

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.

often ashamed before God, and know not how to lift up mine eyes to the height of heaven !

2. But may not love itself constrain us to lay before men "the terrors of the Lord?" And is it not better that sinners "should be terrified now, than that they should sleep on, and awake in hell?" I have known exceeding happy effects of this, even upon men of strong understanding; yet I agree with you, that there is little good to be done by "the profuse throwing about hell and damnation;" and the best way of deciding the points in question with us is, cool and friendly argumentation.

I agree, too, "That scheme of religion bids fairest for the true, which breathes the most extensive charity." Touching the charity due to those who are in error, I suppose, we both likewise agree, that really invincible ignorance never did, nor ever shall, exclude any man from heaven. And hence, I doubt not, but God will receive thousands of those who differ from me, even where I hold the truth. But still, I cannot believe He will receive any man into glory (I speak of those under the Christian dispensation) "without such an inspiration of the Holy Ghost as fills his heart with peace, and joy, and love."

3. In this Mr. Whitefield and I agree; but in other points we widely differ. And therefore I still apprehend it is inexcusably unjust to link us together, whether we will or no. For by this means each is constrained to bear, not only his own, but another's, burden. Accordingly, I have been accused a hundred times of holding unconditional predestination. And no wonder: For wherever this charge is advanced,—"The Methodists preach sundry erroneous doctrines; in particular three, unconditional predestination, perceptible inspiration, and sinless perfection," the bulk of mankind will naturally suppose, that the Methodists in general hold these three doctrines. It will follow, that if any of these afterwards hears, "Mr. Wesley is a Methodist," he will conclude, "Then he preaches unconditional predestination, perceptible inspiration, and sinless perfection." And thus one man is made accountable (by others, if not by you) for all the errors and faults of another.

4. The case of many who subscribe to the Eleventh and following Articles, I cannot yet think, is exactly the same with the case of Mr. Whitefield and me subscribing the

Seventeenth. For each of us can truly say, "I subscribe this Article in that which I believe from my heart is its plain, grammatical meaning." Twenty years ago, I subscribed the Fifteenth Article likewise, in its plain, unforced, grammatical meaning. And whatever I do not now believe in this sense, I will on no terms subscribe at all.

5. I speak variously, doubtless, on various occasions; but I hope not inconsistently. Concerning the seeming inconsistency which you mention, permit me to observe, briefly, (1.) That I have seen many things which I believe were miraculous; yet I desire none to believe my words, any further than they are confirmed by Scripture and reason. And thus far I disclaim miracles. (2.) That I believe, "he that marrieth doeth well; but he that doeth not, (being a believer,) doeth better." However, I have doubts concerning the tract on this head, which I have not yet leisure to weigh thoroughly. (3.) That a newly justified person has, at once, in that hour, power over all sin; and finds from that hour the work of God in his soul slowly and gradually increasing. And, lastly, that many, who, while they have faith, cannot doubt, do afterwards doubt whether they ever had it or no. Yea, many receive from the Holy Ghost an attestation of their acceptance, as perceptible as the sun at noon-day; and yet those same persons, at other times, doubt whether they ever had any such attestation; nay, perhaps more than doubt, perhaps wholly deny, all that God has ever done for their souls; inasmuch as, in "this hour and power of darkness," they cannot believe they ever saw light.

6. I think St. Austin's description of his own case (whether it prove anything more or less) greatly illustrates that light, that assurance of faith, whereof we are now speaking. He does not appear, in writing this confession to God, to have had any adversary in view, nor to use any rhetorical heightening at all; but to express the naked experience of his heart, and that in as plain and unmetaphorical words as the nature of the thing would bear.

7. I believe firmly, and that in the most literal sense, that "without God we can do nothing;" that we cannot think, or speak, or move a hand or an eye, without the concurrence of the divine energy; and that all our natural faculties are God's gift, nor can the meanest be exerted without the assistance of his Spirit. What then do I mean

by saying that faith, hope, and love, are not the effect of any, or all, our natural faculties? I mean this: That supposing a man to be now void of faith, and hope, and love, he cannot effect any degree of them in himself by any possible exertion of his understanding, and of any or all his other natural faculties, though he should enjoy them in the utmost perfection. A distinct power from God, not implied in any of these, is indispensably necessary, before it is possible he should arrive at the very lowest degree of Christian faith, or hope, or love. In order to his having any of these, (which, on this very consideration, I suppose St. Paul terms the "fruits of the Spirit,") he must be created anew, throughly and inwardly changed by the operation of the Spirit of God; by a power equivalent to that which raises the dead, and which calls the things which are not as though they were.

8. The "living soberly, righteously, and godly" in this present world, or the uniform practice of universal piety, presupposes some degree of these "fruits of the Spirit," nor can possibly subsist without them. I never said men were too apt to rest on this practice. But I still say, I know abundance of men, who quiet their conscience without either faith or love, by the practice of a few outward works; and this keeps them as easy and contented, though they are without hope and without God in the world, as either the doctrine of irresistible decrees could do, or any theory whatsoever.

Now, what is this but using outward works as commutations for inward holiness? For, (1.) These men love not inward holiness; they love the world; they love money; they love pleasure or praise: Therefore, the love of God is not in them; nor, consequently, the Christian love of their neighbour. Yet, (2.) They are in nowise convinced that they are in the broad way which leads to destruction. They sleep on, and take their rest. They say, "Peace, peace," to their soul, though there is no peace. But on what pretence? Why, on this very ground, because, (3.) They do such and such outward works; they go to church, and perhaps to the Lord's table; they use, in some sort, private prayer; they give alms; and therefore they imagine themselves to be in the high road to heaven. Though they have not "the mind that was in Christ," yet they doubt not but all is safe, because they do thus and thus, because their lives are not

as other men's are. This is what I mean by using outward works as commutations for inward holiness. I find more and more instances every day of this miserable self-deceit. The thing is plain and clear. But if you dislike the phrase, we will drop it, and use another.

Nearly allied to this is the "gross superstition of those who think to put devotion upon God, instead of honesty." I mean, who practise neither justice nor mercy, and yet hope to go to heaven because they go to church and sacrament. Can you find no such men in the Church of England? I find them in every street. Nine times in ten, when I have told a tradesman, "You have cheated me; sold me this for more than it is worth, which I think is a breach both of justice and mercy. Are you a Christian? Do you hope to go to heaven?" his answer, if he deigned any answer at all, has been to this effect: "As good a Christian as yourself! 'Go to heaven!' Yes, sure; for I keep my church as well as any man."

Now, what can be plainer, than that this man keeps his church, not only as an act of goodness, but as a commutation instead of goodness; as something which he hopes will do as well, will bring him to heaven, without either justice or mercy? Perhaps, indeed, if he fell into adultery or murder, it might awaken him out of his dream, and convince him, as well as his neighbours, that this worship is not a mitigation, but an aggravation, of his wickedness: But nothing short of this will. In spite of all your reasoning and mine, he will persist in thinking himself a good Christian; and that if his "brother have aught against him," yet all will be well, so he do but constantly "bring his gift to the altar."

I entreat you, Sir, to make the experiment yourself; to talk freely with any that come in your way. And you will surely find it is the very thing which almost destroys the (so called) Christian world. Every nominal Christian has some bit or scrap of outward religion, either negative or positive: Either he does not do, in some respect, like other men, or he does something more than they. And by this, however freely he may condemn others, he takes care to excuse himself; and stifles whatever convictions he might otherwise have, "that the wrath of God abideth on him."

After a few impartial inquiries of this kind, I am persuaded you will not say, "As a commutation, surely no Protestant

ever did [receive the sacrament] but yourself." Is there not something wrong in these words, on another account; as well as in those, "You should not treat others as the children of the devil, for taking the same liberty which you and Mr. Whitefield take, who continue, notwithstanding, to be the children of God?" Is there not in both these expressions (and perhaps in some others which are scattered up and down in your letters) something too keen? something that borders too much upon sarcasm? upon tartness, if not bitterness? Does not anything of this sort, either make the mind sore, or harden it against conviction? Does it not make us less able to bear plainness of speech? or at least less ready to improve by it? Give me leave to add one word more, before I proceed. I cannot but be jealous over you. I fear you do not know, near so well as you suppose, even what passes in your own mind. I question not but you believe, that without inward holiness no man shall see the Lord; but are you sure you never once entertained a thought that something else might be put upon him in the stead? Perhaps not grossly, not if it appeared just in that shape: No, nor have I, for these twenty years. But I find the same thought to this day, stealing in continually, under a thousand different forms. I find a continual danger of stopping short of a full renewal in the image of God; a continual propensity to rest in whatever comes between; to put some work or other that I do, even for God's sake, or some gift that I receive, in the stead of that great work of God, "the renewal of my soul after his likeness in righteousness and true holiness."

9. One point of doctrine remains: "Is there any such thing as perceptible inspiration or not?" I asserted, "There is;" but at the same time subjoined, "Be pleased to observe what we mean thereby: We mean, that inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, whereby he fills us [every true believer] with righteousness, and peace, and joy; with love to him and 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 Ghost, without perceiving it as clearly as he does the light of the sun."

You reply, "You have now entirely shifted the question." I think not. You objected, that I held perceptible inspiration. I answered, "I do;" but observe in what sense;

otherwise I must recall my concession : I hold, God inspires every Christian with peace, joy, and love, which are all perceptible. You reply, "The question is not, whether the fruits of inspiration are perceptible, but whether the work of inspiration itself be so." This was not my question ; nor did I till now understand that it was yours. If I had, I should have returned a different answer, as I have elsewhere done already.

When one warmly objected, near two years ago, "All reasonable Christians believe that the Holy Spirit works his graces in us in an imperceptible manner ;" my answer was, "You are here disproving, as you suppose, a proposition of mine. But are you sure you understand it? By the operations [inspirations or workings] of the Spirit, I do not mean the manner in which he operates, but the graces which he operates [inspires or works] in a Christian."

If you ask, But do not you hold, "that Christian faith implies a direct, perceptible testimony of the Spirit, as distinguishable from the suggestion of fancy, as light is distinguishable from darkness ; whereas we suppose he imperceptibly influences our minds?" I answer, I do hold this. I suppose that every Christian believer, over and above that imperceptible influence, hath a direct perceptible testimony of the Spirit, that he is a child of God.

As I have little time, I must beg you to read and consider what I have already spoken upon this subject, in the First Part of the "Farther Appeal," at the thirty-eighth and following pages ;* and then to let me know what kind of proof it is which you expect in a question of this nature, over and above that of Scripture, as interpreted by the writers of the earliest Christian church.

I have not studied the writings of the Quakers enough, (having read few of them beside Robert Barclay,) to say precisely what they mean by perceptible inspiration, and whether their account of it be right or wrong. And I am not curious to know ; since between me and them there is a great gulf fixed. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper keep us at a wide distance from each other ; insomuch that, according to the view of things I have now, I should as soon commence Deist as Quaker.

I would just add, that I regard even faith itself, not as an

* Vol. VIII., p. 76, &c., of the present edition.—EDIT.

end, but a means only. The end of the commandment is love, of every command, of the whole Christian dispensation. Let this love be attained, by whatever means, and I am content; I desire no more. All is well, if we love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.

10. I am aware of one inconvenience, in answering what you say touching the consequences of my preaching. It will oblige me to speak what will try your temper beyond anything I have said yet. I could, indeed, avoid this by standing on my guard, and speaking with great reserve. But had you not rather that I should deal frankly with you, and tell you just what is in my heart?

I am the more inclined to do this, because the question before us is of so deep importance; insomuch that, were I convinced you had decided it right, there would be an end at once of my preaching. And it lies in a small compass, as you say, "I am not making conjectures of what may happen, but relating mischiefs which actually have happened." These, then, "the mischiefs which have actually happened," let us consider as calmly as possible.

But first we may set aside the "thousands whom (it is said) we should have had pretending a mission from God, to preach against the wickedness of the great, had not the rebels been driven back." The rebels, blessed be God, are driven back.* So that mischief has not actually happened. We may wave, also, "the legion of monstrous errors and wickednesses, the sedition, murder, and treason of the last century;" seeing, whatever may be hereafter, it is certain these mischiefs also have not yet actually happened. Nor have I anything to do with that poor madman, (I never heard of any more than one such,) who came some time since, "preaching in London streets against Prelacy" and Methodism; and "denouncing curses against George Whitefield, John Wesley, and all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons."

I was more nearly concerned in what has actually happened at Wcdnesbury, Darlaston, and Walsal. And these were "shameful disorders" indeed. Publish them not in Gath or Askelon! Concerning the occasion of which I may speak more freely to you than it was proper to do to the public.

When I preached at Wcdnesbury first, Mr. Egginton

* Referring to the discomfiture of the Pretender's forces in the year 1745.—
EDIT.

(the Vicar) invited me to his house, and told me, that the oftener I came, the welcomer I should be; for I had done much good there already, and he doubted not but I should do much more. But the next year I found him another man. He had not only heard a vehement visitation-charge, but had been informed that we had publicly preached against drunkards, which must have been designed for satire on him. From this time, we found more and more effects of his unwearied labours, public and private, in stirring up the people on every side, "to drive these fellows out of the country." One of his sermons I heard with my own ears. I pray God I may never hear such another! The Minister of Darlaston, and the Curate of Walsal, trod in the same steps. And these were they who (not undesignedly) occasioned all the disorders which followed there.

You add: "In countries which you have not much frequented, there have appeared Antinomian Preachers, personating your disciples." These have appeared most in countries I never frequented at all, as in the west of Lancashire, in Dorsetshire, and in Ireland. When I came, they disappeared, and were seen no more there; at least, not personating our disciples. And yet, by all I can learn, even these poor wretches have done as little harm as good. I cannot learn that they have destroyed one soul that was before truly seeking salvation.

But you think, I myself "do a great deal of harm, by breaking and setting aside order. For, order once ever so little set aside, confusion rushes in like a torrent."

What do you mean by order? a plan of church-discipline? What plan? the scriptural, the primitive, or our own? It is in the last sense of the word that I have been generally charged with breaking or setting aside order; that is, the rules of our own Church, both by preaching in the fields, and by using extemporary prayer.

I have often replied, (1.) It were better for me to die, than not to preach the Gospel of Christ; yea, and in the fields, either where I may not preach in the church, or where the church will not contain the congregation: (2.) That I use the Service of the Church every Lord's day; and it has never yet appeared to me, that any rule of the Church forbids my using extemporary prayer on other occasions.

But methinks I would go deeper. I would inquire, What

is the end of all ecclesiastical order? Is it not to bring souls from the power of Satan to God; and to build them up in his fear and love? Order, then, is so far valuable, as it answers these ends; and if it answers them not, it is nothing worth. Now, I would fain know, where has order answered these ends? Not in any place where I have been; not among the tanners in Cornwall, the keelmen at Newcastle, the colliers in Kingswood or Staffordshire; not among the drunkards, swearers, Sabbath-breakers of Moorfields, or the harlots of Drury-lane. They could not be built up in the fear and love of God, while they were open, barefaced servants of the devil; and such they continued, notwithstanding the most orderly preaching both in St. Luke's and St. Giles's church. One reason whereof was, they never came near the church; nor had any desire or design so to do, till, by what you term "breach of order," they were brought to fear God, to love him, and keep his commandments.

It was not, therefore, so much the want of order, as of the knowledge and love of God, which kept those poor souls for so many years in open bondage to a hard master. And, indeed, wherever the knowledge and love of God are, true order will not be wanting. But the most apostolical order, where these are not, is less than nothing and vanity.

But you say, "Strict order once set aside, confusion rushes in like a torrent." It has been so far from rushing in where we have preached most, that the very reverse is true. Surely, never was "confusion worse confounded," than [it] was a few years since in the forest of Kingswood. But how has it been since the word of God was preached there, even in this disorderly manner?

*Confusion heard his voice; and wild uproar
Stood ruled; and order from disorder sprung.*

O Sir, be not carried away with the torrent; the clamour either of the great vulgar, or the small! Re-examine your very first notions of these things; and then review that sentence, "The devil makes use of your honest zeal, to his dishonest and diabolical purposes. He well knows, you do him more service by breach of order, than dis-service by all your laborious industry." I hope not, (1.) Because I bring the very order you contend for into places where it never was before: And, (2.) Because I bring (yet not I, but the

grace of God) that knowledge and love of God also, in conjunction wherewith order is of great price, but without them a worthless shadow.

I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified, by faith that is in him.

XLI.—*To the Same.*

SIR,

NEWCASTLE, *March 25, 1747.*

1. IN your last, I do not find much reason to complain either of tartness or bitterness. But is it so serious as the cause requires? If it be asked,—

Ridentem dicere verum

*Quis vetat? **

I think the nature of the things whereof we speak should forbid it. For surely, it is a very serious concern, whether we dwell in the eternal glory of God, or in the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

2. If those who subscribe the Eleventh and following Articles do subscribe in what they believe from their hearts to be the plain, unforced, grammatical meaning of the words, then they are clear before God. I trust you can answer for yourself herein; but you cannot for all our brethren.

3. I am glad that our dispute concerning commutations in religion proves to be “entirely verbal:” As we both agree, (1.) That abundance of those who bear the name of Christians put a part of religion for the whole; generally some outward work or form of worship: (2.) That whatever is thus put for the whole of religion, (in particular, where it is used to supersede or commute for the religion of the heart,) it is no longer a part of it, it is gross irreligion, it is mere mockery of God.

4. When you warned me against “excess of zeal,” I did not say, this was not my weak side; that it was not one weakness to which I am exposed. My words were: “I am always in danger of this; and yet I daily experience a far greater danger of the other extreme.” I do. I am, to this day, ashamed before God, that I do so little to what I ought to do. But this you call “over-done humility,” and suppose

* This quotation from Horace is thus translated by Francis:—

“Yet may not truth in laughing guise be dress’d?”—EDIT.