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THE
WHOLE WORKS

OF
THE LATE

REV. JAMES HERVEY, A. M.

RECTOR OF WESTON-PAVEL, IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

A New Edition.

VOL. IV.

CONTAINING

ASPASIO VINDICATED,

In Eleven Letters from Mr Hervey to Mr Wesley, in Answer
to that Gentleman's Remarks on Theron and Aspasio.

WITH MR WESLEY'S LETTER PREFIXED.)



TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A DEFENCE OF THERON AND ASPASIO,

AGAINST

THE OBJECTIONS CONTAINED IN MR SANDEMAN'S
LETTERS ON THERON AND ASPASIO.

WITH

MR HERVEY'S LETTERS TO THE AUTHOR PREFIXED.

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P R E F A C E.

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 very 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 Fa-

* Afterwards he read it again, and gave it, what he calls in the beginning of the first letter, “a careful perusal.”

ther 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 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."

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 persons who solicited the publication, I could not be per-

suaded 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*.

* The quotations from Theron and Aspasio, are distinguished by double inverted commas.

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.

“ 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 any thing 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 subtilty.

“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, shews 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. 6. 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 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!” 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 can't 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, Psa. lxxix. 71. It was in the 2d or 3d 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 fulfil 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 suffering 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 every thing necessary for our redemption, namely, in a covenant made with the Father.” 'Tis sure he did every thing 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 any thing 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.

“ 'Tis true, I cannot fulfil the conditions.” 'Tis not true; the conditions of the new covenant are, repent and believe; and these you can fulfil, through Christ strengthening you. “ 'Tis 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 our's 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 our's, 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 Wheately! Thomas Williams! James Reiley!

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 burthened with the workings of inbred corruption?” You know this is not the meaning of the text. The whole context shews, 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 shew 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.

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.” 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 *dikaiosyne* and *dikaioma*, and cannot conceive on what authority it is founded. O how deep an aversion to inward holiness does this scheme naturally create!

“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 comprizes abundance of sense in a narrow compass, and expressed in beautiful language.

Gems have “ a seat on the virtuous fair one’s breast.” I can’t 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 shew 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 master-piece, 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 Pastacia 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

Consigned their unborn souls to hell,
And damned 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 comfort, 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 abhorred,
The servant were above his Lord.

“ The wedding-garment 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 fa-

yourable 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 intermixt 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 seasonableness 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 objection, 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.

REV. 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

* 1 Thes. iv. 11. *Philatocisthai*, a beautiful word, rich with meaning, and not adequately translated by *make it your ambition*, still more inadequately by our common version.

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 the 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 anything 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 acknowledgment. “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 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.

* Prov. ix. 9. The original phrase is only *dat*—give, which may signify, give *admonition*, as well as (what our version has supposed) *instruction*.

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 must 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, shewing 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 only propose, another definition. Well, then, to differ from you as little as possible, nay, to agree with you as far as truth will permit, since you are so loth to admit of our representation, we will accede to your's ; 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 full 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

* 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

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 dropt 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 from 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†. And were not the sacrifices, was not their imputation typical of Christ, and things pertaining to Christ? The former prefiguring his all-sufficient ex-

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. And why should we not all speak with the Scriptures? Why should we not use the expressions of the Apostle? He says, 'justified by the blood of Christ;' he says, 'made righteous by the obedience of Christ;' when therefore we say, sinners are pardoned and accepted through the blood, and through the obedience of Christ, we have a warrant for our doctrine, which is indisputable, and a precedent for our language, which is unexceptionable.

† Lev. vij. 18. "If any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace-offerings, be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed unto him that offereth it." It shall not be accepted. Why? for this reason, because it shall not be *imputed*. A plain indication, that the latter is the cause of the former; that without *imputation*, whether it be of the typical or real sacrifice—the blood of the beast, or the death of Christ, there is no acceptance.

piation, the latter shadowing forth the way whereby we are partakers of its efficacy. The righteousness (not the righteousness 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 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?

“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 a 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 *higgajan selah*, or *imputed*) without its idea, poison the principles of men, and induct 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 future happiness, by their own good behaviour. Hence it will appear, that he had 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 embarrass, 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* *, and that *righteousness might be imputed* †. Now, is it possible, that there should be righteousness imputed, yet not an imputed righteousness? To assert this, must argue either a wonderful subtile 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

* Rom. iv. 6.

† Rom. iv. 11.

account," "as effectual as if our own 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 then 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 the world, 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 coagency, 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 shew 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 our 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 acknowledgement, 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 shewn 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*, 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 †.”

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

* Heb. iv. 10.

† Isaiah lvii. 12.

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 that 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 enquires, 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 is never weary of viewing or reviewing either the active or passive obedience of Immanuel. Faith will declare, that neither of these points can be set forth in too strong or too recommending a light. Faith is ever desiring to see 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 God 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

Yours, &c.

LETTER II.

REV. SIR,

I am particularly pleased at my entrance on this epistle, 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 *anomia*, 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 *?' Why

* Gal. iv. 4. There is, I think, something uncouth in this expression, 'made under the law.' *Genomenos*, 'tis true, very well comports with both the clauses, *ek gynaiicos upo nomon*. But in the English translation, the participle might, not ungracefully, be varied, perhaps

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 dead? 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 pur-

in some such manner; ‘the Son of God was made of a woman, and became subject to the law.’

* Rom. vii. 1, 4. The word *ze* 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*.

† See Explan. Notes, Rom. vii. 1.

chase 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 connection 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 shewn 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. 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? 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

* Rom. v. 19.

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 asserted in Scripture, the latter is not expressly asserted there." A small inaccuracy here; Sir! the former is no more a Scripture 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 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, those 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 their 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."

"The whole world of believers." "This is an expression which never occurs in Scripture." It affords me a kind of presumptive proof, that solid objections are not at hand, when such shadows are listed in the service. I should 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 none but Scriptural expressions? Had we done this, one benefit might indeed have accrued to the public: It would considerably have reduced our volumes.—But I trifle as well as Mr Wesley. You proceed to enforce your remonstrance, 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 it's finished, it's past,
The world is forgiven for Jesus' sake.

The world forgiven? What, all the world? Every child of Adam? They who believe not on Christ and die in their sins? This you cannot mean; this 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 partem colit asseminervam*. 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 shew 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 ayto* 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, any thing 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 we will 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

• See. p. 56. of Hymns and Spiritual Songs: Anonymous indeed, but universally ascribed to Mr Wesley. In these excellent lines, how strongly marked are the sentiments of the gospel! Our offences so fully imputed to Christ, as to be accounted his: His righteousness so fully imputed to us, as to be accounted our's. In him we are complete, because his most obedient life, and his all-atonement death are our's. We are guiltless, not through our repentance or reformation, but because he has died for us. We are righteous, not on account of any graces or attainments of our own, but because he has lived for us. To these truths I most cordially subscribe. This is that good old wine that once made Mr Wesley's heart glad. He has since tasted new; but I hope he will be brought to say, “ the old is better.”

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."

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 recommending 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

* *None else*—Not any person, nor any thing. *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. For the vindication of this version, see Vitringa *in loc.*

‡ *Shall swear*. Our translation seems to discontinue the divine speech here; which weakens the force and diminishes the dignity of the passage. I apprehend Jehovah is still speaking, and in the following words prescribes the form of the confession, or dictates the words of the oath, in which sinners shall testify their allegiance, even the allegiance of faith. Agreeably to this supposition, I would translate the word *aman*—saying. It will then denote, not *one*, or a few, but every tongue mentioned in the foregoing verse. *Lachin*. I am aware is of the feminine gender; but every reader knows how often the Hebrews neglect the nicety of grammatical construction; and every reader sees that the idea of *aiah* or of a *person*, is comprehended in the word *tongue*.

§ The prophet's *an*—surely, is something like the Apostle's *alla menouge*—yea, doubtless, Phil. iii. 8. The Holy Ghost teaches believers to speak with vehemence upon this point, to signify their steadfast and resolute affiance in the glorious Redeemer, together with the mighty and matchless importance of this faith. I have taken in this idea, because it is suggested by the English translation, though I prefer the exclusive sense *only*, as implying an absolute and total renunciation of every other confidence.

|| *Righteousness*. This is the precise signification of *nadkih*, 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.

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 sufferings, "be ye saved." This is the mysterious, but certain way of salvation. Thus 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 excellences. "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 ever 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, and the perpetual improvement of this inestimable privilege, I have *strength* for my sanctification. Now do I indeed delight myself in the Lord, who, perfectly reconciled and infinitely gracious, has done so great things for me; now do I cordially love my neighbour, and being so happy myself, unfeignedly long for his eternal happiness, that he may be a partaker with me of this great salvation.

To this sovereign decree, the prophet sets as it were his seal, or else in a transport of joy, he fortells the accomplishment of it. Yes, my brethren, *to him*, even to this gracious Redeemer, *shall men come*. I see them flying as clouds for multitude, as doves for speed. They believe the report of his gospel, and

receive of his fulness. Whereas, *all they that are offended in him*, that cannot away with his doctrine, which pours contempt upon all human excellency, and will allow no righteousness to avail but that which is divine; who refuse to come unto him, poor and miserable, and stript of every recommendation; all they *shall be ashamed*. The fig-leaves of their own duties, or their own endowments, shall neither adorn them for glory, nor screen them from wrath, but shall abandon them to vengeance, and cover them with double confusion. While on the other hand, *all the seed of Israel*, every true believer, shall be justified in the Lord. Against those persons no accusation shall be valid: No condemnation shall take place. So magnificent is the majesty, so surpassingly efficacious are the merits of their Saviour, that in him they shall not only confide, *but glory*; not only be safe, but triumphant: Clothed with his incomparable righteousness, they shall challenge every adversary, and defy every danger. To this portion of Scripture I have led back your thoughts, that I might not close with any disgusting sentiments, but might leave a sweet savour on your mind, on the reader's mind, and on the mind of Rev. Sir, your's, &c.

LETTER III.

REV. 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 will 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?

* "They who receive the gift of righteousness." Rom. v. 17.

This is an unworthy thought; this were an unsufferable 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 stedfast 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. Shewing 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

* 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 incontestable argument for the necessity of an imputed righteousness?

truly, or rather infinitely meritorious, therefore the man was one person with the Godhead.

Still it may be enquired, 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 completely effected. In this method, I see a propriety and an efficacy that silence my doubts, and comfort my heart. Accordingly, it is written in the Scriptures; "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." *God*; the work was too arduous, to be performed by a created agent; therefore God himself *was in Christ*. None 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, that was needful for this great purpose. Being himself the creditor, the sponsor, and payer of the debt, how was all this brought to pass? By *not imputing 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 conduct 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 any thing 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,

Our's is his righteousness divine.

Theron, speaking of the terms *inherent* and *imputed*, calls them nice distinctions 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 attested, 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 not 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 incogitancy 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 19, 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 I am 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? If so, we have an authority from Scripture, we have the example of the chiefest Apostle, for this way of thinking and speaking.

We have also a concurrent testimony from the genius and import of the original language. Do not *ypakoe* and *dikaiosyne* signify somewhat different from *aima* and *thanatos*? Are there any approved writers who use these words promiscuously, 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 blame who considers them distinctly, and examines each property in a separate treatise?

tise? You would commend this practice in the philosopher, as the way to enter thoroughly into the knowledge of his subject; and why should 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 rich advantage to the serious enquirer?

“The righteousness which justifies sinners, is already wrought out,” says Aspasio: “A crude unscriptural expression,” replies Mr Wesley. It may be so. But if the expression is plain and true, I will sit down content. This, however, you 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? Or 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 doctrines ascribed to philosophy. But this I have heard, and this I believe, that 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 shew 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 this 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 redemp-

tion obtained for us ! The former divine ! The latter eternal ! These, rightly understood, make us, beyond all the treasures of literature, wise. These, 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, and 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 law, says, Believe in me, and live. Be verily persuaded, that I am sufficient for thy salvation, with-

out 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 obedience of faith. The obedience suited to the name, Jesus; obedience to the first and great command of the gospel. Beyond all other expedients, it excludes boasting; and at the same time produces that genuine love, that filial fear, which the law of works requires in vain.

Only to make a thing possible, and to effect it, are widely different. When our king fits out a fleet, and gives his admiral a commission to harass the French coasts, and destroy the French shipping, he makes the thing possible; but to carry the design into execution, to accomplish the enterprise now become practicable, is a far more arduous task, and a far more honourable achievement. How strangely do those writers derogate from the dignity and glory of the Redeemer, who would ascribe to him what corresponds with the former, and attribute to man what bears a resemblance to the latter!

If Christ only made our salvation possible, then we are to execute the plan; we are to face the enemy, to sustain the charge, and silence the battery; we are to climb the steep, to enter the breach, and bring off the standards; and so, in all reason, the honour and praise must be our own. Whereas, the gospel gives all the honour to the Captain of our Salvation. He bore the heat and burthen of the dreadful day. He made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness. So that all our officious attempts, like a pinnacle arriving after the victory, should be told, 'it is finished;' the great salvation is already wrought. And instead of being dissatisfied or disappointed, methinks we should rejoice, unfeignedly rejoice, in the accomplishment of the glorious work.

If it should occur to the reader's mind, that the Christian life is represented as a warfare; and that we ourselves are commanded to fight, though under the banner of our divine Leader: To this doubt I would answer, The Canaanite is still in the land; and we fight, not to gain the country, but only to subdue the rebels.

“Whoever perverts so glorious a doctrine, shews he never believed.” This may be the substance of what Aspasio maintains, though not represented so fully or so clearly as he has expressed himself; however, such a small wrong we will readily excuse. It was done with no sinister intention, but for the sake of brevity.

To this position Mr Wesley replies, “Not so.” That is, they did really and truly believe; but after their belief, they apostatized and fell from the faith: They were sometime the members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost; but, quickly severed from their divine head, they became the slaves of the devil, and brands for the everlasting burning: Their names were indeed written in heaven; but it seems the heavenly records were less faithful than the parish register;—they were quickly erased, and their place in the book of life knew them no more. Or thus: They did as really and truly believe, 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 sufficiency 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 promise; 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 enquire 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 a 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; 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 *miasmata*, 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. 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 knowledge, Sir, may you and I teach; in this knowledge may our hearers and readers abound; and may the divine power give us, by means of this knowledge, all things pertaining to life and godliness.

"The goodness of God leadeth to repentance."
"This is unquestionably true," says Mr Wesley;
"but the nice metaphysical doctrine of imputed righteousness—." Should you not rather have said, the nice metaphysical *phrase*? since, as to the doctrine, we are, according to your own confession, agreed. 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 any other objector. And as to the phrase, I cannot understand by what authority 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, that Theron often personates an enemy, and speaks the language of unbelief? Be pleased, Sir, to explain your term, and shew in what sense it is compatible with this article of my faith: "I am acquitted and counted righteous before God, only through the imputation of my Saviour's obedience and death." Which is, both in style and sentiment, truly evangelical; but, in no degree, 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 barely 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 then 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 chearing; this 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 acknowledgement; "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 then, O Lord, with a professed view to this end." To implore acceptance of 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*."

* "Si quis dixerit, justos non debere pro bonis operibus, expectare eternam retributionem, per Jesu Christi meritum, anathema sit." 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 your's 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 thanksgivings! Our praises! Our prayers! Our preaching! Our sacramental duties! What are they all but filthy rags* 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 †. 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 ex-

* Isa lxiv. 6. In such a light, I cannot but look upon the services and works of frail man. In such a light they are represented in various parts of our public devotions. And if we are but humble enough to confess ourselves sinners, in such a light they must appear to every discerning and impartial eye; since nothing, even in hell itself, is more loathsome, or imparts a more horrid defilement, than sin. If such services are a sweet-smelling savour to God, it is owing to that copious incense, *thymiamata polia*, Rev. viii. 3. which arises from the golden censer and the golden altar, Rev. viii. 3. It is wholly owing to the infinite dignity, and all-recommending efficacy of Christ's blood, intercession, and righteousness.

† Isa. xl. 15, 16, 17.

tensive 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 any thing worthy of his notice †. Blessed therefore, for

* Do we want to learn the prophet's aim and design in this magnificent paragraph? We may, to our great satisfaction, consult his sagacious and devout commentator Vitringa. "Hic altius surgens oratio, non tantum omne meritum abjudicat carni, sed docet etiam et inculcat, esse hæc omnia quæ geutes ad placandum numen finxerunt, merum, nihil et inane. Nullum plane pondus affere in commendatione causæ suæ apud deum: imo esse nihilo ipso et inani inferiora, si quid nihilo minus fingi et cogitari possit. Non potest in natura: sed fingi potest et obtinet in æconomia spirituali. Est enim ebi quod ita no prodest ad obtinendam justitiam apud Deum, ut simul noceat. Cujus generis sunt omnia *byremata* et commenta sapientiæ carnis. Non tantum Deo non commendant, sed potius iram et indignationem divinam provocant.

† May I be allowed to elucidate the noble passage quoted above? Sure I am, the reader will not be displeas'd with the digression, unless the annotator fails in the execution, and has the misfortune

—Egregium opus
Culpa deterere ingeni.

The prophet, struck with the contemplation of a most glorious personage, cries out, like one transported and amazed, Who? Never was any thing comparable to him, either existing in nature or imaged by fancy. "Who hath measured the waters," the unfathomable deep, and the boundless wave; measured them, not in his capacious cistern, but "in the hollow of his hand?" "Who hath meted out heaven," an expanse in which worlds revolve, and extended to immensity; meted it, not with an outstretched line, but "with the span" of his fingers?

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

“Who hath comprehended the dust of the earth,” all the solid contents of this prodigiously large globe, as a little pittance, “in the smallest measure?” “Who hath weighed the mountains,” with all their ponderous ridges, and the hills with all their massy rocks, as a man weigheth an ounce or a dram “in his scales?” Here I would only observe the judicious choice of objects; by far the most distinguished and magnificent that the universe affords. The abyss of waters, and the circuit of the skies! The dimensions of the earth, and the elevation of the mountains! Compared with which, the loftiest groves are less than the hyssop on the wall; and the most ample cities are smaller than a grain of mustard seed.

Then follows a comparison, more admirable, if it be possible, than this fine description. “Behold! The nations,” whether on the neighbouring continent or in the remotest isles, are, before this exalted being, “as the small drop of a bucket,” which is almost too scanty to deserve our notice. “They are as the small dust upon the balance,” which is not sufficient even to turn the hovering scale. They are as the smallest atom, which has not weight enough to reach the ground, nor force enough to resist the slightest undulations of the air. Yea, all the nations of the earth, amidst all their pomp and grandeur, with all their boasted accomplishments and admired works, are before this incomprehensible God as a mere nothing. Can language go farther? Can imagination take a bolder flight? Yes; the astonishingly rich ideas of the prophet add a heightening, a redoubled heightening, even to this inimitable picture. The kingdoms of the world with all their inhabitants and all their honours, are “less than nothing;” are less than vanity itself, in the estimate of the almighty Jehovah.

This, if I am not greatly mistaken, is one of the most highly finished sketches of the beautiful and sublime, extant in the whole compass of letters. Let us always remember, that the majestic person whom it describes, is our atonement and righteousness, ver. 2. is our shepherd and guide, ver. 11.; it will then be one of the most consolatory and delightful truths in all the book of God. And O! may we never forget, that the small drop of the bucket, the smaller dust on the balance, the volatile atom, and that which is less than nothing, are intended to shew us, what figure our own endeavours, works, and duties make in the sight of God. We shall then have a doctrine, most powerful to humble us, to abase us, and to teach us to renounce our own righteousness.

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 eight 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 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 and 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 apostacy. 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 unblameable and un-reproveable before the majesty of heaven. He hath done all that is necessary for their full, perfect, and everlasting acceptation. 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 acceptation 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 last remark, you was dissatisfied with my insisting on the inseparable connection 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 bond-man, not of the free. A slave bought with our money, obeys in order to be accepted. A servant hired to dispatch our business, obeys in order to receive his wages. But the child obeys, because he is beloved; because he is the heir, and all things which the father has, 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 have I 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.

REV. 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, 18, 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 a 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 time, 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 he 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 than Egyptian darkness of friars and monks; with whom

Cælum 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*, whe-

[* The exhortation is addressed, not to the ungodly, but to true believers. Who had received Christ, and were saved through grace. Consequently, had no need to win or attain eternal life. but only to make it, in their own apprehension. or to their own consciences, more and more sure. Had they been unconverted people, the Apostle would like his divine Master, discoursing with the rich but unregenerate Nicodemus, have struck at the root of their misery; and spoke of more important things, than distributing a little shining dust among the poor.]

ther 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 partizan 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

* *Take fast hold on*—thus I would translate that emphatical compound word *epilabontai*; which agrees with the experience of the Christian, and is not without the authority of the critic. With *the experience of the Christian*: Since believers, by the exercise of faith, producing all good works, are continually maintaining and increasing their hold of Christ, and of that eternal life which is given them in him. With *the authority of the critic*: For the word signifies, “ to seize with great vehemency; to lay hold on with both hands, as upon a thing we are glad to have got, and will be loth to let go again.” LEIGH'S *Crit. Sacr.* That it does not, in this connection, denote an apprehending of somewhat, not taken hold of before, is evident from verse the twelfth, where this very exhortation is directed to Timothy himself, who was an eminent man of God, and the subject of particular prophecies; was a believer of the first class, and an undoubted heir of life and immortality; who needed not, therefore, to attain, but to live in the steadfast hope and unintermitted expectation of the glorious inheritance.

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 him in another, I shall leave to his own determination. Immediately after the display of free justification, or of "righteousness imputed without works *," 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 co-agency 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

* Rom. iv. 6.

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 firming 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 *to adynaton tenome*, 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, chearful, 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 im-

puted 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 judgement, 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*.” 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, in 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 sun-shine, 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 shew 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.

* “Si quis dixerit, justitiam acceptam non conservari, atque etiam non augeri coram Deo per opera bona: Sed opera ipsa fructus solummodo et signa esse justificationis adeptæ, non etiam ipsius augendæ causam, anathema esto.”—*Sees. vi. Can. 24.*

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 anything 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 dif-

ferent persons, but as to the same person at different times.

Farther; since all these endeavours 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; *endokia*, 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 shewed 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, make 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 thunder-bolt 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 be like prisoners confined in the same dungeon, 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 meta-

phors seems to express all those attainments, possessions, and excellences, 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 the dust. So that in the pursuit of eternal life, none shall regard them, or else 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. Your's, &c.

LETTER V.

REV. 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 your's 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 shew 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 *dikaiosyne*, 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 my 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 the 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 your's. "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 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

* *Aspasio*, speaking of the obedience and death of Christ, professedly declares, “ However, therefore, I may happen to express myself, I ne-

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? “Insomuch 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 was 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. 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 any thing 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

ver 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.”

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 shewy but insignificant. I don’t 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 any thing 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 ex-

ercises. 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 a perfect, sinless obedience; that none can be delivered from the wrath to come, or enjoy eternal life, without this unsinning, perfect obedience, should such a one, struck with surprise and anxiety, enquire; "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

* "Christus magna asseveratione pronuntiat, pharisaicam illam justitiam, quæ non perfectissime habet integram legis impletionem, non posse ingredi regnum cælorum. Suorum igitur justitiam vult esse abundantior, hoc est, suos vult ad judicium Dei, afferre abundantissimam, plenissimam et perfectissimam justitiam, ut per ac propter eam possent ingredi regnum cælorum. Eam vero, quia in se non inveniunt, fide quærunt et apprehendunt in impletione legis, a Christo pro nobis præstita." Vid. CHEMNITH *Harm. Evang.* p. 122.

A truly valuable work. In which the learned reader will find many traces of lively devotion; many pieces of solid criticism; and many fine views opened, to see more clearly the wisdom, beauty, and transcendent excellency of our blessed Redeemer's life. This book is particularly estimable, for displaying with great perspicuity, and enforcing with proportionable zeal, that distinguished article of Christianity, "justification through the righteousness of Jesus Christ." Which is, as our author very emphatically speaks, *Ipsissimum evangelii fundamentum.*

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 gulph 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 other ways may "seem right unto a man, yet the end thereof are the ways of death."

A doubt, perhaps, may arise 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 holines." True. The way is Christ, the incarnate God, with all his gifts, privileges, and blessings. "It shall be called the way of holiness*." 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 it assuredly makes, the passengers righteous; and thought

* Isa. xxxv. 8. Upon this subject, Dr. Owen speaks excellently. "Christ is the medium of communication between God and us. In him we meet, in him we walk. All influences of love, kindness, mercy from God to us, are through him; all our returns of love, delight, faith, obedience unto God, are through him. He being that One Way, God so often promiseth his people: And it is a glorious way, Isa. xxxv. 8. "An high way, a way of holiness," a way that none can err in, that once enter it; which is further set forth, Isa. xlii. 16. All other ways, all other paths but this, go down to the chambers of death: They all lead to walk contrary to God.

See a treatise, entitled Communion with God. By John Owen, D. D. Which presents us with the spirit and quintessence of the gospel; with the noblest privileges and strongest consolations of Christianity; animating us thereby to all the duties of holy obedience. Here are pinka and roses in the path; milk and honey in the cup; marrow and fatness on the table. In many treatises, the author has done worthily; but in this, I think, he excellet them all.

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 *teleiōtai*; there it is *eteleiothe*. 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 Roy*. 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 men. Were faith perfect, in your sense of the word, love, joy, and all holiness 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 supplication, 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 tenour of the Apostle's discourse? Is it not the native result of the Apostle's inquiry, "Shew me thy faith?" Prove it to be real and unfeigned: Prove it by such acts as demonstrate you trust in Jesus alone for everlasting fire. 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 a justification of faith, which displays its sincerity, and renders it without rebuke? Somewhat like this, would be reckoned a justification of any person, or 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 *oi ek piseos*; 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 enquired, 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 employs; 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 him 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 allurements 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.

REV. 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 apostacy.” 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 fall 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 apostacy? And if he falls into final apostacy, 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 apostacy 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 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

* 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. The children of the truth are, by the same Spirit, led to imitate this character according to the measure of their faith; yet so imperfectly, that when compared with it in their own persons, they have reason to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses." Though, when considered as clothed with the fulfilment of all in Christ, they may assure themselves of acceptance with God, and an everlasting title to the divine favour.

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? Especially, since the Apostle assures us, that the "carnal mind is not subject to the 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 corrupt, 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 the 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 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 Christ. This notion may pass current at Rome*, not among the Protestant churches.

* The council of Trent, by her interpreter Andradius, thus expresses herself: "Christus obedientia sua non meruit credentibus in ipsum salutem et vitam æternam; sed hoc tantummodo meruit, quod propter ipsum infunditur nobis charitas in hærens; ut illa demum sit, quæ homi-

Our own church has most expressly disclaimed it. Speaking of Christ and his precious blood-shedding, she adds, "Whereby alone we are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven."

"Is the obedience of Christ insufficient to accomplish our justification?" Here you would correct both the language and the doctrine. *The language*; for 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 dismiss it without much solicitude: Only I would transiently observe, that to *accomplish*, denotes more than to *purchase*. It denotes the constituent cause; what the school-men 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 it. 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 co-efficiency of faith, of works, or anything else whatever? I said, the *errors of Popery*: For a Popish synod will allow, that we are

sem Deo non tantum gratum, sed pergratum; non tantum acceptum, sed peracceptum reddat ad vitam æternam."—*Vid. Chemnit. Exam. Conc. Trident. p. 146*

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 comprize 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 sun-beam 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 the conditions, had a hand in obtaining the reward, these ought to have a share in receiving the honour. Not to *sound doctrine* ; Aspasio believes much more than a possibility of salvation by Jesus Christ. He believes a 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 some terms or pre-requisites, 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 Ahobite, 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 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 unblameable 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 remarkable 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 parti-

cularity. 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 transcending 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 to-

* "Vox loqui constructa cum præfixa, notat passim, phrasi sacra, loqui de re."

kens, not of forbearing mercy, but of inexorable vengeance. 'Tis 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 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 acts, even mine, and mine only. Yours be all the benefit, mine all the glory.

* *Trodden the wine-press.*—I can hardly forbear taking notice of the great impropriety with which this text and this metaphor are frequently used by our theological writers. They apply both to Christ, as bruised by his almighty Father, and bearing the weight of that indignation which was due to the sins of mankind. Nothing is more common than to make this text descriptive of his agony in the garden. If, indeed, it had been said, *I am trodden in the wine-press*, the image might not be improper; but when it is said, *I have trodden*, nothing can be more unsuitable to a state of humiliation and suffering. This phrase evidently denotes conquest and triumph; enemies vanquished, and totally destroyed. It should never, therefore, be applied to the agonizing, but to the triumphant Saviour: not to Jesus prostrate on the ground, but to Jesus making his foes his footstool.

As I have taken leave to animadvert upon a common mistake, I would also take liberty to pay merit its due honour, by recommending to my readers a poetical version of the passage, given us by Dr Lowth, in his very elegant work, entitled *De sacra Poesi Hebræorum*: Where he understands the text, in the sense suggested above; and translates it, in the very spirit of Virgil. As the lines are few, and the book may not be in the hands of all my readers, I will present them with a transcript.

— Ille patris vires indutus et iram.

Dira rubens graditur, per stragem et fracta potentum
 Agmina, prona solo; prostratisque hostibus ultor
 Insultat; ceu præla novo spumantia musto
 Exercens, salit attritas calcator in uvas,
 Congestamque struem subigit: Cæde atra recenti
 Crura madent, rorantque inspersæ sanguine vestes.

“ 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 don't 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 enquired.

"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 *metanocite*; 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 be 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 require repentance of fallen man, who is not able to think a good thought; but 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 subtilize, 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 don't 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 these 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 inquietude 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, every thing 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, ’tis true, you use the language of Scripture. Nevertheless it behoves a watchman in Israel to shew 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

* 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.

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 an 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 represents it by a very magnificent image. 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 de-

fend this important sentiment 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 significance of our own doings; that they, under the notion of terms and conditions, may come in for a share, and be his co-adjutors 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

* Isa. liii. 10. *Si posueris.* Vocula valet *conditionem*, et recte vertitur per *si*. Patet enim clarissime, *conditionem* hic conjungi cum *privilegio*, præstita conditione obtinendo. VIRTIN.

Jesuit 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 Jesuit or a Papist; but no body, 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 "wherein soever 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.

REV. 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 opposition 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 house," he promises some special good, that should redound to the man's household from his own receival 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 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, 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

* The reader will please to remember, that the pamphlet which contains the remarks under consideration, is entitled *A Preservative against unsettled Notions in Religion.*

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 suppositon, 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 of any of his matters. How, Sir, would you interpret these words? It is undeniably certain, that sometimes God giveth account of his matters; he gave 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 transact 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 same 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*, 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

* Eccl. vii. 20.

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 not this 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

* The original is, not *kyrioi* (masters,) but *didaskaloi* (teachers.)

† ‡ Judgment, condemnation. The word *krimis* may be taken in both these significations.

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 every thing. 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, not 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 criticise again, let me beseech you to con-

sider a little, the import of language, and the consequences of things.

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 verse the ninth, 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 don't 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 conditions of

* "Ne seipos quidem excipiunt Apostoli." BENGEL. *in loc.*

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 diso-

* *Paul. xxxii. 1.* "Blessed is he whose iniquities are covered." Upon this text St Jerome very ingeniously, and very comfortably descants: *Quod tegitur non videtur, quod non videtur non imputatur, quod non imputatur non puniatur.*—"That which is covered is not seen, that which is not seen is not imputed, that which is not imputed shall not be punished."

bedience, 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 Theron. 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, 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

* 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.” If so, the sentence of the law is their's ; not to overwhelm them with confusion, but to make them joyful through hope ; because this is the language of the almighty Lawgiver to the redeemed of the Lord Jesus ; and surely the law will not jar, but harmonize with its Author, saying, “ How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed ? Or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied ?”

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, if we prefer St Peter's judgment: His judgment in that memorable passage, “Who have obtained like precious faith in the righteousness of our God, even 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 reconcilable with the tenour 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 transporting 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 hu-

* St Chrysostom expounds the important passage in much the same manner. His words are worthy, not only to be copied in a note, but to be written on our hearts: "What words can express, or what thoughts can conceive, the greatness of these things; He made the righteous One a sinner, that he might make wretched sinners righteous. This, though marvelously great, is not all. The word is not in the concrete, but in the abstract: He made the just One, not a *sinner*, but *sin*, that we might be made not righteous only, but righteousness itself; yea, the righteousness of God."

mour 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 immaturity. 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 supereminent 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 impress.

However, in this place I am willing to gratify you ; because it will be difficult to shew, 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 a dejected countenance, begged leave to resign his commission. The general, surprised at such an unexpected request, asked him the reason. Your officers, said 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? 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 your's, &c.

LETTER VIII.

REV. 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 at 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 significance 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 comes, 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 enquire, 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 our 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 con-

demn 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 teneman vultus, &c.*

If it was requisite for Christ to be baptized, argues Aspasio, much more to fulfil the moral law. "I cannot prove (replies Mr Wesley,) that either 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 baptized, 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 not you 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 *." 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 vacarious 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 expounded the awful text,

* Matt. v. 17. Some expositors would persuade us, that the word *plerosai* signifies, fully to explain. This sense I am far from discarding; but in this sense I can by no means acquiesce. It neither gives us the whole nor the principal part of our Lord's meaning. Let us place the matter in a different light; then I believe the scantiness of the interpretation, and the impropriety of the notion will appear unto all men. We will suppose an ungodly person who has learned from books, the spiritual and extensive import of the divine law: Having a ready utterance, he explains it clearly, properly, fully. Does any mortal say of this lip-practitioner, that he fulfils the law? No such thing. A system of precepts can never be fulfilled, without a due and punctual obedience. To open, to adjust, to enforce a set of injunctions, is as far from fulfilling them, as to give a description of a battle and a conquest, are different from fighting the enemy, and gaining the victory.

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 *eos an parethe o oranos e kai ge*, and *eos an panta genetai*, 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 subterfuges 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 †. 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.

* Sermons by John Wesley, vol. ii. p. 173

† Job xxiii. 13.

‡ *Eos anparet theo oranos kai e ge*; a proverbial expression, to denote the utmost impossibility. See it explained Luke xvi. 17. In this connection, it signifies the absolute certainty of our Lord's declaration, both as to its truth, and as to its accomplishment. If I may borrow the language and the imagery of Horace, they will not unfitly express, what is affirmed concerning the law.

*Si fractus illabatur orbis,
Immobilem ferient ruinae.*

|| *Eos an panta genetai*. "The word *all* (says Mr Wesley) does not mean all the law, but all things in the universe." How forced a con-

“By Christ’s sufferings alone the law was not satisfied,” says Aspasio. “Yes, it was,” replies Mr Wesley. Then all the indefatigable and important labours of his life, all his exemplary and shining graces must be mere superfluities. At least, they could have no merit, but were necessary only by 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 will magnify the law and make it honourable*.” The Apostle was of another mind: “God sent forth his Son, made of 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 observed, that pardon and acceptance always go together. “In the same moment that God forgives we are the sons of God.” And wherefore? The reason is, because the suffering of a sinner, and the obedience of a Son, went together in the Redeemer; and without this union, the redemption of man had not been complete.

“The law required only the alternative—obey or die.” Some of your errors are less considerable; this

struction! 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 foretells, shall be effected. The translation here given, is most literal, and most comprehensive. The law has its effect, when its sanctions are executed, as well as when its precepts are obeyed. Let me add, in case of a violated law, then only it is fulfilled, or has its effects, when both the former and the latter respectively obtain their end.

* Isa. xlii. 21. I am sensible there are expositors who give a different turn to these noble words. But I had rather take the voice from heaven for my guide, than all the expositors in the world. Even that voice, which declared concerning Christ and his work, Christ and his righteousness, in these “I am well pleased.” Which is one of the most capital sayings in the Bible, and a clue to lead us into its whole meaning.

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 af-

fords 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 inclusive? 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 *apethanen*, he died; but *geneomenos ypekoos*, 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 his 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 master-piece 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 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 tripode*) 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 Michaiah, 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 thou hast 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 effectuated by, the sacrifice of the dying Jesus: Transactions which both the prophet and the Apostle consider under the notion of the 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 promise 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 these 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 Messiaë, offert gloriam longe amplissimam, mediationis et salvationis Judæorum et gentium, quæ gloria, omnium quæ

* 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 called by his name, "The Lord our righteousness." So he is here called by her name, *Israel*. See Jer. xxxiii. 16.

mente concipi possunt, est maxima, sub lege sive sub conditione profundissimi obsequii servilis; eaque stipulatio utrinque 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,

* *VITRING. in loc.*—Before I leave this paragraph which is so rich in sense, and contains the very substance of evangelical doctrine, I would observe, that it most clearly and exactly delineates the mysterious counsel of peace, planned between God the Father, and his divine Son. The Father as supreme Lord, offers to his Son the Messiah, the highest glory, that which shall result from justifying, sanctifying, and saving with an everlasting salvation, both Jews and Gentiles. This glory, the greatest which thought can conceive, is proposed on the terms, or under the condition of his deep humiliation, even to the state and obedience of a servant. The whole passes into a solemn contract, and is ratified on either side.

Here our author subjoins an extract from a rabbinical treatise. Which is very remarkable; for such a writer, singularly just; one of the most curious, as well as valuable pieces of Jewish antiquities that ever fell in my way. I believe it will afford no unpleasing entertainment, perhaps some spiritual benefit to the reader. For which cause I take leave to transcribe it: “God began to enter into a covenant with the Messiah, and said, Messiah, my righteous one, the sins of thy chosen people are likely to bring thee into a state of great toil and extreme affliction: Thy lips shall taste gall, thy tongue shall cleave to the roof of thy mouth, thy body shall be wasted with sorrow and sighing. Is thy love to thy people inviolable? Art thou willing to rescue them on these conditions? If thou undertakest their recovery, well; if not, they are rejected from this moment, and perish for ever. To this Messiah replied, Lord of eternity, I am pleased with the office, I accept these conditions, and am willing to undergo all tribulations, that my people may enjoy a resurrection (to the life of grace and the life of glory). Then said the holy blessed God, be it so. Immediately the Messiah took upon him our miseries, as it is written in the book of the Prophet Isaiah, ‘He was oppressed and he was afflicted.’”

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 Lawgiver.” You see the whole argument turns upon a *complete* righteousness, such as satisfies the law, and is an adequate 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 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 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,

* 2 Cor. v. 21. This is Dr Doddridge's interpretation of the passage ; and it speaks a noble, a joyful truth. The righteousness of God is more than equivalent to untainted innocency ; is more than tantamount to the most perfect human obedience. It is a righteousness of infinite

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 exchanged the Apostle's expression. He says, “Accepted in the Beloved;” you say, “Accepted *through* the

worth, far surpassing the integrity of Adam in paradise, or the sanctity of angels in heaven. It is a gift, incomparably, yea, incomprehensibly great, efficacious, glorious.

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 work, lest you blemish the language, or injure the sense. Perhaps you will ask, what difference is there between accepted *through*, or accepted *in*, the Beloved? I will illustrate the difference by a similitude. A creditable house-keeper 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 *.

" 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 fœderal 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

* 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."

so, the second covenant must be made with Christ, as our public fœderal 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 has 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 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 recompence 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 as 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 unrighteousnesses, 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 imparts, as a gracious temper 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 *." 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 your's, &c.

* Acts iii. 25.

LETTER IX.

REV. 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 God 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 shewn, that they are represented by the Holy Ghost, not as conditions, but as blessings; not as conditions required, but as blessings bestowed; not 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.

"'Tis equally true," says Aspasio, "this is not required at my hands." "'Tis 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 Scriptures 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, shew 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*."

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 †."

Freely: "Being justified freely. The things that are freely given to us of God. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely ‡."

By way of gift: "If thou knewest the gift of God. The gift of God is eternal life. 'The free gift came upon all men, to justification of life §."

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 ||."

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 ¶."

By *righteousness*, not performed, but imputed:

* 2 Kings xx. 13.

† Eph. ii. 5. Rom. x. 6. 2 Tim. i. 9.

‡ Rom. iii. 24. 1 Cor. ii. 12. Rev. xxii. 19.

§ John iv. 10. Rom. vi. 23. v. 18.

|| Rom. iii. 21. Gal. ii. 16. iii. 18.

¶ Rom. ix. 11. Tit. iii. 5. Phil. iii. 9.

“ Faith (in Christ, as our ally) 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 *.”

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 †.”

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 ‡.”

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 §.”

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 ||.”

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.

* Rom. iv. 5, 6, 23, 24, 25.

† Psal. xxxii. 1. 2 Cor. v. 19. Luke i. 77.

‡ Rom. v. 17, 18, 19. Heb. x. 14.

§ Rom. v. 1. iii. 28. Acts xiii. 39.

|| Heb. i. 3. Dan. ix. 24.

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 performances 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*." *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 es-

* Zech. ix. 11.

cape, 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 perfections, 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, who bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men ; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and

* *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.

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 his 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 *tassei*—prescribeth, by way of rule, nor *epitassei*—enjoineth, by way of authority; but *paideyosa*—teacheth, by way of instruction, pointeth out the effectual method of obeying the precepts, and conforming to the rule. A tyrant may command his slave to write, or make a proficiency in writing; a kind tutor forms him to it, shews him how to do it, and renders what otherwise would be an irksome perhaps an impracticable task, both easy and pleasant: So

* The word *arnksamanoi*, which does not signify, to abolish totally, or to destroy utterly; but to disavow and renounce, to refuse admittance, or not to yield compliance. There may be, even in the regenerate some remainders of ungodliness; but influenced by grace, they will constantly turn a deaf ear to its solicitations, or resolutely say nay to its demands.

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 tenour, 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 shew me in the construction of the law, any hint of faith in the merits of another, or any mention of repentance unto life, I retract my opinion, that Christ performed whatever was conditional; I will do honour to those genteel expressions, and submit to those cogent arguments, " 'Tis not true, 'tis nothing to the purpose, 'tis 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 unalienable. 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.

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 du-

* Explanatory Notes *in loc.*

ties 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 this 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 adjunct 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. ii. p. 316, 317*. Read these, and I cannot but think,

* 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.

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 xxxist article.” What? That Christ, by his *death alone*, or by *shedding his blood alone*, without fulfilling 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 three 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, in 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

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 our’s, 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.

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 connection he never used, nor so much as dreamt of using; for which reason, I call it not *his*, but *your's*. 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 xviiith 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 definest the term, thou neither affirmest nor deniest the thing. This is no proof that thou thyself believest a tittle of water-baptism, or wouldest 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 xxxist 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 enquiry: "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 the 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, and 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 thought 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 art 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 chargeable 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 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," all 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 shew 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 Wheatly! Thomas Williams! James Relly!" 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 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 would 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* also 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 that 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 afore-mentioned 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 ready 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 do good, evil is present with me?" "I believe not." What a proof is here! How well suited to its office; which is to controul the current, and over-rule the evidence of ancient and modern consent.

But why don't 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 shews 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 shews, as plainly as words can shew, 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 *to thneton*. 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.

* "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.

“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 fullness 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 manifestation 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

* 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 ante-chamber.

to err, not knowing the Scripture. I have a *desire*, says the Apostle, *to be dissolved*. 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 *argumentum 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 rari nantes 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 hanged, and some that were drowned,
 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, be 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 * ;" neither that iniquity which was formerly committed, nor that which still defiles †.

* Psal. xxxii. 1, 2. Should any objection arise from the next sentence, the reader may see it anticipated, and superseded, in Theron and Aspasio, vol. i.

† Psal. 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 authorized, 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 (*oy kyrieysi*) 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 should 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 (tis 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. Does 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 ! Wondrous 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 any thing 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 ; ’tis 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 conti-

queth 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.*" Lindemus, another champion for the same bad cause expresses himself in an 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 per-*

* 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.

fecta, et undique immaculata renatorum opera in hac vita." If Mr Wesley pleases to consider these passages, I hope 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 tenour 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" *, and of justification "without the deeds of the law †."

"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 per-

* Rom. iv. 6.

† Rom. iii. 18.

formance 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 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

* Heb. ii. 17. *Eis to ilaskesthai*.—"Ad expiare, t. e. ut expiare peccata populi, quibus expiatis, Deus nobis redderetur propitius."

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 forgot 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 loosing 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 variations at our table. I shall only refer the reader to Page 144, where we 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 ex-

pressing 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 inexpressible 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 same 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 righteous-

ness, 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 to 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:

* 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.

This *imputed righteousness* was once a delightful theme; your song in the house of your pilgrimage. Why is it now a burthensome 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 pretensions 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 led for that triumph and gratitude, expressed in the inspired hymn, "Let us be glad and rejoice (exceedingly, but) give the honour, (all the honour) to him *."

"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 thread-bare 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 me-

thod 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 vallies. 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 *.”

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 has 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 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 Chryso-

* 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?” Some writers, I am aware, interpret this and other similar passages, without taking in the unspeakable blessings of Christ and his grace. But these interpreters seem to act a very injudicious, and no less unfaithful part. I will suppose them expounding and illustrating that great command of creating power, “Let the earth bring forth grass, and the herb yielding seed.” Will they model their exposition, or fetch their illustration from what appears on the ground in the barren month of December? Surely, if they have any taste or judgment, they will form their comment, by the fertility, the plenty, the unbounded luxuriancy of April and May. There is much the same difference between the righteousness of an incarnate Saviour and all other gifts of divine goodness, as there is between the vegetable productions of the vernal, and the almost total sterility of the wintry months.

tom, read his exposition of that charming sentence, "The righteousness of God," *Poos*, &c. This venerable Father of the church speaks the thing as it is. He does not mingle our wine with 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 relinquished, 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 the impartial reader, I promise myself, will allow these

* Rev. xix. 8. *Ta dikaiomata*, 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. 2 k*.

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 reasonable 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 cloathing 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, Rev. Sir, your, &c.

LETTER X.

REV. 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 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,

* 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.

which every true minister, in ancient times did preach, and in later times does 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.

Nor 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* *. 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* †.

* Verse 24.

† "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."

Mr Caryl, in expounding the book of Job, has acquitted himself like a master in Israel. His thoughts are beautiful and animated. His criticisms are correct and judicious. His language, considering the time in which he wrote, is remarkably pure and strong. His doctrines are truly edifying, because, generally speaking, they are evangelical. What is a very necessary, but very difficult task, in explaining this part of Scripture, the connexion of the sentiment is discovered, the bearings and dependencies of the argument are pointed out; and the transitions from one passage to another, shewn to be, not wild and disorderly, but just, regular, and graceful.

The only fault attending this work, is prolixity. I wish some skilful hand would, by rendering it less copious, render it more useful. I cannot but think, it might be a profitable employ for young students in di-

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 different from the expression used by the Psalmist? He says *tsrkh*, whereas holiness is expressed by *kds̄h*. Besides, have you not observed, that your interpretation would be-

vinity, to exercise themselves in abridging Mr Caryl, Dr Owen upon the Hebrews, Mr Charnock upon the attributes, or some such valuable, but voluminous authors. These, and many other works of the same luxuriant growth, would if put into the alembic, afford us the very spirit of the gospel, and the richest cordials for our souls.

tray the Psalmist into apparent tautology? He had, in the preceding verses, displayed the duties of practical godliness, and the graces of inherent holiness. The person he describes, possesses the latter, and practices 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 *hsd*, 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 Melchisedec; 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 principle and leading significancy 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 any thing 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 shewn 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 trans-

late 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 punishments which you have deserved; yea, as a ransom, he has paid double; as a victim, he has suffered double * for all your sins. 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 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. Every body 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 be-

* Isa. xl. 2.

ing 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

* Gen. xlix. 10. "Shile."—Schilo. Nomen Messiae peculiare, tranquillatorem designans.—That is, the Maker of Peace, and the Author of Tranquillity, for rebellious and wretched men.

† The doctrine of the Papists, avowed by a writer of their own, is, "Our confidence and hope in the day of judgment dependeth, not only upon our apprehension of Christ's merits by faith, but also upon our

(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*. O! that you may return to your

conformity to Christ, in charity and good works.” The reader may see this presumption rebuked, and this error refuted, in Dr Fulk’s Annotations on the Rhemish Testament, 1 John vi. 17.

* Job xv. 6.

first sentiments, and to your first love*! And no longer expose yourself and your doctrine, to be a by-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 your 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 don't you exhibit the golden bowl complete? We shall then quickly perceive, that it

* That Mr Wesley may not be ashamed to retract a mistaken sentiment, I will break the ice and lead the way. If it be shameful to renounce error, and sacrifice all to truth, I do very willingly take this shame to myself. 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.

Far be it from me to suppose, that any work of mine should, in order to create my peace, or cherish my confidence, be coupled with Christ's most holy act. I speak the words of our church, and I speak the sense of the prophet: "I will trust, and not be afraid." Wherefore? Because I am inherently holy? Rather, "because God is my salvation." God, manifest in the flesh, has finished my transgression, and made an end of my sin; and in this most magnificently gracious work will I rejoice. I speak agreeably to the declaration of the Holy Ghost, "Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed, neither shalt thou be confounded." Why? Because thy inherent goodness shall prevent thy confusion? No; but on a footing infinitely more solid, for a reason infinitely more satisfactory—"Because thy Maker is thy husband." The consequence of which is, all thy debts and deficiencies are upon him; all his consummate righteousness is upon thee.

contains a more sweet and salutary draught, than you have provided for our refreshment.

En toto teteleiotai e agape meth emon ina parresian echomen en te emera kriseos. Which we translate, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment*." 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 seasonable and important. The true sense of *meth emon*, 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; that 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 inherit righteousness, but to free grace ‡.

* 1 John iv. 17.

† *O Theos alape esin*, "God is love." This I call *inimitable*. Nothing can be more simple, yet nothing is more sublime. For my part, I know not how to attempt an illustration of the noble sentiment. It strikes the mind, as light strikes the eye. No art can make this more bright, and no paraphrase can make that more delicate, more majestic, more affecting. How flat some of the finest things, said by the ancient philosophers; how flat they read, when compared with this animated stroke of divine eloquence, the reader, if he pleases, may see in *Contemplations on the Starry Heavens*.

‡ Should it be said, in case you thus interpret the first part of the text, who will it connect with what follows? Perfectly well. And none

Aspasio thus translates St Peter's words: "Who have obtained like precious faith in the righteousness of our God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." 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 *en* 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 *dikaïosyne* must not denote *righteousness*, though it pleads, as a warrant for this weighty sense, the incontestible 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 edify the readers of your exposition, you inform and assure them, that this phrase signifies "both the active and 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

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.

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 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

* 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. In so doing, he has done well. Since the contemptuous and the reproachful, even when really deserved, can have no tendency to confirm our argument, but to provoke resentment. They are not the most promising means of joining us together, in the same mind and the same judgment; but rather the sure way, to widen the breach, and increase animosity.

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 present 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 complain of, and will lay much to your charge. You have not magnified it by 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 recede, from its most righteous demands, and the immutable God must compromise matters with his crea-

* The reader is desired to peruse Aspasio’s own words, vol. ii. 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.

tures, 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 precepts 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 variable-ness, 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 imbellis 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; and 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

* Rom. x. 8. "Christus," (saith Bengelius) "est telus homo; justitiam et vitam, quam lex ostendit, sed dare nequit, tribuens."—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.

"Christus," (saith St Augustine) "est legis finis, interficiens et perficiens." The ceremonial law he has slain, and taken out of the way. The moral law he has fulfilled for us, and we in him. Inasmuch as through faith in his name, his obedience becometh ours.

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 Wesley, "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?

"I would never speak of them (the active and passive righteousness of Christ) separately." This insinuates, what Aspasio disavows; and what 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 meantime, be so candid as to read a short note, inserted in Theron and Aspasio, vol. ii. 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 secret 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 righteous-

* Here Mr Wesley speaks in perfect agreement with St Chrysostom.

ness, 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 incontestible 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, *dikaioma*, *dikaioyne*, *ypakoe*. 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 construc-

tion 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 tenour of the apostle's argument, 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 descendents, though they did not (like him) eat the forbidden fruit; so Christ was the cause, (*proxenos*) † author, procurator 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*

* The obedience of one, St Chrysostom expounds by *onos katorthosantos*. Would Mr Wesley venture to affirm that *dying well*, not *doing well*, is certainly the chief thing signified in *katorthosantos*? 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?

† *Proxenos*, 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 expence, or of the trouble, *proxeno soi toto*. "Hujus rei sum tibi auctor; hanc rem tibi comparo. *Steph. Thesaur. in voc.*

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 in-

* Chrysost. vol. iii. pag. 71, 72. Edit Savil.

deed 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 *dikaïoma*, in conjunction with *to nomo*, signifies the fruits of justification; and not those demands of the law, which must necessarily be satisfied before justification can take place. Especially when the phrase is corroborated by that other strong expression, *plerothe*. 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 tenour 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 punishments. 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 farther 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 *dikaiosisyne* and *dikaionoma*.” 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? O how deep an aversion to the *imputed righteousness* of Christ, does this Armenian 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 become a Calvinist? You that had rather be an

* 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.

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 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 eyesore and an offence to the self-conceited Jews; and this was only the 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.

This 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 re-

vealed 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*, 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. *Pros epanorthosin*, signifies, For restoration of the man to a state of moral uprightness; 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

* Eph. ii. 13.

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 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, unblameable, 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 tenour 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 insignificancy, 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 shew its efficacy, to shew its excellency, and recommend it to the unbelieving world, by an unblameable conversation, giving no offence in any thing.

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 that I 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*." 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.

* "Si quis dixerit, hominem justificari, vel sola imputatione justitiæ, vel sola remissione peccatorum, exclusa gratia et charitate, anathema esto."—*Sess. vi. Can. 11.*

“ 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 treats 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

* 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.

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 stiles, "The obedience of one." 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 merito-

rious 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 I now 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, may you have some reasonable pretence for these your suggestions.

Alas! *Quantú de spe decidi!* I find my hopes were too sanguine. We are not come to the desired coalition. In this very paragraph, you begin to fly off. By talking of imputed righteousness, you tell us, "We are exposed to an 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 trea-

tise you may learn some valuable knowledge. In case the author of this treatise is mistaken, in maintaining the indissoluble connection 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 can't reconcile this with St Paul. He says, not with pearls; by a parity of reason, not with diamonds." Do you rightly understand St Paul? Don't you dwindle his manly and noble idea, 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 that they 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 pearl, 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 *endysasthai*, put on *, nor *phorein*, wear †, but *kosmein*, 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 the 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, (*on o kosmos*, not *on to endymni*) 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 adoring, whose excellency is unquestionable, and ‘ whose praise is of God, (even) the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.’ Which will ren-

* Mark vi. 9.

† Matt. xi. 8.

der 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 is 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

* That Mr Wesley may not suspect I am pleading for self-indulgence, I will give him my word, that I have never wore my silver buckles since I was in mourning for his Royal Highness; neither shall I have one uneasy thought, if I never put them on again.

† Should it be said, The persons to whom St Peter wrote were in mean circumstances; therefore, such *grandees* are out of the question: I answer, The persons for whom St Peter wrote, were all Christians to the very end of the world. Among these, though there may not be many grand, nor many noble, yet, blessed be God, there are some. And when these go to receive their celestial crown, we trust it will be said,

Uno ablato non deficit alter
Aureus.

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 external 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;" reguling 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 convenientiâ cuique.

However, I am willing to take all upon myself, and be responsible for the obnoxious sentiments. I would only ask, is any thing 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 of 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 our all-bountiful Creator! See its beauty, taste its sweetness, admire its excellency, 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 cloyster or monastery.

Upon the whole, however well-effected Mr Wesley may be to our civil, he seems to be a kind of male-content, 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 should not sensualize our affections, but refine and exalt them,

* The Scripture calls them, royal dainties, Gen. xlix. 20.

by knitting our hearts more inseparably to their magnificent 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 pre-requisites. 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 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 your epistolary animadversions on *Aspasio*, required your audience so 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 *ta me outa*,—Things that are not. "Christ has blotted out, as a thick cloud, our transgressions; yea, as a thin cloud, our sins*." 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 †. 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 this 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

* Isa. xlv. 22. *Nubes Nubecula*. Thus Hubigant translates the words; and I think, very justly. The first seems to denote an immense arrangement of clouds, covering the sky. The second signifies a loose detached fragment, floating in the upper regions. The first, fixed like a vault; the last, sailing like a skiff. This sense diversifies the prophet's imagery, and instead of tautology, presents us with a beautiful gradation.

† 2 Kings v. 14.

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, unblameable, and unprovable 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, Rev. Sir, your, &c.

LETTER XI.

REV. 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 these, 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 Puritan's, 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 prophet 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 a perfect union 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 his 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 shew 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 won-

der, 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 your 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 shews 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 im-

putation 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.

'Tis 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 *Pisin en dikaiosyne*,—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 'tis pity but they were more thoroughly instructed into 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, don't 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

* Mr Wesley cannot say, What! teach a doctrine which I disapprove? Since he himself has allowed it, has approved it, has set his seal to it again and again, in the course of these his remarks.

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 dropt 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 store-house 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 servant, 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 par-

pose 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 obedience; 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 shall 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, inclosed 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 out-works. Be it demolished or established, the grand privilege, and the invaluable blessing, of justification through the righteousness of Christ, remains unshaken, stands immoveable. 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 you not 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 of the 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 master-piece; 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 blameable, 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 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 shew 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

* *Insolvent and attainted creature*, Mr Wesley has changed into "a rebel."

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 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 don't you 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 Dávid 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 un-

* *Beloved.*—This is the meaning of David's name.

speakably 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.

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 angel 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. 10. 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 Pharisical 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 immoveable, in the grace of justification and life, as the rock itself, on which it is founded. "Because I live," sayeth 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," sayeth 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 off. 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, will certainly die in their sins, and perish for ever. They will be all 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 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. xi. 82. and admired the riches of his wisdom, which was so brightly displayed in the dispensations of his mercy toward him, 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 Thess. ii. 11, 12. And, in short, 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 !

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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 reproaches 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 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 intrusted his friends 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 sweetness." 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 Antino-

* All these notes are thrown out of this edition of our author's works.

mian side of the question, and that Mr Hervey by no means approved of his sentiments." Upon this, there immediately appeared in the *Gazeteer*, 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 Aspasie; 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 W——y'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 in the various classes of religious people as a political bugbear, whereby they disguise and disfigure the party they intend to reproach*.

* When these religious politicians have raised an alarm, "Beware of the Antinomians!" the ignorant multitude are upon the inquiry to know, what this dreadful thing called Antinomianism is; they are told

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

a hundred bugbear tales of monsters in human shape; when they inquire farther who are Antinomians, meaning, who are the persons so abandoned as to hold such dreadful opinions or practices, they have nothing more to do, than to place the name upon whom they please; and it follows of course, by this artful shift, that the credulous and deceived multitude believe the persons so pointed out to be guilty of whatever has been charged under that name. Were it not for this piece of artifice, they might perhaps be obliged, honestly and fairly, to point out the particular errors of those they dislike and accuse; and, in so doing, might manifest, that they themselves know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

Mr Hervey has very properly exhibited such vain declaimers in the following note:

This puts me in mind of what Theodorus replied to Philocles, who was often insinuating, that he preached licentious doctrine; because he enlarged, with peculiar assiduity, upon faith on Jesus Christ, and frequently chose such texts as, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved."

"I preach salvation by Jesus Christ; and give me leave to ask, Whether you know what salvation by Christ means? Philocles paused; he began to blush; would have eluded the question, and declined an answer. No, said Theodorus, you must permit me to insist upon a reply: Because, if it be a right one, it will justify me and my conduct; if it be a wrong one, it will prove that you blame, you know not what; and have more reason to inform yourself, than to censure others.

"This disconcerted him still more. Upon which Theodorus proceeded; Salvation by Christ means, not only a deliverance from the guilt, but also from the power of sin. He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity; redeem us from our vain conversation, as well as deliver us from the wrath to come.—Go now, Philocles, and tell the world, that by teaching these doctrines, I promote the cause of licentiousness. And you will be just as rational, just as candid, just as true, as if you should affirm, that the firemen by playing the engine, and pouring in water, burnt your house to the ground, and laid your furniture in ashes." *Note*, vol. 2. dial. x.

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 enterrupt 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 Hervey'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, is 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 Hervey 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 expecta-

tion to obtain, is by labouring in 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, agreeable 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 true 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 shew, 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 be-

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 to 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 S——n 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, least we, by pleading 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 easily 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,

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 abridgement 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 abridgement 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 xvi. 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

* 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.

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,

Weston, April 15.

JAMES HERVEY.

DEAR SIR,

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 a couple of letters containing objections ‡. I wish you would be so kind

* 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 abridgement 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.

‡ 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. They allowed, that the free and unconditional nature of the divine declarations concerning Christ as an object of trust and confidence, was the only foundation upon which trust or confidence could be established; but then they immediately contradicted this freeness of the divine grant, by clogging it with the pre-requisites of seriousness, sensibility of need, real desires, and, in short, every qualification that human pride could presume upon the divine favour with, provided no Saviour had ever been revealed. Whereas, the man taught of God is made sensible, that no qualification in him is to be a stepping-stone to the Redeemer's righteousness. His real desire is daily to live by that righteousness, not by his own; and he is serious in this matter, as being of the greatest importance, "counting all things but loss and dung, that he may win Christ, and be found in him; not having on his own righteousness, which is of the law." They allowed the gospel declarations contained what might be compared "to a free welcome to an entertainment, by a friend's invitation;" but denied that this gave them leave to believe that this entertainment was theirs; and only served as an inducement for them to do something, called reception,

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

in order to found a title. They were answered, It was not theirs as a property in their disposal to give away, or trifle with; but theirs to partake of it certainly was, by virtue of the invitation. And this partaking of Christ, and salvation in him, could be neither more nor less than living by him in virtue of these declarations, instead of seeking a title by inherent qualifications; which would be, in fact, living by our own righteousness, and not by him. That if they allowed he was free for us to trust in, then the trust and confidence we pleaded for was vindicated as no presumption, but rather an obedience from the divinely-gracious Benefactor. The difference between Mr Hervey and them, lay in their different sentiments, about what was the truth of the gospel: What they counted gospel, left them to seek for a something in themselves under the name of faith, on account of which they might conclude themselves saved persons. What Mr Hervey counted gospel, was the revelation of the divine righteousness to the most guilty, warranting their immediate trust and confidence therein; assuring them such confidence should not be disappointed. It is easy to perceive, that such confidence must be essential to the real belief of such doctrine; as, on the other hand, no assurance or confidence can be essential to the belief of that doctrine, which leaves me to seek for my ground of confidence in a something more than what Christ has already done, and God has so freely presented to me. Mr Hervey's view was not to establish a standard for the hope of salvation of this kind, as depending upon our inherent qualifications, whether called convictions, faith, repentance, or by any other name; but rather to establish an important, comfortable, precious truth, concerning an open door of access to God by what Christ has done, and salvation in him, granted to the most guilty, on a supposition that every mouth is stopped, and all the world (in every pretension or plea unto righteousness) become perfectly on a level before him. This truth, he apprehended, was, when received, the conviction and faith of every true believer, and the foundation of immediate trust and confidence, and, as such, was necessary and essential to solid peace of conscience, and true holiness of heart and of life; yet, at the same time, entirely opposite to the peace and holiness of men of the Pharisaic spirit. In short, we seemed to be only upon the old apostolic or reformation dispute still, viz. Whether we are to be justified by faith in Christ without works? or whether we are first to find some righteousness in ourselves?

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 xvi. 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 don't spare my own performance, but freely animadvert upon Aspasio. I am sensible he sometimes speaks unguardedly, and sometimes seems inconsistent with himself.

Weston-Favel, April 22, 1755.

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 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 don't scruple to express yourself with all possible freedom. Direct and correct, as a friend and fellow labourer ‡, &c.

* 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; and as his confidence only arose from the truth, he believed it stood in so near a connection with it, that he accounted it essential to it; as, on the other hand, their confidence, depending upon what they found in themselves, as distinguishing characteristics of God's children, could only have existence when and while they could thus conceive of themselves.

‡ The remainder of this letter is lost.

DEAR SIR,

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. Don't you 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 xvith 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,

Weston, May 8.

J. HERVEY.

* How evidently does Mr Sandeman appear to be mistaken, in calling this the popular doctrine, or in judging that Mr Hervey had gained a public esteem on the account of it!

† Some of these recommendations were not to the advantage of the truth, which it was his main design to communicate. Of this Mr Sandeman has not failed to take notice; and it must be acknowledged, that a resentment of the offices of such a friend might not have been improper. But the same reasons which he had for desiring the silence of one friend for the present, may be justly supposed the reason he shewed no resentment to the officiousness of the other.

DEAR SIR,

I have been so poorly in my health, and so much engaged in company, that I could not possibly get the inclosed 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 inclosed 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 of 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 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 ingenuous 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,
Weston, May, 31, 1755. J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR SIR,

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 xvi. 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 any thing that may be conveniently omitted, I wish you would inclose 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,

Weston, June 12.

J. HERVEY.

DEAR SIR,

I should be very glad, and much obliged, if you could give me your company in your return from Norwich, that we may thoroughly canvas, 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

* It must be remembered, that they who love the Lord Jesus, love

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, gives every sinner a sufficient warrant to do this, and are a strong immoveable 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

him that came to save, not the righteous, but the guilty; not the qualified, but the lost.

* 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. The Christian, conscious to himself that he is guilty, makes no account of the degrees of imperfect love, but lives solely and entirely by the righteousness revealed for the hope of the guilty; and what he lives by, he loves; not as a task proportioned by the worthiness of the object, but as an affection arising from the truth believed.

† This is well expressed, and evidently distinguishes 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.

‡ They who hear and understand this gospel-grace, find it their bounden duty, as well as their happy privilege, and heart's inclination, no more to seek to live by their own, but to live entirely by the divine righteousness.

|| If this gentleman, by a *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.

gospel upon this ill-grounded imagination, 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,

Weston, July 6, 1755.

J. HERVEY.

DEAR MR CUDWORTH,

Last night I received your favour, and, according to you 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 more 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,

Aug. 4.

J. HERVEY.

* 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 so 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.

DEAR MR CUDWORTH,

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 faithful and cordial friend,

Weston, Sept. 9.

J. HERVEY.

DEAR MR CUDWORTH,

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 me 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 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 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 or 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 on 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 recommend yourself and your labours; and am, dear Sir, your truly affectionate friend,

Weston, Oct. 9.

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

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 adviseable 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

* This treatise, so useful to my worthy friend, was one of the most offensive pieces to my opponents; which very plainly manifests, that whatever compliments and pretensions of regard might be paid to Mr Hervey, they differed exceedingly in taste and judgment of spiritual things.

you now reside? It is styled, "A vindication of the eternal law and everlasting gospel." It is but very lately that it came to 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 for 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 The-ron 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,

Weston, Nov. 8. 1755.

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

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; tear 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 inclosed. 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,

Weston, Nov. 25, 1755.

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

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

* If Mr Hervey may be believed, nothing was more offensive to him, than those encomiums on his piety, which only serve to render his confession of himself hypocritical, and his doctrine false. In all his thoughts, in all his practice, he found himself a sinner; and in nothing more so, than in entertaining any good conceit of himself, or his own state, by comparison with other men. God had taught him he had no rule to measure by, but the perfect law or will of heaven; and every single deviation served to render his plea of righteousness vain, to class him among the rest of mankind-sinners, and subject him to eternal vengeance. In the view of these circumstances, mercy revealed in Christ Jesus to the guilty, was a precious joyful sound, which he heard and lived by. Had he heard any one describe the holy, heavenly, pious Mr Hervey, he would have replied, you have described a man that will never enter heaven; but in the guilty Mr Hervey, living only by the divine righteousness, you find the man that is taught of God.

To love the divine righteousness provided for the guilty as such; to love God thus characterised as just, and the justifier of the ungodly by the righteousness of his Son; to love them that are of this truth, for the truth's sake dwelling in them, is, according to Scripture account, the distinguishing holiness of truth, whereby the children of God are manifested from the children of the devil; and the works of love to this righteousness, are the only works that will be openly rewarded and acknowledged in the great day. It is also evident, from Scripture and experience, that men may compass sea and land to make a proselyte, may give all their goods to feed the poor, and even their bodies to be burned, yet want this charity; they may do all this, and at the same time manifest themselves to be the children of them who crucified Jesus, by their conduct towards his real gospel, and the disciples of it.

† They should mean so; and the fruit of love, &c. which is evidently from this operation of the divine truth we plead for, is undoubtedly a confirming evidence of its having become our faith, and of its divine efficacy in working by love.

‡ 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.

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 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 reconcileable with your 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 xvi. 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. And 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 you 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 xvi. which I think is very injudiciously inserted, and is really a mistake. I observed it a good while ago, and expunged it from

* "Hereby we (the children of the truth, by loving one another for the truth's sake alone, not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth) hereby we know (or have an additional confirming knowledge) that we are of the truth" we profess, "and shall assure our hearts before him," saying, with Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that we love thee:" For, "if our hearts condemn us," that we love not those who are of this truth, or that our love to them is not for this truth's sake, whatever pretensions we may make to the faith, and of comfort, joy, holiness, &c. yet "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things;" therefore cannot be deceived by our pretended regard to him and his truth, while we love not them who are of this truth. But, "beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, (if the law of the New Testament, Jer. xxxi, 33. to believe on Christ, or live by his righteousness, and love one another for this truth's sake, is written in our hearts,) then have we confidence towards God."

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 us 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 for the weakest of ministers, and the weakest of believers, but his affectionate brother in Christ,
Weston, Jan. 26, 1756. J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

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

* Acts ii. 39. The persons mentioned were pricked in their hearts at hearing that God had made that same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ, and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" We do not find that Peter had been preaching to them any such doctrine as that, "if they were much affected with their sins, and wounded at heart with a godly sorrow for them, they had an interest in the promise of life and salvation." This would have been only introducing the Pharisæic distinction, which our Saviour constantly opposed. On the contrary, when Peter had declared, that God had made "that same Jesus," who opposed such distinctions in the Pharisees, and was rejected on that account, that God had made him "both Lord and Christ," they were confounded. All their pretensions to righteousness and acceptance with God, forsook them. They were pricked in their hearts at these tidings, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" If Jesus is Lord and Christ, what will become of us? Then Peter exhorted to the assurance we plead for, in these words: "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, for the remission of sins." For the words thus circumstanced, bear evidently this sense: "Your case is undoubtedly desperate; you have been to this moment God's enemies; even so far have you carried your opposition, as with wicked hands to crucify and slay the Lord's Christ," sent for your deliverance. Nevertheless, "in this man's name is preached unto you remission of sins:" therefore "repent" of your wickedness in opposing him, submit to him as your free given righteousness and salvation, be baptized in his name "for the remission of your sins," and live from henceforth by him, as your proper righteousness; assuring yourselves of "remission of sins" by him alone, and you shall receive the promised gift of the Holy Ghost, as it has come

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 inclosed 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,

Weston, April 21, 1756.

J. HERVEY.

upon us: "For the promise is to you and your children." And "with many other words did he exhort them, saying, (by flying to this same Jesus as your proper refuge) Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word (out of the mixed multitude) were baptized; and the same day were added about three thousand souls." From the whole thus considered, there is nothing to contradict the call and promise of God directed to sinners as such; but, on the contrary, a foundation for calling upon the most guilty to live immediately by the Redeemer's righteousness.

DEAR MR GUDWORTH,

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 are any observations that are just, and such as animadvert upon passages, truly unexceptionable, 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 demands. Mr K—— desires you would send a fresh supply to him. In the greatest haste, but with great sincerity and affection, yours,

May 27.

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

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 any thing 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,

Weston, June 17.

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 shew 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 of 'obscurity' which is confessedly in his 3d and 4th direction."

I apprehend, the obscurity of chapter 3d and 4th arises not from any improper manner of treating the subjects, but from the mysterious * nature of 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.

* *Mysterious*, because contrary to our natural notions, the "natural man not receiving the things of the Spirit of God."

† The remainder of this letter is lost.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The cause of my writing is this, Mr — is upon the point of publishing a new edition of Marshall. I have given him the inclosed 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,

Wcston, Oct. 6, 1756.

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

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 Marshall; which I observed was inexpressive. If you said any thing, 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 commendatory introduction to the work, which you have in hands: 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 dated 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,

Weston, Dec. 24, 1756.

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I received your parcel containing several copies of the *Friendly Attempt*, &c. * My thanks would have been returned sooner; but I have been under that indisposition and langour of spirit, which renders me unable for every thing.

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 intercourses.

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 em-

* A friendly attempt to remove some fundamental mistakes in the Rev. Mr W——d's sermons.

† *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.

bracing 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 displeased 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

* Or, in other words, the confidence that is founded on the truth we believe concerning Christ given to be believed on, or confided in.

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.



MY DEAR FRIEND,

One principle 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 will 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 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 will 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,

Weston, Sept. 8, 1757.

J. HERVEY.

DEAR MR CUDWORTH,

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 shewed 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,

Weston, Feb. 22. 1758.

J. HERVEY.

* 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 objection 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.

DEAR MR CUDWORTH,

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 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,

Weston, March 1, 1758.

J HERVEY.

DEAR MR CUDWORTH,

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,

Weston, July 15, 1758.

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.

* Letters of correspondence between me and Mr Sandeman.

† This was an answer to Mr John Wesley's objections against Theron and Aspasig, 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.

DEAR MR CUDWORTH,

This day I received your letter, with the two manuscript sheets inclosed. 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 revival of all; which shall be sent you, as you shall be able to dispatch the work. I am, dear Sir, most cordially yours,

July 27, 1758.

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Last week I sent you two sheets of the manuscript, now I send you two more for your revival. If you see a fair opportunity of contracting, please to make use of it; for I fear the piece will be too long. Inclose 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,

Weston, Aug. 2, 1758

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Here I inclose 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 W—y's letter, and prefix it to my answer? Have you left your own two books for 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,

Weston, Aug. 9, 1758.

J. HERVEY.

P. S.—I suppose about three sheets more will finish
the work.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

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 com-
ment*. Cannot you procure for me Taylor's book?
I am, dear Sir, affectionately yours,

Aug. 16.

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

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 inclosed is a copy of a letter, which
I sent, some years ago, to two malefactors under sen-
tence 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 greatly in 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

* As abridged and designed for the Evangelical Library.

the sermons which you have given us? If so, I should desire 'to see, to possess them all. I am, very affectionately, yours,

Weston, Sept. 23, 1758.

J. HERVEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

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 of 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,

Weston, Dec. 2.

J. HERVEY.

DEAR MR CUDWORTH,

I am so weak I am scarce able to write my name†.

Dec. 15, 1758.

J. HERVEY.

* 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.

▲

DEFENCE

OF

THERON AND ASPASIO,

AGAINST THE
OBJECTIONS CONTAINED IN A LATE TREATISE,
ENTITLED

Letters on 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 our-

selves 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 excellencies 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 falsehood, 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, in as much 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, nor 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 own 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, 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 notions 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

* 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, before Mr Sandeman's performance appeared.

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, 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

* N. B. Mr Sandeman's words are included with the commas, the other paragraphs are the reply.

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 manifold instructions, how to perform that strange something which is to make out our connection 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 con-

tradition 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 to 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 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 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

* The name the author of the letters has chosen for himself, as Mr. Hervey is to be understood by Aspasio.

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 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 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 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 con-

science cannot be relieved ; and a vindication of our view of the gospel-report, as furnishing us with the gracious answer.

“The Scripture affirms the final perdition of the 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 their 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 sufficient 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 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 Palæmon'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 baptised, 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 baptised 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 en-

courage 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, whosoever thou art."

The promise of salvation, to whomsoever believes on Christ, is evidently to the sinner, as his encouragement to come to a sure enjoyment of the righteousness and salvation given to 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 emboldens 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. 58. A fallacy or impropriety charged upon the former is 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, 23, 24. Shall it be disputed, whether God can give 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 requires, every requisite, without exception, to procure acceptance for, and give relief 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 by our author. The question between us is, whether the guilty conscience can be relieved from the sentence of condemnation, by the consideration of a 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; so 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 a revelation of righteousness, that I may as really impute to myself, as the sin 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 ten 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 hope 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 I 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 Isa. li. 1—5. If it is again

required, 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 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 all obedience to these commands supposes the belief of the gospel-report. Be it so; the commandment 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 in-

terest 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 connection? 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 safe-guard, 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 esteem, 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 persuasion that Christ is such a place of refuge, and covert free for our use, accompanied with any esteems, 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 authorises 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, 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 shew 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 any thing to obtain life, but that we should live by what he hath done. It is a commandment not requiring any thing 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 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 in right to possess and enjoy, as any thing 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 hearers 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 your 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 hear-

ers 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 any thing 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 embolden 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 Phillippian 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 suffi-

cient 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 show, 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 pre-requisites 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 one newly apprehended by the officers of justice; and, for my part, I think it 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,

* If, as the apostle affirms, “ the thoughts and imaginations of man’s heart are evil, and that continually;” if this compound of evils is only in some measure restrained and covered in the brightest characters among men; if these restraints are only from the various workings of pride, fear, and shame, in all who are not influenced by the saving truth: how wretchedly are they mistaken, who found their hope on self-excellencies arising from so poor and shameful an original.

will know his state to be desperate, unless relieved by the finished work of Christ.

“Aspasio, then, hath found out a path, by walking wherein 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 justifications, without all that round-about 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, 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 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 pre-requisite 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-chace, in Dialogue ix. till I saw the sinner's relief described as coming to him by means of such conflicts and struggles," &c.

Aspasia 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 divers 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 shewn 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 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 intention," 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 shew 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, 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 to turn 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 presume to account the blessings 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 be-

lieving 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 Matt. 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 any thing 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 any thing 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 recompenced 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 connection 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 farther 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 authorises 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, 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 Palæ-

mon. 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 Thes. 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 be-

lieve." 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 fight 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. v. 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 stedfast," &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 stedfast?" 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 by asking doubtfully, 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. xvi. 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 seek 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 *stedfast*, and which entereth into that within the veil," 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 what 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 Pet. 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 Palæmon'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 shew "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 stedfast 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 hope 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 *stedfast*."

"The assurance of hope, again, is an enjoyment proposed to them who believed."

A stedfast 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 re-

mission 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 these 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 connection 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 wri-

tings on account of the elegance of the style, or some particulars foreign to his main intention of 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 perfectly 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 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

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 you 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, (*tois lachresi,*) ‘ 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 man-

ners 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 for-

mer. 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 bearing 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, emboldening 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 thus 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 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 nor 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 into the hearts of men, the effect is suitable to the divine promise, Jér. 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 believe 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 what 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 the 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 highest to the Jewish appropriation, Aspasio or Palæmon? Aspasio, who in Dialogue xvi. compares "those who advise us to prove our title to comfort by genuine marks of conversation, 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 beget 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, as the first knowledge and certainty came by divine evidence, 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 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 peculiar 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 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. xii. 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 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 life-time 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 Christianised, is at bottom the same thing with that *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 tender, 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 round-about course? Why should we seek to repress any man’s impetuousness 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 themelves, 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 are 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 testi-

fied 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*.

* Methinks this author discovers too much complaisance, when he compliments Mr Sandeman so far as to make an apology for his conduct in professing an agreement, in some fundamental articles of the Christian faith, with the late Messrs Erakines and the Seceding ministers in Scotland, according to Scripture, and the judgment of all sound Protestant divines, and in quoting a few passages from a sermon of Mr Ebenezer Erakine; as if he had thus made Messrs Erakines, and the Seceding ministers, with other Protestant divines, the vouchers of his creed, and given a manifest proof of his yielding implicit faith to their dictates and sentiments. Is it culpable, then, to yield obedience to our Lord's command in going forth by the footsteps of the flock, Cant. i. 8. or to " remember them who have spoken to us the word of God, whose faith" we are exhorted to " follow, considering the end of their conversation?" Heb. xiii. 7. Must an endeavour to keep the unity of the faith in the bond of peace be reputed a fault; and a sovereign contempt of the doctrine and principles of Christian teachers uninspired, however consonant to the word of God these may be found, accounted essential to the character of a true believer and apostolic Christian? What pity is it, that men should suffer themselves thus to be bantered by the scornful

“ 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 towards 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 towards 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

and senseless reflections of one of the most trifling, though one of the most arrogant writers this or perhaps any age has produced? *Wilson's Palæmon's creed reviewed and examined*, Pref. p. lii. note.

* If any object, that this representation relates only to personal enjoyment and manifestation to our own consciences, it may be granted;

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 main-

and it may be also affirmed, that the whole of God's revelation bears this design. The Scriptures were never designed to inform God about our justification, but to inform us. And whenever any who dislike the Scripture account, endeavour to scheme out another, what is their design? to inform God, or to inform man? If one tells me, I am justified (according to his scheme) whether I am persuaded of it or not, is not his design at the same time very evidently to persuade me that I am justified, or to manifest my justification according to his scheme? Shall I not rather let God be my instructor? And when I ask the question; "Wherewith shall God be pleased?" he answers, "I am pleased in my Son." When I inquire further, "How shall I know my own interest herein?" he tells me, "he gives me eternal life in him; and so makes me welcome to call it my own, without more. Is it not the height of disaffection to this to say, I will call it my own upon some other account; but not because he either bids me, or gives it to me?"

tains 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 connection; 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.

VOL. III. page 8, line 6, 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 belongs to me, and, according to the declarations of divine grace, sufficiently authorises me to draw near to God thereby."

P. 285, l. 37. "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. 286, l. 17. "Consider those stately poppies, &c. observe the young ravens, &c. He accomodates 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. 288, l. 7. "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. 289, l. 18. "The man without the wedding garment, &c. Your former mistakes, and present objections, tend to place you in the state of this un-

happy creature. The returning prodigal came with no recommendation either of dress, of person, or of character. None but his nakedness and misery; his acknowledgement and vileness, which had every aggravating, not one extenuating circumstance."

P. 291, l. 1. "If there be any qualification, I think, it is our extreme indigence; and this, I presume you are not without."

P. 291, l. 20. "Sanctification, heavenly-mindedness, and a victory over our lusts, are not the qualities he requires, but the blessings which he confers."

P. 293, l. 33. "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. 296, l. 17. "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. 298, l. 6. "That we all deserve this misery, is beyond dispute. We are also told, that the Lord Jesus has satisfied divine justice."

P. 298, l. 32. "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. 299, l. 20. "And sure it cannot be a fanciful persuasion of our health which renders us proper objects of his recovering grace."

P. 301, l. 18. " 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. 301, l. 31. " 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. 302, l. 39. " They are to be enjoyed by every one. No exception is made."

P. 303, l. 25. " To us (says the prophet), a child is born."

P. 204, l. 14. " 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. 815, l. 19. " 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 brings 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. 316, l. 10. " 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. 317, l. 16. " 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. 318, l. 22. "He that believes on the Son, hath—a chimerical? far from it; a real substantial happiness; even everlasting life.

"Can you doubt of his willingness to save the chief of sinners? or his sincerity in his declarations? Then go to mount Calvary."

P. 319, l. 14. "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*

"*Ther.* But is not faith the work of God's Spirit? How, or in what manner," &c.

P. 320, l. 24. "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 de-

ceive; you receive the gift which enriches you with grace and glory. But permit me to ask," &c.

P. 339, l. 13. "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. 339, l. 19. "Let the most wretched sinner, and most afflicted soul, trust in the name of the Lord."

In note, p. 347, l. 36. "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. 356, l. 4. "*Asp.* The *if* is what I greatly question; but of this I am certain, that you are still inclined to spare *Agug.*"

P. 356, l. 23. "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. 357, l. 22. "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. 359, l. 27. "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. 363, l. 1. "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. 363, l. 8. "I do more than pardon my dear Theron. I feel for him, and I sympathise 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 for 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 dissatisfied on 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 means or instruments whereby the Spirit of God accomplisheth our union with Christ, and our fellowship with him in all holiness, are 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 partook 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

* 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.

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 *.” 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 inclose it with boards of cedar †.”

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 mer-

* 1 Cor. vi. 20.

† Cant. viii. 9.

cy 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 Jehovah. These duties of love to our Creator and our fellow-creatures, are regarded as the sum and substance of the moral law; as the root from which all other branches of pure and undefiled religion spring. Holiness, thus stated, is considered, not as the means, but as a part, a distinguished part, of our salvation, or rather as the very central point, in which all the means of grace, and all the ordinances of religion, terminate.

Man, in a natural state, is absolutely incapable of practising this holiness, or enjoying this happiness. If you ask, What is meant by *a natural state*? It is that state in which we are under the guilt of sin, and the curse of the law, are subject to the power of Satan, and influenced by evil propensities. From this state none are released, but by being united to Christ; or, as the apostle speaks, by "Christ dwelling in the heart through faith *."

Faith, according to Mr Marshall, is a real persuasion that God is pleased to give Christ and his salvation; to give him freely, without any recommending qualifications, or preparatory conditions; to give him, not to some sinners only, but to *me* a sinner in particular. It is likewise an actual receiving of Christ, with all the benefits, privileges, and promises of the gospel; in pursuance of the divine gift, and on no other warrant than the divine grant. This last office is particularly insisted on, as an essential part, or as the principal act of faith; to perform which, there is no rational, no possible way, unless, as our author declares, we do in some measure persuade and assure ourselves†, that Christ and his salvation are our's.

* Eph. iii. 17.

† It is not by this expression affirmed or insinuated, that we are able to produce faith in ourselves, by any power of our own. This self-sufficiency the author has professedly and frequently disclaimed, asserting, that "the Spirit of God habitually disposes and inclines our hearts to a

As faith is such a persuasion of the heart, and such a reception of Christ, it assures the soul of salvation by its own act, antecedent to all reflection on its fruits or effects on marks or evidences. It assures the soul of acquittance from guilt, and reconciliation to God; of a title to the everlasting inheritance; and of grace sufficient for every case of need. By the exercise of this faith, and the enjoyment of these blessings, we are sanctified; conscience is pacified, and the heart purified; we are delivered from the dominion of sin, disposed to holy tempers, and furnished for an holy practice.

Here, I apprehend, our author will appear singular; this is the place in which he seems to go quite out of the common road. The generality of serious people look upon these unspeakable blessings as the reward of holiness, to be received after we have sincerely practised universal holiness; not as necessary, previously necessary, to perform any act of true holiness. This is the stumbling-block, which our legal minds, dim with prejudice, and swollen with pride, will hardly get over. However, these endowments of our new state are, in our author's opinion, the effectual, and the only effectual expedient, to produce sanctification. They are the very method which the Eternal Spirit has ordained, for our bringing forth those "fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God*." Whereas, if there be any appearances of virtue, or any efforts of obedience, which spring not from these motives and means of practice, Mr Marshall treats them

right performance of this most important act."—This manner of speaking is used, I imagine, for two reasons: To point out the first and chief work which we are to be doing, incessantly and assiduously, till our Lord come: To remind us, that we must not expect to have faith wrought in us by some fatality of supernatural operation, without any application or endeavour of our own; but that we must make it our diligent endeavour, and our daily business, to believe in Christ. We must "labour to enter into this rest, and shew all diligence to the full assurance of hope."

* Phil. i. 11.

as "reprobate silver;" he cannot allow them the character of gospel-holiness.

This is the plan, and these are the leading sentiments, of the ensuing treatise. To establish or defend them, is not my aim. This is attempted, and I think executed, in the work itself. My aim is, only to exhibit the most distinguishing principles in one sketch and clear point of view, that the reader may the more easily remember them, and by this key enter the more perfectly into the writer's meaning. Let him that is *spiritual** judge, and reject or admit, as each tenet shall appear to correspond or disagree with the infallible word. Only let candour, not rigour, fill the chair; and interpret an unguarded expression, or a seemingly inconsistent sentence, by the general tenor of the discourse.

We are not to expect much pathos of address, or any delicacy of composition. Here the gospel-diamond is set, not in gold, but in steel; not where it may display the most sprightly beam, or pour a flood of brilliancy, but where it may do the most signal service, and afford a fund of usefulness. Neither is this book so particularly calculated for careless insensible sinners, as for those who are awakened into a solicitous attention to their everlasting interests; who are earnestly inquiring, with the Philippian jailor, "What shall I do to be saved †?" or passionately crying, in the language of the apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ‡?" If there be any such, as no doubt there are many, in the Christian world, I would say, with regard to them, as the Israelitish captive said concerning her illustrious but afflicted master, "Would God my master were with the prophet in Samaria; for he would recover him of his leprosy ||." O that such persons were acquainted with the doctrines, and influenced by the directions, contained in this treatise! They would, under the divine blessing, recover them from

* 1 Cor. ii. 15.

† Rom. vii. 24.

‡ Rom. viii. 24.

|| 2 Kings v. 3.

their distress, and restore them to tranquillity; they would "comfort their hearts, and thereby establish them in every good word and work *."

But I am going to anticipate what the following extract speaks †. I shall therefore only add my hearty wishes, that you may meet with encouragement and success in the publication of this truly valuable piece. Since there is, in this instance, an evident connection between your private interest and the general good, I think you may promise yourself the approbation and acceptance of the public, as you will assuredly have all the support and assistance that can be given by,

SIR,

Your humble Servant,

J. HERVEY.

Weston-Favel, near Northampton,
Nov. 5, 1756.

* 2 Thess. ii. 17.

† This extract, or the recommendation given of this excellent book, entitled *The Gospel-Mystery of Sanctification*, is to be found in our author's works, vol. iii. p. 351. note.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

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