

Letter to James Hervey October 15, 1756

From John Wesley

Source: John Telford, *The Letters of John Wesley*, vol. 3, pp. 371-388

John Telford's Introduction:

Hervey's *Theton and Aspasio* was published in February 1755 in three octavo volumes. Wesley had seen the first three Dialogues in manuscript, and had suggested some alterations. When he read the volumes, he sent further thoughts upon them to Hervey, but received no answer. He wrote again in October 1756. The letter was published by Wesley in a 2s. pamphlet, *A Preservative against Unsettled Notions in Religion*. Hervey told a friend on June 23, 1758, that he took very little notice of the letter and let it lie by him several months. He wrote some letters in reply, which he gave to William Cudworth with a view to publication; but on his death-bed he told his brother he did not wish them to be issued. What William Hervey calls a surreptitious edition of them got into print, and he then published them in a volume in 1765. The replies to Wesley's strictures cover 297 pages. The Rev. J. C. Natrass found on studying Hervey's MS. that the passages which deeply wounded Wesley were Hervey's, and not interpolations by Cudworth, as Wesley thought. See *Journal*, iv. 103n, and for Wesley's interview with Cudworth, iv. 303; *W.H.S.* xii. 35-6; see also letters of March 20, 1739, and November 29, 1758.

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 favored 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 these 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 labored, the language too stiff and affected Yet the reflections on the creation, in the thirty-first and following pages, make abundant amends for this. (I cite the pages according to the Dublin edition, having wrote the rough draught of what follows in Ireland.)

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" (page 39) I allow; if by that ambiguous expression you mean only, as you here explain it yourself, "They are as effectual for obtaining our salvation as if they were our own personal qualifications" (page 41).

“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” (page 43). 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.” (Page 45.)

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 labored head of discourse. Oh 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: -

“Satisfaction was made to the divine law” (page 54). 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” (page 74). 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” (page 120). 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” (page 135). 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” (page 145). 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” (page 148) 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 the 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” (page 149). 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” (page 150). That remains to be proved. Many allow the former who cannot allow the latter.

“The righteousness which justifies us is already wrought out” (page 151). A crude, unscriptural expression! “It was set on foot, carried on, completed.” Oh 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” (page 152). 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” (page 153). 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” (page 154). 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 of our final acceptance” (page 155). 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 honor by the perfect obedience of Christ” (page 156). 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 practiced in its full extent.

“On those who reject the atonement, just severity” (page 157). 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” (page 159). Not so: there may be as many degrees in the favor 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” (Page 190.) He tells you himself, “To him that believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, faith is imputed for righteousness” (Rom iv. 5). “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” (page 190). How does this agree with page 45, “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” (page 195). 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 an 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” (Page 197). 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” (page 198). 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” (page 200). No; the natural sense of the words 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” (ibid.). Nay; the plain meaning is, He alone is truly righteous whose faith worketh by love.

“St. James speaks of the justification of our faith” (page 201). 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 apostasy” (page 202). How pleasing is 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” (page 216). 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” (Page 222.) 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” (page 226). So do I; and yet I believe â€”He obtained for all a possibility of salvation.

“The terms of acceptance for fallen man were a full satisfaction to the divine justice and a complete conformity to the divine law” (page 227). This you take for granted; but I cannot allow it. The terms of acceptance for fallen man 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” (ibid.). 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” (page 253). 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 (1) that this is said of David in a particular respect, not with regard to his whole character; (2) 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 sheepfolds” (Ps. lxxviii. 70-1). 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 ca, me, say as truly, “Whosoever is born of God sinneth not” (page 261). 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 the words which occur in the 270th page â€”

“O children of Adam, you are no longer obliged to love God with all your strength, nor your neighbor as yourselves. Once, indeed, I insisted on 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 fulfill 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” (Page 291.) 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” (page 292), 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” (ibid.). There must be an interest in Christ, and then “every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.”

“A rebel may be forgiven without being restored to the dignity of a son” (page 293). 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” (page 295) -- 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” (ibid.) -- 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” (Ibid.) 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” (page 296). I cannot prove that either one or the other was requisite in order to His purchasing redemption for us.

“By Christ's sufferings alone the law was not satisfied” (page 297). 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 the Scripture ascribes the whole of our salvation to the death of Christ a part of His humiliation is put for the whole” (ibid.). 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” (page 300) -- 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: (1) From that, “Thou gavest them to Me.” Nay; when any believe, “the Father gives them to Christ.” But this proves no such previous contract. (2) “God hath laid upon Him the iniquities of us all.” Neither does this prove any such thing. (3) 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. (4) “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’” (page 301). Nay; here is no mention of any covenant, nor anything from which it can be inferred. “The recompense 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, Isa. xlix., from the 1st to the 6th verse” (ibid.). 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.

“By the covenant of works man was bound to obey in his own person” (page 302). 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’” (page 303). 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” (ibid.). We see no such thing in this text. We see here only a promise of a Savior made by God to man.

“It is true I cannot fulfill the conditions” (ibid.). It is not true. The conditions of the new covenant are, “Repent and believe”; and these you can fulfill 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 endeavor 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" (page 308). 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" (page 309). 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 Thirty-first Article. Is it therefore fair, is it honest, for anyone to plead the *Articles* of our Church in defense of Absolute Predestination, seeing the *Seventeenth Article* barely defines the term without either affirming or denying the thing, whereas the Thirty-first totally overthrows and razes it from the foundation

"Believers who are notorious transgressors in themselves have a sinless obedience in Christ" (ibid.). Oh syren song! Pleasing sound to James Wheatley, Thomas Williams, James Relly!

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 un-advisedly with his lips" (vol. ii. p. 44). 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'" (Page 46.) I believe not. You and I are only able to answer for ourselves. "Do not they say, 'We groan, being burthened 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" (page 47). Nay; surely in paradise, if no sooner. "This is a noble prerogative of the beatific vision." No; it will 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 word is "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. Beside, 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 honor" (page 48). And will the righteousness of faith have its due honor 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" (ibid.). 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 anything do this like perfect love.

"It will endear the blood and intercession of Christ" (page 49). Nay; these can never be so dear to any as to those who experience their full virtue, who are "filled with the fullness" of God. Nor can any "feel their continual need" of Christ or "rely on Him" in the manner which these do.

"The claims of the law are all answered" (Dialogue 14, p. 57). 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" (page 59). 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 (1) that they are unscriptural; (2) 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." (Page 91.)

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.

"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. 20-1). 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 *Articles*. 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*. (Letter 3, P. 93.)

"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 Savior. When this is the case, I am very little solicitous about any particular forms of expression" (page 101.) O lay aside, then, those questionable, dangerous forms, and keep closely to the scriptural!

"The authority of our Church and of those eminent divines" (**Letter 4**, p. 105) 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" (ibid.). 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" (page 107). 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. (Page 109.)

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 (page 110).

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” (page 11).

“Sion shall be redeemed with judgment,” after severe punishment, “and her converts with righteousness,” with the tender mercy of God following that punishment (page 112).

“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” (page 113).

“My righteousness,” My mercy, “shall not be abolished” (page 114).

“To make reconciliation for iniquity,” to atone for all our sins, “and to bring in everlasting righteousness,” spotless holiness into our souls. And this righteousness is not human, but divine. It is the gift and the work of God. (Page 116.)

“The Lord our Righteousness,” the author both of our justification and sanctification (page 117).

“What righteousness shall give us peace at the last day, inherent or imputed” (Page 127.) Both. Christ died for us and lives in us, “that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.”

“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. (**Letter 5**, p, 131.)

“Therein is revealed the righteousness of God,” God's method of justifying sinners (page 132).

“We establish the law, as we expect no salvation without a perfect conformity to it -- namely, by Christ” (page 135). Is not this a mere quibble and a quibble which, after all the labored evasions of Witsius [Hermann Witsius (1636-1705), Professor at Utrecht and then at Leyden. His principal work, *De Oeconomia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus*, 1677, sought unsuccessfully to mediate between the Orthodox and the Federalists.] 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;” none 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” (page 138). 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” (page 139). 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” (ibid.). 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 *das* and *daa*, and cannot conceive on what authority it is founded. Oh, how deep an aversion to inward holiness does this scheme naturally create! (Page 140.)

“The righteousness they attained could not be any personal righteousness” (page 142). Certainly it was: it was implanted as well as imputed.

“For ‘instruction in righteousness,’ in the righteousness of Christ” (page 145). 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 (page 146).

“That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.’ Not intrinsically, but imputatively.” (Page 148.) 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” (page 152).

“My faith fixes on both the meritorious life and atoning death of Christ” (page 153). 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 atmosphere, and comprises abundance of sense in a narrow compass, expressed in beautiful language.

Gems have “a seat on the virtuous fair one’s breast” (page 177). 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 favorable, 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 Savior’s obedience” (page 182). Oh say, with the good old Puritans, “Our Savior’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 (page 194).

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” (page 241) 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 flavored tea, finely scented coffee, the friendly bowl, the pyramid of Italian figs, and the pastacia nut of Aleppo” (page 264). 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, insriga.* [“If they do not rave enough of their own accord, stir them up.”]

“Those treasures which spring from the imputation of Christ's righteousness” (**Letter 10**, p. 271). 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” (page 285). 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” (page 287). 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.

“Faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ is a fundamental principle in the gospel” (**Letter 11**, p. 288). 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” (page 297). Are not these descriptions far too strong May

they not occasion unprofitable reasonings in many readers *Ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet*. ["Medea must not slay her children in the presence of the people."]

"How can he justify it to the world" (Page 298.) 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'" (page 304). What, without the atonement Strange fondness for an unscriptural, dangerous mode of expression!

"So the merits of Christ are derived to all the faithful" (page 306). 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." (Page 310.) Suppose, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" then I am not obliged to love my neighbor: 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 and the purchase." (Page 311.) 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

Consigned their unborn souls to hell,

And damned them from their mother's womb!

[Poetical Works of J. and C. Wesley (Hymns on God's Everlasting Love), iii. 33.]

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." (Page 318.) 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 not He design they should And this you call goodness; this is tender mercy!

"May we not discern pregnant proofs of goodness in each individual object" (Page 321.) 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 comfort and his final acceptance" (Page 334.) 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 abhorred,

The servant were above his Lord. [Ibid. iii. 29.]

“The wedding garment’ here means holiness” (page 337).

“This is His tender complaint, “They will not come unto Me!” (page 340). 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 favorable 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.” (Page 341.) 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” (page 342). 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”--namely, 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” (page 362). 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” (page 440). 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’s 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.