the Romans, leads to a different conclusion. Or did those seducing teachers, who required this conformity from

the Gentile converts, require them to renounce Christ, and relapse into mere Judaism? Neither is this at all supposable. They only required such a conformity, "in order to their acceptance through his merits," which they never rejected, but only placed as a foundation for their own.

What then can be meant by, "Christ shall profit you nothing, if ye be circumcised?" If ye make circumcision, or any thing whatever besides the righteousness of Christ, necessary to your acceptance with God, ye shall receive no advantage from all that the Redeemer has done or suffered? This is to halt between works and grace, between Christ and self: and such divided regard he will interpret as an affront rather than an acceptable homage. Indeed, this is in Christians the grand apostasy. By this they deny the sufficiency of their Saviour's most consummate righteousness. They cast themselves entirely out of the covenant of grace, and must expect no salvation but by doing the whole law.

This is the awful apostolic caution: to which let me subjoin the plain apostolic instruction. *Ye are accepted*, says St. Paul, not partially, but entirely; not occasionally, but finally *in the Beloved*. All acceptance, of whatever kind, or whatever date, is wholly in him, not in any thing of our own. The author to the Hebrews affirms, that Christ "hath obtained redemption, not left it to be accomplished, either in greater or smaller measure, by our diligence and duties. No; he himself hath obtained, both present and final, yea, complete and "eternal redemption for us." And will you, Sir, ascribe to your own obedience, what the apostle so expressly ascribes, and so entirely appropriates, to the blessed Jesus? The same writer assures us that Christ, "by one offering, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Them that are cleansed with the blood of sprinkling, he hath not only discharged from the guilt of sin, but rendered them unblamable and unreprouvable before the Majesty of heaven. He hath done all that is necessary for their full, perfect, and everlasting acceptance. Yes, whether it be in life or death; whether it be at the throne of grace, or the tribunal of judgment; during the span of time, or through the ages of eternity, all that is necessary for our perfect acceptance is done,—done by an infinitely better hand than our own, by an infinitely better expedient than any human obedience.

Do I, by these remonstrances, set at nought true holiness, or suppose a salvation separate from holy obedience? You, Sir, cannot entertain such a supposition; since, in your very remark, you was dissatisfied with my insisting on the inseparable connexion of a living faith and works of righteousness. I honour and prize works of righteousness. I would incessantly inculcate, both the indispensable necessity and the manifold utility of holy obedience. We are redeemed, that we may be zealous of good works; we are created in Christ Jesus, that we may be able to do good works: and by good works we are to glorify our Father which is in heaven.

Only I would have good works know their proper station, and their proper office. I am far from setting at nought the services of the hand or the foot; but I should very much disapprove their design, I should utterly despise their pretensions, if they should offer to intrude themselves on the province of the eye, or act as the organs of sight. Apply this simile to the obedience of man, and justification before God, or acceptance with God; you will

then see in what rank I place, in what esteem I hold, both the one and the other.

As I would have obedience know its proper place, so I would have it take a right form. The obedience which you propose is the obedience of the bondman, not of the free. A slave bought with our money, obeys in order to be accepted. A servant hired to dispatch our business, obeys because he is beloved; because he is the heir, and all things which the father hath are his.

“Obey in order to acceptance!” Indeed, Sir, you quite mistake the principle and source of Christian obedience. Nor shall I undertake to rectify your mistaken apprehensions, lest you should scorn to learn from an inferior. I will refer you to a set of teachers, from whom you need not blush to receive instruction. But as this may demand a very particular consideration, I shall postpone it to some future opportunity, and assign to it a distinct epistle.

In the mean time, if you should ask, why I have been so copious upon this point? I answer, Because it is a matter of the utmost importance. An error on this subject, is as detrimental to our spiritual welfare as a fault in the first concoction is to the animal constitution. A mistake concerning acceptance with God, must set in a false light every religious truth, and shed a malignant influence on every religious sentiment.

If you ask, why I have repeated the obnoxious proposition, almost as frequently as the rams' horns sounded the fatal blast on the day when Jericho was overthrown? I answer, For the very same purpose: to overthrow, if possible, so pernicious a notion: to lay it as low as the fortifications of that devoted city. And I hope, neither Mr. Wesley, nor any other, will attempt to rebuild it, lest they lay the foundation thereof in the dishonour of the blessed Redeemer; and set up the gates of it in the distress of precious souls. Both which effects, I am persuaded, are very remote from your intention. That they may be equally remote from your preaching, your writing, and all your doctrine, is the sincere wish of, &c.

LETTER IV.

REVEREND SIR,—I had, in the warmth of my concern, almost forgot to take notice of a text which you produce from 1 Tim. vi. 17—19: and, which is somewhat strange, produce as a proof that the apostle requires Christians “to obey in order to their final acceptance.”

Is Paul then become the apostate? And do the curses which he has denounced against the seducers of the Galatian converts, fall at length on his own head? He placed Timothy at Ephesus, as the bulwark against the encroachments of other doctrines. Was it with a reserve for liberties of this kind, which he himself should take? Can we think his mind so much altered, since he told those very Ephesians, that without seeking acceptance through their obedience, they were already accepted in the Beloved? Does he now retract the blessed truth; advising the rich to raise a cloud of golden dust, that it may cover their sins, and waft them to the skies? at the same

me, excluding the poor from the fellowship of this new gospel, and the hope of glory? Is he grown ashamed of that righteousness of God, which assured the Romans was the power of God, unto salvation, only through believing? And are we, Sir, grown weary of that pure doctrine, which was restored to us by our glorious reformers? Are we willing to give up the depositum, and return to the more Egyptian darkness of friars and monks; with whom

Coelum est venale Deus que?

But to the point. I shall transcribe the text, and add a short paraphrase; which may perhaps explain the meaning, and best refute the objection. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation, that they may lay hold on eternal life." *Charge them*, those believers among you, *who are rich in this world, that they do good*; that, as members of Christ, they shew kindness, and exercise beneficence to others. *That they be rich in good works*, abounding in those works and labours of love which flow from faith, or a comfortable persuasion of their interest in Christ. *Ready to distribute*, on all proper occasions, with cheerfulness and delight; as counting it more blessed to give than to receive. *Willing*, even without solicitation, *to communicate*; and not only embracing, but seeking every opportunity of relieving the necessitous. Lightly esteeming all that is called wealth here below; and *laying up in store for themselves* another kind of treasure, [even Christ, who is the pearl of price, and the true riches]. This will be a good foundation of hope, of comfort and joy, *against the time to come*, whether it be the trying season of sickness, the awful hour of death, or the more tremendous day of judgment. That, placing their affections on him, and having their treasure in him, they may be found wise merchants; not grasping uncertainties and shadows, but *laying fast hold on** sure and substantial possessions, even on *eternal life*.

"We establish the law—we provide for its honour, by the perfect obedience of Christ," says Aspasio. "Can you possibly think (replies Mr. Wesley) that St. Paul meant this?" Before I answer this question, give me leave to ask another. Have you, Sir, done justice to Aspasio? Is what you quote the whole of his interpretation? Have you not secreted a sentence, which speaks the very thing you blame him for omitting?

A member of the house of commons, haranguing the honourable assembly, took the liberty to assert, "The gentlemen in the ministerial interest never propose any thing for the good of their country—" This was no sooner uttered, than a warm partisan of the other side starting up, complained loudly of calumny and scandal. Hold, Sir, for a moment, said the interrupted orator. Let me just finish my sentence, and then give vent to your vehement invectives. My intention was to have added, "—but we in the opposition readily agree to their measures." Upon hearing this explanation the house smiled, and the hasty zealot sat down ashamed.

Let me produce the whole period now under consideration. Then, I believe, the reader will allow that Mr. Wesley has imitated this hasty gentleman in one instance; and whether he has not some reason to imitate

* *Take fast hold on*—thus I would translate that emphatical compound word *σπιλασσωται*; which agrees with the experience of the Christian, and is not without the authority of the critic.

him in another, I shall leave to his own determination. Immediately after the display of free justification, or of "righteousness imputed without works," Rom. iv. 6, Aspasio, aware of the possibility of abusing his doctrine, asserts the indispensable necessity of holiness. This done, as quite cleared from the accusation, he triumphs with the apostle, "'Do we then make void the law through faith in the imputed righteousness of our Lord? 'God forbid! Yea, we establish the law.' Considered as the original covenant of life, we provide for its honour, by the perfect obedience of Christ: considered as the invariable standard of duty, we enforce its observance, by the most rational, manly, and endearing motives." Here, Sir, was hardly any room for the precipitancy of interruption, because the whole passage lay before you. And it is a little surprising, that you should see and animadvert upon the former clause, yet neither see nor regard the clause immediately following.

"Did such a thought (of establishing the law by the atonement and righteousness of Christ) ever enter into St. Paul's mind?" Let the preceding context determine. Has the apostle been opening the true sense of the precepts, that they might be rightly understood? Has he been inculcating the inviolable obligation of the precepts, that they might be duly practised? Has he not been asserting a justification absolutely free, effected by the righteousness of God, without any coagency from the righteousness of man? Does he not, in the last words, professedly encounter the objection, which, in every age, has been raised against this sacred doctrine, "Hereby you neglect and dishonour the divine law?" No; says the inspired apologist, the law is hereby established, and shewn to be more stable than earth or heaven. The grand Legislator himself shall be humbled to its obedience; the God who gave the law, shall bleed for its penalties, rather than a tittle fail of its due accomplishment. Magnified thus, the law indeed is, and made for ever honourable. And though Aspasio does not exclude our practical regards, I do verily for my own part believe, that the former sentiment, against which you exclaim, was uppermost with the apostle, and is the chief design of the text.

Yes, Sir, it was the apostle's chief design, to shew the perfect consistency of free justification with the most awful glories of the Deity; and thereby lay a firm foundation for the hope of a sinner. Had justice, which is the essential glory of God's nature, or the law, which is the revealed glory of his will—had either of these been violated by the evangelical scheme, benign and desirable as it is, it must have been utterly rejected: It could never have taken place; the whole world must have perished, rather than such an injury be offered to any of the divine perfections. Therefore St. Paul most sweetly teaches, and most satisfactorily proves, that instead of being injured, they are most illustriously displayed, by the obedience and death of Christ. By this means Jehovah is inflexibly just even in justifying the ungodly; and his law is highly exalted, even in absolving the transgressor that believeth in Jesus.

Here is firm footing; here is solid rock.

Solid rock, on which the sinner may rest, who is well nigh sunk in despair, while the waves and billows of divine indignation go over his alarmed soul. *Firm footing*, on which he may proceed who sees the importance of his eternal interests, and does not risk them on the vague notion of mere mercy; does not give into the modish religion, which leaves such venerable things as the justice of the Most High, and the law of the Most Holy, destitute of

their due honour; and leaves such impotent creatures as men to shift for themselves by doing the best they can.

“The plain meaning is, we establish both the true sense and the effectual practice of the law: we provide for its being both understood and practised in its full extent.” How can you make this provision, if you set aside the consummate obedience of Christ, “who is the end of the law for righteousness;” for accomplishing that righteousness which its precepts describe, and its constitution demands?

O Sir! did you consider what that meaneth which the apostle styles *το αδυνατον του νομου*, you would not use this language. Can we, can such miserable sinners as we, ever dream of effectually practising, in its full extent, that law which condemns every failure, which requires truth in the inward parts, which insists upon perfection, absolute perfection, in every instance and on all occasions; charging us,

With act intense, and unremitting nerve,
To hold a course unflinching,

to the very end of our lives, and from the beginning of them too? Attend, I entreat you, Sir, to this most sublime sanctity of the divine law. Then, instead of saying, “we provide for its performance in the full extent of its demands,” you will probably say, with a more becoming modesty, we provide for its performance in a way of willing, cheerful, sincere obedience; still looking unto him for justification, who has, in our name and as our surety, fulfilled it to the very uttermost.

It is, I apprehend, one of your leading errors, that you form low, scanty, inadequate apprehensions of God’s law; that law which is a bright representation of his most pure nature, a beautiful draught of his most holy will, and never since the fall has been perfectly exemplified in any living character, but only in the man Christ Jesus. From this error many others must unavoidably follow:—a disesteem of imputed righteousness, and a conceit of personal perfection; a spirit of legal bondage, and, I fear, a tincture of pharisaical pride.

Should Mr. Wesley ask, why I harbour such a suspicion concerning his sentiments in this particular? I answer, Because here he speaks of practising this law, which is so exceeding broad, in its full extent. Because, elsewhere, he represents the violations of this law, whose least tittle is of greater dignity than heaven and earth, as small matters, as petty offences; or, to use his own words, as “things not exactly right.” But more of this hereafter.

Aspasio, to vindicate the equity of the future judgment, declares, “I see nothing arbitrary in this procedure, but an admirable mixture of just severity and free goodness. On those who reject the atonement, just severity; to those who rely on their Saviour, free goodness.” Mr. Wesley, as though he would exculpate the ungodly asks, “Was it ever possible for them not to reject?” What says our infallible Counsellor, the Teacher sent from God? “They will not come to me, that they may have life.” They rejected his counsel. They would not cease from their own works, and betake themselves wholly to the righteousness of Christ. This method of salvation they disliked; it was foolishness unto them: therefore, they were disobedient to the heavenly call. Does this take away their guilt? Must God be reckoned unjust in punishing, because men are obstinate in their unbelief?

God does not require me, as you too injuriously hint, to "touch heaven with my hand," in order to escape damnation; but he invites and requires me to accept of Christ and his salvation. If, intent upon any imaginary accomplishments of my own, I overlook the gift; or if, eager in the pursuit of worldly gratifications, I trample upon it; is not the fault entirely my own? Does it not proceed from the folly of my mind, or the bad disposition of my heart, and leave my conduct without excuse?

"Justification is complete the first moment we believe, and is incapable of augmentation." Thus Aspasio speaks: thus Mr. Wesley replies, "Not so." And has he, for his authority, a single text of Scripture? No; but the whole council of Trent, one of whose canons dogmatizes in this manner; "If any shall affirm that righteousness received is not preserved, and increased likewise, by good works; but that good works are only the fruits and signs of justification obtained, not the means of increasing it also, let him be accursed;" Sess. vi. Can. 24. I am sorry, Sir, to see you again in such company. And I would hope, if it were not an unhandsome reflection, you did not know your associates. Yet it is strange, that a Protestant divine should have been so inattentive to the main part of his character, or should be able to forget, that complete justification, through the righteousness of our Lord alone, is the very essence, soul, and glory of the Reformation.

But let us examine the point: justification, I apprehend, is one single act of divine grace. It must, therefore, be either done or undone. If done, is my very idea of the act, it includes completeness. So that to speak of incomplete justification is a contradiction in terms; like speaking of dark sunshine, or a round square.

An incomplete justification, seems, in the very nature of things, to be an absolute impossibility. Even an earthly judge cannot justify where there is the least departure from integrity. He may overlook, he may show clemency, he may forgive; but he cannot, in such a case, pronounce righteous. Much less can we suppose that justification should take place before an infinitely pure and jealous God, unless all guilt be done away, and the person be rendered completely righteous.

Besides, can that justification be other than complete, which is brought to pass by the most majestic Son of God? by his perfectly holy nature, by his infinitely precious sufferings, and by his inconceivably meritorious obedience? This, if anything in the world, must be absolutely complete; beyond compare and beyond imagination complete; to speak all in a word, complete in proportion to the dignity, perfection, and glory of the accomplisher.

Is any such notion as an incomplete justification to be found in the Bible? St. Paul says, whosoever believeth is justified; "to all intents and purposes justified. No, says Mr. Wesley; he may be justified only in part, or by halves. "He that believeth (adds the apostle) is justified from all things." No, replies Mr. Wesley; many that believe, especially in the infancy of their faith, are justified only from some things. There is no necessity that justification should be complete, when or wherever it exists.

Is there no necessity? Why then does the voice of inspiration assert, that the righteousness of God is upon them that believe? Can a man have that incomparably magnificent righteousness, and yet be incompletely justified? Does not the same inspired writer declare, that this perfect and divine righteousness is upon all; not upon *some* only, but upon *all* believers; whether

they be weak or strong, whether in the first moments of their conversion, or in the last stage of their warfare? Yes; and he farther assures us, that there is no difference; no difference with regard to the righteousness itself, for it is the one everlasting righteousness of the incarnate God; no difference as to the reality of its imputation, for it is unto all, and upon all; no difference in the way of receiving it, which is by faith in Jesus Christ; consequently, no difference in the fruits or effects, which are pardon and acceptance, free and full justification.

Is Mr. Wesley, like the popish party, an advocate for a first, for a second, for I know not how many justifications? According to this scheme, indeed, justification would be an incomplete thing. But the misfortune attending this scheme is, that it has no foundation in Scripture. The Scripture knows nothing of it; the Scripture declares against it; and acknowledges, as but one faith, but one baptism, so but one justification.

This is the grand scriptural maxim, "He hath, by one oblation, perfected for ever them that are sanctified." The oblation is one, needing no repetition and no appendage. It does not partially accomplish, but perfects the business of justification; perfects it, not at the last only, but from first to last, yea, for ever and ever, in behalf of all those who are sanctified, or made partakers of this great sacrifice, and this divine atonement.

This is the fine scriptural illustration, "The heir, even while he is a child, is lord of all." You have, perhaps, a son born. Upon this child you multiply your favours and caresses: he grows in wisdom and stature: yet neither your favours, nor his growth, add any thing to his sonship, nor augment his right to your inheritance. With both these he was invested the first moment he drew breath. So, we are no sooner justified than we are heirs; "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." The perception and enjoyment of this privilege may increase; but the privilege itself, like the birth-right of the first-born, is incapable of augmentation.

Would Mr. Wesley, with the followers of Arminius, exclude the righteousness of Christ, and introduce something of man's, as the efficient, or as a concurrent cause of justification? Then, likewise, his notion of a gradual, a variable, and incomplete justification must ensue. Whether it be faith which he would introduce for this purpose, or repentance, or sincere obedience, or whatever else he pleases, according to the measure of these works or graces must be the degree of justification; and not only as to different persons, but as to the same person at different times.

Farther; since all these endowments are, so long as we continue in the present state, imperfect, our justification must, according to this plan, unavoidably partake of their imperfections. It cannot be entire and lacking nothing, till mortality is swallowed up of life.—But how contrary is this to a cloud of witnesses from the Scriptures! "Ye are (even now) justified. He hath (even in this present time) reconciled you to God." Through the birth and death of Immanuel, there is not only peace on earth, but good-will towards men; *ευδοκία*, favour, complacency, and love, from the holy God to the fallen soul. And is not this complete justification?

"There may be as many degrees in the favour, as in the image of God." This objection turns upon a supposition, that the favour of God towards us is occasioned by the image of God in us; which is the doctrine of the law, the very language of Heathenism, and has not a savour of that gospel in

which Christ is all. And I think myself more concerned to remove such very prejudicial mistakes, than to sift and adjust any nice speculations relating to degrees of the divine favour. Aspasio has touched this point. Referring you to his observation, I shall confine myself to a more interesting subject.

It is Christ who has redeemed us to God, to the favour and fruition of God by his blood; by his blood alone, without any aid from our goodness, or any co-operation from any creature. His work pleases God; his work magnifies the law; his work is incomparably the noblest of all things in heaven or earth. This, therefore, is our recommendation to the divine Majesty. Interested in this, we stand perfectly righteous before the King immortal, and shall be eternally acceptable in his sight. It was only on account of Abraham's supplication, that God showed compassion to Abimelech; it was only on account of Job's intercession, that the Lord was pacified towards his three friends; and it is only on account of Christ's righteousness, that the high and Holy One beholds any child of Adam with complacency and delight. To Jesus alone belongs the honour of reconciling, justifying, saving the innumerable millions of redeemed sinners. And is not the Lamb that was slain worthy to be thus honoured, and thus exalted?

Is, then, our own internal and external goodness of no avail in this matter? Let us hear the eloquent Isaiah, the evangelist of the Jewish church: "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord (the Lord Jesus Christ) alone shall be exalted in that day." Does this text, it may be said, relate to the gospel, and the case of acceptance with God? Or is it possible to make what follows consistent with such an interpretation? Let us see whether it be not, by the Holy Ghost himself, made perfectly consistent with such a sense.

The day of the Lord of hosts, in the prophetic Scriptures, generally and principally signifies the time of the gospel dispensation; when the Lord puts the finishing hand to his revelation, gives the brightest display of his grace, and gathers together all things in Christ.

This day, and its influence, shall cause a wonderful revolution in what is called the religious, virtuous, moral world: it shall fall like a thunderbolt upon every idol set up in the hearts of men; shall prove their wisdom to be folly, their ability to be impotence, all their works to be worthless.

This prophecy being so repugnant to our notions, and so disgusting to our inclinations, is asserted and enforced with the greatest particularity, both as to persons and to things.

As to *persons*.—"For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon"—whom? Upon the sordid wretch, or the scandalous sinner? Rather upon "every one that is proud and lofty in his own conceit;" pluming himself with the notion of some imaginary pre-eminence over his neighbour. It shall be likewise upon "every one that is lifted up" in the esteem of others; either on account of Roman virtue, or Athenian philosophy, or pharisaical zeal; and, notwithstanding his aspiring pretensions, or glittering accomplishments, "he shall be brought low," shall be degraded to the rank of a lost, undone, helpless sinner.

So that none shall have it in his power to say, "I am better than thou. I stand upon more honourable terms with my Maker, and am a fitter object for his favour." They shall all be like prisoners confined in the same dun-

geon, and liable in the same condemnation. Every one of them equally destitute of any plea for justification : and all of them, as to acceptance with their Creator, without any difference. No difference, in this respect, between the accomplished gentleman and the infamous scoundrel ; no difference between the virtuous lady and the vile prostitute ; no difference at all as to the way and manner of their obtaining salvation. So that the whole may appear to be of grace.

As to *things*.—This part of the subject is illustrated by a grand assemblage of images, comprehending all that is most distinguishable in the visible creation, and denoting whatever is most admired or celebrated among the sons of men. Oaks and cedars are the most stately productions of vegetable nature : Therefore “the day shall be upon all the cedars of Lebanon, and upon all the oaks of Bashan.” Hills and mountains are the most conspicuous and majestic elevations of the earth : therefore “the day shall be upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up.” Towers and cities are the most magnificent works of human art : therefore “the day shall be upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall.” *The ships of Tarshish* are put for the wealth, the advantages, and the various improvements procured by navigation and commerce. *Pleasant pictures* may represent every elegant and refined embellishment of civil life. The whole collection of metaphors seems to express all those attainments, possessions, and excellencies, which are supposed to add dignity to our nature, or stability to our hopes ; to constitute a portion in which we ourselves may rest satisfied, or a recommendation which may entitle us to the favour of heaven.

Yet all these things, before the requirements of God’s law, and before the revelation of his righteousness, shall be eclipsed and disgraced ; thrown to the bats, and consigned over to obscurity ; thrown to the moles, and trampled into dust. So that in the pursuit of eternal life none shall regard them, or regard them only to despise them.

Thus says the prophet a second time. To render the work of humiliation effectual, he redoubles his blow. May our whole souls feel the energy of his vigorous expressions ! Thus “shall the loftiness of man be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be laid low.” All notion of personal excellency set aside, they shall be base and vile in their own eyes, acknowledge the impossibility of being reconciled by any duties of their own, and place all their confidence on the propitiating death and meritorious obedience of Jesus Christ : they less than nothing, he all in all.

With this important sentiment I close my letter ; not without an ardent wish, that it may sink into our thoughts, and dwell upon both our hearts. Yours, &c.

LETTER V.

REVEREND SIR,—Your last, and several of your other objections, appear more like notes and memorandums, than a just plea to the public, or a satisfactory explanation of your opinion. They have rather the air of a caveat, than a confutation ; and we are often at a loss to discern, how far your remonstrance is either forcible or apposite.

Brief negatives, laconic assertions, and quick interrogatories opened by no pertinent illustrations, supported by no scriptural authority, are more likely

to stagger, stun, and puzzle, than to settle our notions in religion. You seem, Sir, to have forgotten, that propositions are not to be established with the same ease as doubts are started; and therefore have contented yourself with a brevity which produces but little conviction, and more than a little obscurity.

This brevity of yours is the cause, and I hope will be the excuse, of my prolixity; which, I perceive, is growing upon my hands, much more than I intended. If you had been pleased to show your arguments at full length, and to accompany with proof your glosses upon Scripture, the reader would then have been able to determine the preponderating evidence between yourself and Aspasio; and my trouble had been considerably lessened, perhaps quite spared.

An instance of the foregoing remark, is the objection which follows. "St. Paul often mentions *a* righteousness imputed," says Aspasio. "Not *a* righteousness (says Mr. Wesley) never once; but simply righteousness." St. Paul mentions *δικαιοσύνη*, the righteousness which is imputed, both with and without the Greek article. And do neither of these signify *a* righteousness? This is a piece of criticism, as new to me as it is nice in itself. Besides, where is the difference between *a* righteousness, and righteousness? Is not every righteousness *a* righteousness? Is not every person *a* person? and every prodigious refinement, *a* prodigious refinement? I thought Mr. Wesley had known how to employ his time better than in splitting, or thus attempting to split, hairs.

To what purpose, Sir, is this excessive refinement? Many of your readers, I apprehend, will find it difficult to conjecture. For my own part, I freely confess, that I could not for a considerable time discern your aim. Nor can I, even now, discover any other design, than a forced endeavour to exclude the righteousness of Christ, and introduce a mistaken something of your own to officiate in its stead. As the thread of your criticism is spun extremely fine, we must examine it with the closest attention. But first let me just take notice—

That Aspasio, in consequence of his observation deduced from the apostle's language, asks, What or whose righteousness can this be? To which Mr. Wesley answers, "he tells you himself; faith is imputed for righteousness." But have you never read Aspasio's interpretation of this text? If not, be so impartial as to cast your eye upon the tenth Dialogue. There he considers this passage at large, and lays before you his exposition of the words: not imposing it without assigning a reason; but, together with his exposition, presenting you with the grounds of his opinion. If you can overthrow them, try your strength and your skill. They stand ready to receive your attack, being at present in full possession of the field.

However, if you will not advert to his thoughts, allow me, if I can, to penetrate yours. "St. Paul never mentions *a* righteousness, but simply righteousness." Thus, I presume, you argue:—not *a* righteousness; that might seem to denote some real righteousness, some actual conformity to the divine law, imputed to sinners for their justification. Whereas, if faith be substituted instead of this real righteousness; if faith be all that to us, which our own obedience to the law should have been, and which Aspasio supposes the righteousness of Christ is appointed to be; if faith itself be all this to us, then we are made righteous without a righteousness. Something is accounted to us for righteousness, which is really no such thing. Then we

shall be under no necessity of submitting to the righteousness of our God and Saviour, but may easily be furnished out of our own stock.

Is not this, or something like this, your way of reasoning? Do you not, in this manner, understand faith imputed for righteousness? Not as deriving all its efficacy, all its significancy, from its most magnificent object; but as being itself the efficient of justification, the very thing for which we are accepted: in opposition "to the wicked and vain commentaries of the Calvinists, which say, that all this is resident in Christ, and apprehended by faith."

This led me to use that singular expression, "a mistaken something;" since this is an egregious mistake of faith—of its nature, its end, its import. Of its nature: for it is a going out of self, and a flying to Christ, for pardon, for peace, and for every spiritual blessing. Of its end: for it is ordained to preclude all boasting, that itself may be nothing; that its owner may be nothing; that the grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ, may be all in all. Of its import: for it says, according to the prophet, In the Lord, not in myself, have I righteousness. It would expostulate in the words of the apostle, with its overweening and doating admirers, Ye men of Israel, why look ye so earnestly on me, as though by my own power or dignity I had procured your reconciliation, and rendered you accepted? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has glorified his Son Jesus, and appropriated this honour to his obedience and death. In the matter of justification, it is my business, not to furnish a contingent, not to supply any part, but to receive the whole from his fulness.

"On Christ's death sinners are to rely as the cause of their forgiveness; on Christ's obedience, as the ground of their acceptance."—"How does this agree with other places?" Be pleased to turn back, Sir, to the places to which you allude; and, with a very little attention, you will perceive the agreement. Then let me desire you to turn inward; and you will probably discern more than a little disingenuity in your own procedure; since you resolve to stop your ears against the author's explanation, his very particular explanation and restriction of his own meaning*. If you was examining a mathematical system, you would always carry in your memory the leading problems or introductory axioms. If you did not, your own judgment would blame you. And when you neglect to do the same in canvassing a theological treatise, does not your own conscience reprove you?

"Our Lord commends such kinds of beneficence only, as were exercised to a disciple in the name of a disciple." Here Mr. Wesley asks, "Is not this a slip of the pen?" Read the passage, Sir; and answer yourself. What are our Lord's words? "Inasmuch as ye have done it to these my brethren." Have you not then as much reason to charge our divine Master with a slip of the tongue, as to charge Aspasio with a slip of the pen? It is undeniably plain, that he does in fact commend only such kinds of beneficence as were exercised towards his brethren. And I presume you will readily grant, that his brethren, the nobler relation, cannot be more extensive than his disciples, the inferior.

"Will not our Lord then commend all kinds of beneficence, provided," &c.

* Aspasio speaking of the obedience and death of Christ, professedly declares, "However, therefore, I may happen to express myself, I never consider them as acting in the exclusive sense; but would always have them understood, as a grand and glorious aggregate. Looking upon our Saviour's universal obedience, which commenced at his incarnation, was carried on through his life, and terminated in his death; looking upon all this, in its collective form, as the object of my faith, and the foundation of my hope."

Excuse my cutting short your speech. You are rambling from the point. What Christ will do, is quite another question. Aspasio neither denies nor affirms anything on this subject. All that he considers is, what appears to be really done, in that particular description of the last day, and its awful process. Nor will he scruple to affirm, a second time, that our Lord applauds such acts of beneficence only as were exercised to a disciple, to believers, to his brethren.

The righteous Judge specifies this sort of munificence, because, it is a sure indication of one begotten by the word of truth. It is a test, which none but the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus will come up to. And a Christian is most properly distinguished, not by what he does in common with others, but by the different principle from which he acts. Of this particularity Aspasio takes notice, on purpose to warn, as well as to exhort his readers: *exhort them*, that they may abound in works of generosity: *warn them*, that their works may spring from the right source—faith in the divine Redeemer.

You are not willing to call works of beneficence, though exercised to a Samaritan or a Heathen, “transient bubbles.” No more is Aspasio, in the sense and manner which you would insinuate. He calls them such, not absolutely, but relatively: not in themselves, but with respect to an affair infinitely too great for them to transact, either in whole or in part. In this view (as relative to justification) St. Paul calls them dung, which is despicable and sordid. Surely then Aspasio may call them bubbles, which are showy but insignificant. I do not call the desk on which I write, a mere egg-shell: yet I should not hesitate to say, it is scanty as an egg-shell, if appointed to transport an army to the Indies; feeble as an egg-shell, if set up as a wall of munition against a battery of cannon.

“How must Christians exceed the Scribes and Pharisees?” To this Aspasio replies: “Not only in being sincere, in having respect unto all God’s commandments; but also in possessing a complete righteousness. Nor can this be anything less than the perfect obedience of our Great Mediator.”—“Did our Lord mean this? Nothing less.” Peremptorily affirmed; but not so easily proved. Yes, you add; “He specifies in the following parts of his sermon the very instances wherein the righteousness of a Christian exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees.” He does so. But is it not an absolutely complete righteousness? A meekness, without the least emotion of resentment. A purity without the least stain of evil concupiscence. A love, a long-suffering, a perfection, such as our Father which is in heaven exercises. Now, if this does not exceed the righteousness of all the Christians in the world, or if this is to be found in any character, save only in the character of our great Mediator, I retract, most freely retract, my opinion.

The discourse relates to that righteousness by which we are saved, or by virtue of which we enter into the kingdom of heaven. And why, Sir, why will you not resign the honour of obtaining salvation, to the most blessed Immanuel’s blood and obedience? Why will you hedge up your people’s way to the immortal mansions, by teaching them to depend upon duties and attainments of their own? Should any one, hearing this doctrine, that the law of the ten commandments requires perfect, sinless obedience; that none can be delivered from the wrath to come, or enjoy eternal life, without this unerring, perfect obedience; should such a one, struck with surprise and anxiety, inquire, “Who then can be saved?”—what answer would Mr.

Wesley give? The answer we would make is obvious, and full of consolation: "No man, by his own performances. But salvation is to be sought, salvation is to be obtained, by the righteousness of another,—even by the consummate obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"He brings this specious hypocrite to the test."—"How does it appear, (you ask), that this young ruler was a hypocrite?" It appears from his conduct, for he came kneeling to our Saviour, as one sincerely desirous of learning his duty; yet, when instructed in it, he would not perform it. It appears from your own character of him. You say, "He loved the world." Then the love of the Father was not in him. That he pretended to the love of God, is evident from his own words: that he had no real love, is certain from your own acknowledgment. If pretence without reality be not hypocrisy, please to inform us what is. It is farther apparent, from your descant on the case: "Therefore he could not keep any of the commandments in their spiritual sense." And it is a sure, as well as important truth, that whosoever pretends to keep the commandments, yet does not keep them in their spiritual meaning, is a deceiver of himself, a deceiver of others—a hypocrite.

"The keeping of the commandments (says Mr. Wesley), is undoubtedly the way to, though not the cause of, eternal life." How then came it to pass that our Lord Jesus Christ should declare, "I am the way?" The way to what? To the favour of God, to the fruition of God, to every spiritual blessing; or, in other words, to eternal life. After such a claim, from such a person, may I not, without the imputation of undue confidence, deny your assertion in your own form of speech? "The keeping of the commandments undoubtedly cannot be the way to eternal life;" since this is an honour, this is a prerogative, which the all-glorious Redeemer has challenged to himself.

Hence your distinction between the way to, and the cause of, appears to have no countenance from Scripture. And will it not, upon a review, appear to have as little support from reason? Cast your eye upon yonder bridge:—It is thrown over a deep and wide river; it is the way, the only way, whereby I cross the water, and arrive at the opposite bank. If so, is it not likewise the cause of my safe arrival on the other side? There may be, in this case, other causes, concomitant or subordinate: but the bridge is the grand one; that which every body chiefly regards, and to which my passage is always ascribed.

Christ therefore is the way, the only way, to life and immortality. By his precious blood, and by his divine righteousness, we pass the gulf of wrath and destruction. By the things which he has done, by the pains which he has endured, we enter the realms of peace and joy. Accordingly, we are exhorted "to walk in him;" and are assured, that as many as walk in this way "shall renew their strength." This is what the apostle calls "the new and living way." This is what the Psalmist styles "the way everlasting;" and though our ways may "seem right unto a man, yet the end thereof are the ways of death."

A doubt, perhaps, may rise in the reader's mind, suggested by the words of the prophet, "an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness." True. The way is Christ the incarnate God, with all his gifts, privileges, and blessings. "It shall be called the way of hol

ness," Isa. xxxv. 8*. None can enter and advance therein, yet continue carnal and unclean. All that travel this road renounce the hidden things of darkness, and do the works of righteousness. It does not indeed find, but assuredly makes, the passengers righteous; and though holiness is not their way, yet it is a principal part of their business while they walk in Christ.

Aspasio, having occasion to speak of Abraham's faith, quotes the words of the apostle, "By works his faith was made perfect." Which he thus explains, "His faith hereby answered its proper end, and appeared to be of the true, of the triumphant, the scriptural kind; since it overcame the world, overcame self, and regarded God as all in all." To this Mr. Wesley, replies, with the solemnity of a censor, and the authority of a dictator, "No. The natural sense of the words is, by the grace superadded, while he wrought those works, his faith was literally made perfect." Your proof, Sir. What have you to make good this interpretation? There is not a word in the text about grace superadded, this is not assigned as the cause of a perfected faith. Nay, the sacred writer expressly assigns another: "By works," says St. James, "his faith was made perfect." No, says Mr. Wesley; but by grace superadded. St. James affirms one thing, Mr. Wesley affirms the contrary; and who am I that I should decide between two such disputants? But I believe the reader will, without my interposal, easily choose his side.

Perhaps you will reply, if this is not the true sense, produce a better. One less opposite to the natural import of the words, and the apparent meaning of the apostle, is already produced. Do you insist upon another? I will then refer you to abler judges. Shall I send to an expositor whom you yourself admire? Dr. Doddridge thus comments upon the text, "His faith was perfected by works; the integrity of it was made fully apparent to himself, to angels, to God." Shall I remit you to an expositor who can neither deceive nor be deceived? The God of glory says "My strength is made perfect in weakness." Made perfect! How? Is there any such thing as a super-addition to God Almighty's power, while he exerts it in behalf of his people? This none can imagine. But it is hereby manifested, to their comfort and his glory. The same word is used concerning Abraham's faith, and concerning the God of Abraham's strength. Why then should it not be understood in the same sense? Here it is τελειουται; there it is τελειωθη. And in both places it signifies, not literally "made perfect," but illustriously displayed.

Shall I send you to a familiar illustration? I view from my window a young tree. The gardener when he planted it, told me it was a fruit-tree, a pear-tree, a right *beauté de roi*. It may be such a tree, and have its respective seed in itself; but this did not then appear. If, when autumn arrives, its branches are laden with fruit, with pears, with that delicious kind of pears, this will be a demonstration of all those properties. This will not make it such a particular tree, no, nor make it a good and fruitful tree; but only shew it to be of that fine sort, or make its nature and perfections evident.

"St. James speaks of the justification of our faith;" thus proceeds Aspasio: and thus replies Mr. Wesley; "Not unless you mean by that odd expression, our faith being made perfect." I mean, such a perfection of faith as is mentioned above. Other perfection I find not, either in books or

* See a treatise by Dr. Owen, entitled *Communion with God*.

n. Were faith perfect, in your sense of the word, love, joy, and allness would be perfect likewise. Correspondent to the principle would be the state of the production. There would be no longer any cause for that petition which the disciples put up, "Lord, increase our faith:" nor for that application which you and I, so long as we continue members of the Church of England, must use, "Give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity." You call the justification of our faith an "odd expression." Is it not founded on the tenor of the apostle's discourse? Is it not the native result of the apostle's inquiry, "Show me thy faith?" Prove it to be real and designed: prove it by such acts as demonstrate you trust in Jesus alone for everlasting life. If it stands this test, we shall acknowledge it to be that precious faith whose author is God, and whose end is salvation. Is not that justification of faith, which displays its sincerity, and renders it without rebuke? Somewhat like this would be reckoned a justification of any person, for of any other thing; and why not of faith?

Something you see, Sir, may be said in vindication of this expression. However, if it be thought improper; if it tend to create any confusion in our sentiments, or to draw off our attention from that grand idea which is peculiar to the word justification, (the idea, I mean, of being made righteous before God,) I freely give it up; I will alter it in my book, and use it no more.

"He that doeth righteousness, is righteous." He manifests the truth of his conversion, and justifies his profession from all suspicion of insincerity. "Nay," says Mr. Wesley, "the plain meaning is, he alone is truly righteous, whose faith worketh by love." Your exposition may be true, and Aspasio's no less true. I leave the reader to determine which is most exactly suitable to the apostle's arguing. He is speaking of the Christian righteousness; that which renders us righteous before God; that which flesh and blood could never have discovered; which therefore was graciously revealed in the gospel, and is the principal subject of gospel preaching. As then there were, and always would be, many pretenders to the noble privilege, St. John lays down a maxim or a touchstone, to distinguish the sincere from the hypocrite. He that uniformly doeth righteousness in a way of sanctification, he, and he only, is to be acknowledged by us as truly righteous by way of justification.

Far be it from me, Sir, to be fond of wrangling. Where you hit upon the truth, or come pretty near it, I shall never be eager to oppose. On the contrary, I shall be very desirous to agree, and preserve as much as possible, both the unity of opinion and the harmony of affection. Your own interpretation shall take place; only let your working be the sign and fruit of a righteous state, not that which makes or constitutes us righteous. The righteousness of fallen creatures is not of themselves, but of me, saith the Lord. It is brought in and accomplished by him whom God hath set forth to be their mediator and surety; so that we are made righteous, not by doing any thing whatsoever, but solely by believing in Jesus. Our character as the redeemed of the Lord, is *οι εκ πιστεως*; men having their existence, their subsistence, their all, by faith. Hence it comes to pass, that we really are what the apostle affirms in the following words, "righteous, even as he is righteous;" not barely righteous, as the moral Heathens, by dint of human resolution; not barely righteous, as the reputable Jews, by the influence of their legal sanctions; but righteous with that very righteousness which

adorns, and exalts, and will eternally distinguish, the only begotten Son of God.

It remains to be inquired, what faith is most likely to operate in this excellent and happy manner? I mean, to work by love. Let me illustrate the point by a short apologue; then release the reader from his attention, and the writer from his task.

A certain king had two favourites, whom he honoured with his peculiar regard, and enriched with a ceaseless liberality. They both, insensible of their vast obligations, became traitors and rebels. Being convicted of treason against their sovereign, he was determined to overcome their evil with good. Accordingly, when they had nothing to plead in their own behalf, he generously forgave them both: the one he dismissed from prison, and suffered to live unmolested on his private inheritance; the other he restored to all his high preferments, and public employments—he adorned him again with the robe of honour, and admitted him again into the bosom of favour.—Which of them now will feel the warmest affection for their sovereign? which of them will be most ready to serve on all occasions, and, if need be, to hazard even life in his defence? He, doubtless, on whom most was bestowed.

And is not that person most likely to work and obey from a principle of love, who believes that his divine Lord has not only borne the curse, but fulfilled the divine law for him? has given him not barely an exemption from punishment, but a title to eternal life? Yea, has clothed him with his own most perfect and glorious righteousness; by virtue of which he will, ere long, be presented faultless before the throne of judgment, and have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom. Will not the faith of such unspeakably rich grace pacify the conscience, and purify the heart? Awaken gratitude to our heavenly benefactor, and enkindle zeal for his glory? Cause us to discharge all the duties of our station cheerfully, and withstand every allurement to evil resolutely?

Surely we may say of this faith, what David said of Goliath's sword, there is none, there is nothing like it. For all these blessed purposes it is beyond compare, and, I should think, beyond dispute efficacious. That you, Sir, may know more of this faith, and dispute less against it, is the sincere and fervent wish of, &c.

LETTER VI.

REVEREND SIR,—As this letter may probably be pretty long, I shall not increase the prolixity by a preface, but enter upon it without any farther introduction.

“Whoso doeth these things (saith David) shall never fall.” Which Aspasio thus interprets, “Shall never fall into final apostasy.” You are pleased to reply, “David says no such thing; his meaning is, whoso doeth these things to the end, shall never fall into hell.” It would be a great wonder, I must own, if he should; but if he happens to fail at some times, and in some instances, what becomes of him then? However, let you and I, Sir, be at as little variance as possible. Where is the extraordinary difference between yourself and Aspasio? If a professor of religion falls into hell, must he not previously fall into final apostasy? And if he falls into final apostasy, must he not inevitably fall into hell?

When you insert the clause, "to the end," do you interpret? do you not rather interpolate the sacred text? The words of the Psalmist relate to the present time, *doeth* not *shall do*. They contain an encouragement to those who, at this present instant, bring forth the fruits of evangelical righteousness. The encouragement is deduced from the comfortable doctrine of final perseverance. It carries this cheering import, "Whosoever believes in Jehovah, as laying all his sins upon Christ, and giving him eternal life freely; whosoever, from this principle of faith, sincerely loves, and willingly obeys God, he shall never fall." The words are, "he shall never be moved." A phrase common among the Hebrews to denote the stability of a man's happiness. An immoveable thing never falls, either one way or other; so this righteous person shall never fall, either into final apostasy, which is the greatest misery here, or into hell, which is the consummation of misery hereafter.

But I begin to apprehend what you mean, and of what you are jealous. Your exclamation unravels all, "How pleasing is this to flesh and blood!" Under favour, Sir, I cannot conceive how this doctrine should be pleasing to flesh and blood. Flesh and blood, or corrupt nature, is proud. Any scheme of perseverance to be accomplished by our own strength, would indeed be agreeable to the vanity of our mind; but a perseverance founded on the fidelity and the power of God—a perseverance which acknowledges itself owing, not to any human sufficiency, but to an union with Christ, and the intercession of Christ—this is a disgusting method—that is what the natural man cannot away with. You will find the generality of people utterly averse to it. Flesh and blood will not submit either to be made righteous before God by the imputed righteousness of Christ, or to be made faithful unto death by the never-failing faithfulness of Christ. Try your friends, try your followers, try your own heart on this point.

To the humble believer, I acknowledge, this is a most pleasing and consolatory doctrine. He who feels his own impotence, who knows the power of his inbred corruptions, and is no stranger to the wiles of his spiritual enemy; he will rejoice in the thought that nothing shall pluck him out of his almighty Redeemer's hand; that his advocate with the Father will suffer neither principalities, nor powers, nor life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, to separate him from the love of God. Without such a persuasion, we might too truly say of the Christian's joy, what Solomon said of worldly merriment, "I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what does it?" If he who is to-day basking in the divine favour, may before the morrow be weltering in a lake of fire, then joy, even joy in the Holy Ghost, is unreasonable; and peace, even that peace which passeth all understanding, is chimerical,—a building without a basis; at least, a bowing wall and a tottering fence.

Let us examine the doctrine which Mr. Wesley says is so pleasing to flesh and blood; or, in other words, to carnal people. What is the thing which the Psalmist teaches, and Aspasio professes? That the persons who are described in the Psalm*, shall never apostatize from the true faith, or from true obedience. Is this so agreeable to carnal people? Is it not rather unwarrantable in Mr. Wesley to suppose that carnal people either possess true faith, or perform true obedience, or can be pleased with either? Espe-

* The xvth Psalm, I apprehend, describes the perfect character: that perfection which Christ really fulfilled; and is the righteousness in which God is well pleased.

cially since the apostle assures us that the "carnal mind is not subject to law of God, neither indeed can be."

Besides, are not the duties mentioned by the Psalmist offensive to flesh and blood? Do they not require, or imply, the mortification of our carnal appetites, and the discipline of our unruly affections? Can it be a welcome piece of news to flesh and blood, that this mortification shall take place instead of being remitted, shall increase? and never, never be discontinued till mortality is swallowed up of life? If so, the old man which is corrupted must be pleased with the curb, and the dagger must delight in its own restraint and its own destruction. Such a paradox we must believe before we can espouse Mr. Wesley's notion, That flesh and blood are pleased with the doctrine of a final perseverance in self-denial, in righteousness, and true holiness.

"Should your repentance be without a failure, and without a flaw, I must still say to my friend, as our Lord replied to the young ruler, 'One thing thou lackest.' In all these acts of humiliation, you have only taken shame to yourself; whereas, a righteousness is wanting, which may magnify the law, and make it honourable." These are Aspasio's words; upon which Mr. Wesley animadvert: "One thing thou lackest, the imputed righteousness of Christ! You cannot think this is the meaning of the text." Neither does Aspasio affirm this to be the meaning; he only uses the words by way of accommodation. Could you demonstrate that our Lord intended no such thing, yet the sentence may not improperly express Aspasio's opinion; and if so, be not unfit for his use.

However, let us inquire into the exact meaning of the text. A very little search will yield the desired satisfaction.—"Sell all thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." *Treasure in heaven* was what the young gentleman lacked. Could this be any other than Christ himself? Is not Christ the treasure hid in the field of the gospel? Is not Christ the inheritance reserved in heaven for us? Is not a communion with Christ, and an enjoyment of Christ, the supreme felicity of our nature? David was of this mind when he publicly declared, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" St. John was of this mind when he solemnly averred, "He that hath the Son, hath life." Whoever is of another mind, has very inadequate, very unworthy notions of heaven and its happiness. Now, if Christ himself was the one thing needed, surely his righteousness could not be secluded. His blood and obedience inseparably accompany his person. He that hath the bridegroom, hath his riches also.

In opposition to this sense it is affirmed, "Certainly the one thing our Lord meant was the love of God." The love of God is certainly an eminent blessing; possessed, I should imagine, only by those who have first obtained eternal life, by knowing the true God, and Jesus Christ. But does our love of God magnify the law, satisfy justice, or obtain heaven? Are we pardoned, are we reconciled, are we justified, on account of our love of God? The young ruler wants that which may open to him the kingdom of heaven, and that whereby he may inherit eternal life. Mr. Wesley, setting aside pardon, reconciliation, justification, together with the one perfect righteousness which procures them, ascribes all to our love of God; and, by this means, not to the true love arising from the knowledge of him as manifested in the gospel, as having first loved us, in granting us remission of sins freely through Jesus

ist. This notion may pass current at Rome, not among the Protestant sches. Our own church has most expressly disclaimed it. Speaking of Christ and his precious blood-shedding, she adds, "Whereby alone we are the partakers of the kingdom of heaven."

Is the obedience of Christ insufficient to accomplish our justification?" "Would you correct both the language and the doctrine. *The language*; you say, "Rather I would ask, is the death of Christ insufficient to purchase it." To purchase justification, you suppose, is more proper and expressive than to accomplish. As this may seem a strife of words, I shall miss it without much solicitude; only I would transiently observe, that to accomplish denotes more than to purchase. It denotes the constituent cause; at the schoolmen call the matter of justification, or the very thing which effects it. If your favourite phrase implies all this, let it have the pre-eminence.

Next you correct the doctrine by saying, "I would rather ask, is the death of Christ insufficient to purchase justification?" I answer, if you consider the death of Christ as exclusive of his obedience, it is insufficient. If you do not, there is no great reason for your starting a doubt where we both are agreed; and, indeed, it is scarce worth my while to take notice of. I will, therefore, return to the distinction which you think proper to make between accomplishing and purchasing justification. Why, Sir, would you set aside the former phrase? Does it not imply, that which justifies; that very thing which commends us to God; that very righteousness in which we stand accepted before him? Does not this way of expressing guard most effectually against the errors of Popery, and exclude all deficiency of faith, of works, or any thing else whatever? I said the *errors of Popery*: For a Popish synod will allow that we are not justified without the righteousness of Christ, by which he hath merited justification for us; but declares at the same time, If any man shall say we are formally righteous by that very righteousness, let him be accursed. According to this, which is no very good confession, the righteousness of Christ purchases, but does not accomplish; it merits our justification, but does not constitute our justifying righteousness. See, Sir, whither your refinements are leading you.

"The saints in glory," says Aspasio, "ascribe the whole of their salvation to the blood of the Lamb." "So do I," replies Mr. Wesley; "and yet I believe he obtained for all a possibility of salvation." Is this objection pertinent? Does Aspasio's assertion contradict your belief? Does it not comprise all that you avouch, and much more? Is it possible that Mr. Wesley, who is such a master of logic, should argue in this manner, "The saints in glory ascribe all their salvation to Christ's blood; therefore he did not obtain a possibility of salvation for all men?" What a forced conclusion is this! What wild reasoning is here! Such premises, and such an inference, will probably incline the reader to think of a sunbeam and a clod connected with bands of smoke.

If you was determined to make this passage faulty, you should have opposed it with the following declaration of your faith: "Yet I believe that Christ obtained no more than a possibility of salvation for any." Then you would have something suited to your purpose; but not agreeable either to sound sense or sound doctrine. Not to *sound sense*: your possibility of salvation is, if people perform the conditions. How then can they

ascribe the whole glory to Christ? At this rate, they do a piece of injustice to their own resolution and diligence: as these, by fulfilling conditions, had a hand in obtaining the reward, these ought to have share in receiving the honour. Not to *sound doctrine*: Aspasio believes much more than a possibility of salvation by Jesus Christ. He believes full and complete salvation, according to that noble text, "It is finished." A salvation not to be acquired, but absolutely given, according to that precious Scripture, "God hath given to us eternal life;" not upon any terms or prerequisites, but without any condition at all, according to that most gracious invitation, "Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." This I look upon as sound doctrine. But will your notion of a conditional salvation, proposed by way of bargain, and granted upon terms, comport with this gift of grace?

No more than a possibility of salvation! Yes, Sir, Christ obtained a great and a free salvation. *Great*; for it comprises the pardon of all sin, original and actual; a restoration to entire and unalterable favour, together with a title to everlasting life and glory. This is such a provision for our happiness as becomes the immense goodness and inconceivable majesty of an incarnate God; such as not only supplies our wants, and satisfies our desires, but surpasses our very wishes—transporting us with wonder, and filling us with joy. To accomplish all this, we may reasonably suppose, nothing less could be sufficient than the active and passive righteousness of him who is gone into heaven; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him. Since this matchless ransom has been paid, since these grand conditions are performed, there is no obstruction from the divine justice, or the divine truth. All that ineffable and eternal blessedness is now become free; is granted to sinners, to rebels, to the most unworthy; they are allowed, yea, invited to receive it, to possess it, to rejoice in it as their own portion; and without the proviso of any good thing in themselves, purely, on account of their Saviour's all-sufficient work.

I read in sacred history of Eleazar, the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David; how he arose and smote the Philistines, until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto his sword: and the Lord wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him, only to spoil. And were not these mighty men typical, faintly typical, of our almighty Redeemer? Did not Jesus also arise and work a great victory? Has he not triumphed gloriously over sin, and all our enemies? And what have we to do but only to return and divide the spoil, and share the benefits of his conquest? May we not boldly say, "My sin is done away, because Christ has borne it on the cursed tree. I stand accepted before God, because Christ has finished the righteousness which renders me unblamable and unproveable. I shall receive the Holy Ghost, because Christ is my advocate, and prays the Father that he will give me another Comforter. This sacred Comforter, by shewing me the riches of Christ, will more and more sanctify my nature. To think and live in this manner, is to take the spoil after our victorious Leader."

Let me close and confirm this sentiment with a passage from that inimitable penman, the prophet Isaiah; who for his remarkably clear views of Christ, may almost be admitted into the number of evangelists; and, for his exquisitely fine descriptions of Christ, greatly exceeds all orators and all poets: "Who is

this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This, that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?—I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.—Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?—I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me.”

The prophet, like one thrown into a sudden surprise, with a beautiful abruptness cries out, *Who is this?* What extraordinary appearance discovers itself to my sight? Is it a human or a divine form that I behold? He *cometh from Edom*, the country—from *Bozrah*, the capital—of our professed national enemies. Is he for us, or for our adversaries? The first question seems to proceed from a distant and indistinct view. He then takes a nearer survey, and describes the wonderful personage with greater particularity. This that cometh *with dyed garments*, like some terrible and victorious warrior that has scarcely sheathed the sword of slaughter; who is all encrimsoned, and still reeking with the blood of the slain.

The vision becomes clearer and clearer. I see him, adds the rapturous prophet, *glorious in his apparel*; highly graceful, as well as extremely awful: bearing in his aspect, in his whole person, in his very dress, the marks of transcendent dignity. *Travelling in the greatness of his strength*; not faint with toil, nor wearied with the fatigue of the dreadful action, but like one that is indefatigable in his zeal, and irresistible in his power: and therefore still pressing forwards to new victories, still going on from conquering to conquer.

The majestic object is all this while advancing. At length he approaches near enough to hold a conference with this devout inquirer. One would naturally expect that his speech should be, like his aspect, alarming and tremendous. But grace is on his tongue, and his lips drop balm. *I that speak in righteousness*; all whose words are faithfulness and truth—an immoveable foundation for the faith of my people. *That speak of righteousness*; of that mysterious righteousness which is the delight of my Father, and the life of the world: to bring in which, is the design of my appearance on earth, and to reveal it, is the office of my Spirit. By means of this righteousness I am *mighty to save*; to save thee, to save any lost sinner; to save them, as with the arm of Omnipotence, beyond all that they can think, even to the very uttermost.

Here the prophet seems to be somewhat at a loss, and takes leave to renew his inquiry. If thou art come not to destroy men's lives, but to save, “Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?” These indicate, not deliverance, but destruction; these are tokens, not of forbearing mercy, but of inexorable vengeance. It is true, replies the illustrious Hero, *I have trodden the wine-press**; I have crushed my foes, I have trampled them under my feet, and repentance was hid from mine eyes. But thy enemies were the objects of mine indignation: Sin, and death, and hell, are the vanquished adversaries. It is their blood that is sprinkled upon my garments, and that stains all my raiment. This victory I have gained by myself alone; being infinitely too great in my power to want an associate, and infinitely too jealous of my honour to accept

* This phrase evidently denotes conquest and triumph; enemies vanquished and totally destroyed. It should never, therefore, be applied to the agonising, but to the triumphant, Saviour; not to Jesus prostrate on the ground, but to Jesus making his foes his footstool.

of any assistance. *Of the people*, whether in heaven or on earth, *there was none with me*, to afford the least succour, or to take the least share in the glorious work. The salvation of sinners, their deliverance from wrath, and their redemption to God, is, in all its parts, my act, ever mine, and mine only. Yours be all the benefit, mine all the glory.

“The terms of acceptance for fallen man were, A full satisfaction to the divine justice, and a complete conformity to the divine law.”—“This,” says Mr. Wesley to Aspasio, “you take for granted, but I cannot allow.” That Aspasio does not take these points for granted, I thought even his enemies would confess: that he has attempted, at least, to make good his opinion, all the world, besides yourself, Sir, will acknowledge. What else is the design of Dialogue third and fourth? What else is aimed at in Dialogue the seventh, eighth, and ninth? The former treat largely of the full satisfaction given to divine justice: the latter treat still more largely of the conformity demanded by the divine law, and yielded by the divine Jesus.

These things, however, “you cannot allow.” Not allow a full satisfaction of divine justice to be necessary! Are you not then acceding to the Socinian? Not allow a complete conformity to the divine law to be necessary! Are you not then warping to the Antinomian? See, Sir, how you approach the rocks, both on the right hand and on the left. May the Keeper of Israel preserve yourself and your followers from suffering shipwreck! Every one, I think, must allow what you deny, who believes the divine justice to be infinite, and the divine law to be unalterable. A justice that will admit of any satisfaction less than complete, can never be deemed infinite. And if the divine law can rest satisfied with an obedience that is defective, it is not so venerable as the law of the Medes and Persians.

“The terms of acceptance for fallen man,” you say, “are repentance and faith.” I must own I do not much like the expression *terms*, unless it be referred to the mediation of Christ. And you yourself, if you would act consistently, should not be over-fond of it, because it is not scriptural; though, for my own part, I have no quarrel against the word because it is not the exact phraseology of Scripture, but because I dislike the idea it conveys. Shall we treat with the Deity, as free states or sovereign princes treat with each other? The one obtaining from the other peace, or some advantageous concession, by complying with his terms?

To confirm your opinion, that “the terms of acceptance for fallen man are repentance and faith,” you produce the following text, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Here you write like a man of sense, who knows what just disputation means. You lay aside your certainlies, your undoubtedlies, your unquestionables, and urge a proof from Scripture. Whether you rightly understand and duly apply this proof, must now be inquired.

“Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” This may be the meaning of the exhortation:—*Repent*; relinquish all your wrong notions relating to the way and manner of finding acceptance with the Deity. *Believe the gospel*; which opens a most unexpected avenue for the communication of this blessing; which brings you tidings of a salvation, fully procured by the incarnate God, and freely offered to the unworthy sinner. The word, you know is *μετανοείτε*, which, in its primary signification, denotes not so much a reformation of conduct as a change of sentiment.

Suppose it to signify a reformation of conduct. The meaning then may

as follows:—*Repent*; forsake all your vices, and all your follies; mortify every evil temper, and renounce every evil way. In order to render this practicable, *believe the gospel*; wherein a Saviour is preached and displayed, who makes peace for such offenders, reconciles them to God, and obtains eternal redemption for them. This will sweetly withdraw your affections from iniquity, and sweetly attach them to the blessed God: Whereas, without this powerful expedient, you will never be delivered from the pleasing witchcraft of your lusts; sin will always have dominion over you, so long as you are under the law and not under grace. Repentance, thus understood, is not the condition of obtaining salvation, but the fruit of salvation obtained.

Besides, if repentance be a gift, it cannot be a term or condition. He must be a stranger to the import of language, and the common ideas of mankind, who will take upon him to affirm the latter; and he must be yet a greater stranger to the holy word of God, who will offer to deny the former.

Christ is exalted," saith the apostle, "to give repentance." Not to require it as a condition of blessedness, but to give it as a most eminent blessing. Not to require repentance of fallen man, who is not able to think a good thought; but to give it from his unsearchable riches, and work it by his almighty power.

You say, "The terms of acceptance for fallen man are," &c. Methinks I should be glad to know what you mean by fallen man. Do you mean (as you tell us in your collection of sermons) "one dead to God, and all the things of God; having no more power to perform the actions of a living Christian, than a dead body to perform the functions of a living man?" What terms, I beseech you, can such a one fulfil? Be they ever so difficult, or ever so easy, it maketh no difference. The hand, stiff in death, is no more able to move a feather than to remove a mountain. Whatever, therefore, others may affirm, you, Sir, cannot talk of repentance to be exercised by fallen man, until he is quickened and enabled by fellowship with Christ, the living and life-giving head; unless you choose either to contradict your own assertion, that fallen man is absolutely dead to all good; or else think proper to maintain, that the dead may not only act, but perform, some of the most excellent acts and important offices.

You should likewise, Sir, if you would write correctly and argue forcibly, have told us what you mean by faith; otherwise, you may intend one thing and I another, even while we both use the same word. In this case, our dispute might be as endless as it must be fruitless.

By faith I mean, what St. John calls, a receiving of Christ; a receiving of him and his benefits, as they are freely given in the word of grace and truth. If this, which is the apostolical, be a proper definition, then it seems not to come under the denomination of a condition. They must be excessive refiners indeed, who would call my receiving a rich present, the terms or conditions of possessing it; or would esteem my eating at a plenteous feast, the terms and conditions of enjoying it. Is not this to subtilise till sound sense is lost?

Faith, according to St. Paul, is a persuasion that Christ loved me, and gave himself for me. Where is any trace, or any hint of conditionality in this description? I do not hear the apostle saying—he loved me, provided I repent; he gave himself for me, in case I think this or do that;—but, he gave himself for me when I was ungodly, and had performed no conditions; when I was without strength, and could perform no conditions. Thus he

gave himself for me, that I might have remission of sins through his blood, and eternal life through his righteousness. Believing these delightful truths, and receiving these heavenly privileges, I love my most adorable Benefactor; and abhor those iniquities for which he wept, and groaned, and died. That love of Christ is vital holiness; and this abhorrence of sin is practical repentance; and both are the fruits, therefore cannot be the conditions, of salvation by Jesus.

Some holy men and excellent writers, I confess, have not scrupled to call faith and repentance the conditions of our salvation. Yet I cannot prevail on myself to admire or approve the language. I fear it tends to embarrass the sincere soul; to darken the lustre of grace; and to afford too much occasion for boasting.

To embarrass the sincere soul.—For, if I am saved on conditions, this will naturally divert my attention from the grand and all-sufficient cause of justification,—the righteousness of Christ, which alone gives solid comfort. Instead of delighting myself in the Lord Redeemer, I shall be engaged in an anxious concern about the supposed conditions: whether I have performed them? Whether I have performed them aright? Whether there may not be some latent defect, that spoils all, and renders my labour fruitless? The more serious our minds are, and the more tender our consciences, the more shall we be liable to perplexity and disquietude on this head.

It eclipses the lustre of grace.—“Ye are saved by grace,” says the oracle of Heaven. But if salvation be upon conditions, it cannot be of grace. It must, in some measure at least, be of works. Since it depends upon working the conditions, it is obtained by working the conditions; and the candidate has reason to look principally unto his performance of the conditions. They are to him, by incomparable degrees, the most important point; because, without their all-significant interposition, everything else is as nothing. Even God’s everlasting love, and Christ’s everlasting righteousness, are, till the conditions are fulfilled, but cyphers without the initial figure.

It affords too much occasion for boasting.—May I not, in this case, thank my own application and industry? They, they exerted themselves successfully; and behold the promised reward is mine. What then should hinder me from sacrificing unto my own net, and burning incense unto my own drag? At this door the notion of merit will unavoidably creep in; because my performance of the condition is meritorious of the covenanted reward,—so far meritorious, that the reward is my due: I may demand it as a debt; and it will be an act of apparent injustice to withhold it. But shall these things be said unto the Almighty? Will these things redound to “the praise of the glory of his grace?” Do these things hide vanity from man, or consist with a salvation that is “without money or without price?” Not quite so well, I believe yourself will acknowledge, as the following lines:—

Let the world their virtue boast,
 Their works of righteousness:
 I, a wretch undone and lost,
 Am freely saved by grace:
 Other title I disclaim,
 This, only this, is all my plea;
 I the chief of sinners am,
 But Jesus died for me.

“Fallen man (you say) is justified, not by perfect obedience, but by faith.”

Not by perfect obedience! Ah, Sir! if you had remembered the immutability of God, and the spirituality of his law, you would not have challenged this expression.—“But by faith.” Here, it is true, you use the language of Scripture. Nevertheless it behoves a watchman in Israel to show how the language of Scripture may be abused. Faith, you allow, is imputed to us for righteousness; therefore (you infer) not the righteousness or perfect obedience of Christ. This, if you mean any thing, or would speak any thing to the purpose, must be your way of arguing. So you would set faith and Christ’s righteousness at variance. The former shall exclude the latter from its office: whereas, the former is only the pitcher at the fountain, while the latter is the very water of life—is that blessed, glorious, heavenly expedient, which, received by faith, justifies, sanctifies, saves.

According to your gospel, faith will say to the righteousness of the Redeemer, “Depart hence, I have no need of thee. I myself act as the justifying righteousness. I stand in the stead of perfect obedience, in order to acceptance with God*.” To this may we not reply, was faith then crucified for you? Has faith magnified the divine law? Or is it by means of faith, that not one jot or tittle of its precepts pass unfulfilled?

If faith, in this sense, is imputed for righteousness, how can you subscribe that emphatical article which declares, “We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?” Surely, Sir, you are accounted righteous for the sake of that, whatever it be, which stands in the stead of perfect obedience. That, whatever it be, may claim the honour, and to that justice itself cannot but award the prize.

If your notion be true, the believer ought to have his own faith principally in view. Whatever presents me perfectly obedient before God, is my greatest good—is my choicest portion—the best foundation for my hope, my peace, my joy. To this, therefore, so long as I know my own interest, I must chiefly look. Whereas, *look unto Jesus* is the direction of the Holy Ghost. Look unto his perfect atonement and complete righteousness, and be saved, is the grand unchangeable edict issued from the throne of grace.

Perhaps you will say, are not the words of Scripture expressly on my side? “Faith is imputed for righteousness.” True. But is the sense of Scripture on your side? Suppose I should undertake to prove, that David was purged from guilt by the hyssop which groweth on the wall; this you would think a wild and impracticable attempt. But should I not have the words of Scripture expressly on my side? “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.” Yet should I not have the least countenance imaginable from the spirit and sense of those sacred writings. Has the hyssop, a mean worthless shrub, any kind of fitness to stand in the stead of the sacrificial blood, and make the atonement for sin? No more fitness has faith to stand in the stead of perfect obedience, to act as our justifying righteousness, or procure our acceptance with God.

“What Christ has done.” Here Mr. Wesley himself speaks of what Christ has done. He lays it as the foundation of that first and most comprehensive blessing, justification. In this I most cordially agree with him; hoping that we shall unanimously join to defend this important sentiment

* These are Mr. Wesley’s own words, in his explication of this very doctrine. See his Sermon on the Righteousness of Faith, vol. i. p. 111.

against all opposition, and endeavour to display the Redeemer's work, as well as his passion, in all its glorious excellency.

"What Christ has done, is the foundation of our justification, not the term or condition." The prophet Isaiah had other notions of this matter: "If thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed." *If* is the hypothetic language; denotes a term, expresses a condition, on the performance of which the Messiah *should see his seed*; should have a numberless multitude of sinners pardoned and renewed, born again of the Spirit, and made heirs of salvation. The grand term on which all these blessings depend, and by which they are made sure to believers, is, the pouring out of the Messiah's soul, as a sacrifice for their sins and a ransom for their persons.

"The foundation, not the condition." Methinks you should offer some reason for this distinction; especially since St. Paul assures us, that Christ is, in the work of salvation, not this or that only, but he is *All*; especially since Christ himself declares, *I am*, in that grandest of all affairs, the redemption of sinners, *the beginning and the ending*. And well he may be so, since he is, as it follows in the text, *the Almighty*.

Your meaning, I presume, is, what Christ has done is a foundation for the influence and significancy of our own doings; that they, under the notion of terms and conditions, may come in for a share, and be his coadjutors, in the great work. This was the doctrine established by the council of Trent; this is the doctrine still maintained in the conclave of Rome; and is, perhaps, of all their abominations, the most refined, yet not the least dishonourable to our Saviour. It bears the greatest opposition to the truth of his gospel, and the freeness of his redemption.

I have heard it insinuated, that Mr. Wesley is a Jesuist in disguise. This insinuation I rejected, as the grossest calumny—I abhorred, as falsehood itself. I acquit you, Sir, from the charge of being a Jesuist or a Papist; but nobody, I apprehend, can acquit your principles from halting between protestantism and popery. They have stolen the unhallowed fire, and are infected with the leaven of Antichrist. You have unhappily adopted some specious papistical tenets, and listened to the mother of abominations more than you are aware.

Amidst all your mistakes (and from mistakes who is exempt?) I verily believe your principal aim is, the honour of Christ and the edification of souls: therefore I speak the more freely. Was you a bigot to selfishness, or a devotee to vain-glory, such liberty might be displeasing. But I am persuaded better things of Mr. Wesley. He has publicly declared, that "whereinsoever he is mistaken, his mind is open to conviction; and he sincerely desires to be better informed." This is written in the true spirit of a Christian. To this spirit I address myself; begging of you, Sir, with the sincerity and tenderness of a brother, to consider these hints impartially; lest, being misled yourself, you mislead your thousands and ten thousands.

In the mean time, I hope, you will not take it amiss, if to my affectionate entreaties I add my earnest prayers, that you, Sir, and your people, may be in the number of those "blessed men, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." Which I take to be the first and great evangelical privilege; as I am very sure it is the richest benefit I know how to crave, either for you, or for your most, &c.

LETTER VII.

REVEREND SIR,—Persons skilled in the dissection of animal bodies frequently mention Comparative Anatomy. May I borrow the term, and apply it to theology? I do then freely declare, that in case you censured *Aspasio* for points of divinity comparatively small, you should have no objection nor any check from this pen.

Some people, for instance, are of opinion, that the belief of a parent is considerably beneficial to his children. That when St. Paul says to the anxious jailor, “believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved and thy household,” he promises some special good that should redound to the man’s household from his own receipt of Christ. It seems, indeed, that the apostle must intend something of this nature, more than barely to say, Thy family also, provided they follow thy example, shall obtain salvation with eternal glory. If this were the whole of his meaning, he need not have confined it to the jailor’s domestics, but might have extended it to all the inhabitants of Philippi.

Such tenets, whether admitted or rejected, affect not the main point. Men may embrace which side of the question they think proper, and yet be sound in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. But errors relating to that righteousness which is the one efficient cause of justification, in which alone God is well pleased, and all his perfections glorified, which is the only spring of solid peace and true godliness—such errors are extremely pernicious. These we must withstand with resolution and zeal. We may not give place to their encroachment, no, not for an hour. The former may be compared to a fly settled on the dish; the latter are more like poison mixed with our food. To dislodge that, may not be amiss; but to prevent, or expel, or antidote this, is absolutely necessary. In the former number, perhaps, the reader will rank your observation which follows. But as I have undertaken to follow you step by step, I must not disregard it.

Aspasio, speaking of David, expresses a high esteem for that hero, king, and saint. Allowing that his esteem were carried a little too far, where would have been the great hurt or the grievous offence? How, Sir, could this have led to “unsettled notions in religion *?”—I was inclined to answer your reflections, as the hero himself answered his censorious brother, “Is there not a cause?” then passing on to another subject, as he, perfectly master of himself, and nobly superior to the affront, turned to another person. But as you seem to have injured David, and not done justice to the truth, I shall hardly be excused if I dismiss the matter without some more particular notice.

“God himself dignifies David with the most exalted of all characters,” says *Aspasio*. “Far, very far from it (says Mr. Wesley): we have more exalted characters than David’s.” Where, Sir? Shew me, in any of the saints, or in any of the sacred writers, a more devout, or a more divine spirit, than that which breathes in the penman of the Psalms. For my own part,

* The reader will please to remember, that the pamphlet which contains the remarks under consideration, is entitled *A Preservative against Unsettled Notions in Religion*.

I know nothing superior to it, in any author, or in any language: neither can I conceive a more exalted character than the character given of David, "a man after God's own heart." If God be an unerring judge, if his approbation be the infallible standard, this description must express the most consummate human worth. Say whatever you will of a person, it does not, it cannot, exceed this most illustrious testimony.

"But this is said of David in a particular respect." Ay! notwithstanding the Holy Spirit has declared concerning him, "a man after mine own heart, who shall perform *all my will*?" If you was expounding this text, would you think it right to say, He shall perform *all my will*, that is, he shall serve me in *some particular respect*? "It was not said with regard to his whole character." No! not when the Spirit of inspiration has borne this witness to David, "His heart was perfect with the Lord his God!" Could his heart be perfect, yet not influence his whole conduct? But it was said in the second or third year of Saul's reign; therefore it was not applicable to him during the future years of his life. This is the inference you would draw. But can you really think it a just one? Or would you call that person a man after God's own heart, who is singularly pious in the days of his youth, but swerves and declines in his advanced age?

Notwithstanding all these remonstrances, you push matters to the utmost; as though it was a point of the last importance to prove David an errant backslider. With this view you add, "But was he a man after God's own heart all his life, or in all particulars? So far from it, that"—Stop, Sir, I beseech you; and, before you speak unadvisedly with your lips, hear what the Lord himself replies to both your interrogatories: "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." Surely you was not aware that such things are written in the book of God; otherwise, you would not have contradicted them with so much boldness. I will therefore put the most charitable construction upon your procedure, and say with the apostle, "I wot, that through inadvertence you did it."

"There is not a just man upon earth, that sinneth not," is a text quoted by Aspasio. Upon which Mr. Wesley observes, "Solomon might truly say so, before Christ came." According to this insinuation, what Solomon said in his Proverbs and other books, was said only by a short-sighted mortal, who might adapt his instructions to the present economy, but was not able to plan a system of morals for futurity; whereas I always supposed, that his writings were dictated by that infinitely wise Spirit, before whom all times are present, and to whom all events are known. Agreeably to this supposition, St. Paul informs us, that "whatsoever things were written aforetime, (whether by Solomon or any other prophet,) were written for our learning." No, suggests Mr. Wesley: here is something written, which appertains not to us Christians: We are above it. Are you so? Your reason for these lofty apprehensions? Why, St. John affirms, "Whosoever is born of God, sinneth not."

True, he sinneth not habitually; it is not his customary practice. Thus the passage is explained by another apostle; "Sin (though it may make insurrection) does not reign in his mortal body:" Though it may assault him, yet it "has no dominion over him."

Again, "he sinneth not," is the same way of speaking, and to be understood with the same limitation, as that text in Job, "he giveth not account any of his matters." How, Sir, would you interpret these words? It is deniably certain, that sometimes God giveth account of his matters; he ve it to Abraham, when Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, were to be destroyed with brimstone and fire from heaven. You would therefore, I presume, in some such qualified sense, expound the passage: *He giveth not account*; it is not his usual way, not a customary procedure with the supreme Disposer of things: he generally requireth his creatures to ansact with him upon trust; to give themselves up, with an implicit resignation, to the veracity of his word, and the good pleasure of his will." The harmony of Scripture, and the necessity of the case, call upon you to give the true exposition of the text before us.

I said, *the necessity of the case*; for you will please to observe, the thing affirmed is affirmed in such a manner, that it must be applied to every individual Christian, and at the very instant of his commencing a true Christian. The apostle says not, a saint of the first rank, but *whosoever*. He says not, after such a one has been for a considerable time born of God; but *whosoever is born*, is but just entered upon the desirable state, *sinneth not*. The character belongs to the very weakest believer: the description is suited even to babes in Christ. To suppose, therefore, that it implies an entire freedom from sin, infirmity, and defect, is to suppose that all the children of the regeneration are born in a state of manhood; or, rather, are more than men, even while they are infants of a day.

Our sense of the passage is free from this impropriety, yet gives no countenance to immorality. "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not." He does not, he cannot sin, like the devil, or one actuated by the diabolical nature. This interpretation is rendered probable, by the apostle's antithesis, "he that committeth sin is of the devil." It is rendered necessary, by the preceding remark, and by the experience of Christians. The text, thus interpreted, is applicable to the babe in Christ as well as to the adult. Though either of them may fall through the violence or surprise of temptation, yet neither of them can live and die in allowed iniquity, whether of omission or commission. They cannot have a settled love to any known sin, nor can they commit it with the full consent of their will.

Solomon, when he uttered those humbling words, Eccl. vii. 20, had his eye upon what you somewhere call, "the inconceivable purity and spirituality of the sacred precepts;" upon that universal obedience which they require, in every the minutest instance: that we do nothing, great or small, which they forbid: leave nothing undone, in heart or life, which they enjoin: that we do all this in the most perfect degree; not only serving the Lord, but serving him with all our strength; not only loving our neighbour, but loving him as our own soul; ever exercising the utmost regularity of affection and desire; ever maintaining the utmost rectitude of temper and thought. If you also, Sir, had your eye fixed upon the same law, as it delineates and demands this "inconceivable purity and spirituality," you would not scruple to acquiesce in the wise man's confession, nor think much to adopt it as your own. You would acknowledge it calculated, not only for the Mosaic era, and the meridian of Judea, but for all times and all places; till those new

heavens, and that new earth appear, wherein dwelleth consummate righteousness.

“In many things we offend all.” “That St. James does not speak this of himself, or real Christians, will clearly appear to all who impartially consider the context.” I wish, Sir, you had made this appear to one, even to him whom you honour with this address; then I should not have been obliged to ask, Of whom speaketh the apostle? He says, “My brethren:” Does not this imply true believers, and real Christians? He says, “We teachers* :” Does this not comprehend himself, and describe his office? He adds, “We all:” if he himself, and real Christians, are not included in this most comprehensive clause, I would desire to know in what terms they could possibly be comprised.

According to this interpretation, the arguing is just, and the conclusion forcible. As though he had said, “My dear brethren, though you are truly converted to Christianity, yet do not unadvisedly engage in the arduous and awful work of the ministry: remembering, that we ministers of the gospel shall be subject to a stricter judgment † than Christians in ordinary life; and if, upon trial, we are found faithless, shall receive a heavier condemnation †. The danger, let me add, is very considerable; because, such is the frailty of our mortal state, that the very best among us, and those conversant in sacred things, cannot always walk uprightly; but in many instances we trip, we stumble, we offend.”

Whereas, if neither the apostle himself, nor real Christians be meant, I can see no propriety nor force in the reasoning.—Nay, I can see no reasoning at all, (though the illative particle *for* evidently requires it,) nothing but a most insipid and frivolous assertion. “For, in many things, we that are not real Christians offend!” Is this a discovery worthy of apostolical wisdom? Is this all that the inspired St. James meant to declare? You and I could have told him and his people a great deal more. Whosoever is not a real Christian offends, not in many things only, but in everything. To such a one nothing is pure; his mind and conscience are defiled; his whole life is sin.

We have examined this objection as it stands in itself. Let us now take a view of it as it may appear in its consequences. “In many things we offend all.”—“The apostle speaks not of himself, nor of real Christians.” What fine work would our adversaries make with the Scriptures, if we should allow them Mr. Wesley’s liberty of interpretation! Tell a Pelagian, that all mankind is depraved: prove the universal depravity by that abasing text, “All we, like sheep, have gone astray:” how easily may he reply, *All we* does not mean all mankind: the prophet speaks not of himself, nor of virtuous persons; but only of profane people, and men of the baser sort. Tell an Arian, that our Lord Jesus Christ is very God: confirm the glorious truth by that most cogent text, “In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead:” the heretic has nothing more to do than, in Mr. Wesley’s manner, to answer, *All fulness* does not mean all the divine perfections, but only some pittance or portion of them. Dear Sir, whenever you are disposed to criticize again, let me beseech you to consider a little the import of language, and the consequences of things.

* The original is, not *κυριοι*, masters, but *διδασκαλοι*, teachers.

† *Judgment, condemnation.* The word *κριμα* may be taken in both these significations.

Had the words been, "In many things we offend," you might, by disregarding the context, have borrowed some slight seeming countenance for your criticism from the ninth verse, where the apostle is supposed to personate the wicked, "Therewith curse we man." But in the place under consideration, he enlarges the sentiment, and strengthens the language: though free from that particular crime, he was not free from this general charge. Here therefore he spares not himself: he takes shame to himself; and teaches the most upright of the human race, to plead guilty before their Judge. We the servants of God; we the ambassadors of Christ; we *all*, not one excepted, in many things offend. Where then could *they*, and oh! where can *you* and *I*, look for our perfection, but only in our divinely gracious Surety, Bridegroom, Head? There let us seek, where some excellent lines (whose author you may probably know) have taught us to find it:

Now let me climb perfection's height,
And into nothing fall;
Be less than nothing in thy sight,
While Christ is all in all.

In the paragraph which begins, "O children of Adam," you do not distinguish what the law is made to speak, according to a new scheme of divinity; and what it really does speak to true believers, on the principles of the gospel. Give me leave to rectify your mistakes, and to point out the manner in which you should have expressed yourself.

To rectify your mistakes.—You suppose the law, upon Aspasio's plan, speaking to this effect. "O children of Adam, you are no longer obliged to love the Lord your God with all your heart." Indeed you are. The obligation remains, and is unalterable; but it has been fully satisfied, as the condition of life and immortality, by the believer's glorious Surety. "Once I insisted on absolute purity of heart; now I can dispense with some degrees of evil desire." No such thing. Every degree of evil desire I condemn with inexorable rigour; but every such offence has been thus condemned, and thus punished, in the flesh of your crucified Lord. "Since Christ has fulfilled the law for you, you need not fulfil it:" Rather, you need not fulfil it in order to the justification of your persons, or to obtain eternal life and glory. This, to you the greatest of impossibilities, has been performed in your behalf by a Mediator and Redeemer, to whom nothing is impossible. "I will connive at, yea, accommodate my demands to your weakness." Not this, but what is much better: I see no sinful weaknesses in you; because they are all covered with the resplendent robe of your Saviour's righteousness; therefore, I no longer curse, but bless you, and sign your title to everlasting happiness. Thus the enmity of our nature is slain; thus the precepts, even the strictest precepts, become amiable and desirable. We love the law, which, through our dear Redeemer, is no longer against us, but on our side; is a messenger of peace, and bears witness to our completeness in Christ.

The manner in which you should have expressed yourself.—This is what the law speaks, according to Aspasio's doctrine: "O believers in Christ, I am, like my divine Author, consummate and unchangeable. I did require, I do require, and ever shall require, perfect love to God, perfect charity to your neighbour, and perfect holiness both in heart and life. Never abating one tittle of these my requirements, I shall denounce the curse upon every

disobedience, upon the least departure from absolute perfection. But this is your comfort, believers, that the curse is executed upon your most holy Surety: This is your comfort, believers, that my precepts have been fully obeyed by Jesus your Saviour. As this was done in your nature, and in your stead, I am satisfied, and you are justified. Now, though I can never dispense with any fault, nor connive at any infirmity, yet I behold all your faults laid upon Immanuel; I behold all his righteousness put upon you; and on his account I acquit you, I accept you, and pronounce you righteous*."

This is the language of the law to the faithful, as they are in Christ Jesus: This is the spirit of Aspasio's conversation with his friend Theroa. The native tendency of this doctrine, and its powerful agency in producing true holiness, are professedly displayed in the tenth letter, and not obscurely hinted in various other places. If you can prove that it has a contrary tendency, you will prove that the grace of God does no longer teach us to deny, but prompts us to commit ungodliness: an attempt in which, with all my esteem to your person, and deference for your abilities, I cannot wish you God speed.

"Does the righteousness of God ever mean (as you affirm) the merits of Christ?" Where do I affirm this, Sir? Be pleased to produce the passage; at least refer us to the page. Aspasio, in the place which offends you, speaks of what Christ has done and suffered—of his active and passive obedience. These expressions you change into "the merits of Christ;" which, being an ambiguous phrase, may serve to perplex the cause, rather than clear up the difficulty. Give me leave, therefore, to restore Aspasio's words, and to state the question fairly.

"Does the righteousness of God ever signify the active and passive obedience of Christ?" To this Mr. Wesley replies, "I believe not once in all the Scripture." Why then, Sir, do you not disprove what Aspasio has advanced in support of this interpretation? You believe one thing, he believes another. And there is this little difference in the ground you respectively go upon: He appeals to argument and Scripture; you rest the whole matter upon this single bottom, "I believe so."

You proceed: "It (that is, the righteousness of God) often means, and particularly in the Epistle to the Romans, God's method of justifying sinners." Suppose I should say in my turn, This phrase never means, no, not in the Epistle to the Romans, God's method of justifying sinners; I should then argue in your own way—bring a shield suited to your sword: just as good an argument to defend, as you have brought to destroy my opinion. What would the judicious reader say on such an occasion? Would he not smile and cry, "A goodly pair of disputants truly!"

But let me ask, Does the holiness of God signify his method of sanctifying sinners? Does the wisdom of God signify his method of making sinners wise? This no mortal has suspected: This you yourself will hardly venture to assert. Why then should we take your word, when, without assigning the least reason, you dictate and declare, "The righteousness of God means his method of justifying sinners?" You must pardon us, Sir,

* I think it is no misrepresentation to suppose the law speaking in this manner to the believers; because to them "all things are become new:" Consequently, the voice of the law is new; because "all things are their's."

we prefer St. Peter's judgment: his judgment in that memorable passage, Who have obtained like precious faith in the righteousness of our God, and in the righteousness of our Saviour Jesus Christ." This sentence is a key to all those texts in the New Testament, and many of those in the Old, which mention the righteousness of God. Here it necessarily signifies the righteousness of Christ; because none else is our God and Saviour: Here it confessedly signifies the object of justifying faith; which cannot be the essential righteousness of an absolute God, but must be the vicarious righteousness of an incarnate God. And why should you scruple to call the righteousness of Christ the righteousness of God, since his blood is called the blood of God; his life, which he laid down for us, is called the life of God; and he himself, as the Author of our salvation, is called Jehovah (or God self-existent and everlasting) our righteousness?

It is possible you may produce some commentators of eminence, who coincide, or have led the way, in this interpretation; but may we not ask them, as well as yourself, On what authority they proceed? Is this the plain and natural signification of the words? No; but an apparent force upon their natural import. Does this tend to fix and ascertain the sense of the passage? No; but it gives the passage such a rambling turn as will accommodate itself to the sentiments of Arians or Socinians, Arminians or Papists. Is this reconcileable with the tenor of Scripture? "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Make a trial of your interpretation upon this distinguished text: See how it will accord with common sense, or the analogy of faith. *That we might be made the righteousness of God;* that is, That we might be made God's method of justifying sinners. Can you yourself, Sir, upon an impartial review, be pleased with such interpretations of sacred writ?

How much more noble, and how much more comfortable, is the easy and obvious sense which the words, in a most beautiful climax, afford! He made Christ—who was perfectly free from sin, both in heart and life, God made him—to be sin, justly chargeable with it, and justly punishable for it; that we, who are full of sin, both original and actual, might be made *righteous*; and not barely righteous, but, which is a much stronger expression, *righteousness itself*; yea, that we might be made, what exceeds all parallel, and passes all understanding, *the righteousness of God!* Might have that very righteousness for our justification, which the God of all perfection, uniting himself to our nature, wrought, finished, and infinitely ennobled.

Mr. Samuel Clarke, in his annotations on this verse, on Rom. i. 17. on Rom. x. 3. writes in the same vague and unsatisfactory manner as yourself. I could mention another celebrated commentator, who leans to this timid and trimming scheme. I speak thus freely, because I look upon the article of justification through the righteousness of our God and Saviour, to be the supreme distinguishing glory of Christianity; because I consider it as the richest, incomparably the richest, privilege of the Christian. To have a righteousness, a consummate righteousness, the very righteousness of the incarnate God, dignified with all the perfections of the divine nature—to have this righteousness imputed for our justification! Matchless, inconceivable blessing! This fills the believer's heart with inexpressible comfort and joy; this displays the grace of God in the most charming and trans-

porting light ; this constitutes the most engaging motive to love, to holiness, and to all willing obedience.

Let us not then treat of it in such diluting terms, or in such a compromising strain, as shall defeat the efficacy of the heavenly cordial, or deliver up the precious depositum to the enemies of the gospel. Let us rather, by a clear and full manifestation of the truth, of this capital and leading truth especially, commend ourselves to every man's conscience. Their humour may dislike it, their prejudice may reject it, but their conscience, whenever it awakes and gains the ascendant, will embrace it, will cleave to it, and rejoice in it.

But stay. Let me proceed cautiously ; not triumph immaturally. You rally your forces, and prepare for a fresh attack. Aspasio tells his friend, That the righteousness of God signifies a righteousness of the most super-eminent dignity ; such as is worthy to be called by his name, and may justly challenge his acceptance. To this you reply, "I cannot allow it at all." Aspasio supports his opinion by Scripture, by reason, and by a very respectable authority. All which Mr. Wesley would confront and overthrow, by that one irrefragable proof, "I cannot allow it at all." Surely, said I, upon reading such controversial triflings, delivered with the air of oracular responses, surely this letter must have stolen its way into the world ; it was designed as a preservative for Mr. Wesley's private societies only ; it could never be intended for public view, and general examination ; since every reader is treated, not as his judge, no, nor as his equal, but as his pupil : not as one that is to be addressed with argument, and convinced by reasoning, but as a tame disciple, that is to acquiesce in the great preceptor's solemn say so.

To your next paragraph I have no material objection. I might indeed complain of an unfair quotation ; but I shall only observe, that you would discard the expression, *imputation of righteousness*, and insert in its stead, *interest in Christ*. You had not always, Sir, such an aversion to the phrase *imputed*. Witness that stanza in one of your hymns,

Let faith and love combine
To guard your valiant breast,
The plate be righteousness divine,
Imputed and imprest.

However, in this place I am willing to gratify you ; because it will be difficult to show how a sinner can have a real interest in Christ, in what he has done and what he has suffered, any other way than by imputation. I am willing to gratify you, provided you do not entertain that strange conceit, of an incomplete interest, or an interest in half the Redeemer ; but look upon the holiness of his nature, the obedience of his life, and the atonement of his death, as the one undivided ineffable treasure, in which every believing sinner is interested ; as that which is the all-sufficient cause of his justification ; rendering acceptable, first his person, then his performances, and, at the last, introducing him, with dignity and triumph, into everlasting habitations.

Here I lay down my pen ; unless you will permit me to relate a little piece of history, not foreign to your last sentiment.—A certain general happened to observe a common soldier distinguishing himself, on the day of battle, with uncommon activity and courage. Determined to reward merit

wherever it was found, he advanced the brave plebeian to a captain's post ; who had not long enjoyed the honour, before he came to his benefactor, and, with dejected countenance, begged leave to resign his commission. The general, surprised at such an unexpected request, asked him the reason. Your officers, and the petitioner, being gentlemen of family and education, think it beneath them to associate or converse with a rustic. So that now I am abandoned on every side ; and am less happy, since my preferment, than I was before this instance of your highness's favour. Is this the cause of your uneasiness ? I replied the general ; then it shall be redressed, and very speedily. To-morrow I review the army, and to-morrow your business shall be done. Accordingly, when the troops were drawn up, and expected every moment to begin their exercise, the general calls the young hero from the ranks, leans his hand upon his shoulder, and, in this familiar endearing posture, walks with him through all the lines. The stratagem had its desired effect. After such a signal and public token of his prince's regard, the officers were desirous of his acquaintance, and courted, rather than shunned his company.

And will not the favour of the blessed Jesus give us as great a distinction, and as high a recommendation, in the heavenly world ? Will not the angelic hosts respect and honour those persons who appear washed in his blood, clothed with his righteousness, and wearing the most illustrious tokens of his love that he himself could possibly give ? In these tokens of his love may we and our readers be found ! Then shall we meet one another with courage and comfort at the great tribunal ; with honour and joy amidst the angels of light ; with everlasting exultation and rapture around the throne of the Lamb.

Under such pleasing hopes, I take my leave at present, and remain yours, &c.

LETTER VIII.

REVEREND SIR,—You introduce the paragraph that comes next under our consideration by a very just distinction. Aspasio had observed, that a rebel may be forgiven, without being restored to the dignity of a son. To which you reply, "A rebel against an earthly king may, but not a rebel against God. In the very same moment that God forgives, we are the sons of God." This is perfectly right. But hence to infer, that the conversation of our two friends is no better than "an idle dispute," is not very polite, and not all conclusive ; because, remission of the offence, and restoration to favour, may come in the same moment, and yet be different blessings. That afflicted patient, mentioned in the gospel, had, at the same instant, his ears opened and the string of his tongue loosed. Were these effects, therefore, one and the same kind of healing ? Besides, why are forgiveness and sonship united in the divine donation ? Because the sufferings of a sinner, and the obedience of a son, were united in the divine Redeemer. So that we must still have our eye, our believing and adoring eye, upon the meritorious righteousness of our Lord.

"Pardon and acceptance through," &c. Here I see nothing but the *crambe repetita*.—"The words of Job," &c. Here I see nothing but the usual argument, our master's *ipse dixit*. Therefore we will pass on to the next period.

Two texts of Scripture are produced. You set aside Aspasio's interpretation, to make way for one of your own; which might have passed without suspicion, if it had appeared in your sermons, or been delivered from your pulpit; where a person may be content with the general sense, without entering upon a critical nicety. But, by rejecting Aspasio's exposition, you seem to intend a peculiar degree of accuracy." Let us then examine the passages with such a view. "Grace reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life; that is, the free love of God brings us through justification and sanctification to glory."

In this, I question, Sir, whether you are exactly orthodox. You lead the reader to suppose, that sanctification is as much the cause of glory as justification; that Christ's work, and our graces, have just the same weight, act in the very same capacity, have at least a joint influence in procuring eternal life. You should rather have expressed yourself in some such manner: "The free grace of God brings us, through the joyful privilege of justification, first to sanctification, or the love of his blessed self, then to glory, or the enjoyment of his blessed self."

Besides, you neglect the significancy of that beautiful and emphatical word, *reigneth*. On this much stress ought to be laid in reading the sentence; therefore it ought not to be totally overlooked in explaining the sentence. Grace is discovered in other instances; grace is exercised in other blessings; but by giving us eternal life, by giving it freely, even when we are undeserving guilty creatures, this ever-amiable attribute *reigneth*. It is manifested with every grand and charming recommendation. It appears like the illustrious Solomon, when seated on his inimitably splendid throne of ivory and gold, or like the magnificent Ahasuerus, when he "shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty."

Another particular I cannot persuade myself to admire. You change the word *righteousness* into *justification*. Instead of saying, "Brings us through righteousness," you say, "Brings us through justification." By this language you scarcely distinguish yourself from any heretic. You may rank with the Arian, or with the sectarist of any denomination. They will, every one, allow the necessity of justification in order to final felicity; but not the necessity of a righteousness adequate to the demands of the law, as a foundation for this blessed hope. You do just the same injury to Christ and his righteousness, which obtain this inconceivable recompence of reward, as you would receive from a messenger who carries a rich present to your friend, but will not acknowledge from whom it comes: It come, he confesses, from some man, but obstinately refuses to say from Mr. John Wesley. Whereas, Aspasio scruples not to own, nay rejoices to declare, from whence the invaluable benefit of justification proceeds. Not from works of the law, no, nor from works of the spirit; from nothing done by us, from nothing wrought in us; but wholly from the blood and obedience of Jesus Christ.

The next passage on which you descant is, "That they may receive forgiveness, and a lot among the sanctified." Thus you translate the original. Aspasio, not affecting needless novelty, is content with the common version: "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among all them that are sanctified, by faith that is in me." Why do you omit the word *sins*? Forgiveness, I own, implies it; but the apostle chooses to express it; by which means, the sentence becomes more full and emphatical; grace

is more highly honoured, and man more deeply abased. I wonder also, why you should prefer *lot* to *inheritance*, which is the usual translation. The latter word conveys a much more noble and pleasing idea to the English reader, than the former.—*Receive* forgiveness of sins : not earn it (let us mark this) by performing conditions, but receive it as an absolute gift ; just as Joseph's brethren received the portions sent them from the viceroy of Egypt's table.—*Receive an inheritance* : consisting of all spiritual blessings here, and a title to everlasting blessedness hereafter. All which are bestowed as freely, as the several portions of land in Canaan were, by Moses and Joshua, consigned over to the tribes of Israel for a possession.—Among those that are *sanctified*. If you should inquire, how sinners are sanctified ? the answer is added, by *faith* which is in me ; not *for* faith, as your conditional scheme supposes, but *by* faith. By accepting the blessings mentioned, by looking upon them as your own through the divine gift, and by living in the delightful enjoyment of them ; thus our hearts are won to God, and filled with his love ; thus they are weaned from vanity, and renewed in true holiness.

Is the satisfaction made by Christ's death sufficient to obtain both our full pardon and our final happiness ? Aspasio has answered this question in the negative. He has confirmed his opinion by the authority of Scripture and the testimony of reason. Mr. Wesley thinks it enough to reply, "Unquestionably it is sufficient, and neither of the texts you cite prove the contrary." How easy, by this way of arguing, to overthrow any system, and silence demonstration itself ! But pray, Sir, be pleased to recollect yourself : did you not, a little while ago, extol Aspasio as "unquestionably right," because he made the universal obedience of Christ, from his birth to his death, the one foundation of his hope ? Yet here you condemn him as "unquestionably wrong," because he does not attribute all to Christ's death exclusively. Will Mr. Wesley never have done with self-contradiction ? Why will he give me such repeated cause to complain, *Quo teneam vultus, &c.* ?

If it was requisite for Christ to be baptised, argues Aspasio, much more to fulfil the moral law. "I cannot prove (replies Mr. Wesley), that either the one or the other was requisite, in order to his purchasing redemption for us. "Why then do you admit his obedience to the moral law as an essential part of the foundation of your hope ? A tottering foundation methinks, which is laid in a doctrine you cannot prove.

But if you cannot prove it, may not others prove it for you ? You are not called to prove this point, Sir, but only to disprove what Aspasio has advanced in confirmation of it. That it was requisite for our Lord to be baptised, he himself acknowledges. Speaking of that sacred rite, he says, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It *becometh* : was it not requisite for Christ always to act the becoming part ? in every circumstance to demean himself according to the utmost decorum and highest dignity of character ? "This was not requisite to purchase redemption for us." For what then was it requisite ? Not to wash away any stain from the holy Jesus ; not to obtain any blessedness for the Son of the Highest : since, as the Son of the eternal God, he had an undoubted right to all the blessings of heaven and earth, of time and eternity.

"But it was not requisite that he should fulfil the moral law." No ! Do you then establish the law ? Are you not the Antinomian, who would have

sinful man saved, yet the divine law not fulfilled either by them or their Surety? This is a strange way of magnifying the great standard of all righteousness! Rather, it is the sure way of dishonouring and debasing it. What says our Lord? "I came, not to destroy the law, but to fulfil," Matth. v. 17. Did this signify, as some expository refiners suggest, only to vindicate and illustrate the law, to explain its highest meaning, and rescue it from the false glosses of the Scribes, the business might have been done by the prophets and apostles: no occasion for the King of heaven to appear in person: His ambassadors might have transacted the whole affair of vindication and explanation. But to fulfil every jot and tittle prescribed in its commands, to suffer all the vengeance and the whole curse denounced in its penalty—this was a work worthy of the Son of God—practicable by none but the Son of God—and, being executed by him, is truly meritorious of pardon and life for poor sinners; of their restoration to the divine favour, and of their admission into the heavenly kingdom.

The moral law is inviolable in its nature, and of eternal obligation. This is a truth of great importance: with this is connected, and on this depends, the absolute necessity of a vicarious righteousness. I am no longer surprised that you dispute against the latter, since you question or deny the former. But consider what our Lord says farther upon this subject, in the fifth of St. Matthew and the eighteenth verse. Perhaps you will reply, "I have both considered it, and expounded it in my Sermons." You have; but in such a manner as I hope you will live to retract. Thus you expound the awful text, and turn it into a piece of unmeaning tautology. "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass, till heaven and earth pass; or, as it is expressed immediately after, *till all* (or, rather, *all things*) be fulfilled, (till the consummation of all things)*." You would make *εως αν παρελθη ο ουρανος και η γη* and *εως αν παντα γενηται*, synonymous phrases, expressive of the same thing. Thus stands the passage, interpreted according to your criticism: "Till the consummation of all things, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till the consummation of all things." See to what miserable subtuges a man of learning is driven, in order to evade the force of a text which militates strongly for the meritorious obedience of Christ.

How much more just, more noble, more useful, is the common exposition and the obvious meaning? Which we may thus introduce, "These are the terms of life and happiness to man; whosoever falls short, God himself pronounces accursed." And will the Unchangeable go back from his purpose, make abatement in his demands, or come to a composition with his creatures? No, verily. "He is of one mind, and who can turn him, Job xxiii. 13. It were easier for heaven and earth to pass," for all nature to be unhinged, and the universe to drop into dissolution, "than for one jot or tittle of this unalterable law to pass without a perfect accomplishment †" in every the minutest instance.

"By Christ's sufferings alone the law was not satisfied," says Aspasio. "Yes, it was," replies Mr. Wesley. Then all the indefatigable and impor-

* Sermons by John Wesley, vol ii. p. 173.

† "The word *all* (says Mr. Wesley) does not mean all the law, but all things in the universe. How forced a construction! How contrary to grammar! since the law, and the things which it comprehends, are the immediate antecedent. How much more properly and consistently has Dr. Doddridge explained the passage! "Till all things which the law requires, or foretels, shall be effected."

labours of his life, all his exemplary and shining graces must be mere effluviæ. At least they could have no merit, but were necessary only way of setting us an example.

The prophet was of another mind: "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake." By this righteousness, not barely by his sufferings, "he magnify the law, and make it honourable," Isa. xlii. 21. The apostle of another mind: "God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law. What? Only to bear its curse? Only to undergo its penalty? Not to fulfil its preceptive part? which is confessedly the principal part in every law; and to enforce which all penalties are added. You yourself ought to be of another mind; for you have already, and truly deserved, that pardon and acceptance always go together. "In the same manner that God forgives, we are the sons of God." And wherefore? The Son is, because the sufferings of a sinner, and the obedience of a Son, went together in the Redeemer; and without this union the redemption of mankind not been complete.

"The law required only the alternative—obey or die." Some of your errors are less considerable; this I take to be a first-rate mistake. According to this supposition, Cain, and Judas, and all the damned, are righteous. Because they die, they bear the curse, they suffer everlastingly; and thereby conform to one of the law's alternatives. One of the law's alternatives! No, here I am wrong: it is one of your alternatives. The divine law knows no such thing. No law on earth knows any such thing. Sanctions and penalties annexed to a law, are never looked upon as equivalent to obedience; but only as preservatives from disobedience. In all the compass of your reading, have you ever met with a law that makes such proposals to its subjects: "Conform to the regulations established, and you shall enjoy my privileges, you shall share my honours? Or, if you choose to violate all my wholesome institutions, only submit to the penalty, and you shall have an equal right to the immunities and preferments?"

"The law required no man to obey and die too." But did it not require a transgressor to obey and die? If not, then transgression robs the law of its right, and vacates all obligation to obedience. Did it not require the Surety for sinful man to obey and die? If the Surety dies only, he only delivers from punishment; but this affords no claim to life, no title to a reward, unless you can produce some such edict from the court of heaven, "Suffer this, and thou shalt live." I find it written, "In keeping thy commandments there is great reward." Nowhere do I read, "In undergoing thy curse, there is the same reward." Whereas, when we join the active and passive obedience of our Lord, the peace-speaking blood with the life-giving righteousness—both made infinitely meritorious and infinitely efficacious by the divine glory of his person,—how full does our justification appear! How firm does it stand! It has all that the law can demand, both for our exemption from the curse, and for our title to bliss.

Before I take my leave of this topic, let me make one supposition, for which your way of thinking affords the juster ground. Suppose our Lord Jesus Christ had yielded a perfect conformity to the precept, without ever submitting to the penalty; would this have been sufficient for the justification of a sinner? Here is one of your alternatives performed. Upon the foot of your principles, therefore, it would, it must have been sufficient. But

this is so wild an opinion, so contrary to the whole current of Scripture, that to produce it, is to refute it.

Where Scripture ascribes the whole of our salvation to the death of Christ, a part of his humiliation is put for the whole. To this Mr. Wesley objects, "I cannot allow it without proof." I wish you would remember the golden rule, of doing as you would be done by; and since you insist upon proof from others, not be so sparing of it in your own cause. I wish likewise you would impartially consider what Aspasio has advanced upon the subject. Has he not given you the proof you demand? No; "He was obedient unto death" is no proof at all. But is that the only thing urged? If one argument is inadequate, must all be inconclusive? Because you have routed one detachment, have you therefore conquered the whole army? However, let us see whether this detachment, weak as you suppose it, may not be able to sustain your attack.

Does not the Scripture ascribe the whole of your salvation to the death of Christ? To this question Aspasio replies, "This part of our Lord's meritorious humiliation is, by a very usual figure, put for the whole. The death of Christ includes not only his sufferings, but his obedience. The shedding of his blood was at once the grand instance of his sufferings, and the finishing act of his obedience: in this view it is considered, and thus it is represented by his own ambassador, who, speaking of his divine Master, says, 'He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.'" "This (you reply) is no proof at all, as it does not necessarily imply any more, than that he died in obedience to the Father."

How do some people love to cramp the enlarged, and debase the magnificent sense of Scripture! Surely this text implies, and not implies only, but forcibly expresses, both the active and passive obedience of Christ. It is not *απεθανεν*, he died; but *γενόμενος υπηκουος*, he became obedient. Can you see nothing of his active righteousness in these words? For my part, I can see very little besides. This is what the following clause confirms (let common sense be judge): Obedient, not barely in death, but unto death; like that expression of Jehovah by the prophet, "Unto hoary hairs will I carry you." Does not this give us a retrospect view of youth and manhood, as well as lead our attention forward to old age? In like manner, *obedient unto death*: Does not this refer us to all the previous duties and virtues of a righteous walk; while it leads us to the closing scene of all, a resigned exit? Does it not most naturally mean, *obedient through the whole course of life, even to the last all-completing instance, a voluntary submission to death?* How easy and obvious is this interpretation! How grand and graceful is this meaning!

I can no more admire your taste, considered as a critic, than I can admire your doctrine considered as a divine. Give me the expositions of Scripture which act, not like the nocturnal damp, but like the morning sun; not shrivelling and contracting, but opening and expanding those flowers of paradise, the truths of the gospel, that they may display all their charming beauties, and breathe out all their reviving odours. I think, upon the whole, we have very sufficient cause to assert, and to abide by our assertion, that when the Scripture ascribes the whole of our salvation to the death of Christ, a part of his humiliation is put for the whole; and, in thus speaking, the Holy Spirit copies after himself: for if the death inflicted on the first Adam

included every evil consequent upon the fall—the depravity as well as the misery of the creature—it was meet that the death to which the second Adam submitted should include every good needful for our recovery; the obedience as well as the sufferings of the Redeemer. It was meet that the price, expressed by the same word, should be as extensive as the punishment.

“But how does it appear that he undertook this before the foundation of the world?” At what time does Mr. Wesley suppose that Christ undertook the work? Not till sin entered and man apostatized? Was it then an incidental upstart expedient, fetched in to remedy some unforeseen disaster? Was it a device which owed its birth to some unexpected contingency, occasioned by the perverseness of the creature? Far, far from it: it was the grand, original, all-comprehending plan; the way in which God, long before time commenced, decreed to manifest the glory of his grace, and the lustre of all his perfections. The world was made as a proper theatre on which to display and execute this most magnificent scheme; and all the revolutions of human affairs, like so many under-plots in the drama, are subservient to the accomplishment of this capital design. “Known unto God are all his works;” determined by God are all his counsels, “from the beginning of the world;” more especially this grandest of all the divine dispensations, this masterpiece of his unsearchable wisdom.

“But was this by a positive covenant between Christ and the Father?” Aspasio proceeds to illustrate and confirm the doctrine of an everlasting covenant between the almighty Father and his co-equal Son. He produces several texts of Scripture, to each of which you object as insufficient for his purpose. Each of your objections I shall answer only by adding a short comment, explanatory of their spirit and force. “This proves no previous contract:” That is, I deny it; and therefore you cannot prove your point. “Neither does this prove any such thing:” That is, I cannot or will not see the proof; and therefore there is none. “That expression does not necessarily imply any more”—than I please to allow. “In the way or method he had chosen;” of which I am the sole complete judge, and my judgment ought to be decisive in the case. Thus would Mr. Wesley have, not Aspasio only, but the public also, receive his dictates (*tanquam a tripodē*) as absolute oracles; for here is only bare assertion, or bare denial, without any vouchers but his own word, without any authority but his own declaration.

In Psalm the xlth, the conditions of the covenant are circumstantially recorded, which were the incarnation and obedience of the eternal Son: “A body hast thou prepared me: Lo! I come to do thy will.” “Nay, here is no mention of any covenant, nor any thing from which it can be inferred.” How many times shall I adjure thee, said Ahab to Micaiah, that thou tell me nothing but that which is true? And how many times shall I entreat Mr. Wesley to object nothing, without assigning some reason for his objection? At least not to think of convincing my judgment, and converting me to his opinion by a bare *say so*. But I have done. Perhaps I have trespassed upon the patience of the reader in expressing my disappointment so frequently; perhaps I may also bear too hard upon Mr. Wesley in asking for proofs, when it may be no small difficulty to produce them. To return: “Nay, here is no mention of any covenant, nor any thing from which it can be inferred.” That the word *covenant* is not mentioned is very true; that

there is no reference to any such thing, is not so certain. Let us consider the whole passage: "Sacrifice and burnt-offering thou didst not require." If sacrifices and slain beasts are not the object of the divine complacency, in what will the Lord delight? The next words declare, "A body hast thou prepared me:" since the law cannot be fulfilled without *doing*, nor justice satisfied without *dying*, "Lo! I come," (says the second person in the Trinity), "to undertake both: since this undertaking must be accomplished by one who is finite, that he may die, and infinite, that he may conquer death, I will accomplish it in the divine and human nature. For this purpose, a body hast thou prepared me: in this body, lo! I come, willingly and cheerfully I come, to perform, to sustain, to fulfil all; and so to do thy great, thy gracious will." May we not rationally suppose this spoken by way of re-stipulation, or compliance with the Father's demands? that the matter is thereby brought to a solemn contract?

Dr. Hammond thought this no irrational supposition; therefore gives us upon the following words a perfectly corresponding comment. *In the volume of the book it is written of me* :—"Which is no other than a bill or roll of contract between the Father and Christ, wherein is supposed to be written the agreement preparatory to that great work of Christ's incarnation; wherein he, undertaking to fulfil the will of God, to perform all active, and also all passive obedience, even unto death, had the promise from God that he should become the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him."

Thus says our learned countryman. And what says the blessed apostle; whose exposition and application of the passage you seem to have forgotten, at least not to have thoroughly weighed? Having quoted the passage, argued from it, and displayed the benefits obtained by this all-sufficient propitiation, he adduces a text from Jeremiah relating to this very subject, and explaining its nature: "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is witness." Of what? Of the justification and sanctification of sinners, both founded on, both effected by, the sacrifice of the dying Jesus: transactions which both the prophet and the apostle consider under the notion of a covenant, as is plain from the following quotation: "For after that he had said before, This is the covenant which I will make with them in those days." Hence it appears that the author to the Hebrews saw something in the words of the Psalmist from which the doctrine of a covenant might be inferred.

Another copy of this grand treaty is recorded, Isa. xlix, from the first to the sixth verse. "I have read them, but cannot find a word about it in all those verses; they contain neither more nor less than a prediction of the salvation of the Gentiles." They contain a prediction, and somewhat more; they describe the way whereby this most desirable event shall be brought to pass. This the Lord himself declares shall be by way of covenant: "I will give thee for a covenant to the people." This verse we may look upon as a key to the preceding. It teaches us to consider them as descriptive of the august covenant; of its establishment, its parties, and its terms. Indeed the verses themselves lead us to the same view: for what is a covenant? A contract wherein a condition is prescribed, a promise is made, and both are ratified by a mutual agreement. The condition is prescribed in those words: "Thou art my servant, O Israel*, in whom I will be glorified." The pro-

* Israel is the name of the church, often given to her in this prophecy: Christ and his church, by virtue of the union between them, have the same names. As she is sometimes

mise is made in those words: "Thou shalt raise up the tribes of Jacob, restore the preserved of Israel, and be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." The agreement is specified or implied in those words: "I have spent my strength for nought; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God."

The great Vitringa, after having expounded the whole clause, concludes in this manner: "Antequam ab his verbis, sensu fœcundissimis, summam doctrinæ evangelicæ complexis, discedam, monere vellim, eadem clarissime deformare totum mysterium conventionis pacis, inter Deum patrem et Messiam filiam ejus, in humana carne appariturum, initæ, perinde ac in locis quæ ex aliis excerpo; Psal. xl. 7, Zech. vi. 13. Pater ut Dominus, filio ut Messia, offert gloriam longe amplissimam, mediationis et salvationis Judæorum et gentium, quæ gloria, omnium quæ mente concipi possunt, est maxima, sub lege sive sub conditione profundissimi obsequii servilis; eaque stipulatio ntrinque rati habetur*."

If, upon a stricter review, this prophecy be found to express no such thing as a covenant, I am very willing to give up the proof: so much the rather as it makes no part of Aspasio's discourse; is only just mentioned in a note; and stands not in the main body, but only as a *corps de reserve*.

"By the covenant of works, man was bound to obey in his own person." Here you take Aspasio up very short, and reply, "So he is under the covenant of grace, though not in order to justification." This is the very thing he means: nor could you easily have mistaken his meaning, if you had only done him so small a piece of justice as to read the whole paragraph; of which, since you seem either willingly, or through inadvertence, to be ignorant, I will beg leave to transcribe it:—"Between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, this, I apprehend, is the difference: by the former, man was indispensably bound to obey in his own person; by the latter, the obedience of his Surety is accepted instead of his own. The righteousness required by both is not sincere, but complete; not proportioned to the abilities of fallen man, but to the purity of the law, and the majesty of the law-giver." You see the whole argument turns upon a *complete* righteousness, such as satisfies the law, and is an adequate ground for justification. This, I imagine, fallen man is not obliged by the covenant of grace to perform; if so, we shall be at a loss to find any such thing as grace; if so, we can have no hope of obtaining salvation with eternal glory. There will be too much reason for applying to all mankind those awful words of the prophet, "In the day thou mayest make thy plant to grow, and in the morning thou mayest make thy seed to flourish; but the harvest shall be a heap, in the day of grief and desperate sorrow."

Blessed be God, the melancholy strain is superseded. Though the terms in the first covenant were a perfect obedience, though the terms once fixed continue unalterable, yet in the new covenant there is a change and substitution as to the performer, without any relaxation as to the performance. Instead of personal obedience, we are justified through the obedience of our Mediator, "we are *made* the righteousness of God *in* him:" that is, we are furnished with a plea as prevalent for our justification and admission into the

called by his name, "The Lord our righteousness," so he is here called by her name Israel. See Jer. xxxiii. 16.

* VITRING. *in loc.*

divine favour, as if we had retained our innocence untainted, and in every respect conformed ourselves to the righteousness which the law of God requires *. Thus, the salvation of sinners neither clashes with the truth, nor interferes with the justice of the supreme Legislator: on the contrary, it becomes a faithful and just procedure of the most high God, to justify him that believeth on Jesus.

“The obedience of our Surety is accepted instead of our own.” “This is neither a safe nor a scriptural way of speaking.” That the obedience of Christ is accepted for our justification, is a doctrine warranted by Scripture: it may, therefore, very justly be reckoned a scriptural way of speaking. And if his obedience is accepted for this purpose, our own, were it ever so considerable, could come in for no share of the work; our own, though ever so gorgeously arrayed, must stand aside, or be cast into shades, just as the stars hide their diminished, or rather extinguished heads, when the sun appears in his meridian splendour: because the obedience of Christ is of infinite dignity and value; and infinite value is such as not only transcends all other services, but renders them mere nothings in the comparison. For this reason the apostle counted all endowments but loss for Christ; and the prophet represents all nations as nothing before God.

“I would simply say, we are accepted through the Beloved.” If you rightly understood what is meant when the apostle speaks of being accepted in the Beloved, you would have no fault to find with Aspasio’s comment. St. Paul means we are accepted, not by any obedience, performed in our own persons, but solely by the obedience of that infinitely excellent, and infinitely beloved one, Christ Jesus; whose righteousness, being imputed to us, and put upon us, causes us not only to be pardoned, but to be highly esteemed, dearly beloved, and blessed with all spiritual blessings.

Here I cannot but observe that you have changed the apostle’s expression. He says, “Accepted *in* the beloved;” you say, “Accepted *through* the Beloved.” I am willing to believe this was an oversight; you had no sinister design; but still I think you should take more heed to your pen, and not alter the inspired word, lest you blemish the language, or injure the sense. Perhaps you will ask, what difference is there between accepted *through*, and accepted *in*, the Beloved? I will illustrate the difference by a similitude. A creditable housekeeper gives a good character to a servant that leaves him, by virtue of which he is accepted, and admitted into some other valuable employ. This character is his introduction, yet this makes no addition to his real value. Acceptance *through* the Beloved, may import no more than such an admission through such a recommendation; whereas, accepted *in* the Beloved implies not only a recommendatory passport from Christ, but a real union with Christ; whereby we are incorporated into his sacred body, and partake as truly of his righteousness as the members partake of the life which animates the head. By this our persons are really ennobled; this imparts the highest dignity to our nature: we are not only recommended to, but rendered meet for the favour, the complacency, the beatific presence of God, being one with Jesus, and therefore loved even as Jesus himself is loved †.

* 2 Cor. v. 21. This is Dr. Doddridge’s interpretation of the passage; and it speaks a noble, a joyful truth.

† John xvii. 23. “They *in* me,” says our Lord. Therefore, on this account, or viewed in this relation, “Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”

“The second covenant was not made with Adam or any of his posterity, but with Christ in those words.” “For any authority you have from these words, you might as well have said it was made with the Holy Ghost.” No : Christ, not the Holy Ghost, was the seed of the woman. This is an answer much in your own strain. But let us consider farther.

You allow, I presume, that the first covenant was made with Adam, as our public federal head ; that all his posterity were included in it, being to stand or fall together with him : Herein, says the apostle, “Adam was a figure of him that was to come.” If so, the second covenant must be made with Christ, as our public federal head : he and all his seed are included in it ; and as it was impossible for him to miscarry, they must be joint partakers of the benefits. Accordingly, he is styled the Mediator of the new covenant, by whose most acceptable and prevailing interposition all its blessings are obtained : he is styled the Surety of the covenant, engaging to pay the whole debt for poor insolvent creatures—the debt of penal suffering, and the debt of perfect obedience : the Testator of the covenant, whose are its riches, and whose are its privileges ; who has also of his unbounded goodness bequeathed them as so many inestimable legacies to indigent men. Methinks those are such charming truths, such divinely comfortable doctrines, that you should consider them thoroughly before you oppose them, lest you do a greater act of unkindness to your readers, than that which is charged, though very injuriously, upon Job : “Thou hast stripped the naked of their clothing, and sent widows away empty.” And when you are disposed to consider these points thoroughly, ask yourself this question : is it possible to conceive that Christ should be the Mediator, the Surety, the Testator of the covenant, if it was not made with him, and the execution of it undertaken by him ? Or is it possible to suppose that the all-glorious Son of God should be the Mediator, the Surety, the Testator of the covenant, yet leave others to perform the conditions ; which are incomparably the most important, interesting, and difficult parts of the transaction ?

“These words were not spoken to Christ, but of him.” True, of him as given for a covenant of the people. “There is not the least intimation of any such covenant.” You will not deny that Christ is signified by “the seed of the woman.” It is said, *He shall* ; a language expressing authority, and requiring conformity. As Christ is the supreme uncontrollable God, this could not be required, and would never have been said without his actual consent : here then is implied his approbation of the office. It is farther said, “The serpent shall bruise his heel ;” he shall become incarnate, and after a life of much sorrow, and many tribulations, shall be put to a most tormenting death : here is the condition of the covenant. It is added, “He shall bruise the serpent’s head ; shall destroy the works of the devil, and repair the ruins of the fall ; shall deliver from the wrath deserved, and recover the inheritance forfeited :” here is the recompense or reward of the covenant.

Should you ask, Is it supposable that Adam understood the words in this compass of meaning ? Perhaps not. But if we do not understand them in a more exalted and extensive sense than our first father, what advantage do we reap from the full revelation of the gospel ? The full revelation of the gospel pours as much light upon this, and other of the ancient oracles, as the experiments of our modern anatomists have poured upon the structure and

economy of the human body. This grand original text, read with the comment of the New Testament, speaks all that Aspasio has suggested; all that our fallen state could want, or our very hearts can wish.

You have mustered up several objections, yet there is room for more; I will therefore for once act as your auxiliary, and turn against Aspasio. He supposes the covenant to be made with Christ; whereas the Scripture represents the covenant to be made with various men, particularly and personally, in various ages. True, it is recorded that God made a covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob, and with David the father of Solomon: but were they in a capacity to enter into covenant with their Maker? to stand for themselves, or be surety for others? I think not: the passages mean no more than the Lord's manifesting, in an especial manner, the grand covenant to them; ratifying and confirming their personal interest in it; and farther assuring them that Christ, the great covenant head, should be of themselves, and spring from their seed.

This accounts for that remarkable and singular mode of expression, which often occurs in Scripture, "I will make a covenant with them;" or, "This is my covenant with them." Yet there follows no mention of any conditions, only a promise of unconditional blessings; because the former have already been performed, and nothing remains but to confer the latter; so that the meaning of the divine speaker is—I will admit them to an interest in this covenant, and make them partakers of its privileges.

I should now conclude, but Mr. Wesley will not suffer me to quit the subject. He farther insists, "The words manifestly contain, if not a covenant made with, a promise, made to Adam and all his posterity." *If not:* he begins to hesitate in his assertion, to fluctuate in his opinion, and, I could hope to see his mistake. "The words contain a promise." And have you never read, that the covenant of God, or the various renewals and ratifications of the covenant of grace, are styled *covenants of promise*? which consist of pure promises, and dispense free gifts.

Observe the tenor of the new covenant, as it stands engrossed by the pen of inspiration: "This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and on their hearts will I write them; 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 of them even unto the greatest of them. For I will be merciful unto their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Where are your conditions in this draught? Where are any terms required of impotent man? Is it not all promise from the beginning to the end? That repentance, and that faith, for whose conditionality you plead, are they not both comprehended in this heavenly deed? and comprehended under the form of blessings vouchsafed, not of tasks enjoined? Does the contract run in this manner *I require and command*? or in this strain, *I grant and bestow*? The Lord says, "I will put my laws; I will write them." The work shall not be laid on my creatures, but done by myself. "They shall be my people, and I will remember their sins no more." What! Provided they perform such and such duties? I read no such clause: I see no such proviso. All is absolutely free; dependent on no performances of ours; but flowing from sovereign, supreme, self-influenced goodness.

Just such is that delightful declaration, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their heart, that they shall not depart from me." What you call conditions, must be comprised in *my fear*. This is represented as a singular benefit which God implants; and both as dependent, not on the fidelity of man, but on the power and veracity of God. Another of your conditions, I presume, is perseverance unto the end. This, in the covenant of grace, is not enjoined, but secured; secured, not by a strict prohibition of apostacy, but by the omnipotent interposition of Jehovah: "I will put my fear (so put my fear) into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me;" shall never draw back into perdition. Thus the covenant becomes not transient, but everlasting; thus the promise is not precarious, but sure to all the seed. There seems to be as great a difference between this evangelical, and your legal method of stating the covenant; between suspending the benefits on human endeavours, and grounding them on divine agency; as between hanging the anchor on the top of the mast, and fixing it at the bottom of the sea.

Let me add one more text, which now occurs to my thoughts: "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed," Acts iii. 25. Here the covenant is first mentioned in general; then particularly specified. "In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth"—be laid under conditions? be obliged to execute terms? No; but "shall be blessed," blessed with all blessings, temporal, spiritual, eternal. *In thy seed*: that is, in Christ; without any regard to qualifications or deeds of their own; entirely by virtue of an interest in his consummately excellent actions, and consummately precious sufferings. Then the apostle singles out one special and distinguished blessing of the covenant—a conversion from "darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the service of God;" or, as it is expressed in the following verse, "a turning from all iniquity." This is still exhibited to our contemplation as the fruit of the covenant of grace; as the thing for which it makes provision, not introductory to, but consequent upon, our participation of it.

If, therefore, in speaking of holiness and obedience, we represent them as the promises, rather than the demands of the covenant, we evidently follow the apostle's example. Were we to take the contrary course, we should act as prudently as the sportsman, who, entering his horse for a plate, chooses to have him walk backwards, rather than run forwards. Would this increase his speed? Would this help him to outstrip his rivals, or enable him to win the prize? Shall we, in order to avoid the charge of Antinomianism, rush into this absurdity? I am persuaded you could not wish to see so egregious a piece of folly even in your enemy, much less in yours, &c.

LETTER IX.

REVEREND SIR,—I wish you would consider with some attention that emphatical memento of the apostle, "Since ye knew the grace of God in truth." Here he intimates, that we may have a knowledge of grace which is not genuine; not free from corrupt mixture; not true. It may be so discoloured with error, or blended with so much of the law, as no longer to

appear like itself. The language of such persons is somewhat like the language of the Israelites after their return from captivity, who spoke neither the Hebrew nor the Heathenish dialect; but expressed themselves half in the speech of Ashdod, and half in the speech of Sion.

"It is true," says Aspasio, "I cannot perform the conditions." "It is not true," says Mr. Wesley. This is pretty blunt, and pretty bold too; for it is in effect affirming, that a man dead in trespasses and sins is able to perform conditions. Mr. Wesley is not aware, that "Christ strengthening us," is one of the benefits of the covenant, comprehended in these words, "I will put my laws into their minds."

"The conditions of the new covenant are, Repent and believe." It has been already shown, that they are represented by the Holy Ghost, not as conditions, but as blessings; not as conditions required, but as blessings bestowed; not as conditions on which depends the accomplishment of the covenant, but as happy fruits, or precious effects of the covenant, made and making good to sinners, who are wholly without strength.

"It is equally true," says Aspasio, "this is not required at my hands." "It is equally true," says Mr. Wesley, "that is, absolutely false." This is, doubtless, a *home* thrust. It behoves us to provide some armour of proof for our defence; and this the Scripture furnishes abundantly. It furnishes us with more than *robur et æs triplex*. The Scripture sets forth justification, salvation, and all blessedness, as things perfectly free; detached from all works, dependent on no conditions, but the gifts of sovereign goodness and infinitely rich grace.

Though you, Sir, treat Aspasio in so unceremonious a manner, we will be more complaisant; you shall receive such entertainment from us, as the king of Babylon's ambassadors received from Hezekiah. We will, on this occasion, show you "the house of our precious things, the silver and the gold, the spices and the precious ointment, and if not *all*, yet some of the house of our armour," 2 Kings xx. 13.

We are saved, that is, we have all the benefits of the new covenant, by *grace*: "By grace ye are saved. It is of grace, and no more of works. Who hath saved us, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace." Eph. ii. 5, Rom. x. 6, 2 Tim. i. 9.

Freely: "Being justified freely. The things that are freely given to us of God. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rom. iii. 34, 1 Cor. ii. 12, Rev. xxii. 19.

By way of gift: "If thou knowest the gift of God. The gift of God is eternal life. The free gift came upon all men, to justification of life." John iv. 10, Rom. vi. 23; v. 18.

Without the law: "The righteousness of God without the law. That we might be justified, not by the works of the law. If the inheritance were of the law." Rom. iii. 21, Gal. ii. 16; iii. 18.

Not by works: "Not of works, but of him that calleth us. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law." Rom. ix. 11, Tit. iii. 5, Phil. iii. 9.

By righteousness, not performed, but imputed: "Faith (in Christ, as our all) is imputed for righteousness. God imputeth righteousness without works. To whom it (that is, the merit of a dying and rising Saviour) shall be imputed." Rom. iv. 5, 6, 23, 24, 25.

Not by guiltless behaviour, but by *remission of sins*: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. To give knowledge of salvation by the remission of their sins." Psal. xxxii. 1, 2 Cor. v. 19, Luke i. 77.

Not each by himself, but all *by one*: "They shall reign in life by one Christ Jesus. By the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous. By one offering, he hath perfected for ever those that are sanctified." Rom. v. 17, 18, 19, Heb. x. 14.

By *faith* alone: "Being justified by faith. A man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law. Through him, all that believe are justified from all things." Rom. v. 1; iii. 28. Acts xiii. 39.

Not on account of faith, as a *condition performed*, but on account of Christ, the pearl of inestimable price; which faith receives, applies, and uses: "Who has by himself purged away our sins, by himself finished our transgressions, made reconciliation for our iniquities, and brought in an everlasting righteousness." Heb. i. 3. Dan. ix. 24.

This is the doctrine of Scripture. Because it is of the greatest importance, you see with what care it is stated, and with what copiousness displayed; with what zeal it is urged, and with what vigilance guarded. How solicitously the sacred writers use every form of speech that may exclude all human works, may set aside all conditions and pre-requisites, in order to supersede all glorying, and ascribe the whole of our justification to the free grace of God, and the sole merits of Christ.

After all these testimonies of Scripture, shall we still maintain, that the covenant of grace consists of conditions, depends upon conditions; is such as we cannot expect to have made good till certain conditions are, by us, duly and truly fulfilled? Dagon may as well stand in the presence of the ark, as such a notion in the face of these evangelical texts.

All, all is free to us sinners, though it was not free to Christ our Saviour: he paid the price; he performed the conditions. If you would know what price was paid, what conditions were performed, and on what terms we inherit the blessings, you, Sir, may receive information from Mr. John Wesley, who says in his comment, "All the blessings of the new covenant are secured to us by the one offering of Christ." According to this commentator, they are not only procured for us, but *secured* to us. How could either of these be true—much more, how could the latter be fact—if the blessings were suspended on any performance or any acquisition of ours? If I am not to enjoy them until I discharge this or that duty, they are not procured for me; if I am not to enjoy them unless I become possessed of this or that quality, they are not secured to me;—not secured to me as the estate is to an heir, even whilst he is a minor, but only as the prize is to a racer, in case, by exerting his speed and his strength, he arrives first at the goal; which was never yet called security, but allowed to be mere uncertainty.

As to this point, others may receive information from the prophet Zechariah: "By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein was no water," Zech. ix. 11. *Thy prisoners*: those wretched creatures who were in a state of guilt, and under the sentence of death; subject to the tyranny of the devil, and liable to the damnation of hell. In this dismal state they were as in a *pit* unfathomably deep; from

which there seemed no possibility of escape, nor any method of deliverance: a pit in which there is *no water*; nothing but absolute misery, without a gleam of hope, or a drop of comfort. *I have sent them forth* into a place of liberty, where they obtain pardon, and enjoy peace; are satisfied with the plenteousness of my house, and drink of my pleasures as out of a river. All this by the *blood of thy covenant*. Blood was the righteous term, blood was the dreadful requirement; even that infinitely precious blood of Christ, on which the covenant of our freedom was established, and by which its rich blessings are procured. Which is called "*thy covenant*", O daughter of Sion," thou church of the first-born; because it was made in thy name, made with thy divine Surety, and for thy unspeakable good.

This is not only false, "but most dangerously false. If we allow this, Antinomianism comes in with a full tide." Pray, Sir, what do you mean by Antinomianism? Such a contrariety to the law as debases its dignity, deprives it of its proper honour and proper end†?

Surely then, not Aspasio's, but Mr. Wesley's tenets, are chargeable with this kind of heterodoxy; since they would cause the law to be put off with a mite, when millions of talents are its due; oblige it to be content with errant deficiency, when the most sinless obedience, and the most exalted perfection, are what it demands.

Do you mean by Antinomianism, such a contrariety to the law as disregards its duties, and violates its precepts? Then the apostle Paul shall reply, "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly." *The grace of God*, his infinitely free favour, of which we have a specimen in the preceding text, which scorns to be shackled with conditions, or meanly dependent on human endeavours. This grace, requiring nothing of the creature, but *bringing* salvation, spiritual and eternal salvation, finished by the incarnate Creator, and free for the chiefest of sinners: this grace, being revealed in the gospel, being discerned by faith, and thus appearing in lustre, and with power, to all men; to men of every rank, every age, every character; making no difference between the servant and the master, between the ruddy stripling and the hoary sire, between the vile prostitute and the chaste vestal, but opening its inexhaustible treasures to be received by one as well as the other: this grace does what? "Cause Antinomianism," or practical ungodliness, "to come in with a full tide?" Quite the reverse: it represses it like an immoveable barrier: it *teaches us to deny*, to renounce ungodliness, *all ungodliness*; not only external gross abominations, but *worldly lusts*, also every vicious inclination, and every irregular desire. Farther, it teaches us to live *soberly*, with regard to ourselves, *righteously* towards our neighbours, and *godly* to our great Creator.

The original word is particularly beautiful and significant; it is not *ταπεινω*—prescribeth, by way of rule, nor *ενταλασσει*—enjoineth, by way of authority; but *παιδευουσα*—teacheth, by way of instruction, pointeth out the effectual method of obeying the precepts, and conforming to the rule. A

* *Thy covenant*. The words are not addressed to Christ, but to his church; as the Hebrew word, being in the feminine gender, intimates.

† The end of the commanding law is righteousness, Rom. x. 4. The end of the violated law is punishment, Gal. iii. 10. Both these ends are answered by the interposition of an obedient and crucified Redeemer, but on no other scheme, and in no other manner whatever.

tyrant may command his slave to write, or make a proficiency in writing ; a kind tutor forms him to it, shows him how to do it, and renders what otherwise would be an irksome, perhaps an impracticable task, both easy and pleasant : so this grace, clearly manifested in the understanding, and cordially apprehended by the will, renders every duty of holiness both practicable and pleasant : it gives us a heart, and a hand, and ability to exercise ourselves unto universal godliness.

Christ has performed all that was conditional for me, says Aspasio. "Has he repented and believed for you?" says Mr. Wesley ; a question already answered in the dialogues. "No," replies Mr. Wesley, "not answered, but evaded. 'He performed all that was conditional in the covenant of works,' is nothing to the purpose ; for we are not talking of that, but of the covenant of grace." Give me leave to tell you, Sir, that you are greatly mistaken here ; we are talking, at least we ought to be talking, of the covenant of works, when we talk of the covenant which Christ came under. It was a covenant of works to him, which, by his execution of it, became a covenant of grace for us : he became answerable for our debt ; the debt was exacted without the least abatement. In this respect, "God spared not his own Son." And is not this the tenor, are not such the effects, of a covenant of works ?

Christ is called the "Surety of a better covenant;" that is, a surety provided and admitted by a better covenant. In this peculiarity, infinitely momentous and comfortable, the new covenant is better, because it brings in a substitute to discharge what was contracted under the old, which neither provided, nor allowed, nor knew any such thing. It is written, "Christ was made under the law," therefore, not under a covenant of grace. If you can show me, in the construction of the law, any hint of faith in the merits of another, or any mention of repentance unto life, I will retract my opinion, that Christ performed whatever was conditional ; I will do honour to those genteel expressions, and submit to those cogent arguments, "It is not true—it is nothing to the purpose—it is absolutely false."

"If Christ's perfect obedience be ours, we have no more need of pardon than Christ himself. The consequence is good ; you have started an objection which you cannot answer." It is answered in the Dialogues, whether in a satisfactory or insufficient manner, the reader must determine. But suppose we admit the consequence, it implies no more than the apostle affirms, "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Let me transcribe your own * explication of this passage : "He hath done" (observe, you yourself speak of Christ's doing ; in this place only of Christ's doing ; yet I would not be so injurious to your good sense, as to imagine that you exclude his suffering) "all that was needful, in order to their full reconciliation with God." This exposition I approve, as far as it goes ; only you have omitted one very weighty circumstance, comprehended in the word *ever* : By this doing and suffering, believers are fully and perfectly reconciled ; not for a day only, or for any particular time, but for ever. The pardon is irrevocable ; the blessing inalienable. Not like the moon, which now waxes, and anon wanes ; but like the sun, which is always the same, ever shines with the same plenitude of rays, and needs only to appear, in order to appear unchangeably bright.

* Explanatory Notes *in loc.*

This reminds me of a more direct answer to your difficulty. The repeated pardon which believers implore, is only a witness-bearing to the truth, or a repeated manifestation of it to our consciences. Will you find fault with this doctrine? Might you not, for the very same reason, say, if the atonement of Christ's death was absolutely perfect, there could be no need of his intercession at God's right hand? Yes, for the actual application of the great atonement, and the continual communication of its happy fruits, this intercession is necessary. So, though our justification is complete, though our sins have all been laid upon our Lord, and are not to be done away by some duties of our own, but already done away by the sacrifice of himself; yet the application of this blessing, the revelation of it to our hearts, is daily, hourly, incessantly needful: therefore he saith, speaking of his vineyard the church, "I will water it every moment." Whereby? In what manner? What spiritual blessings correspond with watering the thirsty soil? The discovery of complete pardon, of complete acceptance, of complete salvation in Christ. This will make the soul like a watered garden; this will cause joy and holiness to blossom as a rose.

Both the branches of the law, the preceptive and the penal, in the case of guilt contracted, must be satisfied. "Not so." If not, one of them must pass unsatisfied, and unfulfilled; whereas our Lord declares, that "heaven and earth shall pass away, sooner than one jot or one tittle of the law shall fail" of its accomplishment. Will you undertake to prove, either that the preceptive, or else that the penal part of the law, does not constitute so much as one jot or one tittle of its contents? Then, and then only, your assertion may consist with our Lord's declaration. This will be an undertaking as adventurous as your next is disingenuous.

"Not so; Christ by his death alone (so our church teaches) fully satisfied for the sins of the whole world." *By his death alone*, that is, in contradistinction to all human works as efficient or adjutant causes. *Fully satisfied*, that is, without having, and without needing the concurrence of any human satisfaction. It is spoken in opposition to our endeavours, not to his own most glorious obedience. But do you really want to be informed, that our church means no such thing as you would insinuate? Have you never heard her profess, and require to believe, what Aspasio maintains? If not, be pleased to read the quotations from her Homilies, which he has produced, (vol. iii. p. 41, 42*.) Read these, and I cannot but think you have modesty enough to blush at an attempt to palm upon the public such an apparent misrepresentation of our venerable mother.

"The same great truth is manifestly taught in the 31st Article." What? That Christ, by his *death alone*, or by *shedding his blood alone*, without ful-

* As this pamphlet may possibly fall into the hands of some persons who have not the book entitled Theron and Aspasio; I will, for their sakes, transcribe one of the testimonies to which we are referred.

In the Homily concerning the salvation of mankind, we read the following words: "The apostle toucheth three things, which must go together in justification. On God's part, his great mercy and grace: On Christ's part, the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption, by the offering of his body and shedding of his precious blood, with fulfilling of the law perfectly: On our part, true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours, but by God's working in us." You see, according to the judgment of our reformers, not only the offering of Christ's body, and the shedding of Christ's blood, but also his perfect fulfilling of the law, are the adequate price of our redemption. Yet Mr. Wesley is pleased to exclude the latter; and ventures to affirm that he has the authority of our church for such an opinion, and for such a practice.

filling the law perfectly, satisfied for the sins of the world! Then the Articles and the Homilies most flatly contradict one another. Upon this you ask, "Is it therefore fair, is it honest, for any one to plead the Articles of our church in defence of absolute predestination?" Indeed, Sir, I know not what you mean by this interrogatory, or at what you aim. Does Aspasio plead the Articles for any such purpose? Not that he should be afraid, in case there was an evident occasion to advance such a plea, and perhaps might put Mr. Wesley to greater difficulty than he is aware of, in order to elude the force of it. But he does not in this place come within view of the point, nor so much as remotely hint at it: no, nor in any part of the two volumes does he once touch upon absolute predestination, much less does he plead the Articles of our church in its defence: so that your inferential word *therefore*, is a conclusion without premises.

Absolute predestination is a phrase not to be found in all the Dialogues, or in any of the Letters; but it is a phrase which Mr. Wesley thinks to be alarming and disgusting; on which Mr. Wesley has learned to say many horrible and shocking things; therefore, be it right or wrong, be it true or false, Aspasio shall be charged with the obnoxious expression. When he mentions predestination, it is in the very words of Scripture; without dwelling upon the subject; without resting his cause upon it; without attempting either to explain or to establish it. This he leaves, and ever will leave, to clearer heads and abler pens. As to your *absolute*, this is not what Aspasio speaks, but what Mr. Wesley would make him speak; a word, which in this connexion he never used, nor so much as dreamt of using; for which reason, I call it not *his*, but *yours*. May I not then retort your own question; and ask, Is it fair, is it honest, to put into your friend's mouth words which he never used, and then exclaim against them?

What follows in this paragraph is prodigious indeed. "Seeing the 17th Article barely defines the term;" that is, the church does not believe the doctrine, nor require any such belief from her members! Why then does she select it for one of the Articles? Why pronounce it agreeable to God's word? Why forbid disputation against it? Pity but we had been acquainted with this fine distinction when we were students at Oxford: we then declared our approbation of the academical statutes; we engaged to observe them all, and confirmed our engagement with an oath. But how easily might we have eluded the obligation, if, when called upon for conformity and obedience, this salvo had come into our heads:—The university does not, in these statutes, set forth our duty, but barely defines the term; she does not insist upon a conformity, but only flourishes a little upon terms, and leaves us to obey or disobey as we shall find ourselves inclined.

"Barely defines the term, without either affirming or denying the thing." How! Does she not affirm the thing, when she styles it an "excellent benefit of God?" Declares it to be "full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort" to the godly? That it "greatly establishes and confirms their faith of eternal salvation, and fervently kindles their love towards God?" "Not affirm the thing!" when she expressly ascribes such fruits and consequents to it! This is not only affirming, but affirming with the highest approbation, like proclaiming the king, and placing the crown upon his head.

In one part of your Preservative you enumerate, and very properly display,

what you call "The five benefits of baptism." Suppose a Quaker, upon reading this passage, should say, "Friend Wesley, thou barely definedst the term, thou neither affirmest nor deniest the thing. This is no proof that thou thyself believest a tittle of water-baptism, or wouldst have thy readers believe the reality of any such ordinance." Should the Quaker argue thus, he would argue just like yourself. But I apprehend he would not be so boldly disingenuous; he would rather confess, "Friend John doth certainly maintain and believe these things; but his opinion is mistaken, and his arguments are inconclusive." "The 31st Article totally overthrows predestination, and razes it from the foundation." If so, it makes one Article contradict another; consequently, weakens the authority, and undermines the credibility of them all. In this Article are two points more particularly proper for our inquiry: "The great salvation, and the number of the saved." I cannot but query, whether you believe the former, or rightly understand the latter.

The *great salvation*, expressed in the following words: "The offering of Christ once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual." If I take these words as I am enjoined, in the literal and grammatical sense, I must believe, that Christ engaged to satisfy offended justice for every sin which I have committed, or shall commit, throughout my whole life: my past sins, at that time, had no more existence than my future sins have at this hour, but both were equally laid upon my Lord.

Having undertaken this greatest of all works, I must believe that he fully accomplished it; and actually satisfied for all my transgressions, of every kind and every date. A possibility, or mere chance of being redeemed, can never be reckoned a perfect redemption: neither would our Saviour have paid down a positive price for a precarious conditional good; much less would he have paid an immense, an infinite price, upon a bare uncertainty whether it should take any effect, or ever obtain its desired end. I believe, therefore, that the satisfaction is made for me; that God has received the all-sufficient atonement in behalf of all my provocations; and that there is no more ground of condemnation for me, a vile sinner, than there is room for the prosecution of an insolvent, all whose debts are defrayed, even to the very last mite.

The number of the saved, expressed in those words, "The sins of the whole world." This I acknowledge to be the language of Scripture; and I promise myself you will bear with me, while I offer my thoughts concerning the occasion and the import of such language.

In the antediluvian and patriarchal ages, the Lord Jehovah confined his favour to a few particular families. When he formed his Israel into a commonwealth, he chose them to himself, and separated them from all other nations. To them he gave his oracles, his ordinances, and his covenants, yea, he honoured and indulged them with his divine presence. In this the Israelites gloried; they appropriated this privilege to themselves, and held other people at a distance, looking upon them as strangers, and without God in the world: hence that chosen seed spares not to say, "We are thine; thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name." At the commencement of the Messiah's kingdom, the Lord purposed to change the scene, and vary the dispensation, by admitting both Jews and Gentiles to an interest in the great salvation: as they were equally charge-

able with sin, and equally liable to the curse, they should now stand upon a level; be equally sharers in that divine Saviour, who submits to be made sin, and to be made a curse for both alike. This the Holy Ghost expressly and repeatedly promised, "He (that is, the Redeemer, which is to come) shall speak peace unto the Heathen; his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."

Notwithstanding such prophecies and such promises, our Lord himself, when he entered upon his ministry, acted a discriminating part, and kept up the partition wall, in pursuance of that declaration, "I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." When he sent forth his disciples to preach and to teach, he gave them also a command to shew the same partial regard, "Go ye not into the way of the Gentiles." This conduct of our Lord, both under the Old Testament and the New, confirmed the Jews in their self-flattering notion, that they were, and ever should be, a favourite nation and a peculiar people. The Gentiles, on the other hand, were no less discouraged; apprehending that as they were, so they ever should be, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." But in order to convince the Jews of their mistake in claiming the blessing of Abraham to themselves; and in order to assure the poor discarded Gentiles that they should be "fellow-heirs and of the same body;" our Lord, in his last charge to his apostles, alters the style of his commission, and enlarges the sphere of their several departments. It is now no longer, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles," but quite the reverse: "Go teach all nations of the world," yea, and "every creature: whosoever believeth (whether Jew or Gentile) shall be saved."

Still the Jews were hardly induced to give the right hand of fellowship to their brethren the Gentiles: For St. Peter cries, with some indignation, "Not so, Lord." Still the Gentiles, hardly persuaded that they should be partakers of the grace, reasoned against themselves, "The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people." Therefore the Lord, to intercept all the desponding objections of the latter, and to bring down the high disdainful imaginations of the former, declares in a variety of places, that the difference no longer subsists; that Christ has thrown down the partition wall, and laid all plain, and common, and free. Though the giving of the law pertained to Israel only, the Lord Jesus gave himself a ransom for all people. Though the paschal Lamb extended its influence only to the circumcision, the Lamb of God is a "propitiation for the sins of the whole world," even though it be not circumcised. And now God would have all men, whether bond or free, Jews or Gentiles, Greeks or Barbarians, to be saved, by coming unto the knowledge of the faith.

This account gives us the true cause, and points out the intended use, of such universal phrases. They are calculated to abate the pride of the Jews, to encourage the despised Gentiles, and, by excluding none, they give encouragement for all to come; because, though every individual person will not be saved, yet "whosoever cometh shall in no wise be cast out." By this interpretation, the phrase is neither inconsistent with other texts, neither does our church contradict herself.

Upon the whole, you will please to observe, that I should never have touched upon this subject, had not your objections, far-fetched and forced as they are, given me a kind of challenge. And now I have touched upon the subject, it is not as a champion for the cause, but only to show the weakness

and the inconsistency of your arguing ; how little you avail yourself, even on a point where you think opposition vain and your arm irresistible.

“Believers, who are notorious transgressors in themselves, have a sinless obedience in Christ.” This passage you select as faulty, I presume because it is opposite to your favourite tenet, “*Perfection in personal holiness.*” By *notorious*, I mean acknowledged, confessed, indisputably such. If you are not such a transgressor, why do you daily confess yourself a miserable sinner? Why do you acknowledge that you are “tied and bound with the chain of your sins,” and declare before all men “that there is no health in you?” All this Mr. Wesley speaks with his lips, and I would hope believes in his heart. Yet all this does not amount “to a notorious transgressor!” Pray then, good Sir, inform us what sort of transgressor is described by all these expressions.

You cry out, “O syren song!” The Psalmist would have taught you a better exclamation. If this is the case, “let us rejoice with trembling.” Are we notorious transgressors in ourselves? The consciousness of this is the strongest motive to humility. Have we a sinless obedience in Christ? The belief of this is an abundant source of joy. When you add, “pleasing sound to James Wheatley! Thomas Williams! James Reily!” I am quite ashamed of your meanness, and grieved at your uncharitable rashness. How unworthy is such a procedure, either of the gentleman, the Christian, or the man of sense? Unworthy the gentleman, to stigmatize by name, and expose to the most public infamy. Unworthy the Christian, whose charity concealeth, rather than divulgeth and proclaimeth upon the house-tops. Unworthy the man of sense, who knows that the miscarriages of a professor are no argument against the soundness of a doctrine: if they were, would not your own principles totter? nay, how could Christianity itself stand?

“Elijah failed in his resignation, and even Moses himself spake unadvisedly with his lips.” “It is true (says Mr. Wesley). But if you could likewise fix some blot upon venerable Samuel, and beloved Daniel, it would prove nothing.” I have no desire to fix a blot; but if I find it in the most accomplished character, this proves the proposition which Aspasio maintains, “That the very best of men fall short; that the very best of men will be found guilty, if tried by the righteous law; that the very best of men have nothing more to plead for acceptance with the High and Holy One, than the criminal who yesterday murdered his benefactor, to-morrow is to be executed for his crime, and is now flying to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus for the chief of sinners.”

“No Scripture teaches that the holiness of Christians is to be measured by that of any Jew.” I should be afraid to advance such a position, after having read that general exhortation, “Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises;” and those more particular references to the ancient saints, comprised in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews. Were not they Jews? Does not the apostle propose them as patterns for our imitation? Is not this his language, *Let us act in conformity to their practice?* “The Spirit of Christ was in them,” and “they obtained (even from the supreme Judge) a good report.” Agreeably to this divine testimonial, we are directed to learn from Abel a fiduciary dependence on the great atonement; and from Enoch, a life of communion with a reconciled God. The prophets are recommended to our contemplation, as “examples of

suffering affliction, and of patience." Elijah is set before us as an instance of persevering and successful prayer; and we are directed to walk in the steps of our father Abraham's faith. This was the counsel of an apostle to others; this was the aim of an apostle with regard to himself; therefore I think, it can never be unworthy of you, or unfit for the most advanced among your disciples. For my part, I shall reckon myself truly happy, I shall bless the day whereon I was born, if I may but be enabled to follow the footsteps of these illustrious leaders, though *non passibus æquis*. That Christians ought to rise above the level of the common Jews, I freely own. Mr. Wesley's mistake seems to lie in confounding the *common* with the *uncommon*; in not discerning the difference between *any* and *every*, between *some* and *all*. Some Jews were blessed with extraordinary endowments; they had distinguished communications of the Spirit of wisdom and holiness. They were as the "stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land." Their great achievements and eminent attainments are described in the aforementioned chapter, which may truly be styled the golden legend; great things, impossible to flesh and blood, they both performed and suffered; such as characterize a saint of the highest rank. To imitate these is the duty of all Christians; to equal them is the privilege of few.

Let me illustrate this sentiment: the reader, I apprehend, will hardly think it needs confirmation. Every graduate in the university, much more every minister of the gospel, ought to exceed the school-boy in learning and knowledge. Yet there have been school-boys with whom few ministers, and fewer graduates, will venture to compare themselves. A recent instance of this kind we have in the famous Baratier. This wonderful youth, when he was but four years old, spoke French to his mother, Latin to his father, High-Dutch to his maid. At the age of six, he explained the Hebrew text as readily as if it had been his native German. When other lads are scarce able to read with fluency and propriety their mother tongue, he was not only acquainted with, but master of five several languages. In his eleventh year, he published a learned Latin dissertation, and translated a book of travels out of Hebrew into French. While a mere boy, he was qualified to dispute with professors of the sciences, was honoured with a seat at an ecclesiastical synod, and admitted to the degree of doctor in philosophy. Upon this narrative I shall only observe, that many of the Jews, whose names are immortalized in Scripture, were, in faith, in godliness, and all that is exemplary, so many Baratiers.

"Do not the best of men frequently feel disorder in their affections? Do they not often complain, When I would do good, evil is present with me?" "I believe not." What a proof is here! How well suited to its office; which is to control the current, and overrule the evidence of ancient and modern consent. But why do not you believe what Aspasio supposes? Is your disbelief grounded on fact? Are you acquainted with any people who feel no disorder in their affections? who always do good in the completest manner? and never have evil present with them? If so, what are their names? where do they live? We would go many miles to see them. You have no aversion to the mention of names, when censure is the motive, and public disgrace the effect; why should you be so reluctant, when honour and distinguished respect would be the consequence?

Do they not say, "We groan, being burdened with the workings of inbred

corruption?"—"This is not the meaning of the text. The whole context shows the cause of that groaning was their longing to be with Christ." You need not on this occasion rummage the context, or take a journey to find what is at your door. The sentence itself shows, as plainly as the words can show, the cause of their groaning. We groan—it is not said because we long to be with Christ. This might be a truth; but this is not the cause assigned: "We groan because we are burdened." Burdened with what? Aspasio answers, with a body of sin and death, or with what the apostle himself styles *το θυγρον*. This, whatever it means, was the load that encumbered them, oppressed them, and made them sigh ardently for deliverance. Does not this signify all the infirmities and disorders of the present mortal state? Among which, the sad effects of inbred corruption are none of the least. These gave those magnanimous but pious souls more uneasiness than all other kinds of affliction whatever*.

"The cure of sin will be perfected in heaven." "Nay, surely in paradise." Aspasio knows no difference between paradise and heaven. Paradise is the kingdom where Christ reigns; and is not this heaven? Paradise is the region where the tree of life grows; and is not this heaven? Heaven denotes the place; paradise describes its nature—a place of consummate bliss and absolute perfection, where is the fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore. However, if it can be proved that they are different abodes, and imply different states †, then Aspasio would be understood to say, the cure of sin is completed in paradise; or as soon as the believer drops his flesh, and enters the invisible world.

"This (a perfect conformity to God) is a noble prerogative of the beatific vision." "No;" says Mr. Wesley. Though St. John, one would think, had settled and ascertained this point beyond all contradiction: "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." *We shall*; which intimates, that at present we are not perfectly like him. *For*; which denotes the efficient cause of this advancement and felicity, this complete transformation into the divine image. *We shall see him*, no longer through a glass, but face to face: We shall receive the clearest manifestations of his ineffable holiness and glory, which will have just the same effect upon our souls as the imprinted seal has upon the melting wax.

"It would then come too late. If sin remains in us till the day of judgment, it will remain in us for ever." You suppose, that the beatific vision is not enjoyed till the day of judgment. But in this you seem to err, not knowing the Scripture. I have a *desire*, says the apostle, *to be dissolved*.

* "We groan, being burdened with a sense of our spiritual infirmities, and with the workings of inbred corruption:" this is Aspasio's interpretation. "We groan, being burdened with numberless infirmities, temptations, and sins:" this is Mr. Wesley's interpretation in his Expository Notes on the New Testament. Yet here he denies what there he affirms. It is said, I think of Ishmael "His hand will be against every man." Mr. Wesley goes a step farther, his hand is against *himself*, as well as against every body else.

† St. Paul, I am aware, speaks of heaven, and speaks of paradise, 2 Cor. xii. 2. 4. So does David speak of "rising up into the hill of the Lord," and of "standing in his holy place." But as the same thing, though variously expressed, is meant by the Psalmist, I think we may not unreasonably understand the apostle in the same manner. If they had been different habitations, methinks he would have mentioned paradise first, and then the third heavens. Otherwise he tells the story but awkwardly; for he first mentions his arrival at the third heavens, and then at paradise; that is, according to Mr. Wesley, first he was led into the presence, and then introduced to the antechamber.

And what is the consequence, the immediate consequence of dissolution? "To be with Christ," in his presence, before his throne. And is not this the beatific vision? "Willing (says the inspired writer) to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." Here is no hint of any intermediate state; but the very moment in which the saints depart from their bodies, they are present with the Lord; and if with the Lord, then in the highest heavens, then at the fountain-head of felicity, then amidst the beatific vision. To heaven Elijah was conveyed in his fiery chariot; and into heaven the first martyr was received by his compassionate Saviour. Neither of them waited in some intervening mansion, as a kind of lobby to the heaven of heavens. This is the Popish notion, and very closely connected with the chimera of purgatory; so closely connected, that if you take away the former, the latter drops into, nothing. I am sorry your opinions, Sir, are so much like the errors of the man of sin.

"Our present blessedness does not consist in being free from sin." "I really think it does." Spoken like Mr. Wesley. *I think*, is still the *argument palmarium*. *I think*, is the heavy artillery which is to demolish brigades at a blow; only here it is strengthened and enforced by that emphatical word *really*. But if our present blessedness does really consist in being free from sin, where are your blessed persons? We may truly say,

Apparent raritates in gurgite vasto.—VIRG.

No; this can hardly be said. Virgil's description is too full: instead of seeing a very few, here and there one, popping up their heads, in the great and wide ocean of the world, we are not able to find so much as an individual: shew us *one*, only *one* of these angels in flesh and blood, and it sufficeth us. Whereas, if you persist in maintaining your sinless perfection, yet cannot produce a single instance to exemplify your notion, will you not give too just a handle for that sarcastic reflection used on another occasion?

With witnesses many this cause did abound;
With some that were hang'd, and some that were drown'd;
And some that were lost, and some never found.

These are Aspasio's words: "It (our present imperfection) perpetually reminds us of a most important truth, that our present blessedness consists, not in being free from all sin, but in having no sin imputed to us." He took particular care to guard his meaning from misconstruction, by adding the word *all*. Lest this word, because it is little of stature, should be overlooked, he printed it in italics. But all this precaution is thrown away upon Mr. Wesley. He takes no notice of this same little word; nay he shuts it entirely out of his quotation, as though he should say, where is the harm of clapping under the hatches such a puny insignificant monosyllable? I would have it to know, I shall ere long turn adrift more plump and portly words than that.

Aspasio also took care to confirm his sentiments by a reference to Scripture: he supported himself by the authority of King David. Mr. Wesley, having a little while ago laboured to depreciate, now ventures to contradict the royal Psalmist. "Blessed," says the Psalmist, "is the man"—who is free from sin? who is perfectly sanctified? This is not the doctrine which the sweet singer of Israel teaches, but "blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Deeply impressed, and quite charmed, with

the contemplation of this most substantial happiness, the sacred writer proclaims it, repeats it; yes, a third time, he celebrates it, crying out with ardour of joy, "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth no iniquity *," Psalm xxxii. 1, 2; neither that iniquity which was formerly committed, nor that which still defiles, Psalm xv. 3. Blessed indeed! May I live under a firm persuasion of my own particular interest in this unspeakable privilege! May I find it made good to my soul at the universal judgment! Then let others take the kingdoms of this world, and all the glory of them. And as for Aspasio, he may reckon his credit safe, and his opinion fully authorised, while he espouses the doctrine, and uses the very words of the unerring Spirit.

"If we are not free from sin, we are not Christian believers." What an assertion is here! *Assertion*, for I dare not call it a truth. If it was, who then could be saved? Not one of a thousand, not two of a million; no, nor Mr. John Wesley himself, since out of his own mouth he stands condemned. He makes this acknowledgment concerning himself and his followers, "We know by melancholy experience what it is to neglect works of righteousness." To corroborate his confession, he adds, "We know and feel by melancholy experience, what it is to swerve from our first love." *We feel by experience*: he is willing to run the hazard of tautology, rather than any should suspect the sincerity and truth of his protestation. And can you, after such a confession, after such a protestation, pretend to be free from sin? Is all this which you know of yourself, and *feel by experience*, consistent with a sinless state? Just as much as a lethargy is consistent with the vigour of health, or a shameful flight with a glorious victory. See, Sir, how you are entangled in your own net; how, without being chased by an enemy, you run yourself aground. Nor will all your dexterity, so long as you avow such palpable inconsistencies, be able to set you clear.

You attempt to confirm your opinion by the apostle's declaration, "Being made free from sin." But he and you mean different things by the same words. He means being freed from the dominion of sin. This is agreeable to his own explanation, "Sin (*ου κυριευσει*) shall not lord it over you." It may assault you, it may harass you, it may gain some advantage over you; but it shall not obtain a final victory, nor play the tyrant over you. To the expedience and necessity of this freedom, if ever we would approve ourselves disciples of Christ, or Christians indeed, I readily subscribe. Whereas, you mean being freed from the very remainders of sin. "Having a purity (it is your own explanation) free from all mixture of its contrary, and a resignation excluding every degree of self-will." Against the existence, or the possibility of this freedom, so long as we sojourn in a body of flesh, I enter my protest.

"If we were perfect in piety, Christ's priestly office would be superseded." "No; we should still need his Spirit, and consequently his intercession." But were we perfect, we should receive the Spirit without an intercessor. An intercessor implies an alienation between the two parties; or something which, without the intervention of a third person, would create alienation. The priestly office, whether of atoning, or of interceding, is founded on a state of guilt; to this it bears an essential and invariable relation. Docs

* Should any objection arise from the next sentence, the reader may see it anticipated and superseded, in Theron and Aspasio.

Christ exercise his priestly office in behalf of angels? No; because they excel in strength, and are perfect in holiness. Will Christ exercise his priestly office, when all his saints are received into glory? No; because then there will be an absolute consummation both in body and soul, both in righteousness and happiness, and the mediatorial kingdom be delivered up to the Father. Did Christ exercise his priestly office before Adam fell? No; because sin had no existence then; and then the language was, "let man be blessed," not "deliver him from going down into the pit."

The objections laid to my charge in this paragraph, and the whole side of the leaf, proceed upon your favourite notion, perfection of holiness, even while we continue in houses of clay. As I look upon your foundation to be a mere delusion, I must of course conclude all that you build upon it to be chimerical and delusory; therefore, till you prove your supposition, I have no reason to concern myself with any of your consequences deduced from it, or with any of your allegations relating to it. On one clause, however, let me bestow a slight animadversion.

Aspasio says, A sense of remaining inbred corruption will reconcile us to death. Mr. Wesley replies, "Indeed it will not; nor will any thing do this like perfect love." Here I think you have missed the mark. Nothing can reconcile us to death but that which takes away its sting; and this is done only by the atonement of Christ. Nothing can reconcile us to death, but that which delivers us from its terror; and this is effected only by the sacrifice of our great High-priest, which has converted the king of terrors into a messenger of peace. Nothing can reconcile us to death, but that which makes it desirable to depart, and gain to die; and this is owing, wholly owing to him who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Old Simeon found, that nothing could reconcile him to death, so much as a believing view of the Lord's Christ. Seeing God made flesh, seeing him as his own Saviour, he was enabled not only to acquiesce in the summons, but to welcome it as a deliverance. He was enabled to say with composure and complacency, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace:" Not because I am weary of this imperfect state; not because I am perfect in divine love; but because "mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Though you may not like to imitate a Jew, I most heartily wish for myself, Let me die the death of this most venerable Hebrew, and let my latter end be like his!

If you still persist in your opinion, that nothing can reconcile you to dissolution like the imagined perfection of your love—not the blood by which the saints overcame, not the righteousness by which they reign in life, not the grace and power which have swallowed up death in victory; I must then caution you to take heed lest you cross, or attempt to cross the river, in the boat of *vain confidence*. You have abridged, if I mistake not, the Pilgrim's Progress, therefore can be at no loss to understand my meaning.

One clause, I said; but I correct myself: there is another, so very extraordinary, that you might justly charge me with inattention, little short of stupidity, if I should pass it over without notice. These are the words: "If we were perfect in piety, (St. John's word is, perfect in love), we should still be encompassed with infirmities, and liable to mistakes, from which words or actions might follow, even though the heart was all love, which were not exactly right."

This is strange! Wonderous strange indeed! *Perfect*, yet encompassed with infirmities! *Perfect*, yet doing actions, and speaking words not exactly right! You are as singular in your idea, as you are strenuous for the doctrine of perfection. I know not any Protestant writer that pretends to maintain the latter, yourself only excepted; and as to the former, I think it could never enter into the head of anything living, but Mr. Wesley's only. Perfect, yet encompassed with infirmities, is just as sound divinity—as True, yet addicted to lying, is sound morality.

This is not the worst property of your notion of perfection, that it is absurd and self-contradictory. A sentiment may be absurd, yet not very pernicious. But this is an error of the most malignant kind; this was at the bottom of the Pharisees' pride, and spirited them on to seek justification by the works of the law. They knew full well, that their obedience was not complete, it did not come up to their sacred and exalted standard; but they had learnt to soften and extenuate their disobedience into matters not exactly right. This is the cause why people professing Christianity see no form or comeliness in Christ, so as to desire him with desires that cannot be uttered. It is true they are not perfect, they often offend; but then the offences are only human infirmities—words and actions not exactly right. With this, which is indeed the *syren song*, they lull their souls into an insensibility of their ruined state, and a disregard of the all-sufficient Redeemer.

“Cursed (says the law) is every one that continueth not in all things,” whether they be great or small: and will you regard that as a mere infirmity, and consistent with perfection, on which the divine law denounces a curse? which the divine law threatens with all misery here, and with everlasting vengeance hereafter? The apostle would probably chastise the author or abettor of such a conceit, in the following manner: “Wilt thou know, O vain man, that what thou callest a matter ‘not exactly right,’ is most horribly odious in the eye of God's infinite purity; deserves eternal death in the estimate of his infinite justice; and could never have been pardoned but by the atoning death of his infinitely majestic Son.

“Encompassed with infirmities, yet the heart all love! Words and actions not exactly right, yet the man all perfection!” These are all paradoxes which I never saw equalled, only in the writings of some high-flown Papists. Mr. Wesley's words are not far from a translation, they are to a nicety the sense, of those very offensive passages which I meet with in a couple of Popish zealots. Andradius, interpreter of the council of Trent, writes thus: “Venialia peccata tam sunt minuta et levia ut non adversentur perfectioni charitatis, nec impedire possunt perfectam aut absolutam obedientiam*.” Lindenus, another champion for the same bad cause, expresses himself in a more elegant, but in no less shocking a manner: “Levicula vitiola lapsuum quotidianorum, aspergines, et nævulæ sunt: quæ per se non maculant et contaminant, sed quasi pulvisculo leviter aspergunt vitam Christianam; ut nihilominus tamen per se sint perfecta, et undique immaculata renatorum opera in hac vita†.” If Mr. Wesley pleases to consider these passages, I hope

* Venial sins are so minute and trivial, that they do not oppose the perfection of our love, nor can they hinder our obedience from being absolutely perfect.

† The little trifling faults which are owing to our daily slips or mistakes, are like specks, or almost imperceptible moles upon the body, which of themselves do not stain or defile, but as it were with small particles of fine dust, lightly sprinkle the Christian's life; so that nevertheless the works of the regenerate may be of themselves perfect, and in all respects immaculate, even in this life.

he will be induced to alter his phrase, and rectify his notions. If he pleases to translate these passages, his followers may have an opportunity of seeing how nearly he approaches to some of the worst errors of Popery; and may hence be admonished not to imbibe, without due examination, his doctrines; nor submit with an implicit credulity to his dictates.

“The charges of the law are all answered.” At this sentence Mr. Wesley is highly offended. As the lion is said to lash himself into rage, so my objector stirs himself up into a graceful indignation; for there is nothing in the passage, or in the context, to awaken such a flame of zeal. If Mr. Wesley had understood Aspasio according to the whole tenor of his discourse, there would have been no room for bringing Count Zinzendorf upon the carpet, nor for making that injurious conclusion, “Then neither God nor man can claim any obedience to the law.” This is what Aspasio means: the claims of the law, as a covenant of works; the claims of the law, as being the condition of life and glory; the claims of the law, as requiring perfect obedience on pain of eternal death—these claims are all satisfied by our most blessed and gracious Surety: if not, they are still incumbent upon us, and upon every child of man. A burden this, which neither “we nor our fathers were able to bear;” which, heavier than the sands of the sea, would have sunk us into the nethermost hell. This doctrine, therefore, is not “Antinomianism without a mask,” but it is the doctrine of “righteousness without works,” Rom. iv. 6. and of justification “without the deeds of the law,” Rom. iii. 28.

“Then neither God nor man can claim any obedience to the law.” Yes, God Almighty may, and God Almighty does claim our obedience to the law, as a rule of life: he requires a conformity to its precepts, as to the image of himself; he demands a performance of its duties, as the means of bringing glory to his name, and paying submission to his authority. And none will be so readily disposed, none will be so effectually enabled to obey the whole law, as those who see themselves made righteous by the obedience of Christ; who are thereby delivered from that tremendous curse, denounced on all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Aspasio thus exhorts his friend: “Let me desire you to imagine, rather may the blessed Spirit enable you to believe, that your sins are expiated through the death of Jesus Christ; that a righteousness is given you, by virtue of which you may have free and welcome access to God.”—“This is not scriptural language,” says Mr. Wesley; therefore it cannot be sound doctrine, in his way of arguing. Harmless enough, I must own. But what follows is not quite so modest. “I would simply say;” and surely what I would say must be unexceptionably right. This is the conclusion we are to make; otherwise what you allege is of no weight at all. “I would simply say, by him we have access to the Father.” This is beyond all objection proper; it is taken from the apostle, and it includes what Aspasio expresses. The apostle’s language is the ingot of gold; Aspasio’s sentiment is a thread drawn, or a leaf beaten from it. Methinks, before I dismiss this topic, I would desire you to turn back a moment, and reconsider what you have affirmed. Your sins are expiated;—is not this scriptural language? What else meaneth that expression of the apostle, “To make expiation for the sins of the people.” A righteousness is given you;—is not this the scriptural way of speaking? “They who receive the gift of righteousness, shall

reign in life." "By which you have free access to God;"—is not this both the dialect and the doctrine of the Holy Ghost? "We have access with confidence (not through our punctual performance of any conditions, but) through the faith of him;" by a fiducial reliance on our Lord's most precious obedience, blood and merit.

"I have seen such terrible effects of this unscriptural way of speaking." Here I fancy you slip into a little mistake; you forget the distinction between the use and the abuse of a doctrine, a distinction which you can easily make on other occasions. You have doubtless seen people, who use the most scriptural way of speaking, yet act unsuitably to their language; what reflections arose in your mind, and what inference did you draw upon observing such an inconsistency? You said perhaps, "Their voice is Jacob's voice, but their hands are the hands of Esau. Hence it appears, that they are hypocrites; they pretend one thing, and are really another." Make the same reflection, and draw the same inference, when you hear people talking of "imputed righteousness," yet see them losing the reins to ungodliness; then you will be consistent with yourself, and with truth; ascribing the terrible effects, not to the wholesome doctrine but to the vitiated mind.

"Where sin abounded," &c. Mr. Wesley rejects Aspasio's interpretation of this text, and offers one of his own; one which he had given us a little while ago, and now serves a second time without any considerable variation at our table. I shall only refer the reader to page 542, where he will find this text considered, and Mr. Wesley's exposition canvassed.

In this and the two following paragraphs you find fault with the phrase *imputed*; yet you say, "Concerning the thing there is no question." You would discard that particular form of expression; yet you add, "As to the doctrine we are agreed." Then, according to your own confession, all these your objections are a mere strife of words. Surely such a man as Mr. Wesley should know how to make a better use of pen, ink, and paper, than to litigate about letters and syllables. If I thought myself contending only about the more precisely proper form of expressing the same thing, I should be ashamed of my employ, and would this instant lay down my pen; whereas I apprehend, that we are not agreed as to doctrine, that there is a material and very wide difference between us. My opinion, or rather my faith is, that our Lord's obedience to the moral law, in professed submission to its authority, and in exact conformity to its precepts—his performance of all holy duties, and his exercise of all heavenly graces—that all this is a most essential and distinguished part of his merit; that this is of higher dignity and greater value than the whole world, and all the righteousness in it: that the divine law is hereby more signally honoured, than it could have been honoured, by the uninterrupted obedience of Adam and all his posterity: that God's justice, holiness, truth, receive greater glory from these unparalleled acts of duty, than from all the services of angels and men in their several wonderful orders: that this active righteousness, together with his most meritorious sufferings, are the ground and cause of my acceptance with God; are the very thing which procures and effects my justification; making me not barely acquitted from guilt, but truly righteous, yea, perfectly righteous, and that before the God of infinite penetration and purity. This is a view of the doctrine incomparably magnificent and inexpressibly comfortable. If you agree with your friend in all these particulars, speak and write conformably

to such agreement; then you will never again hear from him in this manner, neither will he receive any more such favours from you as the letter now under consideration; then we shall be perfectly joined together "in the same mind and in the judgment."

Alas! this union, I fear, is not so easily to be effected. Mr. Wesley still insists and still urges, "The authority of our church (which Aspasio pleads) and of those eminent divines (whose testimony Aspasio alleges) does not touch those particular forms of expression." Justification through imputed righteousness, or being made righteous through the obedience of Christ, I suppose are the forms of expression intended. These, it seems, none of the quotations confirm, establish, no, nor touch, in Mr. Wesley's opinion at least; but I am inclined to hope, that the generality of readers will be of a different persuasion, and allow that the quotations and the expressions touch and resemble one another, as much as the wings of the cherubim in the ancient sanctuary*.

"Does not touch." No! not yet? Then we must have recourse to some other authority, and such a one I have at hand as you would hardly venture, or even wish to gainsay, I mean the authority of John Wesley, M.A. who declares, in his Exposition of the New Testament, "This is fully consistent with our being justified by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ." Now I shall only remonstrate in imitation of the apostle: "If thou thyself usest this phrase, why wouldest thou compel others to lay it aside? Or, why art thou displeased with others for a practice which thou allowest in thyself?"

Surely you will not say, *imputation* of righteousness is quite a different thing from *imputed* righteousness. Does not the former evidently include the latter? Can there be a proclamation of pardon, without a pardon proclaimed? Can there be the purchase of an estate, without an estate purchased? Or the imputation of righteousness, without a righteousness imputed? If others should affect such subtle and self-deluding evasions, Mr. Wesley cannot, Mr. Wesley must not; he has precluded himself; nay, he has, with his own mouth, given a verdict against himself. Is it not recorded in those lines subjoined to your character of a Methodist?

Let faith and love combine
To guard your valiant breast;
The plate be righteousness divine,
Imputed and imprest.

This *imputed righteousness* was once a delightful theme; your song in the house of your pilgrimage. Why is it now a burdensome stone which you would fain shake off from yourself and others? Are you become rich in yourself, and increased with goods of your own acquiring? We know full well for what reason the phrase and the doctrine are rejected, exploded, and reproached by the Romish superstition, because they display in the brightest light the beauty of free grace. They hold the door against all kind of human merit; they cut off every the most distant pretension for glorying in man; and refer all the honour of salvation to Jesus Christ alone. Admit justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ, and the grand bulwark, or the main pillar of Popery, falls to the ground; while a solid foundation is laid for that

* * "Both the cherubims were of one measure, and one size; and their wings touched one another in the midst of the house," 1 Kings vi. 25, 27.

triumph and gratitude, expressed in the inspired hymn, "Let us be glad and rejoice (exceedingly, but) give the honour (all the honour) to him," Rev. xix. 7.

"The righteousness of God, signifies the righteousness which God-man wrought out." "No;" says Mr. Wesley. Your reason, Sir, for this negative? A child may deny; a man of judgment will disprove. Does not Mr. Wesley disprove, when he adds, "It signifies God's method of justifying sinners?" Just as forcibly as the Jews disproved the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, when they cried, Thou the Messiah! No; thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil. What they alleged, wanted a proof altogether as much as what they denied. What Mr. Wesley here alleges, is a threadbare objection, already considered, and already confuted. Yet, since it relates to a point of the utmost moment, and that which is the main hinge of our controversy, I shall not be deemed officious, if, as the shot has been once again discharged, I once again lift up my shield against it.

"The righteousness of God, signifies God's method of justifying sinners." We have already shewn how low an interpretation this is; how insipid in itself, and incompatible with the current language of Scripture. On the other hand, how sublime and consolatory is the sense which Aspasio gives! A righteousness, which God himself has provided without any co-operation from his creatures. The righteousness of that most exalted, yet most condescending Saviour, who is God and man in one, Christ; a righteousness dignified with all the perfections of the Godhead, therefore worthy to be the comfort, the joy, the never-ceasing boast of his people; and sufficient, infinitely sufficient, to save even the most vile, the most base, the most desperately ruined sinners.

This is a righteousness, as much superior to all human attainments, to all angelic accomplishments, as the heaven of heavens is higher than a clod of the valleys. This is a righteousness which could never have entered into the heart of man or angel to conceive, but will be the cause of their admiration, and the subject of their wonder, to endless ages. This sense fully accounts for those rapturous expressions of the prophet, when, speaking of the all-surpassing gift, he thus addresses his fellow-sinners: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee. He is righteous, and having salvation." He is completely righteous in his nature, has fulfilled all righteousness in his life and death, and has thereby obtained for thee a full pardon, a finished salvation, a sure title to eternal glory. This accounts for those more rapturous expressions of the sacred writers, when in the fervour of their gratitude they call upon the whole creation to celebrate the goodness of the incarnate Jehovah: "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains; O forest, and every tree therein, for the Lord hath (in his own person, by his own obedience and sufferings) redeemed Jacob, and glorified (not human abilities, not human works, but) *himself*, (and his own righteousness), in the restoration of Israel*."

* Isa. xlv. 23. Should any one say, is this the sense of the Prophet? I ask, is not this the fullest, grandest, divinest sense? Is it not a sense perfectly true? Is it not warranted by the gospel revelation? Is it not demanded by that declaration of our Saviour; "They (the ancient Scriptures) testify of me?"

In short, this is a righteousness which exalts God's justice; which magnifies the law; displays all his awful and amiable attributes in their fullest lustre. To contrive it, was unsearchable wisdom; to bestow it, is invaluable treasure. It answers in the completest manner all the grand and gracious purposes, both of God's glory and of man's salvation. True gospel this! Glad tidings indeed! An expedient for our recovery greater than our hearts could wish. We may truly say, while meditating on this gift of consummate righteousness, "Where sin hath abounded, grace has much more abounded." The bricks are fallen down, but the most glorious repairer of our breaches has built with hewn stone. Well might the apostle, having this supremely excellent righteousness in his view, look down with the most sovereign contempt upon every other (cause of) confidence, upon every other object of trust, and reckon them dross and dung. Well might he declare, that he would never be ashamed of the gospel, in which is this transcendently noble righteousness, in all its magnificence, riches, and glory.

Do you think me rather too warm upon the subject? Let me once again remit you to St. Chrysostom: read his exposition of that charming sentence, "The righteousness of God," *Πολος*, &c. This venerable father of the church speaks the thing as it is. He does not mingle our wine and water, but gives us the genuine truth, and triumphs because of the truth.

The doctrine of an imputed righteousness seems to have been typically taught, by the remarkable manner of clothing our first parents. All they could do for their own recovery, was like the patched and beggarly mantle of fig-leaves; this they relinquish, and God himself furnishes them with apparel: animals are slain, not for food, but sacrifice; and the naked criminals are arrayed with the skins of those slaughtered beasts. The *victims* figured the expiation made by Christ's death; the *clothing* typified the imputation of his righteousness. "That does not appear," cries Mr. Wesley. Aspasio has produced an authority from the famous Milton. I could reinforce it by another from the elegant Witsius. If you are not satisfied with either, or both these testimonies, I will give you a reason for the sentiment. The victims most properly shadowed forth the expiation of guilt by the Redeemer's blood, because it is the peculiar end of sacrifice to make atonement for sins; the clothing most pertinently denoted the Saviour's righteousness, which is described both by the prophet and the apostle under this very image. "He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness," says the prophet Isaiah. "The fine linen which arrays the bride of the Lamb, is the perfect righteousness of the saints*," says the beloved disciple. "It is like a royal vesture, or a rich suit of apparel, upon all them that believe," adds the apostle Paul. The impartial reader, I promise myself, will allow these passages, if not to be absolutely decisive, yet to have somewhat more weight than that atom in your scale, "This does not appear." As for sanctification, this may very reasonably rank among the effects of being cleansed by the blood, and adorned with the righteousness of Christ. These blessings produce peace of conscience, and love of God; just as commodious clothing

* Rev. xix. 8. *Τα διναιμματα* being in the plural number, I think may be translated, *Justitia omnibus numeris absoluta*. A righteousness of all kinds, and all degrees, or comprehending every kind, and defective in no degree. Would you see the beauty of this fine linen, or the wardrobe in which it is deposited, consult Isa. xlv. 24.

produces warmth, and promotes health. And what is love of God, but holiness of heart in the seed, and holiness of life in the fruit ?

As this (the nature of true holiness) is a matter of the last importance ; is a point on which multitudes, I fear, are mistaken ; I will leave it uppermost in your thoughts, in the reader's, and in those of, Reverend Sir, your, &c.

LETTER X.

REVEREND SIR,—We are now entering upon a new province. Our business will be chiefly of the philological kind. We shall treat principally of words. But as they are the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, they are like the combs erected in yonder hive : Not empty syllables, made only for sound ; but rich with divine sense, and full of the honey of the gospel, replete with the manna of heaven. May this pen be to the reader like Jonathan's rod ; when, dipt in the delicious juice, it enlightened his eyes, refreshed his spirits, and cheered his heart !

“Almost every text, you are pleased to affirm, quoted in this and the following letter, in support of that particular form of expression, (imputed righteousness), is distorted above measure from the plain, obvious meaning, which is pointed out by the context.” Let us examine these abused and distorted texts, in order to discover from whence the misfortune happened ; how the violence was done ; whether by Mr. Wesley's pen, or by Aspasio's tongue.

The first is from the book of Job ; which, as it is greatly venerable for its antiquity, and singularly to be regarded for its importance, I shall beg leave to consider at large. A sinner is described lying under a dangerous sickness, and brought by the force of his disease to the brink of the grave ; by the multitude of his sins to the very borders of hell. In this deplorable condition, “If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one of a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness ; then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down into the pit ; I have found a ransom*.”

“If there be with him a messenger” of the living God ; a faithful ambassador of Christ, who may administer spiritual assistance to the poor afflicted creature.—“An interpreter,” who knows how to open the Scriptures, and rightly to divide the word of truth ; who is a preacher of righteousness, and can properly apply the word of grace.—This is not every one's talent ; nor within the compass of every man's abilities. He is one of a thousand, to whom God hath given the tongue of the learned ; enabling him to speak a word in season, and suit the condition of each respective patient : “To shew

* Job xxxiii. 23, 24. I have the rather chosen to lay this whole passage before the reader, because a new interpretation is given to the word *messenger*. Here it is supposed to denote a faithful and skilful minister of the gospel. In the Dialogues it is supposed to describe our Lord Jesus Christ himself. I scarcely know which sense to prefer. Perhaps both may be included, the author, as well as the instrument, of comfort to the sick and sinful man. However, the point in debate between Mr. Wesley and Aspasio, is not affected by the different application of this word. His uprightness, according to either exposition, may signify the Messiah's obedience and sufferings ; must signify these things ; provided these are the only justifying righteousness of a sinner ; the only way of obtaining the divine favour, and removing every evil.

unto man his uprightness ;” that is, says Mr. Wesley, “to convince him of God’s justice, in so punishing him.”

But is this the instruction which such a distressed sufferer wants? Is this the word of reconciliation which every true minister in ancient times did preach, and in later times doth preach? Or is there any need of a choice instructor? One skilled in the counsel of God, to teach what the common dictates of reason demonstrate? In this interpretation, I can neither discern the true critic, nor the clear reasoner, nor the sound divine.

Not the *true critic*: He would acknowledge that the antecedent in this clause is not God, but man. To man, therefore, if we regard grammatical propriety, the pronoun *his* must be referred. Not the *clear reasoner*; he would observe the emphasis of the word *then*, ver. 24. implying some discovery, or some conviction, in consequence of which deliverance from death ensues, or with which it is connected. Can this be a discovery or a conviction of God’s justice in punishing him? No, verily. Much less therefore can I discern the *sound divine*. He knows, and affirms constantly, that this is the consequence of the Messiah’s righteousness alone, which being imputed to the sinner, becomes, for the blessed purpose of justification unto life, *his* *.

So that Aspasio seems to have the import of language, and the scope of the context, both on his side. And I may venture to add, he has the consolatory genius of the gospel yet more strongly pleading for his interpretation. It must yield but cold comfort to tell a poor wretch, confined to the bed of languishing, and alarmed with apprehensions of eternal vengeance—but cold comfort must it yield to tell such a one, that he has deserved all this misery, and is justly punished. Whereas, to inform him of a righteousness sufficient to do away all his transgressions; sufficient to reconcile him and render him acceptable even to the chastising God; sufficient to obtain his deliverance, very probably from death, most assuredly from hell; this is a reviving report indeed. This will make the bones which sin and misery had broken, to rejoice.

Then the sinner and the sufferer, attentive to this instruction, and applying this righteousness, is made partaker of pardon. God, the sovereign Lord of life and death, “is gracious unto him;” and saith, in the greatness of his strength, as well as in the multitude of his mercies, “deliver him from going down into the pit” of corruption, as a pledge of his deliverance from the pit of perdition. For “I have found a ransom,” satisfactory to my law and to my justice. I have received an atonement in behalf of this once obnoxious, now reconciled transgressor.

“He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness.” This you would render *holiness*; but have you no Hebrew lexicon to inform you that the word which signifies holiness is very different from the expression used by the Psalmist? He says *tzrkh*, whereas holiness is expressed by *kds*. Besides, have you not observed that your interpretation would betray the Psalmist into apparent tautology? He had, in the preceding verses, displayed the duties of practical godliness, and the graces of inherent holiness.

* The uprightness, (says Mr. Caryl,) chiefly intended here, is the righteousness of Christ, in and by which we are reconciled to, and made one with God. We never see where our uprightness is, till we see there is nothing that makes us stand upright in the court of heaven, but only Christ our righteousness. This is the great duty of the messengers and interpreters of Christ, to declare to man this righteousness for his uprightness. And that hence it is (as Elihu speaks) that God is and will be gracious unto him.”

The person he describes possesses the latter, and practises the former. To say, therefore, he shall receive holiness, when he has it already, would not suit David's correctness, however it may suit Mr. Wesley's fancy, or Mr. Wesley's design. In this clause, the evangelical moralist touches upon another particular, which enters, as an essential part, into the character of a godly man—even "the righteousness which is of faith;" denoted by the blessing of pardon, and the gift of righteousness. Take away this, and there is no acceptance with God. Take away this, and the gates, mentioned in the close of the psalm, are unalterably shut. Unless we are furnished with this passport, the everlasting doors never lift up their heads. If you exclude this peculiarity, the description is very imperfect, and the picture extremely deficient. Whereas, this adds the finishing touch, and gives true perfection to both.

Several passages are quoted in which the word *tzrkh* occurs. Sometimes you would have it signify *mercy*; sometimes *justification*; sometimes *spotless holiness*. But what proof do I find for establishing any of these significations, which differ so much from one another, and still more from the truth? Nothing but the customary argument, "So it unquestionably means." Now you must unquestionably know, at least every novice in the language knows, that the genuine and native sense of *tzrkh*, is righteousness. The word expressive of mercy is *had*, neither in sense nor sound alike. As to *justification*, the phrase never denotes that blessed effect, but the divine and meritorious cause which produces it.

Shall I, in this inquiry, appeal to the best lexicons, the most approved translations, or the ablest interpreters? No, I will refer you to the decision of an interpreter, who is superior to all lexicons and all translations; I mean, the author of the epistle to the Hebrews. He translates this very word, as it enters into the name of Melchisedek; and he translates it, not mercy, not justification, no, nor spotless holiness, but righteousness; even that righteousness whose fruit is peace with God, and peace in our own conscience. Now, will you play the critic upon this inspired writer, and say, Unquestionably it means, not what the apostle has determined, not what Aspasio, supported by his authority, has adopted; but what I think fit to dictate?

An opposer of our Lord's imputed righteousness, who had more discretion or more subtilty than Mr. Wesley, would have argued in this manner: "The original word, I must confess, ought to be translated *righteousness*: this is undoubtedly the principal and leading signification of the term; but then the circumstances and the context oblige us to understand it in the notion of mercy, of spotless holiness, or of anything else that serves our purpose. This would be more modest and more plausible, though not more just and solid than your confident assertion.

Suppose we should admit this pretence, what does the critic gain thereby? Must he not have recourse to that noble and comfortable doctrine for which we plead? Let the word be translated *mercy*. Why is mercy shown to sinners? Is it not on account of the righteousness of their Surety? Let it be translated *goodness*. Wherefore is goodness exercised to rebellious men? Is it not because of the satisfaction made by their crucified Lord? Render it whatever you please, provided it conveys the idea of favour vouchsafed, or of the benefits conferred, it must terminate, still terminate, in that grand central point, the incarnation, obedience, and death of Immanuel.

"Sion shall be redeemed with judgment"—"After severe punishment," you say. The Hebrew preposition signifying *after*, is *achr*. I find no trace of any such word in my edition of the Bible. You may as well render or interpret the passage, *in the midst*. And then, if some other critic should be inclined to translate it *before*, or *round about*, we should have a large compass of meaning; but where would precision and exactness be found? But why is Sion to be redeemed *after severe punishment*? Has her punishment any influence or sway in the work of her redemption? Does the punishment of man pave the way for the salvation of God? Are sinners to wait for pardon and reconciliation, till they have been severely punished? This is very discouraging doctrine; and, blessed be God, it is absolutely without foundation. The gospel says, "To-day, even to-day (sinners), if ye will hear his voice, ye shall enter into rest." You need not tarry till you have been severely chastised; but this instant believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved. The Lord Jesus has been wounded and bruised in your stead; he has received all the punishment which you have deserved; yea, as a ransom, he has paid double; as a victim, he has suffered double for all your sins, Isa. xl. 2. Considering these things, I am still disposed to abide by Aspasio's plain and obvious interpretation; not to go out of my way in quest of the pricking briar and grieving thorn, when I meet with roses and lilies in the common road.

"In the Lord have I righteousness." This will not satisfy our critic. It must be *through* the Lord. What piddling criticism is this, even in case it was true, and answered some specious end! But it is by no means true. Everybody knows, that the prefix *b* signifies *in*; and every body but Mr. Wesley would blush to assert the contrary. Neither does it answer any valuable end, but the reverse. It degrades the exalted sense, and impoverishes the rich blessing. To have righteousness in the Lord, is abundantly more expressive of glorious grace, than barely to have righteousness through the Lord. Mordecai had riches and honours, *through* Ahasuerus and his royal favour; Esther had riches and honours, *in* Ahasuerus, as her royal husband: he by being a courtier, she by being a consort, to the most magnificent monarch in the world.

If Mr. Wesley piddled in the foregoing, he flashes in the following passage. He assures us that *ghlmim tzk* means, *spotless holiness*. This is really a bold stroke in criticism. But, like many other bold enterprises, it is likely to prove, not a birth, but an abortion. *Spotless!* You might as well have rendered it *toothless*. It has no more to do with the idea of spotless, than it has to do with the idea of an ivory tooth, or a polished toothpick. Literally translated, it signifies *ages*; and may denote the perpetuity of this righteousness, and of its beneficial effects. It was from the beginning, it is at this day, and it will be even unto the end, mighty to save. It is the one refuge and hope of sinners, in every age of the world, and under every dispensation of religion. Through all the changes of time it has been, and through the unchangeable eternity it will be, their chief joy, and their crown of rejoicing.

What righteousness shall give us peace at the last day, inherent or imputed? To this question Aspasio has replied, in a very explicit manner, by presenting us with a pertinent extract from Bishop Hall, and by commenting upon a most important prophecy of Isaiah. In both which, all human righteousness

is set aside, and our peace is derived entirely from the glorious Shiloh*. From him, who made peace by the blood of his cross, and whose name is the Prince of Peace: having this heavenly blessing, and the right of conferring it, as the peculiar privilege, or unshared prerogative, of his crown.

Mr. Wesley is pleased to deny this doctrine, and to associate with the Papists in ascribing our peace (and if our peace, then our salvation) "partly to inherent, partly to imputed righteousness." But does our church so? Hear her own words: "We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness;" much less then will she dare to approach his judgment-seat trusting in any such thing. Does the apostle Paul do so? Hear his own protestation: "That I may be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law;" which consists of my personal obedience, and inherent holiness; but having this, as the source of my peace, and the strength of my salvation, "the righteousness which is of God by faith;" even that inconceivably precious righteousness, which God my Saviour wrought, and which a sinner by faith receives. Did Mr. Wesley himself always do so? Let those lines bear witness; of which neither the poet, nor the divine, need be ashamed.

My righteous servant and my Son
Shall each believing sinner clear,
And all who stoop to abjure their own,
Shall in his righteousness appear.

Will that righteousness give you peace which you abjure? Or is it pious, is it prudent, is it consistent, to trust in a righteousness which you absolutely renounce? That which you abjure (a stronger word could not be used) you consider, not barely as despicable, but as utterly abominable; whereas that which gives you peace at the awful tribunal, must not only be excellent, but incomparably excellent and valuable. See, my friend, how "thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I; yea, thine own lips testify against thee," Job xv. 6. O! that you may return to your first sentiments, and to your first love † and no longer expose yourself and your doctrine to be a bye-word among the people. If you persist in such palpable inconsistencies, who can forbear taking up that taunting proverb, "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

But stop. A passage from St. John is introduced to support this opinion. "Christ died for us, and lives in us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment." That Christ died for us, and lives in us, I readily acknowledge. But where do you find any of the apostles, from these premises, drawing

* Gen. xlix. 10. "Shile,"—Schilo. Nomen Messiae peculiare, tranquillitorem designans.—That is, the Maker of Peace, and the Author of Tranquillity, for rebellious and wretched men.

† That Mr. Wesley may not be ashamed to retract a mistaken sentiment, I will break the ice and lead the way. In a copy of verses which I formerly wrote, sacred to the memory of a generous benefactor, I remember the following lines:

Our wants relieved by thy indulgent care,
Shall give thee courage at the dreadful bar,
And stud the crown thou shalt for ever wear.

These lines, in whatever hands they are lodged, and whatever else of a like kind may have dropt from my pen, I now publicly disclaim. They are the very reverse of my present belief; in which I hope to persevere so long as I have any being.

our conclusion? St. John, whom you quote, has no such logic. His inference is deduced from a very different topic. You give us a fragment of the apostle's words; why do you not exhibit the golden bowl complete? We will then quickly perceive, that it contains a more sweet and salutary draught than you have provided for our refreshment.

Ἐν τούτῳ τετέλειται ἡ ἀγάπη μεθ' ἡμῶν, ἵνα παρρησιᾶν ἔχωμεν[†] ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ κρισεως; which we translate, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment," 1 John iv. 17. As you are fond of criticising upon the original Scriptures, here you might have done it justly and honourably. Here you might have altered and reformed our translation; while every capable judge would have owned your service to be reasonable and important. The true sense of μεθ' ἡμῶν, is *with us*, or *with regard to us*. That is, God's love, celebrated with inimitable energy and beauty in the preceding verse, God's love towards us is herein made perfect; this is its grand and crowning effect, that we should have, not a bare hope, but an unappalled boldness at the day of judgment.

As though he had said, God, having reconciled us to himself by the blood of his Son; having renewed us after his own image, by his blessed Spirit testifying of Christ in our hearts; having carried us through all the dangers of life, and raised our bodies from the dust of death; he crowns and consummates all these most indulgent acts of his grace, by giving us an undaunted and triumphant confidence at the day of universal audit. According to this interpretation, your own text is against your opinion, and refers this joyful assurance, not to our love of God, but to his love of us; not to inherent righteousness, but to free grace*.

Aspasio thus translates St. Peter's words: "Who have obtained like precious faith in the righteousness of our God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. i. 1. Mr. Wesley gives us to understand, that this translation is wrong, it should be faith *through*—and not through the righteousness, but through *the mercy* of our God and Saviour. He will not allow the Greek preposition *ἐν* to signify *in*; though I can prove it to have been in peaceable possession of this signification for more than two thousand years. And the substantive δικαιοσύνη must not denote *righteousness*, though it pleads, as a warrant for this weighty sense, the incontestable authority of St. Paul. Give me leave to tell you, Sir, that I can produce a multitude of proofs to overthrow your first puny alteration; but produce, if you can, a single passage from the whole New Testament†, to uphold your last daring innovation.

Here I cannot but observe, you abandon your favourite commentator Bengelius, of whose merit and excellence you speak so highly and so justly. He says, in his notes upon the place, the righteousness of God our Saviour, is the righteousness of Christ; which faith apprehends, and which is opposed to a man's own righteousness. What is more surprising, you depart from your own comment; nay, you expressly contradict your own comment. To

* Should it be said, in case you thus interpret the first part of the text, how will it connect with what follows? Perfectly well. And none need wonder that we shall appear with such boldness at his coming; since they cannot but observe, that *as he is, so are we in this world*. We are actuated by his Spirit; we resemble him in all our conversation; and hence it is evident that we are one with him.

† The righteousness of God, the righteousness of God our Saviour, never denotes, in all the apostolical writings, the attribute of mercy. If it does, and Mr. Wesley can make it appear, I will confess myself mistaken, and thank him for correcting my error.

edify the readers of your Exposition, you inform and assure them, that this phrase signifies "both the active and the passive righteousness" of Christ. To gainsay what Aspasio has advanced, you more than insinuate, that it signifies no such thing, but only "the mercy of our Lord." Nay, to corroborate the true sense, and determine the words invariably to the active and passive righteousness of Christ, you add, "It is this alone by which the justice of God is satisfied." If then Mr. Wesley would reconcile what he writes in his Expository Notes with what he writes in his animadversions on Aspasio, he must maintain, that by the mercy of God alone his justice is satisfied.

I will not exclaim, on this occasion, as you have too freely and not very genteely done in your letter to Mr. Law, "Exquisite nonsense*!" But this I may venture to say, Contradiction, didst thou ever know so trusty a friend, or so faithful a devotee? Many people are ready enough to contradict others: but it seems all one to this gentleman, whether it would be another or himself, so he may but contradict.

Permit me, for a moment, seriously to expostulate the case. Why should you be so averse to the righteousness of our God and Saviour? Why should you ransack all the stores of your learning and knowledge; nay, descend to unwarrantable criticisms, and quite unworthy your superior abilities, in order to exclude this most glorious truth from the Bible; in order to exterminate this most precious privilege from the church? Attempt, if you think proper, to pluck the sun from the firmament, to hide the light from our eyes and withdraw the air from our lungs; but do not attempt to rob us of what is far more valuable than all these blessings, by depriving us of this inestimable treasure, the righteousness of Christ: which being a righteousness, immaculate, all-surpassing, divine, swallows up and annihilates our guilt; as the immense waves of the ocean would swallow up and annihilate the drop of ink that now hangs on the point of my pen: which, being a righteousness immaculate, all-surpassing, divine, will present us before our God, and before his angels without spot and blemish; in robes more beautiful than the colours of that resplendent bow, which is bended on the skirts of yonder cloud.

"Therein is revealed the righteousness of God."—"God's method of justifying sinners." See this interpretation examined, and this objection answered before.

We establish the law, as we expect no salvation without a perfect conformity to it †; namely, by Christ. "Is not this a mere quibble?" says Mr. Wesley. Quite the reverse. It is no low conceit, but an exceeding serious and momentous truth. It is no *play upon the sound* of words, but expresses a doctrine of great solidity, and of the last importance. Tell me, ye that cavil at this method of establishing the law, by what other expedient you propose to effect it? By your past conduct? That, you must acknowledge, has been more or less a violation of the law. By your obedience? That, you cannot deny, falls short of the sublime requirements of the law. By your future behaviour? Well, I will suppose that, in some future period, you reach the very summit of perfection. Still the law will have much to

* Mr Wesley, in the abridgment of his letter to Mr. Law, inserted in the *Preservative from Unsettled Notions*, has expunged this and some other indecently harsh expressions.

† The reader is desired to peruse Aspasio's own words, *Let. v.* There his sentiments are more fully explained; but the passage is not transcribed, on purpose to avoid increasing the size of this piece, which already swells to a larger bulk than the writer proposed.

complain of, and will lay much to your charge. You have not magnified it as a holy nature. You have not presented it with the consummate righteousness of your whole heart, and your whole conversation. You have not begun from the first moment of your existence, and persevered in this perfect conformity to the last breath you drew. In this case, either the law must concede from its most righteous demands, and the immutable God must compromise matters with his creatures, or else you can never enter into life. Unless you renounce all such impotent attempts and arrogant conceits, talk no more of "practising it in its full extent;" but betake yourself to Christ, who is the end of the law*, for accomplishing that righteousness which its receipts demand, but which the frailty of man cannot perform.

Thus we establish the law, as the consummate standard of righteousness; as the original condition of life; and as that most venerable system, with which, as well as with its divine Author, there is no variableness or shadow of changing. And does this method of securing the dignity of the law, hinder or discourage a dutiful observance of its commands? If not, your objection derived from that well-known text, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," is

—Telum imbelli sine ictu.

If this be the most rational and the most sure way of producing the love of God, which is the very essence of true holiness, then your objection recoils, and falls upon the head of your own cause. Can there be a more powerful, a more endearing motive to love the Lord my God, than a persuasion of his ineffable love to me, in giving his dear Son, so to fulfil, so to satisfy the law on my behalf, that I am thereby delivered from all my offences; am vested with a perfect righteousness; and, on the foot of justice, as well as mercy, stand entitled to eternal life?

"Though I believe that Christ hath lived and died for me, yet I would speak very tenderly and sparingly of the former." How widely then does your practice differ from the apostle's? We believe, and therefore have spoken, confidently and incessantly, in season and out of season. No, says Mr. Wealey, "We believe, and therefore we speak tenderly and sparingly." If you believe, that Christ has lived for you, and fulfilled all righteousness in your stead, surely you should give him the honour of this wonderful loving-kindness, and both preach, and talk, and sing of his goodness. It should be as a fire shut up in your bones; and you should speak, that yourself may be refreshed, and your Lord may be glorified.

But you "fear dreadful consequences." What! where the divine holiness fears none? and the divine prescience sees none? Are you then more deep-sighted to discern these distant evils than omniscience? Methinks, I would not have spoken thus, unless I had been wiser than the Spirit of inspiration. Do you not, by cherishing and avowing such apprehensions, find fault with the glorious gospel in which this righteousness is revealed? revealed as its most eminent article, and most distinguishing peculiarity? A doctrine taught, and a blessing granted, and both from heaven! yet not fit to be displayed, inculcated, and insisted on! What a contemptible idea must this give of our holy religion, and of our holy revelation, to an inquiring infidel?

* Rom. x. 8. Christ is the end of the law. How? By bringing in that righteousness, and giving that life, which the law shews, and shews the want of, but neither itself gives, nor can enable us to acquire.

“I would never speak of them (the active and passive righteousness, Christ) separately.” This insinuates, what Aspasio disavows; and which you cannot hint, without apparent injustice to his sentiments. “I would speak of it (the former) as sparingly as do the Scriptures.” Here you appeal to those writings, which must either condemn your conduct or their own propriety. At your leisure consider the case, and you will find the dilemma unavoidable. In the mean time, be so candid as to read a short note inserted in Theron and Aspasio; where you may see, that the Scriptures are far from speaking sparingly on this point. It is their favourite and fundamental topic: it runs through them as a golden woof through a warp of silver; or as the vital blood through the animal structure. And whatever you, Sir, may be inclined to do, I hope no lover of Christ will be persuaded to secrete this invaluable truth of the gospel. Shall such a truth skulk in a corner, or speak only in a whisper? No; let us proclaim it upon the house-tops and wish that the joyful sound may reach the very ends of the earth.

The gift of righteousness must signify a righteousness not their own. Aspasio's expression is, not *originally* their own. Originally, he said, with a view of hinting, that, in some other sense, it was and is their own; their own, by way of imputation, though not by way of operation. This word, in order to make the sentence appear absurd, Mr. Wesley drops. But whether such a practice be free from guile, or what the apostle calls cunning craftiness, let the impartial reader judge.

Aspasio's interpretation of the phrase, authenticated by the language of Scripture, Mr. Wesley sets aside; and introduces another, whose only recommendation to the public is, “I come from Mr. Wesley's pen.” Do you so? Then we will allow you all proper regard. But, because you come from Mr. Wesley's pen, must you therefore displace propriety and supplant truth? make an inspired writer argue incorrectly, nay, jar with himself? This is rather too much for you to assume, even though you came recommended by a greater name.

“The gift of righteousness signifies the righteousness or holiness which God gives to and works in them.” Let us observe the apostle's aim, and the process of his reasoning. His aim is to illustrate the manner of our justification. For this purpose he forms a contrast between Adam's transgression and Christ's obedience. Adam's transgression, which he himself committed, ruins all that spring from him. This is the leading proposition. Now, if the sacred disputant knows how to reason accurately, or to draw a conclusion justly, the conclusion must be to this effect: so likewise Christ's obedience, which he himself performed, recovers all who believe in him. Through Adam's disobedience, without the consideration of their own misdoings, the former are made sinners; through Christ's obedience, without the consideration of their own good qualities, the latter are made righteous. Though I am far, very far from disesteeming the holiness wrought in us, yet what place has it here? In the article of justification, it is utterly excluded. It has no share in the accomplishment of that great work; and every attentive reader will see, that it enters not into the apostle's present argumentation. Besides; if the gift of righteousness signifies the holiness wrought in us, then we shall reign in life, by means of a personal, not of an imputed righteousness; by means of an imperfect, not of a complete obedience. Then all the people of God will be justified, not by the obedience of one, but each

by his own, severally and distinctly; which is contrary, not only to a single, but to many express passages of this very chapter.

I said, "Every attentive reader will see." Some, perhaps, may say within themselves, is not this spoken in Mr. Wesley's manner? the loose presumptive way of arguing which you blame in him? To which it is answered, I am far from resting my point upon this presumptive proof. It is not the pillar which supports my cause, but only a festoon which adorns my pillar. However, was it accompanied with no proofs satisfactory to others, it must to Mr. Wesley, whom I suppose one of the attentive readers, have the force of demonstration. Hear his own words, in his comment on this very portion of Scripture: "As the sin of Adam, without the sins which we afterwards committed, brought us death; so the righteousness of Christ, without the good works which we afterwards perform, brings us life*." It is a righteousness, without the good works, which we afterwards perform; therefore, it is a righteousness not originally our own, but another's. It is not that which God works in us, but prior to it, and independent on it. If Aspasio had suborned an evidence, and put words into his mouth, he could not have devised a more direct and full confirmation of his doctrine than this volunteer witness deposes. I thank you, Sir, for giving me so valuable an explanation of the gift of righteousness, and its blessed effects. I thank you likewise, for furnishing Aspasio with so incontestable a vindication against the objections of the author of the *Preservative*.

The obedience of one, so highly extolled by the apostle, is Christ's actual performance of the whole law.—This you deny. I wish you had favoured me with your reasons for this denial. But my wishes of this kind are constantly disappointed. However, I will follow our Lord's direction, and do unto others even as I would they should do unto me. I will give you a reason for my own or Aspasio's interpretation: the apostle is treating of Adam's actual breach of the law. If so, the proper antithesis must be Christ's actual performance of the law. In the following verses he explains himself. Let them be the comment on our text, and the gift of righteousness means, "The righteousness of one; the obedience of one." This righteousness we have in Jesus Christ our Lord; all other is inherent in ourselves. Justification by this righteousness is alone consistent with free grace; justification by any other, is (inconsistent with it, is) subversive of it.

Farther; As you are a critic in the Greek, you need not be informed that St. Paul uses three several words, δικαιομα, δικαιοσυνη, υπακοη. Now, can you shew any passages in which all these words are used to signify sufferings or death? Nay, can you shew me any single passage in which any one of them occurs in this signification? If you cannot, what shadow of authority have you for putting this construction upon the words in the present case? What shadow of authority for saying, with that unlimited confidence, Christ's "dying for man, is certainly the chief part, if not the whole, which is meant by that expression †?" If you attend to the tenor of the apostle's argument,

* Here Mr. Wesley speaks in perfect agreement with St. Chrysostom: Ο Χριστος τας εβ
αυτου, πασαν εν δικαιοπραγησιν γεγονεν προξενος της δικαιοσυνης.

† The obedience of one, St. Chrysostom expounds by ενος καταθεσασαντος. Would Mr. Wesley venture to affirm, that dying well, not doing well, is certainly the chief thing signified in καταθεσασαντος? A pretty daring criticism this! Does not the word rather signify a course of well doing; terminated (if you please) in, not constituted by, a correspondent death?

or inquire into the import of his language, perhaps you will see cause, not only to alter, but even to reverse this your positive assertion.

Let me subjoin an extract from St. Chrysostom, suited to this and the preceding paragraph, and worthy of our serious consideration; from which it will appear that Aspasio is by no means singular in his sentiments, but speaks the doctrine of the ancient church. "Adam is a type of Christ. How? In this respect: as the former was the cause of death to all his descendants, though they did not (like him) eat of the forbidden fruit; so Christ was the cause, (*προφωρος*)* author, procurer of righteousness to all his seed, though they have not (like him) been personally obedient; even of that righteousness which he finished for us on the cross. For this reason, 'to ascertain and appropriate the honour of this righteousness to Christ—as a work not wrought by us, nor wrought in us, but completed for us on the cursed tree,'—he insists and dwells upon that very observable circumstance, *one*: he iterates and reiterates the emphatical word *one*: he introduces it again and again, and can hardly prevail upon himself to discontinue the repetition. As by *one man* sin entered into the world; through the offence of *one* many be dead; not as it was by *one* that sinned, so is the free gift; the judgment was by *one* to condemnation; by *one man's* offence death reigned by *one*; as by the offence of *one*, judgment came upon all men unto condemnation; as by the disobedience of *one*, many were made sinners. Thus does the apostle again and again introduce the word *one*, and can hardly prevail on himself to discontinue the repetition; that if a Jew should ask, How can the world be saved by the well-doing of one, or by the obedience of Christ? you may be able to reply on his own principles, how could the world be condemned by the evil-doing of one, or by the disobedience of Adam †?"

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." That is, by our representative, and in our nature. "Amazing!" cries Mr. Wesley. But why amazing? Is not this the common import of the most common actions? Do not you and I make laws in and by our representatives in parliament? May not every debtor, when his surety has given full satisfaction to the creditor, say, I have satisfied, I have paid, in my bondsman?

To invalidate this interpretation, you allege that the apostle "is not speaking here of the cause of our justification, but the fruits of it." Among all the excellent things which in your studies and in your travels you have learned, have you never learned that between saying and proving there is a wide difference? Never did I meet with a person who seemed so totally ignorant of this very obvious truth. Well, we must take your word without proof; but I hope not without examination. "The apostle is speaking of the fruit." Is then the fulfilling of the law the fruit of justification? This is the first time, I apprehend, that any such thing was deliberately affirmed. It is the cause, the adequate, the immediate, and indeed the only proper cause of justification. But the fruits are, peace of conscience, and love of God; the spirit of adoption, and the hope of glory.

Shew me, Sir, where *δικαιωμα*, in conjunction with *του νομου*, signifies the

* *Προφωρος*, an expressive word! It seems to denote such a procuring of righteousness for sinners, as corresponds with the provision made by some hospitable householder for the strangers who are come to be his guests; in which they bear no part, either of the expense or of the trouble. *Προφωρος ου νομοσ*, "Hujus rei sum tibi auctor; hanc rem tibi comparo." *Steph. Thesaur. in voc.*

† Chrysost. vol. iii. p. 71, 72. Edit. Savil.

fruits of justification, and not those demands of the law which must necessarily be satisfied before justification can take place. Especially when that phrase is corroborated by that other strong expression, *τληροσθη*; an expression used by our Lord, concerning himself, and the design of his coming into the world: Applicable to him alone who is the end of the law for righteousness; and descriptive of that obedience by which alone the law is magnified.

This sense, says Aspasio, agrees with the tenor of the apostle's arguing. "Not here," replies Mr. Wesley. Let us then consider the aim, and trace the progress of the apostle's reasoning. He is clearing up and confirming that great privilege of the gospel, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Jesus Christ." This, you will allow, is not the fruit of justification, but justification itself. As this wants no argument to confirm it, let us proceed in our attention to the sacred writer. There is no condemnation to those who are true believers in Jesus Christ; who, in consequence of this belief, walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Perhaps, some man will say, How can this be? since even true believers fall short: nay, they offend; and therefore must be liable to the curse. For this reason, they are delivered from condemnation; because "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," that new dispensation introduced in the room of the old law, promises the privilege of pardon, and the gift of the Spirit, in which things the true life and real happiness of mankind consist: Promises both freely, without any works, purely on account of the righteousness which is in Christ Jesus. And hereby this new, gracious, blessed dispensation "hath made me free from the law," which convinced me of sin, condemned me for sin, and bound me over unto death.

These are glad tidings, doubtless. But are they not attended with two inconveniences? Does not this procedure deprive the law of its due honour, and screen the sinner from his deserved punishment? By no means. "For that which was an absolute impossibility, on account of the" strictness of the "law, and the weakness of human nature," God, to whom nothing is impossible, *has* most wonderfully *accomplished*, by "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," to live among sinners, to come under their obligations, *and* perform the obedience demanded from them. By sending him also to be a sacrifice *for sin*; to be charged with its guilt, and undergo its punishment. By this grand expedient, he has provided for the honour and perfect accomplishment of the law. He has also *condemned* and punished sin with the utmost severity. And both these *in the flesh*; in that very nature which was guilty, disabled, ruined.

Should you further ask, Wherefore is all this? To lay the surest foundation, or make the most complete provision for our justification. "That the righteousness of the law, (both its righteous sentence and its righteous precepts, whatever either of suffering or of obedience it required from transgressors, being fulfilled in Christ) might be fulfilled in us." As it was all done in our name; and as he and we are *one*. One in civil estimation, for he is our representative; one in legal estimation for he is our surety; one in social estimation, for he is our bridegroom. For which cause his righteous acts are ours, and his atoning death is ours.

There was a time when you embraced these sentiments; when you had such a view of things; when such language came out of your mouth; which even now stands upon record, under your own hand. See your Principles of a

Methodist. If you have forgotten them, permit me to remind you of them. "Christ (you say) is now the righteousness of all them that truly believe in him. He for them paid the ransom by his death; he for them fulfilled the law in his life. So that now, in him, and by him, every believer may be called a fulfiller of the law." Since you pronounce *my* sense of the apostle's words unnatural; I adopt, I espouse *yours**. And so much the more readily, as it will puzzle sagacity itself to discern a difference between them.

"I totally deny the criticism on *δικαιοσύνη* and *δικαιοσύνη*." Then be so good as to suggest a better. Or, if this should be somewhat difficult, at least favour us with a reason for this your total denial. Not a word of either. Strange! that a man of ordinary discernment should offer to obtrude upon the public such a multitude of naked, unsupported, magisterial assertions! Should ever be able to persuade himself that a positive air will pass for demonstration, or supply the place of argument! If this be to demonstrate, if this be to confute, the idiot is as capable of both as the philosopher. May I not cry out, in your own strain, Oh, how deep an aversion to the *imputed righteousness* of Christ does this Arminian scheme discover! since it will make a man gainsay, when he knows not why, or wherefore?

St. Paul declares, that the "Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, had attained unto righteousness." Upon which Aspasio observes, that the righteousness here mentioned could not be any personal righteousness. To which Mr. Wesley replies, "It was." And to render his reply quite irresistible, a perfect thunderbolt in argumentation, he adds, "Certainly it was." How, Sir! Did they attain personal righteousness without seeking after it? Are you becoming a Calvinist? you that had rather be an Atheist? Could the zealot of Geneva go greater lengths? Aspasio will not deny, that these Gentiles were sanctified as well as justified; but he will venture to affirm, that no degree of sanctification can make the persons righteous who are once become sinners. Christ, like Elijah, first casts his mantle over them; and then, like Elisha, they forsake all, and follow him.

"The righteousness which the Gentiles attained, could not be a personal righteousness." "Certainly it was."—Then it was the righteousness of the law; whereas, the righteousness which they attained, is expressly said to be the righteousness of faith. Then it was a righteousness consisting of good works and godly tempers; whereas, their righteousness consisted in believing, according to the apostle's own explanation, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Then it was the righteousness of man. Personal righteousness, and implanted holiness, pass in the Scriptures under that denomination. Whereas, these Gentiles "submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." If what these Gentiles attained had been a personal righteousness, it would have been no stumbling-block to the Jews. Even they would have fallen in with such a system of religion, as should ascribe righteousness and salvation to their own duties and their own deeds.

You say, "It was implanted as well as imputed." Here, then, you acknowledge an *imputed* righteousness. You yourself use the phrase; you

* Should Mr. Wesley say, Though I used these words, I never intended them for a comment on this passage. If you did not, I imagine the compilers of our Homilies, from whom they are taken, did. At least they regarded this text as a foundation, a warrant, a proof of their doctrine.

affirm it to be, if not the whole, part at least, of the apostle's doctrine. I wish you had been of this mind when you began your letter. Then you would not have conjured me, by all that is venerable and important, to discontinue an expression which conveys—your own—the apostle's meaning—and the meaning of the Holy Ghost.

You join imputed and implanted righteousness. So, in case this address to yourself should pass through the printer's hand, would I join a handsome type and pertinent reasoning. Yet I apprehend, when you sit down to examine the essay, you will regard only the latter. What you associate, you associate properly. The first is the trunk, the last is one of the branches which spring from it. But the apostle seems, in the place before us, to be considering the first only. The last he reserves for some future occasion. He is speaking of the righteousness by which we are saved; and that is solely the imputed righteousness of Christ: he is speaking of the righteousness which was an eye-sore and an offence to the self-conceited Jews; and this was the only imputed righteousness of Christ: he is speaking of a righteousness, contradistinguished to that righteousness which is described by "He that doeth these things;" and this can be nothing else but the imputed righteousness of Christ. Therefore, though love of God, and conformity to his image; though the pure heart and the devout affection, are the inseparable concomitants, or rather the genuine produce, of imputed righteousness; yet here they come not under consideration. To force them into this passage, is to make them appear out of due season. Such an exposition may bespeak a zealous officiousness, not a distinguishing judgment; because it confounds the order of the apostle's plan; it defeats the design of his argument, if it does not introduce self-contradiction into his arguing.

The righteousness came upon the Gentiles, as the former and latter rain upon the earth. To them was fulfilled the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah, "Let the skies pour down righteousness." As the earth engendereth not the rain; has not the least influence in forming, or the least agency in procuring the refreshing showers, but only receiveth them as the mere gift of Providence; so these Gentiles had not the least influence in effecting, nor the least agency in procuring, this righteousness. When the good news came into their territories, they were totally destitute of it, they were utterly unconcerned about it, they knew nothing at all concerning it. But seeing it revealed in the gospel, seeing it displayed as the work of God, and hearing it offered as the gift of God, they were not disobedient to the heavenly invitation. They believed the report, they accepted the blessing, and relied upon it for life and salvation. Then, "as the rain coming down, and the snow from heaven, returneth not thither again, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater;" so, this inestimable truth being admitted into the soul, Christ and his righteousness being received to dwell in the heart, Eph. iii. 17, all the powers of intellectual nature, or what St. Paul calls "the inner man," are exhilarated, quickened, and fructified. They bud as the rose, and blossom as the lily; they bring forth the fruits of inward love, of outward obedience, of universal godliness.

"For instruction in righteousness—in the righteousness of Christ." "Was there ever such a comment before?" May I not answer, in your own words, Was there ever such a method of confutation used before? But you add,

"The plain meaning is, For training up in holiness of heart and of life." I wish you had thought of introducing this interpretation by the following short preface, "I take it for granted." You would then have been sure of saying *one* truth. But if this does not appear plain to me, as you see it did not to Aspasio, methinks you should lend me your spectacles, or favour me with your reasons.

If you please to examine the passage, you will find holiness of heart and life comprehended in one of the preceding expressions. *Προς επανορθωσιν* signifies, For restoration of the man to a state of moral uprightiness; which must include a renovation of the mind, and a reformation of the conduct. After this comes, very properly and without any tautology, very needfully and to the exceeding comfort of the sinner, another most valuable property of the Scriptures. They instruct the reader in the Christian righteousness; in the justifying righteousness; in that mysterious, but incomparably precious righteousness, which no other book in the world displays, mentions, or so much as hints: yet, without which, we could never stand in the judgment, never find acceptance with God, nor be admitted into the realms of glory. If you reject this sense, the apostle's character of the sacred volumes is very defective. It leaves out what is their supreme excellence and most distinguishing peculiarity; what is first, and above all other things, necessary for our fallen race. A traveller undertakes to give an account of some celebrated picture-gallery. He describes the dimensions of the structure, the form of the windows, the ornaments of the roof; but he quite forgets, at least he totally omits, the article of the paintings. Is this a masterly execution of his design? Is this satisfactory to the hearer's curiosity?

"He shall convince the world of righteousness."—"That I am not a sinner, but innocent and holy." How flat and jejune is this exposition! Nothing can be more so, to my taste. *Innocent and holy!* Is this all the Spirit witnesses concerning the most adorable and infinitely deserving Son of God? Does this come up to the inconceivable dignity of his person, and the immensely glorious perfection of his work? Is this sufficient to comfort the conscience, smitten with a sense of most damnable guilt, and alarmed with the terrors of eternal vengeance?

The whole clause contains a platform or summary of evangelical truth; of that all-important truth which ministers are to teach and preach; which the Holy Spirit will own and accompany with his influence, and which is thereby made the power of God to the salvation of the hearers. He shall convince the world of *sin*: of the guilty and miserable state in which all mankind are plunged by nature, and in which every individual person continues so long as he is destitute of an interest in Christ; so long as he believeth not in him who died upon the cross, and is gone to the Father. Of *righteousness*: he shall reveal the Redeemer's most perfect and magnificent righteousness in their hearts; that righteousness which satisfies the justice of the Most High, and brings complete redemption to transgressors: testifying, not barely that he is innocent; such was Adam in paradise: not barely that he is holy; such are angels in heaven. Shall the eternal Creator, even after his humiliation unto death, have no higher a testimony than a set of mere creatures? Yes, verily; the Holy Ghost will convince the world, that Christ's righteousness is the grand and capital blessing which the prophets foretold, and which not only fulfils, but magnifies the law: that it is the

righteousness, the very righteousness of the incarnate Jehovah ; and therefore renders every soul, to whom it is imputed, unblamable, unreprouable, complete. Glorious office this ! worthy to be the object of the almighty Comforter's agency ! in performing which he administers strong consolation. Then he shall convince of judgment ; shall condemn and cast out the prince of this world, introducing a most happy change into the heart and life ; shall begin and carry on the work of grace, sanctification, obedience ; and all through the joyful knowledge, together with the personal appropriation, of this justifying righteousness.

“ That we might be made the righteousness of God in him : ” which cannot be intrinsically, but must be imputatively. This interpretation Aspasio establishes, attempts at least to establish, from the tenor of the context, from the apostle's antithesis, and from several venerable names. But what are all these to Mr. Wesley ? No more than the arrow and the spear to Leviathan. Nay, not so much. That scaly monster “ esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. ” But Mr. Wesley, cased in his own self-sufficiency, esteemeth all the afore-mentioned evidences as mere nothings. He totally disregards them. Reason, grammar, precedents, are eclipsed by his bare negative, and vanish into an insignificance not worthy of notice.

When Aspasio, supported by such great authorities, says, this cannot be intrinsically, but must be imputatively ; Mr. Wesley, supported by his greater self, replies, “ Both the one and the other. ” But does he duly advert to the apostle's subject, or follow the clue of the context ? The subject is reconciliation with God, justification before God, or that, whatever it be, which is implied in not imputing trespasses. The context intimates, that intrinsic holiness is not yet taken into consideration, but is reserved for the next chapter. There the apostle exhorts the Corinthians, not to receive this infinitely rich grace of free justification in vain ; but to show its efficacy, to show its excellency, and recommend it to the unbelieving world, by an unblamable conversation, giving no offence in anything.

Justification, then, is the only point which the apostle in this passage considers ; and justification is the fruit of imputed righteousness solely, not of inherent righteousness in any degree. This we must allow, unless we prefer the impositions of Trent before the confession of our church. Faith says unto us, “ It is not I that take away your sins, but Christ only ; and to him only I send you for that purpose, forsaking therein all your good words, thoughts, and works, and only putting your trust in Christ : ” thus speaks and thus teaches our reformed church. “ If any one say, that man is justified only by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, or only by the remission of sins, without the co-operation of inherent grace and holy love, let him be accursed ; ” Sess. vi. Can. 11 : thus dogmatizes, and thus anathematizes, that mother of falsehoods. Choose now your side. For my part, I renounce and abjure the proud and iniquitous decree. If you persist in your present opinion, there will be an apparent harmony between yourself and Rome, but an essential difference between yourself and Aspasio.

“ God, through him, first accounts, and then makes us righteous. ” How ! does God account us righteous, before he makes us so ? Then his judgment is not according to truth ; then he reckons us to be righteous, when we are really otherwise. Is not this the language of your doctrine ? this the unavoidable consequence of your notion ? But how harsh, if not horrid, does

it sound in every ear! Is not this absolutely irreconcilable with our ideas of the Supreme Being, and equally incompatible with the dictates of Scripture? There we are taught that God "justifieth the ungodly." Mark the words: *the ungodly* are the objects of the divine justification. But can he account the ungodly righteous? Impossible! How then does he act? He first makes them righteous*. After what manner? By imputing to them the righteousness of his dear Son. Then he pronounces them righteous, and most truly; he treat them as righteous, and most justly. In short, then he absolves them from guilt, adopts them for his children, and makes them heirs of his eternal kingdom. In the grand transaction, thus regulated, mercy and truth meet together; all proceeds in the most harmonious and beautiful consistency with the several attributes of God, with his whole revealed will, and with all his righteous law.

"The righteousness which is of God by faith, is both imputed and inherent." Then it is like interweaving linen and woollen; the motley mixture forbidden to the Israelites. Or rather, like weaving a thread of the finest gold with a hempen cord, or a spider's web. The righteousness which is of God, is perfect, consummate, everlasting. Not so inherent righteousness, your own self being judge, and your own pen being witness. In the righteousness which is of God, the apostle desires to be found, before the great and terrible tribunal of the Lord. His own righteousness, or the righteousness which is inherent, he abandons, as absolutely improper for this great purpose; being no more fitted to give him boldness at the day of judgment, than dung and filth are fit to introduce a person, with credit and dignity, to court. The righteousness which is of God, is unknown to reason, is revealed from heaven, and without the works of the law: whereas the righteousness inherent, is discoverable by reason, was known to the Heathens, and consists in a conformity of heart and life to the precepts of the law. By the latter, we act, we obey, and offer our spiritual sacrifices unto God; by the former, we work nothing, we render nothing unto God, but only receive of his grace.

They are, therefore, not the same, but totally distinct. To blend and confound them betrays unskilfulness in the word of righteousness; derogates from the honour of Christ; and tends to cherish a legal frame, or what the Scripture calls, "a spirit of bondage." If you would approve yourself a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, thus you should speak, and thus you should write: the righteousness of God is always imputed; but, being imputed, it produces the righteousness inherent. Being justified by the former, saved from hell, and rendered meet for heaven; we are sanctified also, and disposed to love the Lord, who has dealt so bountifully with us. And if to love, then to worship him, to serve him, to imitate him.

"My faith fixes on both the meritorious life and atoning death of Christ."
 —"Here we clearly agree." How can you clearly agree, either with Aspasio, or with yourself, or with common sense? How with Aspasio? since you question, in direct contrariety to his sentiments, whether the death of Christ be not the whole of what St. Paul styles, "The obedience of one."

* Agreeably to this, our church speaks: "In justification, of unjust, we are made just before God;" and adds, "This is the strong rock and foundation of Christian Religion."
 —*Hom. of Justif.* part 2.

—How with *yourself*? For, did you not declare a little while ago, that fallen man “is not justified by perfect obedience?” Is not Christ’s meritorious life perfect obedience? If your faith fixes on this perfect obedience, is it not for the purpose of justification?—How with *common sense*? Since you suppose that the “Scripture ascribes the whole of our salvation to the death of Christ;” so entirely ascribes it to the death of Christ, “that there was no need of his fulfilling the moral law, in order to purchase redemption for us;” what reason, or shadow of reason can you have, to fix upon what we call the merit of his life? If what you suppose and affirm be true, there was no kind of meritorious efficacy in his life. His life, and all his labours, were in this respect a mere superfluity. Salvation might have been obtained, and redemption purchased, without their concurrence. Therefore, to fix upon them is to fix upon a phantom, and to rest your hopes upon a thing of nought.

But stay. Am I not repeating the misconduct which proved so fatal to the famous Earl of Warwick and his forces? At the battle of Gladmore, while the scale of victory hung in suspense, they saw a considerable body of troops advancing. Supposing them to be enemies, the bowmen made a general discharge and galled them with their arrows. But they soon perceived their mistake: that they had been opposing their friends and annoying their allies. Perhaps by this time you are become my ally. You may have seen your errors, may have corrected your notions; saying, in ratification of both, “We agree.”

That is “I would no longer exclude the meritorious obedience of Christ. But this, together with his atoning death, I look upon as the only cause of my justification. This I call his righteousness; and this, being imputed to me, becomes my plea, my portion, and rational foundation for my everlasting felicity. This I receive by faith. Which now I look upon, not as constituting any part of my recommendation, but only as receptive of the fulness laid up for me in Christ. Though the law of works saith, Do and live; I am now made sensible that the law of faith says,—Be verily persuaded that Christ is sufficient for thy acceptance, without any doing of thy own at all. Since Christ is given to me, in the sacred record given to me as a sinner, to be received without any conditions, I joyfully accept the gift. I am satisfied with his doing and suffering: they are divinely excellent, and infinitely sufficient: I neither wish for, nor think of any thing more, to obtain my complete salvation. This way of salvation effectually excludes boasting; and, at the same time, produces those desirable effects, that love of God, that delight in his perfections, that conformity to his will, which the law of works requires in vain.”

If this is what you mean by “We agree,” I would seal and ratify the agreement with the last wish and the last words of the celebrated Father Paul, *Esto perpetua*. Be this the case, and you shall have, not only the right hand of fellowship, but the right hand of pre-eminence. Only I crave one favour in return: dismiss those injurious insinuations, which cause your readers to suspect that Aspasio considers the meritorious life of Christ separate from his atoning death; whereas, he affirms them to be inseparable, like the correspondence of motion between the two eyes. Try if you can make one of your eyes move to the right, while the other wheels off to the left. When you have done this, then, and not till then, you may have some reasonable pretence for these your suggestions.

Alas! *Quanta de spe decidi!* I find my hopes were too sanguine. We are not come to the desired coalition. In this paragraph you begin to fly off. By talking of imputed righteousness, you tell us, "we are exposed to exceeding great hazard; even the hazard of living and dying without holiness." Pray, Sir, have you seen a little piece written upon this subject by the Rev. Mr. Witherspoon? If you have not, let me recommend it to your perusal. In case you are ignorant of that powerful influence which justification through the righteousness of Christ has upon sanctification and true holiness, from this treatise you may learn some valuable knowledge. In case the author of this treatise is mistaken, in maintaining the indissoluble connexion of justification with true godliness, and the never failing efficacy of the Redeemer's righteousness to bring forth willing obedience in the believer, you may have an opportunity of rectifying his sentiments. You may give us, in your next publication, a preservative, not only against unsettled, but against unsound notions in religion.

Theron, speaking of gems, says, "When nicely polished, and prodigal of their lustre, they stand candidates for a seat on the virtuous fair one's breast." This displeases Mr. Wesley. Would he then have gems placed on the vicious or lascivious breast? Or would he have them put to no use at all, but buried in darkness? Did the Almighty pour such brilliancy upon them, only that they might be consigned over to obscurity? Did he not rather array them with lustre and with charms, that they might display something of his own brightness; incite his rational creatures to admire his transcendent excellency, and teach his faithful people to apprehend the emphasis of that animating promise, "They shall be mine, in the day that I make up my jewels."

"I cannot reconcile this with St. Paul. He says not with pearls; by a parity of reason, not with diamonds." Do you rightly understand St. Paul? Do not you dwindle his manly and noble ideas into a meanness and littleness of sense? such as befits the superstitious and contracted spirit of a hermit, rather than the generous and exalted temper of a believer, "who stands fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free?" Our Lord says not, they that are *splendidly apparelled*, are apparelled unsuitably to Christianity, or in a manner inconsistent with the fear of God; but they are in *king's courts*, and their dress is adapted to their station. Neither does St. Paul forbid the use of pearls, or costly array, when a person's circumstances will afford them, and his situation in life may require them: he rather cautions against the abuse, against looking upon these glittering things as any part of their true dignity, on which they value themselves, or by which they would be recommended to others. The word is not *ενδουσασθαι*, put on, (Mark vi. 9.); nor *φορειν*, wear, (Matth. xi. 8.); but *κοσμειν*, adorn. "Let them not place their excellency in such mean distinctions; no, nor covet to distinguish themselves by these superficial decorations; but rather by the substantial ornaments of real godliness and good works, which will render both them and their religion truly amiable.

The Apostle Peter observes the same propriety of speech, and the same correctness of sentiment: "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of wearing of gold, or plaiting the hair, or putting on of apparel." Was this an absolute prohibition of the several particulars mentioned, it would forbid all kind of clothing, or putting on of any apparel. Take the passage

in your rigorous sense, and it concludes as forcibly against garments as against ornaments; we must even go naked, and lay aside our clothes as well as our gems. Whereas, understood according to the natural signification of the words (*ων ο κοσμος*, not *ων το ενδυμα*), it conveys a very important, and a very reasonable exhortation: "Christians, scorn to borrow your recommendations from the needle, the loom, or the toy-shop: this may be the fashion of a vain world; but let your embellishments, or that which beautifies and distinguishes your character, be of a superior nature. Let it be *internal*; not such as the sheep have wore, or the silk-worms spun; but such as is peculiar to the immortal mind, or 'the hidden man of the heart.' Let it be *substantial*; not such as the moth corrodes, or such as perishes in using; but 'that which is not corruptible;' which being planted on earth, will be transplanted into heaven; and being sown in time, will flourish to eternity. Let it be that adorning, whose excellency is unquestionable, and 'whose praise is of God, (even) the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit;' which will render you, not indeed like the grandees of the earth, but like the Son of the Highest; shewing that you are united to him, interested in him, and partakers of his divine nature."

"In all things, I perceive, you are too favourable, both to the desire of the flesh, and to the desire of the eye." I rather think Mr. Wesley is too censorious of others, and too indulgent to himself. Why may not Theron wear his richly embossed gold watch, and his lady use her golden buckle set with diamonds, as well as you and I wear a silver buckle, or make use of our silver watch? Why may not an earl or a countess put on their robes, sumptuous with embroidery, or their coronet glittering with jewels, as inoffensively as you and I put on a beaver hat, or trail after us a prunella gown? There is no necessity for this our spruceness. A fustian jacket would keep our backs warm, and a flannel cap our heads, as well as our more elegant array. Methinks, therefore, we should either abstain from all needless finery in our own dress, or else forbear to censure it in others. Rather, we should all, in our respective stations, and according to our respective circumstances, use these things as not abusing them; remembering that the fashion of this world passeth away: looking, therefore, for that city of the living God, "whose walls are of jasper, whose buildings are of pure gold, and whose foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones;" but whose external splendour is infinitely surpassed by the glory of God which lightens it, and by the presence of the Lamb, which is the light thereof. When we are blessed with clear apprehensions of this ineffable glory, which shall be revealed; when we live under a delightful persuasion that God hath given to us this eternal life; gems will have but little lustre in our eye, and less and less allurements for our heart. All the pomp of this transient world will appear to us, as the palace of Versailles or the gardens of Stowe would appear to some superior being, who, from an exalted stand in ether, should contemplate the terraqueous globe, and at one view take in its vast dimensions, its prodigious revolutions, and its most copious furniture.

"You are a gentle casuist as to every self-indulgence which a plentiful fortune can furnish." I would consider the end for which these things were created; and point out and enforce their proper improvements. They were created, not to tantalize, but to treat us; not to ensnare, but to gratify us.

Then they are properly improved, when we enjoy them with moderation, and render them instruments of usefulness; when they are regarded as pregnant tokens of our Creator's love, and act as endearing incitements of our gratitude. What you call my casuistry, is built upon a maxim which will never be controverted, "Every creature of God is good, if received with thanksgiving." It is nothing else but an attempt to display what is affirmed in the former clause, and to enforce what is prescribed in the latter.

In the sixth letter, in the ninth, and in other parts, Theron enumerates some of the finest productions, and most choice, accommodations, which the earth, the air, the seas afford: in imitation of the apostle, who in one sentence expresses abundantly more than my three volumes contain, "He giveth us all things richly to enjoy;" in imitation of the Psalmist also, who, in several of his hymns, especially in Psalm civ., celebrates the profuse munificence of Jehovah; profuse even in temporal blessings, and with regard to our animal nature. Does our nature call for any thing to support it? Here is "bread, which strengthens man's heart," and is the staff of his life. Does our nature go farther, and covet things to please it? Here is "wine, that maketh glad the heart of man;" regaling his palate, and exhilarating his spirits. Is our nature yet more craving, and desirous of something to beautify it? Here is "oil, that maketh the face to shine;" that the countenance may appear both cheerful and amiable; that gaiety may sparkle in the eye, while beauty glows in the cheek. Now I cannot persuade myself, nor is all Mr. Wesley's rhetoric powerful enough to convince me, that it is any discredit, or any error, to follow such examples.

"But I mention the exquisite relish of turbot, and the deliciousness of sturgeon. And are not such observations beneath the dignity of a minister of Christ?" Mr. Wesley does not observe from whom these remarks proceed. Not from Aspasio, but Theron. To make him speak like a minister of Christ, or like a Christian of the first rank, would be entirely out of character. It would have betrayed an utter ignorance, or a total disregard, of Horace's rule,

Reddere personæ scit convenientia cuique.

However, I am willing to take all upon myself, and be responsible for the obnoxious sentiments. I would only ask, is anything spoken of which the Almighty has not made? and shall I think it beneath my dignity to magnify the work of his hands?—Is any thing spoken of which the Almighty has not bestowed? and shall I think it a diminution of my character to acknowledge the various gifts of his bounty?—Has God most high thought it worthy of his infinite Majesty to endue the creatures with such pleasing qualities as render them a delicious entertainment to our appetites? and shall I reckon it a mean unbecoming employ to bear witness to this condescending indulgence of the Deity? Particularity in recounting benefits, is seldom deemed a fault. It comes under no such denomination in my system of ethics. If Mr. Wesley has a better, in which neglect and insensibility are ranked among the virtues, I must undoubtedly, upon those principles, drop my plea. Where they are commendable, my conduct must be inexcusable; and if inexcusable, I fear irreclaimable. For I shall never be ashamed to take a fish, a fowl, or a fruit in my hand, and say, "A present this, from my all-bountiful Creator! See its beauty, taste its sweetness, admire its excel-

lency, and love and adore the great Benefactor. To us he has freely granted these and other delights ; though he himself, in the days of his flesh, had gall to eat and vinegar to drink."

"But the mentioning these in such a manner, is a strong encouragement of luxury and sensuality." If to enumerate a few of these dainties*, be a strong encouragement to luxury, how much more to create them all, and clothe them with such inviting properties, and recommend them by such delicate attractives? But "the mentioning them in such a manner." What! Is this an encouragement to sensuality? To mention them as so many instances of divine beneficence, and so many motives to human gratitude? This, methinks, is the way to prevent the abuse of our animal enjoyments, and to correct their pernicious tendency. This is the way to endear their adorable Giver, and render them incentives to love. And the love of God is a better guard against luxury, a better preservative from sensuality, than all the rigid rules of the cloister or monastery.

Upon the whole, however well affected Mr. Wesley may be to our civil, he seems to be a kind of malecontent with regard to our spiritual liberties—those, I mean, which are consigned over to us in the Magna Charta of the gospel.

We have liberty, through Jesus Christ, to use not one only, but every creature of God; and to use them in a sanctified manner, so that they shall not sensualise our affections, but refine and exalt them, by knitting our hearts more inseparably to their munificent Creator. According to that clause in the heavenly deed, "All things are yours." This you would curtail and diminish.

We have liberty to look upon ourselves as justified before God, without any works of our own; made perfectly righteous in his sight, without any personal obedience whatever; entirely through our Representative and Surety, what he has suffered in our name and in our stead; according to those gracious declarations, "In the Lord have I righteousness," and, "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." This you would supersede and abolish.

We have liberty to claim and receive this unspeakable privilege, without performing any conditions, or seeking any prerequisites. Having no other qualification than that of being lost sinners, and needing no other warrant than the divine grant, made and recorded in the word of the gospel. According to that most generous invitation, "Come, buy wine and buy milk, without money and without price." According to that most gratuitous concession, "Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." This you would clog and embarrass.

We have liberty, through our Lord's atonement, to look upon ourselves as made free from all guilt; to consider our sins as absolutely blotted out, never to appear again, either to our utter condemnation or to our least confusion.

The three first articles of the charge, I think, are made clear, too clear and undeniable, in the course of the preceding letters. Should you challenge me to prove the last, I refer you to your assize sermon. There you tell us, that the sins of true believers, as well as of unbelievers, will be brought to light, and exposed before the whole world, at the day of universal judgment.

Here I must do you the justice to acknowledge, that you have not, as in

* The Scripture calls them royal dainties. Gen. xlix. 20.

your epistolary animadversions on Aspasio, required your audience to assent, merely because you affirm. You attempt to establish your opinion by the authority of Solomon, "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." But you seem to forget, that the sins of the believer are *τα μη οντα*,—Things that are not. "Christ has blotted out, as a thick cloud, our transgressions; yea, as a thin cloud, our sins," Isa. xlv. 22. Consider them as moral stains, or causes of defilement; they are washed away by the blood of Jesus: and surely the blood of God must have as powerful an effect on our souls, as the waters of Jordan had upon Naaman's body, 2 Kings v. 14. Consider them as contracting guilt, or deserving punishment; they are vacated, they are disannulled, and, like the scape-goat, dismissed into the pathless inaccessible wilderness; "when sought for, they shall not be found." Consider them in either of these respects, or under any other character, and they are not only covered or secreted, but abolished; just as the darkness of the night is abolished by the splendour of the clear, serene, delightful morning.

Bring to our sight, if you can, the millstone that is cast into the depths of the sea; restore to its former consistence the cloud that is dissolved in rain; or find one dreg of filthiness in the new-fallen snow. Then may those iniquities be brought again into notice, which have been done away by the High-priest of our profession; which have been expiated by the perfect, most effectual, and glorious oblation of himself. His people, when rising from the bed of death, will "have no more conscience of sin" in themselves: they are fully and for ever free from the accusation of others: so free, that sin shall not so much as be mentioned unto them; no, nor even remembered by the Lord their God any more. They are made holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable in his sight. And they shall be presented at the great day, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Thus may we, and thus may our readers be presented! So shall we meet each other with comfort at the awful tribunal; with joy amidst the angels of light, and with everlasting transport around the throne of the Lamb. To promote this blessed event is the sole aim of these remonstrances, and the unfeigned desire of, Reverend Sir, your, &c.

LETTER XI.

REVEREND SIR,—My last concluded with a sketch of our Christian liberty, extracted from the charter of the gospel. We have liberty to use all the creatures; and, in a sanctified manner, to consider ourselves as made perfectly righteous through the obedience of Christ; to receive this grand prerogative without performing any conditions; to look upon all our sins as totally and finally done away, through the blood of Jesus.

Perhaps you will ask, Where is your liberty from the power of sin? Does not this come within the extent of your charter? Most certainly. You injure our doctrine, if you deny it. We are undone irreparably, if we continue destitute of it. Every other immunity, without this crowning privilege, would be like the magnificent palace and the beautiful gardens of Pharaoh, while swarms of locusts filled them with their loathed intrusion.

But observe, Sir, freedom from the dominion of sin, is the result of all the

preceding blessings. By revealing these in our hearts, and Christ the author of them, the Holy Spirit acts as the Spirit of liberty. You are a philosopher ; you understand the theory of light. From the association of various rays, or the mixture of many parent colours, springs that first of elements, and best of material gifts, *light*. So from the union and united enjoyment of all those heavenly treasures, springs that most desirable liberty, the "liberty of righteousness." This is that truth which makes us free ; this is that knowledge by which we are renewed after the image of him that created us ; and these are the exceeding precious promises by which we are partakers of the divine nature. Hence we are taught to love the Lord our God, and to delight in his adorable perfections. By this means they look with a smiling aspect upon us, and are unspeakably amiable to us. Under such views, we say of sin, we say of all our evil and corrupt affections, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred : I count them mine enemies."

"Our Saviour's obedience." This phrase disgusts Mr. Wesley. Therefore he cries, "O say with the good old Puritans, our Saviour's *death* and *merits*" Aspasio speaks with St. Paul, "By the obedience of one." He speaks with St. Peter, "Faith in the righteousness of our God and Saviour." He speaks with the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, "In the Lord have I righteousness;" and, "Jehovah is our righteousness." Having these precedents, he need not be very solicitous who else is for him, or who is against him.

Though not very solicitous about this matter, he is somewhat surprised at your vehement address ; that you should exhort him so earnestly to "speak with the good old Puritans." Has not your printer committed a mistake? Did not the clause stand thus in your manuscript? "With my good friends the Arminians." They indeed disapprove this expression, because it is, when rightly understood, a dagger in the heart of their cause ; but as to the Puritans, they are, one and all, on the contrary side : their language is in perfect unison with Aspasio's ; they glory in the meritorious obedience of their great Mediator ; they extol his imputed righteousness in almost every page, and pour contempt upon all other works compared with their Lord's. What will not an author affirm, who ventures to affirm or insinuate that the Puritan writers disuse this manner of speaking? For my part, I know not any set of writers in the world so eminently remarkable for this very doctrine, and this very diction. I said, in a former letter, we would inquire into this particular ; but the inquiry is quite unnecessary. It would be like Uriel's searching for the sun, while he stands in its orb, and is surrounded with its lustre.

"We swarm with Antinomians." And we must swarm with persons whose hearts are enmity against the law of God, so long as your tenets find acceptance. Who can delight in a law, which neither has been, nor can be fulfilled by them ; which bears witness against them, and is the ministration of death unto them ; testifying, like the hand-writing on Belshazzar's wall, "thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting?" Whereas, when we see it fully satisfied on our behalf, by our Surety's obedience ; no longer denouncing a curse, but pronouncing us blessed ; not pursuing us, like the avenger of blood, but opening a city of refuge for the safety of our souls ; we shall then be reconciled to its constitution and design ; we shall then take pleasure in its precepts and prohibitions ; we shall say with the Psalmist,

‘Lord, what love have I unto thy law! All the day long is my study in it.’

“My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation.”—“Thy mercy which brings my salvation,” says Mr. Wesley, in opposition to the sense assigned by Aspasio: which sense has been vindicated already. I shall therefore not renew my arguments, but only express my wonder.

As Mr. Wesley is a minister of the gospel, I wonder that he should studiously set aside what is the peculiarity and glory of the evangelical revelation. “Mercy which brings salvation,” is what an unenlightened Jew might have preached; nay, what a more ignorant Heathen might have taught; but salvation through a divine righteousness, as the adequate and meritorious cause thereof, is the distinguishing doctrine, and the sovereign excellency, of the gospel.

As Mr. Wesley is a sinner, I wonder he should choose to weaken the foundation of his own and our hope. Why mercy *alone*? Is it not better to put our trust in mercy, erecting its throne on a propitiation, and thence holding forth the golden sceptre? By the obedience of Immanuel, the law is satisfied as to its penalty, is fulfilled as to its precept, and is in every respect unspeakably magnified. This shows us the inexhaustible fountain of mercy unsealed, and every obstruction to its free and copious flow removed.

As Mr. Wesley is zealous for the honour of God, I wonder he should not prefer that method of salvation, by which every divine attribute is most abundantly glorified. This is not done by expecting pardon and acceptance from mercy alone; but by expecting and receiving them through our Redeemer’s righteousness and blood. Then we have a display, not only of infinite love, but of inflexible justice, and incomprehensible wisdom. Here they mingle their beams, and shine forth with united and eternal splendour.

Considering these things, I am still inclined to embrace Aspasio’s interpretation of this, and such like passages of Scripture, wherein salvation is ascribed to divine mercy exercised through the obedience and death of Christ; which gives as great a heightening to the blessing, as the atmosphere gives to the rays of light, or as the light itself imparts to the scenes of creation.

“Those divine treasures which spring from the imputation of Christ’s righteousness.” “Not a word of his atoning blood.” I wish you would turn back to Aspasio’s definition of this phrase, as it is laid down at the beginning of the conference, to be the groundwork of all the dialogues and of all the letters. You will then perceive that there is not a word of this kind but Christ’s atoning blood is included in it. Without this, his righteousness had not been perfect. Without this, his righteousness could not be imputed. Some people have a treacherous memory, and really forget things: others have a perverse mind, and resolve not to regard them. Which of these is Mr. Wesley’s case, I presume not to say; let his own conscience determine.

It is true, we “love to speak of the righteousness of Christ.” Yet not because “it affords a fairer excuse for our own unrighteousness.” For indeed it affords no excuse at all: on the contrary, it renders unrighteousness quite inexcusable; because it yields new and nobler motives to all holy obedience. But we love to speak of the righteousness of Christ, because it is the most comprehensive expression, and the grandest theme in the world. The *most comprehensive expression*; as it denotes all that he has done and suffered,

both his meritorious life and his atoning blood. *The grandest theme*: consider all those blessings which have been vouchsafed to God's people, before our Saviour appeared on earth; add all the blessings which will be vouchsafed, until the consummation of all things: consider all that good which is comprised in a deliverance from the nethermost hell; together with all that bliss which is contained in the pleasures and glories of the heavenly state: all these to be enjoyed through a boundless eternity—and by multitudes of redeemed sinners, numberless as the sands upon the sea-shore. Then ask, What is the procuring cause of all? Whence do these inestimable benefits proceed? From the righteousness, the sole righteousness of Jesus Christ. Is it not then worthy to be uppermost in our thoughts, and foremost on our tongues? Might not the very stones cry out, and reproach our insensibility, if we did not love to talk of this divinely gracious righteousness?

Faith is a persuasion, that Christ has shed his blood *for me*, and fulfilled all righteousness *in my stead*. "I can by no means subscribe to this definition." You might very safely subscribe to this definition, if you would suffer St. Peter to speak his genuine sentiments. Describing the faith of the primitive Christian, he calls it *πιστιν εν δικαιοσυνη*,—Faith in the righteousness. He says nothing of the atoning blood: but does he therefore exclude it? He speaks of nothing but the justifying righteousness: and will you totally discard it? It is the central point in his faith, and shall it have no place in yours? *Righteousness*, he assures us, was the object of the believer's faith, even the righteousness "of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." But how could this be the object of their faith, if it was not fulfilled in their stead? Or how could they truly believe in this righteousness, if they did not regard it as performed for them, and imputed to them?

"There are hundreds, yea thousands, of true believers, who never once thought, one way or the other, of Christ's fulfilling all righteousness in their stead." Then their faith is like the sight of the person who saw men as trees walking. He saw them, indeed, but very dimly, indistinctly, confusedly. And it is pity but they were more thoroughly instructed unto the kingdom of God. Not one of those thousands, provided he fixes his hope wholly upon the merits of Christ, would reject this delightful truth, if it was offered with scriptural evidence to his understanding. Reject it! No, surely. He would joyfully embrace it, if offered, with that single but undeniable evidence, "Christ was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

"You personally know many, who to this hour have no idea of Christ's righteousness." Surely, then, it behoves you, as a lover of souls, and as an ambassador of Christ, to teach them the way of God more perfectly. So doing, you will be employed much more suitably to your function, and much more profitably to your brethren, than in your present attempt; by which you would weaken the hands, and defeat the designs, of those who endeavour to spread abroad the savour of this knowledge in every place; and who, notwithstanding all that you personally know, must unalterably persist in their method; which is, to regulate their definition of faith, not by the state of your supposed believers, but by the express declaration of the unerring word. And from this they have authority to maintain, that faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ is a fundamental principle to every believer who understands upon what foundation he is saved.

These your acquaintance, though they have no idea of Christ's righteousness, yet "have each of them a divine evidence and conviction,—Christ loved me, and gave himself for me." In this case, do not you take rather too much upon you? Have you then the apostolical gift of discerning spirits? If not, it will be impossible for you to know the man, exclusive of yourself, who is certainly possessed of this divine evidence. You may form a charitable judgment or a prevailing hope; which seems to be the utmost you can warrantably claim with regard to others. And while you entertain this hope, we shall allow it to indicate the benevolence of your heart, but cannot admit it as a proof of your point, "That people may be full of faith and love, yet have no idea of Christ's righteousness." We would also caution you to take heed, lest, through an immoderate fondness for increasing the number of your converts, you are led to deceive yourself and others; registering those as real believers, whom the Lord hath not registered. By this means, you may be confirmed in your unscriptural notion, that the righteous fall away and the faithful apostatize: whereas, they who fall away were righteous only in appearance, and they who apostatize were no otherwise than professionally faithful. What you see drop from the sky is not a star, but a meteor only.

Faith is the hand which receives all that is laid up in Christ. Aspasio expresses himself thus: "Christ is a storehouse of all good." Whatever is necessary to remove our guilt, whatever is expedient for renewing our nature, whatever is proper to fit us for the eternal fruition of God—all this is laid up in Christ; and all this is received by faith, for our application, use, and enjoyment. To this Mr. Wesley subjoins a word of objection, but not in due season. Aspasio is displaying the efficacy of faith; Mr. Wesley's argument is levelled against the indefectibility of faith. However, as it is your favourite objection, it shall not be treated as an intruder. "If we make shipwreck of the faith, how much soever is laid up in Christ, from that hour we receive nothing."

Have you never heard of the answer which the Spartan states returned to an insolent and barbarous embassy from Philip of Macedon? You may read it in the book you are censuring, and may receive it as a reply to this and your other surmises of this nature. It was all comprised in that single monosyllable *if*. A mere professor may make shipwreck of the doctrine of faith; a true believer does not make shipwreck of the grace of faith: no, nor ever will, unless Christ's intercession be made of none effect, "I have prayed, that such faith fail not."

Aspasio, describing the dreadful nature of the command given to Abraham, says, "Thy hands must lift the deadly weapon; thy hands must point it to the beloved breast; thy own hands must urge its way through the gushing veins and the shivering flesh, till it be plunged in the throbbing heart."—"Are not these descriptions far too strong?" This is submitted to the judgment of the reader. I would only observe, that the more strongly the horrors of the tremendous deed are represented, the more striking will the difficulty of the duty appear; consequently, the more efficacious and triumphant the power of faith. "May not these descriptions occasion unprofitable reasonings in many readers?" What unprofitable reasonings may be occasioned, I do not pretend to guess; but the just and natural reflection arising from the consideration of such a circumstance is, "What

has faith wrought? It purifies and exalts the affections; it invigorates and ennobles the soul; makes it bold to undertake, and strong to execute, every great and heroic work. I see, therefore, it is not in vain that the Scripture so frequently inculcates faith, lays so remarkable a stress upon faith, and places it in the very front of all Christian duties." "This is the victory that overcometh the world," overcometh self, overcometh all things.

"How could he (Abraham) justify it to the world? Not at all." True; not to the unbelieving world. They will argue, as Mr. Wesley on another occasion: "What! stab his son, his best beloved, his only son, to the heart? Could the God of goodness command such a piece of barbarity? Impossible! I could sooner be a Deist, yea, an Atheist, than I could believe this. It is less absurd to deny the very being of a God, than to make him an almighty tyrant." But to the believing world, who fear the Lord, and hearken to the voice of his servants, Abraham's conduct will never stand in need of a vindication. By them it will be highly extolled, and greatly admired. It will be an undeniable demonstration of the reality and sincerity of his faith, of its very superior elevation and invincible strength.

"You take the direct and certain way to obtain substantial comfort. The righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, after which you inquire, about which you are solicitous, is a never-failing source of consolation." Thus Aspasio writes to Theron. "What! without the atonement?" cries Mr. Wesley. To which he adds, in a following paragraph, "So the death of Christ is not so much as named." This puts me in mind of an objection, no very formidable one, made against that introductory exhortation to the Common Prayer, "Dearly beloved brethren." So, then, said a candid examiner, *women* have no part in your worship; they are not so much as named. But I forbear. If you are not ashamed of repeating, I am ashamed of refuting, so frequently refuting, such an empty cavil; and I believe the reader is tired with us both.

I have no great objection to your alteration of Aspasio's comment. Suppose we compromise matters, and consider the oil poured on Aaron's head, and emptying itself from Zechariah's olive-tree, as typical both of the merits and the Spirit of Christ; which, like light and heat in the sun, are indissolubly connected; or, to make use of a sacred illustration, are like the living creatures and the wheels in Ezekiel's vision: "When the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; when the living creatures were lift up from the earth, the wheels were lift up." Whithersoever the former were to go, the latter went also. For the sake of obliging Mr. Wesley, I call this a compromise. But if he can prevail on himself to read the paraphrase on the two passages without prepossession, he will find this association of senses anticipated by Aspasio.

"Has the law any demand?" says Aspasio: "It must go to Christ for satisfaction." From which you draw this injurious consequence, "Then I am not obliged to love my neighbour: Christ has satisfied the demand of the law for me." This objection has already received an answer.

I shall therefore content myself with shewing why I call your conclusion injurious; because, like the deaf adder, it stoppeth the ear against my own explication of my own phrase. A note is added, on purpose to limit its sense, and obviate your misrepresentation. This you totally disregard, and argue as if no such precaution was used. The note informs you, that the law, the commanding law, is satisfied with nothing less than perfect obe-

dience ; and the broken law insists upon condign punishment. Now, if it must not, for satisfaction to both these demands, go to Christ our divine husband, where will it obtain any such thing ? Who is able to give it among all the children of Adam ?

However, lest we offend, needlessly offend any reader, I promise, that in case the providence of God, and the favour of the public, call for a new edition, Aspasio shall alter his language. Thus the paragraph shall stand : “ Does the law demand perfect purity of nature, and perfect obedience of life ? It must go to him for satisfaction. Do we want grace, and glory, and every good gift ? We may look to him for a supply ; to him, in whom it hath pleased the Father, that all fulness should dwell.”

“ For all his people.” With this phrase Mr. Wesley is chagrined. This he will not suffer to pass without animadversion ; though he must know, if prejudice has not blinded his understanding, that it is pure Scripture. Why does he not shew the same dissatisfaction with the angel that appeared unto Joseph, and with Zechariah, the Baptist’s father ? The former of whom says, “ He shall save his people from their sins.” The latter declares, “ He shall give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins.” Why does he not put the same question unto them, and draw the same inference upon them ? “ But what becomes of *all other people.*” Sometimes Mr. Wesley is so attached to the Scriptures, that nothing will please him but scriptural expressions. Here he is so wedded to self-opinion, that even scriptural expressions will not pass current, when they seem to thwart his own notions.

“ For all his people.”—From this expression, though used by a prophet, authorised by an angel, and to be found in many places of Scripture, Mr. Wesley deduces some very offensive and dreadful consequences ; so dreadful, that he “ would sooner be a Turk, a Deist, yea an Atheist, than he could believe them.” My dear Sir, let me give you a word of friendly advice, before you turn Turk, or Deist, or Atheist : see that you first become an *honest* man. They will all disown you, if you go over to their party destitute of common honesty.

Methinks I hear you saying, with some emotion, What do you mean by this advice ? or what relation has this to the subject of our present inquiry ?—A pretty near relation. Out of zeal to demolish the doctrine of election, you scruple not to overleap the bounds of integrity and truth.—Mysterious still ! I know not what you aim at.—Then be pleased to review a passage in your book on Original Sin ; where you have thought proper to make a quotation from my Dialogues. It relates to that great doctrine of the gospel, Christ becoming the representative and federal head of sinners. Upon this occasion Aspasio says, “ As Adam was a public person, and acted in the stead of all mankind, so Christ was a public person, and acted in behalf of all his people. As Adam was the first general representative of this kind, Christ was the second and last.” Here you substitute the word *mankind* instead of *this kind* ; and thereby lead the reader to suppose, that Aspasio considers our glorious Representative as standing in this capacity to the whole human race ; than which nothing can be more injurious to the sense of his words.

I at first thought it might possibly be the effect of inadvertency ; but could a person of Mr. Wesley’s discernment allow himself to nod over a passage,

which he knew to be of a critical and controverted import? Perhaps it might be the printer's fault, an error of the press. I would willingly have admitted one of these extenuating circumstances, till I came to the bottom of the page; where, to my great astonishment, I found the following words, enclosed within the marks of the same quotation, and ascribed to Aspasio: "All these expressions demonstrate, that Adam (as well as Christ) was a representative of all mankind." Then I could no longer forbear crying out, "There is treachery, O Ahaziah!" A false quotation, not made only, but repeated, cannot be owing to negligence, but must proceed from design; and this, I should think, can never be defended, no, nor with a good grace excused, by Mr. Wesley's most devoted admirers. A studious alteration of our words, and an evident perversion of their meaning, are defensible by no arguments, are excusable on no occasion.

"Quite inexcusable this practice." And is not your language equally offensive? Is not your conclusion very precipitate, when you suppose Aspasio, though using the words of Scripture, yet representing God as "an almighty tyrant?" Surely you had better forbear such horrid and shocking expressions; especially as you cannot deny, that many passages in Scripture seem at least to countenance this obnoxious tenet; as you very well know, that many persons eminent for their learning, and exemplary in their lives, have written in defence of it, and bled for the confirmation of it;—as we have proofs more than a few, that you are far from being infallible in your judgment, yea, far from being invariable in your opinion—witness your former notions of matrimony—witness the character you formerly gave of the Moravian Brethren, and the esteem which you once had for the mystics and their writings. Considering yourself, therefore, it would better become you to be diffident on such a subject, and say, "That which I know not, Lord, teach thou me." And I imagine it can never become you, on any subject whatever, to break out into such language as ought not to be named among Christians; ought to have no place but in the bottomless pit. This is an admonition, which, while I suggest to you, Sir, I charge on myself.

The three following paragraphs relate to a doctrine, which you are fond to attack, and which Aspasio studiously declines. It constitutes no part of his plan. It forms not so much as the outworks. Be it demolished or established, the grand privilege, and the invaluable blessing of justification through the righteousness of Christ, remains unshaken, stands immovable. In applying this to ourselves, we proceed neither upon universal nor particular redemption, but only upon the divine grant and the divine invitation. We assure ourselves of present and eternal salvation through this perfect righteousness, not as persons elected, but as persons warranted by the word of God, bound by the command of God, and led by the Spirit of God. Therefore, while you are encountering this doctrine, I would be looking unto Jesus; be viewing the glory of my Lord; contemplating his perfection, and my own completeness in him.

If I divert, for a moment, from this delightful object, it is only to touch upon one of your remonstrances. You suppose, that according to the Calvinistic scheme, God denies what is necessary for present comfort and final acceptance, even to some who sincerely seek it. This is contrary to Scripture, and no less contrary to the doctrine of your opponents. However, to confirm yourself in this misapprehension, you ask, "Would you deny it to any, if it were in your power?" To shew the error of such a sentiment,

and the fallacy of such reasoning, I shall just mention a recent melancholy fact.

News is brought, that the Prince George man-of-war, Admiral Broderick's own ship, is burnt, and sunk, and above four hundred souls that were on board are perished. Six hours the flames prevailed, while every means was used to preserve the ship and crew; but all to no purpose. In the mean time, shrieks and groans, bitter moanings, and piercing cries, were heard from every quarter. Raving, despair, and even madness, presented themselves in a variety of forms. Some ran to and fro, distracted with terror, not knowing what they did, or what they should do. Others jumped overboard from all parts; and to avoid the pursuit of one death, leaped into the jaws of another. Those unhappy wretches who could not swim were obliged to remain upon the wreck, though flakes of fire fell on their bodies. Soon the masts went away, and killed numbers. Those who were not killed, thought themselves happy to get upon the floating timber. Nor yet were they safe; for, the fire having communicated itself to the guns, which were loaded and shotted, they swept multitudes from this their last refuge. What say you, Sir, to this dismal narrative? Does not your heart bleed? Would you have stood by, and denied your succour, if it had been in your power to help? Would not you have done your utmost to prevent the fatal catastrophe? Yet the Lord saw this extreme distress. He heard their piteous moans. He was able to save them, yet withdrew his assistance. Now, because you would gladly have succoured them if you could, and God Almighty could, but would not send them aid; will you therefore conclude, that you are above your Lord, and that your loving-kindness is greater than his? I will not offer to charge any such consequence upon you. I am persuaded you abhor the thought.

"The wedding garment here means holiness." Thus saying, you depart from Bengelius, for whom you profess so high a regard. Bengelius overlooks your exposition, and gives his vote for Aspasio's *hæc vestis est justitia Christi*. Awed by so venerable an authority, you have not ventured to exclude this sense from your comment. You have admitted it into your Expository Notes, yet will not allow Aspasio to admit it into his discourse with Theron. These are your words: "The wedding garment, that is, the righteousness of Christ, first imputed, then implanted." Which, by the way, is not perfectly accurate, nor according to the language of the gospel. The gospel distinguishes between the righteousness of Christ, and our own righteousness. That which is *imputed*, goes under the former, that which is *implanted*, under the latter denomination.

However, let us consider the circumstances of the case, and we shall find, that our common favourite Bengelius has probability and reason on his side. The guests mentioned in this parable consisted of poor outcasts, collected from the highways and hedges. Now we cannot suppose, that people in such a condition, and coming at a minute's warning, should be able to furnish themselves with a dress of their own suitable to the grand occasion. Here then personal holiness is put out of the question. But we must suppose (which is conformable to the eastern customs), that the king had ordered his servants to accommodate each guest from the royal wardrobe; that each might have this additional token of his sovereign's favour, and all might be arrayed in a manner becoming the magnificent solemnity. This exactly corresponds with the nature of imputed righteousness.

Farther, the banquet, you will readily allow, is the pardon of sin, and peace with God, the divine Spirit, and eternal life. From all which uniting their happy influence, true holiness springs. To say that holiness is the wedding garment necessary for our introduction to this banquet, savours of absurdity ; like saying, holiness is necessary to holiness. It is absolute legality ; for it makes the performance of all duties the way to the Redeemer's grace : it implies an absolute impossibility ; the sinner that can exercise holiness before he receives Christ and his Spirit, is like the dead man who arises and walks before he is restored to life.

The grand end which God proposes in all his favourable dispensations to fallen man, is to demonstrate the sovereignty of his grace. " Not so." Do you mean, Aspasio has not spoken so ? that you have misrepresented his sense ? have clipped and disfigured his coin ? If this is your meaning, you speak an undoubted truth. His words are, " To demonstrate the sovereignty, and advance the glory of his grace." Why did you suppress the last clause ? Was you afraid it would supply the deficiency which you charge on Aspasio, and express the idea of imparting happiness ? If so, your fears are just enough. Why did you not take into consideration those texts of Scripture with which Aspasio confirms his tenet ? Ought not you to have overthrown those testimonies before you deny his doctrine ? otherwise you oppose your own authority to the decision of a prophet and of an apostle.

" Not so," proceeds Mr. Wesley : " To impart happiness to his creatures is his grand end herein." The devout prophet speaks otherwise, " I have created him for my glory." The wise moralist speaks otherwise, " The Lord hath created all things for himself." The holy apostle speaks otherwise, " To the praise and glory of his grace." From which, and from innumerable other places of Scripture ; from the reason of the thing, and from the very nature of the Supreme Being, it appears, that the primary leading aim, in all God's works, and all God's dispensations, is his own glory. The felicity of his creatures, though not separated from it, though evidently included in it, is still subordinate to it. And surely it is very meet and right so to be. Can there be a nobler end, or more worthy of an infinitely wise agent, than the display of those sublime perfections, for which, and through which, and to which, are all things ? Could God make any other being the principal end of his acting, he would undeify himself, and give his glory to another. Does any creature imagine his own happiness to be a higher end than the divine glory ? He thereby usurps the Godhead, making as far as in him lies, Jehovah the subject and himself the sovereign.

" Barely to demonstrate his sovereignty." The word *barely* is not used by Aspasio. But it gives another specimen of Mr. Wesley's integrity in stating truth, and doing justice to his opponents. It is not said, the sole, but the grand end. Therefore, would any unprejudiced person conclude, there must be some other, though inferior purpose. " No," says Mr. Wesley ; " hence I infer, that it was barely to demonstrate his sovereignty." Do you so ? Then your inference is of a piece with the quotation—that as valid as this is faithful.

" Barely to demonstrate his sovereignty," is a principle of action fit for the great Turk, not for the most high God. Such a fraudulent quotation I have not often seen, no, not in the critical reviewers. To mark the sentence with commas, and thereby assign it to Aspasio, is really a masterpiece, especially after you have thrust in the word *barely*, and lopped off the word

grace. You have treated the passage worse than Nahash king of Ammon treated the ambassadors of David. They were ashamed to shew their faces, under such marks of abuse and disgrace. I am no less ashamed of the clause, as you have mangled and disguised it: but restore it to its true state; let it wear its native aspect; then see what is blamable, or what is offensive in it.

The grand end which God proposes in all his favourable dispensations to fallen man, is, to demonstrate the sovereignty, and advance the glory of his grace. The *glory*, that it may appear rich, unbounded, and infinitely surpassing all we can wish or imagine. The *sovereignty*, that it may appear free, undeserved, and absolutely independent on any goodness in the creature. That sinners may receive it, without waiting for any amiable qualities, or performing any recommending conditions. That, when received, it may stop the mouth of boasting, may cut off all pretensions of personal merit, and teach every tongue to say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise".

And should we not greatly rejoice in this method of the divine procedure? that the Lord orders all things relating to our salvation, "to the praise of the glory of his grace?" Can any thing be more honourable to our nature, or more transporting to our souls? Can any thing so firmly establish, or so highly exalt our hopes? Angels, principalities, and powers! all intellectual creatures, in all ages and all worlds, are to look unto *us*; unto us men they are to look, for the most consummate display of God's grace. Our exaltation and felicity are to be the mirror, in which the wondering cherubim and seraphim will contemplate the superabundant goodness of Jehovah. How great must that honour and that happiness be, which are intended to exhibit the fullest, fairest, brightest view of God's infinitely glorious grace! How sure must that honour and that happiness be, which are so intimately connected with the glory of the omnipotent King! which can no more fail of their accomplishment, than the amiable attributes of the Godhead can be stripped of their lustre.

God is a boundless ocean of good. "Nay, that ocean is far from boundless, if it wholly passes by nine-tenths of mankind." What! if it had passed by *all* mankind, as it certainly did all the devils, would it have been the less boundless on that account? I wish, methinks, you would study the evil of sin more, and not so frequently obtrude upon us a subject, of which neither you nor I seem to be masters. Then we should neither have hard thoughts of God nor high thoughts of ourselves.

"You cannot suppose God would enter into a fresh covenant with an insolvent and attainted creature*," These are Aspasio's words. To which Mr. Wesley replies, "I both suppose and know he did." *Satis cum imperio*. Then be pleased, Sir, to show us where the Almighty entered into a covenant with fallen Adam; for of him we are speaking. Produce the original deed; at least favour us with a transcript; and we will take your word when it is backed with such authority.

God made the new covenant with Christ, and charged him with the performance of the conditions. "I deny both these assertions." And what is your reason for this denial? Is it deduced from Scripture? Nothing like it. Is it founded on the nature of things? No attempt is made towards it. But you yourself affirm, that these "assertions are the central point wherein Calvinism and Antinomianism meet." Or, in other words, they tend to

* *Insolvent and attainted creature*, Mr. Wesley has changed into "a rebel."

establish what you dislike, and to overthrow what you have taught. This is all the cause which you assign for your denial. I cannot but wish, that, whenever I engage in controversy, my adversary may be furnished with such arguments.

You deny the assertions now ; but do you not forget what you allowed and maintained a little while ago, when you yourself, adopting a passage from Theron and Aspasio, called Christ “a federal head ?” Pray, what is a federal head, but a person with whom a covenant is made in behalf of himself and others ? Here your judgment was according to truth. Fit, perfectly fit for such an office is Christ ; whose life is all his own, who is able to merit, and mighty to save. But absolutely unfit for it, utterly incapable of it, is fallen man ; whose life is forfeited, whose moral ability is lost, and whose very nature is enmity against God.

“I have made a covenant with my chosen ; namely, with David my servant.” True ; with David as in Christ, or rather as a type of Christ. You cannot be ignorant that Christ is called by this very name. The Lord, speaking by the prophet Ezekiel, says, “I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David.” Was David beloved * ? Christ was incomparably more so. Was David God’s chosen one ? Christ was so likewise, and in a far sublimer sense, and for infinitely more momentous purposes. Was David God’s servant ? So was Jesus Christ ; and by his services brought unspeakably greater honour to the Lord his God, than all kings on earth, and all the princes of heaven. Several parts of this psalm must be applied to Christ ; and if several of them must, the principal of them may and ought.

“He will wash you in the blood which atones, and invest you with the righteousness which justifies.”—“Why should you thus put asunder continually what God has joined ?” How difficult is it to please Mr. Wesley ! When Aspasio spoke of Christ’s righteousness, without particularly mentioning his blood, you said it was better to mention them both together ; it behoved us never to name the former without the latter. Yet here, when both are mentioned, and the particular use of each is specified, you complain of his putting asunder what God has joined ; which, in truth, is no disjoining, but an illustration and amplification of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

God himself, at the last day, pronounces them righteous, because they are interested in the obedience of the Redeemer. “Rather, because they are washed in his blood, and renewed by his Spirit.” God will justify them in the last day, in the very same way whereby he justified them in this world ; namely, because they are interested in the obedience of the Redeemer. As for their renewal by the Spirit, though it will then be perfect, yet it will be no cause of their acquittal, but the privilege of those who are acquitted. A proof of this, at least an attestation of it, the world has received from your own pen : “For neither our own inward nor outward righteousness is the ground of our justification. Holiness of heart, as well as holiness of life, is not the cause, but the effect of it. The sole cause of our acceptance with God is the righteousness and death of Christ, who fulfilled God’s law, and died in our stead.” Excellent sentiments ! In these may I ever abide. To these may you also return.

* *Beloved.*—This is the meaning of David’s name.

THE PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT of the Doctrine of a Sinner's Justification by the Righteousness of Christ, taken from a little Piece, entitled, A DISCOURSE UPON JUSTIFICATION, printed at London in 1740, which Mr. Hervey highly esteemed, and warmly recommended.—Being no improper Supplement to the Doctrine contained in THERON and ASPASIO, and ASPASIO VINDICATED.

1. SINCE the justification of a sinner is by the complete obedience of Jesus Christ imputed to him, and received by faith unto such great and glorious effects; we may hence learn what reason we have to admire that infinity of wisdom which shines forth in the contrivance of this wonder; and to adore that immensity of grace which is displayed in this glorious provision made for the favourites of heaven! When the beloved John was favoured with a visionary sight of the woman-bride, the Lamb's wife, as clothed with Christ the sun of righteousness, and shining forth in the resplendent rays of her bridegroom's glory, he says he saw a wonder, Rev. xii. 1. And a wonder it is indeed; so great, that it calls for the admiration both of men and of angels. This is one of those glorious things that by the gospel is revealed unto us, "which the angels desire to look into," 1 Pet. i. 12. And while sinful men have the forgiveness of their sins through Christ's blood, and the acceptance of their persons in him, "the beloved, according to the riches of" the Father's grace, "wherein he has abounded towards them in all wisdom and prudence," it becomes them to admire and adore the same, and to cry out with the apostle, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Eph. i. 6, 7, 8; Rom. xi. 33. That the obedience of the Son of God should be made our righteousness, the righteousness of a sinner, to his complete justification before God, is such a project of infinite wisdom, such a provision of infinite grace, for the salvation of God's chosen, that every way becomes the great Jehovah, and will be the endless wonder of men and angels!

2. Since the justification of a sinner is wholly by the righteousness of another, which is a way of life above nature, above being discovered by nature's light, and seen by nature's eye, or discovered by the light of the law, and discerned by natural reason; we may learn hence what an absolute necessity there is of a supernatural revelation thereof, in order to the soul's receiving of this righteousness, and so of the grace of justification thereby. This is one of those things that God has prepared for his people, that never entered into the heart of the natural man to conceive of, which he has neither known nor can understand; and therefore deems it foolishness, or a foolish thing, for any to think they shall be justified by the obedience of Christ, exclusive of all their own works. But the people of God "receive not the spirit which is of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that they may know the things which are freely given them of God." And this, of "the free gift of righteousness, is revealed unto" them by his Spirit, though it is one of those "deep things of God" which are hidden from the natural man; which are impossible to be known by any but heaven-born souls, under a special revelation from above, 1 Cor. ii. 9. &c.

3. Since the justification of a sinner is by the obedience of Christ alone, we may hence learn how greatly important the knowledge thereof is. The

knowledge of this righteousness must needs be of the utmost importance, since ignorance of it, and non-submission to it, (which always go together,) leave the soul in an unrighteous state, Rom. ix. 31, 32, and x. 3. All those miserable souls who are "ignorant" of Christ's "righteousness, go about to establish their own righteousness;" and, alas! "the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it," Isa. xxviii. 20. There is no true rest for a sinner from the works of his own hands; no covering for a naked soul from the fig-leaves of its own righteousness, though ever so artfully sewed together. Our Lord told his disciples, that except their "righteousness did exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they should in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matth. v. 20. These Scribes and Pharisees were the zealous, the religious men of that age; the strict observers of Moses' law, that trusted in themselves that they were righteous by their own legal performances, and thought to get to heaven by means thereof. But our Lord declares, that none shall ever come there but those who have a better righteousness, a righteousness that exceeds a Pharisaical righteousness, *i. e.* such a righteousness that every way answers to all the extensive requirements of the law, in heart, lip, and life; and this is no other than the righteousness of Christ imputed to poor sinners, or made theirs by imputation; in which, being completely justified according to law and justice, they shall, as righteous persons, be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, or into the glory of the heavenly state; while all those who trust in their own righteousness, and think they have done many wonderful works which they dare plead for acceptance with God, shall be sent away from Christ into eternal misery, with a "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity," Matth. vii. 22.

And as our Lord, in this his sermon upon the Mount, had been expounding the law of God in its spirituality, as extending to the heart as well as life; and asserting the necessity of keeping the commandments in the same extensive manner that the law required, in order to make a person righteous; so, in the conclusion thereof, he says, "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock," ver. 24, 25. These sayings of our Lord contain the substance of the moral law; and the doing of them unto righteousness before God, is by believing; as faith lays hold on Christ, who has obeyed the law perfectly, as the representative of his people; on which account they may be said to have done, or fulfilled the law in him, his obedience being imputed unto them for their complete justification before God, as the surety's payment among men is accounted to the debtor, and is the same in the eye of the law, and as effectual for his full discharge, as if he himself had paid the debt. And he that thus doth the law, or these sayings of Christ, he likens him "unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock." It is a piece of natural wisdom, to lay a good foundation for a stately structure; and the most firm that any house can be built on, is that of a rock. And he that is spiritually "wise, wise unto salvation," lays the whole stress of it, and builds all his hope of life, upon Christ, the Rock of ages: in which it appears, that he is wise indeed; for as, in nature, a house that is built upon a rock will stand the storm, so the soul that is built upon Christ shall never be removed: "The rain may descend, the floods come, and the winds beat;" afflictions,

temptations, and trials of all kinds, may beat vehemently against that soul, but shall never destroy its salvation, nor make it ashamed of its hope. No; Christ, the rock of immutability, will hold it unshaken, in a state of salvation, through life, through death, at judgment, and for ever. Such a soul stands as immovable, in the grace of justification and life, as the rock itself on which it is founded. "Because I live," saith our Lord, "ye shall live also," John xiv. 19. Christ's life is the life of that soul, that depends upon him alone for all its justification and eternal salvation. And therefore the wisdom of faith is great indeed, in that it foresees the storm, and thus provides against it.

"But he," saith our Lord, "that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not," (*i. e.* that heareth the law's requirements, and endeavours to obey the same for righteousness before God, and so doth them not, because his obedience cannot come up to that perfection which the law requires,) "shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it," ver. 26, 27. O the folly of that poor sinner, who lays the stress of his salvation, and builds his hope of life, upon his own righteousness! For this sandy foundation cannot endure the storms of divine wrath which shall be revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men, nor secure the soul from being driven away by the tempest of God's anger, and the floods of his indignation, into the abyss of eternal misery. The house fell that was thus built upon the sand, "and great was the fall of it!" Oh! what a miserable disappointment will it be to that soul, that "goes down to the chambers of eternal death with this lie of his own righteousness in his right hand;" from which he had all along hoped for eternal life! when this "way that seemed right to him in his own eyes," as if it would lead him to everlasting life, by his depending thereon, shall end in eternal death! "The hope of the hypocrite," or of him that trusts in himself that he is righteous by his own external performances, when yet his heart is far from that conformity to God which the law requires, "shall perish at the giving up of the ghost. His hope," *i. e.* his salvation hoped for, "shall then be cut of. He shall lean upon his house," *i. e.* his own righteousness, which he had raised up in his imagination, to shelter him from the storm of divine vengeance, "but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure," Job viii. 13—15. No; this house of his shall be as soon destroyed by the storm of God's indignation, as a spider's web is swept down by the besom that comes against it; and the miserable soul, that trusted herein, shall be driven away into eternal perdition. Thus, an error in the foundation will prove fatal to the building; and therefore the knowledge of Christ, as the alone way of a sinner's justification and life, must needs be of the highest importance; since no other refuge can stand the storm but Christ, as the Lord our Righteousness; this glorious hiding-place, which God has prepared for poor sinners, whither they may run, and be for ever safe. And as for those who live and die in ignorance of, and non-submission to, the righteousness of Christ, they will certainly die in their sins, and perish for ever. They will all be found filthy at the day of judgment, that have not been enabled to believe in Christ's blood, for cleansing from all sin; they will all be found unjust at that awful day, that have not believed the Redeemer's righteousness, for their justification before God; and so must remain for ever: for concerning them it will then be said, "He that

is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is unjust, let him be unjust still;" *i. e.* let him abide so to an endless eternity. But,

4. Since there is but one way for a sinner to be justified before God, and that is by the obedience of Christ alone, this informs us what great folly those persons are guilty of, who press poor sinners to obey the law, to make themselves righteous in the sight of God, when there is no law given that can give life unto them; and how dangerous it is for souls to sit under such a ministry, that naturally misleads them; since, while "the blind leads the blind, both fall into the ditch." "If there had been a law given that could have given life," says the apostle, "verily righteousness should have been by the law," Gal. iii. 21. But as there is no law given that can give life to a sinner, it is a vain foolish thing to press such a soul to get a righteousness by his own performances, which was never appointed of God, nor can be attained by man. No; "the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise (of life) by faith of Jesus Christ (as a sinner's righteousness) might be given to them that believe," ver. 22. And those who receive it not in this way shall never attain it in any other, but must go without it for ever. "The labour of the foolish," says the wise man, "wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city," Eccles. x. 15. A man may labour, all his days, to make himself righteous before God by his own performances, and to make his peace with him by his legal repentance and humiliation for sin; and yet lose all his labour at last, and so weary himself in vain, being never able to reach that city, that eternal rest, which God has prepared for his people; because he knoweth not Christ, the only way that leads thither, and so walks not by faith in him as such. All men are by nature ignorant of Christ's righteousness, as it is God's way of justifying and saving a sinner; and it is dangerous for souls to sit under such a ministry, that presseth doing, and persuades them their safety lies there, instead of believing. "For how shall they believe," says the apostle, "in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" Rom. x. 14, 15. How shall poor souls believe in Christ for justification, when they have never heard of his righteousness, which is the proper object of faith? And how shall they hear without a preacher of that gospel that declares it? And how shall they preach the gospel to others, who have never seen that salvation it reveals for sinners, by the righteousness of Christ, themselves? How shall they declare the glory and efficacy thereof to others, that have never seen nor experienced it themselves? And how does it appear that they are sent by Christ to preach the gospel, who neither know nor proclaim his righteousness for the justification of a sinner, which is such a main doctrine thereof? Have we not reason to fear, that many of those who are called ministers of the gospel, are rather preachers of Moses than of Christ? and that their ministry rather tends to lead souls to the bondage and death of the law, than to the liberty and life of the gospel? But "how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, that bring glad tidings of good things!" That publish that peace with God, which was made for sinners alone by the blood of Christ's cross, and is possessed only by faith in him! That proclaim the glad tidings of those good things, which God has prepared to be enjoyed by sinners, through the justifying righteousness of his Son! And how great is the privilege of those souls who sit under a gospel ministry; since this is

the means appointed of God to work faith in them, and to bring salvation to them! Once more,

5. Since the justification of a sinner is by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and received by faith alone, we may hence learn, how great the obligation of the justified ones is, to live to the glory of that grace which has so freely and fully justified them, in and through Christ, unto eternal life, by him! When the apostle had asserted the justification and salvation of God's people, both Jews and Gentiles, to be wholly of his free mercy, in and through Christ, Rom. ix. 32, and admired the riches of his wisdom, which was so brightly displayed in the dispensations of his mercy towards them, ver. 33. he thus concludes his discourse, ver. 36. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever, amen." It is as if he should say, Since all things, relating to the justification and salvation of God's people, are of him, and through him, it is meet that the glory of all should, by them, be given to him. And therefore, when he applies this doctrine of God's free mercy in Christ, to them who had obtained it, he thus addresses them, chap. xii. 1. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." I beseech (you), says he, you that have obtained mercy, (therefore) or since it is God's design to glorify his mercy in the salvation of sinners, that you give him the glory of it; (by the mercies of God,) those mercies of God which you are partakers of, in the forgiveness of all your sins, and in the justification of your persons, ("that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,") that ye continually offer up yourselves, as a whole burnt-offering, in the flames of love, unto him that hath loved you, in all holy and acceptable obedience, to the glory of that God who has thus had mercy upon you; ("which is your reasonable service.") For it is a most reasonable thing, or a thing for which there is the highest reason, that you should ever serve the Lord, to the glory of that grace by which you are freely justified, and shall be eternally glorified. And thus the apostle Peter, 1 Pet. ii. 9. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood," who are washed from all your sins in Christ's blood, and clothed with his righteousness, "an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." And, "You know (says the apostle Paul) how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, (i. e. of you justified, saved ones), that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory," 1 Thes. ii. 11, 12. And, in short, as it was God's design to get himself glory in the justification of sinners, by the righteousness of Jesus Christ: so the display thereof, throughout the whole gospel, lays them under the highest obligation to live to his praise. Does God the Father impute the obedience of his Son to poor sinners? Did God the Son obey in life and in death for them? and does God the Spirit reveal and apply this righteousness to them; and enable them to receive the same, as a free gift of grace, unto their eternal life in glory? What thanks, what praise, is due to God, in each of his glorious persons, for this abundant grace! And let the language of the justified ones, in heart, lip, and life, in all kind of holy obedience, both now and always be, "Thanks be unto God for the grace of justification! for this his unspeakable gift!" 2 Cor. ix. 15. Amen! Hallelujah!

A DEFENCE

OF

THERON AND ASPASIO,

AGAINST

THE OBJECTIONS CONTAINED IN A LATE TREATISE, ENTITLED
LETTERS ON THERON AND ASPASIO.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A SERIES of LETTERS from Mr. HERVEY to the Author, authenticating this DEFENCE with his entire approbation, and manifesting it to be the only one that can be presented to the Public with that authority.

PREFACE.

THE intention of prefixing Mr. Hervey's letters to this reply, is in fact to recommend it to the attention of the public, as such a farther explication and defence of Theron and Aspasio as was quite agreeable to his own judgment; such as, in substance, would have appeared in the world in his elegant and entertaining manner of address, had it pleased the Sovereign Disposer of all events to have continued him in life, and such as the present situation of his writings require.

It has been already remarked, in the public intimation of printing Mr. Hervey's letters, that "when writers of a distinguished superiority have gained our admiration and applause, we are fond of penetrating into their more retired apartments, and associating with them in the sequestered walks of private life." A curiosity of this nature cannot be more usefully gratified; we cannot be ushered into Mr. Hervey's company to better purpose, than to hear him declare what he himself counted most valuable in all his writings; that which was his main design, and to which he would have his readers continually advert; those sentiments which, as he expresses it in one of his letters, "I wish to have written on my heart; such as I wish to speak and teach while I live; and in my writings, if my writings survive me, to testify when I am dead:" more especially, if what he so esteemed is the doctrine of our Lord and his apostles; otherwise Mr. Hervey's esteem will be but of small account.

It seems the more necessary that he should thus be made to speak for himself, since some who have distinguished themselves as his peculiar friends, and as very angry with Mr. Sandeman in his behalf, are at the same time very likely to be no friends to his Defence. The reason is, whatever may be the motive for their professed regard, they have, for many years past, and do unto this day, manifest great ignorance, if not great enmity, in respect of

the principles which formed and influenced Mr. Hervey's faith and practice, and on which he ventured his eternal concerns; stigmatizing, or, I should rather say, honouring them with the same kind of rebukes as the ancient opposers of Christianity cast upon our Lord and his disciples. Perhaps it may awaken the attention of some to inquire of the unerring oracles, *What is truth?* when they find by these letters, that there is no dependence to be placed elsewhere; and that those in whom they have trusted as spiritual guides, applaud or censure with a very little judgment, or with a worse design.

After all, I am not so sanguine in my expectation, as to think that by this, or any other method, the despised truth of the gospel will prevail with many, against the stream of the reputed devout and highly esteemed of this world. We must remember the treatment which our Lord and his disciples met with; and as the world is not better now than it was in those days, we have little reason to expect better success.

Mr. Hervey began to find he had been in a mistake in this respect, and would have publicly acknowledged as much, had he lived but a few months longer. He began to be acquainted with that true grace of God, which is contrary to the course of this world, in its devoutest form, for upwards of twelve years before our correspondence commenced. He was willing to recommend it to their consideration, and, if possible, make it appear lovely to their view. He dressed it up with all the beauties of eloquence, and all the winning arts of persuasion. He concealed whatever he thought might give his readers disgust, and even entreated his friend to conceal their correspondence for the present, lest the power of prejudice (raised by his professed friends) should prevent them from looking into his books; and all this in hopes to prevail, and give the despised gospel of Jesus a recommending appearance in their eyes. But, alas! he died before he had accomplished this design; and perhaps, had he lived to the age of Methuselah, he would never have brought it to pass. So that we can only look upon this as his fervent desire, that the important truth in which he had found all he wanted, should be as great a blessing to others as it had been to him. He gained a return of compliment for his favourable sentiments and kind behaviour, but it was in vain for him to expect to prevail any farther.

His notion was, as he himself expresses it, that "the taste of the present age is somewhat like the humour of children; their milk must be sugared, their wine spiced, and their necessary food garnished with flowers, and enriched with sweetmeats." His desire that what he called his principal point might be, if possible, made thus palatable, engaged him in several correspondences, suited to the embellishment of his works; his superiority as a writer caused many to covet an acquaintance and friendship with him; and his tender and complaisant behaviour, even to those who differed, gave some of them hopes of prevailing with him, or by him, to advance their own various and opposite sentiments. Filled with these hopes, their behaviour towards him was accordingly respectful; which, together with his retired situation in life, prevented him, in a great measure, from discerning their enmity to his principles. Taking it for granted they meant as they spake, he judged them aiming to promote the same important cause. Had this been fact, they would have still merited the regard he paid them; their professed zeal would have been commendable, had it been subservient to the true grace of God for which he pleaded; but bears as different an aspect when their enmity and

opposition thereto is discovered, even as Paul's most hardened wickedness was to the piety and zeal of his Pharisaic state.

No sooner was he dead, than consultations were on foot, tending to bury his principles as well as him. His private letters were publicly advertised for, in order to be printed; which, by the use made of them, seems not done with any design to establish the truths he contended for, but to pick out, if possible, something to their disadvantage; and, what is still more unworthy, to establish their own characters in such attempts, on the encomiums he had at one time or other bestowed on them, for want of seeing them properly; for want of knowing that their ruling principle was a fixed enmity to that gospel which was his sole delight. Besides this, several reports were spread, detrimental to the important truth he had so contended for: and, knowing that all and every one of them could be fully disproved by Mr. Hervey's own handwriting, I counted it my duty to print the defence, and to publish the letters to the author, to authenticate it with Mr. Hervey's approbation; though I was apprehensive, at the same time, it might carry the appearance of ostentation, to such as did not know what was in hand, and so could not be sensible that the support of the important truth which shines through all his works, depended, in some measure, on the publication of these letters.

Notwithstanding all this, the persons concerned in the publication of two volumes, under the title of "The Letters of the late Rev. Mr. James Hervey," have exerted themselves, with uncommon boldness, in disfiguring his principles: and, at the same time, introduce their own. This is evidently manifest from several notes annexed to these letters*. In these volumes they have insinuated, that the author of the Defence of Theron and Aspasio was "on the Antinomian side of the question, and that Mr. Hervey by no means approved of his sentiments." Upon this there immediately appeared in the *Gazetteer*, Aug. 22, and *London Chronicle*, Aug. 26, a letter to the editor and publisher of these volumes, signifying the shocking appearance of slander and detraction, in volumes under the name of a man so averse to such proceedings; and proving, from Mr. Hervey's own words, the most apparent falsehood in their assertions; there being no letter in the whole two volumes so expressive of sameness of sentiment, as the letters to the author of the Defence of Theron and Aspasio, and concluding with these words: "The secret stabs that are given to characters, by modern pretenders to piety, would make a court of justice blush. And I am persuaded the real friends to Mr. Hervey's memory, or writings, will not be pleased to find his name made subservient to such base purposes."—The proceedings are a little more open in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August; where we are told, that Mr. Hervey himself "is by no means free of the charge of stretching the principles of Calvin into Antinomianism." It is very evident Mr. Hervey concerned himself with no Calvinistical or Arminian disputes. In one of his letters, speaking of Mr. Wesley's conduct, he says, "I am sometimes apprehensive that he would draw me into a dispute about particular redemption. I know he can say startling and horrid things on this subject; and this, perhaps, might be the most effectual method to prejudice people against my principal point."

As to the charge of Antinomianism, unless the particular errors are pointed out, (which may as well be done without the assistance of reproachful names), it is no more than a very vague uncertain sound, made use of by some leaders

* All these notes are thrown out of this edition of our Author's Works.

in the various classes of religious people as a political bugbear, whereby they disguise and disfigure the party they intend to reproach. It is a term not confined to any dictionary interpretation, but admits of a variety of definitions, according to the various sentiments of the persons who use it, from the most professed preachers of Christ, down to the monthly reviewers, who esteem no better of any that concern themselves with the name of Jesus, farther than what becomes a decent complaisance to the profession of their country. These gentlemen can read the Bible as well as these volumes, "without the least intellectual improvement" in the doctrine of Christ; and can also give a solid reason for it, viz. that they have no taste for this kind of reading—it is very disagreeable to them. They judge, "that one virtuous design promoted, one good action done, or one bad habit subdued, is worth more than all such trifling considerations" as the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Scripture language concerning salvation only by Christ, must be Antinomianism in their esteem. They expect to be saved in doing well; and the Scripture assures them, that "if they do well, they shall be accepted." Our Saviour declares, he never came to interrupt such people in their good intentions; but to save the lost and worthless, such as ought to perish according to every rule of equity; and the real gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will ever prove "foolishness," a "stone of stumbling," and "rock of offence," to any but these sort of people.

Any one who has read the letters on Theron and Aspasio, or ever seen Mr. Herve's sentiments of that author, will easily perceive that a reply to that performance was absolutely necessary, or else, as he observes in one of his letters, "what is not confuted by argument, is confirmed by silence." It was also necessary, if possible, that this defence should be by himself, or by his approbation, and also that the public should be ascertained of this, that so it may be considered as a proper and necessary supplement to his volumes. As these particulars can be so plainly discovered by the letters prefixed, it is well that Mr. Herve was so open in his declarations.

As to our debate with Mr. Sandeman, it seems to stand as follows:—

The turning-point from despair to good hope, he observes, is the hinge of the controversy; and this point is, with Mr. Sandeman, the finished work of Christ, as it is fully sufficient to vindicate the divine justice in saving the most guilty. All the hope he has by this, is represented by the hope a man has from hearing of the plentiful importation of corn in the time of famine, while it yet remains a hazard whether he shall ever obtain any; and his expectation to obtain is by labouring and painful desire and fear till crowned with enjoyment.

Aspasio's turning-point is the finished work of Christ revealed in the gracious declarations of the gospel, not only as supporting the divine justice in saving the most guilty, but also as the sufficient object of the sinner's immediate trust and confidence, agreeably to the repeated divine assurances that such shall not be confounded or disappointed. And the works and labour of love Aspasio pleads for, are works of love to God thus manifested and trusted in.

Aspasio's former opponents have objected to this immediate trust of a sinner upon Christ alone for everlasting life, by pleading for what they have conceived to be previously necessary, under the names of faith, repentance, sanctification begun, &c.

Mr. Sandeman has undertaken to prove, that all ~~the~~ sanctification, conversion, faith, &c. springs solely from the truth of Christ's sufficiency for the most guilty, without any addition whatever, as the central point of divine revelation ; and that all other religion is not any part of Christianity, not any part of that doctrine which came from heaven, but only the vain efforts of the natural man to lower the divine character of the infinitely righteous and just God, and quiet his guilty conscience with a righteousness insufficient, or, in other words, a righteousness stained with sin : and that the names of conversion, faith, sanctification, applied to this kind of religion, are only fitted to deceive ; and supposing our appropriation or trust to be a denial of this sufficiency of Christ alone, he opposes that also. This, then, is what we are concerned to defend.

To this purpose, I have endeavoured to show, that in trusting to the sufficient righteousness of Christ alone for everlasting life, we keep clear of the charge of denying the sufficient righteousness, and of adding or mixing another righteousness with it. We may rather ask, How does it appear that any man believes it to be sufficient, when he dare not trust his soul upon it, but waits, in painful desire and fear, to discover himself possessed of the distinguishing qualities of a believer ? And as he carefully separates what he believes from all foundation of hope or confidence therein for everlasting life, he appears to us involved in the absurdity of hoping for eternal life by Christ, because he discovers himself without any foundation of hope, either in himself, or in the gospel he believes.

He may say, " He trusts to be saved by what Christ has done, if saved at all ;" but that very *if* signifies, that he does not trust upon what Christ has done, but is waiting to discover something else as a more proper ground of his confidence. And what is that something else, but the difference he discovers betwixt himself and other sinners ? So that, after all our flourishes against self-dependence and Pharisaic doctrine, if we are not upon our guard, we shall be at last settled on no other foundation.

Mr. Sandeman, in endeavouring to prove that his view of the gospel " quiets the guilty conscience of a man as soon as he knows it," acknowledges with us, that the gospel is designed for that end ; but fails in his attempt to make out that the guilty conscience of that man is quieted, who discovers no foundation in what he believes, to trust in Christ's righteousness for everlasting life. He supposes, that the uneasiness and dread of conscience arises only from the appearing impossibility of a just God being a Saviour ; from whence he infers, that the revelation of a righteousness removing this seeming impossibility, brings the rest and peace the Scripture speaks of, without revealing any ground for trust and confidence in that righteousness. But this supposition is not true ; few or none are troubled with such apprehensions ; nor does the Scripture address men as though they were. It is self-evident, that the cause of our dread is an apprehension of our want of a righteousness acceptable to the divine purity ; and what relieves must be, our having such a righteousness, either in ourselves or by God's free gift. This Mr. Sandeman himself seems to acknowledge, when he talks of " labouring in painful desire and fear," as the effect of his cramped view of the gospel. For why is this the effect, but because what he believes does not afford the proper satisfaction ?

Mr. Sandeman's jealousy is, lest we, by -leading thus for a sinner's trust and confidence on Christ, should lead man into a self-dependence on his doing

something to relieve himself from his dreadful circumstances, instead of being supported only by what Christ has already done. But how easy is it to perceive, that no man is, or can be, supported by what Christ has already done, but he that discovers it the object of his trust and confidence for everlasting life? and that so to depend on Christ, and what he has done, is the very opposite of all self-dependence, and inconsistent with our depending on our doing any thing either present or future?

It is true, a man that is at an entire uncertainty, without any dependence whatever, is as clear of self-dependence as he is of dependence on what Christ has done. So a man that neither eats nor drinks, is as much out of danger of dying with gluttony and excess, as he is of being poisoned with unwholesome food. But how long can a man live thus? and how long can a man support, without having some dependence or other for his soul? It is as natural for the mind of man to depend on something against the fears of hereafter, as it is for his body to gravitate or sink till it meets with a proper support. Hence we find, that those who depend not on the truth, depend on some falsehood or other which they suppose to be true; and when a man is beat off from one false dependence, he is sinking to despair till he finds another, or is relieved by the real truth. And that truth which relieves, must reveal a foundation of dependence for everlasting life: to attempt to rest short of this, is to attempt to build a castle in the air. The discovery that "God may, if he pleases, have mercy upon me as I at present stand," although it tends to remove the Pharisaic wish or want to know that I am distinguished from others, yet leaves me unsupported as to original and real dread of conscience arising from my personal deficiency. And as such slight the divine warrant for the sinner's trust and confidence in Christ's sufficient righteousness, they naturally sink to the hope of eternal life, not by what Christ has done, or what the gospel declares, but a hope that they are the sheep of Christ who hear his voice, which is in fact only a hope in themselves.

The generality of mankind are but little concerned about the truth of the foundation of their peace of conscience; so they have got some hope, it is enough; they do not care to be disturbed from it with such a controversy as this; especially if they can but conceit themselves holy, or feel themselves happy; not considering, that if their hope is founded on falsehood, their whole religion is a deceit. But they who are taught of God, are not led by fond conjectures; they will not be satisfied with any other reason of their hope, than the voice of that God who speaks in the conscience; and Christ, the Saviour of the guilty given to be trusted in, is the only foundation that God has laid in Zion.

I have only to add, that the manner in which the subject is treated, that is, by short remarks on the passages we are concerned with, was the way in which the subject was treated for Mr. Hervey's view; and as I could think of no shorter method of defence, it is so presented to the public.

LETTERS

FROM

MR. HERVEY TO THE AUTHOR.

DEAR SIR,

Weston-Favell, April 15. 1755.

Last night I received your kind letter* ; and this morning I have but a moment's space in which to acknowledge it. However, I cannot neglect the first opportunity. Are you the author that has given us an abridgment of Mr. Marshall? Truly, I think you have well bestowed your labour, and well executed your work. I wish you had not given yourself the trouble of sending me the book, because I have it, and highly prize it—the abridgment, I mean.

I should be very glad if you would read that Dialogue you mention with a critical attention—if you would point out the places where you think I am confused in my apprehensions, injudicious in method, or weak in argument. As you have so thoroughly studied the point, and so often taught the doctrine, you must easily see where the essay lies most open to objection, and where the point might receive additional strength. You would much oblige me if you would do this with the utmost impartiality and freedom ; and I hope you would do service to the truth as it is in Jesus. Several persons, I find, are dissatisfied with my opinion on this head. Do, Sir, review Dialogue 16, and favour me with your free remarks and friendly improvements. Whatever of this kind is done, I beg may be done speedily ; because a new edition is in the press, and the printers will soon come to that part. When I hear from you again, I will speak my sentiments with relation to your well calculated design of an evangelical library†. At present, I have leisure only to assure you, that I am, dear Sir, your affectionate friend in Jesus Christ,

JAMES HERVEY.

DEAR SIR,

April 22.

I received your present by the coach ; I thank you for it, and am much pleased with it. The doctrine ‡ which you approve in my essay, and have clearly displayed and fully proved in your own writings, is not relished by every body ; no, not by many pious people. I take the liberty to send you

* When I perceived, by his first edition of Theron and Aspasio, that he had so publicly espoused the truths for which I had incurred the displeasure of many of his professed friends and admirers, I wrote him, signifying my fellowship with him in the despised truth.

† An intended collection of the most evangelical pieces, from the beginning of the Reformation down to the present day. And as nothing was designed but the marrow of each performance, so he judged it might be comprised in six volumes, and desired that an abridgment of Theron and Aspasio, might have a place in one volume of it.

‡ This was a summary of doctrine, extracted from Theron and Aspasio, in Aspasio's own words.

a couple of letters containing objections*. I wish you would be so kind as to consider them, and in your concise way, which I much admire, to make your remarks upon them. One of the letters, in case it exactly coincided with my sentiments, I should think too diffuse and prolix. I love to have the force and spirit of a subject contracted into a small compass, and exhibited to our minds in one clear and easy view. Long discourses and protracted arguments dissipate the attention, and overwhelm the memory. I think you are very happy in expressing yourself with a brevity that is striking, yet perspicuous.

I am not shaken in my opinion by these attacks; but I should be glad to deliver it more clearly, and establish it more firmly, in another edition. If you can spare a little time from your own labours, I hope you will gratify me in this request; and I trust he whom you serve will make it a blessing to me and to others.

I would beg of you to return these letters, and if the Lord should enable you, with free observations on the most material points, as soon as possible; because our new edition goes on apace, and will soon come to Dialogue 16. I have some thoughts of enlarging it a little, and dividing it into two Dialogues. At present it is rather too long to be read at once.

I heartily wish you success in your projected work. I assure you it is my opinion, that such a work, if well executed, will be one of the most valuable services to the present age. You will not, I hope, be too hasty. Mr. W— has huddled over his performance in a most precipitate, and therefore most imperfect manner. One would think his aim was, not to select the best and noblest passages, but to reprint those which came first to hand. If I live to see another edition of Theron and Aspasio published, I will desire your acceptance of a set, and I hope it will be improved and enriched with your observations; which will be a favour acknowledged by, dear Sir, your affectionate friend in Jesus Christ,

JAMES HERVEY.

P. S. Pray do not spare my own performance, but freely animadvert upon Aspasio. I am sensible he sometimes speaks unguardedly, and sometimes seems inconsistent with himself.

DEAR SIR,

I received your last valuable letter, and sincerely thank you for the judicious observations it contained. Your other letter also, which conveyed an answer to——, came safe to hand. How is it, dear Sir, that godly † people are so averse to this doctrine ‡? ?

I have another letter from——, containing remarks upon, and objections

* These objectors were adding no revealed truth to our minds, but, on the contrary, were only attempting to overthrow the solid foundation laid for the hope, confidence, and salvation of guilty sinners; that which makes the gospel glad tidings indeed to such.

† Mr. Hervey here uses the word *godly*, in the common signification of it, as distinguishing the religious from those who profess no religion; but, in the Scripture sense of the word, it is confined to those whose religion is formed by the belief and love of that truth which came from God for the hope of the guilty.

‡ These godly people he mentions, mistook him continually, by apprehending all he said in the light of the properly qualified faith; whereas his apprehension was totally in the light of free salvation to the guilty as the ground of immediate confidence; and as they could make no hesitation about confiding in the Lord, if (as they termed it) *their evidences were clear*, so he made no hesitation about confiding in the Lord, as a guilty sinner; the divine declarations to the guilty answering to him as the foundation of his confidence, as their evidences would to them, if they could conceive them to be clear.

to Mr. Marshall. I would transmit it to you by this conveyance, but I remember you have already work upon your hands. In my next it shall wait upon you. My only aim, I trust, is to find out the truth as it is in Jesus; which, at present, I am convinced is with you. There is so much clearness and simplicity in your doctrine, it is so suitable to the goodness of God and so eminently conducive to the comfort, recovery, and happiness of a sinner, that I cannot be persuaded to relinquish it. I should be glad to maintain it in a convincing, yet the most inoffensive, manner. I propose to allot two Dialogues for this very important subject. How, in what form or order, would you advise me to proceed? pray do not scruple to express yourself with all possible freedom. Direct and correct as a friend and fellow-labourer*, &c.

DEAR SIR,

May 8.

Last night I received the favour of your two packets, and I assure you a real favour I esteem them. Your answers are so clear, so consistent, so comfortable, they very much tend to establish my mind. I find by your experience, the "account, I mean, of God's dealings with your soul," that you have incurred, but surely without any just cause, the displeasure of many. Now, as this is the case, my dear Sir, let us act prudently, be wise as serpents. Do not think, I beg of you, that I am ashamed of your friendship. God forbid! But as I have some concern, and you have a greater zeal for these precious doctrines, let us use the most probable means to spread them. You know the power of prejudice is great; is almost incredible. Many people, were they to know that you and I have been laying our counsels together, perhaps would never look into my book. We seem now to have a favourable opportunity of diffusing these sacred and delightful truths†. My books have been well spoken of in three of the London Magazines successively; and there is printing a new edition. The Lord Jesus, the Wonderful Counsellor, direct us in this truly important affair. I will now, relying on his unerring Spirit, set about preparing the 16th Dialogue for the press; and I should be very desirous to have it pass under your examination, before it is launched into the world. You will give me leave to expect an answer; and let me know from time to time where a letter may find you, sent by, dear Sir, your obliged and affectionate brother in Christ Jesus,

J. HERVEY.

DEAR SIR,

May 31.

I have been so poorly in my health, and so much engaged in company, that I could not possibly get the enclosed ready before this time; which is the cause, the only cause of my deferring my thanks for your last favour.

As to the doctrine under consideration, I have given a favourable and attentive ear to all that is said against it; and yet the more it is attacked, the more I am convinced of its truth. The Lord Jesus enable me to deliver and testify, with clearness of sentiment and meekness of temper, what I am persuaded in my own conscience is the true gospel of grace! The enclosed

* The remainder of this letter is lost.

† How evidently does Mr. Sandeman appear to be mistaken, in calling this the popular doctrine,—in judging that Mr. Hervey had gained a public esteem on the account of it!

paper contains some of the alterations which I propose to make. Another sheet will comprise the remainder. Let me desire you, dear Sir, to examine them, and remark upon them, as freely and impartially as you have done upon other papers. Pray treat me with a kind severity. Whatever sentence or expression appears wrong, I beg of you, animadvert, correct, spare it not. I assure you, I can bear to be told, by your friendly pen at least, This is not evangelical—here you contradict yourself—this is redundant, and that ambiguous. Please to make little marks of reference in the MS., and pen down your observations on a separate paper.

I think to drop my first design of dividing the essay into two Dialogues, and answering the various objections. This I intend to postpone for the present; and would print no more than is needful to explain, establish, and guard the tenet. I think to add, in a note, a friendly invitation to any serious and ingenious person on the other side of the question, to debate and sift this very important point; professing, that if it can be proved erroneous, I will retract and renounce it, not only without reluctance, but with pleasure and thankfulness. Truth, the truth of the gospel, is my pearl; wherever I find it, thither, without respect to names or persons, would I resort, and there would I abide. May that gracious promise be fulfilled to us in our searches, "The Lord shall guide thee continually!" I hope to send you very soon the residue; and am, dear Sir, your obliged and affectionate friend in Christ Jesus,

J. HERVEY.

DEAR SIR,

June 12.

Last night I was favoured with your second letter, and sincerely thank you for the freedom you have used, and the corrections you have made. Herewith I send the remainder of Dialogue 16; those parts, I mean, that are to undergo some alteration. I wish you could borrow the larger edition; to that the numeral references are made, as from that the new edition is printing. I hope you will be so kind as to examine this MS. also with a friendly severity. Spare no sentiment or expression, I beseech you, that so much as seems contrary to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you see anything that may conveniently be omitted, I wish you would enclose it in a parenthesis, for I fear the Dialogue will be too long, and overwhelm the attention.

I am sorry that I am so straitened in time, and can say no more: my servant waits, and if I delay him any longer, will be too late to dispatch some necessary business for the family. Be pleased to favour me with your observations as soon as possible, because the printers will, if they are delayed much longer, be tempted to impatience. I should be glad if you would make Weston in your way when you return from Norwich. May the Lord Jesus strengthen your judgment, make you of quick understanding, and enable you to detect every thing in my poor essay that is not agreeable to his word!—I am in doubt whether this letter should be directed to you at London or Norwich. A mistake in this particular may cause a longer delay in the affair. The all-seeing God guide me in every thing! I choose London, and hope it will come to your hand before you set out. I am, dear Sir, your obliged and truly affectionate friend in Christ Jesus,

J. HERVEY.

DEAR SIR,

July 6.

I should be very glad, and much obliged, if you could give me your company in your return from Norwich, that we may thoroughly canvass, and carefully examine the important subject of our correspondence. I have ordered the printers to keep their types, composed for this part of my work, standing; and to proceed with the remainder before this is worked off. So that I hope to have the whole in proof-sheets to lay before you in one view, provided you could favour me with your company pretty soon.

A celebrated divine from abroad writes thus, in a private letter to his friend; in which he speaks the very sentiments of my heart; and, I apprehend, of yours also.

“I apprehend Mr. Hervey’s definition of faith will expose him most to the generality of divines, both of the church of England and dissenters; though it is a very good one, when well explained. The persuasion or assurance which is in the very nature of faith, must be carefully distinguished from that which has, in a manner, appropriated the name of assurance to itself; I mean that exercise of spiritual sense following upon saving faith, whereby a believer sees, and, upon good grounds, concludes himself to be in a state of grace and salvation, and that he has an actual interest in Christ, and his whole purchase, even eternal life. The foundation of this assurance of sense, is the believer’s experience and feeling of what the Holy Ghost has already wrought in his soul, and it runs into this conclusion: ‘I find the fruits of the Spirit planted in my soul—I am a new creature—I love the Lord Jesus in sincerity; and it is one of the greatest burdens of my life, that I have no love suited to so glorious a One*. From all which, I am sure, God has given me Christ, pardoned my sins; I am in a state of grace, and must go to glory.’ But the ground and foundation of that particular persuasion and assurance, which is in the nature of saving faith, is the glorious authority and faithfulness of God in the gospel record, promise, and offer; and it rises no higher than this, that God offers, and thereby, as he is true and faithful, gives Christ with all his fulness to me, to be believed on, and trusted in, for life and eternal salvation†. So that I not only safely and warrantably may, but, am obliged, to receive, apply, and make use of Jesus Christ, as my own Saviour, by resting on him, and trusting to him as such. Jehovah’s great gift, offer, and promise, give every sinner a sufficient warrant to do this, and are a strong immovable foundation for this persuasion or assurance of faith. Nor can any other solid satisfying answer be given to a broken-hearted, humbled creature‡, who puts away from himself the gracious promises and offers of the gospel upon this ill-grounded imagination,

* This manner of expression, which this friend never learned from the Scriptures, but caught (as I suppose) through common custom, savours too much of the leaven of the Pharisees.

† This is well expressed, and evidently distinguished his meaning of the word *offer*, from the offer of a bargain to any who will come up to the terms. He evidently means the real grant of the blessings, as when money, food, and clothing, are offered to the poor, famished, or naked.

‡ If this gentleman, by *broken-hearted, humbled creature*, means some that were hereby more qualified for mercy than the rest, he would differ from us widely; but if (as I apprehend) he only means those whose criminal remorse renders them absolutely destitute of every other hope than by Christ alone, we are of one mind.

that they do not belong to him : to whom it always may, and ought to be answered, That they do belong to him, in the sense I have mentioned*.”

This extract is, I think, the precise explanation of our doctrine. If you find any expression not exactly suited to your opinion, please to observe it. I am, dear Sir, your affectionate and obliged brother in Christ,

J. HERVEY.

DEAR MR. CUDWORTH,

August 4.

Last night I received your favour, and, according to your request, have written to my excellent friend, without delaying a single post. The Lord Jesus accompany my conciliatory offices with his heavenly blessing.

I hope you had a good journey, and are well in health, and joyful through faith. We shall all be glad to hear that — bore his journey comfortably, and is returned home and more established in the love of his blessed Lord.

I hope you do not forget me and my family, my people, and my work at the press. May the good Lord prosper you, and your labours of love!

I am much straitened for time, and can add no more at present, but that I am yours most cordially,

J. HERVEY.

DEAR MR. CUDWORTH,

September 9.

Mr. W——d has been with me, and went away last week. We had much talk concerning you. I told him what I thought of your conversation and doctrine. What I could urge seemed to make no impression. I assure you my esteem for you is not diminished. I am more and more persuaded, that your method of stating that grand and precious doctrine, the doctrine of faith in Christ, is the truth of the gospel. Your company, whenever you come this way, will be truly acceptable to all my family.

I wish you would inform me of the mistakes which you apprehend to be in Dr. Crisp's sermons. I have the new edition, intend to read them very attentively, and should be glad of your cautionary hints.

Pray let me hear from you soon; and believe me to be, dear Sir, your cordial and faithful friend,

J. HERVEY.

DEAR MR. CUDWORTH,

October 9.

I received your welcome letter from London. I should have answered it much sooner, but I had quite forgot where to direct. The direction was given in the first letter you ever wrote to me, which, consisting only of kind and friendly expressions, I suffered to perish, as I do all letters of that kind. Your other epistolary favours I carefully preserve. I have waited and waited, one day after another, in hopes of seeing you at Weston in your return to Norwich; and have been uneasy in myself, lest you should think

* One of the most evangelical appearing objections against this grant of Christ to be believed on, is, "That, according to this doctrine, the free gift does not secure their reigning in life on whom it is bestowed; because they may rise to damnation for all that abundance of the gift." To which it may be answered, That gift, though to sinners indefinitely, that they may live by it, yet is a non-entity to every one till he hears it, and no conveyance of righteousness to any man that does not believe it according to that which is spoken. And, on the other hand, where a man does really believe it, he undoubtedly lives by it; and there "grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life," over all who are thus begotten again.

I neglect your correspondence. Indeed I do not. Neither do I forget my promise. I have a set of the new edition reserved on purpose for you ; to be delivered into your own hand, if you call upon me. Or I will order a set to be left for you in London, wherever you shall appoint.

I sincerely thank you for the copy of your letter. The sentiments are such as I wish to have written on my heart ; such as I wish to speak and teach while I live ; and in my writings, if my writings survive me, to testify when I am dead. May the good Lord bear witness to such doctrine, by making it healing to the conscience, and fruitful in the conversation !

Your treatise of Marks and Evidences I will attentively read. If any thing occurs, which seems to need explication or alteration, I will most freely communicate it.

Pray let me hear from you soon. Inform me how you go with Mr. ——. Depend upon it, I will do you all the service that lies in my power. Not merely because you are a friend whom I esteem, but also because I am persuaded you work the work of the Lord Jesus ; to whose tender love I commend yourself and your labours ; and am, dear Sir, your truly affectionate friend,

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

November 8.

Your welcome letter is now in my hand. I thank you for the remarks it contains. The Lord make us of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord !

I have read the treatise concerning Marks and Evidences. I am going, as soon as I have dispatched this letter, to read it again. If to do the heart good be a sign of its value, I can very confidently bear this testimony to its worth. It refreshes my spirit and comforts my soul. I hope, when republished, it will be attended with this blessed effect to multitudes of readers. I believe it would be advisable to send it abroad without a name, and commit it wholly to the disposal of Him who is head over all things to the church.

Did you ever see a little treatise written by one Mr. Beart, formerly pastor of a church in the place where you now reside ? It is styled, "A Vindication of the Eternal Law and Everlasting Gospel." It is but very lately that it came into my hands. It appears to me a truly valuable piece. I forgot to desire that you would present my most cordial salutations to Mr. ——. It is not for want of esteem that I do not write to him, but from want of health and multiplicity of engagements. I should be very glad if he would communicate, with all freedom, any remarks that he himself has made, or has heard from others, relating to Theron and Aspasio.

Mr. —— called upon me, about ten days ago, in his return to London. He staid only to make a hasty breakfast, so that I had very little conversation with him. I hope the God of power, and the God of peace, will unite our hearts in the love of the Spirit, and unite our hands in the work of the Lord.

There is no stage goes from Northampton to Suffolk. I believe I may convey a parcel by the Cambridge carrier. I will inquire of him when he comes this way ; and, if it is a practicable thing, you shall have the books by his next return.

We shall all be glad to entertain you at Weston ; and my best prayers will always accompany your labours in the Lord. I send a frank, lest your stock should be exhausted. Write to me soon, and pray for me ever, who am, dear Sir, your affectionate brother in Christ,

J. HERVEY

MY DEAR FRIEND,

November 25.

I sent, last week, by the Cambridge carrier, a set of my books. He promised me to deliver them to the Bury carrier; and I hope by this time they have reached your hands. Whenever you peep upon them, pray be so kind as to note down any expressions or sentiments that are not thoroughly evangelical. I shall be pleased with them, and thankful for them, even though I should not have, through the want of a new edition, an opportunity of inserting them in my volumes.

I have been thinking of your proposal to republish your treatise on Marks and Evidences. Suppose you transmit it, detached from any other piece, under a frank to me: suppose I send it to an understanding and sagacious friend; and learn his sentiments, and get his critical observations on it: by this means you will see what is likely to give offence, or meet with objection; and may perhaps be enabled so to form your arguments, so to draw up your forces, as to prevent or baffle any attack. If you approve of this scheme, send me a copy of the piece, tearing off the title-page, and I will immediately convey it to a friend, who lives at a great distance from London, who knows nothing of the author, and will give me his opinion without favour or disaffection.

Lest you should not be furnished with a frank, I send the enclosed. My sister is gone from home; my mother is in health, and will always be glad of such conversation as yours; which will be equally agreeable to, dear Sir, your affectionate friend and brother in Christ Jesus,

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

January 26, 1756.

I received, with pleasure and gratitude, your letter and its contents. Would have made my acknowledgments immediately, but waited a post or two, in hopes of transmitting to you some remarks on your treatise. But my friend has not sent them. As soon as they come, they shall be forwarded to you.

I am very much pleased with your explanation of *In the Lord have I righteousness*. "I a sinner, not I a new or sanctified creature." This is encouraging, this is delightful, it is like a door opened in the ark for me, even for me to enter. Blessed be God for such truths! Such truths make the gospel glad tidings indeed to my soul. They are the very thing which I want, and the only thing which can give me comfort, or do me good.

When people inquire, whether sanctification is an evidence of justification, I suppose by sanctification they mean what St. Paul calls the fruits of the Spirit—love of God, charity to man, meekness, temperance, &c. Now, may we not allow these to be proper evidences of faith, but maintain that the appropriating faith, or the faith of persuasion*, is the appointed means of producing them? "The life which I live in the flesh," the life of holiness, usefulness, and comfort, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." What this faith is, he explains in the next sentence; by viewing the Son of God, "as

* By *appropriating faith*, he means the confidence arising from the belief of the truth, of righteousness and salvation freely presented to the guilty in Christ Jesus, as their immediate ground of confidence; which he also styles the *faith of persuasion*, to distinguish it from that which is described, not by what we are persuaded of, but as a hidden, holy principle, discoverable only by the good qualifications which distinguish us from others.

loving me, and giving himself for me." Pray favour me with your opinion of 1 John iii. 19. This seems one of the texts least reconcilable with our doctrine.

I have a long letter from a new hand, wrote very fair, and drawn up in an elaborate manner, in opposition to my account of faith, and to several parts of Dialogue 16. It consists of five sheets wrote on every side; too large, I apprehend, to come under a frank, otherwise I would transmit it to you for your perusal. I hope to see you ere long; then we may examine it together.

I am glad to hear that you are acquainted with Mr. —, and that he is so well acquainted with the truth as it is in Jesus. The Lord enable him, and raise up many more ministers, to spread abroad the joyful sound. When you give me your company, do not forget to bring with you the evangelical piece on the work of the Spirit in bringing a soul to Christ.

There is one passage in Dialogue 16, which I think is very injudiciously inserted, and is really a mistake. I observed it a good while ago, and expunged it from my copy; and my new opposer has not spared to animadvert upon it. What need have we to pray for that divine Guide, "who leads into all truth!" May this divine Guide dwell in us, and walk in us, be our counsellor and comforter even unto death! Dear Mr. Cudworth, I hope, will not forget in his prayers the weakest of ministers, and the weakest of believers, but his affectionate brother in Christ,

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

April 21.

I received your valuable remarks, and sincerely thank you for them. May our divine Master enable us both to discern and to display the truth as it is in Jesus.

I am much pleased, and thoroughly satisfied, with your explanation of Acts ii. 39. The proposals seem to me clear, pertinent, and weighty. If I am able to make any slight correction in the style, it shall be transmitted in my next. I would now only ask, how far you have proceeded in the work? I think you should by all means get the greater part, the whole, I would rather say, completed, before you begin to publish. If this is not done, many unforeseen accidents may arise, which will probably straiten you in point of time, and oblige you to be precipitate in your preparations for the press. And I am inclined to query, whether it is not a piece of justice we owe to the public, not to engage them in purchasing a piece, till it is put beyond the power of common casualties to render it imperfect. Pray, therefore, let me know what progress you have made. I could wish to have it judiciously executed, and not performed in that confused, inaccurate, slovenly manner, which must be a continual discredit to Mr. W——'s Christian Library.

I rejoice to find that the gospel of our salvation is spreading. May it have a free course, and an extensive circuit! till the fountain becomes a river, and the river widens into a sea!

The enclosed came a little while ago. My friend is very severe. It will give you an opportunity of exercising forbearance and gentleness. He knows nothing at all of the author. When your other affairs will allow leisure, please to return the letter, with your observations; which will oblige, and I trust edify, dear Sir, your affectionate friend,

J. HERVEY.

DEAR MR. CUDWORTH,

May 27.

I have only time to beg of you, if you have the letter of remarks on Mr. Marshall's book, to return it to me as soon as you can. If there any observations that are just, and such as animadvert upon passages truly exceptionable, be so kind as to give me your opinion on them. The reason of my desiring this, is a prospect of a new edition of Marshall. A bookseller is inclined to print one, and sell it at half-a-crown price; I believe encouraged thereto by my recommendation of it. The recommendation has been printed in our Northampton newspaper, and immediately there was a demand for twenty-three of your abridgments. But the printer could not procure enough to supply the demand. Mr. K—— desires you will send a fresh supply to him. In the greatest haste, but with great sincerity and affection, yours,

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 17.

This comes to inform you, that Mr.—— has begun an edition of Marshall, in much the same size, and exactly the same letter, as Theron and Aspasio. If you have anything to observe, pray let me have it with as much speed as you can make. If you have Mr. ——'s objections, examine them attentively; and I hope you will be enabled to obviate what is material. I should be glad if you could, after you have digested your notes, give me your company, that we might talk them over. Now is the time, in all probability, to make Marshall a well-known spreading book. I hope the Lord will enlighten your understanding, fructify your invention, strengthen your judgment, and enable you to write "sound words, such as cannot be condemned." I am, very affectionately, yours,

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Yesterday I received your letter, and am much obliged to you for it. Pray do not mention Mr. ——'s name, nor show his letter. I hope to adhere to the truths of the gospel; but yet I would endeavour to live in harmony of affection, and friendly intercourse at least, with those who differ. I cannot think that Mr. —— could have any knowledge of the author of the discourse against Marks and Evidences. I will read your treatise over again with my best attention; for, I assure you, it always does me good. I will also compare it with your remarks on Mr. ——, which in my opinion are solid and satisfactory: I am sure they are encouraging and comfortable.

When Marshall was advertised in our newspaper, the gentleman that inserted my recommendation added this note, to explain one sentence: "By *uncommon road*, it is presumed the recommender means the very evangelical nature, and remarkably instructive method, of the directions laid down by Mr. Marshall (than whom no man, perhaps, was ever better acquainted with the human heart) for the effectual practice of holiness, as likewise somewhat 'obscurity which is confessedly in his 3rd and 4th direction."

I apprehend, the obscurity of chapter 3rd and 4th arises not from any proper manner of treating the subjects, but from the mysterious * nature of

* *Mysterious*, because contrary to our natural notions, the "natural man not receiving the things of the Spirit of God."

the subjects themselves. I will write to the bookseller to suspend his procedure of the press till he hears farther. But let this hasten you, my dear friend, in communicating what you have to observe. I should be glad to have our common favourite as clear and unexceptionable as possible, &c.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

October 6.

The cause of my writing is this: Mr. — is upon the point of publishing a new edition of Marshall. I have given him the enclosed letter, to introduce it into the world; but was desirous to have you peruse it, and correct it, before it goes to the press. Be so kind, therefore, as to examine it strictly; and wherever you think it should be altered, use with it the freedom of a friend. The more rigour, the more kindness.

I send a frank to be the vehicle of your observations, together with the printed half-sheet.

As soon as I have finished what you mention, it shall be transmitted; though I would fain see one of the books completely abridged, before any proposals or advertisements appear. It is a matter of great importance; pray let it be executed with care and correctness. May the Keeper of Israel protect you in your journeys, and the Light of the world guide you in your work! Affectionately yours,

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

December 24.

Mr. — told Mr. W——d that I offered to write a preface to your remarks on his sermons. I told Mr. W——d the whole of the affair: that you informed me of your design, and what I answered: that I desired it might be conducted in a tender and respectful manner: that the title should be more friendly and benign: that you read what you proposed to say concerning my mentioning of Marshall; which I observed was inexpressive: if you said anything, I thought it should be more weighty and significant. This was all the concern I had in the affair.

That I had promised, not offered (for I do not remember I ever did such a thing in my life) to write a recommendatory introduction to the work which you have in hand: that it was at your request, but with the real approbation of my judgment; for I apprehended that your design, when well executed, would be a valuable present to the world.

This comes by a gentleman who knows you. Let me hear what Mr. — says about the affair. And remember to give me a direction where to write to you. You date from Margaret-street; but this I suppose is not particular enough. I can add no more, lest the bearer should be gone. Only I wish you much success in preaching Christ. Yours affectionately,

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I received your parcel containing several copies of the Friendly Attempt, &c.† My thanks should have been returned sooner; but I have been under that indisposition and languor of spirit, which renders me unfit for everything.

* The remainder of this letter is lost.

† A Friendly Attempt to remove some Fundamental Mistakes in the Rev. Mr. W——d's Sermons.

I think there is rather too much asperity in the close; and I wish that expression, "refined idolatry," had been a little softened. This I mention only to yourself, and to give you a specimen of that openness and freedom which I would have take place in all our personal and epistolary intercourse.

I have read your manuscript again and again, with my best attention, and with much delight*. I have made here and there a small alteration with regard to the language, only to render the sense somewhat more perspicuous, not to vary the peculiar cast of your diction. I heartily concur in receiving and embracing these doctrines. I think them to be truths of very great importance, and shall be truly glad to see them in print, that they may be spread, and be universally known.

If I should be enabled to finish a fourth volume of Dialogues, I propose to have one conference on the assurance of faith †; to state it more clearly, and to establish it more strongly. In this, I shall be glad to borrow several of your thoughts, and will make my acknowledgments accordingly; declaring, at the same time, my opinion of the piece which lends me such valuable assistance.

Present my most affectionate salutations to —. I received his obliging letter: I most sincerely wish him success in displaying the unsearchable riches of grace, and the infinitely glorious righteousness of Christ. I hope he will not be displeas'd with my silence. It proceeds from no disrespect, but from a multiplicity of engagements, and a poor pittance of strength, utterly insufficient to fulfil them. Please to thank — for his very encouraging and comfortable letter. I wish, when he is at leisure, he would favour me with another on this subject—how holiness springs from faith, or a view of sanctification as the effects of justification.

When shall I see you? If — writes to me on the subject you mention, he shall have a speedy answer. You need not send me the twelve queries, because they have been transmitted me from Scotland. But cease not to send up your prayers and supplications in behalf of your truly affectionate friend,
J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have, with attention and delight, read over your pamphlet. A slight alteration or two, relating to the language, I have made. But I desire you will follow the determination of your own judgment. As soon as they are printed, send me a quarter of an hundred; not as a present, but as a purchase.

The Lord has lately visited me with a dangerous fever; which confined me to my room many days, and excluded me from the pulpit several Sundays. I am still extremely weak in body. Pray that I may be strong in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ—in his most precious and everlasting righteousness. I remain affectionately yours,
J. HERVEY.

P. S.—Send me a dozen of your Aphorisms, when they are published.

* *Aphorisms on the Assurance of Faith.* The substance of them originally was what Mr. Hervey takes notice of in his letter, dated Oct. 9, 1755. Afterwards Mr. Hervey desired me to draw up the substance of the whole that had been canvassed, in as concise a manner as possible, for his own use. This, some time after, I proposed for printing, and is the manuscript here mentioned.

† Or, in other words, the confidence that is founded on the truth we believe concerning Christ given to be believed on, or confided in.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept. 8, 1757.

One principal cause of my long silence, I do assure you, was my ignorance of the place of your residence in London. I knew not, till Mr. — yesterday gave me a direction, where to write to you.

I thank you for your last packet. But you must give me leave to insist upon paying for the contents, when I have the pleasure of your company, which I want much. Cannot you take Weston in your way, and contrive to spend a couple of days with me? I cannot be satisfied with a shorter stay. I have much to say to you; but as I hope to see you, and converse face to face, I shall not attempt to communicate my thoughts by ink and pen.

I have just published three sermons. If you will call upon Mr. R——'s, in St. Paul's Church-yard, or send a messenger with the note subjoined to this letter, he will deliver two of my pieces. Let me beg of you to peruse them, with your pen in your hand; and to transmit whatever observations may occur. I have some remarks upon your Aphorisms, which you shall see when you give me your company. Have you seen a couple of volumes, lately published, and entitled, *Letters on Theron and Aspasio*? You come in for a share of chastisement. What is your opinion, in general, of this performance? As to particular passages, we will postpone the examination of them till God's providence grants us a personal interview*. Do you know who is, or who is supposed to be, the author of this piece?

May the work of the Lord Jesus prosper in your heart, your tongue, your pen, and in those of your truly affectionate friend,
J. HERVEY.

DEAR MR. CUDWORTH,

Feb. 22, 1758.

I received your letter, and return you my very sincere thanks for your remarks †. I only wish that there had been more of them.

I hope it will not be long before you give me your company at Weston. Then we will examine the three Dialogues, as they appear in their new form; and will consider and determine concerning their publication ‡; or rather will beseech the only wise God our Saviour, to overrule and guide our determination. Contrive to stay some time with me.

Try if you can get me Taylor's book; or any of those which you showed me. *Neonomianism Unmasked*, if you can light on, purchase for me. I wish you growing consolation in Christ, deliverance from all your troubles, and abundant success in spreading abroad the savour of our Redeemer's name. In whom I am, dear Sir, your true and affectionate friend and brother,
J. HERVEY.

DEAR MR. CUDWORTH.

March 1.

Yesterday your favour came to hand. I hope to see you at Weston ere long, and then I will deliver the letters § into your own hand. I have sent you a couple of franks. If you want more, when I see you I will endeavour

* The result of this consideration, and of my after correspondence with Mr. Sandeman, at Mr. Hervey's request, see in the *Defence of Theron and Aspasio*.

† Remarks on *Theron and Aspasio*, considered with regard to the objections raised by the Author of the Letters.

‡ The publication of the 15th, 16th, and 17th Dialogues, corrected with regard to the objections of Mr. Sandeman.

§ Letters of correspondence between me and Mr. Sandeman.

to supply you. I am glad you are debating the important point with Mr. Sandeman. He seems to be an acute person; and if there is a flaw in our cause, he will be likely to discover it. But as far as I can judge, he has found no such thing hitherto.

May the God of truth and grace be with you; and enable you to understand and defend the first; to experience and abundantly enjoy the last.

Please to present my very affectionate respects to your worthy kinsman Mr. —, and recommend to his prayer, and remember in your own, dear Sir, your brother in Christ,

J. HERVEY.

DEAR MR. CUDWORTH,

July 15.

This comes to desire you will inform me how I may direct a large letter to you; which I will send, as soon as your answer is received. It is a manuscript*, which wants your examination, and it is of some importance. Therefore I am somewhat solicitous that it may not miscarry. Yours affectionately,

J. HERVEY.

P.S.—You may direct your letter to stop at Northampton. Do not use any of your franks. You will have greater occasion for them. Or, if your stock is spent, let me know.

DEAR MR. CUDWORTH,

July 27.

This day I have received your letter, with the two manuscript sheets enclosed. Accept my thanks for your remarks, and let me beg of you to examine the two sheets which are now sent. I will take your advice with regard to Mr. B—; and follow your hint concerning your own work. I apprehend there will be about ten such sheets; and that the piece will make a two-shilling pamphlet. I must entreat you to get time for the revisal of all; which shall be sent you as you shall be able to dispatch the work. I am, dear Sir, most cordially yours,

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

August 2.

Last week I sent you two sheets of the manuscript, now I send you two more for your revisal. If you see a fair opportunity of contracting, please to make use of it; for I fear the piece will be too long. Enclose what you think may be omitted in a parenthesis, by a pencil. Pray examine rigorously, by which you will very much oblige your truly affectionate,

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

August 9.

Here I enclose two sheets more. They are very long; but I hope you will get time to revise them. Your last packet I received, and am much obliged for your remarks. I apprehend the piece will make a two-shilling pamphlet. If you could suggest or introduce any thing to make it edifying and useful, I should be glad. Would it not be proper to print Mr. Wesley's letter, and prefix it to my answer? Have you left your own two books for

* This was an answer to Mr. John Wesley's objections against Theron and Aspasio, and is so valuable a defence of imputed righteousness, that its publication is much to be desired. It has been since published by Mr. Hervey's brother, and may be seen in the preceding part of this volume.

me at my brother's? If you have not, please to leave them at Mr. J. R—'s in St. Paul's Church-yard. I am, dear Sir, cordially yours in Christ Jesus,
J. HERVEY.

P.S.—I suppose about three sheets more will finish the work.

MR. DEAR FRIEND,

August 16.

Here are two more sheets. The last I received with your valuable remarks. Pray bestow the same attention on these. Two more, or less, will finish the essay; then I will discontinue writing, and employ myself in reading, especially in reading Luther's comment.* Cannot you procure for me Taylor's book? I am, dear Sir, affectionately yours,
J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

September 23.

I received in due time your last letter. Should have sent the conclusion of my manuscript, but it has been lent out, and is not yet returned.

I shall be glad to see your correspondence with Mr. Sandeman. The enclosed is a copy of a letter, which I sent, some years ago, to two malefactors under sentence of death. It is got into a good many hands. Some would have me print it. I wish you would be so kind as to revise it, and give me your opinion. People say there is not enough said concerning the spiritual change, or the new heart.

My next shall bring you a little piece of mine, which, without my knowledge, has passed the press. I have lately been in great want of franks, but now I have got a recruit.

I have been very ill this week, but had strength enough to read in your book. I was much edified by Mr. Simpson's sermons. Pray, are his whole works to be procured? and are they of the same spirit with the sermons which you have given us? If so, I should desire to see, to possess them all. I am, very affectionately, yours,
J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

December 2.

Excuse me for keeping your MS.† so long; I have been extremely ill. This morning I have been up for four hours, and in all that time not able to look into a book or hold up my head.

I fully assent to your opinion. Think you have proved the warrant for a sinner's application of Christ very satisfactorily. If I live, I should much desire a copy of this your correspondence, when you have revised and finished it; or do you intend to print it?

Have you got some complete sets of your works? If you have, I wish you would lodge about four of them at Mr. R——n's. Let them be only in sheets. And when you have given me notice that they are deposited with him, I will order him to pay you a guinea for them. I promised a worthy clergyman a set some days ago. Yours affectionately,
J. HERVEY.

DEAR MR. CUDWORTH,

December 15.

I am so weak I am scarce able to write my name‡.

J. HERVEY.

* As abridged and designed for the Evangelical Library.

† The remaining part of my correspondence with Mr. Sandeman.

‡ Hearing how dangerously ill Mr. Hervey was, I wrote to remind him of leaving something under his hand in regard to his writings, as he knew the situation of them now required it; and this was all the answer he could give me.

A DEFENCE

OF

THERON AND ASPASIO.

THE sum and substance of the doctrine pleaded for by *Aspasio* is, "That God hath so given eternal life in his Son to guilty sinners, as that they are fully warranted to receive Christ, or assure themselves of salvation by him alone, without waiting for any inward motions, feelings, or desires, as any way requisite in order to such a reception or assurance."

This doctrine has been hitherto opposed, under the notion, 1. That some inward motions, feelings, or desires were some way requisite in order thereto: that these inward motions, feelings, or desires, were the faith or reception of Christ spoken of in the Scripture, or at least the indications of it; and must be discerned in us in that light, before there can be any well-grounded assurance of salvation by him. 2. That if we are called directly to live by Christ, or appropriate him, he is ours, and we are safe, whether we appropriate him or no. 3. That it is assuring ourselves of what, for aught we know, is absolutely false. 4. That the wicked, the presumptuous, and the hypocrites may and do often thus assure themselves. 5. That there is nothing in faith, thus understood or exerted, which is a proper spring and cause of good works, by which it is in itself different from a false faith. 6. That it is contrary to all self-examination, and assurance thereby. And, 7. That such doctrine is a great discouragement to weak souls.

In answer to all this, we have asserted, 1. That the divine revelation concerning Jesus is addressed to sinners, the world, the lost; and that, without being directed to wait for any inward motions, feelings, or desires, remission of sins, and eternal life in Christ, are said to be presented or given to them; and they are immediately called to believe on him as so granted. That the inward motions, feelings, or desires, correspondent to these gospel declarations, are motions, desires, &c. to live by Christ alone, immediately, without waiting for any thing previous thereto; and that this voice of God, in these declarations of the gospel, was a sufficient authority for the whole we plead for, without waiting for any inward motions or excellences in us to add thereto. 2. That it is very absurd to infer, that Christ being given for us to feed upon, or live by, that there is therefore no need to live by him. Nor is it, 3. Assuring ourselves of what may be false; the divine declaration having secured this—that they which believe on him shall not be confounded; nor does any man thus live by Christ alone, but he who is chosen to salvation by the belief of the truth: notwithstanding, many deceive themselves, professing great confidence; but it is in some undue mixture or addition of their own to

what God hath spoken. And, 4. That it is here the presumptuous and the hypocrite do err and destroy themselves, and not in believing according to that which is spoken. 5. That good works are works of love to God, thus manifested; and therefore it is the only principle of good works on this account: "We love him because he first loved us." So that it differs from a false faith, as the belief of a truth differs from the belief of a falshood, and as an apprehension of the divine favour begets love and obedience, rather than an apprehension of wrath. 6. That a proper self-examination is therefore, whether we thus live by Christ alone, or whether we are waiting for something more? And, 7. That it is far from discouraging the chiefest sinners, to let them know that God hath given to them eternal life in his Son, although it very possibly may, and ought to, discourage every one from seeking relief in themselves, while the divine declarations point us so plainly to the salvation given in Christ Jesus to the guilty.

We have now to engage with another kind of an opponent, one that tells us, "That on account of our thus pleading for assurance of salvation, by receiving or appropriating Christ as given to us, we are also to be classed with the popular preachers, inasmuch as we also lead the guilty, as they do, to seek after some inward motions, feelings, or desires, as some way requisite in order to acceptance with God, not understanding how God can appear just to an unrighteous person, in justifying him as he at present stands, without some motion in his will, &c. That the whole doctrine of the popular preachers is devised for producing, animating, and directing this motion, that so the anxious hearer may find about himself some distinguishing reason why the Deity may regard him more than others. That the work finished by Jesus Christ in his death, proved by his resurrection, is all-sufficient to justify the guilty. That the whole benefit of this event is conveyed to men, only by the apostolic report concerning it; and that this whole benefit is no more than a possibility of salvation depending upon the divine sovereignty. That every one who understands this report to be true, or is persuaded that the event actually happened, as testified by the apostles, is justified, and finds relief to his guilty conscience, *i. e.* the relief of the above-mentioned possibility. That such are relieved, not by finding any favourable symptoms about their heart, but by finding their report to be true. That all the divine power which operates on the minds of men, either to give the first relief to their consciences, or to influence them in every part of their obedience, is persuasive power, or the forcible conviction of truth. That our primary notion of the divine character can give no comfort to the guilty, but, on the contrary, make them miserable by a sense of fear and shame. That when a man knows how God may be just, in justifying him as he at present stands, he finds relief from the aforementioned disquieting fear."

To this we reply in general, That we agree to the greatest part, to almost all these assertions, as most valuable truths, and stand corrected by some of them; particularly wherever we have too charitably supposed or admitted a belief of the report, contrary to the Scripture declaration, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee *;" and thereby have been sometimes † led to fall in with the multitude, who make light of the belief of the report,

* Mr. Hervey had begun a correction of his three last Dialogues in this view.

† *Sometimes*; for the force of truth frequently prevailed against this mistake, befor Mr. Sandeman's performance appeared.

as a common thing ; whereas, to know the real truth of the gospel, in distinction from every corrupting and contradictory falsehood, is the peculiar teaching of God ; and every one that has "so heard and learned of the Father, comes to Christ." We agree, that "our primary notion of the divine character makes the guilty miserable, by a sense of fear and shame ;" but we deny that relief from this fear is obtained, without being as certain that we have righteousness, as we are that we have guilt. The divine declaration of Christ, given to be believed on, affords a foundation for this certainty, and contains, therefore, more than such a possibility as is above-mentioned. We also deny the charge, that we lead the guilty, as the popular preachers do, to seek after some inward motions, feelings, or desires, as some way requisite in order to acceptance with God. For, notwithstanding the righteousness appropriated relates to acceptance with God, the appropriation we plead for relates only to the consciousness, knowledge, and enjoyment of that righteousness whereby the guilty are justified. And we affirm, that to receive a gift is no pre-requisite or condition, as such receiving has no existence without the thing received ; and to be so enriched, is not to be enriched by our act of receiving, or what we do, but only by what we receive. But as Mr. Sandeman's attack well deserves a more particular defence, we consider it as follows :

"Has our favourite author then, at least so far, lost sight of the imputed righteousness, as to mix another with it? Has he so embarrassed, or rather shut up, our access to the divine righteousness, as to hold forth a preliminary human one as some way expedient, or rather necessary, to our enjoying the comforts and benefits of it.*"

No, far from it ; but as the pinching point in the conscience is not, that there is no such righteousness in being as pleaseth God, but that we have no such righteousness ; so we understand the comfort and benefit of Christ's righteousness to be, that it is a sufficient righteousness in our behalf. And we who plead for the divine grant of this righteousness to sinners as such, very evidently maintain, that there is no preliminary righteousness necessary to such a conclusion.

"I speak of those teachers, who, having largely insisted on the corruption of human nature, concluded the whole world guilty before God, eloquently set forth the necessity of an atonement, zealously maintained the Scripture doctrine concerning the person and work of Christ, yet, after all, leave us as much in the dark as to our comfort, as if Jesus Christ had never appeared ; and mark out as insuperable a task for us, as if he had not finished his work."

This charge may be very properly exhibited against those teachers who leave us as much in the dark as they found us, unless we can find out something within ourselves to distinguish us from other sinners. But Aspasio's doctrine brings Christ near to guilty sinners as such, for their immediate enjoyment. Take and have, receive and possess, relates only to personal enjoyment ; is no task, no entitling condition ; the appropriation being fully warranted by the truth believed, and effected by the belief of it.

"While, with great assiduity and earnestness, they are busied in describing to us, animating us with various encouragements, and furnishing us with

* N.B. Mr. Sandeman's words are included within commas ; the other paragraphs are the reply.

manifest instructions how to perform that strange something which is to make out our connexion with Christ, and bring his righteousness home to us."

We say, Christ's righteousness is "brought home to us" in the gospel declaration, without the necessity of any intervening righteousness to warrant us to call it ours. We only receive what is freely given,—that is all the strange something we have pleaded for; and that not for our acceptance with God in virtue of our act, but only to know and enjoy that righteousness as ours, on account of which alone we are accepted.

"Setting them to work to do something, under whatever name, to make up their peace with God."

Not so with us, who receive and live by Christ's righteousness; with which God hath declared himself already well pleased.

"Every doctrine which teaches us to do or endeavour any thing toward our acceptance with God, stands opposed to the doctrine of the apostles."

But the doctrine we plead for, teaches us to live by what Christ has already done, as being given to us for that purpose. To say that I must do, or endeavour any thing, that I may be accepted, is a contradiction to that believing on Christ we plead for; which is, in fact, neither more nor less than living upon him as our whole, only, and complete salvation; and will, on that account, bear the test of the apostle's word, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly," &c. As this faith cannot be separated from the truth believed, nor the truth believed from Christ the subject of that truth, so to be justified by faith, by Christ, or by his blood, is the same thing. Nor can any doing for acceptance be charged upon this believing on Christ, while its native language is, "In the Lord have I righteousness."

Palæmon's* main argument is, "If the work finished by Jesus Christ is alone sufficient for justification, then no appropriation or reception is necessary thereto." We reply, that that alone is sufficient; therefore reception or appropriation belongs to our conscious possession and enjoyment of the justifying righteousness, to the manifestation of our justification by it, and to the influence of it in our lives and conversations.

Palæmon thinks he does not deny the sufficiency of Christ, when he connects faith and salvation together, and maintains that all who believe this sufficiency will be saved, and all who believe it not will perish.

He admits that a work of God is necessary in the justified, that is, to beget faith, to beget in them a persuasion of the sufficiency of the justifying righteousness.

He judges this cannot be a contradiction to the one thing needful alone; because it is wholly a persuasion of the sufficiency of that alone, without more. In what light then are we to consider this farther work of God, in persuading us of the sufficiency of this righteousness? Not as an addition to the sufficient righteousness, but only as relative to the knowledge of it. He is justified by believing, only as he is justified by what he believes.

Neither does he think he denies the sufficient righteousness, when he maintains faith, love, and self-denied obedience, as necessary to demonstrate his portion in this righteousness, or that he is a justified person; because, in

* The name the author of the Letters has chosen for himself, as Mr. Hervey is to be understood by Aspasio.

these acts, or in this obedience, he is not doing something to be justified, but proceeding in the way "of painful desire and fear," in order to know himself to be justified.

Hence it is apparent, that he must be obliged to allow, that although the work finished by Christ on the cross is the sole requisite to justification, yet, in this view, something more is necessary to the knowledge of his interest in this righteousness, or of his justification by it; and that to maintain this is no contradiction to the sole requisite, but a procedure upon it. What he is obliged to plead for himself, he must also allow to us; and the difference between us is not in regard of the sole requisite, but our present enjoyment of it, or the knowledge of our justification by this alone. He says, with the multitude, "in the way of painful desire and fear," till we come to the knowledge of the difference God has made between us and others; we say, by the free grant of the gospel to the absolutely guilty without difference.

"The doctrine of the apostles, instead of directing us what to do, sets before us all that the most disquieted conscience can require, in order to acceptance with God, as already done and finished by Jesus Christ."

A disquieted conscience requires a righteousness pleasing to God in its own behalf. No righteousness will quiet my conscience, unless I consider it as a righteousness for me. The righteousness which pleaseth God, is already done and finished by Jesus Christ. Palæmon considers this righteousness as respecting himself, only as far as he discovers his own faith, love, and self-denied obedience. We consider it as given to the absolutely guilty, warranting such to live by it, as so given to them for that purpose.

Palæmon's notion, that God hath appointed no way but by our works, to be assured of salvation by Christ alone, renders his doing, endeavouring, striving, &c. scarcely different in any thing from doing that we may live. There are few so weak as to think that they can alter God's mind or purpose by their performances; but, not knowing what he has purposed, they do, that they may obtain satisfaction in their minds about their salvation: and Palæmon's doing seems to be wholly of this sort, that is, in fact, for peace with God, and not from it.

"What Christ has done, is that which pleaseth God; what he hath done, is that which quiets the guilty conscience of man as soon as he knows it."

As soon as he knows it respects him a guilty sinner. If the fear of the guilty conscience consisted only in an uncertainty of there being any righteousness which pleaseth God in the behalf of the elect, or the qualified, then the guilty conscience would be quieted as soon as it is evident there is such a righteousness. But this is not the case; the fear of the guilty conscience is a dread of God, because I have no such righteousness—because I have no righteousness upon which I can be assured he is pleased with me. And this guilty conscience cannot be quieted, unless I discover the righteousness which pleaseth God in my own behalf.

As we conceive the report of the gospel, of sufficient righteousness freely given in Jesus, suits the guilty conscience thus understood; so we agree, that whenever we hear of this provision of divine grace, we have no occasion for any other question but this, "Is it true or not? If we find it true, we are happy;" and it is Palæmon, and not we, that stands in need of another righteousness to quiet the guilty conscience.

Palæmon considers "the work of Christ as a sufficient foundation whereon

to rest the whole weight of our acceptance with God," while, at the same time, he asserts that his own part or lot in this righteousness "is not so easily settled;" but that he must wait and work for it in the way of "painful desire and fear, till he is at last crowned with enjoyment," in a clear discovery of his having faith, love, and self-denied obedience. We judge ourselves not left to this uncertainty; and that, without the discovery of any such difference betwixt us and other men, we are allowed to receive, enjoy, and live upon Jesus Christ, as freely given to sinners in the gospel; even as those who are invited to an entertainment are freely allowed to partake of what is set before them. Palæmon's view of the gospel report sets him at a distance from enjoyment, or leaves him in uncertainty, till his obedience manifests a difference betwixt him and others. Our view is of the sufficient righteousness brought quite home, so that our first act is to live by it, that in the strength thereof we may be influenced by love to him that first loved us.

It is true, the Scripture "no where ascertains that Christ died for me in particular." But it allows, invites, and commands me, a guilty sinner, without more, to believe on him, live by him, &c.; phrases evidently expressive of the appropriation, trust, or confidence we plead for.

Our author says, "That Christ died, that he gave his life a ransom for many, is, indeed, a truth fully ascertained in the Scriptures, for the relief of the shipwrecked and desperate." But can it relieve any farther than it respects ourselves? And if the gospel declaration concerning this righteousness doth not respect us any farther than as we apprehend we may be of the elect, or that we have their qualifications, how does it relieve the shipwrecked and the desperate? It rather relieves the elect and the qualified. This point seems to be Mr. Sandeman's mystery; and he guards the inquiry with something like, Hence, ye profane! "The world," says he, "will always be objecting thus." A plain acknowledgment, I think, that that is the question to be answered, or the guilty conscience cannot be relieved; and a vindication of our view of the gospel report, as furnishing us with the gracious answer.

"The Scripture often affirms the final perdition of many, not merely hearers of the gospel, but who have heard and received it with joy."

This is an objection against depending on any thing I at present feel, but not against complying with the divine invitation, to live by the sufficient righteousness of the Son of God; an objection against the certainty which arises from inherent qualifications, but not against that which proceeds solely on the divine invitation and faithfulness.

"Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

Because they seek not by faith (by the truth of the gospel), but as it were by the works of the law.

"Notwithstanding their great confidence about their acquaintance with Christ, and their interest in him, and their experience of his presence with them, he will at last say unto them, *I never knew you, depart from me.*"

The confidence of those condemned is evidently not a confidence built upon the finished work of Christ given to them, or the divine faithfulness pledged to sinners in the gospel report, but a confidence on their own attainments and experience, wherein they judged themselves peculiarly entitled to the heavenly admission.

Let who will be condemned, it is allowed by Mr. Sandeman, that every believer of the sufficiency of the work of Christ to justify the ungodly, is

justified. And it is very evident, that whosoever lives by that, as ~~as~~ for him, believes that sufficiency, and is really saved by what he believes, though ten thousand professors perish.

“When they are condemned, then, as hypocrites and unbelievers, they are not condemned for want of Aspasio’s faith; and that for these two reasons: The first is, it was never true that Christ died for them; the second is, that they were not faulty in this respect; for the sacred text describes them as rather too confident about their interest in Christ.”

As to the first, it is not Aspasio’s faith that Christ died for them, whether they believe it or no; and as to the second, they may be condemned for neglecting or rejecting the gospel grant of a Saviour to the guilty (which is the truth Aspasio pleads for), and at the same time too confident upon their imagined attainments on which they found their hopes.

“The gospel proposes nothing to be believed by us but what is infallibly true, whether we believe it or not.”

But it proposes something to be immediately received and enjoyed by us, without performing any entitling condition whatever. We plead for such a persuasion as is the reception of a gift; and what we thus receive, or assure ourselves of, depends for its truth, or infallible certainty, on the veracity and faithfulness of God, who has promised such shall not be confounded. We agree, that a persuasion of a proposition, true in itself, must be grounded on the evidence of that truth. But this is not the case when we are commanded to believe on, or trust in, the Lord.

“The gospel, which foretells the final perdition of so many of its hearers, so many seriously and zealously exercised about it, can never warrant us to persuade every one who hears it that Christ died for him.”

The gospel, which foretells the final perdition of so many of its hearers, at the same time warrants every hearer to live by the righteousness it reveals; and assures them of eternal salvation who thus believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, or live by his righteousness alone, without more.

“Unless we shall say, that Christ died for every individual of mankind, and consequently that none of mankind owe their salvation, wholly to his death.”

They owe their salvation, and ascribe their salvation, wholly to his death, who live and found all their hopes on that alone. Besides, our appropriation relates only to our conscious possession or enjoyment of that which justifies, and therefore is no more liable to the above-mentioned objection, than Palænon’s working to the same end, in a way of painful desire and fear, till he is crowned with enjoyment. If a man receives £10,000 as a gift, does the act exist without the gift? And is it the act that enriches him, or the riches he receives? We, on both sides, plead for the conscious enjoyment of the divine righteousness. He, that we enjoy from our consciousness of our acts of obedience, &c.; we, by a discovery of the sufficient righteousness granted indefinitely to the guilty, in such a manner as warrants each one’s particular application. Who stands freest from the doctrine of self-dependence, I leave others to judge.

In the second letter, our author wishes Aspasio’s faith had been “equally precious with the apostolic.” As the difference between his faith and ours is, that we believe the righteousness which pleaseth God is given to us guilty sinners immediately, to live by as our own, which he does not; his faith does not in that respect appear to be more precious, or more apostolic.

It is true, "the apostles never taught men to make one step of advance towards God, on the prospect that God would condescend and come down the rest of the infinite distance to meet them."

And this may be a suitable argument against those who spend their time in offering Christ, upon certain terms or conditions to be performed by the sinner. But this is far from being the case in what we plead for. Christ, or his righteousness, does not meet our believing application, but is the object of it, the thing applied. It is Christ, and his righteousness, that is immediately received, applied, or accounted ours, as being freely given or granted in the gospel report. So that our appropriation terminates in its object, and can no more exist without Christ, than eating can without food. Is it proper to say, that, in eating, a man makes only a step of advance towards his food, on the prospect that the food shall meet him? Just as improper to apply such representations to the appropriation pleaded for.

The apostles called men to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, in such a manner of address as is inconsistent with intending thereby only such convictions as are purely passive—only such as force themselves upon the mind by the evidence of their truth. The apostolic language is, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins," Acts ii. 38. "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourself from this untoward generation," ver. 40. And again, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted," chap. iii. 19. And again, "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins," chap. x. 43. And again, "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sin. And by him all that believe are justified," chap. xiii. 38, 39. And again, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," &c. chap. xvi. 31. In all these instances, there is something exhorted to, called believing on or in, Christ; being baptized in his name for remission of sins; repenting, and being converted; something more than passive conviction, and, at the same time, something consistent with the alone sufficiency of Christ's righteousness, which can be neither more nor less than the appropriation, trust, or confidence we plead for.

That "the promises of the gospel are made only to believers," will never invalidate our plea for appropriation, while it remains true that the grant of Christ, and the salvation in him, is made to sinners; and, in receiving the grant, they evidently commence those to whom the promises are made; that is, those who believe on Christ according to the apostolic exhortation. And to sinners, thus immediately believing on Christ, the promises are made; *first*, To encourage such to draw near, and live with confidence on the sufficient righteousness; *secondly*, To give them a certainty dependent upon the divine faithfulness, and animating thereby to the most ready and willing obedience.

To say no one must account the righteousness of Christ as belonging to him, in any sense, until he discovers himself a true believer, as it excludes the application we plead for, so, in its room, it introduces all the pernicious consequences this author professes to avoid in his accusation of Aspasio, viz. "holding forth a preliminary human righteousness as some way expedient, or rather necessary, to our enjoying the comfort and benefit of Christ's." Unless Palæmon can make it manifest, that we enjoy the comfort and benefit of

Christ's righteousness, while we are, according to him, "working in the way of painful desire and fear, till we come to that enjoyment," common experience teacheth us, that righteousness can only relieve or comfort us, as far as it respects us. That he is able to save his elect, is no comfort to me, further than I conceive myself to be one of them; and in this case I am comforted, either by conjectural hope, or by a hope founded on the difference there is between me and others.

"And to obviate the difficulty, how shall I know that the promise is to me? They address their brethren in this manner: In the name of the great God we declare, that the promise is to thee, and thee, O man, woman, who-soever thou art."

The promise of salvation to whomsoever believes on Christ, is evidently to the sinner, as his encouragement to come to the sure enjoyment of the righteousness and salvation given in him, by receiving, appropriating, and trusting confidently on him, as so given.

"In his name, we call you this moment to stretch out the withered hand, and the withered heart, and take hold of Christ, saying, He is mine, and I am his."

That may be understood thus: "We speak not in our own name, as signifying our own importance; but inform you of the glad tidings, that it is God's command, and your duty, not to wait to feel some power or alteration in yourself, as a ground for your confidence, but, just as you are, in obedience to the divine command, receive or appropriate Christ, saying, 'He is mine, and I am his.'"

The withered hand, and the withered heart, are expressions used to signify a powerless, helpless, condition; which, consisting in the prevalence of our naturally evil dispositions, serves to denominate us sinners, and spoils our hopes of living by our own performances; yet it is no objection against living by his obedience, who hath become the righteousness of the guilty. For it must be remembered, we are not justified by our acts, but by the righteousness we appropriate; and our appropriation only serves to give us the divinely authentic enjoyment by the word, of that justification of the ungodly, and without strength, whereby we are saved. Hence we are called, not to wait for strength to do something for the enjoyment of this justification, but stretch forth the withered hand, or, just as we are, to live by Christ's righteousness, when we feel nothing but what marks us out for eternal destruction. When Lazarus was made to hear, he came forth, according to the command he heard, or in obedience to the voice that quickened him; and when we are made to hear the divine invitation and command to live by this righteousness, we appropriate it in obedience to him that makes us hear his voice. The righteousness itself is that by which we are accepted; the appropriation respects our possession and enjoyment. In the latter, we may be weaker or stronger; in the former, is the invariable ground of our confidence.

That God has given to us eternal life in his Son, is the apostolic style, and the very record which is pointed out for our peculiar attention; and when the word *offer* has been made use of, and understood to convey nothing more than this important truth, the believer of the record has become the receiver of the gift, or the enjoyer of the blessing.

"Hence we see, that 'this is mine, or this was done for me,' is a truth, whose evidence takes its rise from the pains I take to believe it."

Its evidence depends on the veracity and faithfulness of him who spake the world into being, has provided the sufficient righteousness, and has commanded us to give him this honour of depending on his word, in our enjoyment of this salvation.

It is not in this case the language of the belief of a truth, but of the reception or appropriation of a free gift: the belief of the truth of the sufficiency of Jesus Christ, and of his being freely given, goes before, and is that knowledge of the name of the Lord which imboldens us to put our trust in him. What we thus assure ourselves of, in compliance with the divine invitation, &c. as it is a certain truth in the divine mind, so it appears a truth by the divine word, when it is evident I am begotten to this Christian faith, hope, and charity. The difference here between us is, that, with Palæmon "This is mine, this was done for me," is a truth, whose evidence takes its rise only from a discovery, that I am distinguished from other sinners by my faith, love, and self-denied obedience. With us, it is the language of a reception, appropriation, trust, or confidence, grounded upon the divine declarations to sinners for that purpose.

"This, I must say, is indeed a very strange and uncommon way of distinguishing truth."

But such a way of dependence on the divine veracity and faithfulness as becomes us, and gives glory to God. It is the reception of a gift by a persuasion of the mind. It is trusting to the faithfulness of God to make out, in this particular case, a blessing indefinitely promised; not assuring myself of a proposition being true, but of eternal salvation by a Saviour given to me.

To receive a gift, or to partake of any thing upon invitation, is nothing strange or uncommon. In this case, when the gift is given in divine declarations, and the reception of it purely mental, an answerable persuasion of the mind, or (in dependence on the divine veracity and faithfulness) an assuring ourselves of the blessing granted, what we are persuaded of, is in a way peculiar to itself, and very consistent before him who said, "Whatsoever things ye desire when you pray, believe that you receive them, and ye have them." Palæmon will allow, that Christ's death is an uncommon affair, as is also imputing righteousness without works, &c. Why, then, should the peculiarity of thus enjoying righteousness without works, be so much the subject of sneer, because accounted strange and uncommon? May it not rather be accounted such a way of dependence on the divine veracity and faithfulness, as renders him his proper glory?

"If he (namely, Christ) died for them that perish, then the happiness of them who are saved must be owing to something else besides his death."

Aspasio is no farther concerned here, than as he maintains, that Christ is given for the guilty to appropriate and live by. And in this regard, may it not be said with as much propriety, If an entertainment, provided in common, is refused by some, that then the nourishment of those who partake of it is owing to something else besides the food? This is coming pretty near to our Lord's representation, John vi. 53. A fallacy or impropriety charged upon the former, is also a reflection upon the latter.

If we understand, by the happiness of them who are saved, their redemption from the wrath to come, and title to future glory; this is owing strictly to

his perfect righteousness. If we mean their present happiness in a conscious possession, knowledge, or enjoyment of this redemption; this, we may say, is owing to his death, given to be received. Palæmon says, to a discovery of our faith, love, and self-denied obedience.

It is a very just observation, that, "in speaking of the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, we had need keep clear of all human systems, and hold close by the Scriptures."

And it is in strict conformity to this we assert, that although God has given eternal life in his Son, even unto them who by disbelieving it make God a liar, yet no man has that life but he that hath the Son. God gives being to that which he commands, authorises, and thereby enables us to receive, appropriate, or be persuaded of. And if we admit of his character as a just God and a Saviour, in justifying the ungodly, why should we object thus giving him the glory of his power and faithfulness? Thus "Sarah received strength to conceive seed, because she judged him (not only able but) faithful that had promised." And thus our Lord speaks, Mark xi. 22—24. Shall it be disputed, whether God can give an existence to things that yet are not, and make out that to be true, which we, according to his word, depend upon him for? This confidence is due to God only, and is giving him glory. On the other hand, to suppose this cannot be, and, on this account, to set aside this manner of believing or trusting in him, is to rob him of his proper glory.

This persuasion may properly be called *trusting* in the Lord, because it proceeds neither on pre-evidence nor inward qualifications, but on God's bare word of invitation, promise, &c. taking that as a sufficient authority and security. By this a proper dependence of the creature on the Creator is preserved and kept up. And unless it can, without misrepresentation, be shewn inconsistent and anti-scriptural, all other objections raised against it are but of small account; and all labour to form it into a proposition, true in itself, whether we believe it or no, is the labour of diffidence and unbelief. For it is plain, they cannot trust to God's invitations, commands, and declarations; and are seeking a reason of hope more agreeable to themselves.

"Aspasio maintains, that none have the proper scriptural faith, but those who are taught by the enlightening Spirit to draw the conclusion."

Aspasio maintains, "that when the divine Spirit opens our eyes, &c. we discover and make use of the same right or warrant as is the privilege of the vilest miscreant; a right founded, not on our awakened desires, but purely, solely, entirely, on the free grant of a Saviour."

"They maintain, that reprobates have as fair a revealed warrant to draw the conclusion, as the elect have."

That is, that no man need to wait to see his election, or, in other words, any difference between himself and other men, to warrant his confidence in Christ. The general indefinite expressions contained in the declarations of the gospel, such as, *whosoever any man, he that believeth on him, &c.* fully authorising or warranting *he, any man, whosoever* he be, to believe or trust confidently on Christ alone for everlasting life. Being taught of God this truth, he lives by Christ as the Saviour of the lost; even as being taught the sufficiency of Christ, he lives by that alone.

In the third letter, our author mistakes the real question between us. It is not, "Whether or not did Christ finish upon the cross, all that God re-

res, every requisite, without exception, to procure acceptance for and give of unto the guilty conscience of the most profane wretch that lives?"

[This is not disputed by us, but maintained more properly on our side than our author. The question between us is, Whether the guilty conscience be relieved from the sentence of condemnation, by the consideration of sufficient righteousness for the elect and the qualified? Or, whether God hath not provided for the relief of the guilty conscience, by giving his only begotten Son, that we might live through him? giving him not only to die, but giving him in the divine declarations to be believed on?

"It must be the very same thing which placates divine justice, or which fully expresses the necessary opposition of infinite goodness to evil or sin, that relieves the sinner from the sentence of condemnation, which is no other than the voice of God naturally residing in the conscience."

As it would be very absurd to suppose it placates the divine justice, without being considered by that justice in the behalf of the transgressor; it seems to be equally absurd, that it can "relieve the guilty conscience from the sentence of condemnation," without being appropriated by that conscience.

The sentence of condemnation naturally residing in the conscience, requires revelation of righteousness, that I may as really impute to myself as the sinner that condemns me, or the condemnation still remains untouched. A possibility that I may be an elect person, cannot give relief, because it may be true to one it is not true. My hope is only in proportion as I apprehend many or few to be elected; and, after all, it is not in fact Christ's righteousness that relieves me, but my conjectural or fond hope of being one of the elect.

Christ did finish upon the cross that righteousness "which placates the divine justice, or which fully expresses the necessary opposition of infinite goodness to evil or sin;" that righteousness which alone can relieve the sinner from eternal death, entitle him to eternal life, and bring peace and repose of everlasting life to the most guilty conscience. At the same time it would be absurd to say, Christ finished on the cross every requisite or commandment relative to this righteousness, as preached or declared in the world. For instance, "He hath commanded all men every-where to repent;" which we understand a repentance respective of this righteousness; and the same with the commandment, "that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Again, the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," was attended with a commandment to *hear him*, agreeable to sa. li. 1—5. If it is again inquired, of what avail are these commandments? it may be answered, as the commandment to preach the gospel to every creature, availed to be the savour of life unto life in them that are saved, and of death unto death in them that perish; so the commandment to believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ avails to encourage and warrant the sinner, as such, to trust, believe in, or appropriate and enjoy that righteousness. I am persuaded Palæmon will not say, that Christ finished upon the cross any of the commandments above mentioned; as it may be affirmed, on the other hand, that the obedience to these commands is no part of that righteousness which procures acceptance for, or gives relief unto the conscience of the most profane wretch that lives. But Palæmon's reply is, That obedience to these commands supposes the belief of the gospel report. Be it so; the command-

ment speaks to them, not as to believers, or to the distinguished among mankind, but as to sinners or children of wrath, even as others; and is the divine method of grace in giving us a conscious possession or enjoyment: which Palæmon seeks totally by works.

“What is the turning-point from despair to good hope?”

The finished work of Christ alone. How is that our hope? As it is given for that purpose to be the hope of the guilty.

“Aspasio’s faith rests, one foot on the work of Christ, and the other on human efforts, or the motions of man’s heart.”

Quite a mistake. Aspasio’s faith is, that the work of Christ is given to him: on this he rests, and on no motions of his heart whatever.

“What gives right to eternal life? The imputed righteousness. What gives right to that? The work of faith. Who have a right to act faith? Those who feel an aversion to sin,” &c.

This is also far from being Aspasio’s view of the matter; he should be represented thus: What gives right to eternal life? The imputed righteousness. What gives right to that? The declarations of the gospel, giving it freely to sinners as such. Who have a right to act faith, or appropriate this righteousness? All the ends of the earth; as many as can be included in the word *whosoever*. To any of all the ends of the earth were the apostles commissioned to say, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” To exhort thus to a passive involuntary conviction, would be very absurd.

Aspasio’s observation is, the “grant is made to sinners; in receiving the grant we commence believers,” according to the above-mentioned apostolic exhortation.

“But Aspasio will still insist, that these qualifications are by no means the ground of their right. Let us see, then, where the ground of their right lies.”

In the divine declarations to sinners as such.

“I think the obvious meaning of Aspasio’s words is this, these persons, so qualified, have the right, exclusive of unqualified sinners.”

It is very obvious this is not his meaning.

“Where, then, can the ground of this right lie, but in the distinguished qualifications? It cannot lie in any thing common to both; for in that case, the unqualified would have as good a right as the qualified.”

They have so. These are Aspasio’s real sentiments: whatever qualifications make a difference between one man and another, they confer no right to the kingdom of God, they confer no right to the imputed righteousness. For, “as all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” they who are justified, are “justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.”

“They have nothing in the heaven above, nor in the earth below, to keep their hearts from sinking into utter despair, but the bare propitiation. This, and this alone, encourages them to make their address to God.”

Can this encourage further than they see their interest in it, or right to draw near to God thereby, in virtue of his gracious declarations? And how are they to address God? As their friend and father, on account of this righteousness? Then they, in fact, appropriate it, and our debate is at an end; we are agreed. Or do they address God only as the friend of some who

are to be known in time by suitable qualifications? If this is our author's meaning, then it is he, and not Aspasio, that in drawing near to God seeks for inherent qualifications, instead of the imputed righteousness.

"By this, and this alone, God conveys the first taste of his favour and peace into their hearts."

Unless we conceive of the imputed righteousness as graciously granted unto us in this destitute condition, where is the connexion? What taste of favour and peace can be admitted barely by the consideration of sufficiency for the elect? Sufficient for me a guilty sinner, without any other consideration, is evangelical. To wait for something more before we are allowed to call him friend, or father, on account of this righteousness, is not at all adapted to bring us nigh to God by the bare propitiation.

"And it pleases me to find Aspasio had not courage to close this period, without bringing forth the plain truth at last. For pointing to the poor, indigent, and guilty sinners, he concludes, 'For such the Saviour is provided; to such his benefits are proposed; and on such his grace will be magnified.'"

If it is allowed that his benefits are proposed to such, the debate is ended. We mean no more. It is undoubtedly warrantable to receive and appropriate what is provided for the enjoyment of any, or whosoever among the guilty, and proposed to our trust and confidence under that name. If any other consideration must intervene, then it is plain the benefits are not provided for and proposed to such, but only for and to those who have the additional consideration.

"As for the bare work finished on the cross, or the bare report about it, however true we think it, so far have we mistaken it, that, setting aside our active operations about it, we do not see what comfort or benefit can be derived from it."

This proceeds on a total mistake and misrepresentation of Aspasio; he is not putting the least slight on the report or persuasion of the sufficiency of the finished work of Jesus Christ, to justify the most guilty, without more; he is here opposing a qualified persuasion, or rather mere profession, artfully substituted in the room of the sufficient righteousness, and the sinner's living by that alone. A persuasion, "that the shelter of the summer-house is free for our use, accompanied with a high esteem of its accommodation, an earnest desire after its protection, or an habitual tendency towards it." Aspasio asks not, whether a persuasion of the sufficiency of Christ, but "a persuasion that the summer-house is free for our use;" whether this, though accompanied with esteem, desire, or tendency, unless "carried into actual entrance and possession," would answer the end and design of such a truth,—“would be a proper safeguard, or indeed any manner of advantage as to our persons;” that is, in respect of possession, enjoyment, and advantage from that enjoyment. These are his very words. And let any one impartially judge, whether Aspasio is here objecting against the finished work of Jesus; or rather, is he not setting aside a fruitless persuasion, or rather profession, that the shelter is free for our use, with dependence on our supposed esteems, desires, tendencies, &c. that the soul may rest purely and entirely on Jesus Christ alone? whom he describes, from the prophet Isaiah, as “a place of refuge, as a covert from the storm and from rain.” Aspasio asks, If a pe-

suasion that Christ is such a place of refuge and covert, free for our use, accompanied with any esteema, desires, and tendencies, will answer to such a representation? Which is in fact, whether we may trust in such a persuasion, esteem, desire, and tendency, instead of that righteousness which is our appointed refuge? It is plain, all the active operations pleaded for, is to live by this alone, in distinction from any other dependence. And the advantage arising from these active operations, is the enjoyment, comfort, and influence of this sufficient righteousness.

If the objector had been pleading for the entire sufficiency of the work of Jesus, Aspasio would readily agree to that, and have recommended living by that alone. But after he had so far coincided with Aspasio as to allow, "that all this grace, and each of these benefits, are free, perfectly free for you, for me, for others:" might not Aspasio ask, Would this bare persuasion answer the end and design of such a truth, unless I was induced thereby to really use it as a shelter? That is, to oppose Christ's righteousness, thus freely given unto me, to every sense of guilt and condemnation, and assure myself of salvation by that alone. As I suppose Mr. Sandeman, in his view of things, will allow the believer of the gospel report to oppose the truth of Christ's sufficiency to every declaration or conviction of guilt tending to despair, and this may as properly be called *reducing* that truth to *practice*. This is what Aspasio calls *reducing to practice*, the truth of Christ being given for us to receive and live by him as such a gift, as a refuge from all the curses of the law and danger of damnation, unto the end of peace, assurance, and holiness. We do not consider the gospel as barely furnishing us with good and excellent materials to work upon, but with blessings to enjoy and possess as our own; and our whole comfort, or any part of it, does not arise from the success of our labour, but wholly from the blessings so freely presented to us to take comfort in them, and is very far from making them fit to comfort us.

"Now, it does not signify much by what name we call the mean of escape, whether we call it the law or the gospel; for the great concern we have with either of these, is to obtain righteousness or a title to life."

However true this may be of those who seek by works, in a way of "painful desire and fear, till they are crowned with enjoyment," Aspasio is not chargeable, whose doctrine allows an immediate enjoyment, without the intervention of any righteousness or work whatever.

"For it is not the bare knowledge of the law or gospel that can do us any service, but the use we make of them."

This is but mere sound; for our author pleads for the above-mentioned use to be made of the report, previous to the enjoyment of the privilege. The use we make of the gospel report, is immediately to live by the righteousness it reveals; whereas the use of the law is, to do that we may live. Is not here a manifest, yea, is not here a sufficient difference?

So each one reasons thus: "Seeing many shall perish, and seeing the gospel says nothing to me but what it says to every one, what comfort can I reap from it, unless I can find about myself at least one grain of odds casting the balance in my favour, in comparison with others, or in comparison with what I myself have hitherto been?"

But this is not Aspasio's language, which may rather be represented,

Seeing the gospel authorizes me and every sinner to live by the righteousness it reveals, why should I not make this use of it? Since the door into the kingdom of God is thus open for sinners, why should I any longer hesitate?

“But what signifies all this, says the proud devotee, unless I can find some reason about myself, why the Deity should distinguish me as his favourite beyond other men? And thus he treats the bare truth of the gospel with scorn and contempt.”

Aspasio waits for no such reason, therefore this representation does not affect him.

“In vain shall he (any sinner) expect to hear one syllable more from God, to encourage him to draw nigh to him, than that “he is well pleased in his beloved Son;” that “Jehovah is well pleased for his righteousness.”

Hath not God already said, “He that believeth on him shall not be ashamed?” that “he that cometh to him shall in no wise be cast out?” &c. Hath he not given him as bread from heaven, that “whosoever eateth him should live by him?” Has he not given “eternal life to us in him?” even so given to us, that “whosoever” of us “believe not this record” that he hath given of his Son, “makes him a liar?” Are we to set aside these declarations as no encouragement to us to appropriate or to draw nigh to God, lest we should not sufficiently submit ourselves to the divine sovereignty? Or, are we not rather to look upon them as the declarations of sovereign grace; which has found out a way consistent with the highest justice thus to show favour to the guilty, and for the encouragement of such to believe on him, or draw nigh with confidence through the faith of him?

“The apostle John says, ‘This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son;’ not that we should do anything to obtain life, but that we should live by what he hath done. It is a commandment not requiring anything of us, but bestowing life by the knowledge which it conveys.”

If I live by what he hath done, I account what he hath done given me for that purpose. And this is also the use I make of it; and this commandment so understood, requireth nothing of us, but bestows life by the knowledge it conveys. So that what our author has here said, expresses our whole mind, and may end the dispute.

“Paul, in the deepest of all his distresses, was relieved by that very faith which we modern Christians, in the height of our complaisance, choose only to call of the enfeebled and infantile kind.”

A mistake this; Paul was relieved by a view of the sufficiency of grace for himself in particular: “My grace is sufficient for thee.” He waited for no other righteousness to certify him that this sufficient grace belonged to him.

“If we hearken to them, the great point about which our faith is principally concerned, is a matter which turns out to be true—no book nor man can tell how.”

It turns out to be true in God’s faithfulness, answering to his gracious declarations. Our assurance or appropriation is founded and exercised upon God’s faithfulness to answer to what he has revealed as the ground of our confidence: that “he has given to us eternal life in his Son;” that “in this man’s name is preached to us remission of sins;” and that “whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” So that, in the

very nature of the thing, the appropriating language is only the language of trust and confidence, and will turn out to be truth, if God may be depended on, as he most surely may.

“In the gospel offer, we are told, is presented to the poor bankrupt, a bond, or bill indorsed to him, to relieve him from his poverty. It is not his as yet.”

It is freely given to him, it is his right to possess and enjoy, as anything we are invited to partake of. It is therefore his to live upon, though not his in present enjoyment. It is not presented to him but in common with others who perish, rejecting it as insufficient; yet it is so really presented to him, that he is welcome to live by it, or avail himself of it as his own, without performing one act, or obtaining one qualification to entitle him to it. The difficulty lies in a man's being thoroughly persuaded that this is true; which when a man really is, he immediately lives by this revealed righteousness without more.

“He at last lays hold of it, so it becomes his.”

It becomes his by that same grace which has convinced him of its truth, and influenced him thereby to appropriate and enjoy it. It becomes his in possession and enjoyment. Not that God imputes it on account of our appropriation; that only serves the use of peace of conscience by it, and a warrantable enjoyment by the divine word, and to demonstrate we are those to whom it is imputed.

Mr. Marshall, Mr. Boston, and Messrs. Erskines maintain, that, according to the law, “man is bound to believe whatever God declares, and do whatever he commands; that the duty of believing to be true what God has reported, and receiving what he has commanded us to receive or take to ourselves, belongs to the law; which fastens the new duty upon us, the moment the gospel reveals the new object.” And if this is not true, how will the heirs of the gospel be condemned for despising or neglecting this great salvation? And if this is true, why may not gospel ministers declare against the rejecters of this grace, what will be matter of their just condemnation? or, in other words, what proves that they that perish, perish justly, and of their own will and choice, vindicating the righteous judgment of God?

And is it not to be maintained, consistent with this, that the gospel is purely and entirely a revelation of a sufficient righteousness for the most guilty? That where it takes place in the heart, it is by the sovereign grace of him who provided the righteousness it treats of? That in receiving it for true, and living by it, they are fulfilling the command of the new covenant; they are performing of duty; and at the same time, the subjects of the New Testament promise, in having that obedience or law written on their heart, by the Spirit of the living God, as a Spirit of grace and truth?

“I hope Satan does not chain you to your houses, nor stake you down to fields on the Lord's day.”

This is rather to be considered as a convicting them of their sinful negligence and willing ignorance, than giving any directions what we must do to be saved. In that case we allow the answer is, Either keep the law yourself, or live by what Christ has already done.

“We may now turn our eyes more particularly to those who are most successful in propagating a perverted gospel. These men do indeed press very hard upon the conscience to awaken fear; but when they have driven

the serious hearer almost to despair, by an awful description of his miserable condition, and by representing him as utterly unable, in every respect, to contribute any thing towards his own deliverance, they at last condescend, with no small art and address, to make some comfortable exceptions from the foregoing awful doctrine. Now is described, in a variety of particulars, a convenient resource, where the pride of the serious hearer may exercise itself with great hopes of success."

The pride of the serious hearer is the conceit of his being able to do or obtain something to deliver himself, as proceeding from his propensity to live by something he is to do, whereby he becomes self-dependent. The truth is, the gift of the divine righteousness depends on no doing or difference in man. The being quickened by the truth of the gospel, to hear the voice of God therein, depends on the sovereign good pleasure of heaven. A man hearing this voice of God, not to the qualified, but to the absolutely guilty and lost, is made obedient to the commands and exhortations to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, or to live by his righteousness, without waiting for any other; and the obedience that answers as an echo to that divine voice, command, invitation, &c. is, and can be no other, than trusting, depending, and assuring ourselves of salvation by Christ alone, in obedience to the divine declaration, as Lazarus came forth in obedience to the voice that quickened him. When we bid sinners believe on Christ, we would be understood as exhibiting a quickening truth, as well as a divine command; that is, that there is a sufficient Saviour, who may safely be depended on. And in obedience to this voice we are not doing that we may live, but we are living by Christ alone, in obedience to him who makes the dead to hear his voice. The pride of the serious hearer may be as much excited by being told to do that they may know their salvation, as to do to be saved.

"The preacher finds it necessary to warn his hearers to avoid all thoughts of this doctrine of election at present."

That is, when election is objected against the divine declarations, encouraging the guilty under that character, and without any evidence of election, to live immediately by Christ's righteousness. For the jailor to have objected election against Paul, when he bid him believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, would have been from the enemy.

"Because (says he) there is in this doctrine no visible ground for faith to rest upon, no visible resource for the pride of any man."

No visible ground for a sinner's confidence or trust in Christ alone, which is not the pride of man, but essential to the faith of God's elect.

"Sometimes they take great pains to shew us how little we do when we put forth an act of faith."

The act we plead for, is to live alone by what Christ has done; whether we call it believing on Christ, receiving, appropriating, trusting, or whatever name we give it—this is what we mean. Our opponents on this head, are those who are for having some good thing to be wrought in us, or done by us, before we are to be allowed to live by what Jesus has done; which is, in fact, a denial of its being wrought for the guilty. When they have been driven out of every subterfuge, they at last plead, that we tell people to believe on Christ; whereas it is the Spirit's work, and they must wait for this working of the Spirit before they are able to believe. We do not pretend to deny, that for a man to believe on the Son of God is the Spirit's work; but at the

same time are assured, that when a man is taught of God to believe Christ's righteousness a provision for the guilty, he is not taught to assume any other character as his title to it. Nor is he taught of God to consider himself in any other light than as guilty, and justly condemned. And therefore, we farther insist upon it, that a man, without waiting for anything more than what Christ has already done, is to live by that, as sufficient for him, and given to him in the indefinite grant of the gospel. And this he is to do, that is, live by Christ's righteousness in obedience to the divine command and invitation, when he feels nothing good in him to imbolden him thereto; and to depend upon it, that that righteousness will not fail him. And thus far we proceed scripturally, according to the answer given to the Philippian jailor.

We have also asserted, that a man may ask the question, What shall I do to be saved? and yet be but upon nature's bottom. The direction to that man, is not to wait for to do something, or to get something done in him, but to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. When it has been objected to this, that nature cannot believe on Christ, and therefore such are not to be told so; we have answered, He that gives the command is able to overcome this difficulty by divine conviction of the truth, writing his laws in our hearts and minds. And while we, thus taught of God, in obedience to the word, are endeavouring to believe or trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, to obtain our certainty, and rest satisfied with this righteousness, the Spirit of grace and truth may further dissipate every distrustful suggestion, and make us fully so. And here, by believing on Christ, we mean such a trusting, confiding on him, as we allow follows a divine passive conviction of the truth; that kind of activity which is intimated in the Scripture phrases, Acts xvi. 31, John vi. 35, and John iii. 23.

We cannot believe through our own natural averseness to live by the righteousness of another, or our proneness to establish our own. But at the same time, he that is taught of God, when he acknowledges he can do nothing, he rejoices that nothing is left him to do, but, on the contrary, that he is called to live by what Christ has already done. And they who will not distinguish this life from an endeavour to live by our own righteousness, cannot be farther talked with.

As conviction of the truth of the sufficiency of Christ, and his being freely given to the guilty and lost, is the only conviction of truth that is free from self-righteousness; so to live by this sufficient righteousness as so given, is the only activity that most immediately answers to the above-mentioned truths.

Palæmon cannot deny but coming to Christ has the promise of "being in no ways cast out;" but he judges it to be an obedience in consequence of faith, or the belief of the truth. This, on the other hand, is not denied him; and it may be also affirmed, that the promise is an encouragement of certainty of success to every one that comes to him, and a divine declaration which ascertains the sufficient righteousness to be imputed to every particular person answering that character. *Coming to Christ* is allowed to be more than a passive conviction; it is allowed to be something active in consequence of such a conviction; and as it cannot be any such activity or coming as contradicts the alone sufficiency of Christ's finished work, what answers to the Scripture descriptions or names given to this activity more properly, than

living by that sufficient righteousness, instead of doing, or seeking to do, any thing to add thereto ?

And as far as Aspasio, Marshall, &c. plead for, or encourage to, an activity of this kind, they cannot be accused justly of setting up another righteousness. This activity terminates in its object, and resolves itself entirely therein. The business to be accomplished by this activity, is only to come under such a certainty of salvation by Christ alone, as is implied in the words *trust* and *confidence*; and the nature of it is as opposite to setting up another righteousness, as the persuasion of Christ's sufficiency. Palæmon pleads for activity in coming at the certainty of our interest in Christ's sufficient work; and we plead for no more. Which, therefore, removes our plea beyond the reach of his objections.

To plead for appropriation as something to be added to entitle to acceptance, is liable to Palæmon's objections. To plead for it so as to make the sufficient righteousness depend on that act for its acceptance with God in our behalf, may also be accused as a doctrine of self-dependence; but to appropriate it as an effect of the report believed, as a means of ascertaining to ourselves eternal life by that righteousness revealed, and as an animating principle of obedience, evidencing our special interest therein, is not at all liable to such objections.

"If faith must be called an instrument, and if it be at the same time maintained, that justification comes by faith only; then I am at full liberty to affirm, that he who is possessed of the instrument, hand, or mouth, is already justified, without regard to his using the instrument," &c.

Quite a mistaken view; because faith, or appropriation of Christ, has no existence in itself without its object, as material instruments have.

"We shall seldom find them speaking any thing like the language of the gospel, without cautioning, mincing, or clogging it with some exceptive, *but*," &c.

The apostle says, "To him that worketh not, *but* believeth," &c. There is a believing that stands opposed to working; and if our *but* is the *but* of the apostle, and only respects our receiving the record, and appropriating the revealed righteousness accordingly, it is free from this exception.

"Though Theron is divested of all *righteousness of his own*, of every *qualification* and every *recommendation*, he must yet be well provided with *requisites*, even such as may embolden him to make the appropriation."

A wide mistake: Aspasio's scope and design throughout, is to shew, that nothing emboldens to appropriation but the divine grant to sinners as such.

"He (Theron) is very willing to believe that he is a gracious person."

How evident does it appear, from the passage here quoted, that the faith or truth recommended was, "that all was his; that is, by way of the divine grant of heaven to the guilty. Quite different from believing about himself, that he is a gracious person.

"And while Theron cannot be brought to believe, Aspasio beholds his title perfectly clear."

Aspasio beheld his title or warrant to appropriate from the divine grant made to sinners, not from the prerequisites of Theron.

"I must frankly own, that I see no more difference betwixt a careless and convicted sinner, than is betwixt a felon ranging his round at large and newly apprehended by the officers of justice; and, for my part, I think

would look liker an impertinent sarcasm than any thing else, to tell either of these last, that he was now in a very hopeful way."

As faith comes by hearing, we hope for another when we can prevail with him only to hear. This does not imply, that there is a foundation of hope in them. We hope, when we see people concerned about their everlasting state, that this concern will terminate in listening to the remedy that is graciously provided.

"As if one could reap any spiritual benefit from studying the divine law, or know how pure, how extensive, how sublimely perfect it is, before he knows Christ the end thereof for righteousness; as if such a one could judge of his spiritual state impartially."

Palæmon seems to forget that he has intimated, that "it was for want of comparing themselves with the divine law, that the Pharisees made their mistake." He that measures himself by others, instead of this sublimely perfect standard, must at last stand self-condemned. He that measures himself hereby, will know his state to be desperate, unless relieved by the finished work of Christ.

"Aspasio, then, hath found out a path, by walking wherco in the guilty may confidently hope to arrive at righteousness at last."

Not so; but Aspasio hath found himself guilty by comparing himself with the divine law. He hath found the difference so great, as to lead him to despair of himself; he hath found Christ the end of the law for righteousness, and the principle of new evangelical obedience. He testifies of this with confidence, as a subject wherewith he is really acquainted, and testifies of what he has experienced to be true.

"The doubtful faith he (E. E.) complains of, is that which admits of a doubt concerning one's own state. Now, a man may have some doubts about this, who is very firmly persuaded of the truth of the gospel."

The doubtful faith we complain of, is the want of that confidence answerable to the gracious declarations of salvation in Christ to the absolutely guilty; and not a man's doubting about himself, or what he at present is. On the contrary, we maintain, that this persuasion of a new state in Christ, implies our natural state to be quite bad, and past recovery; and the particular application we plead for, is flying from a bad state in our natural situation, to a good state in the person, righteousness, and blessing of Christ.

As existence, and consciousness of existence, bear such a relation to each other in the human mind, that the former is only enjoyed by the latter; so is justification, and the consciousness of it. If I perceive not my justification, it is to me as if I was not justified. If I apprehend it is so from a false foundation, it will prove to me as a dream which vanishes when wide awake. If a man, by some kind of argument, was to persuade me that I existed a thousand years ago, though I am not now conscious of it, it would be the same delusion as if he was to persuade me that I am now King George, or the King of Prussia. For a hundred such existences is, in fact, a hundred men; every man's own consciousness ascertaining himself to himself, in distinction from any other. In like manner, if a man was to use arguments to persuade me that I was justified long ago, when I was not conscious of it, he could propose no other end, his labour could no otherwise terminate, than in persuading me that I am now justified. And that which is brought to prove that I am one of those who were justified long ago, when I was not

conscious of it, may as well give me a consciousness of my present justification, without all that roundabout labour. Unless it is, that while we are considering these pre-existing justifications, we are apt to slip ourselves in for a share, upon a foundation that will not bear a present scrutiny. The Scripture, therefore, does not thus metaphysically subtilize, it does not thus separate, our justification from the consciousness of it. He that is justified by the finished work of Christ, without any consciousness of a difference between himself and others, is justified as ungodly ; has peace with God by that which justifies him ; and is justified by his faith ; that is, not by what he does, but what he believes ; and the additional confirmation, by the fruits of faith, or consciousness of our not being deceived in our justification by faith, is called by the apostle James, justification by works, without bearing any contradiction to the alone righteousness by which we are justified. If my justification arises to me from the difference there is betwixt me and others, I may be said to be justified, or enjoy justification, by that difference. If the spring of my hope arises to my view from the report making me welcome to the finished work of Christ, as the righteousness provided for the guilty to live by, then I am justified, or enjoy justification, by Christ's righteousness given to me, in opposition to any thing done by me, or performed in me. If my personal justification, and the consciousness of it, stand so nearly related, it is not at all improper that the ground of our acceptance with God, and the ground of our consciousness of that acceptance, should be of the same kind. So that if I am accepted with God by the work of Christ alone, given to me, I am to know my acceptance with God just upon the same, and no other foundation. If it were not so the favourite something might be set up, and the pride of man as fully gratified under the name of marks and evidences, as it is under the name of entitling conditions ; and we are as effectually taught to draw near with a "God, I thank thee I am not as other men." The sufficient righteousness justifies a man, or gives him a consciousness of his acceptance with God, when he knows it is graciously given to him, so that he is made welcome to draw near to God on that account. He that believes, to the peace of his conscience, believes this, and does not rest in an uncertain conjectural hope. Says Palæmon, a hope grounded on the sovereignty of God ; say we, not unless that sovereignty has declared a ground of hope for us ; otherwise we rest in bare conjecture. But hearing that Jesus has fulfilled all righteousness for the justification of those guilty ones who believe in his name, from a conviction that the doctrine is true, we assure ourselves, in dependence on the divine veracity and faithfulness, that the privileges are our own ; or that we shall not be confounded in so trusting to Jesus.

"Paul calls upon some whom he himself looked upon as believers, to examine themselves whether they were in the faith ; and he exhorts others, about whom he observed the surest tokens of their being true Christians, to give all diligence to remove every doubt concerning their state."

When Paul bid the Corinthians "examine themselves," &c., he plainly intimates their being in the faith a self-evident matter ; and that to be in the faith, and to have Christ in them as the peace of their consciences and hope of glory, is the same thing ; and this was the surest evidence that he had been a minister of Christ unto them. He is not here calling them to remove the doubts concerning their own state, by a discovery of their faith,

love, and self-denied obedience. It is also very improbable, that the apostle should (as Palæmon says) have the surest tokens of their being Christians, and yet call them to doubt of it.

"I am sorry to see Aspasio so much carried away with their (*i. e.* the popular preachers) dissimulation." He points out to Theron his danger and remedy in the following manner: "If you fail in one point, or in any degree, you are guilty of all. If your conformity be not persevering as well as perfect, you incur the penalty, and are abandoned to the curse," unless you find mercy by what Christ has already done. No; but "unless, renouncing all your personal performances, you place all your affiance on a Saviour's atonement, and a Saviour's righteousness."

They who endeavour to renounce their personal performances, as an entitling performance required of them, act inconsistently; but they who evidently renounce their own, from a gospel-discovery of the Redeemer's righteousness, and live alone by that, in virtue of the divine declarations, are taught of God, and find mercy by what Christ has already done.

"This good conduct of ours, by which we are said to escape the curse."

So we are, according to Palæmon, to take care that we have no affiance, or confidence in Christ's atonement or righteousness, because that is escaping the curse by some good conduct of our own!

"Were (says Aspasio) that firm and joyful reliance on Christ Jesus in any degree proportioned to his infinite merits and inviolable promises." "And if (says Palæmon) I cannot find acceptance with God, but in being conscious of perfect conformity to this new law, then I am in as great danger as before."

Aspasio moves this very question, not to obtain a prerequisite, but to manifest the necessity of a better righteousness than our reliance, considered as a performance or work of ours, that we may rely upon the sufficient work of Christ, without recurring to any other.

The gospel declarations are not to be separated from our Saviour, his atonement, or righteousness. Nor can our affiance, knowledge, or enjoyment, through that report, be separated from either. Is Christ's righteousness presented to me as a security from the curse of the law? My affiance therein, or knowledge thereof, is Christ, my security, enjoyed by me, and manifested to me. The apostle was not so curious as to distinguish and divide with our author, when he said, "I count all things but loss," not for the excellency of Christ, in distinction from the knowledge of him, but "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;" and this he styles, "not having on his own righteousness."

"My expectations were greatly raised by the beautiful and affecting description of the royal stag-chase, in Dialogue 9, till I saw the sinner's relief described as coming to him by means of such conflicts and struggles," &c.

Aspasio does not mean, struggling to believe the report, but struggling for that rest, which comes at last in a way they thought not of; that is, by the report. The reasons of the soul-struggles described, are ignorance and self-righteousness, seeking other methods of relief than by the declaration of eternal life given in Christ; and it frequently proves, that after many useless struggles in diverse ways, the soul thus finds rest.

"They knew their interest in Christ's death, by the effect that his death had upon them."

Christ's death hath its effect upon us, when we draw near to God thereby ; which is, in fact, when we appropriate it.

"They imagine, that something besides the bare truth may contribute more or less toward their escape."

They are clear of this charge, who escape by what that truth declares.

"The gospel leads a man to the greatest reverence for, and submission to the divine sovereignty, without having any claim upon God whatsoever, or finding any reason why God should regard him more than those that perish."

Palæmon maintains, that all who acknowledge the truth of Christ's sufficiency, have the promise of salvation. He does not imagine a dependence on this promise opposes the most absolute submission to the divine sovereignty ; but is rather a dependence on the promises of sovereign grace. And if we are persuaded of a grant of this sufficient righteousness to the guilty, why may not this be admitted as fully consistent with the same submission to the divine sovereignty ?

"The divine sovereignty appearing, that grace might be shown to the worthless ; and the divine justice appearing in justifying the ungodly," it is very readily acknowledged, leaves a man entirely at the mercy of God for his salvation. Here no man's pride is flattered ; "no man can find any ground to presume that the Deity regards him more than others. And the relief a man finds by this discovery is, that God can be just, and justify him as he at present stands, without more, or while he finds nothing about himself in the way of wish, desire, or otherwise, but what renders him obnoxious to the divine displeasure." The question that remains is, whether God has not intended a farther relief for such guilty helpless ones, even to assure them of their particular salvation in believing, trusting, and confiding in this sufficient righteousness, as given freely to them to be thus depended upon ? whether there is not a word, promise, call, or testimony, to this purpose ? and whether Christian obedience is not influenced by an assurance thus obtained ? At the same time, we can also readily agree, that "no man can warrantably be assured that he is already a Christian, a believer in Christ, or that he is an object of the peculiar favour of God, but by being also conscious, on good grounds, that his practice, in obedience to the peculiar precepts of Christianity, is influenced by that same truth which influenced the lives of the apostles."

Now, if there is such a *word, promise, call, or testimony*, as above mentioned, it is very distinct from, though not contrary to, the declarations concerning the *purpose and election* of God ; and affords a visible ground for our confident dependence on that righteousness, as sinners, without finding any reason about ourselves why God should regard us more than others ; whereas the doctrine of election, in the nature of it is not of itself capable of affording us this relief.

It is true, "this word, promise, call, or testimony, leaves it as much a secret what particular person shall be saved, as the doctrine of the divine purpose or election does ;" but does not leave the sinner so much without a warrant to appropriate. Notwithstanding the doctrine of election, Palæmon will allow, that "by him all that believe are justified." So also it is said, "He that cometh to him shall in no wise be cast out ;" "He that believeth on him shall never be confounded."

In this view of things, we are fully warranted "to represent the Deity as

keeping secret his gracious intentions" to beget this or that particular person by the word of truth; and, at the same time, "revealing his gracious intentions" to save all those, or any, whosoever they be, that, without seeing any difference at all between themselves and others, shall, upon the bare invitation and divine promise to the guilty, live, trust, or depend on his Son, and his righteousness, graciously provided as a refuge unto such. And while we "are busy in prompting our hearers to live thus by Christ alone, as given freely and indefinitely to the guilty, we have reason to show no small concern, lest Satan tempt them" to think, that because God's people are chosen to salvation, they are not allowed to feed upon the bread of life, till they know themselves to be distinguished from other sinners as God's chosen. Hereby salvation to the absolutely guilty is denied; and the people are taught to hope for eternal life, only by that which distinguishes them from the rest of mankind. This is building wood, hay, and stubble, on the precious foundation of Christ, the Saviour of the lost.

"They tell us, that God hath made a grant, or deed of gift of Christ, and all his benefits, to sinners of mankind. But when we inquire into this again, we find it turns out to be a gift of benefits to multitudes who are never benefited thereby."

And what of all that? Could there be no such thing as manna given to, or rained daily around the camp of Israel, because some despised it, and longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt? Must it follow, that there is no such gift, because multitudes neglect and slight it; or because, like Palæmon, they will not be persuaded there is such a gift? Shall our unbelief make the gift, the faith, or faithfulness of God, of none effect? It remaineth nevertheless a truth, that whosoever believeth on him, or receiveth the gift, shall not perish, but have eternal life. And why may not they miss of the benefit of this gift, who thus reject it, as the word preached never profited, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it?

"It might with equal propriety be said, that there is a grant of life made in the law, and that the divine willingness to bless men is therein expressed, Keep the commandments, and thou shalt live."

It might so; the difference lies here: the grant of life in the law requires conditions to be previously performed, before we may presume to account the blessing ours. The gospel bestows life in Christ without any condition, or as a free gift to be immediately enjoyed.

Several instances of the faith of those who were healed by Christ are adduced, to evidence that they only believed Christ's ability to cure them. To this I answer, that in those instances they waited for a proper ground or declaration to proceed upon, in believing that he would; and for that purpose, they made application to him. And where they had ground for concluding the event, they were as certain of that as of his ability. And faith in those cases includes that certainty, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. "If I had all faith, so that I could remove mountains;" compare with Matth. xvii. 20. "When he saw he had faith to be healed," Acts xiv. 9, and in Luke v. 19. 29, they neither doubted his ability or willingness. In our case, the grant of a Saviour to the guilty is declared, as well as the sufficiency of his righteousness; hence we make God a liar, if we do not proceed on the truth of both.

"The leper, like the two blind men, was fully persuaded that Christ was

able to relieve him. Yet, as he had no claim upon him, he referred his request entirely to his sovereign pleasure. In the full assurance of faith, he was at Christ's mercy, who was nowise obliged to apply his healing power to him."

But this is no argument against that appropriation which proceeds entirely upon the gracious declaration and grant of that sovereign good pleasure. If the sovereign good pleasure has declared the guilty, as such, so welcome to what is already done, that "whosoever believeth on him shall have eternal life," he hath no other application to make, or to wait for. We may be without any claim upon God to do for us anything that he has not already done, or to give us any right unto what is already done; but as far as he is pleased to declare himself, it is our business assuredly to believe, trust in him, or hope in his mercy. And that appropriation which proceeds wholly upon his gracious declaration, is consistent with the utmost submission to sovereign grace.

"Sovereign grace interposed, providing a righteousness for the guilty world."

Palæmon should say, to ascertain his meaning, "providing a righteousness for some of the guilty world."

"When once the gift of righteousness is made known to a man."

Can the gift properly be said to be made known to a man, unless he knows to whom it is given? A gift to nobody, is no gift. A gift to the elect, or to the qualified, is not a gift to the guilty world, but to them that are chosen out of it, and distinguished from it.

"He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the record in himself,—the record that God gave of his Son."

Palæmon slips over the record here treated of, viz. "That God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." This the apostle points unto, as what is to be particularly regarded, "And this is the record," &c. Nor should the testimony, that he is well pleased in him, be understood in any sense exclusive of it.

"In like manner, all his children in the faith believe the divine word for righteousness, without perceiving any shadow or symptom of it about themselves; without feeling, or being conscious of anything about themselves, to concur with the divine word, to make out their righteousness."

This description suits Aspasio much better than Palæmon, who waits for a discovery of his faith, love, and self-denied obedience.

"If we look into the Scripture, must we not say, that all the good works which shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just, are produced by the influence of the divine Spirit dwelling in the hearts of those who believe? Yet such is the connexion betwixt every good work and its reward, that, according to the Scripture, the justice of God, not to say his grace, is concerned to make it good, Heb. vi. 10. 'God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.' 'Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, verily, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.' Justice as well as grace will appear in the last judgment; then due regard will be had to every man's works. But in the justification of sinners, God has no respect to any man, as better than another. He considers men, when he commends his love to them, as ungodly, and without strength, that is, without any will to be better. . And all who find mercy, are brought to view

themselves in that same point of light wherein God beheld men, when he gave his Son to die for them. They do not find themselves prepared, or made fitter than others for mercy, by any work of the divine Spirit upon their minds; but they find their first taste of comfort by hearing of him, 'who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.'

Then they find their first taste of comfort independent of any previous discovery or discernment of their faith, love, or self-denied obedience. And their first taste of comfort is, not that there is a sufficient righteousness provided for the elect, or the qualified, but that there is a sufficient righteousness provided for the guilty to live by, without waiting for any further discovery.

"The popular doctrine supposes that unbelievers may be seriously engaged in praying for the Holy Spirit to help them to faith, and exhorts them accordingly; which is as absurd as to suppose that a man may be desirous of being influenced by the Spirit of a truth, which at present he neither believes nor loves. For I reckon it must be granted, that no man loves the gospel before he believes it."

If we only understood by the gospel that we were welcome to do something, or to wait and pray for something, to denominate us Christ's people, then we might be complaining for want of this power, praying for it, and perhaps falsely comforted with the supposed will for the deed; and all the while there is no willingness to live entirely by what Christ has done. But this is not the case: when Aspasio considered appropriation as essential to faith, and pressed it accordingly, he understood by appropriation, a living entirely by Christ's righteousness alone, without waiting for any other.

"When our systems describe faith to us, as a saving grace bestowed on us, by which we make use of Christ for salvation; are we not led to think of some grace necessary to our salvation, beside what appeared when Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for the sins of men?"

But inasmuch as Aspasio's whole plea is to live immediately by that grace alone, without waiting for any other, he stands clear of this mistake.

"They seem to forget that Christ is in heaven, and we on earth; that the only way wherein we can receive benefit from Christ, is by the report concerning him conveyed to our ears."

If the report in this particular case invites and authorizes us to live by him, and the righteousness which he performed, who is gone to heaven, we may, notwithstanding, he is gone to heaven, receive the report for true, and also lay hold of, or live by, the righteousness it thus reveals and conveys to us.

"When he comes to know that he may be justified, he finds immediately a covert from the storm."

But, according to Palæmon, he does not find this to be a covert for him, till he discovers distinguishing qualifications; whereas Aspasio finds a covert for the guilty sinner without any such distinction.

"If now we understand by the storm, the wrath that is to come, the believer, knowing that Christ hath done enough to deliver from it, loves him takes hold of him, or flies to him."

How?

"In obeying his commands, and frequenting every mean of correspondence with him."

He that loves him, takes hold of him, or flies to him, obeys his commands,

and is inclined to frequent every means of correspondence with him ; but to give us this as the meaning and import of those scriptural phrases and representations, more becomes Mr. Locke or Archbishop Tillotson, than the evangelical Palæmon. He may be assured, if he abides by this doctrine, the offence of the cross will soon cease. The primitive Christians were taught to obey, because "Jesus had delivered them from the wrath to come," 1 Thess. i. 10. They fled to him as the righteousness provided for the guilty and destitute ; and by the enjoyment of him under this character, they were disposed to all other obedience.

"Accordingly, we find Barnabas exhorted those at Antioch, in whom he saw the grace of God, that with purpose of heart they would 'cleave unto the Lord.' The consequence of which was, they assembled together in the appointed church order, and denied themselves in sending relief to their brethren in Judea."

Did they not assemble as members of Christ, and partakers of his righteousness ? Did they not cleave to him as the Lord their righteousness ? Or did they only fall into the appointed church-order, in order to escape the wrath to come ? If so, what is now become of the sufficient righteousness ; or, in short, of all the apostolic exhortations, which constantly proceed upon the certainty of salvation by Christ, as the principle of all the obedience they call for ?

See what effect the knowledge of Christ had on Paul, and what was his steady purpose : "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Paul says, "My Lord," the thing we plead for ; and counts himself "apprehended of Christ Jesus." So that it is plain, he "ran not as uncertainly, he fought not as one that beateth the air." And as his assurance did not allow him, or lead him to trifle, or slacken his diligence in pressing forward to the desired end : so, on the other hand, his pressing forward was far from being the result of his uncertainty, far from being animated with a view to know, by his performances, whether the divine sovereignty had interposed in his behalf.

Palæmon does not approve of Aspasio saying, "You must endeavour, diligently endeavour, to believe." But we may plead in his excuse, that Aspasio is not here pressing to receive a report as true without evidence, but to appropriate and live by the revealed righteousness : to obtain and maintain thereby that certainty of acceptance with God, which was necessary to animate and incline to all evangelical obedience, and is included in every apostolic exhortation. "Wherefore, as ye have always obeyed—as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. Work out your own salvation. Fight the good of faith, lay hold on eternal life," &c. And thus understood, we may allow, with Palæmon, that "by such arguments God worketh in them that believe, both to will and to do, not any thing in order to justification, but all those things wherein their salvation is evidenced."

"If a friend of mine should see me cheerful on hearing something new, and I should tell him I was comforted by an act of faith ; would he not say I trifled with him, and readily ask what good news I had heard, that he might partake in my satisfaction ?"

But this representation does not reach those who plead for an immediate and constant living upon the complete and perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. They are comforted by his acts, and their own has no other concern in it.

“ Faith, with its effects, is in Scripture often signified by one expression, and accordingly connected with salvation ; as when it is said, ‘ Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ Now, though we cannot say that a believer is saved on account of his prayers, yet we may say that he is saved on account of what he believes, and by which he is encouraged to pray. It is easy to see love and hope expressed in all the prayers of faith recorded in the Scripture ; yet it would be absurd to infer from thence, that prayer, love, and faith, are requisites in order to justification ; for if we agree with the apostles, we must still maintain, that justification comes by faith, and not by works—not by any thing we do in obedience to any law whatsoever.”

And at the same time it must be acknowledged, that faith is duty and obedience to the divine law, and in this sense a work ; for, as our author has observed, “ Will not that law which Christ came to fulfil, the law which requires love to God with all the heart, condemn all who by their unbelief make God a liar ? Does not the Spirit of God convince all whom he brings to the knowledge of the truth, of sin, because they believe not on Christ ? In fine, is there any thing contrary to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God not condemned by the divine law ?” How can these be reconciled, unless we admit that faith is so far a work, duty, or obedience, as has been above-mentioned ? Yet, as Palæmon maintains, we are justified only by what we believe. We are justified by faith, as we are pleased with a sight, that is, with what we see. And God justifies us by faith when he gives us this sight of faith, whereby we are thus justified. And thus to be justified by Christ’s blood, and to be justified by faith, is the same thing.

If Palæmon will abide by what he says, that the Scriptures point forth the freedom of divine grace to the setting aside all human distinctions, in such language as this, “ If any man will come after me—Let him that heareth say, Come ; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely”—we are then agreed ; this is the foundation of all we plead for, that sinners, as such, are made welcome to take of the water of life freely.

“ If the Scriptures describe believers as pilgrims and strangers on earth, as running the Christian race, denying themselves for the sake of the heavenly inheritance, and accordingly ‘ flying for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before them ;’ our preachers, ever mindful of their acts of faith, are ready to exhort us to put forth the acts of ‘ flying to Christ, and laying hold on him.’ ”

The passage alluded to is Heb. vi. 18, 19. “ That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us : which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast,” &c. *Who have fled*, is an act passed, and bears a manifest reference to flying from the revenger of blood to the cities of refuge, Numb. xxxv. 27 ; to which city the manslayer being fled, was, while there, secure ; not in his act, but in the privilege of the city wherein he now dwelt ; and waited unto the death of the high-priest, as the hope set before him. The hope set before us, the apostle tells us, we yet see not, “ but with patience wait for it,” Rom. viii. 25. But how can we with patience wait for it, if it is not at present the “ anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast ?” Or, as the apostle says in another place, “ I so run, not as uncertainly.” Yet as his security lay in that righteousness of Christ alone, he kept his body (all his temporal concerns) under subjection thereto, even as the manslayer abode in the city of

refuge, knowing there was no safety for him elsewhere. When a man performs his acts of obedience, that he may thereby gain himself a conscious title, possession, or enjoyment, of the favour of God, it is but of little moment whether he styles it the favour of God by Christ, or by any other name. His way to come at it is still the same—by his own obedience. Nor can this be flying for refuge to Christ, but rather choosing my own performances as my security, and betaking myself to them.

“If Barnabas exhorts those in whom he saw the grace of God, with purpose of heart to ‘cleave unto the Lord,’ after the example of the believers who were said to be added unto the Lord when they were added to the society of the disciples, keeping his commands, then we are told, that justifying faith is a cleaving to Christ.”

It will answer our purpose, and convey our whole meaning to say, the faith which justifies cleaves to Christ; and in exhorting to cleave to Christ, we exhort to continue in the faith. The phrase, “Believers were the more added to the Lord,” is very evidently neither more nor less than that many more were begotten to the faith.

“But Aspasio tells us, that it is the office of faith ‘to take and use the inestimable gift.’ If in this or any other part of the New Testament, more be meant by receiving Christ, than knowing him or believing on him, then I am ready to shew, that more than faith is meant, namely, faith with its fruits and effects.”

By *receiving Christ* more may be meant than *knowing him*, but not more than *believing on him*. We may be said to *know* a thing, when its evidence forces itself upon the mind; but to *believe on Christ* is, in the Scripture sense, the subject of exhortation. If Palæmon will confine himself to mean, by faith, no more than a passive conviction of truth, it shall be allowed him, that by *believing on Christ* more than he means by faith is intended. The same may be said of the phrases *laying hold, leaning, &c.* more is allowed to be meant by these expressions than Palæmon means by faith. At the same time it may be affirmed, that these expressions of activity “do not contribute their quota” to our justification, since we are justified by the righteousness received, trusted or leaned upon, and not by our act. We are justified by *what we receive*, even as Palæmon will allow we are justified by *what we believe*.

“The faith of the gospel is indeed the basis of trust.”

If so, we are agreed again; for this *trust* we call *believing on Christ*. If the faith of the gospel is the *basis of trust*, it is of appropriation; for how can I trust in that wherein I am not allowed to take any share? If we are not allowed to trust in the Redeemer’s righteousness when absolutely guilty, the faith of the gospel is not the basis of trust. In Palæmon’s view, the gospel only shews us the possibility of the salvation of the elect, and cannot therefore be the basis of trust to a sinner; but the discovery of his obedience, as giving him hopes that he is one of the elect, is, in fact, the matter wherein his trust is founded.

“If one approaching to a frozen lake or river, over which he has occasion to pass, tells me, that he has been assured by good information that the ice was sufficiently strong to support him; and yet after all proves timorous, and averse to make the trial by venturing his person freely upon it, I plainly perceive he has no faith in the report he heard, because he does not trust in

it ; or, which is the same thing, he cannot trust, rely, confide in, or venture himself upon the ice."

There cannot be a more apt illustration of what we plead for. And he that ventures his eternal concerns on the all-sufficient righteousness of Christ, with the same confidence that he that believes the ice will bear him ventures his body upon that, will not be averse to run the risk of his interest and reputation also for the sake of it. We can therefore have no objection to Palæmon, when he says,

"If one tells me that he believes the gospel, and yet proves averse to risk his interest or reputation in the world for the sake of it, I immediately perceive that, whatever he speaks with his mouth, he does not in his heart believe the gospel, because he puts no trust in it."

"Perhaps it will now be inquired, Are no rules to be observed, no means to be used, no works to be exerted by the human mind or body, in order to justification? The answer is ready: Yes, very many. And they may be thus shortly summed up: Be perfect, keep the commandments, and thou shalt live. The obligation of the law is eternal, and cannot be loosed. But perhaps another state of the question will be demanded, and that faith should be more directly respected therein. Well, then, let it stand thus: ought not a man to be at pains to attain the persuasion, that all the pains he takes are good for nothing, except to enhance his guilt? Here, methinks, we are landed at downright absurdity; for who will labour in hopes of being convinced that all his labour is to no purpose, unless to his hurt?"

This we may allow to be very well stated, with respect to the persons whom it concerns. But the question between our author and Aspasio really stands thus; are no rules to be observed, no means to be used, no acts to be exerted, by the human mind or body, to arrive at the certainty of our own particular justification? Palæmon says, Yes, a great many; as many as will serve to demonstrate that we are elected: Aspasio says, Only thankfully to receive or accept the blessings as freely given. And all the direction given by Aspasio respects this question, and not the sufficiency of the finished work of Christ to justify the most guilty.

"The design of the passage (Rom. x. 19, 20, 21.) is plainly to shew, that faith comes not by any human endeavours, or the use of any means, even under the greatest advantages that men can enjoy, but of that same sovereign good pleasure which provided the grand thing believed."

Here is, then, notwithstanding all Palæmon's exactness, a something more than the finished work of Christ, a something called faith, which he tells us comes "of that same sovereign good pleasure which provided the grand thing believed." Palæmon will reply, he means no more than believing that which is provided is sufficient; nor do we mean any more by appropriation, than receiving that which is sufficient, as believing it to be freely given to us for that purpose.

"I would here subjoin, by way of postscript to this, some reflections on the assurance or appropriation said to be essential to saving faith.

"While various terms and distinctions are coined by popular preachers on this subject, great neglect is shewn to a very plain and obvious distinction, which Paul makes betwixt the assurance of faith and the assurance of hope."

Upon a review of the Scriptures, to see what foundation there was for this remark, I gathered the following:

1. In regard to *faith*. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 1.; "All joy and peace in believing," Rom. xv. 13; and not by what Palæmon styles assurance of hope, gathered from a discovery of our faith, love, and self-denied obedience.

The language of faith is not barely concerning others, the elect, &c.; "But we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved," Acts xv. 11.

Faith is described, Heb. xi. 25, 26; to be so far the assurance of eternal life by Christ, as to be, on that very account, "the victory that overcomes the world."

They that died in faith, "not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of and embraced them, and (therefore) confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth," Heb. xi. 23.—did they not appropriate these promises? or did they only consider them as belonging to the elect, and themselves uncertain whether they were of the number, till they could discover it by the discovery of their faith, love, and self-denied obedience?

The assurance of faith proceeds upon "having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a way consecrated for us, and having a High-priest over the house of God," Heb. x. 19, 22. And can all this be in a fixed uncertainty, or without appropriation? Can I draw near, as having a way consecrated, or as having a High-priest over the house of God; and, at the same time, do not know whether I have or no?

If we are condemned for asking doubtingly, James i. 6, 7; and for little faith in Providence, Matth. vi. 30; does not the opposite character imply a certainty of divine favour and regard by sovereign grace, independent of a discovery of our previous obedience?

Rom. xiv. 23. "Whatsoever is not of faith," i. e. whatsoever action is not of confidence of acceptance with God, "is sin." Does not this Scripture make confidence essential to faith?

Rom. iv. 5. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly," &c. Is not this inconsistent with waiting to be godly, before I dare put my trust in him?

We cannot "call on him in whom we have not believed," Rom. x. 14; that is, we cannot "call in faith, nothing doubting," as above, James i. 6.

It is the divine commandment to "believe in his name," 1 John iii. 23; and it is the strength of "faith against hope," of what we see or feel, "to believe in hope" of what God hath freely given and promised.

Eph. iii. 12; "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the *faith* of him." Can this be where there is no appropriation?

Gal. v. 5. "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by *faith*." Can this be said in an uncertainty? or in a conditional certainty depending on our performance?

Can the dead live by "believing on him," according to John xi. 25; if they are to wait till they feel life first?

2. In regard to *hope*. We are told, that not our performances, but God's promise and oath, are the "strong consolation of them who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the *hope* set before them; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both *sure* and *steadfast*, and which entereth into that within the vail," Heb. vi. 18, 19.

We are told to "hold fast the beginning of our confidence, the confidence and rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end," Heb. iii. 6.

As we "have not seen, and yet have believed," so we are said to "hope for that we see not, and patiently wait for it," Rom. viii. 25. "We are saved through faith," Eph. ii. 8. "We are saved by hope," Rom. viii. 23. We are said to "purify ourselves by this hope," 1 John iii. 3; to have our "hearts purified by faith," Acts xv. 9; to "purify our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto the unfeigned love of the brethren," 1 Peter i. 22. We are said to be all "the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ," Gal. iii. 29; to be "begotten again to a lively hope," not through a discovery of our obedience, but "by the resurrection of Christ from the dead," 1 Pet. i. 3. And "the God of hope fills us with all joy and peace in believing," Rom. xv. 13. "And being justified by faith, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God," Rom. v. 2.

When we are exhorted, 1 Pet. iii. 15. to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us," I apprehend our faith, or that truth we believe, is that reason, and not our own righteousness or qualifications. Upon this review of these Scriptures, it appears to me, that Palsson's refinement upon the Scripture phrases, to the excluding appropriation or certainty of salvation from faith, and ascribing it wholly to a discovery of our inherent qualifications, under the name of assurance of hope, is not so scripturally founded as he has imagined.

"The assurance of hope is enjoyed only by those who give all diligence to obtain it."

That they are exhorted to show "the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end," is true. We are also to "hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

"The first of these (the assurance of faith) was called for in a man's first profession of the faith, upon his first hearing the gospel, in order to his being acknowledged for a Christian."

Hope is also called the "hope of our calling by the gospel," Eph. i. 18; not the hope of our obedience, or hope arising from our qualifications. And upon a man's first hearing the gospel, when he was first begotten again by the word of truth, he is said to be "begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead," 1 Pet. i. 3. Christ is said to "dwell in our hearts by faith," Eph. iii. 17; and Col. i. 27; as our "hope of glory." And if he is not thus in us, we are said to be not young professors, or young Christians, but reprobates.

"The assurance of faith is likewise necessary to the drawing near to God in his worship."

We are likewise said to "draw near to God by the better hope," Heb. vii. 19; "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast."

"The assurance of hope, again, is an enjoyment proposed to them who believe."

A steadfast continuance, full assurance, and increase in the faith, is proposed to them also.

"The assurance of hope, then, holds pace, first and last, with the work and labour of love."

The apostolic hope held pace, first and last, with the apostolic faith; and

love or charity followed both. The apostles do not teach the order to be faith, love, and hope, because I love ; but faith, in the revealed righteousness, is the spring of hope ; and love flowing from both. "Now abideth faith, hope, and charity ; these three" as the root, and not the fruit of our obedience.

"There was no Christian, however eminent, in the days of the apostles, but needed the exhortation to give all diligence for maintaining and confirming the assurance of hope."

Nor was any Christian so far advanced, but he might be exhorted to be "strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, and continue in the faith grounded and settled."

"They often called on men to examine themselves."

They declared remission of sin immediately in Christ's name, as the truth whereby we pass "from death to life." They did not teach people to find remission of sin by the way of their inherent dispositions or works ; but when the apostle Paul was called upon for a proof of Christ speaking in him, he bid the Corinthians examine themselves for that proof ; for if they had not received Christ, they were reprobates ; and if they had, they were his epistle of commendation, agreeable to what he had said, chap. iii.—xiii. 5.

"No man, then, can be charged with the sin of disbelieving the gospel, for doubting if he be a good Christian."

But he may, for doubting whether Christ is given to him in the divine declarations to sinners ; or whether he may trust to those declarations ; or, for doubting whether he may venture his eternal concerns upon Jesus Christ alone, without and before any discovery of his excellency above other men.

"Yea, we find the apostles ready to quash the confidence of those who were ready to conclude their state was changed, by such awful sentences as this : 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.'"

They who professed the faith and hope of Christians, and were evidently not influenced by the Christian love to observe the commandments of him in whom they professed to believe, were undoubtedly the subjects of this censure ; which may well be admitted, without any contradiction to the hope of a guilty sinner by Christ alone.

"The apostles frequently declare their assurance of faith and of hope in the same passage. While they express their faith in Christ, they are at the same time confident of their interest in him."

This proves, that either the apostle's Christian hope stood in a nearer connexion with their faith, and sprung more immediately from their doctrine than Palæmon will admit of ; or else, that he is more accurate than they in describing it.

"This joint assurance they sometimes express in fellowship with all that follow their footsteps, and often in language plainly distinguishing the apostles themselves from other professors of the faith."

The 1 John v. 11, is not of this sort : "This is the record which he that believeth hath in himself ; he that believeth it not maketh God a liar, because he believeth not the record which he gave of his Son." And *this is the record* that God hath given, not to us apostles, exclusive of others ; not to us who can say, "God, I thank thee I am not as other men ;" but to us, guilty sinners, lost, &c. ; to us, as numbered with them who, in not believing

it, make God a liar. "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son:" so given him, that "he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life;" it being only to be received, possessed, or enjoyed, in receiving, possessing, and enjoying of him.

"The same Spirit, acting as the Comforter, is given only to those who are already the friends of Christ. To this purpose Paul says, Gal. iv. 6, 'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.'"

That is, and because ye, while enemies, have received, through the gospel, "the adoption of children by Jesus Christ," Eph. i. 5. Because, also, according to the fulness of time, ye are sons, the church being come out of her non-age. As a proof of this it is evident, God hath not given you "the spirit of bondage again to fear, but he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts," whereby ye obtain such a discovery of salvation to the guilty, as enables you to cry "Abba, Father."

"The Holy Spirit then acts a twofold part, as he breathes in the gospel. He reconciles enemies, and he comforts friends."

He reconciles and comforts enemies in the same instant, and by the same truth; so the distinction is not properly founded. Besides, the consolation we have by Christ to the end, is of the same nature with the beginning—the grace that is manifest in Christ Jesus to the guilty. Not but that we have also the additional consolation of those sayings which relate to our witnessing and suffering for the truth.

"What, then, shall we say of those pretenders to the apostolic consolation, whose very profession of Christianity, instead of being any loss to them, spreads their reputation for piety, and procures them esteem and reverence from the world?"

We will say, their consolation is not apostolic, that the offence of the cross has ceased with them, or that they are of the world. But it is very plain Aspasio's appropriation, or that trust wherein he is comforted, has not had this effect, however he may have been honoured on other accounts.

"In latter times, not a few have, from the hand of church authority, supported by secular power, endured the same sufferings which the apostles met with from the Jews and Romans, and accordingly enjoyed the same consolation. It was very natural for such of them as were writers, to commend the faith which thus wrought by love."

They suffered as maintaining the certainty of salvation by Christ alone, and did not ground their certainty upon their sufferings; although they were far from being discouraged thereby, but endured them with additional consolation. Their assurance gave the offence, and caused their sufferings.

"Shall we say that these friends of Christ would have approved of that assurance of an interest in him, which men now pretend to acquire by some heart work, in a full consistency with their worldly ease and reputation?"

Nor does Aspasio plead for such an assurance: what he pleads for is founded only upon the divine declarations to guilty sinners; and is far from having the approbation of the devout and honourable of the world, however they may profess to esteem his writings on account of the elegance of the style, or some particulars foreign to his main intention in them.

"The modern assurance proceeds on the principle, that the simple truth believed affords no joy nor comfort."

This cannot be our case, who plead for the joy and comfort of the sufficient righteousness, as given freely to the guilty in those evangelical declarations.

“Will the news of a plentiful importation of corn, in the time of famine, give joy to many ready to perish, and revive even the poorest with the hope that they may be fed?”

Will the joy and comfort of this news be set aside by understanding, that the corn is freely given for us to live upon without money or price? Will not this rather enhance the joy? Does not the poorest receive comfort from such tidings, because they expect either to be able to buy some, or to have some given them?

“Yet no man knows certainly but his present day may be his last.”

But the joy created by the news above-mentioned proceeds on a contrary supposition, viz. That he shall live, and be sustained by it. Besides, the bread of life concerns a day that will never have an end; therefore this uncertainty is foreign to the purpose.

“And however diffident the convert (that is, the convert of Aspasio's stamp) be, he is still supposed to be possessed of some degree of assurance, provided he blame himself for the want of it.”

He is supposed to live by Christ alone, as his sufficient righteousness, who condemns every word, work, or thought to the contrary, or who fights this fight of faith against all oppositions and trials, inward or outward. But though we may make such an allowance, this is not our point. The question is not so much about whether I believe; let that make itself evident: the proper question to be always considered and rested in, is this, Does God give to guilty me eternal life in his Son? Is this the spring of my hope, and the source of my love and obedience? Do I live, not by my notion that I am a believer, but do I live by this?

“They (the devils) believe, they hate, and yet they tremble at that truth which Christ's people believe, love, and find salvation in. With them are ranked all those of mankind who know as much of the truth as inclines them to hate and pervert it.”

Yet it cannot be said of the devils, they have the same confidence. It cannot be said of the devils, that they receive or appropriate the divine righteousness as freely given to them, or that they see any foundation for it.

“In this view, the same truth is the savour of life unto life unto some, and of death unto death unto others. In this view, the same truth is the object of contempt and chagrin to some, and of love and joy to others.”

True, it is so; but not by both believing it alike for themselves.

LETTER VI.—“We are now, then, to consider faith as a principle of life and action.”

Palæmon is here obliged to admit of a different consideration of faith. If he considered it in justification as a principle of life and action, he would have been involved in the mistakes he has been opposing. If, on the other hand, he denied faith to be a principle of life and action, he would overthrow the principle of the Christian obedience he pleads for. Now, since he is thus obliged to take up this distinction for himself, why should he not allow it to Aspasio? Why should he not allow that appropriation, although it is an act or work exerted by the human mind, in consequence of the belief

of the gospel, and as a principle of all other Christian obedience? Yet we are not justified by our appropriating persuasion, but by the righteousness we appropriate; even as Palæmon says, we are justified by what we believe, and not by faith, as a principle of life and action.

“And here we must carefully distinguish betwixt all works by which men would pretend to acquire faith, and those which faith produces; for, if we will contend that justification comes by faith without works, and that there is no acceptable working but what follows upon this, and yet maintain that faith is acquired by works, we undoubtedly reason in a circle. And however seriously and devoutly we may be occupied in this kind of reasoning, it is evident we are employed in nothing else but solemn trick and dissimulation; unless it may be pled in our behalf, that we are imposing on ourselves by the same means by which we impose upon others.

“Men are justified by the knowledge of a righteousness finished in the days of Tiberius; and this knowledge operates upon them, and leads them to work righteousness. ‘If ye know,’ says the apostle John, ‘that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doth righteousness is born of him.’ Faith is not acquired, but is obtained, as Peter says, (τοῖς λαχοῦσι,) ‘To them who have obtained by lot like precious faith with us.’ Of two criminals justly condemned to die, if one escapes by a favourable throw of the dice, and the other dies for his crime, we see mercy in the deliverance of the former, and no injustice in the death of the latter. Two men may be employed with equal diligence in studying the Scripture, and with equal seriousness in praying for divine assistance; the one may come to know the truth, and the other may grope in the dark all his lifetime. He who comes to know it, plainly perceives that he has found what he was not seeking after; he plainly sees that his most serious devotion was pointed in direct opposition to what now comforts him.”

Nevertheless, the truth being declared, they may, like the noble Bereans, search the Scriptures, “whether these things are so.”

“Thus the word of life is held forth in the world—serving as a mean of divine appointment to lead some to the faith, and render others inexcusable.”

This is a proper reply to Palæmon’s own objection: “That the grant of the gospel is a gift of benefits to multitudes who are never benefited thereby. It serves as a means of divine appointment to lead some to faith, and leave others inexcusable.”

“The change made upon a man by the belief of the gospel, may be thus illustrated: when Lazarus was revived to the enjoyment of this mortal life, neither his will nor his power were concerned in the obtaining of life. Yet his life could no otherwise be continued and enjoyed, but in his voluntary exercise of it. As soon as he revived, the principle of self-preservation, with all its hopes and fears, behoved immediately to be set in motion. No sooner was he possessed of life, than the active love of it behoved to take place. Accordingly, no sooner does a man begin to know the grace of God in truth, than love to it takes place in his heart. Love is the activity of that life which a man obtains by faith; for faith worketh by love.”

But what is all this to the doctrine of working in painful desire and fear, till we come to the enjoyment of life, or the knowledge that we have life? Lazarus had no principle of self preservation before he was conscious that he had a self to preserve; nor had he any love of life before he enjoyed it. In

like manner, we can have no love to that grace of God we know not, nor desire to preserve that life we never enjoyed.

“If a man of low condition is by a royal patent ennobled, and entitled to a place in the politest assemblies, he cannot enjoy the pleasures of his promotion but in as far as he loves and studies to learn the manners suitable to his rank and company.”

And his motive to this improvement of these manners is, that he is promoted to a station he desires to enjoy more perfectly. So we, being called to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, toil no more in the way of painful desire and fear to attain to a consciousness of the privilege, but as partakers of it are influenced thereby.

“The apostle John, speaking of obedience to the new commandment of love, says, ‘Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God;’ that is, if, notwithstanding our natural bias against the gospel, with its remaining effects, giving us daily disquiet, our heart condemn us not as destitute of love to that truth which the world hates, then we have confidence towards God; even as much confidence as the testimony of our own conscience can give us.”

This is plainly not the confidence which the truth itself affords a guilty sinner, but confidence “that we are not destitute of love to that truth the world hates.” The former is our life, the latter is only an additional corroborating comfort.

“Yet this is but one witness, and needs to be supported; for in this case one may be liable to doubts, lest even his own conscience should be partial in his favour.”

If we have confidence in Christ by the truth itself as we are guilty sinners; if I am conscious that the truth, or, which is the same thing, my faith, and confidence in it, works by love; if our hearts condemn us not in this matter, then have we confidence towards God: *First*, because we are conscious we proceed on divine authority: *Secondly*, we prove the blessed effect of the truth. These, then, are two witnesses inseparably united. The first, a divine truth, the testimony of the divine Spirit, than which there cannot be a greater ground of certainty; the latter is the consciousness of the effect of that truth.

“Here, then, the Spirit of truth, who never fails to bear witness to the genuine effects thereof, gives his testimony as a second witness supporting the former. Thus Paul, after he had said, ‘As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,’ adds, ‘the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.’”

The apostle Paul, after he had said, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” adds, “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received (*i. e.* by the gospel truth) the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.” And then follow the words, “The Spirit itself (which ye received in the hearing of the gospel, imbolding us guilty sinners, to cry “Abba, Father,” through the divine righteousness freely given to us; this Spirit received in the gospel) beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God,” and not of them who deceive themselves with vain thoughts.

It is already granted, that “the Spirit of truth never speaks one word or sentence to any person beyond what is written in the Scripture.” And what

is written in the Scripture, is either the declarations of free salvation to sinners in Jesus Christ, or divine assurances of no disappointment to them that believe on Christ, or an account of the genuine effects of faith. In the first, we are taught to apply what is said to ourselves as sinners: In the second, we are encouraged to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, in assurance of salvation by him, without disappointment: In the last, we are informed of the genuine effects of this truth, or faith, corresponding to what we find and feel to be true, when we believe according to that which is written.

“And this he (*i. e.* the Spirit) does, by shedding abroad in the heart such an abundant sense of the divine love, as leaves no room for, so casts out, the anxious fear of coming short of life everlasting.”

The love shed abroad in the heart, is that manifested in Christ dying for the ungodly when enemies, and without strength; not love manifested to the qualified; for “if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, (given freely unto us), much more being reconciled,” as is apparent to us in what we believe, and in its genuine effects, we have a hope (that maketh not ashamed) that “we shall be saved by his life;” that he who gave us righteousness while enemies, will save us for ever who are thus reconciled to him.

“Thus that love to the truth, which formerly wrought in a way of painful desire, attended with many fears, is perfected by being crowned with the highest enjoyment it is capable of in this mortal state.”

I do not read in the Scripture of any love to the truth of the gospel so described. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, (and he crowned us with enjoyment), but that he loved us, and sent his Son, his only begotten Son, into the world, that we might live through him;” sent his Son “to be a propitiation for our sins. If we who are of this truth love one another, his love is already perfected in us; and we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. Herein is our love made perfect. He that feareth,” and is not emboldened by the truth to venture his everlasting concerns upon Christ Jesus alone, “is not made perfect in love. We love him because he first loved us, purifying our souls by obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto the unfeigned love of the brethren,” as its proper and genuine effect.

“Jesus Christ, who loved his Father with a perfect heart, even while sorrowful unto death, received the highest proof of his being the beloved Son of God, when, being exalted at the Father’s right hand, and being made most blessed with a sense of his love, he experienced fulness of joy in his presence.”

But he knew he was the Son of God before he had this highest proof: he, though sorrowful unto death, had none of the anxious fear of coming short of his glory, but was animated by that glory. “For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame.” He received the word in its accomplishment, as the highest confirmation of the veracity of what his Father had spoken. But surely he shewed himself entirely satisfied with the bare testimony, when he answered the tempter, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

“The report of this draws them who believe it to love him, and suffer for his sake. To such, Jesus Christ promised fellowship with him in the fulness of joy.”

That *fulness of joy* must be in the life to come, according to Psalm xvi. 11. For in this life we walk by faith, and not by sight; and hope which is seen is not hope. And it is also acknowledged, that Jesus himself did not enter into this joy till he ceased from this world.

John xv. 10, 11. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

The commandments here spoken of are, to believe, and love, for the truth's sake. The love and joy is that which is manifested by the word in this life, and which neither "life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers," nor any kind of suffering or affliction, shall be able to separate us from. Nevertheless, we yet but hope for the fulness of joy that Jesus is now arrived at, with "hope that maketh not ashamed," but animates us to be followers of Jesus, "enduring the cross, despising the shame."

"When the saving truth first shines in the hearts of men, the effect is suitable to the divine promise, Jer. xxxii. 40. 'I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' This fear, dwelling in their hearts, checks and recalls them when ready to be utterly led away by their former evil inclinations. They are preserved from falling away, by the fear of falling away."

This is no more than a fear of caution, consistent with the utmost confidence of the sufficiency of Christ, and the veracity and faithfulness of God; consistent with a firm persuasion, that nothing shall "be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The slavish fear which ariseth from uncertainty, and is seeking after a differencing something to remove our torment, is so far from preserving us from falling, that it is rather a proof we are not satisfied with the sufficient righteousness, with the sufficient ground of faith and hope, and have at present no part or lot in the matter.

"It is evident, that to have the Holy Spirit as the Comforter and earnest of the heavenly inheritance, is an attainment far beyond any influences of the Spirit that are common to those who believe for a time, and those who believe to the saving of the soul; yea, beyond the regenerating work of the Spirit, by which men are at first brought to the knowledge of the truth, and taught to love it."

"To find by experience (in the effects of the report on our minds) the truth of what they formerly believed on testimony," (which is what Palæmon declares himself to mean), is certainly an attainment of another kind than the joy and comfort of the truth itself. But that a conscious certainty, that "I depend on the promise of Christ, and run all hazards for his sake," is what the Scripture means by the *Comforter* and *earnest* of the heavenly inheritance, does not so evidently appear; because, 1. This is not taking of things of Christ, but taking of our things, and shewing them to us: 2. It is not the Spirit's bearing witness itself with our spirits, but bearing witness by the medium of our obedience: 3. It would be speaking more to us than what is written in the Scripture: 4. This consciousness, and the joy accompanying it, was an attainment of the people of God before the resurrection of Christ, as really as it has been since; whereas the Comforter promised was to be the consequence of Christ's ascension to his Father, and was first per-

formed on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 33: lastly, to wait for an attainment far beyond the knowledge of the truth, or, which is the same thing, of the power of Christ's resurrection, serves, in fact, to set aside that resurrection as insufficient, so to deny the one thing needful. More especially, as, according to Palæmon,

“It (this supposed attainment) must be distinguished from any joy or spiritual delight which necessarily attends the obtaining of faith, or its beginning to work by love.” And “that it is vain and absurd to call men to be assured of their being children of God, when they are not enjoying it. That it cannot further appear that any man has known the grace of God in truth, than he gives all diligence to the end, in order to obtain it.” Now the grand arcanum in Palæmon's doctrine is, how a man can live entirely by the *one thing needful*, and yet be so diligently employed in labouring for so important a *something more* ?”

“It is also plain, that the promise of the Spirit, as the Comforter, is common to all those who follow the faith and practice of the apostles.”

It is plain they were comforted by the Spirit of God, in the joy of the truth concerning Jesus the Saviour of sinners; and had also the additional comfort of those confirming declarations concerning the children of God and their blessings, which are recorded for that purpose. But that we are taught to wait for any other attainment, under the name of the Spirit as the Comforter, does not appear.

“Their (the Jews) appropriation was the great spring of all their pride, of all their disaffection to the true gospel, and all their ruin.”

The Jews' appropriation was upon the ground of the difference between themselves and others; which we readily agree has this effect, That the more men excelled in this way, they proved the more hardened enemies to the true God, and the eternal happiness of mankind. But what is this for an objection to that appropriation which proceeds entirely on the free grant of Heaven to the guilty, excluding all such difference? Aspasio is still left to affirm of his appropriation, That nothing will be so powerful to produce holy love and willing obedience, to exalt our desires, and enable us to overcome the world.

Who stands nighest to the Jewish appropriation, Aspasio or Palæmon? Aspasio, who in Dialogue 16 compares “those who advise us to prove our title to comfort by genuine marks of conversion, and teach us on this column to fix the capital of assurance, unto those who would fix the dome of a cathedral upon the stalk of a tulip?” or Palæmon, who judges this “talking profanely?” Neither do I see how this is talking profanely, until it is first proved, that the marks whereby we suppose ourselves entitled to comfort rather than others, are the Deity in which we are to put our trust. Aspasio rightly judges, that this is placing a most weighty affair upon that most slight and uncertain foundation, what we feel or do, instead of the Rock Christ, given to guilty sinners. Does not the Holy Ghost prove a Comforter, by manifesting to us guilty sinners “the things that are freely given of God; taking of the things of Christ, and shewing them to us?” And must not every genuine mark of conversion have its foundation here?

“He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life,” John v. 24. Here we see how men pass from death to life.”

The word that Jesus hath spoken, and the declaration the Father hath made, is the first and surest ground of undeceivable certainty. The dependence hereon proceeds entirely on the truth and faithfulness of God; and that dependence is the assurance we have pleaded for; and they who thus depend, our Lord declares, *have everlasting life*, are already *passed from death to life*.

"Here we see how men pass from death to life. John declares how they come to know this, while, plainly pointing at the words of Jesus, he says, 'We know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.'"

There is no foundation for the distinction here made by Palæmon, viz. "That our Lord only declares how men pass from death to life," and John "only declares how they come to know this." It is plain, that our Lord's declaration runs in the same strain with that of his disciple. Our Lord says, He that heareth my word "is passed from death unto life." John says, He that loveth the brethren "is passed from death unto life." Where is the difference? Both are declarations of who are passed from death to life, therefore both alike in that respect. Our Lord intimates the life-giving word, the matter believed by all who are passed from death to life; his disciple intimates the proper and genuine effect of that word on all who believe. "We know," says John, we have an additional proof, that the word of Jesus is true, "that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." It is plain that they abide still in death who abide in the hating, murdering spirit of the world; and more especially, who cannot love them who are of the *truth* for the *truth's sake*. On the other hand, the uniting, life-giving tendency of the *truth* appears to us, who are of it, since it causeth us thus to love one another for the *truth's sake*; and proves what Jesus said, that "he that heareth his word, and believeth on him that sent him, is passed from death to life."

Jesus saith, He is passed from death to life "that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me." John saith, "We know he has passed from death to life who loves the brethren." The only difference is, Jesus declares the privilege by that whereby we enjoy it; John gives proof in the love of the brethren, as a demonstrative effect that Jesus' words are true.

"By this proof, men come to know that the joy they had upon their first believing was not the joy of the hypocrite."

The joy true believers have on their first believing, is the joy of the truth. If that we rejoice in is found to be true, our joy is proved genuine.

"And so their joy is made full."

Our joy is not made full by a discovery of itself, but by farther confirmations of that truth which begat and supports it. The believer gives an account of his *faith* and *joy*, when he gives an account of what he believes and rejoices in. And it is made full by a farther supply or confirmation of the truth and faithfulness of God, on which he depends.

"By this they come to know it was the genuine truth of God, and not any human counterfeit and corruption of it, which they at first believed."

The genuine truth of God makes itself manifest to be such at our first believing, 1 Thess. ii. 13, 1 John i. 10; and thereby begets faith, joy, and every other effect. He that waits for such effect, to know whether he has the genuine truth or no, may finish his inquiry by reminding himself, that he

is in this inquiry very evidently but upon the search, and therefore has not found truth as yet. He may also be convinced that his search is wrong and preposterous, as if a man that should make an inquiry after what was proper food, should, instead thereof, be waiting to know, by certain effects, whether he had eat any or no. The noble Bereans inquired after truth, by searching the Scripture, to see whether "these things were so; therefore (it is added) many of them believed." The truth was made manifest unto them as the truth of God. And when this was the case, they did not wait for the joy of it, with its effects, to know whether it was so or no.

"Thus they receive an additional knowledge and certainty about the truth, in the way of experience, by perceiving that it works effectually in them, producing its genuine effects."

If the experience of the effects of the genuine gospel produces only an additional knowledge and certainty from experience, as the first knowledge and certainty came by divine evidence of the truth itself; this is all we plead for, then we are again agreed.

"As often as the apostles speak of their interest in Christ, and life eternal, or use any language to that effect, we shall find that they either speak of themselves separately, or in conjunction with those only who are possessed of the same unfeigned faith and love with them."

That the apostles wrote their epistles to professed believers, may be very readily admitted. As, on the other hand, that the apostles did not live by Christ alone, under the notion and view of themselves as guilty sinners, but only through a medium or discovery of their own faith, love, &c. will be very difficult to be proved, however confidently asserted.

"'Hereby we,' who love the brethren, 'perceive the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.' We, who are conscious of the effects, and enjoy the fruits of the atonement, know that God first loved us, and had a particular regard to us in providing the atonement."

The effects and fruits of the atonement are, sinners' *peace with God*, their *access to the holiest of all* thereby; if it is allowed that we enjoy and are conscious of these, we are again agreed. But if Palæmon means only being conscious of "working in the way of painful desire and fear, till we are crowned with enjoyment," there cannot be a plainer deviation from the intent of the apostle. The apostle says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." Palæmon says, Hereby perceive we the love of God, because we are conscious of the effects, and enjoy the fruits of the atonement. The apostles lead us to think he laid down his life for us, who were justly doomed to eternal death. Palæmon leads us to think he laid down his life for us who can say, God, I thank thee I am not as other men; "who can find some reason about themselves, why all the great things spoken and done by Jesus should bear its peculiar direction towards them."

Besides, how does it appear we love the brethren, when those we call so are seeking the reason of their hope, certainty, and assurance of eternal life, wholly in their own love and obedience; consequently are not in this respect the despised few, but of the same mind and judgment with every natural man?

"He who, perceiving the divine love to sinners of all sorts without distinction, manifested in the atonement, is thereby led to love the atonement, and the divine character appearing there; and so to enjoy the promised comfort resulting thence to the obedient."

If the promised comfort is suspended for want of obedience, or depends on obedience as its condition, the divine love is far from being manifested to sinners of all sorts without distinction.

“And thus, by happily experiencing the truth of the gospel.”

He does not experience the truth of the gospel, but only the effect of that doctrine that tells him, if he is willing and obedient he shall eat the good of the land : whereas, the truth of the gospel, relieving the guilty without condition, animates thereby to all the obedience it calls for.

“So he labours neither first nor last to acquire any requisite to justification ; but all his labour proceeds on the persuasion that the atonement itself is the sole and sufficient requisite to justification.”

All his labour proceeds on the persuasion, that however sufficient the atonement may be for the elect, yet he is not allowed to account it of any use to him a sinner, or to trust or depend upon it, but to be at an entire uncertainty about it, until he discovers his works of obedience to such a degree as to conceive himself to be an elect person.

“So he knows that all his holiness, as well as all his happiness, comes entirely of that grace which provided the atonement.”

Far from it ; all his holiness, as well as all his happiness, according to Palæmon's representation, comes entirely of the painful desire and fear, lest he should have no part in that grace ; which provided the atonement.

“The merchant who, being encouraged by some credible intelligence Providence has favoured him with from an unexpected quarter, sets out at all hazards on some new branch of traffic, will be greatly animated to proceed when he finds his labours crowned with success.”

But our obtaining salvation is not like a trading merchant setting out at all hazards on a new branch of traffic. This is salvation by works indeed ! Matt. xiii. 45, describes the merchant as finding one pearl of great price which puts an end to all future merchandising.

“He who so knows the bare report thereof, as to love it, and to run all risks upon it, shall in nowise lose his reward.”

True ; but Palæmon's Christian rather runs all risks in order to know his part in the atonement, than on the account of the bare report of salvation to the guilty.

“The passages in the Dialogues which appear to me to deserve the greatest censure, are those two which in a very confident manner deny, the one, the comfort attending the simple report of the gospel, and the other, the additional comfort attending the self-denied obedience to it.”

These passages have been considered, and it appears that neither are denied, but confirmed by Aspasio's doctrine. We proceed on the report in appropriation ; so it is the very basis of our comfort. We are confirmed by the effect of the enjoyment, that our enjoyment, or the foundation of it, is not a fancy.

“And all this is done, in order to rest, I cannot say our comfort, but a good opinion of our state, on what is neither faith nor obedience.”

Not so ; but to rest our souls on Christ alone, and neither on our faith, obedience, nor good opinion of our state.

“For, according to the popular doctrine, men living for a course of years together in unbelief, consequently neither loving the gospel nor enjoying the comfort of it, are allowed to consider themselves all the while as regenerate, provided they have once in their lifetime exerted a certain act.”

It may be so according to the popular doctrine ; but according to the unpopular doctrine, which Palæmon excepts against, we depend upon no acts but the perfect obedience of Christ.

“ I shall now take some notice of a treatise highly esteemed by the votaries of the popular doctrine ; I mean, *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification.*”

This book was so far from being highly esteemed by the votaries of the popular doctrine in England, it was hardly known till Aspasio recommended it, and since that disapproved of by many devout people, because, 1. It proves that the most earnest desires and endeavours after obedience to the law, may be in the natural state of man : 2. That the new life, new state, or new creation, is inseparably in Christ : so that we have no such privilege, but in enjoying Christ himself through the report of the gospel : 3. That there is no furniture for the obedience of love, but in partaking of this reconciliation or new state in Christ : 4. That no conditions or performances are to be placed between the sinner and the Saviour ; but the first step of practical religion is to trust on Christ alone, as given to us for the sure enjoyment of himself and his salvation.

“ This author supposes his unconverted reader, when beginning to be concerned about religion, to propose for this end such an obedience to the divine law as may be acceptable to God.”

He rightly supposes, that men who are yet in their natural state, may attain with great zeal to great heights of legal obedience, and, as Paul and others, be very earnest after it, counting it their truest gain ; and, like Paul, at the same time totally unacquainted with, yea enemies unto, real Christianity, and the obedience of love to the truth, and to God manifested thereby.

“ According to this author, then, Christ is not the end of the law for righteousness, but the best means one can make use of for enabling him to perform that righteousness which is the end of the law.”

He, as the apostle does, directs unto that love which is the fulfilling of the law, by the enjoyment of that righteousness which is the end of it, by enjoying that new state of peace and reconciliation with God which is inseparably in Christ : or, in fact, his view is to recommend the gospel of our Lord Jesus as a principle of obedience, in opposition to that preliminary grace, which, as Palæmon well says, “ However much it has been Christianized, is at bottom the same thing with that divine *afflatus*, influence, or energy, by which it was supposed philosophers and heroes of old became good and great men.”

“ Accordingly the well-disposed reader is led forward to his desired end, in consequence of the same good dispositions that led him to use the means.”

Not so ; however fair the directions may seem to promise, at first, to him that is naturally desirous to keep the law that he may live ; yet no man is made a disciple to these directions, but by being converted from this false hope to the hope of the gospel. No man is disposed to use the means of reconciliation with God by Christ alone as a principle of obedience, but he that is converted from the false hope of obtaining life by any obedience he can render, to live alone by what Christ hath already done, as the spring of his hope, and the source of his future obedience.

“ But why all this roundabout course ? Why should we seek to repress any man’s impetuosity to fulfil the law ? Why should we retard his course, by entangling him in a labyrinth about the use of means ?”

Men, naturally desirous to keep the law that they may live, may, and do, as Mr. Marshall observes, "rush blindly upon immediate practice, making more haste than good speed, crying with Israel of old, All that the Lord saith, we will do. At the same time there is no such heart in them." But through a natural propensity to things which are contrary to the divine law, they continually fail in the obedience they have so strongly purposed. "And some of these, when they have mispent many years in striving against the stream of their lusts, without any success, do at last fall miserably into despair, and turn to wallow in the mire of their lusts, or are fearfully swallowed up with horror of conscience." As all their religion, or impetuosity to fulfil the law, is founded on a miserable mistaken hope to live by their own obedience, so Mr. Marshall's aim is to throw down that "false hope," by proving that there can be no obedience acceptable to God, till we are first made "accepted in the Beloved;" or, in other words, till we first live by Christ's obedience alone, and are influenced thereby. His hope to live by his own obedience is criminal; it is therefore no matter how soon we repress his impetuosity, and retard his course; and when he understands his reconciliation with God by Christ alone to be the principle or means of gospel obedience, he will not be entangled in a labyrinth, but made free by the Son of God.

"As for the gospel, it was only intended to relieve those ill-disposed people who despair of ever doing any thing to render them acceptable to God, by any assistance whatsoever."

And Mr. Marshall's design is to shew, that those *well-disposed* people who hope to live by their own obedience, are, in fact, at the same time, those *ill-disposed* people, who will never be really obedient till they despair of ever doing any thing to render them acceptable to God, by any assistance whatsoever; and, in that despair of themselves, live alone by what Christ has already done.

"It (the gospel) was never intended to be an auxiliary to those good people who are desirous to give acceptable obedience to the divine law."

But it was intended to remove their mistake, that they may be obedient from a more divine principle; that is, reconciliation with God by Christ alone. And this, it is evident, is the main design of Mr. Marshall.

"All such, who are desirous to give acceptable obedience to the divine law, wheresoever they are, shall undoubtedly be happy without having any occasion to trouble their heads about the gospel."

All such who are of this character uniformly, and without contradiction. But it must be allowed, that there are many, even every natural man has a propensity to live by his own obedience, or to do, that he may live. At the same time, he is desirous of those things which are contrary to that obedience, whereby he forfeits the character and becomes guilty before God.

"Let us now observe the use of means to which our author directs:— Endeavour *diligently* to perform the great work of *believing* on Christ."

That is, in Mr. Marshall's sense, endeavour diligently to live by Christ alone, to be satisfied with him, to assure your soul of salvation by him, by what he has done and suffered; that you may in this way have a personal conscious enjoyment of him and his fulness, in which fulness we enjoy reconciliation with God, and every blessing tending to the obedience of love. Was Palæmon to direct to personal conscious enjoyment of Christ, he would tell us about working diligently, working in the way of painful desire

and fear, till we were crowned with enjoyment in a conviction that we were distinguished from others, by having faith, love, and self-denied obedience. Where lies the difference between the two, but that the latter says, Do that you may live, that you may be crowned with enjoyment: the other says, Live by Christ, that you may do: enjoy as sinners, that you live as saints?

“It is necessary that we should endeavour it, (i. e. to believe on Christ), and that before we find the Spirit of God working faith effectually in us, or giving strength to believe.”

Mr. Marshall here considers faith as a duty required by the law, which Palæmon also asserts. At the same time, he so explains himself, as it is evident faith neither justifies nor sanctifies as a duty, but by Christ alone believed in: and it is also evident he means not the divine passive conviction, but an obedience to the apostolic exhortation, a “trusting on a Saviour, as discovered by a testimony, which (as he says) is properly *believing on him*.”

He opposes, at the same time, the popular notion, that we must wait for God to give us something called faith, before we are to attempt to believe, or to live by his righteousness; whereas, in whomsoever faith is wrought, they immediately live by Christ alone; they wait for nothing, they see nothing to be waited for; but they see Christ’s sufficient work, and the grant of it to the guilty, a sufficient ground for immediate trust and confidence.

“Only (says Mr. Marshall) I shall prove that we are bound by the command of God thus to assure ourselves; and the Scripture does sufficiently warrant us, that we shall not deceive ourselves in believing a lie; but according to our faith, so shall it be to us, Matt. ix. 29. Here (says Palæmon,) is the great whirlpool of the popular doctrine.”

A very great mistake, to call this the popular doctrine; whereas Mr. W——d, Mr. W——y, and numbers more, such as have been named, are full as great adversaries to it as himself. Nor is any point more universally opposed, than that of assuring ourselves of salvation only from the grant of a sufficient righteousness in Jesus Christ to the guilty.

“When we have thus, according to our author, wrought ourselves into a new state.”

This representation is not just: would it be proper, when a man receives a present, or gift, to say that he works himself into it? It is true, he may meet with some opposition in the enjoyment of that which is freely given him. And in this case the Scripture prevents Palæmon’s reflection, by exhorting us to work out our own salvation, &c.

“According to him, there is no practice of holiness, but what proceeds from the persuasion of our state being changed.”

Rather from our persuasion of our reconciliation with God by Christ alone, arising, not from the conceit of our being better than others, or having done something towards it, but as given freely in Christ Jesus.

“This persuasion (of his state being changed) is his faith.”

No such matter. Mr. Marshall’s doctrine, or the truth believed in, his faith is, that there is a new state prepared in Christ for the guilty, which we are divinely authorised to enter into and enjoy, without any works at all; as, on the other hand, Palæmon’s doctrine leaves him working in painful desire and fear till he be crowned with enjoyment.

“If we hearken to this author, we must set out in the service of God, from the confidence of our being in a better state than other men.”

Is it not highly consistent that we should set out in the service of God, with the furniture God hath provided us? If God hath given to us eternal life in his Son, is not our first obedience to receive and enjoy the eternal life that is in him? This does not consist in any persuasion that we are better than other people, that there is any new state in Christ for us rather than for others; but it consists purely in what is inseparably in Christ Jesus, given to us in him, and only to be enjoyed in enjoying him. So that the whole is, we must set out as followers of our Lord, from the confidence of the eternal life given freely to us in Christ Jesus.

“He makes no account of the grand things testified of Christ, as any way sufficient to lead us to holiness, without a good opinion of our own state.”

Palæmon should say, if he would give a just representation, that Mr. Marshall makes no account of all that holiness which is not influenced by the reception and enjoyment of that new state, and eternal life, which is freely given to the guilty in Christ Jesus. Meanwhile, the opinion we have of our own state is, that it is stark naught, and cannot be mended. This is far from having a good opinion of it.

“Thus the ancient gospel, which, from the beginning, turned many from idols to serve the living God, is now set aside.”

The ancient gospel held forth the new state, and eternal life given in Christ, which we plead for.

I have nothing to say in defence of myself from the charge of patronising my creed by the names of fallible men. I acknowledge my fault. If I have not the doctrine of the apostles, what signifies having all the world on my side? And if I have them to keep me in countenance, it ought to be little concern though the whole world are against me.

“The use these people (*i. e.* the people in fellowship with W. C.) have for Christ is, to give them strength to do something toward their justification.”

Our appropriation stands in no opposition to free justification by Christ alone, but rather to Palæmon's coming to the knowledge of it only in a way of painful desire and fear.

But Palæmon's main objection to this reception or appropriation of Christ, and eternal life in him, is, that “this is doing something toward our justification.” To what has been already said, I would only add the following illustration:—A man has a large estate fallen to him by inheritance or legacy; he is now informed that he need do nothing toward his maintenance at all, for he has a sufficiency to live upon, and that it would dishonour his benefactor, and be a disgrace to him to think of it. The man believes this, and accordingly sits down to a plentiful table provided, under a notion that all things being ready, he has nothing to do but to *eat* or *enjoy*. Upon this, a virtuoso in criticism, like Palæmon, informs him, that to eat is to do something towards his maintenance: that the victuals, and in short every thing is his, without any act of his at all. So that if he imagines himself under any necessity of eating, he dishonours his benefactor, and denies the estate his benefactor has given to him, as though it was not in itself enough to maintain him, without doing something toward his own maintenance. What answer would this person in all likelihood return? Very probably he would say, You speak extremely absurd; for if I eat not, all my right and title to it will be of no service to me; I starve, I die in the midst of plenty; besides,

I love to eat. The case is as parallel as possible : our Lord says, He is "the bread of God come down from heaven, to give life to the world ; and that except we eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, we have no life in us."

This objection of Palæmon's is such a fine-spun cobweb of criticism, that he seems to have caught himself in it, while he was endeavouring to entangle us. "Is it possible (says he), after what we have seen, for any one to maintain, that these people look for acceptance with God, only through the sacrifice of Christ once offered for the sins of many ?"

Now, to look for acceptance with God only through the sacrifice of Christ, is the very thing we plead for, and he has been opposing. His argument has been, "The sacrifice of Christ is sufficient of itself. To appropriate, or to look for acceptance with God on that account, is evidently to do something towards our justification ; this is to set up in its stead another sacrifice of their own preparing and offering."

"He who maintains that we are justified only by faith, and at the same time affirms with Aspasio, that faith is a work exerted by the human mind, undoubtedly maintains, if he has any meaning to his words, that we are justified by a work exerted by the human mind."

May not Aspasio as readily retort, He who maintains that we are justified only by faith, and at the same time affirms with Palæmon, "That faith is a principle of life and action," undoubtedly maintains, if he has any meaning to his words, that we are justified by a principle of life and action ? The answer that retrieves him out of this difficulty, will also serve us.

I have now considered all that I apprehend we are concerned with in Mr. Sandeman's performance, not with a design to manifest his blemishes, or to defend Aspasio's, but to preserve the important truth he contended for from the objections arising through evident mistakes and misrepresentations. Not pleading for a manner of believing, either active or passive, but pleading against the private interpretation of those divine declarations, which are the sinner's only ground of immediate trust and confidence in that sufficient righteousness. It is no pleasure to me to find a people to whom my heart inclines on account of their appearing attachment to this sufficiency of Christ, at the same time so inclined to explain away those divine declarations, and tell us, that "God may, if he pleases, have mercy upon me," is all the conclusion that the guilty and destitute can draw from what God has revealed. Now, in this case, are we not to take heed, lest, under the notion of purer faith, "we depart from trusting in the living God," (to a labouring in painful desire and fear) "through an evil heart of unbelief?" And as there is a natural propensity in man to self-dependence, is there not a proportionate averseness in him to trust on the bare declarations of the divine word ? And may not this be the source of those pharisaic attempts Mr. Sandeman has so justly detected, of the objections that stand between us ; and also of those laboured inventions of others, to make out that men are saved by Christ in a way of natural necessary connexion : hereby at once setting aside the divine sovereignty, declarations, promises, or trust therein. I shall only add, that if what we have pleaded for is (without misrepresentation) proved a contradiction to the sufficiency of the finished work of Christ, then, and not till then, I shall see a necessity for understanding the Scriptures on this subject in another light than I do at present, and shall make my public acknowledgment accordingly.

DIRECTIONS

To the readers of *THERON and ASPASIO*, with respect to the amendments which were intended by *MR. HERVEY*, had he survived another Edition.—Taken from *MR. CUDWORTH'S Defence*.

PAGE 246. line 44. read, "This, he says, as it was wrought in the name and stead of the guilty, enemies and rebellious, was wrought out in my name, and in my stead; and is in a name and character that undoubtedly belong to me, and, according to the declarations of divine grace, sufficiently authorises me to draw near to God thereby."

P. 394. l. 36. "Not one among all the numberless productions which tread the ground, or stand rooted on the soil, wants any convenience that is proper for its respective state. And the same heavenly Father has provided, for the most guilty, the righteousness which is absolutely necessary to his present comfort, and his final happiness."

P. 395. l. 1. "Consider those stately poppies, &c., observe the young ravens, &c. He accommodates the former, though incapable of asking; he attends to the latter, though insensible of their Benefactor. He also regards our pressing wants; he has also superseded our earnest petitions by such free and unmerited gifts, as it is both his delight and his honour to bestow."

P. 395. l. 42. "So that nothing is required in order to our participation of Christ and his benefits. We receive them as the freest gifts; as matter of mere grace."

P. 396. l. 18. "The man without a wedding garment, &c. Your former mistakes, and present objections, tend to place you in the state of this unhappy creature. The returning prodigal came with no recommendation either of dress, of person, or of character: none but his nakedness and misery; his acknowledgment and vileness, which had every aggravating, not one extenuating circumstance."

P. 397. l. 13. "If there be any qualification, I think it is our extreme indigence; and this, I presume, you are not without."

P. 397. l. 25. "Sanctification, heavenly-mindedness, and a victory over our lusts, are not the qualities he requires, but the blessings which he confers."

P. 398. l. 44. "The greatest unworthiness is no objection in Christ's account; it is as much disavowed by the gospel, as equivocal generation is exploded by the discoveries of our improved philosophy."

P. 400. l. 14. "From the King, *whose name is the Lord of Hosts*, let us expect (if he vouchsafe to shew us any mercy) not barely what corresponds with our low models of generosity—much less what we suppose proportioned to our fancied deserts, but what is suitable to the unknown magnificence of his name, and the unbounded benevolence of his heart. Then we shall no longer be afraid assuredly to trust to the gracious declaration, 'that Christ Jesus is made of God to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: ' That he hath given himself for us, hath given himself to us, with all the blessings of his purchase, of his Spirit, and of eternal life."

P. 401. l. 7. "That we all deserve this misery, is beyond dispute. We are also told, that the Lord Jesus has satisfied divine justice."

P. 401. l. 27. "You are still corrupt; does this exclude you from being

the very person for whom the Saviour's righteousness is intended, and to whom it is promised?"

P. 401. l. 41. "And sure it cannot be a fanciful persuasion of our health which renders us proper objects of his recovering grace."

P. 402. l. 47. "I behold it (Theron's title) perfectly clear, not because you long or pray for it, but because the all-sufficient righteousness is granted to you a sinner in the record of the gospel."

P. 403. l. 9. "If any man, however unworthy his person, or obnoxious his character, thirst; thirst for something to make him happy—let him not seek to that which satisfieth not; but let him come to me, the fountain of living waters, and drink his fill."

"The clergyman," &c.

P. 403. l. 43. "They are to be enjoyed by every one. No exception is made."

P. 404. l. 10. "To us (says the prophet), a child is born."

P. 404. l. 27. "Since the Lord Jehovah has given us his Son, and all his unutterable merits; and also seals this grant unto us in every sacramental ordinance; why should we not confide in it, as firmer than the firmest deed, and far more invaluable than any royal patent?"

"*Ther.* My servant never," &c.

P. 410. l. 21. "It seems to be quite out of my reach."

"*Asp.* That is, because you still imagine something to be done by you, to entitle to this immaculate and perfect righteousness. You give no credit to those declarations of Heaven, which bring it near to your view, and home to your condition. Remember rather the words of our Lord, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

P. 410. l. 44. "Nothing short of these mercies can afford any satisfaction to the guilty conscience, or true satisfaction to the restless soul."

"Say not, then, my dear friend, that Christ, and the blessings of his purchase, are beyond your reach. They are now, even now at your door."

P. 411. l. 37. "If you heard his voice, you would believe on him agreeable thereto. You then open the door, and he sups with you, makes his abode with you, manifests his salvation, and communicates his blessings. If you believed his promising word, you would no longer hesitate to believe on him accordingly. You then sup with him. This will be refreshing to your distressed soul, as the most sumptuous banquet to the famished stomach and craving appetite." *Expunge all from here to the words,*

"*Ther.* This I believe—That I am a lost sinner," &c.

P. 412. l. 12. "He that believes on the Son, hath—a chimerical? far from it—a real substantial happiness; even everlasting life."

P. 412. l. 23. "Can you doubt of his willingness to save the chief of sinners? or his sincerity in his declarations? Then go to Mount Calvary."

P. 412. l. 36. "What a stranger was I then to the blindness of my understanding, and the hardness of my heart! to my bondage under unbelief, and my natural averseness to the way of salvation by grace, through faith!

"*Asp.* Are you sure this is not now your case? This sentiment, though ever so just, will not palliate your present infidelity. Since the great Jehovah has declared the grant of his Son to you a sinner; since he has thus given to you eternal life in him; since he has warranted your immediate reception and enjoyment, by his commands, invitations, and promises, you make him a liar in all; you reject his word as not to be depended on, every moment you thus unbelievingly hesitate." *Expunge from here to the words,*

"*Ther.* But is not faith the work of God's Spirit? How, or in what manner," &c.

P. 413. l. 23. "I very much question whether I shall ever be able to attain it.

"*Asp.* The true belief, Theron, has no existence without its proper object, Christ, and is never to be considered in the light you speak of; that is, as a most refined and exalted virtue. When, upon the divine grant in the word, you behold Christ as your given righteousness and strength, then you truly believe; you believe God's truth, which can never deceive; you receive the gift which enriches you with grace and glory. But permit me to ask," &c.

P. 423. l. 42. "If you rely on the all-sufficiency of his gracious declarations, as the foundation of immediate trust or confidence, as well as the all-sufficiency of his power."

P. 423. l. 50. "Let the most wretched sinner, and most afflicted soul, trust in the name of the Lord."

In note p. 428. "We only affirm, that an appropriating persuasion of salvation by Christ alone, is that confidence which properly answers to the divine report and grant of a Saviour to be believed on for everlasting life."

P. 433. l. 4. "*Asp.* The *if* is what I greatly question; but of this I am certain, that you are still inclined to spare *Agag*."

P. 433. l. 18. "You ask, Whether the state of these persons is safe, and their faith real? I answer, What evidence is there of their safety, or their faith, while Christ, the only security, is neglected, and the free grant of him to sinners thus disbelieved? Besides, why should," &c.

P. 433. 45. "God has freely loved me, so as to give his Son unto me; Christ has graciously died for me, to take share in his death as my own; and the Holy Ghost sanctifies me, in the belief and appropriating confidence arising from these precious truths."

P. 434. l. 42. "When the divine Spirit, speaking in the gracious declarations of the gospel, manifests the grant of Christ to me a sinner, then am I enabled to receive and appropriate his death as the desert of my sins, and his obedience as the matter of my justification."

P. 436. l. 44. "May I firmly believe on Christ for everlasting life? May I firmly believe, that in this infinitely meritorious Redeemer I have granted unto me pardon and acceptance?" &c.

P. 436. l. 49. "I do more than pardon my dear Theron: I feel for him, and I sympathize with him: not because he has not sufficient evidence from God's word for trusting in Christ for everlasting life, but because I have also felt that perverse tendency in my own heart, to mistrust the infallible word of my God, as though he was less to be depended on than fallible man."

In like manner were to be corrected, all other passages in his writings which might be understood as making thirstings, awakenings, earnest prayers, sorrows, tears, good desires, or sense of unworthiness, as the encouragement for confidence. This Mr. Hervey acknowledged was inconsistent with his main design, which was to come to God by Him only who was able to save, to save to the uttermost: but he had been drawn sometimes into this way of expressing himself by too great a regard for the current customs; and not considering, that, till the divine relieving truth appear in view, the wishes and desires of the distressed are as much pointed against the salvation of the guilty, as the carelessness of the profane. He was sensible, that "the gospel

history gives us no instance of an unbeliever diligent to obtain faith ;" and therefore intended to expunge every thing that tended to encourage such mistakes.

When he took notice of "a speculative assent to all the principles of religion," he intended by it such agreeing with the current opinions as will stand consistent with sentiments quite subversive of the saving truth : not such a knowledge of the truth as the apostle speaks of, when he says, "Ye know the truth, and that no lie is of the truth." He well knew, that there was no man, but he that is taught of God, could be satisfied with the apostolic account of salvation ; and would have informed Theron, had he another opportunity, "that if he attempted to do any thing, easy or difficult, under the notion of an act of believing, or any other act, in order to his acceptance with God, he only thereby heaped up more wrath against himself."

He was also sensible, that a man may be very useful and amiable amongst men, and at the same time an utter enemy to the grace of God's kingdom ;— that he had been too forward in commendations of those who were no friends to apostolic Christianity. His design was only to commend what was amiable in every one, passing over their blemishes. In this design, he acknowledged, he was carried to an extreme. When he says of Erasmus and Locke, that they sat at the feet of Jesus, he only meant to express in an elegant way, that they betook themselves to the reading of the Scriptures, and not to vindicate their notions.

And he counted it an observation well worthy regard, that "it may be maintained by some, that conversion is carried on by grace assisting nature ; and by others, that this matter is wholly conducted by irresistible grace ; and yet both sides may be equally disaffected to that doctrine which maintains the work finished by Christ on the cross, to be the only requisite to justification. And that while many Christian teachers maintain, that no man can be eminently virtuous without divine energy, they say no more than Heathen philosophers have said before them."

These remarks and observations may be sufficient to direct the intelligent reader of Theron and Aspasio to avoid needless objections, and also to improve that performance more agreeably to the Scriptures and the author's own mind.

It appears by the Letters prefixed to this Defence, that an improvement of Mr. Marshall's book was intended, to obviate as much as possible all objections which through the pressing importunities of the printer, and Mr. Hervey's hopes of accomplishing a fourth volume of Theron and Aspasio, was not executed. The following is a plan of such improvement, where by changing the fourteen directions into the form of Assertions or Propositions, the strongest objections are enervated.

Assertion I.—That practice and manner of life which the Scripture calls holiness, righteousness, or godliness, obedience, true religion, is not attained by our most resolved endeavours, but is given through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue.

Assert. II.—No man can love God till he knows him, nor till he knows him to be his everlasting friend. Therefore, the spring of true holiness is a well-grounded persuasion of our reconciliation with God, and of our future enjoyment of the everlasting heavenly happiness, and of sufficient strength given in him for all he calls us unto.

Assert. III.—These endowments, so necessary to the obedience of love,

are contained in the fulness of Christ, and are enjoyed only by union and fellowship with him.

Assert. IV.—The mean or instrument whereby the Spirit of God accomplisheth our union with Christ, and our fellowship with him in all holiness, is the gospel, whereby Christ entereth into our hearts, begetting us to the faith whereby we actually receive Christ himself, with all his fulness, unto the hope of eternal life by him. And thus, by the influence of the Spirit of truth, we unfeignedly believe the gospel, and also believe on Christ, as he is revealed and freely promised to us therein, for all his salvation.

Assert. V.—The practice of true holiness is not attained by any endeavours of our natural state, but is a blessing of that new state given in Jesus Christ, and partaken of by union and fellowship with Christ through faith.

Assert. VI.—Those that endeavour to perform sincere obedience to all the commands of Christ, as the condition whereby they are to procure for themselves a right and title to salvation, and a good ground to trust on him for the same, do seek their salvation by the works of the law, and not by the faith of Christ as he is revealed in the gospel; and they shall never be able to perform sincerely any true holy obedience by all such endeavours.

Assert. VII.—We are not to imagine, that our hearts and lives must be changed from sin to holiness, in any measure, before we may safely venture to trust on Christ for the sure enjoyment of himself and his salvation.

Assert. VIII.—True holiness of heart and life hath its due order where God hath placed it, that is, after union with Christ, justification, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is not therefore to be expected but in that order, as what accompanies salvation.

Assert. IX.—It is only by the comforts of the gospel, revealing a just God and a Saviour, that God works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Assert. X.—The comforts of the gospel, necessary to Christian obedience, contain sufficient grounds of assurance of our salvation, not because we believe, but in a way of immediate trust and confidence. Therefore, instead of seeking other methods of peace and holiness, we must endeavour to believe or trust on Christ confidently; persuading and assuring ourselves, according to the divine declarations, that God freely gives to us an interest in Christ and his salvation, according to his gracious promise.

Assert. XI.—It is therefore belonging to the practical part of the Christian life, to maintain the same immediate trust and confidence in dependence on the divine faithfulness, not to suffer us to be confounded, that so our enjoyment of Christ, union and fellowship with him, and all holiness by him, may be continued and increased in us.

Assert. XII.—The Scripture calls upon Christians to walk no longer according to the principles or means of practice that belong unto the natural or original state of man, but only according to that new state given in Christ, which we receive by faith, and the principles and means of practice that properly belong thereunto; and to strive to continue and increase in such a manner of practice.

Assert. XIII.—All ordinances of divine appointment, for the establishment and increase of our faith and love, are to be considered only in this way of believing in Christ, and walking in him according to this new state given in him.

Assert. XIV.—That we may be confirmed in holiness only by believing in Christ, and walking in him by faith, according to the former assertions, we may take encouragement from the great advantages of this way, and excellent properties of it.

A RECOMMENDATORY LETTER from MR. HERVEY to the Publisher of a New Edition of MARSHALL on Sanctification.

SIR,—It gives me no small pleasure to hear, that you are going to republish Mr. Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*. The instruction, consolation, and spiritual improvement, which I myself have received from that solid and judicious treatise, excite in me a pleasing hope, that it may be equally instructive and advantageous to others.

The recommendation of it in Theron and Aspasio, with which you propose to introduce the new edition, is at your service. To this proposal I consent the more readily, because Mr. Marshall's book may be looked upon as no improper supplement to those Dialogues and Letters, the author of which intended to have closed his plan with a dissertation on practical holiness, or evangelical obedience. But this design was dropped, partly on account of his very declining health, partly because the work swelled under his hands far beyond his expectation.

He has been advised once more to resume the pen, and treat that grand subject with some degree of copiousness and particularity. If he should be enabled to execute what he acknowledges to be expedient, the doctrines already discussed, and the privileges already displayed, will furnish the principal materials for his essay. Justification, free justification, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, is the sacred fleece from which he would spin his thread, and weave his garment; agreeably to that important text, "Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God," 1 Cor. vi. 20. If Providence, in all things wise, and in all things gracious, should see fit to withhold either time or ability for the accomplishment of my purpose, I do, by these presents, nominate and depute Mr. Marshall to supply my lack of service.

Mr. Marshall expresses my thoughts; he prosecutes my scheme; and not only pursues the same end, but proceeds in the same way. I shall therefore rejoice in the prospect of having the Gospel Mystery of Sanctification stand as a fourth volume to Theron and Aspasio. Might I be allowed, without the charge of irreverence, to use the beautiful images of an inspired writer, I could with great satisfaction say, "If *this* be a wall, *that* will build upon it a palace of ivory; if *this* be a door, *that* will enclose it with boards of cedar," Cant. viii. 9.

Mr. Marshall represents true holiness as consisting in the love of God, and the love of man: that unforced, unfeigned, and most rational love of God, which arises from a discovery of his unspeakable mercy and infinite kindness to us; that cordial, disinterested, and universal love of man, which flows from the possession of a satisfactory and delightful portion in the Lord

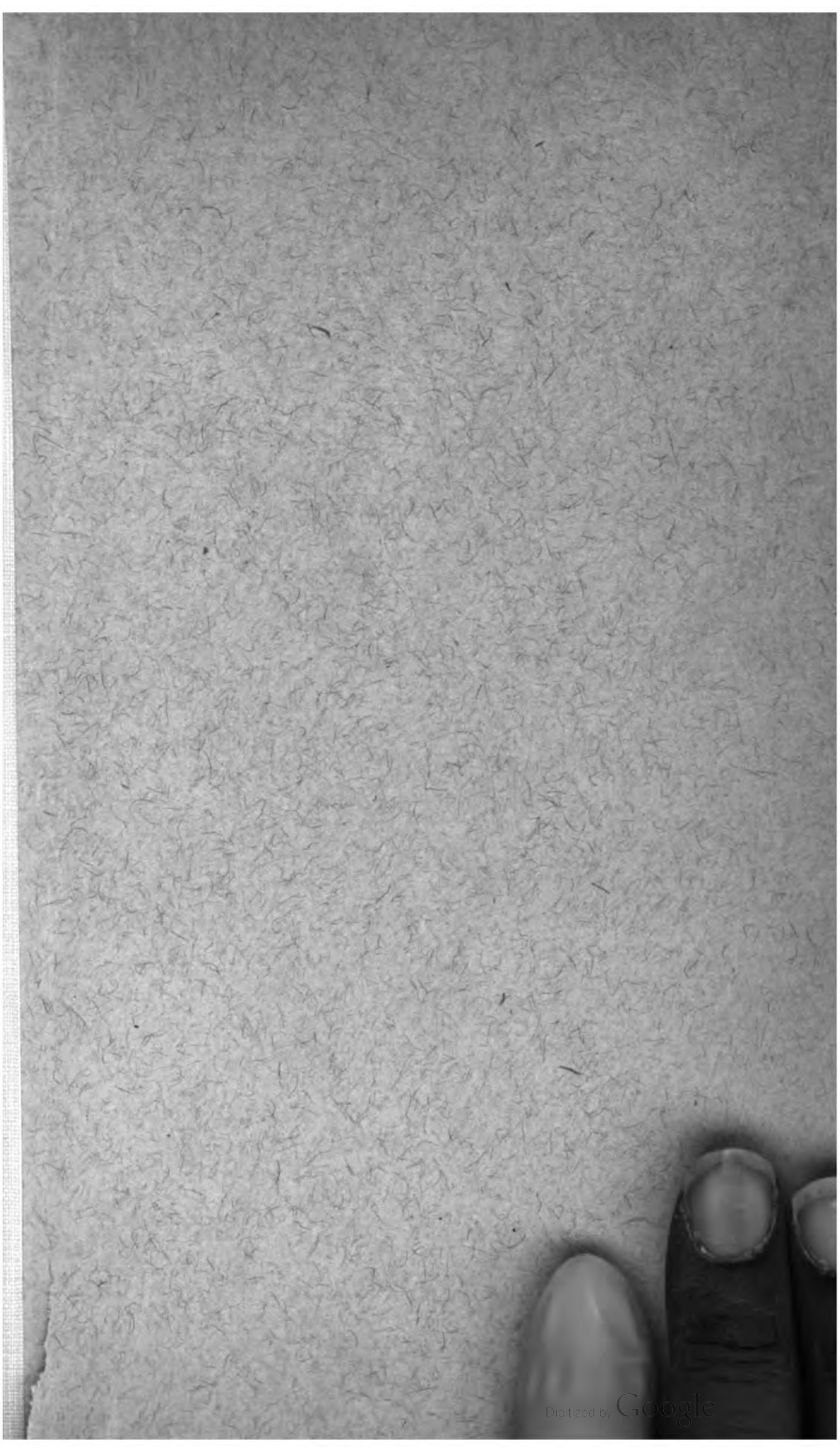
* It is said, by the very best judge of propriety in sacred writing, "Great is the mystery of godliness," 1 Tim. iii. 16. This passage, I presume, Mr. Marshall had in his view, when he pitched upon a *title* for his book. And this passage will render it superior to all censure, unexceptionably just and proper.

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