

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 whcreof 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.

it to be inconsistent with what occurs in the ninety-third and ninety-fourth paragraphs of the "Earnest Appeal." I believe it is not at all inconsistent therewith; only one expression there is too strong,—“all his time and strength;”—for this very cause, “I am ashamed before God.” I do not spend all my time so profitably as I might, nor all my strength; at least, not all I might have, if it were not for my own lukewarmness and remissness; if I wrestled with God in constant and fervent prayer.

You mention four other instances of self-contradiction. The first: “You claim and you disclaim miracles. You claim them, as having seen many miraculous attestations to your ministry. You disclaim them, desiring none to believe your words further than they are confirmed by Scripture and reason;” that is, you claim them in one sense, and disclaim them in another. Perhaps so; but this is no contradiction. (2.) “You are not at leisure yet, either to permit or forbid to marry.” Indeed I am. Although I commend those who are as “eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake;” yet I know “all men cannot receive this saying,” and that “it is better to marry than to burn.” (3.) “The newly-justified has at once, in that hour, power over all sin, and finds, from that hour, the work of God in the soul slowly and gradually increasing. What, until he has power over more than all sin?” No; but until he has more power over all sin; the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit gradually decreasing; and till he has more peace, more joy in the Holy Ghost, more of the knowledge and love of God. (4.) “But surely, the tip-top of all inconsistencies is what follows, even as explained in your own way: Many receive from the Holy Ghost an attestation of their acceptance, as perceptible as the sun at noon-day; and yet these same persons, at other times, doubt or deny that they ever had such attestation.”

The fact stands thus: (1.) A man feels in himself the testimony of God’s Spirit, that he is a child of God; and he can then no more deny or doubt thereof, than of the shining of the sun at noon-day. (2.) After a time, this testimony is withdrawn. (3.) He begins to reason within himself concerning it; next, to doubt whether that testimony was from God; and, perhaps, in the end, to deny that it was. And yet he may be, all this time, in every other

respect, "of sound memory as well as understanding." Now, whether these propositions are true or false, they are not contradictory to each other. They cannot, unless it were affirmed, that the same person has and has not the same testimony at the same time.

5. However, you think I assert a thing impossible. What is impossible? that the Spirit of God should bear a clear, perceptible witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God? Surely no! Whether this be the fact or not, no man of reason will say it is impossible. Or that the Spirit of God should cease to bear this witness? Neither can the possibility of this be denied. The thing, then, which is supposed impossible is this, that a man who once had it should ever doubt, whether he had it or no; that is, (as you subjoin,) "if he continue sound in mind" (or understanding) "and memory." Right! "If he continue:" But the very supposition is, that, in this respect, he does not continue so. While he did so continue, he could not doubt. But his understanding is now darkened, and the very traces of that divine work well-nigh erased out of his memory. Nor can I think, "it is vain to have recourse here to the *evpyusia* of the power of darkness." I verily believe, as it was the God of heaven who once shone in his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God; so it is the god of this world who hath now blinded his heart, so that the glorious light cannot shine upon it.

6. If the Quakers hold the same perceptible inspiration with me, I am glad; and it is neither better nor worse for their holding it: Although, if I "distinguish it away," I do not hold it at all. But do I distinguish it away? or any point which I believe to be the truth of God? I am not conscious of this. But when men tack absurdities to the truth of God with which it hath nothing to do, I distinguish away those absurdities, and let the truth remain in its native purity.

It was several months before my correspondence with you, that I thus distinguished away perceptible inspiration; declaring to all men, "by 'perceiving' or 'feeling the operations of the Spirit,' I mean, being inwardly conscious of them." "By 'the operations of the Spirit,' I do not mean the 'manner' in which he operates in a Christian."

This I mentioned in my last. But it is certain, over and

above those other graces which the Holy Spirit inspires into, or operates in, a Christian, and over and above his imperceptible influences; I do intend all mankind should understand me to assert, (what I therefore express in the clearest language I am master of,) every Christian believer hath a perceptible testimony of the Spirit, that he is a child of God. I use the phrase, "testimony of the Spirit," rather than "inspiration," because it has a more determinate meaning. And I desire men to know what I mean, and what I do not; that I may not fight as one that beateth the air.

7. Is there "not one word said of this, either in the 'Farther Appeal,' or in any one place in the Bible?" I think there is in the Bible; in the sixteenth verse of the eighth chapter to the Romans. And is not this very place proved to describe the ordinary privilege of every Christian believer in the "Farther Appeal," from the forty-fifth to the forty-ninth, and from the fifty-sixth to the fifty-ninth page? *

Give me leave to remind you of some of the words. In the forty-ninth page the argument concludes thus: "It will follow, that this witness of the Spirit is the private testimony given to our own consciences, which, consequently, all sober Christians may claim, without any danger of enthusiasm." In the fifty-seventh page are these words: "Every one that is born of God, and doth not commit sin, by his very actions, saith, 'Our Father which art in heaven;' the Spirit itself bearing witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God. According to Origen, therefore, this testimony of the Spirit is not any public testimony by miracles, but an inward testimony belonging in common to all that are born of God." Once more: In the fifty-eighth page are these words: "He brings yet another proof of the superiority of those who had this Spirit of adoption: 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' 'I prove this,' says he, 'not only from the voice itself, but also from the cause whence that voice proceeds. For the Spirit suggests the words while we thus speak, which he hath elsewhere expressed more plainly, *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!* But what is, *The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit?*' He means the Paraclete by the gift given unto

* Vol. VIII., pp. 63—67, and 93—96, of the present edition.—ED. 17.

us." (But that this was an extraordinary gift, we have no intimation at all, neither before nor after.) "And when the Spirit beareth witness, what doubt is left? If a man or an angel spake, some might doubt; but when the Most High beareth witness to us, who can doubt any longer?"

I am mistaken if this does not come home to the point, to the question now before us; describing a perceptible testimony of the Holy Ghost, "directly felt to be worked by himself."

8. But I will waive all authorities, that of Origen and Chrysostom, as well as of Hannah Richardson (though not a weak woman, but eminently the reverse) and Averel Spencer (though not a wicked one); only observing, that your argument proves too much. I am as fully assured to-day, as I am of the shining of the sun, that the Scriptures are of God. I cannot possibly deny or doubt of it now; yet I may doubt of it to-morrow; as I have done heretofore a thousand times, and that after the fullest assurance preceding. Now, if this be "a demonstration that my former assurance was a mere fancy," then farewell all revelation at once!

But to come closer yet, and weigh the point in debate in the balance of plain reason: You must allow there is a testimony of the Spirit with our spirit, that we are the children of God. "But," you say, "it is not a perceptible one." How is this? Let us examine it thoroughly. It is allowed, (1.) The Spirit of God, (2.) Bears testimony to my spirit, (3.) That I am a child of God. But I am not to perceive it. Not to perceive what? the first, second, or third particular? Am I not to perceive what is testified,—that I am a child of God? Then it is not testified at all. This is saying and unsaying in the same breath. Or am I not to perceive, that it is testified to my spirit? Yea, but I must perceive what passes in my own soul. Or, lastly, am I to perceive that I am a child of God, and that this is testified to my spirit; but not to perceive who it is that testifies, not to know it is the Spirit of God? O Sir, if there really be a man in the world who hath this testimony in himself, can it be supposed that he does not know who it is that testifies? who it is that speaks to his heart? that speaks in his inmost soul as never man spake? If he does not, he is ignorant of the whole affair. If you are in this state, I pray God you

may say from the heart, "Lord, what I know not, teach thou me." How much better were this, than to canonize your own ignorance, as the only knowledge and wisdom; and to condemn all the generation of God's children of "idiotism and madness!"

9. Under your last head, you do not confine yourself now within the bounds you at first proposed; when you said, "I am not making conjectures of what may happen, but relating mischiefs which actually have happened." Take care you do not grow warm when I reply to this: You will have need of all your patience to bear it.

You begin: "Will you ask what I mean by 'order?' Was it not manifest I meant to speak against lay-preaching?" It was: But not against that alone. Therefore, before I entered upon the question, I defined the term in a wider sense, so as to include both this and every irregularity you had objected. You go on: "How could you give so strange an answer, 'I bring this order you contend for into places where it never was before?'" I reply, This is not my whole answer; it is but one, and that the most inconsiderable, part of it: But it is strictly true. "Do you then bring in the ministry of regularly ordained Ministers, where, before, people were used to the preaching of lay brethren?" Yes; them who were before used to no preaching at all, or to that of those whom you would term lay brethren, I bring to attend on the ministry of those regular Preachers who have the charge of their several parishes.

But very "ill consequences" of our irregular preaching, you say, have "actually happened: A number of unsent persons going about the kingdom, and preaching the worst of heresies." "A number!" Where? Within these nine years past, I have heard of two, and no more, (besides that lunatic Clergyman,) who have gone about thus, though I doubt sent neither of God nor man. But I have heard of no heresy which they preached; only a little smooth, undigested nonsense. Nor can the ill done by these balance the thousandth part of the good already done by the preaching of other laymen; namely, the turning so many bold, barefaced servants of the devil, into humble, holy servants of God.

However, evil "will happen if any State faction shall join

the irregulars." If they shall ! Yea, if they shall attempt it, (which is far enough off,) the irregulars will not join them. We bless God that the Government is at present very fully convinced of this.

"But if unsent, well-meaning laymen may preach, unsent ill-meaning laymen will, upon the first opportunity, spread sedition like wild-fire." Yea, and Clergymen as well as laymen, sent as well as unsent. Thus it ever was, and I presume ever will be.

10. That "the irregularities of Mr. Cartwright did more harm in the course of a century, than all the labours of his life did good," is by no means plain to me : And the less so, because I cannot learn from Mr. Strype, or any other impartial writer, (whatever his mistakes in judgment were,) that he fell into any irregularities at all. I look upon him, and the body of Puritans in that age, (to whom the German Anabaptists bore small resemblance,) to have been both the most learned and most pious men that were then in the English nation. Nor did they separate from the Church ; but were driven out, whether they would or no. The vengeance of God which fell on the posterity of their persecutors, I think, is no imputation on Mr. Cartwright or them ; but a wonderful scene of divine Providence, visiting the sins of the fathers upon their children, (when they also had filled up the measure of their iniquities,) unto the third and fourth generation.

I am not careful for what may be a hundred years hence. He who governed the world before I was born, shall take care of it likewise when I am dead. My part is to improve the present moment. And, whatever may be the fruits of lay-preaching, when you and I are gone to our long home, every serious man has cause to bless God for those he may now see with his eyes ; for the saving so many souls from death, and hiding a multitude of sins. The instances glare in the face of the sun. Many indeed God hath taken to himself ; but many more remain, both young and old, who now fear God and work righteousness.

11. Perhaps a parallel drawn from physic may hold more exactly than you was apprized of. For more than twenty years I have had numberless proofs that regular Physicians do exceeding little good. From a deep conviction of this, I have believed it my duty, within these four months last past,

to prescribe such medicines to six or seven hundred of the poor as I knew were proper for their several disorders. Within six weeks, nine in ten of them who had taken these medicines were remarkably altered for the better; and many were cured of diseases under which they had laboured for ten, twenty, forty years. Now, ought I to have let one of these poor wretches perish, because I was not a regular Physician? to have said, "I know what will cure you: But I am not of the College: You must send for Dr. Mead?" Before Dr. Mead had come in his chariot, the man might have been in his coffin. And when the Doctor was come, where was his fee? What! he cannot live upon nothing! So, instead of an orderly cure, the patient dies; and God requires his blood at my hands!

12. But you think "if one should look out of his grave in the middle of the next century, he would find the orderly preaching at St. Luke's and St. Giles's church had done more good than the disorderly preaching at Kennington." I cannot learn by all the inquiries I have made, that at present it does any good at all; that either Dr. B. or Dr. G. has, in all these years, converted one sinner to God. And if a man saves no souls while he is alive, I fear he will save few after he is dead.

But "it does abundance less harm." Perhaps not so, neither. "He that gathereth not with me scattereth;" more especially if he be a Preacher. He must scatter from Him, if he does not gather souls to God. Therefore, a lifeless, unconvicting Minister is the murderer-general of his parish. He enters not into the kingdom of heaven himself, and those that would enter in he suffers not. He stands in the gap between them and true religion. Because he has it not, they are easy without it. Dead form contents him, and why not them? "Sure, it is enough if we go as far as our guide!" And if he is not outwardly vicious, he the more effectually secures them from all inward, solid virtue. How choice a factor for hell is this! destroying more souls than any Deist in the kingdom! I could not have blamed St. Chrysostom, if he had only said, "Hell is paved with the skulls of such Christian Priests!"

13. I must be short on what remains. You suppose the impression made on men's minds by this irregular way of preaching is chiefly owing to "the force of novelty." I

believe it was to obviate this very supposition, that my preaching has so rarely made any impression at all, till the novelty of it was over. When I had preached more than sixscore times at this town, I found scarce any effect; only that abundance of people heard, and gaped and stared, and went away much as they came. And it was one evening, while I was in doubt if I had not laboured in vain, that such a blessing of God was given, as has continued ever since, and I trust will be remembered unto many generations.

You ascribe it likewise in part to "a natural knack of persuasion." If either by a natural or an acquired power of persuasion I can prevail upon sinners to turn to God, am I to bury even that talent in the earth? "No; but try if you cannot do more good in a College or in a parish." I have tried both, and I could not do any substantial good, either to my pupils or my parishioners. Among my parishioners in Lincolnshire, I tried for some years; but I am well assured I did far more good to them by preaching three days on my father's tomb, than I did by preaching three years in his pulpit.

But you "know no call I have to preach up and down; to play the part of an itinerant Evangelist." Perhaps you do not. But I do: I know God hath required this at my hands. To me, his blessing my work is an abundant proof; although such a proof as often makes me tremble. But "is there not pride or vanity in my heart?" There is; yet this is not my motive to preaching. I know and feel that the spring of this is a deep conviction, that it is the will of God, and that were I to refrain, I should never hear that word, "Well done, good and faithful servant;" but, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

XLII.—*To the Same.*

SIR,

ST. IVES, July 10, 1747.

1. You put me in mind of an eminent man, who, preaching at St. James's, said, "If you do not repent, you will go to a place which I shall not name before this audience." I cannot promise so much, either in preaching or writing, before any audience, or to any person whatever. Yet I am not conscious of doing this very often,—of "profusely flinging about everlasting fire;" though it is true,