

be meant) the present Church, it will be no hard matter to show that your doctrines differ widely from the doctrines of the Church."

Well, how blind was I! I always supposed, till the very hour I read these words, that when I was charged with differing from the Church, I was charged with differing from the Articles or Homilies. And for the compilers of these, I can sincerely profess great deference and veneration. But I cannot honestly profess any veneration at all for those Pastors of the present age, who solemnly subscribe to those Articles and Homilies which they do not believe in their hearts. Nay, I think, unless I differ from these men (be they Bishops, Priests, or Deacons) just as widely as they do from those Articles and Homilies, I am no true Church-of-England man.

Agreeably to those ancient records, by "Christian" or "justifying faith" I always meant, faith preceded by repentance, and accompanied or followed by obedience. So I always preached; so I spoke and wrote. But my warm adversaries, from the very beginning, stopped their ears, cried out, "An heretic! An heretic!" and so ran upon me at once.

21. But I let them alone: You are the person I want, and whom I have been seeking for many years. You have understanding to discern, and mildness to repeat, (what would otherwise be,) displeasing truths. Smite me friendly and reprove me: It shall be a precious balm; it shall not break my head. I am deeply convinced that I know nothing yet as I ought to know. Fourteen years ago, I said, (with Mr. Norris,) "I want heat more than light;" but now I know not which I want most. Perhaps God will enlighten me by your words. O speak and spare not! At least, you will have the thanks and prayers of

Your obliged and affectionate servant.

XXXIX.—*To the Same.*

SIR,

December 30, 1745.

I AM obliged to you for your speedy and friendly answer; to which I will reply as clearly as I can.

1. If you have leisure to read the last Appeal, you will easily judge, how much I insist on any opinions.

2. In writing practically, I seldom argue concerning the meaning of texts; in writing controversially, I do.

3. In saying, "I teach the doctrines of the Church of England," I do, and always did, mean, (without concerning myself, whether others taught them or no, either this year, or before the Reformation,) I teach the doctrines which are comprised in those Articles and Homilies to which all the Clergy of the Church of England solemnly profess to assent, and that in their plain, unforced, grammatical meaning.

As to the Seventeenth Article, Mr. Whitefield really believes that it asserts absolute predestination: Therefore, I can also subscribe to it with sincerity. But the case is quite different with regard to those who subscribe to the Eleventh and following Articles; which are not ambiguously worded, as the Seventeenth (I suppose, on purpose) was.

4. When I say, "The Apostles themselves were to prove their assertions by the written word," I mean the word written before their time, the Law and the Prophets; and so they did. I do not believe the case of Averel Spencer was natural; yet, when I kneeled down by her bed-side, I had no thought at all of God's then giving any "attestation to my ministry." But I asked of God, to deliver an afflicted soul; and he did deliver her. Nevertheless, I desire none to receive my words, unless they are confirmed by Scripture and reason. And if they are, they ought to be received, though Averel Spencer had never been born.

5. That we ought not to relate a purely natural case in the Scripture terms that express our Lord's miracles; that low and common things are generally improper to be told in Scripture phrase; that scriptural words which are obsolete, or which have changed their signification, are not to be used familiarly, as neither those technical terms which were peculiar to the controversies of those days; I can easily apprehend. But I cannot apprehend that "salvation" or "justification" is a term of this sort; and much less that "faith" and "works," or "spirit" and "flesh," are synonymous terms with "Christianity" and "Judaism." I know this has frequently been affirmed; but I do not know that it has been proved.

6. However, you think there is no occasion now for the expressions used in ancient times; since the persuasions which were common then are now scarcely to be found. For "does any Church-of-England man," you ask, "maintain anything like this, that men may commute external works,

instead of internal holiness?" Most surely: I doubt whether every Church-of-England man in the nation, yea, every Protestant (as well as Papist) in Europe, who is not deeply sensible that he did so once, does not do so to this day.

I am one who, for twenty years, used outward works, not only as "acts of goodness," but as commutations, (though I did not indeed profess this,) instead of inward holiness. I knew I was not holy. But I quieted my conscience by doing such and such outward works; and therefore I hoped I should go to heaven, even without inward holiness. Nor did I ever speak close to one who had the form of godliness without the power, but I found he had split on the same rock.

Abundance of people I have likewise known, and many I do know at this day, who "are so grossly superstitious as to think devotion may be put upon God instead of honesty;" as to fancy, going to church and sacrament will bring them to heaven, though they practise neither justice nor mercy. These are the men who make Christianity vile, who, above all others, "contribute to the growth of infidelity." On the contrary, the speaking of faith working by love, of uniform, outward religion, springing from inward, has already been the means of converting several Deists, and one Atheist, (if not more,) into real Christians.

7. "Infallible testimony" was your word, not mine: I never use it; I do not like it. But I did not object to your using that phrase, because I would not fight about words. If, then, the question be repeated, "In what sense is that attestation of the Spirit infallible?" any one has my free leave to answer, In no sense at all. And yet, though I allow that some may fancy they have it, when in truth they have it not; I cannot allow that any fancy they have it not, at the time when they really have. I know no instance of this. When they have this faith, they cannot possibly doubt of their having it; although it is very possible, when they have it not, they may doubt whether ever they had it or no. This was Hannah Richardson's case; and it is, more or less, the case with many of the children of God.

That logical evidence, that we are the children of God, I do not either exclude or despise. But it is far different from the direct witness of the Spirit; of which, I believe, St. Paul

speaks in his Epistle to the Romans; and which, I doubt not, is given to many thousand souls who never saw my face. But I spoke only of those I personally knew, concerning whom, indeed, I find my transcriber has made a violent mistake, writing 13,000, instead of 1,300: I might add, those whom I also have known by their writings. But I cannot lay so much stress on their evidence. I cannot have so full and certain a knowledge of a writer, as of one I talk with face to face; and therefore I think the experiences of this kind are not to be compared with those of the other.

One, indeed, of this kind I was reading yesterday, which is exceeding clear and strong. You will easily pardon my transcribing part of his words. They are in St. Austin's Confessions: *Intravi in intima mea, duce te: Et potui, quoniam factus es adjutor meus. Intravi et vidi qualicumque oculo animæ meæ, supra eundem oculum animæ meæ, supra mentem meam, lucem Domini incommutabilem: Non hanc vulgarem, conspicuam omni carni; nec quasi ex eodem genere grandior erat,—non hoc illa erat, sed aliud; aliud valde ab istis omnibus. Nec ita erat supra mentem meam, sicut cælum super terram. Sed superior, quia ipsa fecit me. Qui novit veritatem, novit eam. Et qui novit eam, novit æternitatem. Charitas novit eam.*

O æterna Veritas! Tu es Deus meus! Tibi suspiro die ac nocte. Et cum te primum cognovi, tu assumpsisti me, ut viderem esse quod viderem.—Et reverberasti infirmitatem aspectus mei, radians in me vehementer; et contremui amore et horrore: Et inveni me longe esse a te.—Et dixi, Nunquid nihil est veritas? Et clamasti de longinquo: Immo vero; Ego sum, qui sum. Et audivi, sicut auditur in corde, et non erat prorsus unde dubitarem. Faciliusque dubitarem vivere me, quam non esse veritatem. (Lib. 7, cap. 10.)*

* "Under thy guidance and direction, I entered into my inward parts: And I was enabled to enter, because thou wast my Helper. I entered, and saw, with the eye of my soul, (such as it is,) the unchangeable light of the Lord [shining] above this very eye of my soul, and above my mind. I perceived that the light was not of this common kind, which is obvious to all flesh: Neither did it appear as if it was a larger light of the same kind. It was not a light of this description, but of another; a light that differed exceedingly from all these. Nor was it above my mind, in such a manner as the heavens are above the earth: But it was superior, because it made me. He who knows the truth is acquainted with this light; and he who knows it, knows eternity. Charity [or love] knows it.

"O eternal Truth! Thou art my God. Day and night I sigh after thee. And when I obtained my first knowledge of thee, thou didst take me to see that

9. From many such passages as these, which I have occasionally read, as well as from what I have myself seen and known, I am induced to believe that God's ordinary way of converting sinners to himself is, by "suddenly inspiring them with an immediate testimony of his love, easily distinguishable from fancy." I am assured thus he hath wrought in all I have known, (except, perhaps, three or four persons,) of whom I have reasonable ground to believe that they are really turned from the power of Satan to God.

10. With regard to the definition of faith, if you allow, that it is such "an inward conviction of things invisible, as is the gift of God in the same sense wherein hope and charity are," I have little to object; or, that it is "such an assent to all Christian truths as is productive of all Christian practice." In terming either faith, or hope, or love supernatural, I only mean that they are not the effect of any or all of our natural faculties, but are wrought in us (be it swiftly or slowly) by the Spirit of God. But I would rather say, Faith is "productive of all Christian holiness," than "of all Christian practice;" because men are so exceeding apt to rest in practice, so called; I mean, in outside religion; whereas true religion is eminently seated in the heart, renewed in the image of Him that created us.

11. I have not found, in any of the writers you mention, a solution of many difficulties that occur on the head of predestination. And, to speak without reserve, when I compare the writings of their most celebrated successors, with those of Dr. Barrow and his contemporaries, I am amazed: The latter seem to be mere children compared with the former writers; and to throw out such frothy, uncooked trifles, such indigested crudities, as a man of learning, fourscore or a hundred years ago, would have been ashamed to set his name to.

12. Concerning the instantaneous and the gradual work,

there was something which I might behold. Thou didst likewise beat back the weakness of my own sight, and didst thyself powerfully shine into me. I trembled with love and with horror; and I found myself at a great distance from thee.—I exclaimed, 'Is truth a nonentity?'—And thou didst reply from afar, 'No, indeed! I AM THAT I AM!'—I heard this, as we are accustomed to hear in the heart; and there was no ground whatever for doubting. Nay, I could more easily doubt of my existence itself, than that it was not the Truth."—
EDIR.

what I still affirm is this : That I know hundreds of persons, whose hearts were one moment filled with fear, and sorrow, and pain, and the next with peace and joy in believing, yea, joy unspeakable, full of glory ; that the same moment they experienced such a love of God, and so fervent a good-will to all mankind, (attended with power over all sin,) as till then they were wholly unacquainted with ; that nevertheless the peace and love thus sown in their hearts, received afterward a gradual increase ; and that to this subsequent increase the scriptures you mention do manifestly refer. Now, I cannot see that there is any quibbling at all in this. No ; it is a plain, fair answer to the objection.

Neither can I apprehend that I have given an evasive answer to any adversary whatever. I am sure I do not desire to do it ; for I want us to understand each other. The sooner the better : Therefore let us, as you propose, return to the main point.

“The charge is,” your words are, “that the Methodists preach sundry singular and erroneous doctrines ; in particular three,—unconditional predestination, perceptible inspiration, and sinless perfection. ‘They set up,’ say their adversaries, ‘their own schemes and notions as the great standard of Christianity, so as to perplex, unhinge, terrify, and distract the minds of multitudes, by persuading them that they cannot be true Christians but by adhering to their doctrines.’ This is the charge. Now you ask, ‘What do you mean by their own schemes, their own notions, their own doctrines?’ It is plain, we mean their unconditional predestination, their perceptible inspiration, and their sinless perfection.”

The charge then is, that the Methodists preach unconditional predestination, perceptible inspiration, and sinless perfection. But what a charge ! Shall John Wesley be indicted for murder, because George Whitefield killed a man ? Or shall George Whitefield be charged with felony, because John Wesley broke a house ? How monstrous is this ! How dissonant from all the rules of common sense and common honesty ! Let every man bear his own burden. If George Whitefield killed a man, or taught predestination, John Wesley did not : What has this charge to do with him ? And if John Wesley broke a house, or preached sinless perfection, let him answer for himself. George

Whitefield did neither: Why then is his name put into this indictment?

Hence appears the inexcusable injustice of what might otherwise appear a trifle. When I urge a man in this manner, he could have no plea at all, were he not to reply, "Why, they are both Methodists." So when he has linked them together by one nickname, he may hang either instead of the other.

But sure this will not be allowed by reasonable men. And if not, what have I to do with predestination? Absolutely nothing: Therefore set that aside. Yea, and sinless perfection too. "How so? Do not you believe it?" Yes, I do; and in what sense, I have shown in the sermon on Christian Perfection. And if any man calls it an error, till he has answered that, I must say, "Sir, you beg the question." But I preach, perhaps, twenty times, and say no more of this, than even a Calvinist would allow. Neither will I enter into any dispute about it, any more than about the millennium.

Therefore the distinguishing doctrines on which I do insist in all my writings, and in all my preaching, will lie in a very narrow compass. You sum them all up in perceptible inspiration. For this I earnestly contend; and so do all who are called Methodist Preachers. But be pleased to observe what we mean thereby. We mean that inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, whereby he fills us with righteousness, peace, and joy, with love to Him and to all mankind. And we believe it cannot be, in the nature of things, that a man should be filled with this peace, and joy, and love, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, without perceiving it as clearly as he does the light of the sun.

This is (so far as I understand them) the main doctrine of the Methodists. This is the substance of what we all preach. And I will still believe, none is a true Christian till he experiences it; and, consequently, "that people, at all hazards, must be convinced of this; yea, though that conviction at first unhinge them ever so much, though it should in a manner distract them for a season. For it is better that they should be perplexed and terrified now, than that they should sleep on and awake in hell."

I do not therefore, I will not, shift the question; though I know many who desire I should. I know the proposition

I have to prove, and I will not move a hair's breadth from it. It is this: "No man can be a true Christian without such an inspiration of the Holy Ghost as fills his heart with peace, and joy, and love; which he who perceives not, has it not." This is the point for which alone I contend; and this I take to be the very foundation of Christianity.

14. The answer, therefore, which you think we ought to give, is that [which] we do give to the charge of our adversaries: "Our singularities (if you will style them so) are fundamental, and of the essence of Christianity;" therefore we must "preach them with such diligence and zeal as if the whole of Christianity depended upon them."

15. It would doubtless be wrong to insist thus on these things if they were "not necessary to final salvation:" But we believe they are; unless in the case of invincible ignorance. In this case, undoubtedly many thousands are saved who never heard of these doctrines: And I am inclined to think, this was our own case, both at Oxford and for some time after. Yet I doubt not but had we been called hence, God would first, by this inspiration of his Spirit, have wrought in our hearts that holy love without which none can enter into glory.

16. I was aware of the seeming contradiction you mention at the very time when I wrote the sentence. But it is only a seeming one: For it is true, that from May 24, 1788, "wherever I was desired to preach, salvation by faith was my only theme;"—that is, such a love of God and man, as produces all inward and outward holiness, and springs from a conviction, wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, of the pardoning love of God: And that when I was told, "You must preach no more in this church," it was commonly added, "because you preach such doctrine!" And it is equally true, that "it was for preaching the love of God and man, that several of the Clergy forbade me their pulpits" before that time, before May 24, before I either preached or knew salvation by faith.

17. We are at length come to the real state of the question, between the Methodists (so called) and their opponents. "Is there perceptible inspiration, or is there not? Is there such a thing (if we divide the question into its parts) as faith producing peace, and joy, and love, and inward (as well as outward) holiness? Is that faith which is productive of these

fruits wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, or not? And is he in whom they are wrought necessarily conscious of them, or is he not?" These are the points on which I am ready to join issue with any serious and candid man. Such I believe you to be. If, therefore, I knew on which of those you desired my thoughts, I would give you them freely, such as they are; or (if you desire it) on any collateral question. The best light I have, I am ready to impart; and am ready to receive farther light from you. My time, indeed, is so short, that I cannot answer your letters so particularly, or so correctly, as I would. But I am persuaded you will excuse many defects where you believe the design is good. I want to know what, as yet, I know not. May God teach it me by you, or by whom he pleaseth! "Search me, O Lord, and prove me! Try out my reins and my heart! Look well if there be error or wickedness in me; and lead me in the way everlasting!"

January 8, 1745-6.

XL.—*To the Same.*

SIR,

LONDON, June 25, 1746.

AT length I have the opportunity, which I have long desired, of answering the letter you favoured me with some time since. O that God may still give us to bear with each other, and to speak what we believe is the truth in love!

1. I detest all zeal which is any other than the flame of love. Yet I find it is not easy to avoid it. It is not easy (at least to me) to be "always zealously affected in a good thing," without being sometimes so affected in things of an indifferent nature. Nor do I find it always easy to proportion my zeal to the importance of the occasion; and to temper it duly with prudence, according to the various and complicated circumstances that occur. I sincerely thank you for endeavouring to assist me herein, to guard me from running into excess. I am always in danger of this, and yet I daily experience a far greater danger of the other extreme. To this day, I have abundantly more temptation to lukewarmness than to impetuosity; to be a saunterer *inter sylvas Academicas*,* a philosophical sluggard, than an itinerant Preacher. And, in fact, what I now do is so exceeding little, compared with what I am convinced I ought to do, that I am

* Among the shades of Academic groves.—EDIT.